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PE-S-DE (2002) 21

**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

20-21 January 2003
Room 2, Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg

**Tihany Peninsula
(Hungary)**

APPLICATION

Expert report by
Mr Jean Renault (Belgique)

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

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the visit was to make an on-the-spot appraisal of an area on the Tihany Peninsula, a former protected landscape area recently incorporated into the Balaton Uplands National Park. The European Diploma application for this area was lodged by the Hungarian Ministry of the Environment and bears the reference PE-S-DE (2002) 18.

This is a new application following up the one lodged in 2000 under reference PE-S-DE (2000) 73, for which an on-the-spot expert appraisal was carried out from 28 to 30 August 2001. The report of that appraisal (reference PE-S-DE (2001) 12) was submitted to the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma of Protected Areas at its meeting on 1-2 March 2002.

On the basis of that meeting's conclusions (report PE-S-DE (2001) 15) and in the light of further observations by the Hungarian government (document PE-S-DE (2001) 12 Addendum I), the Committee of Ministers:

1. recognised
 - that the Tihany Peninsula is of European interest, particularly for its geological and physiographical formations, as well as for the quality of its landscape;
 - the efforts made by the Hungarian authorities thus far to protect the natural, landscape and cultural features of the Tihany Peninsula, in spite of the intense pressure it is under from tourism;
2. decided to reject the application, considering that the following preconditions had to be fulfilled:
 - the boundaries of the area must be redrawn in order to exclude at least those parts of the built-up zones which are by nature difficult to reconcile with high-quality, nature-oriented tourism;
 - a more ambitious enhancement, protection and interpretation programme for the geological formations must be introduced, with adequate resources. The programme should include, at the very least, a definition of a "geyser cone field", where specific management measures must be applied, giving the geological formations top priority;
 - water quality in Lake Belső must be restored, and all external contamination stopped.
3. invited the Hungarian government to submit a new application taking full account of the aforementioned conditions.

Obviously, the on-the-spot appraisal concentrated on checking that the conditions laid down by the Committee of Ministers had been fulfilled, since most of the elements relative to the site's European interest and management had already been analysed in the expert's first report after the visit in August 2001. The present report must be regarded, therefore, as an update of the report based on the first application.

The visit took place from 30 June to 2 July 2002, in the company of Mrs Françoise Bauer, of the Council of Europe Secretariat. The first day was devoted to preparing the appraisal with the Secretariat, and the second and third days were spent actually visiting the site. We were accompanied throughout the visit by Mr Zoltán Szilassy, Deputy head of department in the Nature Conservation Division. We would like to thank the Hungarian authorities for the flawless organisation of this visit.

VISIT PROGRAMME

Monday 1 July 2002

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| 9 am | Journey from Budapest to Veszprém |
| 10.30 am | Arrival in Veszprém – Meeting with Mr Bela Kovacs, Director of the Balaton Uplands National Park. Discussion of technical points. |
| 2 pm | Departure for Tihany |
| 3 pm | Meeting with Mr János Futó, geologist. Visit of the site focusing on the elements in the Development Plan (geyser fields, Lake Belső) accompanied by Mrs Annamaria Kopek, head |

of the National Park's tourism and education department, and Mr Jozsef Vers, responsible for the Tihany Landscape Protection Area

7.30 pm Meal and meeting with Mr Bela Kovacs, Director

Tuesday 2 July 2002

8.30 am Meeting with Mr István Bors, Mayor of Tihany

9.30 am Lóczy Geyzer nature trail

2 pm Visit to the Hegyestű geological demonstration area.
Discussion and conclusions of the visit.

6.30 pm End of the visit.

The Hungarian government provided a number of additional documents either prior to or during the visit:

- Results of an analysis of water from Lake Belső (a single sample taken on 10 July 2001)
- Document concerning the staff and facilities available to the Tihany unit of the Balaton Uplands National Park's management
- Document setting out expenditure in the Tihany unit of the Balaton Uplands National Park's management
- Summary of the Settlement regularisation plan for Tihany
- Declaration of support for the management plan of the Tihany diploma area from Dr János Tardy (17 June 2002)
- Management plan for nature conservation in the European Diploma candidate area of Tihany (prepared by János Futó, Norbert Bauer and Zoltán Kenyeres).

ANALYSIS

1. General context and European interest of the area

The detailed analysis set out in report PE-S-DE (2001) 12 still applies. The Tihany area contains significant examples of geological, geomorphological and volcanic phenomena which, according to the criteria listed in the Diploma regulations, mark the Tihany Peninsula as being of European interest, a prerequisite for the award of the European Diploma. Adding to this interest are landscape and biological features (particularly the strictly protected area around Lake Kulső).

2. Boundaries – zoning

The initial application was for the entire Tihany Peninsula. In the light of the conclusions of the first on-the-spot appraisal, particularly regarding the inclusion of infrastructures difficult to reconcile with a distinction such as the European Diploma, the Hungarian government made an initial proposal to alter the area's boundaries, already submitted at the meeting of the Group of Specialists in March 2002. Although new alterations had subsequently been made, the second application contained neither a map nor a precise description of the area's boundaries. These items were expressly requested during the visit and the Secretariat received them on 9 August 2002. The information received included a 1:10,000 scale map showing the boundaries of the area and the strictly protected area around Lake Kulső and a precise description of the area's boundaries. This demarcation must be considered as the definitive reference; the surface area of the site, for which diverging figures still appear in the application file and the management plan, should be definitively established on the basis of this demarcation. The figure of 645.45 ha is recommended.

The boundaries as now drawn overcome the objections raised in the report on the initial application. The great majority of the natural assets are located within the area, particularly the finest examples of special geological formations. It forms a homogeneous unit, making for easier management. Residential areas, public footpaths and intensive farming areas are all excluded. The farmed area consists of small-holdings and traditional vineyards.

Obviously, given this new demarcation, the cultural interest of the village of Tihany itself no longer enters into our considerations, as it lies outside the area. The same applies to the biological interest of the strictly protected reedbeds in Bozsai Bay. Nonetheless, these cultural and biological assets are integral components of the Balaton Uplands National Park and as such enjoy adequate protection status.

It is to be noted that the part of the area enjoying the strictest conservation status, namely Lake Kulsö, is not the one providing the strongest justification for the European Diploma. Also to be noted is the lack of a buffer zone around the built-on areas but, here too, the fact that the entire peninsula forms part of the National Park should provide sufficient guarantees for the integrity and conservation of the site.

The ambiguity of the name of the Diploma candidate area remains very much a problem. The fact that the national and international renown of Tihany is based essentially on its cultural and landscape heritage undeniably poses a risk of confusion as to the grounds for awarding the European Diploma which, it should be remembered, are its geological, geomorphological and volcanic features. The name "Tihany Peninsula", proposed by the new and old application alike, perpetuates that confusion.

3. State of conservation

The state of conservation of the Tihany Peninsula was assessed in-depth in the report of the first on-the-spot appraisal. It may be considered satisfactory, particularly following the boundary alterations made and the exclusion of built-on areas.

In response to the precondition laid down by the Committee of Ministers, the first tangible steps have been taken towards enhancing part of the geyser field, by clearing the area around several cones in the immediate proximity of the most famous of them (the "Golden House"). Safeguarding geological assets has been placed at the top of the list of the development plan's main objectives, with the dual strategy of keeping the geological heritage intact and giving visitors adequate information on it (cf point 3.3.1 of the development plan). Efforts to provide clear views of this field of geyser cones should be swiftly pursued.

There have been conflicting reports from the Hungarian authorities themselves as regards the state of conservation of Lake Belsö. On the one hand, all waste water from the Tihany Peninsula is collected and removed from the peninsula for processing in Balatonfüred. On the other hand, there has been a report of contamination of the run-off water trickling into Lake Belsö; it appears that the contamination was caused by an accident resulting from illegal activities. It may be said, therefore, that the Hungarian government has taken the necessary steps to avoid contamination of Lake Belsö, which is a fragile system whose self-purifying capability must be safeguarded.

In response to the condition laid down by the Committee of Ministers concerning the quality of water in Lake Belsö, the government has passed on the analysis results for a sample taken on 10 July 2001. Since it is a single sample taken at a single sampling point we cannot draw conclusions as to water quality, and all the more so since many parameters that have been measured provide little information on environmental quality and deterioration. The results submitted are therefore of little value. For that reason, it was asked, during the visit, that the Secretariat be provided with a description of the potentially ideal state of the lake in terms of biological value and an assessment of its current state.

The Hungarian government sent on an expert opinion on the importance of Lake Belsö in public health terms, which merely assesses the water quality in human health terms. The Director has pointed out that *the only existing classification for water is based on the quantity of nutrients and that Lake Belsö is a eutrophic lake as a result of natural succession and not of human intervention; since the lake is shallow and has no outflow, the quantity of organic matter produced by the plants living in it is increasing*. It seems quite clear though that the quality of water in Lake Belsö was considerably better in 1930 and maintained a far greater wealth of flora and fauna than at present.

As pointed out in the first report, a special effort is called for, from Tihany local council working in conjunction with the Directorate of Water Management and the National Park Directorate, to improve the hydrochemical and biological quality of the lake and bring it into line with the area's other assets. It would seem preferable to transfer ownership of the lake, or at least responsibility for its management, to the National Park Directorate. This would not necessarily affect recreational fishing in the lake.

CONCLUSIONS

Having regard to the conclusions of the on-the-spot appraisal carried out in August 2000 on the basis of the first application,

Considering that the conditions laid down by the Group of Specialists in March 2001 have been fulfilled, namely:

- the redrawing of the area's boundaries,
- the enhancement programme for geological formations,
- the halting of contamination of the waters of Lake Belsö,

it is proposed that the European Diploma be awarded to the candidate area for the exceptional interest of its geological, geomorphological and volcanic formations.

It is proposed that the following **condition** be attached to the Diploma award:

- complete the development of the "geyser field" begun in 2001 and 2002 and apply management measures to that zone, giving the geological formations top priority.

It is proposed that the following **recommendations** be attached to the Diploma award:

- a) select for the Diploma area a name which clearly emphasises those features that are of European interest;
- b) set up a visitors information centre, giving it the necessary resources to implement an effective information policy;
- c) finalise procedures for approving the management plan and development plan without delay;
- d) ensure that pressure from tourism on the Tihany Peninsula does not devalue the site;
- e) monitor the quality of water in Lake Belsö and take the necessary measures, in conjunction with the authority responsible for managing the lake, to improve its biological quality;
- f) ensure that prohibitions and restrictions on building are strictly applied;
- g) maintain the current balance between forests and farmed areas in order to protect the landscape;
- h) maintain traditional farming practices in the entire area;
- i) strengthen collaboration between all the authorities responsible for managing the area and, if possible, place the management of all the zones belonging to the state under the sole responsibility of the National Park;
- j) lessen, as far as possible, the harmful effects of the fragmented nature of land ownership by systematically purchasing the most vulnerable plots, or by any other means provided for in the Nature Conservation Act.

APPENDIX I**Draft resolution
on the award of the European Diploma of Protected Areas
to the Tihany Peninsula (Hungary)**

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;

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);

Taking into consideration the expert's report presented at the meeting of the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma of Protected Areas on 20 and 21 January 2003;

Having noted the agreement of the Government of the Hungarian Republic,

After deliberation,

Solemnly awards the European Diploma of Protected Areas to the candidate area for the exceptional interest of its geological, geomorphological and volcanic formations;

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

Attaches the following condition to the award:

- complete the development of the "geyser field" begun in 2001 and 2002 and apply management measures to that zone, giving the geological formations top priority.

Attaches the following recommendations to the award:

1. select for the Diploma area a name which clearly emphasises those features that are of European interest;
2. set up a visitors information centre, giving it the necessary resources to implement an effective information policy;
3. finalise procedures for approving the management plan and development plan without delay;
4. ensure that pressure from tourism on the Tihany Peninsula does not devalue the site;
5. monitor the quality of water in Lake Belső and take the necessary measures, in conjunction with the authority responsible for managing the lake, to improve its biological quality; study the possibility of transferring ownership of the lake to the National Park Directorate;
6. ensure that prohibitions and restrictions on building are strictly applied;
7. maintain the current balance between forests and farmed areas in order to protect the landscape;
8. maintain traditional farming practices in the entire area;
9. strengthen collaboration between all the authorities responsible for managing the area and, if possible, place the management of all the zones belonging to the state under the sole responsibility of the National Park;

10. lessen, as far as possible, the harmful effects of the fragmented nature of land ownership by systematically purchasing the most vulnerable plots, or by any other means provided for in the Nature Conservation Act.