Strasbourg, 30 October 2026 **T-PVS(2026)10**

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

46th meeting

Strasbourg, 7-11 December 2026

16th meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks (GoEPAEN), jointly with the 5th meeting of the Working Group on overseeing the implementation of the Strategic Plan

29-30 September 2026
Lagodekhi, Georgia

- MEETING REPORT -

Document prepared by the Secretariat

The Standing Committee is invited to:

- Take note of the report of the 16th meeting of the GoEPAEN held jointly with 5th meeting of the Working Group overseeing the implementation of the Strategic Plan;
- Express its warm thanks to the authorities of Georgia for hosting the joint meeting;
- Acknowledge the updated guidelines for completing the Emerald Network Standard Data Form (SDF);
- Take note of the latest developments concerning Reportnet 3 and its application to the Emerald Network;
- Invite Contracting Parties to review and, where necessary, update their Emerald Network reference lists in light of the checklist changes made during reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012), and to submit updated Emerald Network databases;
- Encourage Contracting Parties to further develop and strengthen the Emerald Network in the context of EU accession, in close cooperation with the European Environment Agency (EEA);
- Take note of the work conducted to prepare the legal analysis of negative changes to Emerald Network sites and the revised draft guidelines on explaining negative changes in proposed, candidate and adopted Emerald Network sites; and request the Secretariat to continue consultations with the Contracting Parties and report on progress to the 47th meeting of the Standing Committee;
- Provide guidance to the Secretariat on the next steps in preparing the mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan;
- Take note of the voluntary national updates on the implementation of the Strategic Plan and encourage Contracting Parties to participate in future reporting exercises;
- Invite Contracting Parties to submit proposals to host the 2027 meetings of the GoEPAEN and Working Group on overseeing implementation of the Strategic Plan.

1. Opening of the meeting

The Chair of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks, Ms Danielle Hoffmann, warmly welcomed the participants and opened the meeting.

The Secretary of the Bern Convention, Ms Grazia Alessandra Siino, also welcomed the participants and thanked the Georgian authorities for hosting the meeting. She situated the Convention's work within the Council of Europe's increasing focus on the environment and emphasised the importance of protected areas, the Emerald Network and the European Diploma for Protected Areas. She also thanked the Parties for their continued support.

Georgia, as the host country, warmly welcomed the participants and emphasised its commitments to the Bern Convention, highlighting its focus on strengthening management of existing Emerald sites, addressing data gaps, and updating its national database.

Mr Carl Amirgulashvili welcomed participants and noted the importance of the meeting's work for the Convention and to the Emerald Network.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted following a clarification from the United Kingdom to the expected outcomes under agenda item 4 on the updated Standard Data Form guidelines and item 13 on the revised guidelines on explaining negative changes in the Emerald Network. The United Kingdom noted that that both documents should be submitted to the Standing Committee for consideration.

3. Conclusions of the 15th meeting of the GoEPAEN and the 4th meeting of the Working Group overseeing the implementation of the Strategic Plan. Relevant decisions of the 45th meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention

The Chair, Ms Danielle Hoffmann, recalled the main outcomes of the previous meetings of the GoEPAEN and the Working Group on overseeing implementation of the Strategic Plan, including the revised Standard Data Form, Reportnet 3 and the assessment of negative changes affecting Emerald Network sites.

The Chair regretted that Mr Jan Plesník, Chair of the Working Group overseeing implementation of the Strategic Plan, had been unable to attend the meeting and wished him a speedy recovery.

4. Emerald Network updated Standard Data Form guidelines

The expert, Ms Laura Gavilán Iglesias, presented the updated guidelines for completing the Emerald Network Standard Data Form. She emphasised that the guidelines explain the information required in the different fields, including new or revised fields concerning data methods, conservation measures and management effectiveness. The expert noted that the revised form is intended to improve the information available for sufficiency assessments and other analyses.

The UK raised concerns about the translation of national habitat classifications into the habitat types listed in Resolution No. 4 (1996), expressing concern that requiring the relevant fields to be completed could put sites at risk of being removed from the Emerald Network. The UK therefore stated that it cannot endorse these guidelines and would welcome further discussion with the Secretariat to find a pragmatic and flexible approach that ensures the UK sites are not excluded from the Emerald Network. The expert explained that difficulties in translating habitat classifications could be examined on a case-by-case basis and that the habitat interpretation manual may be amended where appropriate, and that the guidelines were not to be adopted by the Standing Committee but rather support the Contracting Parties in understanding the fields of the Standard Data Form (SDF).

Albania asked whether the work it had undertaken on the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form (SDF) could also be used for the Emerald Network. The expert explained that the forms are closely aligned, though some fields and reference lists differ, and noted that information from EU accession countries may be transferred between the formats, subject to the necessary adjustments.

Participants were informed that new or amended SDF fields would be subject to a transition period, with the corresponding validation rules expected to become mandatory from 2030.

The Chair concluded that the group could endorse the Standard Data Form guidelines for submission to the Standing Committee for consideration.

Decision of the members of the GoEPAEN and the Working Group:

The participants endorsed the updated guidelines for the Emerald Network Standard Data Form for submission to the Standing Committee for consideration.

5. Reportnet 3: Current status and future prospects of the platform

The expert, Ms Laura Gavilán Iglesias, presented the Emerald Network portal being developed within Reportnet 3 and explained that it is intended to provide tools for managing reference data, tabular and spatial reporting, supporting documents and a function for exporting completed SDFs.

The expert emphasised that the validation rules were currently being tested and reviewed. The group was also informed about the planned Reportnet 3 training and testing process, including training on Emerald Network data submissions scheduled for 2027.

Decision of the members of the GoEPAEN and the Working Group:

The participants took note of the latest developments concerning the Emerald Network portal in Reportnet 3, including the testing and review of validation rules and the planned training and testing process.

6. Outcomes of national reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012) and link between the Resolution No. 8 (2012) checklists and Emerald Network Reference Lists

The expert, Ms Laura Gavilán Iglesias, presented results of the national reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012). Eight countries had submitted data: Switzerland, Iceland, Monaco, Montenegro, Moldova, Norway, Serbia and the United Kingdom. Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia had also been involved in the process but had not submitted data by the time of the presentation.

The group was informed of improvements in data quality compared with the previous reporting round, while also noting significant data gaps. In particular, reporting on the Emerald Network and habitat condition remained incomplete. The reported conservation status and trends were generally not positive, and a substantial proportion of features had been reported as having unknown status.

The expert also summarised changes made to national checklists of habitats and species during the reporting process and explained that countries should ensure their Emerald databases and SDFs remain consistent with the revised checklists and reference lists. Moldova, Montenegro, Norway and Serbia were identified as countries where discrepancies exist between Emerald databases and national checklists.

The Secretariat encouraged further submissions and noted that the reporting exercise would remain open until 30 November 2026.

Decision of the members of the GoEPAEN and the Working Group:

The participants took note of the results of national reporting and the identified data gaps, including the need to keep Emerald Network databases and SDFs consistent with revised checklists and reference lists and welcomed the new submissions of the national databases.

7. Strategic Plan indicators dependent on data from national reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012)

The experts, Mr Dave Pritchard and Ms Laura Gavilán Iglesias, presented work linking reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012) to Strategic Plan indicators 1.1.a, 1.4, 2.1 and 2.2. They explained that the reporting fields provide relevant information for these indicators but may not fully cover all their elements. The final results would therefore need to explain limitations related to response rates, data completeness and data quality.

The experts identified possible complementary sources of information, including information from the SDFs and relevant reporting within the European Union. They also highlighted the importance of improving the completeness of data fields that could support future assessments of habitat trends, species status and pressures.

Decision of the members of the GoEPAEN and the Working Group:

The participants took note of the experts' analysis of how reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012) can inform Strategic Plan indicators 1.1.a, 1.4, 2.1 and 2.2 and considered possible limitations in response levels, data completeness and data quality, and emphasised the importance of improving data in future reporting rounds.

8. Natura 2000 and the Emerald Network: connections and transition between the two

Mr Frank Vassen, representing the European Commission, described the close relationship between the Bern Convention and EU nature legislation, as well as between the Emerald and Natura 2000 networks. He explained that the networks are closely aligned in terms of their conservation objectives, site-selection approaches and technical reporting arrangements, while noting that EU nature directives provide a more detailed and legally binding framework for EU Member States.

The presentation encouraged the EU candidate countries to develop expertise in the Emerald Network and gather biodiversity data early, so that they can prepare for future Natura 2000 requirements and identify gaps in the network in advance.

Decision of the members of the GoEPAEN and the Working Group:

The participants took note of the relationship between Natura 2000 and the Emerald Network, including their alignment in conservation objectives, site selection and technical reporting. The Group and the Secretariat highlighted the importance of further developing and strengthening the Emerald Network within the framework of EU accession.

9. Ongoing EU-funded projects on the Emerald Network in Europe

Mr Frank Vassen, policy officer at the EU Commission, provided an overview of EU-funded projects supporting the development of the Emerald Network and related nature conservation work, including projects covering Eastern Partnership countries and the Western Balkans, as well as Ukraine and Moldova.

Participants discussed the need to make project results and biodiversity information available and to use them to support further Emerald Network development. The Secretariat highlighted the importance of linking project investment to tangible outcomes, including updated databases and new submissions. The discussion also highlighted the value of evaluating project results and making better use of information gathered through project-funded activities. The Secretariat welcomed further coordination with the European Commission and project partners.

Decision of the members of the GoEPAEN and the Working Group:

The participants took note of the information presented on EU-funded projects supporting the Emerald Network and related nature-conservation work and highlighted the importance of using them to support further network development.

10. Emerald Network in Georgia

The host country, Georgia, reported that its Emerald Network consists of 66 adopted sites and that it had not extended since the meeting of the GoEPAEN in 2025. It also noted the shift in

emphasis from designation towards effective management, including the development of site-level conservation objectives and their integration into planning, monitoring and reporting.

Georgia described its ongoing work on reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012), noting that gaps in reliable and sufficient data had prolonged the process. It also reported on research into species and ongoing efforts to strengthen the evidence base for conservation assessments. Georgia explained that the initial results were available and that it aimed to upload data to the reporting platform and submit the report by the end of 2026.

11. Development of the Emerald Network in Contracting Parties

The Chair invited Contracting Parties to report on national developments, current challenges and plans for updating their Emerald Network databases.

Participants were informed of the varying levels of progress in the development of the Emerald Network across Contracting Parties. Several countries are reviewing existing sites and databases, strengthening monitoring and management, and preparing updated SDFs and data for future assessment.

In some countries, this work is closely linked to the development of Natura 2000 and national ecological networks. Progress remains dependent on completing and validating scientific information, while limited resources and unresolved data and reporting issues present continuing challenges. Participants highlighted the value of technical assistance and coordination in supporting database updates, biogeographical evaluation and effective site management.

Decision of the members of the GoEPAEN and the Working Group:

The participants took note of the national updates on the development of the Emerald Network, including progress and challenges related to national database updates, monitoring, management and preparation for future biogeographical assessments.

12. Negative changes to Emerald Network sites: legal analysis of the scope for authorising potentially harmful activities

The Secretariat reminded the group of its decision at the previous meeting to propose a legal analysis of the criteria for assessing negative changes in Emerald Network sites. The analysis was intended to examine the possibility of reducing the size of or fully delisting a site for “imperative reasons of overriding public interest”, subject to compensatory measures, and the compatibility of such action with Article 9 of the Bern Convention, with a view to possibly updating the guidelines on explaining negative changes.

In response, the expert, Mr Arie Trouwborst, presented the findings of a legal analysis of the scope for authorising activities that may cause negative changes to Emerald Network sites. The analysis concluded that Article 9 may apply to habitat conservation obligations, but that any exception concerning Emerald Network sites must be interpreted and applied restrictively. Parties would need to demonstrate that the exception serves a vital interest, that no satisfactory alternative exists and that it would not be detrimental to the survival of the habitat

concerned. Where damage to habitats can neither be avoided nor mitigated to a sufficient extent, the taking of effective compensatory measures must be considered a mandatory aspect of the application of Article 9.

The United Kingdom, Switzerland and Norway noted that they had not had sufficient time to consult their legal and technical experts, as the documents were shared with the Group two weeks before the meeting. The United Kingdom proposed a written consultation and requested that the documents return to the GoEPAEN for consideration in 2027. Following the discussions, the group agreed to set 31 January 2027 as the deadline for submitting written comments. However, the United Kingdom stated that it could not agree to the proposed four-month period and requested that its objection be formally recorded.

Decision of the members of the GoEPAEN and the Working Group:

The participants took note of the legal analysis on the scope for authorising potentially harmful activities in the Emerald Network and agreed that further consultations are necessary, inviting written comments on the legal analysis by 31 January 2027.

13. Revised Guidelines for explaining negative changes in Emerald Network proposed, candidate and adopted sites

The expert, Mr Otars Opermanis, presented revised guidelines intended to clarify the circumstances in which negative changes to Emerald Network sites may be accepted and the supporting information that Contracting Parties should provide. The proposed categories included genuine scientific errors, natural developments, technical corrections and exceptional application of Article 9.

The expert also presented overview tables and individual explanations of changes, supported by information such as mapping, monitoring and site management details. Participants discussed whether compensatory measures could be included in the overview tables. The expert confirmed that the proposed table fields represented minimum requirements and that countries could provide additional information, including on compensation, where this would assist assessment.

The United Kingdom, Switzerland and Norway requested additional time to review the legal analysis and guidelines. Following the discussion, the group set 31 January 2027 as the deadline for written comments. The United Kingdom stated that it could not agree to the four-month timeline and requested to record its objection. Norway and Switzerland considered the revised deadline acceptable.

Decision of the members of the GoEPAEN and the Working Group:

The participants took note of the revised draft guidelines for explaining negative changes in proposed, candidate and adopted Emerald Network sites and agreed that further consultations are necessary. They invited Contracting Parties to submit written comments on revised guidelines by 31 January 2027.

14. Ongoing work on the Strategic Plan: results of "voluntary national updates on the implementation of the Strategic Plan", study on nature-based solutions and reflection on the 'case-file system' Voluntary national updates

The expert, Mr Dave Pritchard, provided an interim update on voluntary national updates. Six countries had submitted responses by the deadline, with three additional late submissions, bringing the total to nine. The reports provided information mainly on activities rather than conservation outcomes. All nine responding countries had agreed to the publication of their individual responses.

Nature-based solutions

The expert, Mr Lawrence Jones-Walters, presented outcomes of the study – *"Draft Policy Guidance and Advice on Capacity Building Measures for the Adoption of Nature-Based Solutions and Ecosystem-Based Approaches Embedded in Broader Governance Structures*", on nature-based solutions and ecosystem-based approaches. The study found that these approaches were increasingly reflected in national policies and practices, but that terminology varied and policy commitments did not always translate into implementation. Enabling factors included cross-sectoral coordination, clearly defined institutional responsibilities, stakeholder participation, science-policy links, monitoring and knowledge exchange.

Case-file system

The Secretariat reported on its ongoing reflection on the Bern Convention case-file system. This included revising the complaint form, exploring the possibility of an online platform for submitting complaints, considering the publication of Bureau decisions on the case-file dashboard and developing possible standard templates for Parties' updates on implementation of recommendations. The Secretariat noted that this reflection was ongoing, with results intended to be submitted to the Standing Committee for information.

Links with the Global Biodiversity Framework

The expert, Mr Dave Pritchard, provided a brief update on potential links between selected Bern Convention indicators and Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) indicators. He noted that the use of related data sources could support synergies and reduce duplication in reporting.

Decision of the members of the GoEPAEN and the Working Group:

The participants took note of the interim update on voluntary national updates, the study on nature-based solutions and the Secretariat's ongoing reflection on the case-file system.

15. Mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan in 2027

The expert, Mr Dave Pritchard, outlined questions to be considered when planning the 2027 mid-term evaluation, including its format, timing, resources, responsibility for drafting and the indicators that could be assessed. He proposed considering both quantitative results and a qualitative account of progress across the Strategic Plan.

The discussion supported prioritising indicators related to Resolution No. 8 (2012), the Emerald Network and the case-file system, while recognising limitations in the data available for some indicators. The Secretariat was tasked with developing a proposed framework and outlining options for the evaluation, including a suggested timeline and format.

The Secretariat encouraged the participants to contribute to future voluntary national updates, noting that the next round might need to be scheduled earlier in 2027 to ensure that the results could inform the mid-term evaluation.

Decision of the members of the GoEPAEN and the Working Group:

The participants requested the Secretariat to prepare a framework for the mid-term evaluation, including a proposed timeline and format, prioritising indicators related to Resolution No. 8 (2012), the Emerald Network and the case-file system, while taking account of available data and its limitations.

16. Programme of activities for 2026–2027

The Secretariat presented a provisional programme of activities related to the development of the Emerald Network in 2026 and 2027. The activities included contributing to a TAEIX workshop for EU accession countries, the organisation of several side events for COP17 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, organising a training course on Reportnet 3 in 2027, holding a biogeographical seminar in Montenegro, following up on reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012), continuing work on the Emerald Network portal and preparing for the mid-term review of the Strategic Plan. The programme was described as provisional and subject to further coordination and consideration by the Standing Committee.

The Secretariat confirmed that further submissions under Resolution No. 8 (2012) would be welcomed until 30 November 2026.

17. Date and place of the next meeting

Participants were invited to propose a country to host the next meetings of the GoEPAEN and the Working Group overseeing the implementation of the Strategic Plan. No offers to host were received during the session. The Chair encouraged Contracting Parties to submit proposals to the Secretariat, noting that it would be helpful to identify the hosting arrangements by the time of the Standing Committee meeting.

18. Any other business

No additional business was raised.

19. Conclusions of the meeting

In closing, the Chair thanked the participants, experts, Secretariat and Georgian authorities for their contributions and hospitality. The Chair highlighted the group’s endorsement of the

updated SDF guidelines for submission to the Standing Committee for consideration, as well as the written consultation process concerning the legal analysis and revised guidelines on negative changes.

The meeting concluded on 30 September 2026. A field visit to the Lagodekhi Protected Area and Emerald Network site took place on the afternoon of 30 September.

Appendix I – Agenda

		Documents	Expected results
Tuesday, 29 September 2026			
9.30 AM	**1. Opening of the meeting**		*National authorities of Georgia welcome the participants in the GoEPAEN and WG on overseeing implementation of the Strategic Plan and officially open the meeting.*
9.50 AM	**2. Adoption of the agenda**	**For adoption** T-PVS/Agenda (2026)10	*Members of the Working Group and Group of Experts are informed of the aims of the meeting and adopt the agenda.*
10.00 AM	**3. Conclusions of the 15th meeting of the GoEPAEN and 4th meeting of the WG on overseeing the implementation of the Strategic Plan. Relevant decisions of the 45th meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention.** *Presentation by Danielle Hofmann, Chair of the GoEPAEN*	**For information** Report of the 15th Meeting of GoEPAEN T-PVS(2025)20 Report of the 4th meeting of the Working Group on overseeing the implementation of the Strategic Plan T-PVS(2026)01	*The conclusions of the previous GoEPAEN meeting and meeting of the WG on overseeing the implementation of the Strategic Plan as well as the salient points of the 45th meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention are recalled.*
10.15 AM	**4. Emerald Network updated Standard Data Form guidelines**	**For endorsement**	*Members of the Working Group and Group of experts are informed of the Emerald Network updated*

	Presentation by the expert, Laura Gavilán Iglesias		*Standard Data Form (SDF) guidelines and endorse the document for consideration by the Standing Committee.*
10.45 AM	**5. Reportnet 3 – current status and future prospects of the platform** *Presentation by the expert, Laura Gavilán Iglesias*	**For information and discussion**	*Members of the Working Group and Group of Experts are updated on the current developments and future function of the Reportnet3.*
11.10 AM	***Break***		
11.30 AM	**6. Outcomes of National reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012) and link between the Resolution No. 8 (2012) checklists and Emerald Network Reference Lists** *Presentation by the expert, Laura Gavilán Iglesias*	**For information and discussion**	*Members of the Working Group and Group of Experts are introduced to the outcomes of the national reporting and changes made to the checklists during reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012) and as well as to how these changes are connected to the Emerald Network Reference Lists.*
12.00 PM	**7. Strategic Plan indicators dependent on data from national reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012): 1.1.a, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2** *Presentation by the experts, Dave Pritchard and Laura Gavilán Iglesias*	**For information and discussion** Indicator 1.1.a Indicator 1.4 Indicator 2.1 Indicator 2.2	*Members of the Working Group and the Group of Experts are informed about and discuss possible next steps for further work on the Strategic Plan indicators that are dependent on data from national reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012).*
12.30 PM	***Lunch***		
2.00 PM	**8. Natura 2000 & Emerald Network – connections & transition between the two** *Presentation by Frank Vassen (online), Policy Officer at the European Commission and the expert, Marc*	**For information and discussion**	*Participants in the meeting are informed about the links between the Natura 2000 and Emerald networks and discuss the transition between the two.*

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2.30 PM	**9. Ongoing EU-funded projects on the Emerald Network in Europe** *Presentation by Frank Vassen, Policy Officer at the European Commission (online)*	**For information and discussion**	*Members of the Working Group and the Group of Experts are informed about ongoing projects aimed at developing the Emerald Network and share their experiences and lessons learned.*
2.50 PM	**10. Emerald Network in Georgia** *Presentation by Luka Khvareshia, the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture,*	**For information and discussion**	*Members of the Working Group and the Group of Experts take note of the developments and current state of the Emerald Network in Georgia.*
3.00 PM	**11. Development of the Emerald Network in Contracting Parties** *Tour de table – power point présentations by Contracting Parties*	**For information** **(*Guiding questions*)**	*Representatives of the Contracting Parties are invited to update the Group of Experts on the latest developments regarding the Emerald Network in their respective countries, including the submission of new databases.*
3.30 AM	***Break***		
3.50 PM	**11. Continue - Development of the Emerald Network in Contracting Parties** *Tour de table – power point presentations by Contracting Parties*	***For information*** **(*Guiding questions*)**	*Representatives of the Contracting Parties are invited to update the Group of Experts on the latest developments regarding the Emerald Network in their respective countries, including the submission of new databases.*
4.30 PM	**End of the first day of the meeting**		
8.00 PM	**Dinner offered by the hosting country**		

Wednesday, 30 September 2026			
9.00 AM	**12. Negative changes to Emerald Network sites: legal analysis of the scope for authorising potentially harmful activities** *Presentation by the expert, Arie Trouwborst - (online)*	**For endorsement** (T-PVS/Inf(2026)10e)	*Members of the Working Group and the Group of Experts are informed about the findings of the legal analysis for assessing negative changes to the Emerald Network.*
9.45 AM	**13. Revised Guidelines for explaining negative changes in Emerald Network proposed, candidate and adopted sites** *Presentation by the expert, Otars Opermanis*	**For endorsement**	*Members of the Working Group and the Group of Experts are presented with the Revised Guidelines for explaining negative changes in Emerald Network proposed, candidate and adopted sites for its further consideration by the 46th Standing Committee.*
10.30 AM	***Break***		
10.40 AM	**14. Ongoing work on the Strategic Plan: results of "voluntary national updates on the implementation of the Strategic Plan", study on nature-based solutions and reflection on the 'case-file system'** *Presentation by the experts, Dave Pritchard, Lawrence Jones-Walters (online) and the Secretariat*	**For information and discussion** Indicator Factsheets (draft) Monitoring & Evaluation Guide – outline Methods for assessing the management effectiveness of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM)	*Members of the Working Group and the Group of Experts are provided with an update on the implementation of the Strategic Plan, including the preliminary results of the voluntary national updates, followed by an update on the indicator factsheets, a presentation of the study on nature-based solutions, and reflection on the "case-file system*

11.10 M	**15. Mid-term evaluation of the Strategic Plan implementation in 2027** *Presentation by the expert, Dave Pritchard*	**For information and discussion**	*Members of the Working Group and the Group of Experts are informed about and discuss the content of the mid-term evaluation to be conducted in 2027.*
11.30 AM	**16. Programme of activities 2026 – 2027: future work of the Group of Experts** *Presentation by the Secretariat*	**For information and discussion**	*Members of the Working Group and Group of Experts are informed about the Programme of Activities planned for 2026-2027 concerning the work of the respective groups*
11.40 AM	**17. Date and place of the next meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks and of Working Group on the Strategic Plan**	**For information and discussion**	*Participants in the meeting agree on the date and place of the next meetings of the GoEPAEN and the WG on the implementation of the Strategic Plan.*
12.00 PM	**18. Any other business**		
12.15 PM	**19. Conclusions of the meeting**		
12.30 PM	**End of the meeting**		
12.30 PM	***Lunch***		
1:30 - 6:00 PM	***Field visit to the Lagodekhi Protected area and Emerald Network site***		

Update on the development of the Emerald Network in Contracting Parties

Presentation by Albania

Presentation by Georgia

Presentation by Hungary

Presentation by Montenegro

Presentation by Norway

Presentation by Serbia

Presentation by Türkiye

Presentation by the United Kingdom

Appendix II - List of Participants

	Contracting Party	Name
1	**Albania**	**Ms Klodiana MARIKA** Director of Nature and Forests Ministry of Tourism and Environment **Focal Point of the Bern Convention**
2	**European Union Commission**	**Mr Frank VASSEN,** Policy advisor **–** online participation
3	**Georgia**	**Mr Luka KHVARESHIA** Legal Expert Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture **Mr Davit Chitaishvili** Head of the International Relations and European Integration Department Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture **Ms Tamar Khakhishvili** Deputy Head of the Agency of Protected Areas
4	**Hungary**	**Ms Andrea RISKÓ** Nature Conservation Lawyer Ministry of Living Environment of Hungary
5	**Moldova**	**Ms Veronica JOSU** Main Advisory Officer, Department on Biodiversity Policy Ministry of Environment **Focal Point of the Bern Convention**
6	**Montenegro**	**Mr Dragan ROGANOVIC** Researcher - Senior Advisor Environmental Protection Agency of Montenegro
7	**Norway**	**Ms Eva Hauge FONTAINE** Senior Advisor Norwegian Environment Agency
8	**Serbia**	**Mr Ivan MEDENICA** Head of Ecological Network Section Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia
9	**Switzerland**	**Ms Danielle HOFMANN** Federal Office of Environment

		Focal Point of the Bern Convention
10	**Türkiye**	**Mr Uğur ÇITLAK** Branch Manager General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks
11	**United Kingdom**	**Ms Jem POWELL** Biodiversity Data Coordinator Joint Nature Conservation Committee
12		**Dr Sarah SCOTT-MARSHALL** Senior International Biodiversity Adviser Joint Nature Conservation Committee **Focal Point of the Bern Convention**
NGOs		
13	**CEE Bankwatch Network / Montenegrin Ecologists Society**	**Ms Andrijana MICANOVIC** General Secretary
14	**CEE Bankwatch Network**	**Mr Andrey RALEV** Biodiversity Campaigner
15	**Society For Nature Conservation - SABUKO**	**Ms Tinatin ARVELADZE** Policy Manager
16	**Society For Nature Conservation - SABUKO**	**Mr Giorgi CHIKORASHVILI** Natural Resource Program Manager
17	**Centre for Biodiversity Conservation and Research – NACRES**	**Mr Kakha ARTSIVADZE** Natural Resource Management Programme Coordinator
Experts		
18	**Mr Arie TROUWBORST**	Professor of Nature Conservation Law Tilburg Law School The Netherlands
19	**Ms Laura Patricia GAVILAN IGLESIAS**	Expert Consultant Spain
20	**Mr Otars OPERMANIS**	Expert Consultant Latvia

21	**Mr Dave PRITCHARD**	Expert Consultant United Kingdom
22	**Mr Marc ROEKAERTS**	Expert Consultant Belgium
23	**Mr Lawrence JONES WALTERS**	Consultant The Netherlands
Others		
24	**Chair of the Standing Committee**	**Mr Carl Amirgulashvili** Head of the Forest Policy Department Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture
25	**European Environment Agency**	**Ms Mette PALITZSCH LUND** Biodiversity data and system expert **–** online participation
Council of Europe Secretariat		
26	**Council of Europe**	**Ms Grazia Alessandra SIINO** Secretary of the Bern Convention
27	**Council of Europe**	**Ms Salome NOZADZE** Policy Advisor, Bern Convention
28	**Council of Europe**	**Ms Cassandra MACTAVISH** Senior Project Officer, Bern Convention