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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

GROUP OF SPECIALISTS – EUROPEAN DIPLOMA FOR PROTECTED AREAS

FUTURE OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA

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

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I. PRE-AMBLE

Following the decision taken in 2010 by the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma of Protected Areas (EDPA) to hold a discussion at its 2011 meeting on the future of the diploma, and how it can be used more effectively, the Secretariat drafted a working document, comprising:

- the pre-meeting views of members of the Group and of the Secretariat;
- the conclusions of the last Seminar of managers of diploma-holding areas, held in 2005 at the Thayatal National Park in Austria (see Annex 2) and published in *Environmental Encounters*, **62**, 1-198 (2006); and
- the proposals made by Mr Hervé Lethier in the report on prospects for the development of the EDPA (2007) (PE-S-DE (2007) 13) (see Annex 3).

The text of the working document has been modified and includes a record of the actions undertaken by the Secretariat during recent months. The present document is therefore designed as a discussion paper which includes an analysis of the various comments, suggestions and proposals as well as a set of 12 of recommendations.

II. INTRODUCTION

The European Diploma for Protected Areas is an acknowledgement of the exceptional heritage quality of an area and its exemplary management. It is also a tool for solving and preventing problems relating to the area's protection.

The EDPA is a living and much sought-after instrument requiring a high level of commitment by both managers of diploma-holding areas and the authorities responsible for those areas. It is both a technical and political tool encompassing the values of the Council of Europe (CoE).

During the 46 years since it was set up in 1965, it has enabled substantial work to be carried out for both the protection and the meticulous monitoring of areas of outstanding value in terms of their biological, geological and landscape diversity. A condition of the award and subsequent renewal of the EDPA is that the areas are managed in an exemplary manner.

The EDPA represents a major contribution to the Pan-European Ecological Network and it also supports the strategic objectives which were adopted at Nagoya. Nevertheless, the EDPA needs to evolve for the following five reasons.

- (1) The EDPA has not developed to the same extent in all member states of the CoE.
- (2) The geographical distribution of the EDPA sites is not homogeneous in Europe, implying that the concentration of awarded areas probably does not adequately reflect the distribution of the environmental heritage values.
- (3) The EDPA appears to be relatively unknown both by the networks of national protected areas and by the competent national authorities.
- (4) In the past 50 years the world has changed, the challenges have changed, new concepts have been developed (e.g. ecosystem services), European integration has increased (e.g. the Habitats and Birds Directives), and therefore the aims of the EDPA should be adapted.
- (5) Working methods need to be reviewed and further streamlined wherever possible.

Also the Secretariat of the CoE has been reorganised. New operational Directorates General have been created and the activities relating to the Bern Convention have been assigned to the DG Democracy. It is intended that the role of the EDPA, inspired by the ideas and principles of the CoE and upholding the CoE's values, should be enhanced as the EDPA reaches its 50th anniversary in 2015. It has been regarded as a valuable instrument during its first half century, but it needs to be developed so that it remains equally, or more, valuable during the second half century.

In 2011, there is a network of diploma-holding areas which includes 71 areas in 26 countries.

III. TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE GROUP OF EXPERTS

At its meetings the group examines the candidatures submitted by governments. It (1) expresses an opinion on the potential European value of the applicant area and (2) decides whether or not to carry out an on-site expert appraisal.

The group examines the reports drafted by independent experts (1) following submission of an application and the subsequent on-the-spot visit, (2) as part of the EDPA renewal process, and (3) in the event of a serious threat, or significant damage, to a diploma-holding area.

The group examines the reports that the authorities responsible for diploma-holding areas are required to submit each year.

Finally, the group makes proposals regarding the issues to be discussed at the seminars of managers of diploma-holding areas and undertakes any other work which might be requested by the Secretariat of the Bern Convention.

IV. RECENT CHANGES TO THE REGULATIONS

In 2003, in view of the increasing number of diploma-holding areas and the limited resources allocated to this activity, it was decided to simplify the system of pre-renewal visits. Article 9 of the Regulations gave rise to the following interpretation:

“Expert appraisals prior to the renewal of the European Diploma, other than those relating to the first renewal, will not be organised systematically. The necessity of making a new on-the-spot appraisal will be decided by the competent committee in the light of the current situation of the area concerned and the content of the most recent annual reports.”

The regulations (Resolution (98)29) were modified in 2008 following a decision by the Committee of Ministers (Resolution Resdip (2008)1): the main changes concern the committee responsible for the European Diploma activities – now the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention – and the period of validity of the EDPA – 10 years instead of the previous period of 5 years (the EDPA is now first awarded for 5 years and then renewed for periods of 10years).

V. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE AND ACTIONS UNDERTAKEN SINCE THE 2011 MEETING OF THE GROUP OF SPECIALISTS

During the discussion at the Group of Experts’ meeting in 2011, many suggestions were made by members of the Group and the Secretariat. Annex 1 includes a list of these suggestions. It is obviously neither possible nor necessarily desirable to attempt to implement all of the suggestions included in Annex 1. However, they do provide the basic information and ideas which are required in making proposals for the future of the EDPA.

The Secretariat has engaged a consultant, Mr Marc Roekaerst, to update the database and the map of the EDPA sites. He will also analyse the different types of habitats and biogeographic regions already represented in the network, identify the gaps, and make proposals with a view to encouraging new applications.

The website has been updated with the descriptions of the EDPA sites. New pages related to the EDPA have been added to the website of the Italian Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea (add details of the Italian website). These pages give overall information about EDPA’s goals and procedures. A page is also dedicated to the Italian EDPAs.

VI. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CHAIR

In reviewing the material in Annexes 1 to 3, there appear to be seven particular issues that become apparent. Four of these issues (numbered 1 to 4 in the list of analyses and recommendations below) relate to the value of the EDPA in a changing world and how it can contribute significantly to the environment of people and communities throughout Europe. The final three issues (numbered 5 to 7 below) relate to the internal working of the EDPA and aim to suggest how it might become both more attractive to member states of the CoE and more effective/efficient in its operation.

1. The EDPA, ecosystem services and sustainable development

One important opportunity for the EDPA is to protect the biological diversity, landscape patterns (including geodiversity) and cultural diversity of an area of land or water or both. This links the EDPA with the European Convention on Human Rights. The EDPA does not focus on any one aspect of diversity, but should reflect the integration of all three aspects. It is therefore considerably more than a nature conservation designation and this distinguishes it from sites in the Natura 2000 and EMERALD networks. The corollary to this is that the criteria for accepting candidate EDPAs, and the criteria for renewing existing EDPAs, may need to be modified so as to ensure that all aspects of diversity, and their integration, are at an acceptable level.

The decade 2011 to 2020 has been designated ‘The Decade of Biodiversity’ by COP10 of the Convention of Biological Diversity. The three aims of this convention are much wider than just conserving species and habitats – they also encompass the equitable sharing of biodiversity resources and well as the use of those resources in a sustainable manner. This is manifest in an understanding of the ecosystem services provided by biodiversity to human populations locally as well as globally. There is therefore considerable opportunity for EDPAs to enhance our knowledge about ecosystem services and their value, both economic and cultural, to society. In particular, EDPAs can demonstrate how their own resources can be used in a sustainable manner.

RECOMMENDATION 1: The principal aim of the EDPA is to protect biological, landscape and cultural diversity and to ensure the integration all these aspects of an area’s diversity.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The criteria should be reviewed, and modified where required, so that all EDPAs meet the requirements of Recommendation 1 above by 2025.

RECOMMENDATION 3: EDPAs should be encouraged to demonstrate to both their local communities and national governments the sustainable use of biodiversity resources.

2. Improving knowledge about the EDPA

In thinking about developing the EDPA into the future, the one fact that stands out is that relatively few people have heard of the EDPA, and even fewer people have any real knowledge about it. In the face of such comparative ignorance of the EDPA, there is certainly a need for improving the level of knowledge about the EDPA and of the value to nations of having a number of EDPAs designated within their territorial limits.

The EDPA comes within the sphere of activity of the Bern Convention. Meetings of the Convention are routinely held in Strasbourg, but consideration could be given to holding some of the meetings within EDPAs. Similarly, various working groups of the Bern Convention (e.g. climate change, invasive alien species, European island biodiversity) could be held on an EDPA where the subject of the working group coincides with aspects of the EDPA’s management.

Information about the EDPA is vital if it is to become more widely known and appreciated. The printed material needs to be refreshed periodically, because increasingly the website will be a primary source of information and hence it is imperative that it is kept up to date. This has been an on-going activity of the staff of the secretariat, all of whom are aware of the importance of this activity. As an aside, the French language name for the Diploma – *Diplôme Européen des Espaces Protégés* – is invariant on publications,

whereas the English language name varies. The four-paged A4-sized leaflet refers to the *European Diploma of Protected Areas* whereas the A5-sized booklet on questions and answers refers to the *European Diploma for Protected Areas*. It would be advantageous to standardise on one of these variants (see recommendation 11 below).

The 40th anniversary of the EDPA was celebrated with a meeting of managers at Thayatal in Austria (Annex 3). With the 50th anniversary in 2015, perhaps there could be two meetings. One could be a conference held in advance of the actual anniversary (perhaps in 2013 or 2014) and aimed mostly at the senior staff of agencies, governments, NGOs and academics dealing with biodiversity, landscape and cultural heritage issues. This would discuss the development of the EDPA concept since 1965, demonstrate the value of EDPAs in terms of conservation, ecosystem services and as models of sustainable development, and encourage more nations to propose candidate sites (see also recommendation 8 below). The second meeting, which could be a seminar held in 2015, could mirror the previous one in Austria, being aimed largely, but not exclusively, at EDPA managers, looking at any new purpose and criteria for the EDPA (recommendations 1 and 2 above) and sharing experiences in the management, opportunities and problems experienced in their areas.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Explore the possibility of meetings of the Bern Convention, and its associated working groups, being held in, and hosted by, EDPAs.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Planning needs to start in 2012 for events – conferences and/or seminars – which will celebrate the golden jubilee (50th anniversary) of the EDPA network.

3. The European and worldwide context of the EDPA

The EDPA meshes with many other international agreements, conventions, etc. Whilst the EDPA has its own and separate identity, nevertheless synergies should be exploited wherever they are found.

Central to the CoE family is the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). There are close links between the ECHR and the European environment, the latter making a distinct contribution to the preservation of those rights. Also within the CoE the EDPA could add substantially to the work of the Bern Convention. The experiences of advocating for, and management of, EDPA areas contributes to the European evidence base for achieving sustainable management of natural resources, and hence for the long-term goal of sustainable development.

Synergies should be sought wherever possible with other conventions. Examples might be the European Landscape Convention, the Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe and the Framework Convention on the Value of the Cultural Heritage for Society. More widely, clear links could be established with Ramsar sites, with both the cultural and natural aspects of the World Heritage Sites, and with the activities of the MAB programmes. Overall, together with the variety of national, European and international designations and other instruments, the EDPA can contribute to aim 9 of the Nagoya strategy (i.e. that the world's protected area system should cover 17% of the terrestrial/freshwater area of the planet and 10% of the coastal/marine area)

RECOMMENDATION 6: The links between the ECHR and the EDPA should be made explicit in the regulations governing the award and renewal of the EDPA.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Discussions should be held with officials of other conventions so as to explore where synergies exist, and, as appropriate, bilateral or multilateral agreements might be entered into which benefit all parties to such arrangements.

4. Expanding the network of EDPAs

The review initiated by the Secretariat (see Section V above) will provide vital information about the current network of EDPA areas and about possible gaps. There is a strong feeling within the Group of Experts that the present network of EDPAs does not adequately cover the extent of the biological, landscape and cultural diversity that is found across Europe. However, at present the evidence to support this 'feeling'

by the Group of Experts is lacking. This is not a criticism of the current network, which has developed over a period of nearly 50 years, and grown also in an eclectic manner as national governments have proposed areas which are appropriate in their view.

In terms of expanding the EDPA network, as well as the diversity of diversities to be included, attention should be given to national coverage. At present EDPAs are found in only a little over a half of the member states of the CoE. Similarly, there is no analysis of the coverage of EDPAs according to the biogeographical zones which occur throughout Europe. When all of this information is available, a strategy of extending the EDPA network would be a first step towards realising a more rational coverage across Europe.

RECOMMENDATION 8: As soon as possible after Mark Roekaerst's report is received, the Secretariat and the Group of Experts should start to develop a strategy for expanding the network of EDPAs so that by 2040 (the EDPA's 75th anniversary) the network truly demonstrates the best of European biological, landscape and cultural diversity.

5. Funding for the EDPA network

The budget within the CoE for the EDPA network is extremely limited. To be realistic, there is little prospect that this will be significantly increased in the foreseeable future. If there are ambitious plans for the development of the EDPA, then it becomes apparent that funds will need to be sourced from elsewhere.

On the public side, the Secretariat of the Bern Convention should seek increased political and financial support for the EDPA network from governments. This may lead to a duality of support, partly centrally for 'core funding' of the Secretariat but, perhaps more importantly, nationally for the demonstrably effective management of the EDPAs themselves. Particularly where applications for new EDPAs are being submitted, it would be useful if a financial contribution could be made to the CoE's assessment and on-the-spot visit processes.

On the voluntary or charitable side, there would be huge advantages in establishing and funding some sort of a European heritage foundation. Such a foundation could make the EDPA more widely known and recognised. There are many possibilities for its activities, such as taking on the organisation of the 50th anniversary events (recommendation 5 above), providing small grants to EDPAs for specified projects, and indeed lobbying for a more complete network (recommendation 8 above).

RECOMMENDATION 9: Explore with governments which are signatories of the Bern Convention the possibility of financial support of the EDPA, perhaps targeted to meeting the cost of processing new applications and renewals.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Consider the possibility either of establishing, or encouraging another body to establish, a foundation which could receive governmental, organisational, individual or charitable funds and which would support the work on the EDPA network.

6. The name of the EDPA

There have been various suggestions about the name of the EDPA. The majority of these include the word 'Heritage'. Whilst this may be useful during the second half century of the EDPA's existence, there appears to be no pressing need at the present time to change the name. However, the extent of acceptance of the current name, or the extent of the demand to change the name needs to be assessed. Hence evidence of the desirability, or otherwise, of a name change needs to be collected.

Whilst the name of the EDPA needs consideration, the possibility should also be given to some associated name for transboundary pairs of EDPAs. Information on the desirability or otherwise of such a new name could also be requested in the questionnaire mentioned in recommendation 11.

RECOMMENDATION 11: A questionnaire should be sent to both the authorities and managers of the EDPAs asking if they wish to change the name, and if they wish to suggest possible new names. The results of this questionnaire would then be considered by both the Secretariat and the Group of Experts

before any final recommendation is made. In the meantime the English language version of the EDPA's name needs to be stabilised – this should be European Diploma for Protected Areas.

7. Reporting on the EDPA

A recurrent feature of the annual meetings of the Group of Experts is that a substantial proportion of the annual reports have not been received by the deadline set by the Secretariat. Inevitably there will be good reasons why a small proportion of reports are received after the CoE's deadline. However, the volume of late reports tends to indicate that there might be a systemic difficulty in reporting.

It has been suggested that the reports should more closely reflect some of the newer aspects of the role of EDPAs in the networks of biological, landscape and cultural designations across Europe. Such newer topics might include an assessment of the EDPA's contribution to ecosystem services, its links with Natura 2000 and Emerald network sites, aspects of the ECHR, as well as links to other cultural and landscape issues.

RECOMMENDATION 12: The Secretariat and Group of Experts should, by 2015, have devised a revised reporting scheme and trialled it with a sample of EDPAs. This revised reporting system should aim at simplicity for the managers of EDPAs, provide useful information for mid-term reviews and for renewals, and may be made less regularly than annually.

Annex 1. Suggestions made before and at the 2011 Meeting.

The suggestions are grouped under 6 headings, and are not attributed to any particular individual

➤ *Extension and adaptation to the new challenges*

- ✓ Encourage candidatures from countries which do not yet have any diploma-holding areas; organize the cover of the network according to the European biogeographical regions.
- ✓ Create an *Open Register of capable areas* in collaboration with experts.
- ✓ Carry out a study aimed at analysing the biological, geological and landscape diversity already represented in the network, identify areas of European importance not yet present and make proposals in this respect.
- ✓ Be more selective regarding acceptance of candidature files.
- ✓ Encourage the delivery of a unique diploma for cross-border protected areas.
- ✓ Use the same classification than for the Emerald network: the use of EUNIS habitat classification in the descriptive form will be encouraged.
- ✓ Watch to take into account the criterion of the ecological continuity between the protected space and its environment, during the examination of the new candidate and the renewals.
- ✓ Additional criteria could be considered in order to support the Decade of Biodiversity implementation of the strategic plan 2011-2020 (COP 10 of the Convention on Biological Diversity) in order to the further development of conservation areas.
- ✓ The close links between the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the European environment should be mentioned in the regulations of the diploma, to ensure full recognition of the latter's established contribution to the preservation of those rights.
- ✓ The EDPA should have as a specific aim the protection of biological, cultural and landscape diversity as components of the general interest guaranteed by the ECHR.
- ✓ Change the name of the EDPA in "Diploma of the natural heritage of the Council of Europe" or "European Heritage Diploma".
- ✓ Incite member states to the constitution of national committee of the EDPA of areas protected to promote and spread the information about the diploma, issue appeals for candidates, select the candidates and be relays with the CoE.
- ✓ Hold the seminars of managers of diploma-holding areas which provide an opportunity to share information and experience and is of key importance in ensuring that the network of areas holding the EDPA operates effectively at more regular intervals.

➤ *Visibility*

- ✓ Enhance the profile of the EDPA both at Council of Europe level (website, updating brochures) and manager level.

➤ *Institutional and financial measures*

- ✓ The EDPA should receive increased political and financial support from governments and where appropriate from other interested donors; areas holding the Diploma should be provided with financial and human resources commensurate with the commitment that governments enter into on submitting applications.
- ✓ In the Secretariat of the CoE, make attribute more means to the team responsible for this activity.

- ✓ Imagine some kind of incentives that may, for example, optimize the use of the trademark for tourist purposes (agreements with networks of tour operators?)
 - ✓ Investigate the possibility to give a prize financed by the sponsorship in every new awarded a diploma protected areas.
 - ✓ Implement a system of voluntary certification; it would be optimal discussing the approach with businessmen.
 - ✓ Explore the possibility of creating an European foundation of the natural heritage/ an European Heritage Foundation.
 - ✓ Explore the possibility of setting up of a European Heritage Centre (EHC).
 - ✓ Would it be beneficial to set up of a Small Grant Fund for the Conservation of the European Heritage (SGFCEH).
- ***European diploma areas as models for conservation and sustainable development***
- ✓ All protected areas and other “more ordinary” natural areas should benefit from the knowledge and skills of those responsible for areas holding the EDPA.
 - ✓ EDPA sites could make a contribution to the construction of a system of protected areas concerning aim 11 of the strategy of Nagoya (17% of the terrestrial part, 10% of coastal and marine parts).
 - ✓ The results obtained should provide richer input to the work carried out in other Bern Convention groups of experts by contributing innovative ideas, advanced tools for the protection of biodiversity (such as the Payments for Ecosystem Services) - and experiences on nature conservation and the management of natural resources in a sustainable development approach.
 - ✓ Bern Convention meetings should be more frequently organised in the EDPA areas which are key sites of biodiversity and often faced with problems dealt with by the Convention, such as climate change, invasive alien species, the biodiversity of European islands.
- ***Cooperation with others Conventions/programmes on protected areas***
- ✓ Work in co-operation with the Group of Experts responsible for protected areas and ecological networks and with other Council of Europe conventions and European instruments (European Landscape Convention, Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe, Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society, Directives UE / Natura 2000).
 - ✓ Ensure better co-ordination with the other awards/forms of recognition granted to areas holding the EDPA (Ramsar, World Heritage, MAB).
- ***Reporting system***
- ✓ The different and new objectives should be reflected in the annual reporting. Some topics should/could have more space: the relationship with the network (Natura 2000 and Emerald, above all); the landscape dimension in the sense of the Convention of Florence (place identity); the public participation; the evaluation of ecosystem services.
 - ✓ The report might become biennial.

Annex 2 – The Thayatal Seminar

Guidelines and principles relating to the four themes dealt with during the Seminar. A full account of the meeting was published in *Environmental Encounters*, 62, 1-198 (2006). The following is extracted from pages 146 to 153.

Theme 1: The new challenges facing area authorities (climate change, return of large carnivores, invasive species, etc.)

- Assist managers facing challenges stemming from economic and ecological globalisation;
- Address the conservation challenge represented by invasive alien species, particularly in the light of the work carried out under other instruments, such as the Bern Convention and its European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species;
- Take into account the work of the Group of experts on large carnivores of the Bern Convention, especially the action plans.
- Address the problem posed by the return of land to private owners particularly by providing a system of compensation for managerial efforts in line with sustainable use of natural resources and landscapes preservation;
- Provide methodological support for the search for new sources of funding among public or private donors sponsors and facilitate access to these sources;
- Take steps to ensure that regulations (concerning land use, tree felling, etc) are more strictly observed in order to reduce the growing pressures on areas holding the Diploma;
- Pay more attention to certain taxonomic groups often neglected, such as invertebrates which play a key functional role in ecosystems;
- Encourage use of common principles for the recognition of different types of protected areas;

Theme 2 –Partnership actions

- Use the European Diploma to promote institutional, technical, scientific and financial partnerships with all the public and private parties concerned in order to ensure and/or improve the functioning of the area holding the Diploma;
- See certain basic instruments, such as management plans, as the fruit of work done in partnership, requiring a participatory process and provide Diploma sites with such plans as stipulated in the Regulations for the European Diploma;
- Reinforce partnership concerning information management on Diploma areas, by updating the existing data; consider the possibility of including in an information system both the annual reports and the on-the-spot appraisal visits;
- Develop partnership with other networks, in order to establish a common trunk of information;

Theme 3 – Transfrontier co-operation and management issues

- Strengthen co-operation between transfrontier areas holding the Diploma in the light of their natural geographical, ecological, human and historical links, thus helping to achieve the Council of Europe's objective of bringing peoples closer together;
- Consider awarding more frequently a single Diploma to transfrontier areas forming a whole;
- Ensure that co-operation is not confined to meetings and exchanges but is enshrined in more formal and equitable partnership arrangements (bilateral agreements, twinning, charters, treaties, ...);

- Harmonise the status of transfrontier areas where possible, so that they receive equivalent protection on the highest possible level;
- Consider, in certain cases, setting up a single management body for transfrontier areas;
- Plan the removal of fences and other obstacles to animal movement or, failing that, create passageways for fauna;
- Strengthen co-operation with those responsible for regional instruments that apply to transfrontier areas (Alpine Convention, Carpathian Convention, Barcelona Convention, Helsinki Convention, ...);
- Promote co-operation with such initiatives as “Green Belt” and the “Cantabria-Pyrenees-Alps Great Mountain Corridor”, whose aim is to establish functional ecological corridors and thus contribute to overcoming Europe’s historic divides;

Theme 4 – Public relations and marketing issues

- Fulfill and harmonise an information, awareness-raising and educational role, targeting the various levels and different population groups, thus helping to ensure that the protected area is accepted by civil society, has a good image and is seen as attractive;
- Highlight the special features of each Diploma site as well as its assets;
- Make arrangements for tourism in consultation with all stakeholders, particularly tourism professionals, taking account of the area’s environmental assets and vulnerability;
- Consider revenue from tourism merely as supplementary income to finance granted by public authorities.

Annex 3 – An extract of the report by Mr Hervé Lethier on the prospects for the development of the European Diploma for Protected Areas

A European heritage diploma (EHD):

The EHD would be awarded to “sites”, monuments or protected areas:

- whose outstanding European value is recognised in terms of their natural, cultural **and/or** landscape aspects;
- **and** if their management is exemplary from an economic, social **and** environmental point of view.

The value of a site would be assessed using a grid comprising several criteria, tying in with the spirit of the Council of Europe conventions in this field (Bern, Florence and Faro).

The quality of management would be assessed with regard to the values, ideals and principles promoted by the ECHR and its contribution to sustainable development in the countries in question.

A European Heritage Site Network (EHSN):

This would be set up by merging the European *institutional* heritage network and the *territorial* network of diploma-holding areas, with the aim of:

- promoting the values, ideals and principles of the Council of Europe;
- facilitating sustainable development in Europe;
- developing co-operation between countries and site managers;
- contributing to the preservation of the pan-European natural, cultural and landscape heritage;
- offering a forum for discussion, information and communication on the management of this heritage.

Adjusting resources:

The following recommendations are designed to optimise current Council of Europe resources.

They are also aimed at promoting greater involvement of civil society in the work to set up the European Heritage Network (territorial and functional dimensions) and ensure co-ordination between the managers of the sites which are part of that network (institutional dimension).

Two institutional measures are proposed:

- the setting up of a **European Heritage Centre (EHC)**, responsible for the administration of the three aforementioned technical conventions (Bern, Faro and Florence) and the administration and development of the EHSN; the administrative and financial resources assigned to the Council of Europe for cultural, natural and landscape heritage should be channelled to and shared out within the EHC;
- the setting up of a **Heritage Committee (HC)**; this would replace the current committees responsible for providing the Committee of Ministers with all the opinions and proposals regarding the award (or withdrawal) of the diploma and, in general, all measures to preserve and enhance the European natural, cultural and landscape heritage, in liaison with the experts. This committee could operate in separate configurations (natural heritage, cultural heritage, landscapes), depending on the matters to be addressed;

Two measures of a financial nature are recommended:

In this regard, it should be borne in mind that there are at present no particular financial mechanisms able to meet the needs generated by the proposed adjustments; it might therefore prove necessary to approach private¹ and public² institutional donors to seek the resources required.

It should also be borne in mind that the Council of Europe has its own internal funding mechanisms which could partially address these needs;³ it was, moreover, beyond the scope of this report to go into this in any greater detail, although reflection on this matter does not present any particular difficulties and could usefully draw on existing formulas.⁴

- The setting up of a **Small Grant Fund for the Conservation of the European Heritage (SGFCEH)**; this Fund, designed to help the sustainable management of diploma-holding sites, would primarily be financed by voluntary contributions from members; it would be used, on recommendations from the HC, to award small grants to the most disadvantaged countries Europe-wide, to help them honour their commitments under the three Conventions; this Fund would be administered by the HC, in liaison with the Committee of Ministers, in accordance with regulations which would need to be drawn up;
- the creation of a **European Heritage Foundation (EHF)**, open to all donors, private in particular, and multilateral; this Foundation would take action in promoting the preservation of the natural, cultural and landscape heritage of outstanding pan-European value, by facilitating ambitious pilot projects and programmes going beyond the legal obligations of member states under international law and promoting co-operation between countries. It would be managed by a Foundation Board (**FB**) comprising, alongside the Council of Europe, interested donors, and could operate, for part of its capital, in the form of a trust fund.⁵

¹ Corporate foundations (e.g.: Gaz de France, EDF, Total, BP, Elf), private foundations (e.g.: Fondation Prince Albert II de Monaco), intervention funds (e.g.: National Geographic's Conservation Trust, the IUCN Netherlands funding programmes), sponsors, etc.

² European Union, governments and development aid agencies in the countries of Europe (AFD, DGID, GTZ, SIDA, DANIDA, FINIDA, DDC), World bank Group, EBRD, Global Environment Facility, etc.

³ The Council's own funds, the Development Bank, etc

⁴ World Heritage Fund, the Ramsar Convention Small Grants Fund, Small Grant Fund/UNDP, the small initiatives programme of the French Global Environment Facility, etc

⁵ The Council of Europe already has some experience with such intervention funds in the youth sector.