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**Committee for the activities of the Council of Europe
in the field of biological and landscape diversity**

(CO-DBP)

Group of specialists – European Diploma for Protected Areas

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**THE TRIGLAV NATIONAL PARK
(Slovenia)**

**APPLICATION
for the European Diploma of Protected Areas**

Expert report by
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*Document established by
the Directorate of Culture
and Cultural and Natural Heritage*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Government of Slovenia has submitted to the Council of Europe the application of the Triglav National Park for the European Diploma of Protected Areas.

In January 2003 the Group of specialists recognised the European interest of the site and requested an on-the-spot appraisal before taking a final decision.

In this perspective, I visited the Park on 15, 16 and 17 May 2003, with Mrs Françoise Bauer of the Secretariat of the Council of Europe.

The organisation of the visit was excellent and we must warmly thank all those who helped to make it pleasant by their helpfulness, through their wise choice of itineraries and the way they shared their knowledge of the area.

Our thanks go especially to Janez Bizjak, Director, Martin Šolar, in charge of management and development and of the Park's professional ranger service, Joze Mihelic, education officer, Jurij Dobravec, in charge of the life project, Marija Markes, responsible for the agriculture policy and development, Davorin Koren, adviser for agriculture policy and rural development, Marko Pretner, in charge of the Trenta Lodge, Miro Erzen, member of the local municipality of Kranska Gora Council and president of the local Alpine Club.

2. SITUATION AND VALUE OF THE PARK

The Triglav National Park covers almost the entire Slovenian part of the Julian Alps in the north-west part of Slovenia, about 60 km north-west of Ljubljana, near the border between Slovenia, Italy and Austria.

The Triglav Lakes Valley, in the heart of the present park, was protected in 1924 and became a national park in 1961 over a larger area. In 1981 the Triglav National Park was established with its present size of 83 807 ha, representing about 4% of Slovenia.

The Park's highest point is Mount Triglav, at 2 864 m and the lowest point is the Tolminka river at 180 m.

The park is named after Mt Triglav, symbol of Slovenia, which is situated almost in the centre of the protected territory. From it the valleys spread out, supplying water to two large river systems which have their sources in the Julian Alps: the Soca river flowing to the Adriatic and the Sava river flowing to the Black Sea.

A very detailed and well-structured description of the park can be found in the documentation supporting the application to the European Diploma (document PE-S-DE (2002) 22) and on the website www.tnp.sl.

The Park is on limestone and presents practically all the karst and glacial phenomena, with high summits, steep slopes, deep valleys, high plateaux, caves and pits, underground water. With the exception of Lake Bled, all glacial lakes of Slovenia are located in the Park.

The very high morphological diversity is reflected in the diversity of vegetation, flora and fauna. The alpine elements dominate, but with Mediterranean influences.

The flora in the park area is for the most part alpine, but due to its marginal situation and vicinity to the Mediterranean there are influences from the neighbouring floral regions. Particularly frequent are islands of thermophile vegetation with illyric and even submediterranean species.

3. LEGAL BASIS AND ADMINISTRATION

The Park was established by the Triglav National Park Act in 1981. This Act has now to be adapted, especially after the adoption of the Slovenian Nature Conservation Act of 1999 and a new law applicable to Triglav is in preparation.

The Park is managed by the Public Institution Triglav National Park, which depends on the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning.

The Parks Council, nominated by the government, is composed of:

- 6 representatives from the government;
- 6 representatives from the municipalities (one commune, very marginally concerned by the Park, is not formally represented),;
- 7 employees of the Park's administration;
- 2 representatives from NGOs (the Alpine Club and the Hunting Association of Slovenia).

70% of the budget is provided mainly by the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning and 30% by the commercial activities of the Park such as accommodation for visitors and sales. Special programme and projects receive support from other ministries or international sources.

The Park employs 42 persons, plus 3 in conjunction with the Life project.

Originally, about 70% of the land was state-owned. Following the privatisation process, only 1.7% of the land is now owned by the National Park.

The intention of the Park is to acquire, lease, or pass agreements with the owners, in areas in need of protection measures, for example natural monuments or zones of intensive pressure.

4. MANAGEMENT

4.1 Objectives

The aim is the long-term safeguarding of a territory of exceptional beauty and natural diversity, with strict protection of the core zone and the preservation of a cultural landscape in the surrounding areas.

The "Strategy for implementation and attainment of Category II IUCN" provides useful guiding principles for the step-by-step implementation or adaptation of protection measures.

4.2 Zoning

The present zoning includes four categories: IUCN II (24 500 ha), IUCN V (58 293 ha), nature reserves (1 014 ha) and several natural monuments.

The zoning is under review and will include a core zone, a subzone of the core zone with slightly less strict protection measures and a buffer zone. Logical adjustments to local situations will also be made, such as the reduction of the core zone in Bohinj, a very touristic centre, and the implementation of a special zone for the existing downhill ski resort area.

4.3 Fauna

The best-known animal is the Zlatorog, the mythical mountain goat with a golden horn.

Regular census of the more current wildlife is undertaken.

The typical alpine fauna is fully protected in the core area. In the buffer zone, control hunting is done on the basis of quotas for the following species: red deer, roe deer, chamois, moufflon, and wild boar in case of damage. The ibex, reintroduced about 50 years ago, is protected; its population has grown to 200-250.

Two species have been introduced: the marmot, now considered as almost indigenous, and the moufflon, which is regularly controlled but not eradicated.

A more detailed evaluation of the population of chamois (2 000-2 500) is planned to evaluate the necessity for control measures.

Regarding the large carnivores, all of which are protected, the lynx is regularly present. There is no established population of bears, but some animals wander regularly through the Park and measures are under study to cope with the damage they cause to sheep.

There is a very rich and diverse bird fauna in the Park, all species are protected.

The other species is the Soca trout, *Salmo marmorata*, which is the subject of special study with a view to conserving and reinforcing its population, restricted to the upper Soca valley.

Inventories of invertebrates are also regularly conducted, which has led to the recent discovery of a new species of shrimp, belonging to a new genus: *Pseudomoraria triglavensis*.

4.4 Vegetation and flora

Beech forest with *Anemone trifolia* is dominant, with spruce and larch at higher altitudes. Spruce is abundant, it has been actively encouraged in some exploited forests on the Pokljuka Plateau. Fire is rare. Mountain pine covers wide areas around the timber limit, associated with *Rhodotamnus* and *Rhododendron*. Thermophile associations include the *Orno-Ostryetum*, the endemic *Cytisantho-ostryetum* and the *Pinetum austroalpinum*.

Grassland is essentially of the *Seslerio-sempervirentetum* type

Linked with the diversity of natural conditions, many other vegetation types are known. The application document provides a very detailed list of vegetation and habitat types, based on European classification systems.

The flora is very rich, with about 1 600 vascular plants, some rare and some endemic such as *Aconitum angustifolium*, *Campanula zoysii*, *Cerastium subtriflorum*, *Festuca laxa*, *Papaver ernestimayeri*, *Papaver victoris*.

The interesting peat-bog formations are the subject of a large Life Project with the aim of ensuring better knowledge, protection and revitalisation of these very sensitive zones.

4.5 Forests

The forests in the core area are left to their natural evolution, without intervention.

In the buffer zone, there is a regular exploitation of the productive forests, under the control of the Forest Service, in co-ordination with the national park administration. Exploitation has in general not been intensive, except on the Pokljuka Plateau, where spruce has been actively promoted. In this area especially, the aim is now to encourage the regeneration of more natural forests, but in the long term, with interventions which remain limited.

In some areas, for example on slopes above Lake Bohinj, negotiations are under way with the owners to convince them to list their forests as protection forests, no longer exploited, with compensation, but with the advantage of being exonerated from the payment of land taxes.

4.6 Agriculture

Part of the landscape of Triglav National Park has been shaped by centuries of human activity. Mountain agriculture is still widespread in part of the Park, generally of low intensity.

The Park is developing a very active programme to encourage organic farming and rural tourism, especially in the south-east part of the Park. Local breeds of sheep and goats are also encouraged.

4.7 Cultural heritage

Human occupation and use of the territory has made important marks on the landscapes, such as high pastures and cowsheds, typical hayricks, characteristic architecture of villages, though changes have been made in the reconstruction following the dramatic earthquakes which recently caused important damage to many houses in the west part of the Park.

The west part of the National Park shows clear Mediterranean influences, with stone constructions predominant, the east part Central European influences, reflected in the wood constructions.

One exploitation, which declined at the end of the 18th century, has left many tracks.

The Triglav region was the site of long and cruel battles during the First World War.

Mountaineering has a very long and active history in the Triglav region, as is well explained in the Alpine Museum in Mojstrana.

5. EDUCATION, INFORMATION AND TOURISM

Information on the Park is very well developed. A website, a magazine, a series of good leaflets are excellent information products. The Information Centre in Trenta is particularly attractive. It is not located in the most visited areas, but in a very beautiful valley where it provides employment and dynamic activities. Overall, the values of the Park are very well presented in different ways and where it matters. Special activities linked more precisely with education are also promoted. In this context, the Alpine Club, to which most inhabitants from villages in or close to the Park belong, plays a very constructive and important role.

Tourism is well developed, with many local and foreign visitors.

Mountaineering at all levels, from rock climbing to hiking, is the most practised activity. There are dozens of alpine huts and refuges, most are frequently used, many throughout the year.

Downhill skiing is practised on a relatively large scale in the region of Vogel, above Lake Bohinj. There are few very small ski-lifts here and there in the Park, with practically no modification of the ground and no negative influences.

Cross-country skiing is mainly practised on the Pokljuka Plateau. On the same Plateau, at Rudno Polje there is also a biathlon stadium, on a military base. Measures are taken in co-operation with the Park to minimise the impacts on the buffer zone.

Rural tourism is being encouraged and provides welcome additional revenues to farmers in some villages.

6. RESEARCH

Most research activities are conducted by the Park personnel and aim at improving the knowledge of the area and completing a well-developed geographical information system. Good scientific articles are regularly published in the series “Triglavski Razgledi”.

Most work is directed at inventories, but also at the development of sophisticated spatial information systems, which facilitate the use of the data collected and management decisions.

It would be useful to encourage more scientific research by outside institutions, and to make it compulsory for scientists working in the Park to first apply for a permit and then provide a report on their findings.

It would also be useful for the Park to develop a list of research ideas or proposals on subjects which could be interesting and/or useful for the management for the Park.

7. RELATIONS WITH OTHER PARTNERS

Relationships with the other municipalities are good, as well as with the agriculture, forest and tourism services. There is close co-operation with the Alpine Club, which ensures the maintenance of the network of trails, at no cost to the Park.

8. INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

The Triglav national park has extensive contacts with international organisations such as IUCN, UNESCO, Europark Federation, Network of Alpine Protected Areas, Eurosite.

9. PENDING PROBLEMS

The management and protection of the Triglav National Park is in a stage of dynamic evolution. There are clear protection objectives, constructive measures are taken, but there is also a series of problems to tackle. In this context, the following issues merit special attention:

9.1 Zoning

The objectives are clearly set and measures are taken step by step to increase the core zone in order to protect all areas with high value (such as steep, well-exposed slopes in the south of the Park), establish a subzone of the core zone to accommodate regions where strict protection cannot be implemented, take out of the core zone, but leave protection measures, areas such as part of the Vogel skiing zone and recreational areas, including the climbing training area on the shores of Lake Bohinj.

9.2 Land use planning

Constructions are not allowed in the park, with the exception of some areas where constructions linked to agriculture can be renovated, built or rebuilt. Some new houses seem to provide more space for the “farmers” than for the cows.

There is a need for clearer directives and control of the agricultural use of the various buildings and a strict application of the regulations.

It would also be useful if the Park took a more active role, with other partners, in encouraging the best possible integration of the local style when houses or farms are built or renovated.

9.3 Traffic

Traffic is on the increase. New facilities are offered, such as the opening throughout the year of the Vrsic pass, on the road from Bovec to Kranska Gora through the Trenta Valley and the Pisciina Valley. The road of the Vrata Valley, used to approach the Triglav, is small and used by cars as well as by pedestrians. There is a dense network of forest roads on the Pokljuka Plateau. Many roads are closed to the general public, less than half are opened. In winter, only few of them are open. Some forest roads, in the Bohinj region, can be used against payment to the municipality, which ensures the maintenance.

There is therefore a need for a good traffic concept in order to minimise disturbances, channel visitors, separate pedestrians and vehicles. Good projects have already been implemented by the Park authority to encourage walking rather than driving in the Vrata Valley, on Pokljuka Plateau and in the Trenta Valley, with a very nice footpath along the Soca river.

It should be noted that the Park is not responsible for the maintenance of the roads; this is ensured by the State, by the Forest service or by municipalities.

Regular flying at low altitude by small aircraft is a cause of regular disturbances, both for the tourists and for the fauna.

9.4 Ownership

All aspects of the changes in ownership linked to the transition period have not yet been solved, for example land which could be returned to the church or buildings owned by people or companies from outside Slovenia. It would be useful if the cases still pending could be solved rapidly taking into account the interests of the Park.

9.5 Waste water

The Triglav National Park has a very important role to play with regard to water resources. It covers 4% of the national territory, but provides some 20% of the water of Slovenia.

Being at the top of the watersheds, it does not receive pollution from above (except the unavoidable atmospheric pollution).

But all measures possible should be taken to reduce as far as possible downstream pollution. This applies especially to frequently used mountain huts and weekend areas such as the group of houses on the Pokljuka Plateau. Pollution from agricultural sources does not seem to be a problem at the present level of exploitation.

9.6 Agriculture and nature protection

The activities in the Park to encourage organic agriculture are very good, and the relationships developed between farmers and Park personnel excellent. It would however be useful to make a better appraisal of the influences of agricultural practices and the conservation of nature and landscape, for example the consequences of silage on the quality of the meadows.

10. CONCLUSIONS ET RECOMMENDATIONS

The geological formations, vegetation, species, cultural marks present in the Park can be found in several other places in Europe.

This is true, but to our knowledge nowhere else are there due to the so many assets which can be found in the same area: breathtaking landscapes, the almost entire series of karst phenomenon, size of habitats, the extent of variations in altitude and orientation, richness of flora and fauna, cultural heritage, dynamic protection and management of a very large area.

We therefore state that the Triglav National Park is of European interest, and benefits in general from adequate protection measures.

We recommend that the European Diploma be attributed to the Triglav National Park, with the following conditions and recommendations, whose main objectives are to support initiatives already underway by the managers of the Park and ensure the best protection of the natural values of the Park.

Condition

Finalise and formalise the management plan as soon as the new law on Triglav National Park is passed.

Recommendations

1. Zoning

Review the zoning plan in order to enlarge the core zone, establish a sub-zone of the core zone, and transfer to the buffer zone the areas where strong protection measures cannot be implemented.

2. Land-use planning

Apply strictly the land-use planning regulations related to new constructions and renovation work.

3. Waste water

Work on solutions to solve the problem of wastewater, especially for buildings and huts with intensive human occupation.

4. Carnivores

Continue to develop schemes to enable the co-existence of sheep farming and the presence of large carnivores such as bear, wolf and lynx, with the aim of increasing the carnivore population in the Park.

5. Integration

Ensure the best integration possible of the various activities conducted in the Park, for example the integration of organic farming and nature protection.

6. Forests

Pursue all measures aiming at converting artificial spruce forest to climax mixed forests and at increasing the area of protection forests.

7. Traffic

Develop and implement a detailed management plan to cope with problems related to traffic and transportation, establish quiet zones through the creation of restricted flight areas.

8. Sporting activities

Continue to monitor the various sporting activities practised in the National Park and ensure that they remain compatible with the conservation objectives.

9. Built heritage

Encourage the best integration of new buildings and the renovation of old buildings in respecting the traditional local style.

10. Research

Improve co-ordination and control of research activities in the Park.

11. Ownership

Follow closely the transition of ownership in the Park, encourage quick decisions on pending questions and ensure that the interests of the Park are fully taken into account.

APPENDIX

Draft resolution concerning the award of the European Diploma of Protected Areas to the Triglav National Park (Slovenia)

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 15.a of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to Resolution (65) 6 instituting the European Diploma, as amended by Resolution (98) 29 on the Regulations for the European Diploma of Protected Areas;

Taking into consideration the expert's report presented at the meeting of the Group of Specialists - European Diploma of Protected Areas on 12 and 13 January 2004;

Having regard to the proposals of the Committee for the Activities of the Council of Europe in the Field of Biological and Landscape Diversity (CO-DBP);

Having noted the agreement of the Government of Slovenia,

After deliberation,

Solemnly awards the European Diploma of Protected Areas to the Triglav National Park which protects breathtaking landscapes, entire series of karst phenomenon, a great diversity of natural habitats, a rich flora and fauna and an important cultural heritage;

Places the aforesaid area under the patronage of the Council of Europe until,

Attaches the following condition to the award:

- finalise and formalise the management plan as soon as the new law on Triglav National Park is passed.

Attaches the following recommendations to the award:

1. Review the zoning plan in order to enlarge the core zone, establish a sub-zone of the core zone, and transfer to the buffer zone the areas where strong protection measures cannot be implemented.
2. Apply strictly the land-use planning regulations related to new constructions and renovation work.
3. Work on solutions to solve the problem of wastewater, especially for buildings and huts with intensive human occupation.
4. Continue to develop schemes to enable the co-existence of sheep farming and the presence of large carnivores such as bear, wolf and lynx, with the aim of increasing the carnivore population in the Park.
5. Ensure the best integration possible of the various activities conducted in the Park, for example the integration of organic farming and nature protection.
6. Pursue all measures aiming at converting artificial spruce forest to climax mixed forests and at increasing the area of protection forests.
7. Develop and implement a detailed management plan to cope with problems related to traffic and transportation, establish quiet zones through the creation of restricted flight areas.

8. Continue to monitor the various sporting activities practised in the National Park and ensure that they remain compatible with the conservation objectives.
9. Encourage the best integration of new buildings and the renovation of old buildings in respecting the traditional local style.
10. Improve co-ordination and control of research activities in the Park.
11. Follow closely the transition of ownership in the Park, encourage quick decisions on pending questions and ensure that the interests of the Park are fully taken into account.