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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

45th meeting
Strasbourg, 8 - 12 December 2025

PRELIMINARY DRAFT
PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES AND BUDGET OF THE
BERN CONVENTION FOR 2026

*Document prepared by
the Secretariat of the Bern Convention*

Table of contents

I. Procedure for the adoption of the Council of Europe Programme and Budget.....	3 -
II. The Bern Convention Programme of Activities within the Council of Europe's Programme and Budget.....	3 -
III. Bern Convention Programme of Activities for 2026.....	4 -
1. Statutory bodies (Standing Committee and Bureau)	4 -
2. Monitoring of obligations	4 -
3. Standard setting.....	5 -
4. Assistance to Contracting Parties	5 -
5. Communication and visibility.....	5 -
6. Staff.....	6 -
IV. Budget Year 2026.....	6 -

I. Procedure for the adoption of the Council of Europe Programme and Budget

The Programme and Budget of the Council of Europe is proposed by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and adopted by the Committee of Ministers. Since 2022, the Programme and Budget consists of a quadrennial Programme and two biennial Budgets. As a follow-up to the Reykjavík Summit (16-17 May 2023) and the implementation of the Declaration adopted by Council of Europe Heads of State and Government on this occasion¹, it was decided to elaborate a new quadrennial Programme (Y1-Y4, *i.e.* 2024-2027 and its biennial Budgets (Y1-Y2, *i.e.* 2024-2025, and Y3-Y4, *i.e.* 2026-2027).

The Programme and Budget indicates for each financial year the General Budget of the Council of Europe (including the so-called “Ordinary Budget²”) and the budgets of the Partial and Enlarged Agreements.

The adoption of the Programme and Budget by the Committee of Ministers generally takes place by the end of November. The second-year budgets of the biennial Budgets are approved on a provisional basis.

In principle, the procedures are as follows:

In the year preceding Y1, the Committee of Ministers approves:

- ⇒ the programme of activities for the quadrennium Y1-Y4,
- ⇒ the budget for year Y1,
- ⇒ the provisional budget for year Y2.

It takes note of the budgetary implications for years Y3-Y4.

In Y1, the Committee of Ministers approves:

- ⇒ the budget for year Y2.

In Y2, the Committee of Ministers approves:

- ⇒ possible adjustments to the programme of activities for the quadrennium following a mid-term review,
- ⇒ the budget for year Y3,
- ⇒ the provisional budget for year Y4.

In Y3, the Committee of Ministers approves:

- ⇒ the budget for year Y4.

II. The Bern Convention Programme of Activities within the Council of Europe’s Programme and Budget

The Bern Convention Programme of Activities is prepared and examined by the Bureau at its September meeting and, thus, before the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe Programme and Budget in November. Therefore, the amounts presented to the Standing Committee are forecasts only and take into account both the expected provision allocated to the Bern Convention via the Ordinary Budget of the Council of Europe as well as the anticipated voluntary contributions to be provided by Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention.

¹ <https://rm.coe.int/4th-summit-of-heads-of-state-and-government-of-the-council-of-europe/1680ab40c1>

² The Ordinary Budget is mainly funded by member States’ contributions. National contributions are based on a formula, following Resolution (94)31 of the Committee of Ministers, which takes into account the population and Gross Domestic Product.

III. Bern Convention Programme of Activities for 2026

The Bern Convention functions by way of a triangular work mechanism composed of (1) monitoring of obligations, (2) standard setting and (3) assistance to Parties. All activities and initiatives implemented by the Convention are proposed by the Bureau to the Convention, adopted by the Standing Committee and implemented by the Secretariat under the coordination of the Bureau.

The main thematic pillars of the Programme of Activities and budget breakdown of the Bern Convention are as follows:

1. Statutory bodies (Standing Committee and Bureau)

Activities listed under this heading include the meetings of the statutory bodies of the Bern Convention. The Standing Committee to the Bern Convention, which is foreseen in Article 13 of the Convention, is the body composed of the representatives of Parties and Observers. It is responsible for following the application of the Convention and meets once a year. The Rules of Procedure of the Standing Committee are available in document [T-PVS\(2022\)29](#).

The Bureau of the Standing Committee, which is foreseen in Rule 19 of the Rules of Procedure, takes administrative and organisational decisions between meetings of the Standing Committee. It is composed of the Chair of the Standing Committee, the Vice-Chair, the Immediate Past Chair, and two additional Bureau members, and is assisted by the Secretariat.

2. Monitoring of obligations

2.1 Monitoring of the implementation of legal aspects

Activities implemented under heading No. 2.1 concern mainly the only compulsory reporting under the terms of the Bern Convention - the so-called “biennial reporting”. All Parties making exceptions to the provisions of the Convention, in compliance with the strict terms and conditions spelt out in Article 9 must submit their reports to the Secretariat every two years. These reports must contain a scientific assessment of the impact of such exceptions to the general obligation to protect the species and habitats covered by the Convention. The biennial reports are presented each year to the Standing Committee for examination, after being submitted under the Bern Convention Online Reporting System (ORS) tool or the Habides + tool of European Union (EU) member States parties to the Convention.

Technical maintenance and updating of the ORS are listed under heading No. 2 as well as the analysis of the replies submitted by the Contracting Parties.

Under this heading, the Convention also manages the “general reports” submitted by Parties every four years on the national implementation of the Convention, as well as the general reviews of the implementation of the Convention in a Contracting Party which are regularly commissioned by the Standing Committee.

2.2 Monitoring of specific sites and populations

The activities under the monitoring pillar include overseeing how Parties meet their obligations through the Bern Convention’s case-file system and the European Diploma of Protected Areas.

In 2026, three On-the-Spot Appraisals (OSA) will be organised in Greece and Serbia. The two OSAs in Greece will focus on Open File 1986/8, Recommendation No. 9, concerning the protection of *Caretta caretta* in Laganas Bay, Zakynthos, as well as Open File 2010/5, which addresses threats to marine turtles in Thines Kiparissias. Meanwhile, the OSA in Serbia will target one of the case files related to mining activities in the country. This assessment in Serbia will be scheduled back-to-back with an in-person round table discussion addressing the broader situation of mining in Serbia, bringing together key stakeholders to explore ways of minimising the negative impact of mining on biodiversity.

In addition, as part of continued site monitoring under the European Diploma of Protected Areas, three expert visits are scheduled to the Selvagem Islands (Portugal), the Carpathian Biosphere Reserve (Ukraine), and the Krimml Waterfalls (Austria).

3. Standard setting

3.1 Conservation of species

Activities listed under heading No. 3.1 aim to provide a platform for exchanging information on the conservation status of species populations listed in the Convention's appendices and to support Contracting Parties in better protecting species at risk through coordinated efforts. This work is carried out with the support of relevant Groups of Experts established under the Convention, through the development of new guidance, monitoring of existing Action Plans and recommendations, and dissemination of existing guidance tools. In 2026, subject to the availability of human and financial resources, these Groups of Experts will continue their work on large carnivores, wild birds, invasive alien species, amphibians and reptiles, and sturgeon conservation. Key priorities include monitoring the wolf's status, addressing chemical pollution affecting wild birds, tackling challenges posed by invasive species, and advancing efforts to eradicate the ruddy duck. Holding joint meetings will be encouraged to enhance cooperation between the groups. Within this framework, collaboration will also be sought with similar Groups of Experts under other international organisations, such as the United Nations and the EU.

3.2 Conservation of natural habitats

Activities indicated under heading No. 3.2 aim at ensuring the conservation of natural habitats and the implementation of Article 4 of the Convention, as well as of Resolutions No. 1 (1989), No. 3 (1996), No. 4 (1996), No. 5 (1998), No. 6 (1998), Recommendations No. 14 (1989), No. 15 (1989), No. 16 (1989) and Recommendation No. 225 (2024) of the Standing Committee. The setting-up of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCI) in Europe is the main objective of the Convention's work in this field. Activities will be organised to support Contracting Parties to prepare and deliver their databases in the context of the progressive adaptation of Natura 2000 portal in Reportnet 3 to Emerald Network Dataflow. The meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks will continue to foster a coordinated approach on site management and network development.

Non-EU Contracting Parties will proceed with the second reporting under Resolution No. 8 (2012) on the conservation status of species and habitats in the context of the new Resolution No.8 Reportnet 3 portal (adapted from the Article 17 portal in Reportnet 3). In 2026, the reports received via the new reporting tool will be assessed and a synthesis of the findings will be displayed online. The meeting of the Working Group on Reporting will continue to guide the work of the Bern Convention Secretariat in this field.

3.3 Others

Activities listed under heading No. 3.3 will contribute to the development of the Bern Convention's strategic framework by exploring sustainable financing options and new mechanisms to guide amendments to its appendices. Furthermore, these activities will support the monitoring of the implementation of the Strategic Plan for the Bern Convention for the period to 2030.

4. Assistance to Contracting Parties

Activities under this heading consist of assistance to Parties in the implementation of their obligations through capacity building activities. Projects aiming at supporting the setting-up of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCI) in Europe are also included here.

In 2026, this will include *ad hoc* assistance to Contracting Parties and biogeographical evaluations for the development of the Emerald Network as well as a workshop on renewable energy including a focus on the topic of ecological compensation measures. The development of tools and the use of expert consultations could also be envisaged to support the implementation of these activities.

5. Communication and visibility

Article 3 of the Convention sets out the general obligation for each Contracting party to take action individually, with respect to the conservation of wild flora and fauna and all natural habitats in general, by for instance promoting national conservation policies as well as education and information. Through the activities

planned under this heading, emphasis will be on the development of communication materials, such as updates of existing publications or creation of new ones, including activity reports, and the improvement of digital tools, including in relation to the Emerald Network. These activities aim to engage a wider audience and to make the Bern Convention activities more visible and accessible.

6. Staff

The Bern Convention's Secretariat is entrusted with the overall coordination and implementation of the Programme of Activities, under the supervision and guidance of the Bureau and the Standing Committee to the Convention.

IV. Budget Year 2026

In 2026, the ordinary budget allocated to the Bern Convention, should provide an approximative amount of 718 340,00 € broken down as follows:

- 348 740,00 € for financing the programme of activities including overheads;
- 369 600,00 € for staff and pensions

The Bern Convention Special Account, which is funded solely through voluntary contributions, will be used to cover expenses that are not covered by the Ordinary Budget of the Council of Europe. Activities that lack sufficient funding through voluntary contributions will not or only partially be implemented. The amount to be provided to the Bern Convention budget via voluntary contributions amounts to 418 433,50 €. It corresponds to:

- 205 697,50 € for financing the programme of activities including overheads;
- 212 736,00 € for staff and pensions.

Activities marked in yellow in the table below will be implemented subject to financial and human resource availability. The Ordinary Budget for 2026 will be adopted in November 2025.

Budget 2026					
Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available (CoE OB)	Funds needed (VCs)

1. Statutory bodies			72 864,00	72 864,00	0,00
Meeting of the Standing Committee (5 days)			61 014,00	61 014,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (average: 27 persons*6 per diem) Chair + maximum of 23 Delegates + average of 4 Experts</i>	162,00	195,00	31 590,00	31 590,00	0,00
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts</i>	27	600,00	16 200,00	16 200,00	0,00
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	6,00	2 204,00	13 224,00	13 224,00	0,00

1st annual Meeting of the Bureau (2 days)			5 925,00	5 925,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Bureau Members (5 persons*3 per diems)</i>	15,00	195,00	2 925,00	2 925,00	0,00
<i>Travel expenses of Bureau Members (5 persons)</i>	5,00	600,00	3 000,00	3 000,00	0,00
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00

2nd annual Meeting of the Bureau (2 days) (online)			0,00	0,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Bureau Members (5 persons*3 per diems)</i>	0,00	195,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
<i>Travel expenses of Bureau Members (5 persons)</i>	0,00	600,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00

3rd annual Meeting of the Bureau (2 days)			5 925,00	5 925,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Bureau Members (5 persons*3 per diems)</i>	15,00	195,00	2 925,00	2 925,00	0,00
<i>Travel expenses of Bureau Members (5 persons)</i>	5,00	600,00	3 000,00	3 000,00	0,00
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00

2. Monitoring of obligations			86 937,50	62 500,00	24 437,50
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2.1 Monitoring of implementation of legal aspects			20 000,00	5 000,00	15 000,00
Maintenance of the ORS			15 000,00	5 000,00	10 000,00
<i>lumpsum</i>	3,00	5 000,00	15 000,00	5 000,00	10 000,00

Assessment of the biennial reports			5 000,00	0,00	5 000,00
<i>lumpsum</i>	1,00	5 000,00	5 000,00	0,00	5 000,00

2.2 Monitoring of specific sites and populations			66 937,50	57 500,00	9 437,50
Group of Specialists on the EDPA			27 700,00	27 700,00	0,00
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts for annual meeting (2 days)</i>	20,00	600,00	12 000,00	12 000,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Delegates/Experts for annual meeting (20 persons*3 per diem)</i>	60,00	195,00	11 700,00	11 700,00	0,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	0,00

Monitoring of and advice on sites at risk (EDPA sites)			16 280,00	16 280,00	0,00
<i>Travel expenses of Experts (EDPA) for 3 OSAs (Elvagem Islands in Portugal, Carpathian BR in Ukraine and Krimml waterfalls in Austria)</i>	6,00	600,00	3 600,00	3 600,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Experts (EDPA)</i>	24,00	195,00	4 680,00	4 680,00	0,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	2,00	4 000,00	8 000,00	8 000,00	0,00

Monitoring of and advice on sites at risk (case-file system)			13 520,00	13 520,00	0,00
<i>Travel expenses for 3 OSAs (staff + experts)</i>	4,00	600,00	2 400,00	2 400,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence expenses (staff + experts)</i>	16,00	195,00	3 120,00	3 120,00	0,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	2,00	4 000,00	8 000,00	8 000,00	0,00
Round-table on mining and biodiversity in Serbia			9 437,50	0,00	9 437,50
<i>Travel expenses of experts for 1,5 day meeting</i>	5,00	600,00	3 000,00	0,00	3 000,00
<i>Subsistence expenses of experts (5 persons*2,5 per diem)</i>	12,50	195,00	2 437,50	0,00	2 437,50

<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	0,00	4 000,00
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3. Standard setting			205 950,00	87 500,00	118 450,00
3.1 Conservation of species			67 450,00	4 000,00	63 450,00
Network of SFPs for IKB			8 000,00	4 000,00	4 000,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	2,00	4 000,00	8 000,00	4 000,00	4 000,00

Group of Experts on Birds			4 000,00	0,00	4 000,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	0,00	4000,00

Group of Experts on Amphibians and Reptiles			4 000,00	0,00	4 000,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	0,00	4 000,00

Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species			19 225,00	0,00	19 225,00
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts</i>	14,00	600,00	8 400,00	0,00	8 400,00
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (14 experts*2,5 per diem)</i>	35,00	195,00	6 825,00	0,00	6 825,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	0,00	4 000,00

Expert Meeting on the Eradication of the Ruddy Duck			5 000,00	0,00	5 000,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1,00	5 000,00	5 000,00	0,00	5 000,00

Group of Experts on Large Carnivores			8 000,00	0,00	8 000,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	2,00	4 000,00	8 000,00	0,00	8000,00

3rd meeting of the National Focal Points for the conservation of the Sturgeon			19 225,00	0,00	19 225,00
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts for 1,5 day</i>	14,00	600,00	8 400,00	0,00	8 400,00
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (14 persons*2,5 per diem)</i>	35,00	195,00	6 825,00	0,00	6 825,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	0,00	4 000,00

3.2 Conservation of natural habitats			133 500,00	78 500,00	55 000,00
Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks			57 187,50	39 187,50	18 000,00
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts for 1,5 day meeting</i>	25,00	600,00	15 000,00	15 000,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (25 persons*2,5 per diem)</i>	62,50	195,00	12 187,50	12 187,50	0,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	6,25	4 000,00	30 000,00	12 000,00	18 000,00
Working Group on Reporting			76 312,50	39 312,50	37 000,00
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts for 1,5 day meeting</i>	15,00	600,00	9 000,00	9 000,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (15 persons*2,5 per diem)</i>	37,50	195,00	7 312,50	7 312,50	0,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports (assessment of the second reporting)</i>	3,00	10 000,00	30 000,00	23 000,00	7 000,00
<i>Display of the reporting results</i>	1,00	30 000,00	30 000,00	0,00	30 000,00
3.3 Others			5 000,00	5 000,00	0,00
Working Group on overseeing implementation of the Strategic Plan			5 000,00	5 000,00	0,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1,00	5 000,00	5 000,00	5 000,00	0,00
Working Group on exploring sustainable financing options for the Bern Convention			0,00	0,00	0,00
Working Group on exploring mechanisms to guide amendments to the appendices of the Bern Convention			0,00	0,00	0,00
4. Assistance to Parties			84 385,00	27 575,00	56 810,00
Emerald Network biogeographical evaluations (for 2 countries or regions)			25 110,00	0,00	25 110,00

<i>Travel expenses of independent experts</i>	6,00	600,00	3 600,00	0,00	3 600,00
<i>Subsistence expenses of independent experts</i>	18,00	195,00	3 510,00	0,00	3 510,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	6,00	3 000,00	18 000,00	0,00	18 000,00
International workshop on minimising the negative impact of mining on biodiversity			31 700,00	0,00	31 700,00
<i>Travel expenses of experts for 2 day meeting</i>	20,00	600,00	12 000,00	0,00	12 000,00
<i>Subsistence expenses of experts (20 persons*3 per diem)</i>	60,00	195,00	11 700,00	0,00	11 700,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	0,00	4 000,00
<i>Tools</i>	1,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	0,00	4 000,00

Workshop on renewable energy and nature conservation			27 575,00	27 575,00	0,00
<i>Travel expenses of experts for 1,5 day meeting</i>	18,00	600,00	10 800,00	10 800,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence expenses of experts (18 persons*2,5 per diem)</i>	45,00	195,00	8 775,00	8 775,00	0,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	0,00
<i>Tools</i>	1,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	0,00

5. Communication and visibility			45 000,00	39 000,00	6 000,00
Communication materials			45 000,00	39 000,00	6 000,00
<i>Lumpsum (communication campaign and supports)</i>	1,00	20 000,00	20 000,00	19 000,00	1 000,00
<i>Lumpsum (Emerald Network Viewer and Webapp)</i>	1,00	20 000,00	25 000,00	20 000,00	5 000,00

6. Official Journeys of staff			21 000,00	21 000,00	0,00
<i>Travel and subsistence</i>	15,00	1 400,00	21 000,00	21 000,00	0,00

7. Provision for the Chair			4 000,00	4 000,00	0,00
<i>Travel and subsistence expenses (lumpsum)</i>	1,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	0,00

8. Overheads			34 301,00	34 301,00	0,00
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<i>Printing Internal</i>	44	77	3 400,00	3 400,00	0,00
<i>Postage (Lumpsum)</i>	lumpsum	300,00	300,00	300,00	0,00
<i>Prepress (lumpsum)</i>	lumpsum	2 500,00	2 500,00	2 500,00	0,00
<i>Translation Services</i>	827	34,00	28 101,00	28 101,00	0,00

9. Staff costs			582 336,00	369 600,00	212 736,00
<i>Fixed term staff (salary and pension) - position of Secretary of the Bern Convention</i>	12,00	10 200,00	122 400,00	122 400,00	0,00
<i>Fixed term staff (salary and pension) - position of Senior Project Officer</i>	12,00	8 900,00	106 800,00	106 800,00	0,00
<i>Fixed term staff (salary and pension) - position of project assistant</i>	12,00	6 200,00	74 400,00	74 400,00	0,00
<i>Fixed term staff (salary and pension) - position of assistant</i>	12,00	5 500,00	66 000,00	66 000,00	0,00
<i>Fixed term staff (salary and pension) - position of Programme Manager</i>	12,00	13 728,00	164 736,00	0,00	164 736,00
<i>Topping-up seconded staff</i>	12,00	3 500,00	48 000,00	0,00	48 000,00
TOTAL			1 136 773,50	718 340,00	418 433,50

Delegates representing Contracting Parties from the following list of countries will be eligible for sponsorship for the participation in meetings, pending the availability of resources:

Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Portugal, Senegal, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Tunisia, Türkiye, Ukraine.