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STEERING COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT
OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL HABITATS

Group of Specialists - Protected Areas

1-4 February 1993

**Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park
(Luxembourg)**

Renewal of the European Diploma

Expert report

by

Dr. Charles STAUFFER

GROUP OF SPECIALISTS - "PROTECTED AREAS"

GERMANO-LUXEMBOURG NATURE PARK

ON-THE-SPOT APPRAISAL

(4-5 August 1992)

EXPERT REPORT

BY

Charles STAUFFER

1. GENERAL FACTS

Created in 1964, the Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park was awarded the European Diploma, category C, in 1973. The award has been renewed every five years since, in 1978, 1983 and 1988.

As the diploma award is up for renewal for a further period of five years, the Directorate of Environment and Local Authorities of the Council of Europe entrusted me with the task of carrying out an on-the-spot appraisal with the following timetable:

Departure, 3 August 1992;

Appraisal on 4 and 5 August 1992;

Return, 6 August 1992.

The terms of reference also included checking that the recommendations of Resolution (88) 8 had been carried out. The first two were to:

1. find some way of restoring the landscape of the Hosingen site, especially the built-up part;
2. assign responsibility for the Hosingen centre to the Ministry of the Environment.

In addition, the Committee of Ministers asked the park administrators to implement the following recommendations:

1. adopt an overall plan for the development and management of the park, including a policy for the establishment of reserves throughout the park;

2. maintain a firm attitude on the limitation of existing tourist facilities, camping sites in particular, and continue restoring and improving inadequate facilities;
3. continue and intensify efforts to encourage mixed forests consisting of native species as opposed to exclusively coniferous woodland, particularly through the discontinuation of grants for the planting of conifers;
4. when the E42 Luxembourg to Trier motorway was built, a route which did as little damage as possible to the countryside around Echternach, and in particular one that did not run across the Haard Forest and did not run along the artificial lake and did not cross Tull Hill was chosen;
5. introduce provisions into Luxembourg legislation enabling nature parks to be managed ecologically;
6. avoid exceeding camp-site capacity, especially in summer.

2. THE APPRAISAL

The Secretariat of the Directorate of Environment and Local Authorities did not appoint a representative to take part.

On my arrival at Grundhof, I was welcomed by:

- Mr Kremer, the Luxembourg C N Nord District Commissioner;
- Mr Meyer, the Secretary General of the Vereinigung Deutsch-Luxemburgischer Naturpark (V.D.L.N);
- Mr Goebel, one of the members of the V.D.L.N. Managing Board.

We reviewed the various points of Resolution (88) 8. I shall take each in turn.

3. MAIN FEATURES OF THE DIPLOMA-WINNING AREA

Approximately 50 km long and 20 km wide, at the widest part, the Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park extends along both sides of the Our and Sûre rivers, which form the border between Germany and Luxembourg, from the Belgian frontier in the north to Echternach in the south.

Geologically speaking, the north-western part is made up of Devonian schists whereas the rest of the park is on Muschelkalk and Keuper overlaid by Lias (Luxembourg sandstone).

The altitude varies from 150m to 550 m, the average temperature is 8°C with a 2° variation between the sandstone south and the schistose north, and precipitation increases from south to north, from 650 mm to 1,000 mm annually in the Ardennes.

The park is heavily forested, especially on the slopes and areas with poor soil. Of the forest, 10% is crown or state property, 25% belongs to municipalities and the remaining 65% (mostly divided into rather small areas) is privately owned.

The forest is made up of approximately equal parts of deciduous and coniferous species but there is a marked contrast between the Ardennes in the north, where spruces predominate, and the mixed deciduous forest in the south.

This climatic and geological diversity gives rise to a wealth of flora and fauna; in particular there is an abundance of insect life.

4. THE ADMINISTRATIVE POSITION

Transfrontier co-ordination is essentially provided by a private association, the Verein Deutsch Luxemburgerischer Naturpark, whose president is alternately a German representative (Mr Hubach) and a Luxembourg representative (Mr Friederich).

A government committee set up when the park was created and comprising the Minister of the Environment of Rhineland-Palatinate and the Luxembourg Water and Forestry Directorate regulates legal matters arising from the international border.

The German section of the park is part of the Southern Eifel Nature Park, it therefore has the benefit of logistical support.

In accordance with Resolution (88) 8, recommendation 5, a similar structure is soon to be set up in Luxembourg; a Parliamentary Bill on nature parks was tabled in November 1991.

In its explanatory statement, the Bill reiterates the outline declaration of intention the government made to the Council of State on 24 April 1981, which refers to three projects, including the Our Park scheme comprising two administrative districts, including two entities, the Our valley and the Mullerthal.

There is a danger here of rivalry between the two districts whereas what is needed is a unified structure to dovetail with the German side. It seems risky to me to add administrative disunity to environmental differences between the Ardennes and Petite Suisse .

5. MATTERS COVERED BY THE APPRAISAL

The park is too big for all the problems to be dealt with in two days. I therefore left it to my hosts to organise the visit as they saw fit. The second day was only partly satisfactory.

CONSTRUCTION OF GOLF COURSES ON THE PARK PERIPHERY

As mentioned in the annual reports for 1989 and 1990, golf courses are being built on the Luxembourg edge of the park. The course at Eselborn, which we visited, blends with the landscape, mainly because of the choice of site but also because copses were preserved and extra planting was done.

However, the Waldbillig golf course, which is sited on much flatter farming land, will be extremely difficult to integrate with its surroundings.

These are big facilities, and like all golf courses they also raise a problem of nitrate pollution.

Unfortunately, what is happening increasingly is that a nature park, which everyone associates with quality surroundings, attracts investors to its edges, which they develop by exploiting the environmental cachet.

THE HOSINGEN SITE

This former game reserve, bought by the Grand Duchy, is now due to be developed under a major interministerial plan. The plans include a sports complex, an arts, leisure and restaurant centre, a football field, a 500-pitch campsite and a car park to hold 100 cars.

Given the size, design and site of the project, it is going to be difficult to integrate into the landscape.

THE OUR VALLEY

Recent studies have shown that the Our river is teeming with fish but it is at risk from the waste effluent from nearby built-up areas including Belgian villages.

Near the European Monument, at the northern entrance to the park, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg has bought an area of private land, abutting on the monument site. This will preserve a precious area of open countryside: one of the major risks to the narrow Ardennes valleys is posed by the vulnerability of the few surviving tracts of farmland or meadow. These need preserving on ecological as well as scenic grounds.

The few open spaces along the main channels of the Our and Sûre are occupied by camping sites, which for many years have posed huge problems to the riverside municipalities. The number of campers has levelled off in the last couple of years but waste treatment and overuse of the rivers inevitably cause environment problems. Salmonella has proliferated in the recent succession of hot, drought years and this has led to periodic bans on bathing.

Canoeing and its commercialisation have developed worryingly and an agreement between the two countries must be revealed urgently to put a legal curb on the situation. This is a prime example of the perverse effect of a unilateral ban.

The 60 or so camping sites in the park mean that, in certain areas, the population is multiplied tenfold. This inflicts overloads on water purification systems which only the most up-to-date are able to cope with and limits have had to be imposed on the number of campers. All the studies carried out agree: that the camping sites make heavy demands on water and space, cause severe riverbank erosion and are ugly. Awareness of the problem has prompted the planting of trees and bushes but these will take some time to achieve full effect.

THE KALBORN MILL

This is a private property to which alteration work has been done on and off. It is situated in the upper Our valley, in outstandingly peaceful countryside.

If it is were to be purchased by the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, serious thought would have to be given as to what use to make of it.

If it were pulled down the regions would be deprived of one the last of the mills which were once the very basis of riverside life.

ROCK CLIMBING AT BERDORF

On the Luxembourg side the jagged sandstone cliffs at Berdorf are not only popular with ramblers, attracted by the beauty and weirdness of the rock formations, but also provide challenging climbs.

A decision to ban rock climbing in the Southern Eifel Nature Park has resulted in 200 to 300 rock-climbers concentrating on a few Luxembourg rock faces, with inevitable pollution and deterioration. The Berdorf rocks are no exception and it was not long before the areas at the foot and top of the climbs were eroded and stripped of vegetation. Restricting rock climbing to a small area has only made matters worse there. The problem is urgent and it too calls for joint action and consideration.

ERNZEN

The Ernzen site is also situated on Luxembourg sandstone. For several years it has benefited from the total commitment of the forester, Mr Goebbels.

In 1989 work was begun on the Waldlehrhütte Teufelschlucht (a forest chalet now being extended). The chalet, which is mainly a public information centre, has been carefully blended into the landscape.

MISCELLANEOUS WORK IN THE EIFEL ZONE

Roadside tree-planting

For two or three years the park has been planting lines of tall deciduous trees along the roadsides, and it may be wondered whether these are necessary in an already densely wooded area, especially since adjacent areas of abandoned farmland will be taken over by forest.

Work near the Irrhausen campsite

In order to attract more tourism to the Irrhausen area, a small lake has been built. It is bounded at the downstream end by a dam and a wasteway equipped with a fish ladder; however, because the dam leaks the water-level is never high enough for the fish ladder to have any water in it. The trees and vegetation planted on the lakeside are well landscaped and should look splendid in a few year's time.

The Daudistel wetlands

The area's potential has been increased by converting a disused gravel pit in the Enz valley into a wetland.

THE FOREST

The forest suffered major damage in 1990 as occurred throughout Europe. Reforesting in publicly owned forest has mainly been with deciduous species but that is not always the policy in privately owned woodland, which accounts for a large proportion of the woodland on both banks of the Our and the Sûre.

Like other European regions the park did not escape the fashion for spruce forest following the Second World War though here it was especially marked on account of farmers abandoning less fertile land.

On both the Luxembourg and German sides, the State has been buying up large tracts of private forest and that will allow a gradual switch to climax forest. There is a long way

to go but in a few decades the combined result of the slump in timber prices, wind damage and insect attack will be a better balance between deciduous and coniferous trees.

In the Eifel region the Douglas fir has been replacing the spruce for the last decade or so. However, this will not help to tip the balance in favour of deciduous trees.

6. CONCLUSION

This overview suggests that the Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park has been making year-on-year progress in the direction sought by Resolution (88) 8.

A laudable effort has been made to limit public access to the park.

There is no objection to re-awarding the diploma in the same category for a further five-year period.

DRAFT RESOLUTION

1. More effective consultation so that Luxembourg and Germany co-ordinate their policies.
2. Further development of a coherent nature-reserve network.
3. Maintenance through appropriate farming practice of the few areas of open farmland left in the valley bottom.
4. Use of tree lining along roads to safeguard local strains of apple and pear trees.

Appendix I is a copy of Resolution (88) 8 adopted when the diploma was last re-awarded; in Appendix II the Secretariat presents a draft resolution for re-award of the diploma in 1993.

APPENDIX I

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE
COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS**

RESOLUTION (88) 8

**ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA
AWARDED TO THE GERMANO-LUXEMBOURG NATURE PARK**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 June 1988
at the 418th 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 (73) 33 awarding the European Diploma to the Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park;

Having regard to the proposals of the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Management of the Environment and Natural Habitats (CDPE),

Renews the European Diploma, Category C, awarded to the Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park until 25 October 1993;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal:

1. A way of restoring the landscape of the Hosingen site, especially the built-up part, should be sought;
2. Responsibility for the Hosingen centre should be assigned to the Ministry of the Environment;

Calls on the park administrators to implement the following recommendations:

1. Adoption of an overall plan for the development and management of the park, including the formulation of a policy for the establishment of reserves throughout the park;
2. Maintenance of a firm attitude on the limitation of existing tourist facilities, camping sites in particular, and the continuation of activities to restore and improve inadequate facilities;
3. Continuation and intensification of efforts to encourage mixed forests consisting of native species as opposed to exclusively coniferous woodland, particularly through the discontinuation of grants for the planting of conifers;
4. When the E42 Luxembourg-Trier motorway is built, choice of a route which does as little damage as possible to the countryside around Echternach, and in particular one that does not run across the Haard Forest, and does not run along the edge of the artificial lake and does not cross Tull Hill;
5. Introduction of provisions into Luxembourg legislation enabling nature parks to be managed ecologically;
6. Compliance with carrying capacities of camping sites, especially in summer.

APPENDIX II

Draft Resolution (93)

ON THE RENEWAL OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA
AWARDED TO THE GERMANO-LUXEMBOURG NATURE PARK

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 (73) 33 awarding the European diploma to the Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park;

Having regard to the proposals of the Steering Committee for the Conservation and Management of the Environment and Natural Habitats (CDPE);

Renews the European Diploma, Category C, awarded to the Germano-Luxembourg Nature Park until 25 October 1998;

Attaches the following recommendations to the renewal;

1. Implementation of more effective concertation so that Luxembourg and German officials can co-ordinate their policies.
2. Continuation of the creation of a coherent natural reserve network.
3. Maintenance through appropriate farming practices of the rare agricultural areas still to be found in the valley bottom.
4. Use of tree lining along roads to safeguard local strains of apple and pear trees.