



Strasbourg, 1st December 2023

T-PVS(2023)21

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

43rd meeting
Strasbourg, 27 November - 1 December 2023

**PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES AND BUDGET OF THE
BERN CONVENTION FOR 2024**

*Document prepared by
the Secretariat of the Bern Convention*

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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

Since 2012, the Bern Convention has prepared a biennial Programme of Activities to be adopted at the Standing Committee meetings in order to follow the same periodicity as the Council of Europe ordinary budget. However, for the 43rd Standing Committee, considering the possible increase of the allocation of the Ordinary Budget to the Bern Convention as a result of the Reykjavik Summit and the on-going discussions for the setting up of a mechanism of mandatory financial contributions, this Programme of Activities for the Bern Convention will focus only on 2024. To recall, the 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

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.

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.

III. Bern Convention Programme of Activities for 2024

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 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 EU member States parties to the Convention.

Technical maintenance and updating of the ORS are listed under heading No.2.

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

Further, activities under heading No. 2 concern the monitoring of the implementation of obligations by Parties by examination of cases dealt within the framework of the Bern Convention’s case-file system and of the European Diploma for Protected Areas of the Council of Europe. They may also concern emergencies in the eventuality of a grave ecological damage as a result of a catastrophe, an accident or a conflict situation.

3. Standard setting

3.1 Conservation of species

Activities listed under heading No. 3 aim at assessing the conservation status of populations of species listed in the appendices to the Convention and identifying species at risk with the aim of supporting the development of models and tools to counteract conservation challenges, common management standards, action plans, various strategic policy documents, etc.

This work is achieved with the support of the relevant Groups of Experts and Working Groups set up under the Convention to monitor and guide the implementation of both the Treaty and the Recommendations adopted by the Standing Committee, including review of past Action Plans, Strategies and Guidance documents.

3.2 Conservation of natural habitats

Activities indicated under heading No.3 also 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) and Recommendations No. 14 (1989), No. 15 (1989) and No. 16 (1989) of the Standing Committee. The setting-up of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCI) in Europe is the main objectives of the Convention's work in this field.

4. Assistance to Contracting Parties

Activities under this heading consist of assistance to Parties in the implementation of their obligations through capacity building or trainings. Activities also include the coordination of the implementation of Action Plans, Strategic or guidance documents. Projects aiming at supporting the setting-up of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCI) in Europe are also included here.

5. Education and awareness-raising

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, the Convention provides assistance to Parties in communicating on the biodiversity advantage and benefits and develops awareness-raising campaigns and materials, as well as online platforms/tools for facilitating access to information on the case-file system and on progress made in the setting-up of the Emerald Network.

6. Staff

The Bern Convention's Secretariat is charged 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 2024

In her proposals submitted to the Committee of Ministers for the 2024-2027 Council of Europe Programme and its accompanying budget, and to implement the decisions taken during the Reykjavík Summit, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe suggested a significant increase in the Ordinary Budget to be allocated to the Bern Convention. However, since the discussions are still being held within the Committee of Ministers when this document is drafted and that, as a consequence, no decision on a possible increase in the budget allocated to the Bern Convention is taken yet, the Secretariat decided to work on two scenarios: one with no increase granted (i.e. the same amount as last year of 244 800€), and one with the increase suggested by the Secretary General.

The proposal of increase of the ordinary budget, if supported by the Committee of Ministers, would not only double the current budget for activities but also provide the resources for the core staff of the Secretariat.

Scenario 1: no increase (ordinary budget of 244 800€)

In 2024, if the Committee of Ministers does not accept the increase of the budget, the Council of Europe's Ordinary Budget allocated to the Bern Convention is expected to provide an approximate amount of 244 800 € to the Bern Convention (as in 2023). This amount corresponds to:

- 164 800 € for financing the programme of activities including overheads;
- 80 000 € for staff and pensions, which corresponds to the job of an Assistant/ Project Officer to the Secretariat of the Bern Convention.

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 614 954,50 €. It corresponds to:

- 173 954,50 € for financing the programme of activities including overheads;
- 441 000 € for staff and pensions.

Scenario 2: increase of the ordinary budget

In 2024, if the Committee of Ministers does support the proposal of the Secretary General to increase the ordinary budget allocated to the Bern Convention, it will provide an approximative amount of 855 300 € broken down as follows:

- 332 700 € for financing the programme of activities including overheads;
- 661 000 € for staff and pensions

In that second scenario, the Special Account would still be used for activities which are not funded by the Ordinary Budget but in a less prominent proportion. The amount to be provided to the Bern Convention budget via voluntary contributions would amount to 208 587,50 € and correspond to:

- 97 587,50 € for financing the programme of activities including overheads;
- 111 000 € for staff and pensions

The increase of the ordinary budget, securing the core staff of the Secretariat and significantly increasing the resources available for activities, would enable to design a more ambitious programme of work and to include additional activities. The additional activities have been highlighted in the budget table reflecting scenario 2 below. Additional staff would be needed to maintain these activities on the longer term.

Budget 2024 (scenario 2)

Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available (CoE OB)	Funds needed (VCs)
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1. Statutory bodies			60 599,00	60 599,00	0,00
Meeting of the Standing Committee (4 days)			50 349,00	50 349,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (average: 27 persons*5 per diem). Chair + maximum of 23 Delegates + average of 4 Experts</i>	135,00	175,00	23 625,00	23 625,00	0,00
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts</i>	27	500,00	13 500,00	13 500,00	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)			5 125,00	5 125,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Bureau Members (5 persons*3 per diems)</i>	15,00	175,00	2 625,00	2 625,00	0,00
<i>Travel expenses of Bureau Members (5 persons)</i>	5,00	500,00	2 500,00	2 500,00	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	175,00	0,00	0,00	0,00
<i>Travel expenses of Bureau Members (5 persons)</i>	0,00	500,00	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)			5 125,00	5 125,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Bureau Members (5 persons*3 per diems)</i>	15,00	175,00	2 625,00	2 625,00	0,00
<i>Travel expenses of Bureau Members (5 persons)</i>	5,00	500,00	2 500,00	2 500,00	0,00
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00

2. Monitoring of obligations			54 500,00	54 500,00	0,00
Group of Specialists on the EDPA (2 days)			24 500,00	24 500,00	0,00
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts</i>	20,00	500,00	10 000,00	10 000,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Delegates/Experts (20 persons*3 per diem)</i>	60,00	175,00	10 500,00	10 500,00	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 (case-file system and EDPA sites)			15 000,00	15 000,00	0,00
<i>Travel expenses of Experts</i>	5,00	500,00	2 500,00	2 500,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Experts</i>	20,00	175,00	3 500,00	3 500,00	0,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	3,00	3 000,00	9 000,00	9 000,00	0,00

Maintenance of the ORS			5 000,00	5 000,00	0,00
<i>lumpsum</i>	1,00	5 000,00	5 000,00	5 000,00	0,00

Case-file study			5 000,00	5 000,00	0,00
<i>lumpsum</i>	1,00	5 000,00	5 000,00	5 000,00	0,00

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

3. Standard setting (Groups of Experts meetings)			151 737,50	112 300,00	39 437,50
Network of SFPs for IKB			19 600,00	19 600,00	0,00
<i>Travel expenses of Delegates/Experts Countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, BiH, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, North Macedonia, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Ukraine)</i>	14,00	500,00	7 000,00	7 000,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Delegates/Experts (14 experts*3 per diem)</i>	42,00	175,00	7 350,00	7 350,00	0,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1,00	5 250,00	5 250,00	5 250,00	0,00

Group of Experts on the Conservation of Birds (back to back with the Network of SFPs on IKB) (1 day)			2 450,00	2 450,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Delegates/Experts (14 experts*1 per diem)</i>	14,00	175,00	2 450,00	2 450,00	0,00

Group of Experts on Large Carnivores			8 000,00	0,00	8 000,00
<i>Lumpsum</i>	1,00	8 000,00	8 000,00	0,00	8 000,00

Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks (1,5 days)			35 437,50	35 437,50	0,00
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts</i>	25,00	500,00	12 500,00	12 500,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (25 persons*2,5 per diem)</i>	62,50	175,00	10 937,50	10 937,50	0,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	3,00	4 000,00	12 000,00	12 000,00	0,00

Group of Experts on Biodiversity and Climate Change (1 day) (back to back with the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks)			12 750,00	12 750,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (15 persons*2,5 per diem)</i>	50,00	175,00	8 750,00	8 750,00	0,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	0,00

2nd meeting of the National Focal Points for the conservation of the Sturgeon (2 days)			31 437,50	0,00	31 437,50
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts</i>	25,00	500,00	12 500,00	0,00	12 500,00
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (25 persons*2,5 per diem)</i>	62,50	175,00	10 937,50	0,00	10 937,50
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	2,00	4 000,00	8 000,00	0,00	8 000,00

Ad hoc Working Group on reporting (1 day) (online)			23 000,00	23 000,00	0,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	2,00	4 000,00	8 000,00	8 000,00	0,00
<i>Development of a reporting tool</i>	1,00	15 000,00	15 000,00	15 000,00	0,00

Ad hoc Working Group on reporting (1,5 days)			14 062,50	14 062,50	0,00
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts</i>	15,00	500,00	7 500,00	7 500,00	0,00
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (15 persons*2,5 per diem)</i>	37,50	175,00	6 562,50	6 562,50	0,00

Ad hoc Drafting Group of the Amending Protocol (online)			0,00	0,00	0,00
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Working Group on Strategic Plan matters (online)			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

<i>Ad hoc</i> Working Group on the conservation of marine turtles (online)			0,00	0,00	0,00
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Expert Meeting on the Eradication of the Ruddy Duck (half day) (online)			0,00	0,00	0,00
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4. Assistance to Parties			64 150,00	40 000,00	24 150,00
Emerald Network biogeographical evaluations (for 2 countries or regions)			24 150,00	0,00	24 150,00
<i>Travel expenses of independent experts</i>	6,00	500,00	3 000,00	0,00	3 000,00
<i>Subsistence expenses of independent expenses</i>	18,00	175,00	3 150,00	0,00	3 150,00
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	6,00	3 000,00	18 000,00	0,00	18 000,00

Cooperation project : Emerald Network capacity building project in one Contracting Party			20 000,00	20 000,00	0,00
<i>Lumpsum</i>	1,00	20 000,00	20 000,00	20 000,00	0,00

Cooperation activities in Contracting Parties concerned by case-files (Seminar, Workshop, etc)			20 000,00	20 000,00	0,00
<i>Lumpsum</i>	1,00	20 000,00	20 000,00	20 000,00	0,00

5. Education and awareness-raising			40 000,00	10 000,00	30 000,00
Awareness and visibility: Communication strategy			40 000,00	10 000,00	30 000,00
<i>Lumpsum (communication campaign and supports)</i>	1,00	25 000,00	25 000,00	10 000,00	15 000,00
<i>Lumpsum (Emerald Network Viewer and Webapp)</i>	1,00	15 000,00	15 000,00	0,00	15 000,00

6. Official Journeys of staff			21 000,00	17 000,00	4 000,00
<i>Travel and subsistence</i>	15,00	1 400,00	21 000,00	17 000,00	4 000,00

7. Provision for the Chair			4 000,00	4 000,00	0,00
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<i>Travel and subsistence expenses (lumpsum)</i>	1,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	4 000,00	0,00
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8. Overheads			34 301,00	34 301,00	0,00
<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			661 000,00	550 000,00	111 000,00
<i>Fixed term staff (salary and pension) - position of Secretary of the Bern Convention</i>	12,00	13 400,00	160 800,00	160 800,00	0,00
<i>Fixed term staff (salary and pension) - position of Programme Manager</i>	12,00	12 200,00	146 400,00	146 400,00	0,00
<i>Fixed term staff (salary and pension) - position of Project Manager</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	6 000,00	72 000,00	72 000,00	0,00
<i>Fixed term staff (salary and pension) - position of assistant</i>	12,00	5 333,33	64 000,00	64 000,00	0,00
<i>Topping-up seconded staff (as of 1st June 2024)</i>	7,00	4 000,00	28 000,00	0,00	28 000,00
<i>Fixed term staff (salary and pension) - position of project officer</i>	12,00	6 916,67	83 000,00	0,00	83 000,00

TOTAL			1 091 287,50	882 700,00	208 587,50
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332 700,00

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.