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T-PVS(2019)11

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

39th meeting
Strasbourg, 3-6 December 2019

**BUDGET AND STAFF OF THE BERN CONVENTION
FROM 2020 ONWARDS: NOTE FROM THE
SECRETARIAT AND THE CHAIR OF WORKING
GROUP ON FINANCING OF THE BERN
CONVENTION**

*Document prepared
by the Secretariat to the Bern Convention*

1. Background

1. This paper aims at informing the Standing Committee on the changes to be operated as from January 2020 regarding the staff of the Bern Convention.
2. This paper should be read in conjunction with document T-PVS(2019)1rev on *Financing of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (ETS No. 104) (Bern Convention): options and legal aspects* and document T-PVS(2019)5 proposing a *Draft Resolution on the financing of the Bern Convention*.
3. The current Secretariat of the Bern Convention is composed of the following 4 staff members:
 1. Staff funded through the Ordinary Budget of the Council of Europe:
 - Secretary of the Bern Convention – A2 grade
 - Assistant – B3 grade
 2. Staff funded through the savings from the Special Account of the Convention and the continuation of the current Voluntary Contributions (VC):
 - Project Manager – B5 grade
 - Assistant – B2 grade
4. In 2018, the Secretariat of the Convention and the Chair of the Standing Committee to the Convention tabled for consideration by the Standing Committee at its 38th meeting, the document T-PVS(2018)15 *Additional discussion paper on the future financing of the Bern Convention*.
5. Document T-PVS(2018)15 first informs that in case the Council of Europe cannot ensure the financial stability of the Convention any longer, it can address, through its Committee of Ministers, a request to other organisations or institutions to accept to become the new depositary of the Convention and perform the corresponding functions (see also Option 4 presented in document T-PVS(2019)1rev).
6. Document T-PVS(2018)15 also informed that although a complete cut of the human resources budget of the Convention and/or the operational budget of the Convention coming from the Council of Europe's Ordinary budget is unlikely in the short term, some changes could however be initiated already as from the second half of 2019 or beginning of 2020. These could for example involve a reorganisation of the staff of the Division/Directorate where the Bern Secretariat is placed, involving a responsibility for several Conventions of the Council of Europe entrusted to a minimum number of staff members, which will effectively result in a reduction of the current Secretariat and inevitably, in cuts in activities/Programme of work of the Convention.

2. Latest developments regarding the Bern Convention staff and staff allocation from the Ordinary Budget of the Council of Europe

7. As from 31 December 2019, the current Secretary of the Bern Convention will leave her position at the Convention and the Council of Europe overall.
8. As from January 2020, a change will operate in the organigram of the Department Culture, Nature and Heritage, where the Bern Convention Secretariat is placed.
9. The A grade position paid by the Ordinary Budget of the Council of Europe for the Bern Convention Secretariat (see paragraph 3 above) will become a horizontal position whose holder will support the Head of Department of Culture, Nature and Heritage to administratively oversee several divisions.
10. It is also decided that to fill in the void left by the removal of the A grade position from the Bern Convention, a secondment position will be opened and advertised among the Contracting Parties. A topping up will be proposed for the secondment position in order to make the position more attractive for officials from competent Ministries of countries with different salary levels.

11. In addition, a new Executive Secretary of the EUR-OPA European and Mediterranean Major hazards partial Agreement will be hired as from January 2020, paid by the Partial Agreement budget, will be asked to support the Bern Convention Secretariat until the Secondment position is filled.
12. These latest developments might indeed lead to the situations first described by the Secretariat in document T-PVS(2018)15 and paragraph 5 and 6 of the current document.

3. Possible responses to the foreseen changes in the Bern Convention staff as from 2020

13. As already presented in 2018, the Bern Convention holds a special savings account, which by 26 September 2019 amounts to 217,676.59 Euros. This amount corresponds to savings made in the past 20 years by the Convention. This special account receives the Voluntary Contributions paid by some Contracting Parties to the Convention each year. For more information on the state of current payments by Contracting Parties for 2019 please consult document Appendix 1 to this document.
14. This paper also aims at clarifying the margins of maneuver offered by the current savings of the Convention, to respond to the loss of financial contribution to the Convention's staff budget by the Council of Europe expected from January 2020, as explained above.
15. The draft Resolution on the financing of the Bern Convention (document T-PVS(2019)5), tabled for discussion and possible adoption at the 39th Standing Committee, tries to respond to the continuous cuts and incertitude around the Bern Convention budget.
16. As requested by the Standing Committee at its 38th meeting, the draft Resolution presents a scale of financial contributions based on a minimum and maximum level per Contracting party, for a total budget of 400.000,00 Euros. This total amount was agreed by the Working Group on Finances in early September 2019. This amount is based on the amount of expected voluntary contributions by Parties for 2019 (359,997.00 Euros) and rounded up to 400.000,00 Euros, in order to respond to the latest cuts in the Convention's budget allocation from the Council of Europe operated in the period 2013 – 2019.
17. In view of the most recent developments presented in point 2 and on the proposal of the Chair of the Working Group on Finances, an alternative and increased total amount of contributions by Parties is proposed. This alternative total amount is 520,000.00, where 120,000.00 Euros are added to the 400,000.00 Euros approved by the Working Group on the Finances. This alternative increased amount is proposed in order to compensate for the effective loss of the only A grade staff member of the Convention Secretariat (1 out of 4 staff members), to be operated in January 2020. The scale of contributions for each Contracting party remains unchanged to the one already agreed by the Working Group on Finances. Please see Appendix 2 to this document.
18. It is proposed that this increased total amount (520.000,00 Euros) replaces the total amount (400,000 Euros) currently included in the draft Resolution on the financing of the Bern Convention (document T-PVS(2019)5).
19. It is also proposed that in 2020, after the approval by the Committee of Minister of the Council of Europe, a survey is developed before relevant international organisations, to investigate their potential interest in becoming the new depository of the Bern Convention, including the financial investment which can be expected towards the Convention, for both human resources and operational budget.

Appendix 1: State of play of Voluntary financial Contributions received for 2019



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Appendix 2: Scale of contributions by Contracting Parties for an increased total amount



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