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**Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe
in the field of biological and landscape diversity
(CO-DBP)**

Group of specialists – European Diploma of Protected Areas

23-24 January 2006
Room 16, Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg

**BAYERISCHER WALD NATIONAL PARK
(Germany)**

RENEWAL

Expert report by
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*Document established by
the Directorate of Culture and
Cultural and Natural Heritage*

The European Diploma of protected areas was awarded to the Bayerischer Wald National Park (Germany) for the first time in 1986 and has been regularly renewed.

The Secretariat did not accompany the expert on his visit to the park.

Appendix I reproduces Resolution (2001) 6 concerning the renewal of the European Diploma. In Appendix II the Secretariat presents a draft resolution for possible renewal.

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To begin, I would like to emphasise how intensive this visit was but also how satisfying. Intensive because although it was advertised as a three-day visit, the actual visiting time was only a little over two days, which was somewhat brief, as the reader will see from the programme presented below. Satisfying because of the quality of the activities and the projects presented, but also because of the people I met, first and foremost Mr Karl-Friedrich Sinner, the director of the Bayerischer Wald National Park, who accompanied me throughout.

Main points of the visit

On the afternoon of 29 August, my first meeting with the team members and, in particular, with Dr Rull, who is in charge of scientific research on the site. Discussed practical matters such as the cross-border satellite tracking of lynx, forest inventories, research on climate change, the national park management plan, the Natura 2000 management plan (the park is a Natura 2000 site) and projects such as an original one involving the cataloguing and research of central European forest canopies, a typology of wetlands, and research work on water and soil (the latter in co-operation with the neighbouring Sumava National Park).

This was followed by a field trip to an area close by the otter enclosure (observation area) to assess a one-off project to combat bark beetles which encourages the growth of young spruces. Meeting with the head of the district authority, Mr Muthmann.

On 30 August, a visit on foot to a new reception facility, the “Haus zur Wildnis” (Wilderness House) which is being built in the area into which the park has expanded. Comprehensive site visit. Around midday, long-awaited arrival of a group of Przewalski’s horses, the first occupants of this vast enclosure (15 hectares), which will also accommodate European bison, wolf and lynx.

Field visit to the Hans Watzlik-Hain virgin forest, known also as the “Märchenwald” or “fairy-tale forest”. Astonishingly diverse range of trees. Some fir trees are nearly 50 metres tall.

Falkenstein Wilderness Camp: Introduction to the principle of the main house and the six branch houses, among which children are divided during their stay from Monday to Friday. Time was a little short to take in the full scope of this new activity.

Round table: The park and prospects for regional development, with representatives of the tourist industry, the business community, the press and the districts covered by the national park.

Presentation of and visit to a new glass museum, opened recently in Frauenau. This outstanding centre takes visitors on a journey through the history of glass and there had been over 11,000 admissions since the opening in June. The museum also has an information point on the national park.

On 31 August, at the border crossing, early morning meeting with the team from the neighbouring Sumava National Park and its director. Source of the river Goldav. Joint project involving both parks in work to fill in a ditch around a high-altitude peat bog.

Five hour walk in high mountain areas up to 1,300 metres in altitude. Reached the Steinfleck, where the grey of spruces afflicted by bark beetles gives way to the green of a hearteningly luscious natural regeneration.

Concluding discussion at around 4 p.m.

Pictures and words

- “It smells of bark beetles!” was an oft-repeated cry. My nostrils detected an acrid, almost vinegary smell of wood. This odour is released by the beetles as they dig their burrows and so the detested insects have their own smell, much like the fox which had signalled its presence on the mountain slopes by leaving numerous fresh droppings. On examination, the dark blue colouring of the droppings betrayed the fox’s penchant for the blueberries growing in such abundance here in the generous light allowed through by the bare trees. And there are enough of them left over for the capercaillie, populations of which are still stable in the whole area formed by the Bayerischer Wald and Sumava parks.
- The three Ws: “Wiese, Weide, Wald” (meadow, pasture, forest).
- “The population is sceptical: 50% of the forest has been destroyed” (a representative of the local tourist industry).
- “We should be considering how long we will be here and how long the forest will be here. The oldest trees in this forest witnessed bears and wolves. Some of today’s trees will see them again. And this whole process can take 600 years” (K.-F. Sinner).
- “The national park is a treasure! Let’s learn how to use it!” (a travel operator).
- In the cave, there will be a reproduction of the frieze representing prehistoric horses and aurochs in the Chauvet cave (Ardèche, France). For the time being, a swallow has built a nest at the back of the site and is rearing its last brood. The plan is to recreate a prehistoric cave around the nearly completed Wilderness House.
- “Stress” is a word used to describe the bark-beetle situation in the local press.
- “Totholzeindruck” (the appearance of dead wood) was an expression used by the head of the district authority, Mr Muthmann.

The bark beetle, purveyor of wilderness

Everything is done to convey the main message, i.e. that beyond the grey trunks of bark-beetle-infected woodland, the luscious green of natural regeneration comes peeping through. The national park director has been devoting himself totally and unceasingly to this task, organising visits for the public and elected representatives so that they can see what is actually happening in the forest and see for themselves the colour of the dead wood and the natural regeneration, and drawing attention to a book published in 1854 which describes a previous large-scale bark-beetle outbreak, because people are not entirely aware that the bark beetle operates in cycles. The “Wildnis” or wilderness concept is offered in all its possible forms – in the title of the Park newsletter “Unser wilder Wald” (Our Wild Forest), in the Wilderness Camp (a reception facility for school groups) and in the outstanding Wilderness House now nearing completion. There is an omnipresent desire to educate and establish dialogue to gain acceptance.

Educational activity

This is intense and takes several different forms:

- Park rangers;
- junior rangers, trained and supervised by their elders. Note that there is a joint transfrontier training course for junior rangers, which enhances transfrontier co-operation;
- over a hundred forest guides conduct guided visits which can be general or on specific themes.

[...]

Bayerischer Wald / Sumava – the first ever transfrontier prize-winner

In the previous report prior to renewal, we highlighted the outstanding co-operation between the two neighbouring national parks which, with a surface area of a little less than 90,000 hectares, are “the largest area of wild forest between the Atlantic and the Urals” (K.-F. Sinner). This co-operation is reflected in the tiniest details but among the most important areas of co-operation are:

- the high profile that will be given to Sumava in the shortly to be opened Wilderness House;
- the satellite tracking of the lynx on both sides of the border;
- joint training, such as the junior rangers’ training course;
- in a high-altitude peat bog located almost directly on the border at an altitude of 1,200 metres, there was a large ditch which was threatening to dry the area out. In summer 2005, a team of twenty volunteers, ten of each nationality, filled in the ditch. One can almost feel the sense of togetherness and above all a common desire to work towards areas governed as much as possible by the principle of non-intervention. At the beginning of September 2005, on the fortieth anniversary of the diploma-winning areas, the emphasis was placed on transfrontier co-operation and the possibility of a single diploma for two areas working together according to the same principles. A single diploma could be awarded to the whole Bayerischer Wald / Sumava area. Consideration should at least be given to awarding the diploma to the Sumava National Park to encourage this partnership at European level.

On this visit, we noted the great dynamism shown by the Bayerischer Wald National Park and its determination to foster the wilderness concept. Everything militates in favour of renewing the diploma, subject to the following recommendations:

- maintain close contact with the local population in the eleven districts of the national park with a view to gradual acceptance of its policies, particularly in the area into which the park is to be extended, and ensuring that the principle of non-intervention is still applied to 75% or more of the total surface area. This is the prerequisite for the wilderness concept to make continued progress;
- after ten years in operation, the Igelbus system has proved its efficiency and now forms part of the sustainable development of the Park; find ways of ensuring that it will continue to be financially viable after 2006;
- stand by the principle of land purchase, making a particular effort to raise funds to buy the small enclaves of private forest around the margins of the Park;
- step up scientific research, particularly the satellite tracking of the lynx, the initial results of which have revealed its movements and daytime activities; seek means of putting original projects into practice such as the study on the forest canopy using cranes;
- in view of the combined efforts of the Bayerischer Wald National Park (Germany) and the Sumava National Park (Czech Republic), consider awarding a joint diploma to these two protected areas located at Europe’s heart or at least consider awarding a diploma to the Sumava National Park as well.

APPENDIX I**COUNCIL OF EUROPE
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS****Resolution ResDip(2001)6
on the renewal of the European Diploma
awarded to the Bayerischer Wald National Park (Germany)**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 17 October 2001,
at the 769th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma, as amended by Resolution (98) 29 on the Regulations for the European Diploma of Protected Areas;

Having regard to Resolution (86) 18 awarding the European Diploma to the Bayerischer Wald National Park;

Taking into consideration the expert's report submitted to the Group of Specialists for the European Diploma of Protected Areas at its meeting on 1 and 2 March 2001;

Having regard to the proposals of the Committee for the Activities of the Council of Europe in the field of Biological and Landscape Diversity (CO-DBP);

Renews the European Diploma awarded to the Bayerischer Wald National Park until 18 June 2006;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

1. efforts should be made to ensure that the aims of the park are accepted particularly in the new extended sector. Extend the "Igelbus" network (transport system) to the new part and examine the possibility of a link to the rail network;
2. gradually extend natural development, that is avoiding any human intervention, particularly in the new area of the park, to cover 75% of the total surface area. Under no circumstances – whether for bark beetle eradication or any other reason – should any breach of the 25% threshold be tolerated;
3. avoid any increase in the network of hiking paths. Draw up an overall plan, taking particular account of the needs of the capercaillie;
4. secure an increase in financial support to step up land purchasing, since the fewer the sections of private forest the fewer complaints there will be;
5. continue the outstanding co-operation with the Sumava National Park (Czech Republic), which guarantees the protection of the largest single tract of ancient and semi-ancient forest between the Atlantic and the Urals and which could lead to the extension of the European Diploma of Protected Areas to the Czech park.

APPENDIX II

**Draft resolution
on the renewal of the European Diploma of Protected Areas
to the to the Bayerischer Wald National Park
(Germany)**

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma, as amended by Resolution (98) 29 on the Regulations for the European Diploma of Protected Areas;

Having regard to Resolution (86) 18 awarding the European Diploma to the Bayerischer Wald National Park;

Taking into consideration the expert's report submitted to the Group of Specialists for the European Diploma of Protected Areas at its meeting 23-24 January 2006;

Having regard to the proposals of the Committee for the Activities of the Council of Europe in the field of Biological and Landscape Diversity (CO-DBP);

Renews the European Diploma awarded to the Bayerischer Wald National Park until 18 June 2011;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

- maintain close contact with the local population in the eleven districts of the national park with a view to gradual acceptance of its policies, particularly in the area into which the park is to be extended, and ensuring that the principle of non-intervention is still applied to 75% or more of the total surface area. This is the prerequisite for the wilderness concept to make continued progress;
- find ways of ensuring that the "Igelbus" transport network will continue to be financially viable after 2006 since, after ten years in operation, it has proved its efficiency and forms part of the park's sustainable development;
- stand by the principle of land purchase, making a particular effort to raise funds to buy the small enclaves of private forest around the margins of the Park;
- step up scientific research, particularly the satellite tracking of the lynx, the initial results of which have revealed its movements and daytime activities; seek means of putting original projects into practice such as the study on the forest canopy using cranes;
- continue the outstanding co-operation with the Sumava National Park (Czech Republic), which could lead to the award of the European Diploma to the Czech park or the award of a joint diploma to these two protected areas at Europe's heart.