



Strasbourg, 30 October 2025

T-PVS(2025)20

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE  
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Standing Committee**

45<sup>th</sup> meeting

Strasbourg, 8 – 12 December 2025

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**15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas  
and Ecological Networks**

7-8 October 2025  
Bar, Montenegro

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**- MEETING REPORT -**

*Document prepared by  
the Secretariat of the Bern Convention*

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The Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks (GoEPAEN) met in Bar (Montenegro) on 7-8 October 2025. The Standing Committee is invited to:

- Take note of the meeting report of the Group of Experts;
- Thank the authorities of Montenegro for hosting the meeting of the Group of Experts;
- Request the Secretariat to convene a joint meeting between the GoEPAEN and the Working Group on overseeing the implementation of the Vision and Strategic Plan 2030, in order to strengthen coordination, particularly regarding the contribution of information from the Emerald Network databases to the assessment of the implementation of the Vision and Strategic Plan 2030;
- Adopt the new Standard Data Form (SDF) which was harmonised with the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form, after validation by the Group via mail;
- Take note of the most recent developments of Reportnet 3 in relation with the Emerald Network;
- Propose that a legal analysis be conducted regarding the criteria for assessing negative changes and the possibility of reducing or fully delisting an Emerald site due to "imperative reasons of overriding public interest" in exchange for compensatory measures, as well as its compatibility with Article 9 of the Bern Convention, with a view to possibly updating the "Guidelines for explaining negative changes in Emerald Network proposed candidate sites and adopted sites";
- Welcome the outcomes of the EU4Environment project in the Eastern Partnership region;
- Invite Contracting Parties to submit proposals to host the 2026 meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks, to be jointly organised with the Working Group on overseeing the implementation of the Vision and Strategic Plan 2030.

## **1. Opening of the meeting**

The Secretariat opened the meeting and warmly welcomed the participants. Ms. Alessandra Siino, Secretary of the Bern Convention, introduced herself to the GoEPAEN, noting that she was appointed to the position last June and this was her first attendance at the annual meeting. She expressed her gratitude to the authorities of Montenegro for hosting the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the GoEPAEN and for their excellent cooperation in organising the event, which clearly demonstrates their commitment to the development of the Emerald Network.

The Secretary referred to the evolving Council of Europe Strategic Framework in the field of environment highlighting the adoption of a new Strategy and Action Plan on the Environment in May 2025 and emphasised the necessity of working together to improve the efficiency and visibility of the Bern Convention's work. She also underscored that the Emerald Network is not only one of the pillars of the Bern Convention's activities, but also a highly ambitious project supporting non-EU countries in their efforts to protect species and habitats of European importance. She therefore stressed the need to invest in its development and to support Contracting Parties in this regard.

## **2. Adoption of the agenda**

The Group of Experts adopted the draft agenda (see Appendix 1)

## **3. Conclusions from the previous GoEPAEN and decisions of the 44th meeting of the Standing Committee (SC) to the Bern Convention addressed to the Group of Experts**

The Secretary recalled that the 14<sup>th</sup> GoEPAEN meeting held in Liechtenstein:

- Mandated the Secretariat to prepare a draft recommendation (future Recommendation No. 225 (2024)) wrapping up binding and non-binding obligations of Contracting Parties towards the Emerald Network;
- Welcomed the targets for 2030 and invited the Standing Committee to endorse them;
- Took note of the revised Natura 2000 Standard Data Form (SDF) and agreed that an information document should be presented at the next Standing Committee;
- Invited the Standing Committee to mandate the Secretariat to propose options to a revised version of the SDF;
- Mandated the Secretariat to develop a guidance document on the delivery process of Reportnet 3 for the attention of reporters.

The Secretary recalled that the 44<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee,

- Adopted with amendments Recommendation No. 225 (2024);
- Endorsed the proposed targets for the Emerald Network for the period to 2030;
- Encouraged Parties to be more ambitious to meet the 2030 targets;
- Mandated the Secretariat to revise the Emerald Network Standard Data Form to keep it harmonised with the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form and present it to the 45<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee;
- Instructed the Secretariat to identify ways to support the engaged actors and stakeholders at national level involved in the Emerald Network in the relevant Contracting Parties to ensure updated databases are submitted to the Bern Convention over the next couple of years.

## **4. Updated information on monitoring the implementation of the Vision and Strategic Plan of the Bern Convention for the period to 2030**

The international expert, Dave Pritchard, presented the current state of implementation of the Vision and the Strategic Plan 2030 of the Bern Convention and the work carried out by the Working Group on overseeing the implementation of the Vision and Strategic Plan in 2025. He highlighted the contribution of the Emerald Network to advancing the Vision and Strategic Plan and emphasised the need to intensify efforts to achieve the targets set for 2030.

The Working Group on the Strategic Plan showed expectations to work closely to GoEPAEN, especially on four specific indicators:

1.2 (*Emerald Network Sufficiency Index*),

1.3a (*Extent to which protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs) cover Emerald Network sites*),

1.3b (*Proportion of adopted Emerald Network sites with implemented management plans*) and

1.4 (*Contribution of the Emerald Network to the conservation status of habitats*).

The Secretariat clarified that, due to the human resources constraints, the call for national updates under the Vision and Strategic Plan was not issued in 2025 but will be issued in 2026 to cover a two-year period.

### Decision of the Group of Experts

The participants in the GoEPAEN took note of the progress made in 2025 in the implementation of the Vision and Strategic Plan for 2030 and requested the organisation of a joint meeting in 2026 between the GoEPAEN and the Working Group on the Strategic Plan to strengthen coordination, particularly regarding the contribution of information from the Emerald Network databases to the assessment of the implementation of the Vision and Strategic Plan 2030.

## 5. Discussion on the new fields of the draft proposal of the Emerald Network Standard Data Form based on the discussion paper on implications

The international expert, Laura Gavilán, introduced the new and updated fields of the proposed Emerald Network Standard Data Form (SDF), highlighting their potential impact both on the information provided and on the workload for reporters.

Special attention was given to fields that could serve as potential data sources for the indicators established to monitor the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The fields to be considered are the following:

INDICATOR	FIELDS USED AS DATA SOURCES
1.3.b Proportion of adopted Emerald Network sites with implemented management plans	5.2 Management plans
	5.3 Conservation measures
	5.4 Management effectiveness
1.4 Contribution of the Emerald Network to the conservation status of habitats	3.1.12.1 Degree of conservation -categorised

Table 1. Fields of the proposed SDF to be used as data sources for indicators

Countries expressed concern about the new fields that would require compiling additional information, as well as about major modifications to existing fields that would involve significant effort to update. Georgia, the United Kingdom and Switzerland were the countries specifically objected to new mandatory fields in the SDF and requested that all the new field be made optional. Following the discussion, it was proposed that all new fields be considered *optional*, except those serving as data sources for the indicators of the Vision and Strategic Plan 2030 or required for the sufficiency analysis. Additionally, a three-year transition period will be maintained during which fulfilling these fields will not be mandatory.

**Decision of the Group of Experts**

The group requested the international experts, Laura Gavilán and Dave Pritchard, to prepare an updated version of the new SDF in which only the new fields serving as data sources for the indicators of the Vision and Strategic Plan 2030 or required for the sufficiency analysis are kept mandatory. The group also requested the Secretariat to circulate the update SDF via email for validation before its submission to the Standing Committee and possible adoption at its meeting in December 2025.

**6. Reportnet 3 delivery platform: state of play**

The international expert, Laura Gavilán, informed participants about the Natura 2000 Standard Data Form timeline and the transition period extending until 2028. Contracting Parties are currently testing the new tool. Since early 2025, ReportNet2 is no longer operational for Natura 2000 sites; countries are now reporting via ReportNet3, which allows a transition period until 2028 during which NULL data entries are accepted. After 2028, incorrect data will be blocked. Contributions from countries will be essential to refine the rules and improve the data schemas. This process is expected to take nearly a year, from February to December 2025.

Additionally, the international expert highlighted the importance for GoEPAEN to become familiar with ReportNet3, as a ReportNet3 portal for Emerald Network data will be launched. This portal is planned to be cloned from Natura 2000 in 2026, provided the new Emerald SDF is endorsed by the Standing Committee in December 2025. The portal will be adapted to the specific requirements of the Emerald Network. By the end of 2025, real data from the Emerald Network will be needed for the testing phase, followed by the adaptation of validation rules and resolution of issues in 2026. Contracting Parties will require an EIONET account, which will be arranged in due course.

The GoEPAEN expressed its gratitude to the European Environment Agency (EEA) and the international expert for their work, support, and collaboration throughout this process.

The Group of Experts were informed of the provisional timeframe for this process:

<b>Reportnet 3 implementation for the Emerald Network database</b>	<b>2026</b>
<b>Training on Reportnet 3</b>	2026
<b>Guidelines for reporting Emerald Network data in Reportnet 3</b>	2026
<b>Testing phase for reporting in Reportnet 3</b>	2026
<b>Opening of the Emerald Network dataflow reporting under Reportnet 3</b>	2026-Q4
<b>Phase I: Transition period (NULL values allowed for new fields)</b>	2026 Q4 -2029
<b>Phase II: Full SDF including provision of data in new fields</b>	2030-onwards

**Decision of the Group of Experts**

The participants in the GoEPAEN took note of the most recent developments of Reportnet 3 in relation with the Emerald Network.

## 7. Criteria for assessing (negative) changes in the Emerald Network dataflow

The international expert, Otars Opermanis, presented his study Criteria for assessing (negative) changes in the Emerald Network which addresses the concept of “negatives changes” related to the periodic reporting of Emerald sites by the signatory countries and the existing differences between Natura2000 network and Emerald Network. The study describes the need for the Emerald database submission process to establish an early assessment procedure which would include a verification if the submitted database contains negative changes and if they could also be justified by a number of criteria.

The expert presented the differences in criteria for negative changes under Natura 2000 and under the Emerald Network and highlighted the need to investigate the possibility of applying the criterion of “imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature”, currently used by Natura 2000 in application of Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive<sup>1</sup>.

The participants in the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks discussed the importance of reporting negative changes for the correct evaluation of the conservation status of habitats and species and of the Sufficiency Index. They agreed on the need to further define the process for reporting and assessing negative changes under the Emerald Network, potentially through an update of the “Guidelines for Explaining negative changes in Emerald network proposed candidate sites and adopted sites”.

### Decision of the Group of Experts

The GoEPAEN proposed that a legal analysis be conducted regarding the criteria for assessing negative changes and the possibility of reducing or fully delisting an Emerald site due to "imperative reasons of overriding public interest" in exchange for compensatory measures, as well as its compatibility with Article 9 of the Bern Convention, with a view to possibly updating the “Guidelines for explaining negative changes in Emerald Network proposed candidate sites and adopted sites”.

## 8. Emerald Network: screening, prior assessment and authorisation of potentially harmful projects. A digest of relevant international legal instruments, recommendations and guidelines

The international expert, Dave Pritchard, presented his study “Emerald Network: screening, prior assessment and authorisation of potentially harmful projects. A digest of relevant international legal instruments, recommendations and guidelines”. The study is a “guide to guidance” which presents and analyses existing legal norms and good practice principles concerning the screening, prior assessment and authorisation of potential harmful projects, such as the EU and UN instruments in this field. The Espoo Convention appears to be quite relevant because it covers also the transboundary context.

### Decision of the Group of Experts

The participants in the meeting took note of the study and highlighted that it constitutes an appropriate source of information on EIA procedures in protected areas, making the development of new, specific Impact Assessment Evaluation protocols specific for the Emerald Network redundant. The question remains open as to which EIA provisions should be used as a reference for the EIA of Emerald Network sites. The outcomes of this discussion will be presented to the Standing Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> Art.6(4) of the Habitats Directive: *If, in spite of a negative assessment of the implications for the site and in the absence of alternative solutions, a plan or project must nevertheless be carried out for imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature, the Member State shall take all compensatory measures necessary to ensure that the overall coherence of Natura 2000 is protected.*

## **9. State of play of the Emerald Network**

The participants in the GoEPAEN were informed about the current status of the Emerald Network. Since the pandemic, progress has essentially reached a standstill. To achieve the 2030 targets, there is an urgent need to accelerate the process. The group was informed that progress depends entirely on the delivery of new databases, a time-consuming process that makes obtaining the new data even more critical. If countries meet the requirements of the Vision and Strategic Plan, 32 databases will be established within four years, which will pose a significant challenge in the near future. Additionally, the development of the marine Emerald Network needs to begin, as it is currently lagging, except for the UK.

## **10. Overview of errors in the Emerald Network dataflow; emphasising the need to update country databases**

The international expert, Marc Roekaerts, informed the participants in the GoEPAEN about the most common errors, primarily quality-related “technical errors,” which are concentrated in phases II and III of the reporting procedure. These phases require high data quality and a significant degree of consistency between certain fields. A major issue arises when comparing the area figures in the tabular database with the area represented in the site boundary shapefile. Additionally, biogeographical errors, including mistakes or omissions of certain regions, can be confusing and may cause errors in the analysis during the preparation of the evaluation seminars.

Habitat types are also a common source of errors: only habitat codes specified in the most recent version of Resolution No. 4 (1996) are allowed. However, some countries are still using Palearctic codes, which cannot be processed by the system. Accurate Habitat Cover values in absolute terms (hectares) are essential, as incorrect estimates of relative surface areas lead to flawed conclusions in the sufficiency analysis. Site management information is often overlooked or misinterpreted, despite its growing importance for the Barometer Index in Phase III.

Participants in the GoEPAEN were informed of the need to keep national databases updated and urged to exercise utmost care in correctly completing the various fields in the new SDF, which will help reduce errors through the automation of certain procedures.

## **11. Summary of countries factsheets aimed to assist on the development of the Emerald Network**

The group was reminded of the 44th Standing Committee decision, which expressed regret over the lack of new site designations and database updates in recent years by most Contracting Parties. The Committee encouraged Parties to be more ambitious in order to meet the targets and instructed the Secretariat to explore ways to support engaged actors and stakeholders to ensure updated databases are submitted to the Bern Convention in a timely manner.

The country factsheets prepared throughout the year include key points for progress in each country, along with requests to identify potential activities for specific external assistance. An example factsheet on Georgia was presented to the GoEPAEN.

### **Decision of the Group of Experts**

Participants in the GoEPAEN took note of the expert’s work summarizing the countries’ factsheets and agreed to continue assisting Contracting Parties with reporting, whenever requested by the Parties themselves and subject to the availability of financial and human resources.

## **12. Development of the Emerald Network in Contracting Parties: national state of play and tour de table**

The barometer of the entire Emerald was presented as an introduction. Short presentations on the national status of the Emerald Network were delivered by representatives from Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Hungary (on Natura 2000), Serbia, Switzerland, Türkiye and the UK.

Participants took note of the recent developments of the Emerald Network across Contracting Parties. Members and observers discussed possible ways to accelerate the selection, proposal and declaration of new Emerald sites at a national level, aiming to meet the targets of the Bern Convention Vision and Strategic Plan 2030, and to fulfil the countries' international commitments. The Secretariat highlighted the need to ensure the timely submission of the databases to enable progress in the development of the Emerald Network.

### **13. Emerald Network in Montenegro**

Members of the GoEPAEN were informed about the current status of the Emerald Network in the host country, Montenegro, as well as its future prospects. A representative from the Environmental Protection Agency of Montenegro updated participants on the progress made in data collection and emphasized the need to continue this work in 2026 before submitting the database.

The Secretariat noted that, within the framework of the case-file procedure on Skadar Lake, Montenegro has expressed interest in hosting a biogeographical seminar. The Secretariat encouraged the authorities to advance the finalisation of data collection and ensure timely submission of the database.

### **14. State of play of the Emerald component of EU4ENVIRONMENT programme**

The GoEPAEN were informed about recent developments in the EU4 Environment project. Building upon previous EU programmes, this project covers the period from 2021 to 2026 and involves six Eastern Partnership countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus. However, Belarus is no longer participating due to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Azerbaijan has temporarily suspended its project activities until the EU and the World Bank resolve certain financial issues.

The project's main focus areas include the management of Emerald sites, the planning of further Emerald Network development, and addressing related legal matters. It also features country-specific work plans as well as regional activities designed to promote knowledge sharing among the participating countries and with EU member States.

### **15. Programme of activities 2025 – 2026: future work of the Group of Experts**

The Secretary proposed the programme of activities for the development of the Emerald Network in 2026, which will include:

- Biogeographical evaluation seminar(s) further to the submission of Emerald Network databases;
- Bilateral assistance to contracting parties/follow-up to countries factsheets;
- A legal analysis on the criteria for rejecting (or approving) negative changes.

Special attention will be given to aiding for conducting the Emerald Network dataflow through the progressive adaptation of the Natura 2000 portal in ReportNet3 to accommodate Emerald Network data, in close cooperation with the EEA and subject to financial availability. Support to Contracting Parties, such as training sessions, will also be provided.

One of the participants proposed that in the future a meaningful analysis could be conducted using the data collected through the Standard Data Forms (SDFs) and the reporting under Resolution No. 8. Such an analysis could, for example, identify key gaps and pressures within the network, as well as areas where enhanced collaboration between Parties is needed. This would undoubtedly contribute to improving the overall quality and comprehensiveness of the Network.

The group agreed on the importance of investing in the network's visibility and welcomed the idea of sending a Bern Convention delegation to COP 17 of the CBD, scheduled to take place in Armenia in October 2026.

The proposed activities will be included in the 2026 draft Programme of Activities and Budget of the Bern Convention, subject to the availability of financial and human resources.

#### **16. Date and place of the next meeting of the Group of Experts**

The 2026 meeting of the GoEPAEN is scheduled for late September to early October 2026. Participants in the Group were invited to submit proposals to host the 2026 meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks, to be jointly organised with the Working Group on overseeing the implementation of the Vision and Strategic Plan 2030.

#### **17. Conclusions of the meeting**

The Chair drew the conclusions of the meeting. She thanked the participants, the experts, and the authorities of Montenegro and declared the meeting closed.

#### **18. Briefing on the excursion to Lake Skadar: timing, targets and logistic details**

Anela Sijarić, Head of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development, Montenegro, presented a summary and outlined logistical details for the visit to Lake Skadar scheduled for the following day.

**Appendix I – Agenda**

		<b>Documents</b>	<b>Expected results</b>
<b><i>Tuesday 7 October</i></b>			
<b>9.00 am</b>	<b>1. Opening of the meeting</b>	Opening address by the Secretariat of the Bern Convention	
<b>9.10 am</b>	<b>2. Adoption of the agenda</b>	Meeting agenda T-PVS/Agenda(2025)20  <b>For adoption</b>	Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the aims of the meeting and adopt the agenda.
<b>9.15 am</b>	<b>3. Secretariat to present the conclusions from the previous GoEPAEN and mandate of the Group and decisions of the 44<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention</b>  <i>Presentation by the Secretariat</i>	Report of the 14 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks <u>T-PVS/PA(2024)09</u>  Extract from the list of decisions and adopted texts on the protection of habitats of the 44 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee <u>T-PVS/PA(2025)05</u>  <b>For information</b>	The conclusions of the previous GoEPAEN meeting and the salient points of the 44 <sup>th</sup> meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention are recalled.
<b>9.30 am</b>	<b>4. Updated information on monitoring the implementation of the Vision and Strategic Plan of the Bern Convention for the period to 2030</b>  <i>Presentation by Dave Pritchard, independent expert</i>	Strategic Plan for the Bern Convention for the period to 2030 <u>T-PVS(2023)18</u>  Vision for the Bern Convention for the period to 2030	Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of updated information on monitoring the implementation of the Vision and Strategic Plan of the Bern Convention for the period to 2030.

	<p><i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the updated information on monitoring the implementation of the Vision and Strategic Plan of the Bern Convention for the period to 2030 and invited to reflect on the contribution of the work of the Group of Experts to the achievement of the Strategic Plan.</i></p>	<p><u>T-PVS(2021)14</u></p> <p><b>For information</b></p>	
<p><b>9.45 am</b></p>	<p><b>5. Discussion on the new fields of the draft proposal of the Emerald Network Standard Data Form based on the discussion paper on implications</b></p> <p><i>Presentation by Ms Laura Gavilán, independent expert</i></p> <p><i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the proposed new fields of the Emerald Network Standard Data Form (SDF) and are invited to exchange views on the compulsory/optional nature of these new fields</i></p>	<p><b>For discussion and decision</b></p> <p><u>T-PVS/Inf(2025)38e</u></p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts discuss and decide on the optional/compulsory nature of the new fields of the Emerald Network SDF to be aligned with the Natura 2000 SDF. They are expected to discuss and decide whether to submit the document for adoption to the Standing Committee.</p>
<p><b>10.30 am</b></p>	<p><b>6. Reportnet 3 delivery platform: state of play</b></p> <p><i>Information point by Laura Gavilán</i></p>	<p><b>For information</b></p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the delivery process to Reportnet 3 and provide the Secretariat with guidance on follow-up work.</p>
<p><b>10.45 am</b></p>	<p><b>Coffee break</b></p>		
<p><b>11.15 am</b></p>	<p><b>6. Criteria for assessing (negative) changes on the Emerald Network dataflow</b></p> <p><i>Presentation by Otars Opermanis, independent expert</i></p>	<p><b>For information and discussion</b></p> <p><u>T-PVS/PA(2025)01</u></p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed about and discuss the relevance of reporting negative changes for the correct evaluation of the conservation status of habitats and species.</p>

11.45 am	<p><b>7. Emerald Network: screening, prior assessment and authorisation of potentially harmful projects. A digest of relevant international legal instruments, recommendations and guidelines</b></p> <p><i>Presentation by Dave Pritchard</i></p>	<p><b>For information</b></p> <p><u>T-PVS/PA(2025)02</u></p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the relevant international legal instruments, recommendations and guidelines for the screening, prior assessment and authorisation of potentially harmful projects.</p>
12.15 am	<p><b>8. State of play of the Emerald Network</b></p> <p><i>Presentation by Marc Roekaerts, independent expert</i></p>	<p><b>For information</b></p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the current situation of the Emerald Network.</p>
12.30 am	<p><b>9. Overview of errors in the Emerald Network dataflow; emphasising the need to update country databases</b></p> <p><i>Presentation by Marc Roekaerts</i></p>	<p><b>For information</b></p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of frequent errors during the reporting procedure and the need to keep national databases updated.</p>
1.00 pm	<p><b>Lunch break</b></p>		
2.15 pm	<p><b>10. Summary of countries factsheets aimed to assist on the development of the Emerald Network</b></p> <p><i>Presentation by Marc Roekaerts</i></p>	<p><b>For information</b></p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the work carried out by the expert in regard to the summary of countries factsheets.</p>
2.30 pm	<p><b>11. Development of the Emerald Network in Contracting Parties: national state of play</b></p> <p><i>Tour de table</i> <i>Reminder by the Secretariat</i></p> <p><i>Representatives of the Contracting Parties are invited to update the Group of Experts of the latest developments regarding the Emerald Network in their countries.</i></p>	<p><b>For discussion</b></p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the recent developments of the Emerald Network in Contracting Parties.</p> <p>Members of and observers discuss possible ways to boost the selection, proposal and declaration of new Emerald sites at a national level, to fulfil the targets for the Strategy and Vision of the Bern Convention to 2030, and to comply with the international commitments adopted by the countries.</p>

<p><b>3.30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>12. Emerald Network in Montenegro</b></p> <p><i>Presentation by Dragan Roganovic, advisor at the Environmental Protection Agency of Montenegro</i></p> <p><i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the highlights of the Emerald Network in Montenegro</i></p>	<p><b>For information</b></p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts take note of the highlights of the Emerald Network in Montenegro.</p>
<p><b>4.0 pm</b></p>	<p><b>13. State of play of the Emerald component of EU4ENVIRONMENT programme</b></p> <p><i>Presentation by Otars Opermanis</i></p>	<p><b>For information</b></p>	<p>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are provided an update on the progress in Emerald component of EU4ENVIRONMENT programme.</p>
<p><b>4.15 pm</b></p>	<p><b>Coffee break</b></p>		
<p><b>4.30 pm</b></p>	<p><b>14. Programme of activities 2025 – 2026: future work of the Group of Experts</b></p> <p><i>Presentation by the Secretariat</i></p> <p><i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are invited to propose and discuss priority activities for 2025 and 2026.</i></p>	<p><b>For discussion</b></p>	<p>Priority activities are identified and will feed into the 2025 programme of work and/or be included in the 2026 draft Programme of Activities and Budget of the Bern Convention (subject to the availability of financial and human resources).</p>
<p><b>5.0 pm</b></p>	<p><b>15. Date and place of the next meeting of the Group of Experts</b></p> <p><i>Members of and observers to the Group of Experts wishing to host the next meeting of the Group of Experts are invited to inform the participants.</i></p>	<p><b>For decision</b></p>	<p>The provisional venue and dates of the next meeting are agreed on.</p>
<p><b>5.15 pm</b></p>	<p><b>17. Any other business</b></p>		

<b>5.30 pm</b>	<b>18. Conclusions of the meeting</b>  <i>Presentation by Danielle Hofmann, Chair of the Group of Experts</i>	<b>For discussion and adoption</b>	Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are invited to work together to draw the conclusions of the meeting.
<b>5.45 pm</b>	<b>19. Briefing on the excursion to Lake Skadar: timing, targets and logistic details</b>  <i>Presentation by the Anela Sijarić, Head of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development, Montenegro</i>	<b>For information</b>	Members of and observers to the Group of Experts are informed of the excursion to Lake Skadar that will take place on 8 October.
<b>6.00 pm</b>	<b>End of the meeting</b>		
<b>7.30 pm</b>	<b>Reception offered by the Montenegrin Ministry of Tourism, Ecology, Sustainable Development and Northern Region Development</b>		
<b><i>Wednesday 8 October</i></b>			
<b>8.30 am</b>	<i>Departure from the Hotel Princess by bus</i>		
<b>9.00 am – 12.30 pm</b>	<i>Excursion to Lake Skadar led by Montenegrin delegation</i>  <i>Opening remarks by Anela Sijarić &amp; Danielle Hofmann</i>		

**Appendix 2 – List of Participants**

<b>Contracting Party</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Armenia</b>	<b>Mr Alik BADALYAN</b> The Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Armenia
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	<b>Mr Dejan RADOSEVIC</b> Head of Division for Biodiversity The Republic Institute for Protection of Cultural, Historical and Natural Heritage
<b>France</b>	<b>M. Charles-Henri DE BARSAC</b> Chargé de mission "accords internationaux et européens faune sauvage" sous-direction de la protection et de la restauration des écosystèmes terrestres Ministère de la Transition Ecologique et Solidaire
<b>Georgia</b>	<b>Ms Salome NOZADZE</b> Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture Georgia
<b>Hungary</b>	<b>Ms Andrea RISKÓ</b> Nature Conservation Lawyer Ministry of Agriculture of Hungary
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