

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 23 September 1985

SN-ZP (85) 44



COE182866

EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND
NATURAL RESOURCES

Sarek and Padjelanta National Parks
(Sweden)

ON-THE-SPOT-APPRAISAL

by

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1. Introduction

The category A European Diploma was first awarded to the national parks of Sarek and Padjelanta in 1967 and has since been renewed three times. The last inspection was made in July 1980 by Mr.M.A. van Wijngaarden (SN-R-DP (80) 31) and Mr.P.Baum.

In accordance with the diploma regulations (Resolution (73)4), Dr.P.Baum and myself carried out the inspection for a fourth five-year renewal from 2 July to 5 July 1985. We were shown round by the head of the national parks in Norrbotten, Mr.Hans Furmark, and by Mr.Stefan Malmborg of the Environment Protection Board, Stockholm. At an introductory talk on 2 July we had also a chance to meet the staff of "Fjällenheten", who are, amongst other things, responsible for all seven national parks in the north of Sweden. Some staff of "Fjällenheten" and some park wardens joined us for parts of the excursion. The company of Ing.Claude Pairaudeau, head of the national park of Vanoise (Savoy), provided an opportunity for comparison and interesting discussions. On 2 July we were received for talks by alderman Karl-Axel Nilsson of the community of Jokkmokk, which the areas of Sarek and Padjelanta are part of. In addition to the inspection of these two national parks there was finally an opportunity to visit Abisko National Park and its information centre.

2. A Short Description of the National Parks

Sarek National Park covers an area of 194 000 ha and was established in 1909 and extended in 1962. More than 90 mountain peaks attain heights of 1800 m above sea level, or more, and they are surrounded by approx. 100 glaciers. On the whole, Sarek is a high mountain region with tablelands and deep ravines; the Rapa valley is particularly impressive. Sarek has no marked hiking trails leading through its territory and no shelters. However, access is not limited.

Padjelanta National Park with its area of 201 000 ha was established in 1962. Both national parks belong to the State of Sweden. The hilly and open territory of Padjelanta with its numerous lakes is situated at the border between maritime and continental climate which causes unstable weather situations. Padjelanta National Park is provided with many shelters, and seaplanes and helicopters land at Staloluokta, in the middle of the park. Yet these landings are limited to four per day.

3. Problems of the National Parks

If, in the following, we speak of "problems" they cannot be compared to problems in the rest of Western Europe where the pressure from civilisation is so much higher. Here we are dealing with vast natural landscapes which have so far hardly been exploited by man.

3.1. Administration

At the time of the last inspection, in 1980, the national parks were still supervised and maintained by the Forest Service; now "Fjällenheten" - the mountain unit council - established for the protection of nature in Norrbotten, is responsible for the national parks, which has meant an essential improvement of the administration. "Fjällenheten" is responsible for the national parks, for protected areas, for the hiking trails (approx. 3000 km) and for the protection of the fauna.

As in other places, the budget for the protection of nature has been frozen in Norrbotten. Most of the investments as well as maintenance costs have been covered by financial means of the Labour market. Yet these means are, as it seems, not secured for the future, which will cause serious financial problems for the administration of the national parks.

3.2. Boundaries Between the National Parks

The national parks of Sarek, Padjelanta and Stora Sjöfallet share common boundaries. It might be considered whether these parks should not be united and possibly become different zones of one single national park. A review of the boundaries might also be considered so as to include the Sjaunja bird sanctuary, which is of European importance, into the conception of the national park. A review of the boundaries would also seem desirable considering natural spatial unities (e.g. rivers which could, in an exemplary way, be included from their headwaters to their estuaries).

3.3. Management Plan and Information Concept

A management plan for Sarek and Padjelanta National Parks has been set up and is now being discussed. From the point of view of the expert it would be desirable if the many existing demands for more information about nature protection

of the visitors to the north of Sweden could be met. In particular, a concept of information at different levels for all the national parks in the north of Sweden with its main centre in Jokkmokk (possibly in connection with the planned ecological museum in Jokkmokk) and minor centres (e.g. mobile stations on much frequented roads) could be imagined. These information centres could be combined with the selling of information material about nature protection (books, brochures, postcards, slides, etc.) and locally made crafts. Consequently, approaching roads to the main entrances of the national parks should be signalled.

3.4. Activities of the Lapps

The Lapps have their traditional rights of use in the national parks. such as the setting up of summer settlements, the keeping of reindeers, fishing and hunting. These activities have been carried out by Lapps for centuries in this region. However, due to the use of technological means there is a new dimension to them. This can cause conflicts between the intentions of the national parks and the rights of the Lapps. In connection to this it is especially desirable to go into the question of the optimum form of reindeer keeping (capacity of pastures) and of fishing, as earlier conditions have obviously changed.

The hunting of the wolf, the bear and the wolverine should be stopped completely (cp. The Bern Convention, appendix II).

3.5. Hydro-Electric Plants

The surroundings of the national parks are in parts characterised by heavy exploitation of water power. As in other places, there is the danger of a possible extension which might affect areas within the parks.

The same is true for the interests of the mining industry.

4. Conclusions

In accordance with Resolution (82) 3 the authorities were requested to meet one condition and seven further recommendations. The condition has been met in so far that the hydro-electric plant planned close to the boundary of the park was not realised. The bridges requested in order to facilitate the migration of the reindeers have been built. A management plan has also been established and no further tourist development has been undertaken.

What remains is to improve information in the park (small centre at

Staloluokta, cp. 3.3.)

Thus nothing impedes another renewal of the Diploma. On the contrary, I must stress that I was very much impressed by the work of the staff responsible for the national parks. The team of Hans Furmark and the National Environment Board have to be highly praised for their exemplary work and their efforts.

Based on the observations made during our inspection I propose in accordance with Resolution (73) 2 that the category A European Diploma be renewed for another five years. Under section 5 some recommendations concerning the renewal of the Diploma are added.

5. Recommendations

1 - The financial resources for the continuing of the administration, the maintenance and the supervision of the national parks have to be secured.

2 - The dialogue with and the consultation of the Lapp population is to be continued.

3 - The responsible authorities are invited to work out and realise an information concept within the frame of the management plan.

4 - The responsible authorities are invited to review the existing boundaries of the national parks with respect to natural spatial unities, and if necessary, to extend them or consider a fusion of Sarek, Padjelanta and Stora Sjöfallet National Parks.

5 - The changes the different forms of exploitation in the national parks have undergone shall be examined in a research programme (influence of the reindeers on the eco-system, fishing in the lakes, etc.). A programme on carnivores shall examine the impact of large beasts of prey on the eco-system.

Vaduz, 2 August 1985

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