



Questions and answers

What is the "Convention on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats?"

The "Convention on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats, better known as the "Bern Convention", is a binding international legal instrument adopted by the Council of Europe to foster the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity in our Continent. The Emerald Network is developed in the framework of the Bern Convention.

What are the "Areas of Special Conservation Interest" (ASCI)?

Recommendation No. 16 (1989), adopted by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, defines Areas of Special Conservation Interest as those areas fitting one or several of the following conditions:

- Substantially contribute to the survival of threatened species, endemic species, or any species listed in the relevant Annexes of the Bern Convention;
- Support significant numbers of species in an area of high species diversity or supports important populations of one or more species;
- Contain an important and/or representative sample of endangered habitat types;
- Contains an outstanding example of a particular habitat type or a mosaic of different habitat types;
- Represent an important area for one or more migratory species;
- Otherwise substantially contributes to the achievement of the objectives of the objectives set in the Bern Convention.



Which countries can set up the Emerald Network?

The Emerald Network is to be set up in each Contracting Party and observer state to the Bern Convention. In 2009, these include 27 EU member states, 20 other European countries, 4 African States and the European Community.

How the Emerald Network is concretely implemented?

The implementation of the Emerald Network consists of an extensive programme of national projects set up with a view to developing a pilot database including selected areas representative of the habitat types and species found in each country. National projects also include the establishment and appointment of national multidisciplinary teams bringing together various scientific institutions in the countries concerned.

Thirty-one national pilot projects have been implemented or are currently underway.

A joint Council of Europe/European Union programme has been launched in 2009 and will run until the end of 2011. This project aims to identify and protect natural habitats to be included in the Emerald Network, in seven countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus.

Why establish the Emerald Network in Africa?

In the four African countries which are Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention, the Emerald Network can contribute to reverse the negative trend in the conservation status of migratory species of European importance, and promote concerted actions to protect the genetic diversity of these species and their habitats.



The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organisation founded in 1979. Its headquarters are in Strasbourg, France, and at present it has 47 Member States. Its main objectives are to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law and to seek common solutions to the main problems facing European society today.



For more information:

www.coe.int/emerald

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Europe and biodiversity

The decline of biodiversity continues worldwide. Habitat fragmentation, pollution, over-use of natural areas and the creation of artificial landscapes increase the rate habitat loss, while reducing species' opportunity for migration and dispersion.

How and by what means can this situation be put right?

Ecological networks can positively influence the conditions for the survival of habitats and species in the fragmented natural areas and human dominated landscapes of Europe. They provide a model for conserving biodiversity, based on ecological principles while allowing a degree of human exploitation of the landscape. Ecological networks include three components: "core areas" (to provide the environmental conditions to conserve important ecosystems, habitats and species populations); "corridors" (to interconnect the core areas); and "buffer zones" (to protect the network from damaging impacts).



Towards a Pan-European Ecological Network

In 1995, the European Ministers of the Environment launched the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (PEBLDS), so as to strengthen environment and biodiversity conservation policies. They called "for the promotion of nature protection, both inside and outside protected areas, by implementing the European Ecological Network, a physical network of core areas and other appropriate measures, linked by corridors and supported by buffer zones, thus facilitating the dispersal and migration of species".

The setting up of a **Pan-European Ecological Network** covering Eurasia was one of the key steps taken under PEBLDS and is being developed on the basis of national, regional and transregional ecological networks and initiatives throughout Europe.



A tool to protect Europe's natural habitats: The Emerald Network

Wild animal species cannot be protected in isolation from the habitats that sustain them. The protection of endangered natural habitats is therefore essential to the conservation of species in Europe and worldwide. The **Emerald Network** is an ecological network made up of "areas of special conservation interest", set up by the Council of Europe in 1989 and launched in 1996, as part of its work under the Bern Convention.



Convention de Berne Bern Convention



Réseau Émeraude Emerald Network

It forms a pan-European ecological network which includes sites in both Contracting Parties and observer States to the Bern convention.

The European Community, as such, is also a Contracting Party to the Bern Convention. In order to fulfill its obligations arising from the Convention, particularly in respect of habitat protection, it produced the Habitats Directive in 1992, and is subsequently working on the setting up of the **Natura 2000** Network.

The Emerald Network and Natura 2000 are fully compatible with each other and contribute to develop a coherent approach to the protection of natural habitats in the European continent.

The cooperation between the Council of Europe and the European Union is therefore the logical consequence of their common commitment for the protection of biodiversity.



Nature does not stop at borders: Co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Union

Europe is a mosaic of countries with relatively humanised landscapes. The ecosystems and processes affecting biological diversity are by large not limited by national borders.

Thus measures taken in a local, regional or national context are often insufficient or even fail. Only an international framework, supporting coordinating initiatives, facilitates the approach of developing a common safeguard for biodiversity and landscape.

That is why the Council of Europe and the European Environment Agency (EEA) carried out, in 2005-2008, a joint Emerald Network development programme in South-Eastern Europe. The Programme, financed by the European Commission (through CARDS grants), aimed at identifying 100% of the potential Emerald sites (Areas of Special Conservation Interest) in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Following this first successful cooperation experience, the Council of Europe and the European Union, through its external cooperation office (Europe-Aid), have launched, in 2009, a new Emerald Joint Programme aimed at developing the Emerald Network in six countries of the EU Neighbourhood Policy East Area and the Russian Federation.



Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe



European Union
Union européenne



Support for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)'s Programme of Work: the Emerald Network in the EU Neighbourhood Policy East Area and Russia

Implemented by the Council of Europe with integral funding from the European Union, the programme has been launched in 2009 and will run until the end of 2011. It aims at identifying and protecting natural habitats to be part of the Emerald Network, in the seven following countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, the European part of the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

The expected results at the end of this joint programme of support are the identification of all the potential Emerald sites in the three countries of South-Caucasus, as well as in Moldova; the identification of 50% of the potential Emerald sites for Belarus and the Russian Federation and the identification of 80 % of the potential Emerald sites for the Ukraine.

Did you know that?

The 27 European States implementing Natura 2000, cover an area of 4.325.675 km².

The 21 Council of Europe member states currently implementing the Emerald Network cover an area of 7.649.605 km².

The seven countries of Central and Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus implementing the Emerald Network under the current joint CoE/EU programme cover an area of **4.991.251 km²**

At the end of 2011, the Council of Europe and the European Union joint programmes will have identified the Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest in 13 countries covering 5.255.624 km².

