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**PE-S-DE (2001) 9**

**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**

**BAYERISCHER WALD NATIONAL PARK**

**(Germany)**

**Renewal of the European Diploma**

**Expert Report by**

**by Mr. Daniel DASKE  
(France)**

The European Diploma was awarded to the Bayerischer Wald National Park in 1986 and thereafter renewed.

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

Appendix I contains Resolution (96) 28, which was adopted when the Diploma was last renewed. Appendix II contains a draft resolution prepared by the secretariat for the purpose of a further renewal.

## **1. Programme**

A full and interesting programme was drawn up in collaboration with the park authorities and began on the afternoon of 26 June.

Here are the details:

### **26 June 2000:**

4 p.m. Initial contact with Mr Karl Friedrich Sinner, the park director, accompanied by his close colleague, Mr Wanninger.

5 p.m. First field trip to Seelensteig, a 1.2 km-long nature trail on forest mechanisms, on the slopes of the highest mountain in the park, the Rachel.

7.30 p.m. Partial introduction to the open air animal park including a glimpse of lynx, wolves and European bison.

**27 June:** Visit to the Falkenstein-Rachel section of the extension to the National Park and a foray into the Sumava National Park in the Czech Republic.

8.30 a.m. St Oswald Forestry Museum

Basic information, major developments in the last five years.

10 a.m. Regen – Meeting with the Landrat (head of the district authority), Mr Heinz Wölfl.

11 a.m. Ludwigsthal information centre. Educational aspects, environmental education, collaboration with schools.

12.30 p.m. Working lunch meeting representatives of the press, the tourist industry, nature conservation associations and Pro-Nationalpark.

2 p.m. The virgin forest of Mittelsteighütte (Zwieseler Wald).

3 p.m. Visit to a site in which a watercourse is being restored to its natural state. A meander had been recreated the previous day.

4 p.m. Stop at the Falkenstein, 1315 m.

4.30 p.m. "Schachten und Filze" discovery trail, 1.5 km long, focussing on ancient pastureland and peat bogs.

6 – 9.30 p.m. Foray into the Sumava National Park in the Czech Republic. Three-stage field visit and dinner with the park management team.

**28 June 2000:** Appraisal of the "old" park around Rachel-Lusen and forestry problems relating to the bark beetle.

8.30 a.m. St Oswald panoramic viewpoint. Management, bark beetle damage and forest regeneration.

9.45 a.m. Rauheck. Treatment of the bark beetle problem on the outer limits of the park.

11 a.m. Four-hour excursion to the high-altitude spruce stand at Lusen and return to the car park on an "Igelbus" (hedgehog bus).

4 p.m. Visit to Hans Eisenmann House, the park's main information centre.

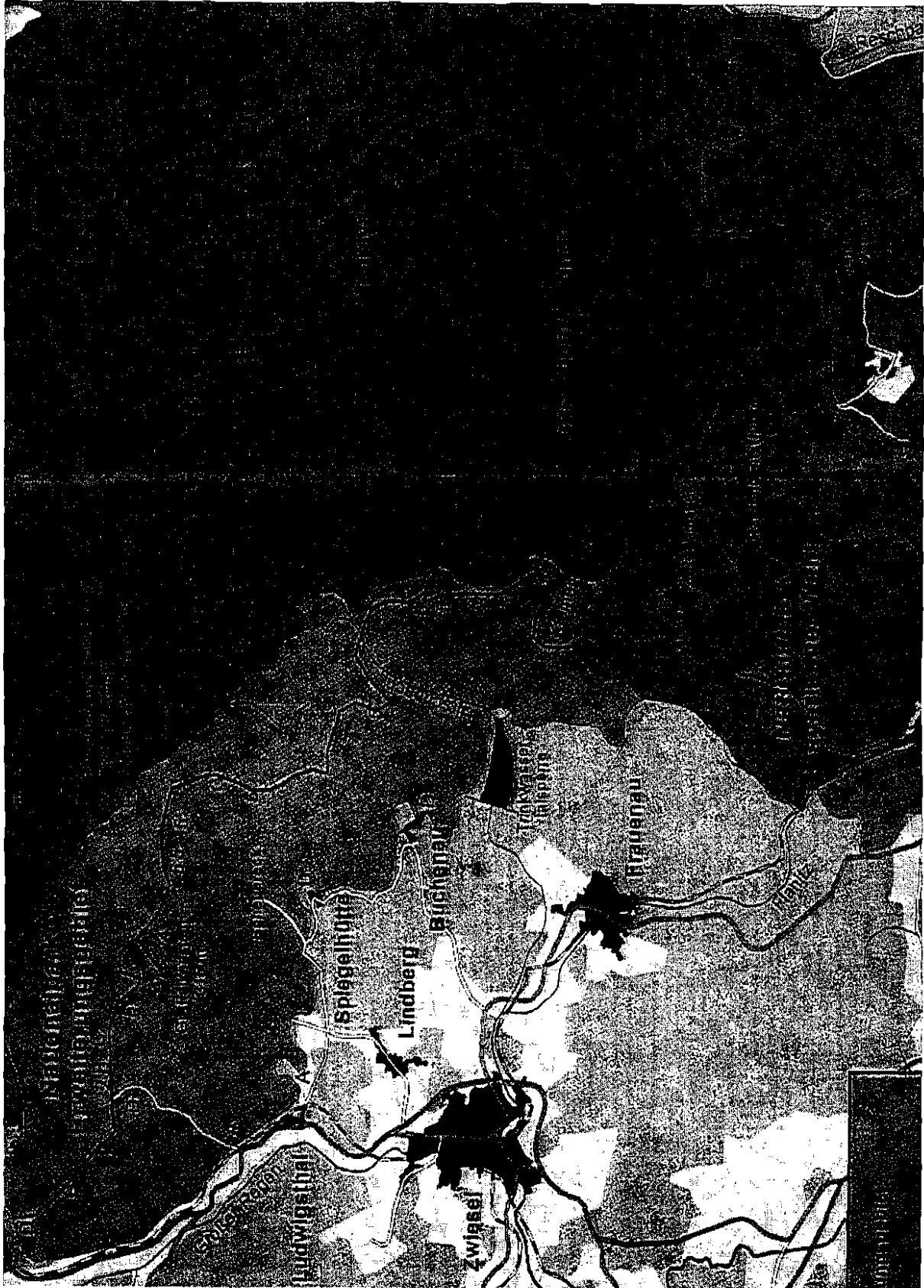
5 p.m. Closing discussions with the two senior officers of the park. The programme was very full and covered all the main points but a third day would not be asking too much. I am especially grateful to Mr Karl Friedrich Sinner who was at my side throughout the visit, along with some of his colleagues including Mr Wanninger, Mr Struntz and Mr Kiener. I also had occasion to talk to other people who work in the Bayerischer Wald such as the scientific expert, Wolfgang Schertinger, the education officer, Michael Held, the museum curator, Wolfgang Bäuml (each of the eleven municipalities covered by the park has its own museum like the St Oswald forestry museum mentioned above), a number of park rangers, and Mr Heindl, the director of a trainers' training school. During our visit to the Czech Republic, the director of the Sumava National Park was accompanied by four colleagues. The working lunch of 27 June provided an opportunity for discussion with:

- Ms Eisch, an official from the nature conservation department;
- Mr Schlenz (a local journalist), Mr Kronschnabel (a tourist industry representative) and Mr Stadler (from the organisation Pro-Nationalpark).

## II. Documents sent

- Leaflets, nature trails, maps – some in German and Czech.
- The decree of 12 September 1997 on the extension of the national park meaning that it practically doubled in size.
- 4 copies of the newsletter "Unser Wilder Wald" ("Our Wild Forest"), which is published twice a year and sent to all the households in the municipalities covered by the park. There is a combination of general information – on Germany's National Parks for instance – and local news – articles on the lynx and data relating to the bark beetle problem in 1999 – as well as a schedule of the season's activities.
- Wirbeltiere (Vertebrates), is a 72-page booklet containing lists of animals (published in 1994).
- Sind Spechte gute Indikatoren der ökologischen Situation von Wäldern? (Are woodpeckers good indicators of the ecological situation of forests?, taken from an article by Wolfgang Schertinger published in "Vogelwelt" (1998).
- Experiencing, understanding and getting a feel for wild forests: the main lines of environmental education in the National Park.
- The Aldo Leopold children's camp, a highly intriguing and original idea for a children's camp. It is planned to open the camp in 2001. The aim is to make it a forum for international exchange, beginning with German and Czech children.
- Joint project with the trainers' training centre run by the aforementioned Mr Heindl for a week's events on the theme "Umweltlust statt Umweltfrust" ("pleasure in nature rather than frustration with nature").
- The 1999 detailed annual report.
- A number of documents on the management plan: training and walking activities; forest management; hiking trails; damage by ungulates; managing wild ungulates.
- Documents published by the Bavarian Ministry: The forest in the National Park in 1998, areas of dead wood and natural regeneration; idem for 1999; the bark beetle problem, conclusions of the international group of experts (1998).
- Leaflets for the general public including a superbly illustrated 36-page booklet on monitoring and combating the bark beetle and another on the bark beetle and the spruce tree.
- A set of small posters.
- A whole range of documents sent by Sumava National Park authorities including a number of books.

[Map of the Bayerischer Wald National Park  
and its extension zone]



### III. The historical background and the habitat – an outline

The Bayrischer Wald was established in 1969 for various reasons including a project for a funicular railway to one of the highest mountain peaks. It is the oldest National Park in Germany. Despite some remaining conflicts, particularly because of problems of acceptance among the local people, it has recently doubled in size with the addition in 1997 of a further 11 000 hectares in the area of Falkenstein. To this block of nearly 25 000 hectares has been added the Sumava National Park in the neighbouring area of the Czech Republic. The latter was set up in 1991 and covers an area of 60 000 hectares. Together, the two National Parks make up a vast protected area in the heart of Europe, Europe's "green roof" which K.F. Sinner rightly describes as "the largest area of wild forest between the Atlantic and the Urals". In 1996/97, when the new area of 11 000 hectares was added to the park, 879 hectares of spruce had died on a large stretch of mountain between the high peaks of the Rachel and the Lusen. From a distance the massif looks like an alignment of grey poles. Only from closer up is it possible to see the vivid green of the regeneration that has already begun in earnest. Life is re-emerging after death just as in 1873 when comparable areas of forest were infested by bark beetles and damaged to such a degree that pilgrimages were organised to cast out this evil which was a somewhat disturbing and visible manifestation of death. It should also be said that this period around 1997 also saw a change in the national park authorities. The dialogue with the local population suffered a little from this but I can confirm that it has been re-established now "even though" in the words of K.F. Sinner "the park's eleven municipalities do not show overwhelming enthusiasm" for the park. However, one encouraging sign is that tourism – which is just as highly developed here as elsewhere in Germany – has even been progressing in recent years.

98% of the Bavarian slopes of the mountains are covered in mixed forest most of which is beech. The upper reaches of the mountain forest are made up almost entirely of spruce stands with a few good-sized mountain ashes dotted among them. On the Czech side only 82% of the park is forest and areas of grassland can reach substantial dimensions. Former grazing areas (Schachten) and a few peat bogs (Filze) account for most of the open areas of the Bayrischer Wald. These areas have been given their own nature trail. The herbaceous flora includes a good number of alpine or eastern species such as the Danube gentian. During our visit in late June we observed *trientalis orientalis*, leopard's bane, blue or Alpine sow-thistle in great abundance, May lily, snowbells (which had shed their blossoms), cotton-grass and round-leaved sundews.

The National Park is mainly a forest reserve but it does also contain a large number of animal species from the most typical to the most prestigious. On all of our field trips we saw the common hare, which is on the decline practically everywhere. We heard or caught brief glimpses of red deer, raven, peregrine falcon, red-breasted flycatcher and three-toed woodpecker. The lynx is now well established in the area with young being born every year. Wolves make the occasional appearance. Quite recently one was run over on a road in the park. About thirty otters are resident in the park.

The main ornithological developments are as follows:

- the survival (though only just) of the capercaillie;
- the disappearance of the black grouse, though it is still present in the Sumava park on the Czech side of the mountains where there are more open spaces;
- sightings of three-toed woodpeckers, sometimes in great numbers, feeding on bark beetle;
- white-backed woodpecker;
- two pairs of black stork;
- around twenty pairs of pygmy owls. A Pro-Nationalpark official reports that a relatively tame pygmy owl was seen throughout the winter around a dung heap near a farm;
- Ural owl: here at the edge of its range, this large nocturnal bird, which is also happy to come out during the day, is the object of a special support programme. There are estimated to be six pairs in the park.

Germany's oldest National Park is just emerging from a crisis period as a result of the vast areas of high-altitude spruce stands damaged by the bark beetle, the difficulty in getting local residents to accept the extension of the park to an area where there are still underlying conflicts, and, to a lesser degree, the change in the management of the Bayrischer Wald. K.F. Sinner says that, in order to steer a straight course through this stormy period and ensure the natural development of the protected areas, the National Park needs the support of the Council of Europe reflected in the award of the European diploma. For Landrat Wölfl "This is a positive assessment coming from the outside". In practical terms steering a straight course means continuing to apply the principle of non-intervention to at least 75% of the park's surface area, restricting attempts to contain the bark beetle to areas bordering on sections of private forest. There are a number of private plantations around the park and it will not be possible to purchase them all. However the land acquisition programme does continue. In the extension zone DM 50,000 million have been invested for this purpose.

**IV. Forestry issues: striking a balance between the rational and the emotional**  
**The same themes and ideas keep coming back again and again in documents on the National Park and its nature trails:**

- The newsletter is entitled "Our Wild Forest";
- The aim of National Parks throughout the world is said to be to leave nature to its own devices;
- National Parks are said to represent evolution;
- Wild nature should be experienced with all one's senses wide awake;
- It hurts to say goodbye to old trees, K.F. Sinner;

To provide the fullest possible understanding of the mechanisms of the forest including life, death and natural regeneration, a short, steep trail called the "Seelensteig" (the soul path) has been constructed in an area of the forest on the slopes of the Rachel which was seriously damaged by a tornado in 1983.

"The soul is twisted by a life lived on tarmacadam. You can talk to trees as if they were your brothers and recharge your soul. Forests are silent. But this does not mean that they are dumb and cannot appease those who come to them".  
 Erich Kästner

The trail leaflet is a diverse and extremely well-focused document which tells visitors that they will be presented with images of the life and death of trees.

Among the most apposite comments are the following:

- Forests teach us that monotony confuses the mind and threatens life.
- Old trees are beautiful.

For the lifespan of two men, a fir tree no thicker than an arm and only a few metres high stands under the dense leafy crown of an old beech. One day the old beech falls, the sun shows the fir tree the way and it shoots upwards. This is how forests regenerate. Its individual members die but its life is eternal.

Let us learn to make choices.

Human beings want healthy timber. Woodpeckers prefer it to be full of woodworm.

Human beings will not let old forests live on. New forests do not enable grouse and capercaillie to survive. Broad-leaved trees provide human beings with very little money but black woodpeckers rely on them. Tengmalm's owls and stock doves live in the holes they peck out. This is what you might call a conflict of interest.

These extracts from National Park documents set the tone. The major bark beetle infestation in the park triggers off an essentially emotional reaction. Practically everywhere one looks there are

the dry boles of spruce trees dying where they stand. A closer look is required to see that natural regeneration has already begun. We saw plentiful evidence of this in the seriously damaged forests around the Lusen. Young mountain ashes and spruce trees are springing up again everywhere, emerging from a carpet of herbaceous plants in which snowbells, May lily and many other species are flourishing. The park management team has been trying to highlight this progress by organising field visits aimed primarily at the local inhabitants and elected representatives. The mayors of the municipalities in the park have been invited and will be invited again. Dialogue has been re-established. Where private land is too close to do otherwise, the bark beetle problem is dealt with as follows: infested trees are cut down, pruned and stripped of their bark. The timber obtained by this process is sold and preserves all its qualities. Shavings and sawdust are left where they are to encourage regeneration by creating humus. It is essential that these intervention zones do not exceed 20 to 25% of the entire area of the park. It goes without saying that everything is done to ensure that the park is safe for visitors. It is mainly the local inhabitants who have a problem with what they see in the park. Visitors are more interested in all that is wild and natural and find it easier to accept the sight of dried-up old spruces although the notion of a "clean and tidy" forest is not dead yet. To sum up, it can be said that the areas affected by the bark beetle reached a substantial size, coming to a "peak" in 1997. We are now on the downward slope of the cycle. Most of the reactions were purely emotional. The forest has now begun to grow again and regenerate and there has even been an improvement in the biodiversity of the park's plant life.

Snowbells for example take advantage of the clearings in the forest. A National Park cannot do otherwise. We can rest assured that in the future, in ten years time at the most, the great swathe of mountain between Rachel and Lusen will have recovered its coat of green.





Our perception of nature is primarily an emotional one. A "neat" well aligned forest gives us a sense of security. We can tolerate the idea of a forest left to its own fate but prefer it to be somewhere outside. Why not in a national park?

## **V. A positive outcome for the extended park**

A major effort was required to double the size of the protected area in 1997. A good number of facilities have been introduced since then in this area which reaches its highest point of 1,315 metres at the Gross Falkenstein and in which the largest settlement is Zwiesel. They include:

- A joint German and Czech information centre at the Bayrisch Eisenstein border crossing;
- Nature trails such as “Schachten und Filzen” where mountain bikers are asked to dismount and continue on foot;
- Work has begun on construction of the Aldo Leopold camp not far from Zwiesel;
- 1 linear kilometre of the Kolbesbach is being restored to its natural state. This is the first time that such an operation has been carried out in Bavaria’s middle-altitude mountains. Six meanders in total are to be recreated along this stretch of river which was straightened in the past. On a short visit to the site we saw a purple emperor butterfly, a diurnal species which is becoming rare.

### **Working to extend the “Igelbus” network to the new area of the park**

In La Fontaine’s fable it is the tortoise that finally outstrips the hare but in Germany it is the hedgehog that steals the show. It is said that he is slower but more cunning than the hare. In the “old” part of the park, the “Igelbusse” (hedgehog buses) enable hikers to return to their starting point easily. Receipts from the car park are used in part to finance the operation. The Igelbus network is to be extended to the new part of the park.

## **VI. Bayrischer Wald/Sumava: a highly gratifying German-Czech joint venture**

We have already pointed out how large a surface area is protected by these two National Parks at the heart of Europe. Inevitably, visitors are struck by the similarity of the landscape but they will also find much in common between the information boards made of poker-worked wood on both sides of the border. The two parks have been working together for years but their co-operation was given formal weight on 31 August 1999 when a memorandum was signed at Bayrisch Eisenstein. The memorandum is a fully-fledged action plan establishing joint goals, deadlines and working methods. It was devised as a “bridge of understanding” between individuals and relates chiefly to:

- the decision to hold regular meetings between the management teams of both parks;
- the appointment of joint working groups;
- work to co-ordinate management plans as fully as possible;
- the drawing up of exchange programmes (studies, training courses, etc.);
- the publication of joint documents in both languages. Some steps had already been taken in this direction. In this vast natural entity where work-sharing has already become the key concept, it would seem entirely logical for the European diploma to recognise the efforts made on the Czech side as well. It would seem only fair for this to occur in the short to medium term. I had expressed a desire to meet the Czech park managers in the field and not just in the formal context of a meeting room. My wish was perfectly fulfilled in the late afternoon and evening of 27 June.

### **Trips to Sumava**

At around 6 p.m. at the Gsenget border crossing reserved for cyclists and walkers, a representative from Sumava national park met us in a minibus. On the way to the village of Prasily (Stubenbach) and its pretty wooden houses, we immediately noticed a slight contrast with the Bavarian side. The landscape is a little more open and the old grazing areas are surrounded by dry-stone walls. Only 82% of Sumava is forest. We drove up to Polednik at a little over 1,300 metres where the park director was waiting for us in a green outfit accompanied by four colleagues. We watched crossbills and citril finches in the spruce trees around an old military radar which is about fifty metres high and has been converted into a panoramic observation tower with exhibition rooms.

We also visited:

- 1) a raised walkway in a peat bog (mugo pines bordering small ponds, cotton-grass and round-leaved sundews);
- 2) a large exhibition on a geological theme staged with the help of a geologist from the Bayerischer Wald team, before being invited to a country dinner in a little wooden farmhouse inn on the banks of a stream. Redpolls sang in the nearby willow trees. The atmosphere was one of a close-knit, hard-working team. This was marvellous to behold because it proved the old adage that nature knows no boundaries.

## **VI. By way of a bonus**

With 200 employees, the Bayerischer Wald National Park is the largest employer along this section of the German-Czech border. The system whereby a museum associated with the park has been set up in each of its municipalities also has a positive impact. Despite the ravages of the bark beetle, there has been a slight upswing in tourism in recent years. This is proof positive that the area still has its attractions.

### **Hans Eisenmann House: An outstanding information centre**

Having spent a full hour visiting it, we can safely say that this large-scale education centre would be enough in itself to warrant a visit to the Bayerischer Wald. In the grounds is a botanical and geological trail introducing visitors to the riches of the National Park's habitats. Inside the building, there are thematic exhibitions and small projection rooms on two levels. The exhibits are extremely down-to-earth and play-orientated where appropriate including tactile games for children. The topic of the stream is dealt with in a living display including live shrimps and salamanders in a reconstituted torrent along with stuffed animals such as kingfishers and dippers. Visitors are constantly alerted to environmental and ecological questions. Hans Eisenmann House is packed with visitors throughout the year and has a policy of welcoming groups, particularly school-parties.

## **Conclusion:**

By remaining true to the principle of non-intervention, the park has rightly chosen the only possible path, which is a narrow and arduous one. The facts speak for themselves. The Bayerischer Wald, which has doubled in size, outstandingly fulfils its role as a biological reserve and a means for the public to access nature. By renewing its diploma, the Council of Europe will demonstrate its confidence and support in these difficult times. But the end is in sight and the mountains are beginning to take on their green hue once again.

### **Recommendations**

1. Efforts should be made to ensure that the aims of the park are accepted by local people, particularly in the new extended sector of the park where the Igelbus network should be introduced as in the old part. The possibility of a link to the rail network should be examined.
2. Natural development, namely avoiding any human intervention, should be gradually extended, 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. Any increase in the network of hiking paths should be avoided. An overall plan should be drawn up, taking particular account of the needs of the capercaillie.
4. An increase in financial support should be obtained to step up land purchasing since the fewer sections of private forest there are the fewer complaints there will be.
5. The combined efforts of the Bayrischer Wald National Park in Germany and the Sumava National Park in the Czech Republic guarantee the protection of the largest single tract of virgin forest between the Atlantic and the Urals. This outstanding co-operation should be encouraged and the possibility should be examined of extending the European diploma to the Czech park.

## APPENDIX I

# COUNCIL OF EUROPE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

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## RESOLUTION (96) 28

**ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA  
TO THE BAYERISCHER WALD NATIONAL PARK  
(GERMANY)**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 19 June 1996  
at the 569th 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;

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

Renews the European Diploma awarded to the Bayerischer Wald National Park, category A, until 18 June 2001;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

1. the north-westward extension of the park, bringing it closer to the Czech Šumava Park, should be encouraged, and the Secretariat of the Council of Europe should be informed of any modification to the present boundaries of the park through maps showing the greatest possible detail;
2. the implementation, as soon as possible, of the management plan, as of 1 January 1996, as planned, without waiting for a further extension to the boundaries of the park to include the state-owned forest overseen by the Zwiesel Forestry Service (north-west of the park);
3. measures, in the form of suitable urban planning regulations, aimed at keeping agricultural areas open in the enclaves, should be sought. Urgent measures should also be taken to restrict the growing urbanisation;
4. research on the red deer problem should continue;
5. contact with the management of the Šumava Park should be increased in order to develop joint actions such as getting the deer problem under control and maintaining homogeneous signposting, as is the case at present.

## APPENDIX II

### DRAFT RESOLUTION

#### **on the Renewal of the European Diploma awarded to the Bayerischer Wald National Park (Germany)**

The Committee of Ministers, under 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;

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);

Bearing in mind the consultant's report submitted to the Group of Specialists for the European Diploma of Protected Areas at its meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2 March 2001;

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

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

#### **Recommendations**

1. Efforts should be made to ensure that the aims of the park are accepted by local people, particularly in the new extended sector of the park where the Igelbus network should be introduced as in the old part. The possibility of a link to the rail network should be examined.
2. Natural development, namely avoiding any human intervention, should be gradually extended, 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. Any increase in the network of hiking paths should be avoided. An overall plan should be drawn up, taking particular account of the needs of the capercaillie.
4. An increase in financial support should be obtained to step up land purchasing since the fewer sections of private forest there are the fewer complaints there will be.
5. Continue the outstanding co-operation with the Sumava National Park which guarantees the protection of the largest single tract of virgin 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.