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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

41<sup>st</sup> meeting  
Strasbourg, 29 November - 3 December 2021

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**REPORT OF THE 12<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS  
ON PROTECTED AREAS AND ECOLOGICAL NETWORKS**

*Document prepared by  
the Directorate of Democratic Participation*

**The 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks was held virtually on 5-6 October 2021.**

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- Take note of the report of the meeting of the Group of Experts;
- Welcome the outcomes of the survey on the experience and expectations of Contracting Parties from the reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012);
- Approve the creation of an Ad hoc Working Group on Reporting;
- Examine and, if appropriate, endorse the Terms of Reference of the Ad hoc Working Group on Reporting;
- Welcome the development of national summary dashboards for promoting the data delivered within the frame of the Reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012);
- Examine and further discuss the options for consolidating / clarifying / adjusting / complementing the legal framework of the Emerald Network;
- Examine and further discuss the findings of the written consultation of the participants in the Group of Experts on the aspects of the Emerald Network legal framework to be further elaborated;
- Take note of the state of reflection on the criteria for assessing negative changes in Emerald Network databases;
- Welcome the development of the Emerald Network Barometer and the improvement of the Emerald Network IT tools;
- Welcome the IPA project entitled “Emerald Network data mobilisation in the Western Balkans”, encourage South East European Contracting Parties to take advantage of the project, and thank the European Commission and the European Environment Agency for their financial and technical support;
- Congratulate the authorities of Belarus for the outcomes of the project carried out within the frame of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Belarus;
- Take note of the bilateral biogeographical evaluation of the list of Emerald Network sites designated by Georgia;
- Welcome the transfer of the second tranche of UK’s former Natura 2000 sites under the Emerald Network as adopted sites and the Emerald Network sites proposed by Belarus, Liechtenstein, Ukraine and presumably by Iceland;
- Take note of and allocate appropriate resources to the activities proposed for 2022.

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## **1. Opening of the meeting**

The Chair, Mr Tore Opdahl, opened the 12<sup>th</sup> virtual meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks by welcoming the participants and briefly presented the representatives of Contracting Parties and Observers to the Bern Convention and international organisations attending the meeting.

The Secretariat welcomed the participants and provided guidance to ensure a smooth run of the meeting and a constructive discussion.

## **2. Adoption of the agenda**

The Agenda was adopted as it appears in Appendix I.

## **3. Mandate of the Group and decisions of the 40th meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention**

The Chair of the meeting recalled the main decisions taken at the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks. The Secretariat recalled that the 40<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee supported:

- the monitoring framework of the Emerald Network proposed and requested that further indicators to measure the effectiveness of the conservation measures be developed;
- the creation of a Barometer to help monitor the progress in the implementation of the Emerald Network;
- the post-2020 Emerald Network workplan and requested that the objectives be aligned with the Vision for the Bern Convention currently under discussion and that targets considered are consistent with those adopted at global and EU levels.

## **4. Reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012)**

### **4.a Questionnaire on the reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012)**

To follow up on the request of the Group of Experts also supported by the Standing Committee a survey was carried out among non-EU Contracting Parties on their experience from the past reporting and their expectations for the future reporting.

To this end a questionnaire was elaborated and the opinions of Contracting Parties were collected via bilateral interviews. 17 non-EU Contracting Parties participated in the exercise representing a balanced sample of Parties which did and did not participate in the first reporting round.

The consultant, Otars Opermanis, presented the outcomes of the survey.

Parties which had participated in the first reporting cycle acknowledged that the most difficult parts of the work were the data collection, the data transfer from stakeholders to the required format and the preparation of spatial dataset. The countries concerned also explained that the most common reasons for information gaps in the reports were the unavailability of data and data input errors. The most challenging information to gather were trends and area for habitats. Populations of species was also mentioned in many countries. Finally, assessing existing data, identifying gaps and understanding the necessary capacity requirements were mentioned among the most important benefits from the reporting exercise.

Parties which had not participated in the first reporting explained that the main reasons for not participating were the lack of scientific expertise and budget and the turn-over in staff supposed to coordinate the exercise.

Parties were also asked to formulate expectations for the future. The findings showed that fourteen out of 17 countries supported the harmonisation of the reporting with the EU in principle. A vast majority of countries

supported the use of the same reporting period as in the EU, but 11 countries also suggested that the data delivery could be later.

Regarding the possible approaches to reduce the reporting burden, countries demonstrated a large disparity of views. In many cases various combinations of items that could be reduced were proposed, rather than focusing only on the format or the list of features to be reported on. For the format, several countries suggested to carefully assess the usefulness of each data field.

A majority of countries assessed the capacity needs for future reporting and have concluded that the current capacity is not sufficient; however, it could depend on the scope of the information required. Respondents expressed the wish that the results of the reporting be presented at all levels, from the national to pan-European, and that sufficient visibility is ensured as well.

Finally, countries pointed to the need to establish a technical working group dealing with reporting issues.

#### **Decision of the Group of Experts:**

Members of and Observers to the Group of Experts welcomed the outcomes of the survey on the experience and expectations of Contracting Parties from the reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012) presented in document [T-PVS/PA\(2021\)04](#) and thanked the 17 non-EU Contracting Parties which participated in the survey.

The Group of Experts further invited the Standing Committee to set up an Ad hoc Working Group on Reporting entrusted with following up on the findings of the survey, addressing technical challenges and proposing a future reporting scheme which will meet both the needs and capacities of Contracting Parties.

Finally, the Group of Experts invited the Standing Committee to examine and possibly endorse the draft mandate of the Ad hoc Working Group on Reporting presented in document TPVS/PA (2021)06 to be circulated among and agreed on by the Group of Experts by 30 October 2021.

#### **4.b National summary dashboards**

The Secretariat recalled that last year the Group of Experts examined the outcomes of the first reporting exercise under Resolution No. 8 (2012). The scope of the assessment of the data delivered was relatively limited because of the low rate of participation of Contracting Parties and the incompleteness of many reports namely not all respondents reported on all the features and all biogeographical regions which made the comparison of data difficult.

At the request of several Contracting Parties, asking to see further analysis of the outcomes of the reporting on the conservation status of species and habitats carried out in 2019, national summary dashboards will be created.

The dashboards will aim to display a summary of the data reported under Resolution No. 8 (2012) by non-EU Parties, complemented with data delivered by EU Parties under Articles 17 and 12 of the EU Habitats and Birds Directives for the same subset of features.

Data will be grouped according to the following themes.

- Number of habitats and species per Country
- Conservation status and trends of habitats and species
- Main pressures and threats
- Data completeness and quality

It was hoped that the national summary dashboards would be ready in time for the Standing Committee.

**Decision of the Group of Experts:**

Members of and Observers to the Group of Experts welcomed the information provided and looked forward to the presentation of the national summary dashboards at the 41<sup>st</sup> Standing Committee meeting.

**5. Development of the Emerald Network guidance and tools****5.a Legal framework of the Emerald Network**

The Secretariat recalled that last year the Group of Experts discussed the comparative legal study assessing the obligations of Contracting Parties towards their Emerald Network sites which was subsequently presented to the Standing Committee. The study is available in the doc [T-PVS/PA\(2020\)07](#).

The Standing Committee required that proposals building on the recommendations of the legal study be developed in close liaison with the Group of Experts.

An initial consultation of Contracting Parties and participants in the 2020 meeting of the Group of Experts was carried out proposing 3 possible avenues: either to clarify the existing provisions, or to further develop the legal framework, or to propose any other way forward. The outcomes of the survey involving 19 Parties are presented in the document [T-PVS/PA\(2021\)02](#).

Based on the findings of the survey, the consultant Arie Trouwborst, presented four options aiming to consolidate / clarify / adjust / complement the legal framework of the Emerald Network detailed in document [T-PVS/PA\(2021\)01](#).

The four options were summarised as follows:

Options for the future work on the legal framework of the Emerald Network	Resulting Instrument
<p><b>Option 1 – clarify and consolidate current requirements</b>                      Providing clarity on existing obligations, consolidating the status quo                      Promotes clarity                      The legal framework remains unchanged</p>	<p><b>Resolution</b></p>
<p><b>Option 2 – clarify currently unclear aspects of requirements</b>                      Providing further clarity and consistency regarding aspects that remain unclear                      Promotes clarity                      The legal framework becomes more defined and consistent</p>	<p><b>Resolution or recommendation + optional guidance</b></p>
<p><b>Option 3 – Adjust requirements themselves</b>                      Adjusting certain aspects of the legal requirements                      The legal framework is actually adjusted</p>	<p><b>Resolution</b></p>
<p><b>Option 4 – provide non-binding guidance on requirements</b>                      Adopting further non-binding guidance, supplementing existing binding requirements.                      Promotes clarity (but less so than options 1 and 2)                      The legal framework remains unchanged</p>	<p><b>Recommendation + guidance</b></p>

While in the discussion, members of the Group of Experts did not express clear preference for one or several options, all speakers acknowledged that the Emerald Network legal framework needs clarification. It was also stressed that according to the written consultation of Contracting Parties and participants in the 2020 meeting of the Group of Experts, the majority of the respondents favoured the second option of the questionnaire *to further develop the regulations, which could result in a Resolution with clear and firm legal language, adopting expansive interpretations of relevant Convention provisions in order to align more closely the legal framework of the Emerald Network with the Habitats Directive.*

Building on the outcomes of the discussion, Arie Trouwborst asked the participants to specify which aspects of the legal framework should be further elaborated.

It was recalled that the legal study was commissioned by the Bureau of the Standing Committee because of the increasing number of complaints related to Emerald Network sites filed under the Convention. The Bureau felt unequipped to assess these complaints due to the lack of clarity of the obligations of Contracting Parties towards their Emerald Network sites.

Members of the Group suggested to look into the background of the complaints of concern of the Bureau and to identify the aspects of the legal framework requiring more clarity.

**Decision of the Group of Experts:**

Members of and Observers to the Group of Experts thanked the 19 Contracting Parties who provided feedback within the framework of the written consultation on how to build on the recommendations of the legal study presented last year;

Members of and Observers to the Group of Experts thanked Arie Trouwborst for elaborating the four possible options aimed to consolidate / clarify / adjust / complement the Emerald Network legal framework, based on the findings of the written consultation of the Contracting Parties.

The Group of Experts mandated the Secretariat to circulate a questionnaire among the participants in the meeting aimed to identify the aspects of the legal framework which could be the focus of the follow up work.

The findings of the questionnaire would be presented to the Standing Committee.

### **5.b Criteria for assessing negative changes in Emerald Network databases**

The Secretariat recalled that the Emerald Network Webapp includes the functionality to issue change reports comparing the latest national database with the previous version. While the functionality can detect any change positive or negative it aims primarily to spot the reduction in area of Emerald Network sites or the removal of features from the standard data forms.

The consultant, Otars Opermanis, presented the state of play of the discussions regarding the criteria based on which the acceptability of the changes will be assessed.

Negative changes can occur both at site and feature levels and should not be ignored as they can impact on the sufficiency assessment of the Emerald Network.

No criteria for acceptable negative changes have ever been discussed and thus applied for the Emerald Network. Despite the existence of guidelines for explaining negative changes endorsed in 2017, no required explanatory files have been ever attached to the data submissions.

Negative changes in the Emerald Network were discussed in the bio-geographical seminars but only from the network sufficiency point of view and at the level of each feature without going into details and looking at justifications of changes in each particular site.

It would be useful to consider the experience of the EU, which recently issued guidelines setting criteria for the de-designation of Natura 2000 sites or part of sites and for removing habitats and species from the subject of protection.

The EU considers three main circumstances for justifying negative changes. They read as following:

- A proven, genuine scientific error
- Natural developments
- A consequence of an application of Art. 6 (4) of the Habitats Directive

These circumstances could be adapted to the Emerald Network context as follows:

<b>Reason for negative change (criteria)</b>	<b>Implications for database (SDF)</b>	<b>Additional conditions</b>
1. Scientific error	Remove from SDF, or area reduction in SDF (for sites)	Evidence needed that a site had no scientific value; a feature did not exist at the time of designation, nor such value or presence has been established until the present day
2. Natural development	Remove from SDF, or area reduction in SDF (for sites)	Evidence needed that the loss was not caused by man-made negative impacts and that it could not be prevented
3. Application of Article 9(1) of the Bern Convention	Remove from SDF, or area reduction in SDF (for sites); compensatory value added to other new or existing SDF	Provided that a site or a feature is irreversibly lost due to overriding national interests, country needs to ensure that the damage is detrimental to the survival of the population or area concerned at national level
4. Other	Move the record to NP (non-presence) field of SDF	In the future adequate conservation measures need to be implemented to give a chance to species to return or habitat to recover

However, regardless of the circumstances considered, negative changes should remain exceptional, and consultations should take place ahead of any actual change.

**Decision of the Group of Experts:**

Members of and Observers to the Group of Experts took note of the information provided and looked forward to further elaborated and delineated criteria for assessing the acceptability of negative changes.

### **5.b Emerald Network Barometer**

As per the decision of the Standing Committee a Barometer reflecting the indicators presented in the Emerald Network monitoring framework presented last year is in preparation.

The Emerald Network Barometer will mirror the Natura 2000 Barometer and provide 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 will enable the production of various statistics for particular Contracting Parties or groups of Contracting Parties and to evaluate the evolvement of statistics over the years.

The creation of the barometer will not only help the Standing Committee to the Convention monitor the progress in the implementation of the Emerald Network by Parties but also support Contracting Parties in stepping up their efforts and in setting conservation priorities.

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

It was hoped that the Emerald Network Barometer would be ready in time for the Standing Committee.

**Decision of the Group of Experts:**

Members of and Observers to the Group of Experts welcomed the information provided and looked forward to the presentation of the Emerald Network Barometer at the 41<sup>st</sup> Standing Committee meeting.

The Group of Experts recommended to reassess the usefulness of the sufficiency index once the network is more developed and to not display the indicator on the implementation of conservation measures in the Barometer until reliable sources of verification become available.

**5.c Emerald Network tools**

The consultant, Marc Roekaerts, informed the Group of the ongoing developments of the IT tools. He underlined that the improvements were taking place at 3 levels:

- Central Data Repository (CDR): Automated QA/QC rules will be implemented and Contracting Parties will be provided with automated QA/QC reports warning them of wrong or missing content and pointing to corrections required for the next data delivery.
- Emerald Network Webapp: Data delivered will be harvested in an automated way, change reports for tabular and spatial data will be created, lists of candidate and adopted Emerald Network sites will be generated in an automated way, more elaborated QA/QC will be implemented and historical data releases will be available enabling the comparison of data sets from different years.
- Emerald Network Viewer: since last year the Viewer displays proposed, candidate and Adopted Emerald Network sites with different background layers and a search function for species and habitats has been put in place. The novelty is that the Viewer will be automatically updated whenever a new data release is available in the Emerald Network Webapp.

**Decision of the Group of Experts:**

Members of and Observers to the Group of Experts welcomed the information provided, in particular regarding the improvements of the Viewer.

Furthermore, the Group of Experts expressed the wish for a guidance document detailing the Emerald Network dataflow.

**6. State of play of the Emerald Network and future perspectives**

The Chair invited Contracting Parties to present highlights in the development of the Emerald Network in 2021.

UK reported that the translation of the habitats for which there was not a one-to-one equivalence between the Annex I of the Habitats Directive and Resolution No. 4 (1996) represented enormous work. UK further stated that the database related to the remaining former Natura 2000 sites would soon be submitted to the Secretariat.

Iceland stated that they decided to propose 5 sites to the Emerald Network. They will consist of 4 Nature Reserves and one National Park and represent almost 20% of the country

Georgia concentrated on the elaboration of management plans. The management plans of 9 sites were ready and 5 others were in preparation.

Ukraine updated its Emerald Network database with an additional 161 sites focusing on underrepresented species in the database.

### **6.a Emerald Network data mobilisation in the Western Balkans**

The Secretariat recalled that data regarding the Emerald Network in South East Europe dates back to 2011.

Mette Lund from the European Environment Agency (EEA) stated that the EEA was implementing an IPA project in the South East of Europe with the financial support of the European Commission. The project aims to update the Emerald Network databases of the Western Balkan Contracting Parties by taking into consideration all the data related to Natura 2000 collected over the years with the support of the European Commission through various projects and to submit them under the Emerald Network. Ultimately, data delivered should go through the biogeographical evaluation process.

In addition, the project will contribute to strengthen not only the consistency in interpretation of habitat types listed in Resolution No. 4 (1996) of the Bern Convention and in Annex I of the Habitats Directive but also taxonomic consistency between species listed in Resolution No. 6 (1998) of the Bern Convention and in the annexes of the Nature Directives.

South East European Contracting Parties have a new opportunity to showcase the progress achieved within 10 years thanks to the project.

#### **Decision of the Group of Experts:**

Members of and Observers to the Group of Experts thanked the European Environment Agency and the European Commission for resuming the Emerald Network in South East Europe.

The Group of Experts acknowledged that delivering data under the Emerald Network is a steppingstone for candidate countries to the EU accession. It encouraged the South East European Contracting Parties to take advantage of the project for showcasing progress achieved since 2011.

### **6.b Progress in the implementation of the Emerald Network in Belarus**

The Secretariat recalled that in 2020 a small envelope originating from a Council of Europe country specific Action Plan for Belarus was allocated to the Bern Convention. A series of activities aiming to extend the Emerald Network in Belarus, address the conclusions of previous biogeographical evaluations, embed the Emerald Network provisions in national legislation and work towards managing Emerald Network sites were implemented.

Alexandra Bayeva, the national coordinator of the project declared that the project aimed to support Belarus in continuing to enlarge the geographical coverage of its Emerald Network. In particular, reaching beyond nationally protected areas and selecting quality small areas instead of additional large ones has the potential to bring the country closer to the objective of the network.

In order to fill gaps in the sufficiency of the existing Emerald Network database 15 additional potential Emerald network sites, which are important for conservation of species and habitats protected under the Bern Convention were identified and described and scientific data on habitats and species were improved through field work and updating scientific records. The Reference List was update by removing 24 features and adding one habitat.

A procedure for maintaining the Emerald Network database has been developed on the basis of the guidelines of the Council of Europe for maintaining the Emerald Network database. The procedure covers the issues of collection, processing and preparation of information on potential Emerald Network sites, as well as updating information on the sites included in the database of the Emerald Network.

Technical specifications were developed to ensure the sustainable management of the Emerald Network database as the national information resource.

Finally, a reporting methodology that will be used in each reporting period and ensure the continuity of these reports and approaches in assessing species, habitats and sites was produced.

**Decision of the Group of Experts:**

Members of and Observers to the Group of Experts congratulated the authorities of Belarus for the impressive project outcomes carried out in a limited period of time and during the COVID 19 pandemic.

**6.c Biogeographical evaluation of the list of sites proposed by Georgia**

The Secretariat mentioned that since 2017, Georgia has regularly updated its Emerald Network database either by proposing new sites or by adding features to existing sites.

After two regional biogeographical evaluations, Georgia will benefit from a bilateral evaluation scheduled on 15 and 16 December funded by a voluntary contribution from Germany. The outcomes of the evaluation will be reported to the Group of Experts in 2022.

**Decision of the Group of Experts:**

Members of and Observers to the Group of Experts took note of the information provided and looked forward to conclusions of the bilateral evaluation.

**6.d Nomination of Emerald Network sites**

The Group of Experts is mandated to examine any proposals of nomination of Emerald Network candidate or adopted sites.

The Secretariat reminded the members of and observers to the Group of Expert of the information already provided by Contracting Parties during the tour de table, namely that the UK will ask the Standing Committee to endorse the second tranche of its former Natura 2000 sites as Emerald Network adopted sites, that Ukraine proposed 161 additional Emerald Network sites, that Belarus has identified 15 new Emerald Network sites and that Iceland intends to propose 5 Emerald Network sites.

The Secretariat also informed the Group that Liechtenstein proposed 2 Emerald Network sites.

The Secretariat recalled that Contracting Parties should provide the Secretariat with the required information and data regarding the sites nominated as candidates or proposed for adoption by 1st November at the very latest.

**Decision of the Group of Experts:**

Members of and Observers to the Group of Experts welcomed the decision of Liechtenstein to join the Emerald Network, the additional sites proposed by Belarus and Ukraine and encouraged Iceland to concretise the designation of 5 sites.

The Group of Experts also supported the transfer of UK's remaining former Natura 2000 sites under the Emerald Network.

## **7. Future work of the Group of Experts**

### **7.a Programme of activities 2022**

The Secretariat mentioned that the following activities were pending the adoption of the Global Strategic Framework and will be rescheduled in 2022:

- To finalise the post-2020 strategic workplan for the Emerald Network in light of CBD's global targets and the EU interpretative guidance related to the targets set in the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030.
- To finalise the Emerald Network monitoring framework in light of the targets of the Global Diversity Framework and elaborate additional indicators or adapt the proposed indicators so as to reflect whether conservation objectives are in place, implemented and monitored.

Furthermore, in the light of the information provided under items 6b and 6d, it was foreseen to conduct bilateral biogeographical evaluations in Liechtenstein, Iceland and if possible Belarus.

#### **Decision of the Group of Experts:**

Members of and Observers to the Group of Experts took note of the activities proposed for 2022.

### **7.b Date and place of the next meeting of the Group of Experts**

The Secretariat stated that the 2022 meeting of the Group of Experts will take place as usual end of September – beginning of October and could be scheduled back-to-back with a possible meeting of the Ad hoc Working Group on Reporting.

Assuming that the sanitary situation will continue to improve, a physical meeting could be envisaged. The Secretariat invited parties wishing to host the meeting of the Group of Experts to inform the Secretariat.

## **8. Any other business**

None

## **9. Conclusions of the meeting**

The Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks took the following decisions:

- To invite the Standing Committee to welcome the outcomes of the survey on the experience and expectations of Contracting Parties from the reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012), to approve the creation of an Ad hoc Working Group on Reporting and, if appropriate, to endorse the Terms of Reference of the Ad hoc Working Group on Reporting;
- Welcome the development of national summary dashboards for promoting the data delivered within the frame of the Reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012) and look forward to their presentation at the 41<sup>st</sup> Standing Committee;
- Take note of the outcomes of the consultation of Contracting Parties and participants in the 2020 meeting of the Group of Experts on the follow up on recommendations of the legal study on the obligations of Contracting Parties towards their Emerald Network sites;
- Take note of the four possible options aimed to consolidate / clarify / adjust / complement the Emerald Network legal framework;

- Initiate a written consultation of the participants in the Group of Experts on the aspects of the Emerald Network legal framework to be further elaborated;
- Take note of the state of reflection on the criteria for assessing negative changes in Emerald Network databases and look forward to more elaborated criteria;
- Welcome the development of the Emerald Network Barometer and the improvement of the Emerald Network IT tools;
- Welcome the IPA project entitled “Emerald Network data mobilisation in the Western Balkans” and encourage South East European Contracting Parties to take advantage of the project;
- Congratulate the authorities of Belarus for the outcomes of the project carried out within the frame of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Belarus;
- Take note of the bilateral biogeographical evaluation of the list of Emerald Network sites designated by Georgia;
- Support the transfer of the second tranche of UK’s former Natura 2000 sites under the Emerald Network as adopted sites and welcome the Emerald Network sites proposed by Belarus, Liechtenstein, Ukraine and presumably by Iceland;
- Take note of the activities proposed for 2022.

**Annex 1: Agenda**

		<b>Documents</b>	<b>Expected results</b>
<i>Tuesday 5 October</i>			
<b>14.00</b>	<b>1. Opening of the meeting</b>		
	<b>2. Adoption of the agenda</b>	Meeting agenda T-PVS/Agenda(2021)15  <b>For adoption</b>	Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the aims of the meeting and adopt the agenda.
	<b>3. Mandate of the Group and decisions of the 40<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention</b>  <i>Presentation by the Secretariat</i>	Report of the 11 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks <a href="#">T-PVS/PA (2020)08</a>  Extract from the list of decisions and adopted texts on the protection of habitats <a href="#">T-PVS/PA(2021)03</a>  <b>For information</b>	The salient points of the 40 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention are recalled.
	<b>4. Reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012)</b>		
	4.a Questionnaire on the reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012)  <i>Presentation by Otars Opermanis / Marc Roekaerts</i>  <i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of outcomes of the survey carried out among Contracting Parties to understand the challenges they</i>	Opinions about the reporting under the Resolution No. 8 (2012): assessment of the past reporting exercise and pointers for the future <a href="#">T-PVS/PA(2021)04</a>  <b>For discussion and decision</b>	Members of and observers to the Group of Experts agree on the follow up to be given to the conclusions of the survey.

	<i>faced during the reporting, the obstacles to their participation in the reporting and their expectations for the future reporting cycle and are invited to exchange views on possible follow up work.</i>		
	<p>4.b National summary dashboards</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 state of development of the national summary dashboards.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Link to the Habitats Directive (Article 17) national summary dashboards</a></p> <p><b>For information</b></p>	Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the development of the national summary dashboards.
	<b>5. Development of the Emerald Network guidance and tools</b>		
	<p>5.a Legal framework of the Emerald Network</p> <p><i>Presentation by Arie Trouwborst</i></p> <p><i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the outcomes of the consultation of Contracting Parties on the conclusions of the 2020 legal analysis and of possible next steps and are invited to exchange views on possible follow up work</i></p>	<p>Future work on the legal framework of the Emerald Network – possible next steps</p> <p><a href="#">T-PVS/PA(2021)01</a></p> <p>Outcomes of the consultation of Contracting Parties on how to follow up on the conclusions of the 2020 legal analysis</p> <p><a href="#">T-PVS/PA(2021)02</a></p> <p>Obligations of Bern Convention parties regarding the conservation of candidate and adopted Emerald Network sites: a legal analysis</p> <p><a href="#">T-PVS/PA(2020)07</a></p>	Members of and observers to the Group of Experts provide pointers for building on the 2020 legal analysis and agree on the next steps.

		<b>For discussion and decision</b>	
	<p>5.b Criteria for assessing negative changes in Emerald Network databases</p> <p><i>Presentation by Otars Opermanis</i></p> <p><i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the state of play of the reflection on the criteria considered for the assessment of negative changes in Emerald Network databases.</i></p>	<p>Criteria for the assessment of changes in the Emerald Network databases</p> <p><a href="#">T-PVS/PA(2021)05</a></p> <p><b>For information</b></p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the state of art of the reflection on the criteria for the assessment of negative changes in Emerald Network databases.</p>
	<p>5.c 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 state of development of the Emerald Network Barometer assessing progress of Contracting Parties in the implementation of the Emerald Network.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Link to the Natura 2000 Barometer</a></p> <p>Monitoring framework for the implementation of the Emerald Network</p> <p><a href="#">T-PVS/PA(2020)02</a></p> <p><b>For information</b></p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the development of the Emerald Network Barometer.</p>
	<p>5.d Emerald Network tools</p> <p><i>Presentation by Marc Roekaerts</i></p> <p><i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the further development of the Emerald Network Webapp and Viewer.</i></p>	<p><b>For information</b></p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the development of the Emerald Network tools.</p>
	<p><b>6. State of play of the Emerald Network and future perspectives</b></p>		

	<p>6.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 the scope and objectives of the IPA project on Emerald Network data mobilisation in the Western Balkans implemented by the European Environment Agency.</i></p>	<p><b>For information</b></p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the scope and objectives of the project on Emerald Network data mobilisation in the Western Balkans.</p>
	<p>6.b Progress in the implementation of the Emerald Network in Belarus</p> <p><i>Presentation by Alexandra Bayeva Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection, Belarus</i></p> <p><i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the outcomes of the project implemented within the frame of the Council of Europe country specific action plan in 2020</i></p>	<p><b>For information</b></p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the development of the Emerald Network in Belarus.</p>
	<p>6.c Biogeographical evaluation of the list of sites proposed by Georgia</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 evaluation of the list of sites proposed by Georgia.</i></p>	<p><b>For information</b></p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the planned biogeographical evaluation of the list of sites proposed by Georgia</p>

	<p>6.d Nomination of Emerald Network sites</p> <p><i>Reminder by the Secretariat</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><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></p>	<p><b>For discussion and decision</b></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>
	<p><b>7. Future work of the Group of Experts</b></p>		
	<p>7.a Programme of activities 2022</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 2022</i></p>	<p><b>For discussion and decision</b></p>	<p>Priority activities are identified and will feed into the Programme of activity 2022 of the Bern Convention (subject to the availability of financial and human resources)</p>
	<p>7.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>	<p><b>For decision</b></p>	<p>The provisional venue and dates of the next meeting are agreed on.</p>

	<b>8. Any other business</b>		
	<b>9. Conclusions of the meeting</b>		
<b>17.00</b>	<i>Wednesday 6 October</i> <b>End of the meeting</b>		

## Annex 2: List of participants

### I. CONTRACTING PARTIES

#### ALBANIA

Ms Elvana RAMAJ Head of Sector, Directorate of Conception and Feasibility of Projects for the Environment, General Directorate of Environmental Policies and Development, Ministry of Tourism and Environment

#### BELARUS

Ms Alexandra BAEVA Representative of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection

#### BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Ms Mirjana MILIČEVIĆ Ph.D. – Representative of the Federal Ministry on Environment and Tourism

#### CZECH REPUBLIC

Mr Jan PLESNÍK Head, Department of International Cooperation, Nature Conservation Agency

Ms Eliška ROLFOVÁ Unit of International Conventions, Department of Species Protection and Implementation of International Commitments, Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic

Ms Sylva SCHACHERLOVÁ Unit of International Conventions, Department of Species Protection and Implementation of International Commitments, Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic

Ms Lenka VÁŇOVÁ Unit of International Conventions, Department of Species Protection and Implementation of International Commitments, Ministry of the Environment of the Czech Republic

#### EUROPEAN UNION

DG Environment Mr Joaquim CAPITAO  
Ms Iva OBRETENOVA  
Mr Frank VASSEN

#### FRANCE

Mr Charles-Henri DE BARSAC Chargé de mission "accords internationaux et européens faune sauvage" sous-direction de la protection et de la restauration des écosystèmes terrestres, Ministère de la Transition Ecologique et Solidaire

#### GEORGIA

Ms Salome NOZADZE Biodiversity and Forestry Department, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture

#### GREECE

Mr Evangelos BADIERITAKIS Ministry of Environment & Energy, General Directorate of Environmental Policy, Directorate of Natural Environment Management & Biodiversity, Department of Biodiversity

#### ICELAND

Mr Snorri SIGURÐSSON Head of the Department for Nature Protection and Specialist in the field of nature and environment, Icelandic Institute of Natural History

Mr Steinar KALDAL	Head of Division, Department of Land and Natural Heritage, Ministry for the Environment and Natural Resources
<b>MALTA</b>	
Ms Angela BARTOLO	Senior Officer Thematic, Environment and Resources Authority
Ms Lara GALEA	Environment Protection Officer, Environment and Resources Authority
<b>REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA</b>	
Ms Veronica JOSU	Principal Advisory Officer, Department on Biodiversity Policy, Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment
Ms Angela LOZAN	Manager Biodiversity Office, Environmental Projects Implementation Unit within the MoARDE
<b>NORWAY</b>	
Mr Tore OPDAHL	Senior Adviser, Protected Areas Section, Norwegian Environment agency, <b>Chair of the Group of Experts</b>
Mr Andreas Benjamin SCHEI	Senior Advisor, Norwegian Environment Agency
<b>SERBIA</b>	
Ms Snezana PROKIC	Representative of the Ministry of Environmental Protection,
<b>SLOVENIA</b>	
Ms Maja HUMAR	Nature Conservation Division, Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning
Mr Peter SKOBERNE	
<b>UKRAINE</b>	
Ms Anastasiia DRAPALIUK	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, Department of PAs and Lend Resource, Head of Division
Ms Darya BOLDAREVA	Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources, Department of PAs and Lend Resource, Lead Specialist
<b>UNITED KINGDOM</b>	
Ms Clare MASON	DEFRA
Mr Kerry VITALIS	Policy Advisor, Protected Areas Team, Natural Environment, Trees & Landscape Directorate, DEFRA
Ms Clare WHITFIELD	Senior EU Exit Adviser, Joint Nature Conservation Committee
Mr James WILLIAMS	Biodiversity Indicators Manager, UK Scientific Councillor for the Convention on Migratory Species, Joint Nature Conservation Committee

### III. INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

#### **BirdLife**

Mr Willem VAN DEN BOSSCHE Senior Flyway Conservation Officer for Europe & Central Asia, Stichting BirdLife Europe, BirdLife International

**European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity**

Ms Stephanie HUDON Director of the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity

Ms Laura GAVILAN Task manager for Natura 2000 and Emerald, European Topic Center on Biological Diversity

Ms Sabine ROCHER

**European Environment Agency**

Ms Mette LUND

**NABU**

Mr Tom KIRSCHHEY Head of International Peatland and Southeast Asia Projects, NABU Headquarters (Nature and Biodiversity conservation, German partner of Birdlife International)

**IV. OBSERVERS**

**IENE**

Mr Tony SANGWINE IENE Governance member  
Mr Tom LANGTON IENE Council of Europe Area representative  
Mr Fraser SCHILLING Road Ecology Center  
Ms Wendy COLLINSON The Endangered Wildlife Trust  
Ms Marita BÖETTCHER Bundesamt für Naturschutz and IENE Governance member,  
Mr Radu MOT Zarand Association  
Mr Eric GUINARD Cerema  
Ms Carme ROSELL Minuartia and IENE Governance member  
Mr Antonio MIRA University of Evora  
Mr Lazaros GEORGIADIS IENE Governance member

**PPNEA**

Mr Olsion LAMA Protection and Preservation of Natural Environment in Albania  
Protected areas and fauna specialist

**V. SPEAKERS**

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)

Mr Arie TROUWBORST Associate Professor of Environmental Law, Tilburg Law School, The Netherlands

**VI. SECRETARIAT OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

**Directorate of Democratic Participation, Directorate General of Democracy (DGII)**

Mr Gianluca SILVESTRINI Head of the Biodiversity Division

Ms Ursula STICKER Secretary of the Bern Convention

Mr Marc HORY Project Manager of the Bern Convention

Ms Helena ORSULIC Secretarial assistant of the Bern Convention