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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

42st meeting
Strasbourg, 29 November - 2 December 2022

**13th Meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas
and Ecological Networks**

15 June 2022, 9:00 am – 01:00 pm (CEST)

-MEETING REPORT-

*Document prepared by
the Secretariat of the Bern Convention*

The meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks was held virtually on 15 June 2022.

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- Take note of the report of the meeting of the Group of Experts;
- Take note of the description of the Emerald Network consolidated dataflow as presented in document [T-PVS/PA\(2022\)06](#);
- Welcome the launch of the Emerald Network Barometer;
- Invite Contracting Parties to update the information regarding management plans in the Standard Data Forms of their Emerald Network sites;
- Welcome the outcomes of the IPA project “Emerald Network data mobilization in the Western Balkans”;
- Welcome the increase of the sufficiency of the Emerald Network in Georgia;
- Consider nominating as candidate Emerald Network sites, the sites designated by Iceland and Liechtenstein which went through a biogeographical evaluation;
- Consider adopting the 20 remaining candidate Emerald Network sites in Georgia.

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1. Opening of the meeting

The Chair, Tore Opdahl, opened the meeting and expressed his sympathy with the colleagues and people in Ukraine.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The Agenda was adopted without amendments.

3. Mandate of the Group and decisions of the 41th meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention

The Secretariat recalled the salient points of the 2021 meeting of the Group of Experts and the related decisions of the 41st Standing Committee. In particular, the Secretariat pointed to:

- the road map for either consolidating, clarifying, adjusting or complementing the legal framework of the Emerald Network whose implementation had been delayed due to the availability of consultants;
- the development of the Emerald Network Barometer;
- the launch of the IPA project entitled “Emerald Network data mobilisation in the Western Balkans”;
- the progress in the setting-up of the Emerald Network in particular in Iceland and Liechtenstein which, for the first time, had proposed respectively five and two Emerald Network sites.

4. Development of the Emerald Network guidance and tools

4.a Emerald Network dataflow

Marc Roekaerts introduced the document [T-PVS/PA\(2022\)06](#) describing the Emerald Network consolidated dataflow. The document aimed to describe each step of the dataflow and to point to existing rules and guidance. The document drew on 20 years developments since the adoption of Resolution No. 5 (1998). The dataflow had grown more stable over time.

The document followed the dataflow cycle in 5 sections: the national databases, the SDF (Standard Data Form) manager, the upload of data to the CDR (Central Data Repository), the production of the European Emerald Network Database and the Emerald Network products.

Before data became public, there was a clean-up process removing duplicated records, empty spaces, syntax errors in species names, etc. to improve comprehensibility and searchability for the public.

Marc Roekaerts also informed of the validation rules and Quality Assurance and Quality Control procedures during the editing of the data in the SDF manager, when uploading the data to the CDR, when merging the country data into the European dataset and when making the data public. He emphasized that at the level of the CDR, blockers were in place in case of incomplete delivery and warnings were implemented in case of errors at the level of the site code, site type, site name, code of the biogeographical region, species population unit, species code, species name.

In the subsequent discussion it was stated that the blockers should be kept to a minimum and that Parties should be given time to become acquainted with the requirements of the tools. Furthermore, warnings and blockers should be associated with explicit communication with reporters specifying the problems occurring in the delivery of data.

Participants welcomed the possibility to comment on the document describing the Emerald Network consolidated dataflow until 15 September 2022.

4.b Emerald Network Barometer

Marc Roekaerts informed the participants that a [Barometer](#) reflecting the indicators presented in the Emerald Network monitoring framework had been launched.

The Emerald Network Barometer mirrored the Natura 2000 Barometer and provided an overview of the Emerald Network in the non-EU Contracting Parties in terms of number and area of terrestrial and marine sites.

The Barometer would enable the production of various statistics for each Contracting Party or groups of Contracting Parties and to evaluate the evolution of statistics over the years.

The Barometer considered the 3 phases of the Emerald Network constitution process (i.e. site inventories and database, coherence of the network and legal protection of sites, and conservation measures).

The Barometer was based on the latest Emerald Network data release and will be updated following each new release.

4.c Management plans in the Standard Data Forms

Otars Opermanis drew the attention of participants on the indicator of the Emerald Network Barometer assessing conservation measures and recalled that the Barometer looked at the management plans declared in the Standard Data Forms. He stressed that not all management plans were recorded, that the information was not necessarily updated and there was confusion between management plans and other related documents which raised doubts about the precision and quality of the indicator for measuring conservation measures.

A review and update on the Standard Data Forms by the Contracting Parties was requested. It was suggested to do that regularly on the country level, and emphasized that information on all Emerald Network sites should be provided even for those sites without management plans. The relevance of plans or other documents mentioned in the Standard Data Form should be critically assessed and all available information on conservation measures should be provided even if that was not mandatory. The Emerald Network Barometer served as a measure to aid priority-setting.

5. State of play of the Emerald Network and future perspectives

5.a Emerald Network data mobilization in the Western Balkans

Mette Lund from the European Environment Agency (EEA) updated participants on state of implementation of IPA project “Emerald Network Data Mobilization in the Western Balkans”.

She recalled the mandate of project consisting in the mobilisation of Emerald Network databases in South-East European Contracting Parties through bilateral workshops, improving the consistency in interpretation of habitat types in the Resolution No. 4 (1996) of the Bern Convention and the Annex I of the Habitats Directive, ensuring taxonomic consistency in reporting between the Resolution No. 6 (1998) of the Bern Convention and the annexes of the Nature Directives, and evaluating proposals of amendments to the annexes of Nature Directives and the biogeographical regions.

She further reported that bi-lateral workshops with four countries and that two Reference List seminar took place, that Serbia delivered new data (using habitats codes of Annex I of the Habitats Directive) and could submit a database to the Bern Convention for evaluation in the near future, that Reference Lists for all countries would be updated, that crosswalks between Resolution No. 4 (1996) and Annex I were improved and that proposals of amendments to Annex I made by Serbia would be evaluated.

The project was ending but Emerald Network databases could be provided on an ongoing basis. A follow up phase to the project could take place under IPA III at the earliest in mid-2023.

5.b Emerald Network biogeographical evaluation in Georgia

Marc Roekaerts reported to the Group of the Experts that Georgia benefited for the first time ever of a third biogeographical evaluation of its list of Emerald Network sites in December 2021. The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the extent to which the species and habitats for which Georgia had a conservation responsibility were sufficiently represented and protected in the Emerald Network. The evaluation raised a lot of interest involving not less than 33 participants and 11 representatives of NGOs. 450 conclusions were discussed. In terms of results, the conclusions of the biogeographical evaluation had shown significant progress. The sufficiency of the network increased from 25,1% up to 41,2% since the second evaluation.

5.c Biogeographical evaluation in Iceland and Liechtenstein

The Secretariat informed the participants that following the designation of Emerald Network sites by Iceland and Liechtenstein, two biogeographical evaluations would be carried out in cooperation with the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity. The first in Reykjavik on 21-22 June 2022 and the second in Vaduz between 24 and 28 October 2022.

With these two evaluations, 17 non-EU Contracting Parties will have benefited of at least one biogeographical evaluation meaning also that 17 Contracting Parties were now implementing the Emerald Network.

5.d Development of the network in Contracting Parties and nomination of Emerald Network sites

Parties were given the opportunity to make a report on their efforts for developing the Emerald Network. Georgia informed that they wished to nominate the 20 remaining candidate Emerald Network sites for adoption by the 42nd Standing Committee. UK stated that they would update their database by reflecting changes to existing Emerald Network sites. Norway repeated their intention to develop and present a plan and timeline for the remaining work on developing the Emerald Network.

The Secretariat recalled that formal information and data for the consideration of the 42nd Standing Committee should be submitted to the Secretariat by 1st November 2022 at the latest.

The Secretariat further informed participants that considering the exclusion of the Russian Federation from the Council of Europe and pending the unanimous decision of the Standing Committee to invite the Russian Federation to continue being an observer State to the Bern Convention, the Emerald Network sites designated by the Russian Federation could be removed from the Viewer and the Barometer at the end of the year.

6. Future work of the Group of Experts

6.a Programme of activities 2023

The Secretariat presented orally the activities planned for 2023 which included:

- the implementation of the workplan defined by the Standing Committee regarding the legal framework of the Emerald Network
- the finalisation of:
 - the post-2020 workplan of the Emerald Network
 - the Emerald Network Monitoring Framework in light of CBD's global targets and the EU interpretative guidance related to the targets set in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.

The Secretariat also informed that two biogeographical evaluations were initially foreseen in Belarus and Ukraine. Both were put on hold *sine die* as the Council of Europe had stopped all cooperation activities with Belarus and the war in Ukraine would not enable to resume the activities of the Bern Convention.

Pending the availability of human and financial resources, bilateral work with UK will be undertaken to look at the pending issues around a streamlined process of adding new sites to a complete national Emerald Network and at handling legacy habitats translation from Natura 2000 to the Emerald Network issues.

6.b Date and place of the next meeting of the Group of Experts

The Secretariat informed that the 2023 meeting of the Group of Experts would in principle take place in-person at the end of the first semester 2023 and invited Contracting Parties wishing to host the meeting to manifest their interest.

The Secretariat further informed that at the meeting of the Group of Experts on Biodiversity and Climate Change held on 23 May 2022, participants were keen to meet back-to-back with the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks in 2024. Furthermore, the 2024 meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks could be part of the activities supported by Liechtenstein during their chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

7. Any other business

None

8. Conclusions of the meeting

The meeting results were briefly summarised. The Chair thanked the Secretariat of the Bern Convention, the Contracting Parties and observers, as well as the consultants. The meeting was closed.

Annex 1: Agenda

		Documents	Expected results
<i>Wednesday 15 June</i>			
9.00	1. Opening of the meeting		
	2. Adoption of the agenda	Meeting agenda T-PVS/Agenda(2022)11 For adoption	Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the aims of the meeting and adopt the agenda.
	3. Mandate of the Group and decisions of the 41st meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention <i>Presentation by the Secretariat</i>	Report of the 12 th meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks T-PVS/PA (2021)08 Extract from the list of decisions and adopted texts on the protection of habitats T-PVS/PA(2022)02 For information	The salient points of the 41 st meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention are recalled.
	4. Development of the Emerald Network guidance and tools		
	4.a Emerald Network dataflow <i>Presentation Marc Roekaerts</i> <i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the Emerald Network consolidated dataflow and are invited to exchange views on possible follow up work.</i>	Description of the Emerald Network consolidated dataflow T-PVS/PA(2022)06 <i>published on 7 June</i> For discussion and decision	Members of and observers to the Group of Experts provide their feedback on the Emerald Network consolidated dataflow.

	<p>4.b Emerald Network Barometer</p> <p><i>Presentation by Marc Roekaerts / Otars Opermanis</i></p> <p><i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the launch of the Emerald Network Barometer assessing progress of Contracting Parties in the implementation of the Emerald Network.</i></p>	<p>Link to the Emerald Network Barometer</p> <p>Monitoring framework for the implementation of the Emerald Network T-PVS/PA(2020)02</p> <p>For information</p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the launch of the Emerald Network Barometer.</p>
	<p>4.c Management plans in the Standard Data Forms</p> <p><i>Presentation by Otars Opermanis</i></p> <p><i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the specifications for filling in the fields related to management plans in the SDF</i></p>	<p>Specification for filling in the fields related to management plans in the SDF T-PVS/PA(2022)03</p> <p>For information</p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the specifications for filling in the fields related to management plans in the SDF.</p>
	<p>5. State of play of the Emerald Network and future perspectives</p>		
	<p>5.a Emerald Network data mobilisation in the Western Balkans</p> <p><i>Presentation by Mette Palitzsch Lund European Environment Agency</i></p> <p><i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of preliminary results of the IPA project on Emerald Network data mobilisation in the Western Balkans implemented by the European Environment Agency.</i></p>	<p>For information</p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the progress in the implementation of the project on Emerald Network data mobilisation in the Western Balkans.</p>

	<p>5.b Emerald Network biogeographical evaluation in Georgia</p> <p><i>Presentation by Marc Roekaerts / Otars Opermanis</i></p> <p><i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the outcomes of the biogeographical evaluation in Georgia (16 December 2021)</i></p>	<p>For information</p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the results of the biogeographical evaluation.</p>
	<p>5.c Biogeographical evaluation in Iceland and Liechtenstein</p> <p><i>Presentation by the Secretariat</i></p> <p><i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the preparation of the biogeographical evaluations of the list of sites proposed by Iceland and Liechtenstein.</i></p>	<p>For information</p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the planned biogeographical evaluations of the list of sites proposed by Iceland and Liechtenstein.</p>
	<p>5.d Development of the network in Contracting Parties and nomination of Emerald Network sites</p> <p><i>Tour de table</i> <i>Reminder by the Secretariat</i></p> <p><i>Representatives of the Contracting Parties are invited to update the Group of Experts of the latest developments regarding the Emerald Network in their countries.</i></p> <p><i>Representatives of the Contracting Parties and Observer states are invited to confirm that all newly proposed sites from their latest national databases are to be sent for official nomination as candidate sites to the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention.</i></p>		<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the recent developments of the Emerald Network in Contracting Parties.</p> <p>Countries may request the official nomination of their newly proposed Emerald Network sites as candidate Emerald Network sites by the Standing Committee.</p> <p>Countries may request the official adoption as Emerald Network sites (ASCI) of their candidate sites by the Standing Committee.</p>

	<i>Representatives of the Contracting Parties and Observer states are invited to inform the Secretariat whether their country is submitting its candidate Emerald Network sites for official adoption as Emerald Network sites by the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention.</i>	For discussion and decision	
	6. Future work of the Group of Experts		
	<p>6.a Programme of activities 2023</p> <p><i>Presentation by the Secretariat</i></p> <p><i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are invited to propose and discuss new activities in 2023</i></p>	For discussion and decision	Priority activities are identified and will feed into the Programme of activity 2023 of the Bern Convention (subject to the availability of financial and human resources)
	<p>6.b Date and place of the next meeting of the Group of Experts</p> <p><i>Presentation by the Secretariat</i></p> <p><i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts wishing to host the next meeting of the Group of Experts are invited to inform the Secretariat.</i></p>	For decision	The provisional venue and dates of the next meeting are agreed on.
	7. Any other business		
	8. Conclusions of the meeting		
13.00	Wednesday 15 June End of the meeting		

Annex 2: List of participants

CONTRACTING PARTIES

Member States	Representatives
CZECH REPUBLIC	<p>Ms Eliška ROLFOVÁ Bern Convention, Carpathian Convention and Nagoya Protocol NFP Unit of International Conventions Department of Species Protection and Implementation of International Commitments Ministry of the Environment</p> <p>Mr Jan PLESNÍK Nature Conservation Agency</p>
GEORGIA	<p>Ms Salome NOZADZE Biodiversity Specialist Biodiversity and Forestry Department Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture of Georgia</p>
ICELAND	<p>Mr Steinar KALDAL Ministry of the Environment, Energy and Climate Department of land and natural heritage</p> <p>Mr Snorri SIGURÐSSON Icelandic Institute for Natural History Department Director Nature protection</p>
REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA	<p>Ms Veronica JOSU Main Advisory Officer Biodiversity Policies Department Ministry of Environment</p> <p>Ms Angela LOZAN Project Manager Environmental Projects Implementation Unit Ministry of Environment</p>
MONTENEGRO	<p>Mr Tilman DIETERICH Ministry of Ecology, Spatial Planning and Urbanism</p>
NORWAY	<p>Mr Tore OPDAHL Chair of the Group of Experts Senior Adviser, Protected Areas Section Norwegian Environment agency</p>
SWITZERLAND	<p>Mme Sophie RUDOLF Office fédéral de l'environnement OFEV Division Biodiversité et paysage Section Faune sauvage et conservation des espèces</p>
UNITED KINGDOM	<p>Mr James WILLIAMS Biodiversity Indicators Manager International Advice Team Joint Nature Conservation Committee</p> <p>Ms Leah FARQUHARSON International Biodiversity Advisor International Advice Team Joint Nature Conservation Committee</p>

	<p>Mr Keith BARBER Senior Policy Advisor Species Recovery National Biodiversity Defra</p> <p>Ms Kerry VITALIS Senior Policy Advisor Habitats National Biodiversity Defra</p>
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OBSERVERS

Observers	Representatives
BirdLife	Mr Willem VAN DEN BOSSCHE Senior Flyway Conservation Officer for Europe & Central Asia, Stichting BirdLife Europe, BirdLife International
CBD Convention on Biological Diversity	Ms Sakhile Silitshena KOKETSO Head of Biodiversity Science Policy and Governance Unit Ms Edjigayehu SEYOUM-EDJIGU Area-based Conservation Consultant
CEE Bankwatch Network	Mr Andrey RALEY Biodiversity Campaigner
European Environment Agency	Ms Laura-Patricia GAVILAN IGLESIAS Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity
FACE	Ms Sabrina DIETZ European Federation for Hunting and Conservation Wildlife Policy Officer
Pro Natura – Friends of the Earth Switzerland	Mr Friedrich WULF International Biodiversity Officer

SPEAKERS

Ms Mette LUND	European Environment Agency
Mr Otars OPERMANIS	Expert and Technical Consultant to the Bern Convention for the setting up of the Emerald Network (Latvia)
Mr Marc ROEKAERTS	Scientific and Technical Consultant to the Bern Convention for the setting-up of the Emerald Network (Belgium)

SECRETARIAT OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Directorate General of Democracy (DGII), Directorate of Democratic Participation Bern Convention	
Ms Ursula STICKER Mr Marc HORY Ms Helena ORSULIC Ms Roxane BRADACZEK	Secretary of the Bern Convention Project Manager Secretarial assistant Trainee