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ROADMAP RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENSURING EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION OF EMERALD SITES IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

2024 - 2030

Action implemented by:



WORLD BANK GROUP



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Introduction

This document was developed within the action “*Advancing the establishment of the Emerald Network in Moldova.*” The activity is part of the EU4Environment Program sub-component 4.1, led by the World Bank, to support the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems through advancing the establishment and management of the Emerald Network in the Eastern Partner countries.

In Moldova, the activities of this sub-component **aim to enhance national capacities to ensure the long-term survival of species and habitats listed in the Bern Convention Resolutions by improving the national legal framework and promoting effective communication in line with European standards and best international practices.**

According to the [Bern Convention](#), the Emerald Network is an ecological network comprised of particular conservation areas, a component of the national ecological network. Each signatory country of the Convention establishes national-level Emerald network sites to comply with the obligations under the Bern Convention. The European Union, as a contracting party to the Convention to fulfill its commitments, established the [Habitat Directives in 1992](#) and consequently set up the [Natura 2000 network, which is](#) considered to be a contribution from the EU Member States to the Emerald Network.

With the support of previous projects of the Council of Europe and the EU, the inventory and mapping (GIS Maps) of the types of natural habitats and biodiversity - species of flora and fauna, included in Resolutions No. 4 and No. 6 of the Convention - was carried out. The databases of the Emerald Network from Moldova are available in the European information system www.cdr.eionet.eu.

In 2018-2019, the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention adopted 61 Emerald sites for Moldova, which constitute 277,157 ha or 8 % of the country's territory, and it includes 32 habitats harboring 167 species of plants and animals on the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

Law no. 225/2022 complements Law no. 94/2007 regarding the ecological network with a new chapter, Chapter III – The Emerald Network, dedicated entirely to the aspects of the Emerald Network. According to art. 122, the evaluation of the types of natural habitats and species of wild flora and fauna is carried out by specialists in the fields of biology, ecology, and geography in coordination with the Environment Agency.

The Environment Agency developed a proposal for the designation of Emerald network sites based on the evaluation report approved by the Ministry of the Environment, in accordance with the standard technical sheet defined by the Bern Convention.

Emerging from the importance of the Emerald Network and the commitments undertaken by the Republic of Moldova at the international level in the field of ensuring the conservation of biological diversity, this roadmap is developed for a period of seven years, covering the years 2023-2030. The activities within the document were divided into phases, with indicators aimed to be achieved. One particular and key focus is network sufficiency, which needs to be increased from 24 % (as of 2023) to up to 80% (by 2030). For that, a range of recommendations, including the proposal for expanding the Emerald Network, will be included in the current Road Map. For that, a primary assessment of the conclusion of bio-geographical seminars was conducted by a team of national experts who were involved in similar previous evaluations. Further scientific work is required to gain more detailed data and information regarding the status of the Emerald species and habitats in the Republic of Moldova.

In the long run, this Roadmap Recommendations will ensure the necessary activities that should be undertaken at the national level to achieve the targets of the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework post-2020](#), approved by the XV Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (2022), the Bern Convention on the conservation of wildlife and natural habitats in Europe, but also to implement the [National Development Strategy European Moldova 2030](#) as well and the National Environmental Strategy 2030.

I. Time frame and interim progress measurement dates

The general timeline covering the Road Map is seven years (2023-2030). The proposed actions consider setting up a middle target for 2028 and an end target for 2030. Also, during these two timeline targets, accomplished indicators will be assessed. Upon necessity, the central environmental authorities can opt for a more frequent interval measurement period, but no more often than every two years. Using the published Emerald Network Barometer, measurements should be done after the Bern Convention Standing Committee is held. The Barometer is calculated from official data and information transmitted by Bern Convention Contracting Parties or Observer States (in this case Moldova, Ministry of Environment) to the Convention.

- A midterm evaluation by the end of 2028
- Reaching the target proposed by the end of 2030.

Even though the current Road Map establishes actions for a seven-year period, a longer implementation timeframe is advisable. The progress and results of the Road Map are highly connected with the country's capacities to perform the assessment and fieldwork required to achieve the set-up indicators. Respectively, in the beginning, a lot of fieldwork will be required in order to have a new and updated understanding of the current status of species and habitats in the Country, together with additional sites that could be included in the national Emerald Network.

II. Objectives, priorities, and expected results

The roadmap recommendations are developed to determine the range of priorities and measures needed to be taken in order to remove the deficiencies in the legal framework (related to creation, management, and protection of Emerald sites) as well as to strengthen institutional capacities that can help establish the Emerald Network in the Republic of Moldova.

The roadmap recommendations aim to restore and maintain Emerald Network sites to a favorable conservation status by 2030, along with guaranteeing good prospects in the face of pressures and threats.

Specific objectives within the roadmap by 2030 are:

- Maintain and prevent further loss and deterioration of designated Emerald sites by appropriately managing protected species and habitats.
- Establish conservation objectives at the national and local site levels to ensure their favorable long-term conservation and achieve conservation objectives, all in line with the requirements of the Bern Convention.
- Implement the necessary conservation measures, including restoration and reconstruction where necessary, to achieve established conservation objectives.
- Ensure ecological connectivity across all habitats, including restoring areas outside the Emerald network, in line with defined biogeographical and national conservation interests.
- Improve knowledge, assess conservation status, and develop monitoring systems for Emerald sites.
- Disseminate and share experiences to foster replication.
- Monitor progress and results/products over time.

The roadmap recommendations represent a steering document (an action plan) intended to be implemented to enhance the effective management and protection of the Emerald Network.

As of March 2024, the current document has been consulted with many experts and researchers. Consultations with officials from the Ministry of Environment and other interested institutions and experts are planned for late April 2024 to be consulted officially with environmental authorities and other target stakeholders.

III. Action plan

Timeline	Targets			Activities			
	Phase I % coverage	Phase II % SI	Phase III % MPs	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Other non-Phase related
2023	8%	24,1%	41%¹	1. Desk review of the conclusion of the last bio-geographical seminars and propose additional species and habitats according to the conclusions of the seminars.		1. Develop the methodological guidelines for developing the management plans of the Emerald sites in the Republic of Moldova.	1. Amendment ² of Law no. 1515/1993 on protecting the environment and other relevant secondary legislation. 2. Raise awareness activities (on Emerald Network, site management, key species, and habitats).
2024				1. Present the preliminary assessment results of the last bio-geographical seminars for official implementation in the Emerald Network database, followed by an official delivery of a new database.	1. Consider adopting the two identified sites in the Emerald Network to the Bern Convention Standing Committee.	1. Approval of the Regulation of the Methodological Guidelines for developing the Management Plans of the Emerald Sites in the Republic of Moldova.	1. Amendments proposed to the Law on Protected Areas system in the Republic of Moldova
				2. Collection of information on the	12. Suggest that the Bern Convention	2. Develop draft management plans for 3	2. Involvement of the local community in

¹ During the discussions with central environmental authority, it was specified that 41% represents not only Emerald sites that have a Management Plan but also were counted Forest Enterprises covering a part or a full Emerald site with an Action Plan in place. Respectively, the % indicated does not reflect the current and real situations of the available management plans for the Emerald sites in Moldova.

² Proposal for modifications of the legal acts to properly reflect Emerald Network and its management in the national legal framework.

Timeline	Targets			Activities			
	Phase I % coverage	Phase II % SI	Phase III % MPs	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Other non-Phase related
				<p>current ecological status and distribution of Emerald species and habitats of European interest for the identification of new Emerald sites.</p> <p>3. Identify additional sites for inclusion in the Emerald Network. These sites will be selected based on their significance for species conservation and habitats of European importance.</p>	<p>Standing Committee organize a biographical seminar in 2025.</p>	<p>Emerald sites identified in the EU4 Environment – WB Action.</p> <p>3. Approval and start implementation of the management plan for 3 selected Emerald sites.</p> <p>4. Elaboration of the Regulation regarding keeping the Register of Emerald network sites in the Republic of Moldova.</p>	<p>activities aimed at protecting and managing Emerald sites</p> <p>3. Training and education of officials employed within the authorities with duties in the management and protection of the Emerald Network.</p>
2025	9%	30%	50%	<p>1. Preparation and submission of Emerald database, considering newly identified sites.</p>	<p>1. Biogeographical Seminar targeting feature groups with substantial new data, addressing IN MINs and SRs and also IN MODs that will lead to identifying the new sites</p>	<p>1. Develop other 3 Management Plans for the Emerald Sites.</p> <p>2. Implementation of the approved and finalized management plans.</p>	<p>1. Finalize revision of the methodologies based on which the damage caused to the environment will be calculated through the violation of environmental legislation in the field of management and protection of wild flora and fauna, as well as of the protected habitats within the Emerald</p>

Timeline	Targets			Activities			
	Phase I % coverage	Phase II % SI	Phase III % MPs	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Other non-Phase related
							<p>Network</p> <p>2. Organizing training for officials from authorities with duties in management and protection of the Emerald Network</p> <p>3. Organizing a conference/ seminar for civil servants at local, national, or international levels in the field of management and protection of the Emerald Network</p> <p>4. Fostering collaboration between businesses, civil society organizations, and academia to drive the transition to a green economy. Form partnerships to share knowledge, resources, and best practices and to collectively address environmental challenges</p>
2026				1. Continuously collect and update data on species and habitats	1. Engagement in a bilateral discussion with the Bern	1. Development and publication of the Register of Emerald	1. Organization of 1 training for officials employed within the

Timeline	Targets			Activities			
	Phase I % coverage	Phase II % SI	Phase III % MPs	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Other non-Phase related
				<p>within the Emerald Network.</p> <p>2. Organizing field trips to potentially new Emerald sites to support identifying additional sites.</p> <p>3. In-depth assessment of the existing Emerald sites</p>	Convention regarding particular inquiries about sufficiency.	<p>Network sites on the official website of the Environment Agency</p> <p>2. Development of monitoring guidelines and reporting tools by the provisions of the Bern Convention</p> <p>3. Develop the management plan for other 3 Emerald Sites.</p> <p>4. Implementation of the finished management plans.</p>	<p>authorities with duties in management and protection of the Emerald Network</p> <p>2. Organization of 1 conference/seminar/training for civil servants at local, national, or international levels in the field of management and protection of the Emerald Network</p> <p>3. Form partnerships with non-governmental organizations, research institutions, and other stakeholders to leverage expertise and resources for conservation.</p>
2027				1. Develop a system that will provide regular data flow in Moldova, resulting in regular reporting to the BC on conservation progress, including species updates and habitat data.	1. Recommend to the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention that they consider the adoption of other Emerald Candidate sites.	<p>1. Develop the management plan for 5 Emerald Sites.</p> <p>2. Implementation of the finished management plans.</p>	<p>1. Organization of 1 training for officials employed within the authorities with duties in management and protection of the Emerald Network</p> <p>2. Organization of 1 conference/seminar/training for civil servants at local,</p>

Timeline	Targets			Activities			
	Phase I % coverage	Phase II % SI	Phase III % MPs	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Other non-Phase related
							national, or international levels in the field of management and protection of the Emerald Network 3. Encouraging responsible tourism within Emerald Network sites that do not harm the environment 4. Develop mechanisms for addressing conflicts between conservation objectives and local communities or other stakeholders' needs and interests.
2028	10%	60%	65³%	1. Collect data on species and habitats and display their distribution on maps.	1. Engagement in a bilateral discussion with the Bern Convention regarding particular inquiries about sufficiency.	1. Develop the management plans for 5 Emerald Sites. 2. Implementation of the finished management plans.	1. Organization of 1 training for officials employed within the authorities with duties in management and protection of the Emerald Network 2. Organization of 1 conference/seminar/training for civil servants at local, national, or international levels in the field of

³ 65% represents 39 Emerald sites are covered with Management Plans

Timeline	Targets			Activities			
	<i>Phase I</i> % coverage	<i>Phase II</i> % SI	<i>Phase III</i> % MPs	<i>Phase I</i>	<i>Phase II</i>	<i>Phase III</i>	<i>Other non-Phase related</i>
							management and protection of the Emerald Network.
2029				<p>1. To enhance its utility, Integrate the Emerald Network database with other relevant data sources, such as environmental databases, satellite imagery, and climate data.</p> <p>2. Coordinate revision of the Emerald Network database.</p>	<p>1 Engagement in a bilateral discussion with the Bern Convention regarding particular inquiries about sufficiency.</p>	<p>1. Develop the management plan for other 3 Emerald Sites.</p> <p>2. Implementation of the finished management plans.</p>	<p>1. Organization of 1 training for officials employed within the authorities with duties in management and protection of the Emerald Network</p> <p>2. Organization of 1 conference/seminar/training for civil servants at local, national, or international levels in the field of management and protection of the Emerald Network</p> <p>3. Strengthen collaboration with neighboring countries and international organizations to ensure a coordinated approach to biodiversity conservation, as many species and habitats may cross national borders.</p>

Timeline	Targets			Activities			
	Phase I % coverage	Phase II % SI	Phase III % MPs	Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Other non-Phase related
							4. Maintain regular communication and reporting on the status and progress of the protected areas, fostering transparency and accountability.
2030 ⁴	11%	80%	80% ⁵	1. Identify the remaining potential sites and the site's data collection. 2. Coordinate revision of the Emerald Network database.	1. Proposing to the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention that they evaluate the possibility of approving all the remaining Emerald Candidate sites for adoption.	1. Develop the management plan for 5 Emerald Sites. 2. Implementation of the finished management plans. 3. Continuously monitor, review, and adapt management plans, conservation strategies, and regulations based on the results of monitoring and changing conservation needs. 4. Use adaptive management principles to respond to new challenges and knowledge.	1. Periodically review and revise management plans and strategies to reflect changes in conservation priorities, threats, and best practices. 2. Develop strategies for long-term funding sustainability, including exploring diversified funding sources, public-private partnerships, and endowment funds. 3. Continue building the capacity of relevant stakeholders, including local communities and conservation organizations, to enhance their conservation skills and

⁴ These activities can be foreseen as 2030 and post 2030 for a qualitative achievement of the results.

⁵ 80% represents 47 Emerald sites covered by Management Plans.

Timeline	Targets			Activities			
	<i>Phase I</i> % coverage	<i>Phase II</i> % SI	<i>Phase III</i> % MPs	<i>Phase I</i>	<i>Phase II</i>	<i>Phase III</i>	<i>Other non-Phase related</i>
							knowledge. 4. Share data with relevant regional and international databases, promoting data exchange and transparency.
2040	15%	100%	100%	Carrying on with work that remains incomplete.	Persistence in addressing tasks that have not yet been completed.	Sustaining the process of monitoring, evaluation, and adaptive management.	

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

The Republic of Moldova should follow a list of legal, institutional, management, and conservative actions and modifications in order to achieve an Emerald Network with adequate protection while allowing human social and economic activities and encouraging sustainable human-nature interaction. Key actions are foreseen in the current Road Map and could be updated by the responsible authority (Ministry of the Environment) upon necessity.

The current Law adopted by the EU on Nature Restorations aims to restore degraded ecosystems in all member states, help achieve the EU's climate and biodiversity objectives, and enhance food security. The Republic of Moldova, as a candidate country, follows to take over the EU policy and legal recommendations gradually to achieve the same level of implementation as the EU by the time it becomes a full EU member state. As per the EU Parliament's position, priority should be given to the Natura 2000 (Emerald Network in the Republic of Moldova), and the current Road Map could constitute a reasonable basis for creating the needed infrastructure to achieve set-out indicators by the EU.

Following the structure of the Road Map and the conclusions of the Gap Analysis, a document that contains a comprehensive analysis that led to the current document, the recommendations are divided into blocks as follows:

- Legal
- Institutional and capacity building
- Management and Conservation

Recommendations	Key actions to follow
Legal	<p>The national legal framework needs to be brought to consistency. Emerald Network should be reflected in primary and secondary legislation, and the importance of protecting the Emerald Network for the Republic of Moldova should be highlighted. Also, Based on the fact that the Emerald sites are designated for the imposition of special measures in order to conserve natural habitats and/or wild species of community interest, in the case of their overlap in the natural areas protected of national interest, the management of the site can be admitted in accordance with the provisions of Law no. 1538/1998, but with the condition that the most restrictive protection functions will be respected. This condition needs to be included in the current legislation, which will generate the situation where a site of European importance will be managed under the same conditions as a site of national importance, contrary to the purpose for which Emerald sites are designated.</p> <p>A focus should also be put on regulating the liability for the destruction and damage of species of wild fauna and flora, as well as of protected habitats within the Emerald Network. This, in particular, only concerns conserving natural areas protected by the state. At the same time, in order to prevent new crimes against wildlife and protected habitats within the Emerald Network, it is necessary to supplement Article 235 of the Criminal Code with provisions on the Emerald Network.</p>

	<p>At the national level, there is a need to develop a regulation on how to maintain the register of sites in the Emerald Network, which will help to ensure efficient and transparent management of these sites, including the associated information and data. The lack of such a regulation makes it difficult to define the criteria and procedures for registering and managing sites and the type of information to be collected and recorded in this register.</p>
Institutional and Capacity Building	<p>The Government of Moldova should focus on research and education to increase the number of qualitative researchers and the interest of future employees in the field of protected areas and species/habitats.</p> <p>Likewise, regular meetings and events should create a stronger connection between the research institutions, education, authorities, and administration of protected areas. Additionally, networking with regional and international experts and specialists in the field is strongly recommended to continuously exchange information related to the concerns of conservation measures, species, habitats, and other natural resources.</p> <p>There is a particular need to promote research on the abundance, population dynamics, and productivity of the species and to develop the respective methodologies.</p>
Management and Conservation	<p>Unfortunately, the lack of site-oriented conservation measures persists for a more significant part of the Emerald sites in Moldova. Emerald site-specific conservation objectives, which must be specific and measurable, should be established and made available to the public for all Emerald sites without delay. Conservation objectives must specify the targets for each attribute or parameter that determines the conservation status of the protected features.</p>



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The roadmap recommendations for ensuring efficient management and protection of the Emerald Network in the Republic of Moldova

The "Roadmap recommendations for ensuring efficient management and protection of the Emerald Network in the Republic of Moldova" are aimed at assisting the Moldovan authorities in enhancing national capacities to ensure the long-term survival of species and habitats listed in the Bern Convention Resolutions by improving the national legal framework and promoting effective communication in line with European standards and best international practices.

Emerging from the importance of the Emerald Network and the commitments undertaken by the Republic of Moldova at the international level in the field of ensuring the conservation of biological diversity, this roadmap is developed for a period of seven years, covering the years 2023-2030. The activities within the document were divided into phases, with indicators aimed to be achieved. One particular and key focus is network sufficiency, which needs to be increased from 24 % (as of 2023) to up to 80% (by 2030).

By implementing these recommendations, Moldova can enhance its conservation efforts and protect its valuable species and natural habitats.

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