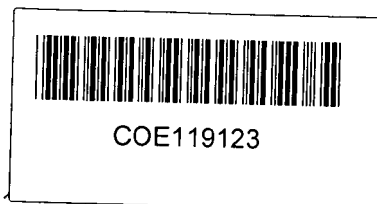


COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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EUROPEAN COMMITTEE FOR THE CONSERVATION OF NATURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Working Party European Diploma

Siebengebirge Nature Reserve
(Fed. Rep. of Germany)

19-20 February, 1976

by

Dr. A. van WIJNGAARDEN

In accordance with the decision taken by the Working Party European Diploma, the on-the-spot appraisal of the Siebengebirge Nature Reserve has been made on February 19th and 20th, 1976.

In the morning of the first day, I made a circular tour by car around the reserve with a view to get a first impression. Accompanied by Dr. J.-P. Ribaut and Mr. L. Dörr, I met a large number of authorities involved in the management of the nature reserve on federal, governmental and municipal level as well as from the local private foundation for conservation.

In long, unofficial but very productive talks, we discussed the problems concerning the vegetation, forestry, hunting, recreation, country planning and future development of the area involved. In the afternoon and the next morning, two excursions were made. At 12 a.m. the meeting was closed by Mr. D. Deneke, Minister of Food, Agriculture and Forestry of Nordrhein-Westfalen.

Our conclusions may be summarised as follows:

Generally the state of the site has remained the same since the date when the diploma was awarded.

The construction of an express railway along the northern and eastern boundaries has been postponed for many years and perhaps for ever.

In the meanwhile, however, a new and even more serious threat for the nature reserve has arisen: plans are made to build a new highway connecting the A 15 highway Cologne-Frankfurt with the Adenauer Bridge in Bonn. This future highway would cut to the very letter the mountain chain of the Siebengebirge through the Ankersbach valley. Since three west-east connections already exist within the restricted area of the reserve (4200 ha), every new intersection is unacceptable if one wants to maintain the present quality of the reserve.

Due to the unsuitable season and the short time available, it appeared to be impossible for me to make a serious investigation concerning the state of conservation of the flora and fauna. All persons involved however assured me that no further losses had occurred during the last years, in spite of the high pressure of the recreation in some areas.

The state of conservation of the landscape has even improved. Some old buildings in the woods have been removed. Old quarries have been transformed into geological monuments of high scientific importance.

Hibernation quarters of bats in subterranean quarries have been protected by bars, etc.

Plans are made to restore the centuries-old vineyards landscape at the foot of the hills.

A summary of all measures taken in this respect can be found in Offner (1975).

Up until now, no important material and legislative alterations concerning the status of the reserve have been made. Private enclaves are regularly bought by the authorities; plans are made to surround the reserve (4200 ha) with a nature park of 11.000 ha.

The impact of the public on flora and fauna is still acceptable. By means of a well-planned system of car parks, a network of footpaths and shelterhuts, the public is concentrated for the greater part on a limited number of places. The reserve thus remains to a great extent rather undisturbed.

As suggested in 1971, boards with clearly marked maps have been placed at all prominent points so as to inform the public.

Perhaps it would be advisable to also mention on these boards that the European Diploma has been awarded to this reserve.

The restoration of the Drachenfels has been completed. The whole of the rock has been perforated in many places, bolted together with strong steel bars and injected with concrete. The traces of this immense work will disappear since in the course of time, the concrete blocks at the end of the bars will have acquired the same colour and irregular forms as the rock itself.

The network of pathways in the surrounding area has also been restored.

On the south-eastern point of the Drachenfels, a new restaurant has been built. Although the architecture fits very well into the landscape, an aesthetic mistake has been made: a glittering aluminium strip one meter wide runs along the roof. Even from a great distance, the view upon the Drachenfels is spoiled by this strip. The problem might be solved by spraying or painting the strip an adequate colour.

In my opinion, the award of the European Diploma has been of great importance for the reserve Siebengebirge. A large amount of public and private grants became available. As a result, all the suggestions made at the time by the Council of Europe, have been carried out.

May I suggest that the following idea be taken into consideration:

The Siebengebirge is a very important nature reserve because of its flora, fauna and landscape. It is, in addition, unique for Europe from the geological point of view for its group of tertiary volcanoes. In the near future, a chain of biogenetic reserves in Europe will be created. In the same manner, one may consider the creation of reserves of comparable geological origins such as, for instance, a chain of vulcano-reserves, safeguarding at least one example of each volcanically-formed type of landscape in Europe. The Siebengebirge could be the very first reserve in such a chain.