



Strasbourg, 20 February 2023

**T-PVS/DE(2023)06**

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

43<sup>rd</sup> meeting  
Strasbourg, 27 November - 1 December 2023

---

**REPORT  
OF THE VISIT OF THE INDEPENDENT EXPERT  
TO THE RETEZAT NATIONAL PARK  
(Romania)**

September 2022

*Document prepared by  
Mr Peter Skoberne (Slovenia)*

## Table of contents

1. Introduction .....	3
2. General description .....	4
3. European interest .....	5
4. Legal protection status and history .....	6
5. Management .....	8
6. Review of the recommendations .....	11
7. Conclusions and Recommendations.....	14



## 1. Introduction

The European Diploma for Protected Areas was awarded to the Retezat National Park in 2008<sup>1</sup>, renewed in 2013<sup>2</sup> and expires on 2 July 2023. To assess the opportunity to renew the Diploma, an on-the-spot appraisal visit was undertaken in 2022.

In addition at the request of the Bureau of Standing Committee to the Bern Convention a special attention was given to the forestry activities in the buffer zone of the Retezat National Park in Râul Alb valley following the complaint submitted by Mr. Călin Dejeu in 2021<sup>3</sup>. Findings and conclusions are in a separate report. The appraisal was organised through an on-line preparatory meeting and a field visit.

**2<sup>nd</sup> August 2022: online preparatory meeting:** Zoran Acimov (Director of the Retezat National Park) and Mircea Vergheteș (Piatra Craiului National Park), Marc Hory (Council of Europe), Peter Skoberne (expert).

**26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> September 2022: on-the-spot visit to the Retezat National Park**

Meetings:

- the Retezat National Park staff: Zoran Acimov (director), Alexandru Nicoară (project manager), Claudia Dănaș (biologist), Robert Hebel (chief ranger and tourism responsible), Alin Dăjulesc (ranger);
- Representative of the Ministry of Environment, Waters and Forest (Ministerul Mediului, Apelor și Pădurilor): Roxana Ionescu (Bern Convention national focal point);
- Mayors of the park communities: Ioan Vlad (Sălașu de Sus) and Flaviu Dilertea (Râu de Mori);
- Cornel Ciolea (forester from Forest office Pui);
- Loghin Stoicuta – president of the village community Râu Alb.

**Field excursion to**

- Valley of river Râu Mare, Gura Apelor Dam, Lăpușnicu Mare, parking place under Poiana Pelegii, Șaua Plaiul Mic (1879 m), Râușor ski resort;
- Valea Râului Alb.

<sup>1</sup> Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)2 on the award of the European Diploma of Protected Areas to the Retezat National Park (Romania) - [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d3083](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805d3083)

<sup>2</sup> Resolution CM/ResDip(2013)4 on the renewal of the European Diploma of Protected Areas awarded to the Retezat National Park (Romania) - [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?Reference=CM/ResDip\(2013\)4](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/ResDip(2013)4)

<sup>3</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/files51-2021-romania-retezat-complaint-form/1680a2dc9d>

The 2022 annual report<sup>4</sup>, the last appraisal report<sup>5</sup> and the National Park home page<sup>6</sup> were used as basic source of information.

**Acknowledgement:**

I would like to thank the organisers of the visit, in particular the director, Mr Zoran Acimov, and his team, as well as all I met for the helpful, competent, enthusiastic and very open assistance during my assessment mission.

## 2. General description

The Retezat National Park (RNP) is situated in the southwestern part of the Carpathian Mountains. Mountains are mainly crystalline with two limestone outcrops (Retezatul Mic and Tulisa crest). There are more than 50 peaks higher than 2000 m, the highest peak in the park is Peleaga Peak (2509 m). The area was glaciated in the quaternary and has many landforms caused by glacial erosion<sup>7</sup>. One of them are attractive glacial lakes. There are more than 80, including the largest – Bucura (8.8 ha), and the deepest - Zanoaga (29 m) in the country<sup>8</sup>.

The ecosystems are very diverse due to the varied relief, diverse geology and the junction of three floristic regions in this area. The main area of the RNP is uninhabited, local communities are utilising some areas within the buffer zones of the park (small scale forestry, agriculture, livestock). The whole range of ecosystems from broadleaves forests up to alpine meadows and rocks is well developed and preserved.

In general, ecosystems are in near nature condition.

Details on habitats, fauna and flora are well presented in the last appraisal report<sup>9</sup>.

Logo of the Retezat National Park (Golden eagle):



<sup>4</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/67-romania-retezat-national-park/1680a9cc49>

<sup>5</sup> Galland, P., 2013: *Appraisal report Retezat National Park With Extension to Piatra Craiului National Park (Romania)*, Council of Europe, 2013, document T-PVS/DE (2013) 3 - <http://rm.coe.int/convention-on-the-conservation-of-european-wildlife-and-natural-habita/1680746969>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.retezat.ro/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/eu-na/retezat>

<sup>8</sup> <https://romaniatourism.com/park-national-retezat.html>

<sup>9</sup> <http://rm.coe.int/convention-on-the-conservation-of-european-wildlife-and-natural-habita/1680746969>



Figure 1: General situation of the Retezat National Park.

### 3. European interest

The RNP is significant for the conservation of European mountain forest, subalpine and alpine diversity in the South Carpathians due to valuable natural assets and efficient management.

In 2004 the RNP became a member of the Pan Parks wilderness areas. After the management of this network ended, the RNP became a member of the European Wilderness Network (among the first areas certified as wild in Europe). Since then, it has been audited by the European Wilderness Network every year between 2006 and 2010, with the certification being renewed in 2017.

The Retezat massif is an Important Bird Area for Europe (2000). Two prime Butterfly Areas for Europe were also identified in the area in 2000.

The European interest is further proven by the designation of Natura 2000 sites (since 2007): the Natura 2000 site SAC *Retezat* (ROSCI0217) and SPA *Munții Retezat* (ROSPA0084), which completely overlap the surface of the Retezat National Park.

**Conclusion:**

**The Retezat National Park is of exceptional European significance and importance for the conservation of biological diversity in the South Carpathians.**

## 4. Legal protection status and history

The Retezat National Park has a long history<sup>10</sup>. Before the Agrarian Reform in 1922 there was a hunting reserve for black goats of His Majesty the King's House, managed by the Directorate of Royal Hunters, under the undivided property of the Romanian State and the family of Count Kendeffy.

Through the Agrarian Reform In 1923 the largest part of the alpine areas was assigned to some villages/municipalities, with the right to use them for grazing. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century approx. 30,000 specimens of livestock grazed in the alpine area. The Agricultural Council of Hunedoara County was appointed administrator of these pastures, based on the instructions received from the Directorate of Pending Lands from the Ministry of Agriculture.

In 1927 the Agricultural Council of Hunedoara County handed over to the Cluj Botanical Museum the area of Aradeş (Zănoaga). This reserve was later integral part of the RNP.

In 1935, the Retezat National Park was established at the initiative of Professor Alexandru Borza, the founder of the Cluj-Napoca Botanical Garden, and Emil Racoviță. When it was established, the RNP covered an area of approximately 100 km<sup>2</sup>.

Grazing with sheep was prohibited in the area of the lakes, thus trying to protect the areas preferred by the chamois.

Tourism has been practiced in the Retezat Massif since the 1930s. On an early tourist map (1936), the Pietrele House, owned by the Tourist Club and acting as a tourist lodge is drawn.

In 1947, through the Law for the Protection of Forestry Heritage, the forests became state property, a fact confirmed by the nationalisation in 1948.

In 1955, the Gemenele Scientific Reserve was established, on an area of 1840 ha. In 1955, the Commission of Natural Monuments together with the Hunedoara Agricultural Directorate established areas of total prohibition for grazing.

In 1979, the RNP was designated as a Biosphere Reserve by the UNESCO "Man and the Biosphere" Committee. Between 1975 and 1986, the Gura Apelor storage dam was built on the Râului Mare valley, located on the western border of the park. The hydropower development of the Mare-Retezat River has the role of producing electricity as well as regularizing the course of the river and mitigating flood waves.

Between 1986 – 1990, the alpine pastures were managed by the forestry departments through special arrangements with local communities.

After 1990, the pastures were taken over again by the local councils, and in most cases former arrangements were no longer respected. Pasture managers did not have the possibility to exercise effective control over grazing activities, which often led to overgrazing.

In 1999 the RNP administration was established.

According to Management Plan (2003) there are 4 management zones<sup>11</sup>:

- Zone A: **Strictly protection zone** (ZPS – IUCN: Ia) - strict reserve character, no human intervention (4,350 ha);

---

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.retezat.ro/istoric>

<sup>11</sup> [https://www.retezat.ro/media/files/0\\_pm\\_pn\\_retezat\\_vs3\\_feb\\_2022.pdf](https://www.retezat.ro/media/files/0_pm_pn_retezat_vs3_feb_2022.pdf)



It is important to underline that the park administration has a clear policy to enlarge the surface area of strictly protection and integral protection zones. It depends on opportunities and negotiations with owners. The improvement from 2003 to 2021 is obvious. Legally, the approval of the revised Management Plan will back up the strategy of the managing authorities.

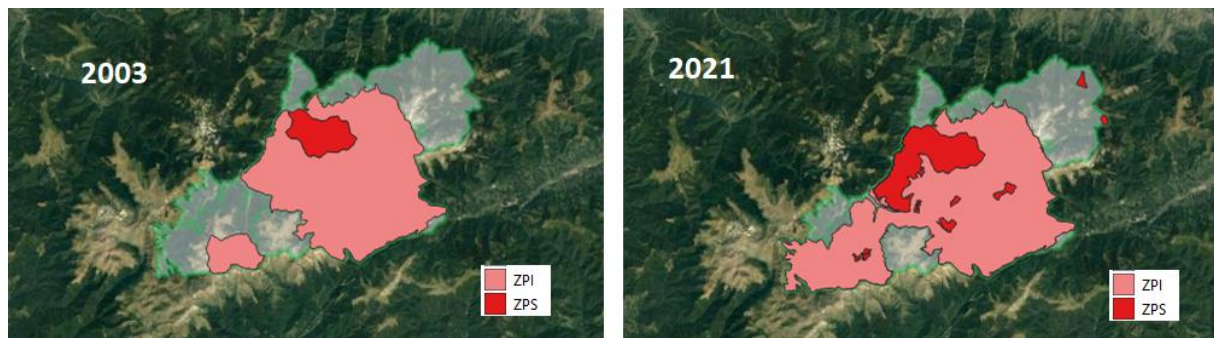


Figure 3: Enlargement of the strict zones (Zone A and B) from 2003 – 2021 (Source: RPN)

There is additional legislation that supports conservation of forest at national level, including in protected areas. This is the Romanian National Catalogue of Virgin and Quasi-virgin Forests, a tool to identify, register and protect valuable forests in Romania. The intention of this legislation and catalogue is to ensure strict protection of residuals of virgin and quasi-virgin forests.

The legal frame and methodology were prepared between 2012-2016. However, there are a lot of difficulties in the implementation which lead to some disappointment within conservation circles. The listing process is relatively long, based on technical criteria, but for the final decision, economic and social reasons are considered. In the first-place the ownership is crucial. For state property forests it is easier to get the agreement, whereas for private or commune forests, discussions usually focus on compensation.

Forests that are legally listed on the Catalogue are regarded by the National Park administration as part of the Zone A (ZPS).

**Conclusion:**

**Existing legal regulations are considered as a solid basis for the future conservation of the Diploma holding areas. Authorities should step up their efforts for the enforcement of the regulations.**

## 5. Management

### Institutional arrangements

The Retezat National Park Administration was established in 1999 as a result of a capacity building Global Environment Facility (GEF) project. It is organised as a unit within the National Directorate of Forests – ROMSILVA under the authority of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests. The Administration is managing the Retezat National Park including the reserve Gemenele and Peștera Zeicului.

There are some concerns that such organisation setting could give some preference to the forestry policy versus nature conservation policy within the protected areas. However, forestry and nature conservation are organised within ROMSILVA in parallel bodies, thus nature conservation is not directly subordinated to the administration dealing with forest management.

There are discussions to move competences to the National Agency for Protected Natural Areas, but as there is no agreement on the financial aspects, it is not likely that it could happen in the next future. The National Agency for Natural Protected Areas (ANANP) was established in 2016 and is a public institution with legal



personality, financed from its own revenues and subsidies granted from the state budget which operates under the Ministry of the Environment<sup>13</sup>.

The mission of the Retezat National Park authority is to manage and conserve the Retezat National Park as a place where nature takes its natural course, whose values are recognised by the general public, locals and scientists, where responsible tourists are welcome, and the sustainable use of natural resources is regulated<sup>14</sup>. Park staff consists of 18 people: the director, an accountant, a biologist, a chief ranger and tourism responsible, a legal advisor, a public awareness and ecological education responsible, an IT specialist and 11 rangers.

Rangers mainly deal with controlling conservation regime and measures, protection and mapping of the natural heritage located within the protected natural areas of Retezat. They carry out guiding activities and supervise tourist activities, carry out interventions and arrangements necessary for tourism activity in the protected areas of Retezat. The rangers collaborate with local communities in the area, with researchers, mountain rescue and rescue formations, the mountain gendarmerie, and tourist operators. Also, the organisation of educational activities in the visitor centres or in the field are mandatory components of the rangers' activity.

The governing body of the RNP is the Scientific Council. All important management decisions or proposals for plans or projects within the RNP must have a consent from the Scientific Council.

Stakeholders whose activity is carried out within the park boundaries or whose activity is directly influenced by the activity of the park administration, are represented in the Consultative Council of the RPN.

#### **Strategic documents and the Management Plan**

The first Management Plan (2003) was to a large extent prepared by the GEF project and approved by the order no. 372/19.06.2003 of the Minister of Water and Environmental Protection and fully used for implementation.

In 2018 a large project, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund was launched to prepare a rather broad and detailed scientific base for the revision of the Management Plan ("Strengthening the capacity for the adaptive management of the natural capital in the Retezat National Park (including the reservations 2 494 Gemenele, 2 496 Peștera Zeicului), together with the partially overlapping Natura 2000 sites - ROSCI0217 Retezat and ROSPA0084 Retezat Mountains"). The total value of the 4-years project was 19,335,112.53 lei.

Main issues that were covered by the project:

- the inventory of species and habitats of community interest in order to determine measures to maintain/improve the state of conservation of species and habitats of community importance;
- establishing measures to maintain and improve the state of conservation of species and habitats of community importance, from Natura 2000 sites;
- monitoring and evaluating the state of conservation of species and habitats of community importance;
- actions to complement the level of knowledge of biodiversity and ecosystems (monitoring and evaluation of species and habitats, knowledge of the pressure factors exerted on biodiversity, including invasive species, etc.).

The results of intensive fieldwork of specialists for species groups and habitats constitute a solid baseline data, important for any kind of conservation measures planning, zoning, appropriate assessment, monitoring and decision making. Data are well managed in a central information system.

Within the project a draft of the revised Management Plan was prepared, discussed with stakeholders (including local communities), approved by the ROMSILVA and is in the governmental procedure for adoption.

<sup>13</sup> <http://anap.gov.ro/cinesuntem/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.retezat.ro/misiune>

### Financial matters

Financing is stable, core financing is secured by the ROMSILVA. Additional incomes are provided by EU funds (mainly cohesion), projects and some own incomes (entrance fees, publications).

2019: 1.743.000 lei

2020: 1.709.000 lei

2021: 2.125.000 lei

2022: 2.269.000 lei

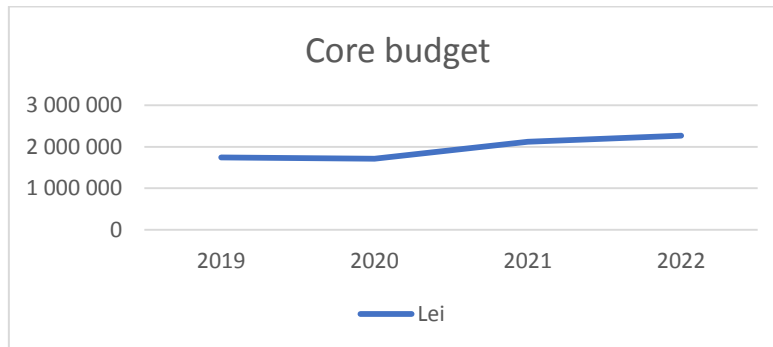


Figure 4: Core budget (2019-2022) of the RPN Administration (Source: RPN)

The core financing is securing regular work of the staff and regular maintenance but no additional investments. For all additional activities, additional financial sources are needed, like the above mentioned ERDF project for the preparation of the revised Management Plan.

### Nature conservation and natural resources management

The RNP Administration focuses on conservation activities defined in the Management Plan (2003). In Zone A and B there is no active economic management.

The RNP Administration does manage forests or grasslands directly as they don't own land in the park. Ownership structure: the Romanian State (37%) and Territorial Administrative Units adjacent to the RNP, communities (composed), natural persons (Kendeffy and Ocskay) as well as the Romanian Academy. Alpine area belongs 100% to individuals or legal entities. According to the current legislation, anyone (Romanian or foreigner) can buy land from private owners in Romania, even from national parks, without requiring the consent of the protected area administration<sup>15</sup>.

In Zone C, forests are managed by owners according to adopted forestry plans. Alpine pastures are owned by local communities. The RNP Administration is negotiating with local communities the grazing rules (where, when and how many animals).

From the historical perspective we can notice big changes in exploitation. In 1880 huge forestry operations were carried out in the area (spruce cuttings), with Italian workers brought by the owners of the forests (the Kendeffy family) from the province of Udine. Tree floating was practiced on Lăpusnicul Mare, Lăpusnicul Mic and later on Râul Șes. Dams for the accumulation of water (reservoirs) existed at Rotunda, Drăgșanu, Branu and on the Ses River. At Brazi there was a "rake" for catching wood and at Clopotiva a sawmill. After the clear cutting reforestation was carried out, by the land owners, with the afforestation material from the nurseries in Gura Zlata, Gura Apelor and Lunca Berhinei. These forests are now regarded as important natural assets of the National Park. Most of them are still in Zone C, but the share of forests included in the strict protection (Zone A and B) is increasing.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.retezat.ro/misiune>

Also at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, grazing with large cattle was experimented for the first time, starting with the Slăvei pasture and mountain pastures were more exploited.

Regarding forestry, the RNP Administration policy is already oriented towards enlargement of the non-intervention forests, as soon as an agreement is reached with the land owners. Where this is not feasible, forests in Zone C are utilised according to the forestry plans. Here there is a possibility to improve the situation. Administrative banning of tree exploitation in the private owned parts of the buffer zone of the National Park is not realistic, nor needed. But more sustainable methods of planning, removing and transporting trees could be introduced within the Park. There are a lot of examples of good practices which could be showcased for the future.

A special challenge is the management of alpine grasslands. In several areas after abandonment of grazing, grasslands are gradually overgrown by forests. On the other hand, overgrazing is a threat, as well. The RNP Administration has now good data on the baseline of grasslands and can seek for solutions with local farmers.

**Conclusion:**

**Management is in place and is operational.**

## **6. Review of the recommendations of the Resolution CM/ResDip(2013)4 on the renewal of the European Diploma of Protected Areas awarded to the Retezat National Park (Romania):**

**the Romanian authorities should secure a sufficient budget for the national park and allocate the funds early enough in the year to ensure favourable working conditions for the staff, the completion and maintenance of the park's infrastructure, more information for visitors and the improvement of tourist facilities;**

The core financing is stable and sufficient for the regular work of the park administration. However, any further development needs additional financial sources. In the last period emphasis was put on establishing a solid basic knowledge about the park's wildlife. It makes sense that further regular basic research is followed by regular monitoring, thus financial resources for such future activities have to be planned. Another investment area is the renewal of the RNP headquarters, including educational facilities for visitors.

**the competent Romanian authorities should work together to harmonise the different national and international designations in order to achieve efficient joint management and to implement joint scientific research and monitoring programmes;**

There are two issues where improved co-ordination of authorities is needed. One is the UNESCO MAB area. Originally it was designated in 1979. It seems that this designation was a political act leading to a 'paper MAB', so it didn't pass the scrutiny of the MAB criteria according to the Sevilla strategy. The MAB status was withdrawn by UNESCO in 2021<sup>16</sup>. There is a strong regional interest to obtain/renew the UNESCO certification. In 2022 a NABU project was launched to give the entire support to the reorganisation and adjustment of the Retezat Biosphere Reserve, in order to completely fulfill the MAB criteria on Biosphere Reserves<sup>17</sup>. The main objective of the whole area is on sustainable development, mostly through tourism, while the RNP would function as the core zone of the MAB area. Further co-operation between the ROMSILVA, the Retezat National Park Administration, the Grădiștea Muncelului – Cioclovina Natural Park Administration, Retezat Tourism Association and local communities is essential.

<sup>16</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/eu-na>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.vgp-foundation.eu/en/projects/romania/reorganization-of-retezat-biosphere-reserve/>

In the vicinity of the RNP there is the Țara Hațegului UNESCO Global Geopark which is very well used as flagship for tourism. In this perspective it would be integrated to the new MAB area.

The second issue is related to the management of the Natura 2000 sites. The responsible management authority is the National Agency for Natural Protected Areas (ANANP), the management in the field for both Natura 2000 sites in Retezat is entrusted to the RNP Administration and included in the proposal of the revised Management Plan.

---

**the management plan should be approved as soon as possible, and at least an executive summary should be translated into either English or French;**

---

The draft of the revised Management Plan<sup>18</sup> was prepared in February 2022, approved by the ROMSILVA and the Local Environmental Agency. It was submitted to the National Agency for Protected Natural Areas and to the Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests. It is essential and urgent that the Plan is adopted as soon as possible as it is the basic document for the management of the RNP. The Management Plan is the corner stone providing the legal ground for all decisions, plans and projects regarding protected areas.

---

**the park, in close collaboration with the mountain rescue services Salvamont, should maintain or renew, when necessary, the tourist infrastructure (trail marking, information signs, etc.); a particular effort should be made to solve the problems of the toilets in the camping areas and near the huts;**

---

The co-operation of the RNP Administration with the mountain rescue service is excellent and is functional for the regular maintenance of basic mountain facilities (trail marking, information signs). There are three main entrances to the core park area accessible by cars. Entrance fee is charged separately for cars and persons. Few camp sites and shelters are the only possibility for over-night staying and are rather crowded during the season. The number of visitors is at peak days already over the capacity of present facilities. The main access to the parking place of Poiana Pelegii (popular starting point for the Bucura lake) is a forest road owned by the forest company. As it is poorly maintained it is functioning as a limiting factor for car visitors. There are some old and not maintained objects near infrastructures which could be better used for the information and awareness raising of visitors. Their potential value for using them for visitors' education and information is very high. The RNP Administration headquarters and visitor centre, built in 2005 need also to be renovated. A complex strategy for education and guidance of visitors is highly recommended, may be as part of a possible next ERDF project. It is very likely that the pressure of visitors will rise in the next years, especially if local communities develop tourist facilities. It is important that the RNP Administration works primarily on the basic conservation of nature and contributes to the tourist and mountaineer organisations rules and code of conduct for visiting the protected areas. This should be clearly defined by a common visitors strategy.

---

**the park should maintain pressure on local communities to prevent construction of inappropriate buildings either in the park or in its immediate vicinity:**

---

Within the park there are almost no problems with constructions. The big exception is the Râuşor ski resort in the peripheral Zone D. It is an example of chaotic urbanism. In this respect it is positive that it is within the RNP, as it is making possible to bring some urbanistic logic and order within the resort area. At the same time it prevents further blind enlargement of this area. These touristic activities have no major influence on the assets of the RNP, but are of big importance to the local community. The community should take advantage of being in the park to put in order the urbanistic situation of the ski resort. The same logic is true for the construction of buildings in the vicinity of the park. It should be regulated by communes respecting cultural heritage traditions.

---

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.retezat.ro/planul-de-management>; [https://www.retezat.ro/media/files/0\\_pm\\_pn\\_retezat\\_vs3\\_feb\\_2022.pdf](https://www.retezat.ro/media/files/0_pm_pn_retezat_vs3_feb_2022.pdf)

**the park rangers should monitor the pastures in order to identify early possible changes due to over grazing and/or under grazing; before the next evaluation, the park should carry out a new study on the pastures; the changes in terms of species composition, erosion, etc., should be analysed in relation to the type and amount of grazing.**

Within the frame of the project for the elaboration of the Management Plan, a lot of studies were done about grazing and pastures, including a detailed mapping of habitat types. The RNP Administration is using this knowledge and is in regular relations with owners of the pastures trying to avoid overgrazing. In fact grazing is essential to preserve certain grassland habitat types.

### **Issues not covered by previous recommendations**

#### **Tourism development in the surroundings of the RNP**

In all local communities I visited around the RNP there are desires, expectations and tendencies for tourist development. At the moment no big infrastructural objects are built. There are some very nice small tourist facilities built in traditional style, many of them offering local culinary specialities. This is certainly the right direction of sustainable tourism development, encouraging local farming and local economy. The Ministry for tourism is supporting tourism initiatives, especially those, oriented towards keeping tradition in a sustainable way. Some interest in weekend houses exists. The main challenge in the future will be to keep this direction and not to be defeated by the temptation of quick and big profit. The latter can be supported by capital and interest from outside of the area and influence the social and economic structure of the local community. This is why a tight and strong co-operation between the RNP Administration and local communities is essential. Precious natural assets of the Retezat should be used for sustainable development of local communities and not be abused for mass tourism. This co-operation should be reflected in a strong local policy regarding urbanisation, farming and tourist development (housing, infrastructure). All advantages of the protected area, the MAB nomination and the European Diploma should be used.

There are different initiatives to promote visits to Romanian natural and cultural heritage. One of them is the Via Transilvanica<sup>19</sup>, a 1400 km long trail from Putna to Drobeta-Turnu Severin. It was completed in Summer 2022. Part of that trail (Terra Dacica section) is passing nearby the Retezat area. Having in mind similar initiatives (like Via Alpina) it is very likely that this trail will attract many hikers and bikers. Consequently, that means increased needs for housing of visitors and tourist infrastructure. An urgent tourism strategy is needed.!

#### **Climate change**

Recommendation No. 206 (2019) of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, adopted on 6 December 2019, on nature-based solutions and management of protected areas in the face of climate change, is addressing European Diploma holding areas as well:

- Ensure adaptive management in the context of climate change is included, as appropriate, in Resolutions for the award or renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas (EDPA);
- Support the involvement of Emerald Network and EDPA sites in testing ways of scaling up and transferring nature-based solutions, as a response to climate change and for the prevention of natural disasters.

Through the project aiming to elaborate the Management Plan a lot of baseline data were gathered about wildlife and ecosystems. This will enable monitoring of changes in species composition and in particular possible vertical shift of ecosystems. The Retezat massif is very convenient for monitoring vegetation changes caused by climate change, mostly because of continuity of vertical vegetation belts and their naturalness.

---

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.viatransilvanica.com/>

**European Diploma visibility**

I regularly pay attention to the visibility of the European Diploma on the spot. The European Diploma logo is not used very much. The EDPA logo should be placed on and its meaning explained on publications, on suitable places in the information centres, starting points of the trails and on the RNP web home page.

**7. Conclusions and Recommendations**

***I therefore recommend to the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas and to the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention to renew the European Diploma of the Retezat National Park for the next 10 years.***

In addition, the following **condition and recommendations** should be attached to the renewal:

**Condition:** Adopt by 2024 the Management Plan and secure finances for its implementation.

**Recommendations:**

1. Strengthen the monitoring programmes and secure finances for their implementation. Initiate in particular the monitoring of the effect of climate change on species and habitats and ensure findings are considered in the management of the area
2. Prepare a plan for maintaining and developing the infrastructure (headquarters, potential information points, entrance points, camp sites, shelters, etc.) of the Retezat National Park and seek for appropriate financing (e. g. ERDF);
3. Maintain and strengthen the good relations with the local and the regional authorities, as well as with tourist organisations to reach an agreement on future sustainable tourist development in the area surrounding the Retezat National Park;
4. Strengthen the cooperation between the Administration of the Retezat National Park, the National Agency for Natural Protected Areas, and ROMSILVA to ensure a coherent and harmonised management of the protected areas under their respective responsibility;
5. Pursue the efforts to further enlarge the strictly protection zone (zone A) and of the integral protection zone (zone B);
6. Consider ways and means for a more sustainable use of forest within the buffer zone of the Retezat National Park;
7. Make more use of the European Diploma logo in all information material and brochures, and explain the relevance of the Diploma wherever appropriate, in particular in the visitors' centres and on the website.