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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

**Group of Experts on
Protected Areas and Ecological Networks**

2nd meeting
14 – 15 September 2010
Council of Europe, Strasbourg,
Room 8

**JOINT PROGRAMME FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION
AND IMPLEMENTED BY THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

STATE OF PROGRESS AS OF 30 AUGUST 2010

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

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EUROPEAN COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION AGREEMENT WITH AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION

DCI-ENV/2008/149-825

Joint Programme funded by the European Union
and implemented by the Council of Europe

SUPPORT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL
DIVERSITY PROGRAMME OF WORK ON PROTECTED AREAS IN THE EU
NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY EAST AREA AND RUSSIA: EXTENSION OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU's
NATURA 2000 PRINCIPLES THROUGH THE EMERALD NETWORK

STATE OF PROGRESS AS OF MARCH 2010

Contract number	DCI-ENV/2008/149-825
Programme area	Biodiversity
Budget	1 484 000 €
Funding	100% European Commission
Implementation	Council of Europe
Duration	36 months: 16 December 2008 – 15 December 2011

Background of the Project

The Programme aims at the identification of the building elements of the “Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest” under the Bern Convention in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

This work includes all the scientific and administrative tasks leading to the constitution of a comprehensive and detailed database listing the candidate Emerald sites.

The Council of Europe, as the implementing institution, coordinates, contributes to, and monitors the scientific work leading to the identification of potential sites of Areas of Special Conservation Interest of the Emerald Network under the Bern Convention, within the 36 months of the Programme’s implementation.

The programme will lead to the identification of:

- All potential Emerald sites in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Moldova;
- 80% of the potential Emerald sites in Ukraine;
- 50% of the potential Emerald sites in the European part of the Russian Federation (Alpine, Arctic, Boreal, Continental, Steppe, and Black Sea);
- 10% of the potential Emerald sites to be achieved by the end of 2009, followed by a second project in 2010 and 2011 leading to the identification of 50 % of the potential Emerald sites in Belarus.

The data provided includes:

- Distribution per bio-geographical regions in each country of all species and habitats included in Resolutions No. 4 (1996) and No. 6 (1998) of the Bern Convention, and Annex I and II of the Habitats Directive and Annex I of the Birds Directive;
- Population data at the national level for all species and habitats identified from the above mentioned Resolutions and Annexes.
- Distribution maps of selected species and habitats in GIS format;
- Sites database for the sites to be listed with all ecological and descriptive data.
- Digital boundaries for all sites in GIS format;

Summary of results (January 2009 – August 2010)

January – December 2009

During the first implementation period, contracts were signed with all the participating countries and the Programme was officially registered in those countries whose legislation so requires. All partners within the Emerald country teams were identified and launching workshops were organised in each participating country and a sub-regional workshop took place in Strasbourg. Two of the targeted countries hosted two workshops.

The main objective of the introductory workshops was to review the results of the previous Emerald pilot projects and to provide the national scientific teams with the tools for creating and uploading the Emerald sites’ database. The aim of the second visits was to concentrate on specific questions and the further development of delivery obligations.

The first Steering Committee meeting, was held in Strasbourg on 18 September 2009.

Excellent relations have been developed between the target groups and the scientific consultant.

At the end of the first implementation year, all countries produced appropriate data on potential Emerald sites, as shown by the summary table below:

Number of sites and total area			
Country	Number	Total AREA (ha)	% country coverage
Armenia	6	228384,28	7,66
Azerbaijan	7	714258,42	8,24
Belarus	3	257545,00	1,24
Georgia	17	198539,63	2,84
Moldova	5	34045,00	1,00
Russia	61	7304579,01	1,84
Ukraine	44	1196989,59	1,98
Total:	143		

The national teams also identified and gathered distribution data on a satisfactory proportion of birds, species and habitats, among those listed in Annex I and II of the Bern Convention, in the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, and in Resolutions 4 and 6 of the Bern Convention. See for reference the summary table below:

Total*		AM	AZ	GE	BY	MD	RU	UA
208	Birds, Annex I Birds Directive and Resolution 6	117	118	65	73	51	146	114
1021	Other species, Annex II Habitats Dir. And Resolution 6	38	48	36	70	32	181	116
179	Habitats, Resolution 4	14	18	15	27	24	86	72

*Total number of species or habitat references within the annexes and resolutions

Additionally, participating countries were requested to deliver GIS distribution data for a selection of species and habitats in any available scale and format. All the national teams complied with the scientific co-ordinator's requests for 2009 and delivered preliminary GIS distribution data for both species and habitats.

Furthermore, all countries produced an updated list of designation codes describing the (legal) protection system in place at the national level for protected areas. These new codes, elaborated in line with the principles of the European Common Database on Designated Areas (ECDDA) were added to the Emerald software in order to update it with the new information on the protection status for the proposed Emerald sites.

According to the scientific co-ordinator's preliminary evaluation, the data produced by the targeted countries in 2009 already covered a fair percentage of their total terrestrial area, and thus indicated that the expected results fixed for the first implementation year had been successfully met. For what concerns more concretely population data for species and habitats at the national level, all the

participating countries carried out a first attempt to collect such information. As a follow-up to the first implementation year, it was decided to give more emphasis on improving the available data and to put more efforts in enhancing tools to support data-flows and their consequent registration in an automatic system like the Common Database Repository (CDR).

Finally, it might be mentioned that, following the first implementation year of the project, the data-table devoted to the species which are not included in the Bern Convention's Resolution nor in Annex I of the EU Directive already counts with more than 2000 records on 750 species and habitats, especially for what concerns Armenia, Georgia, the Russian Federation and Ukraine. This is an additional result of the project and will put forward the issue of updating the current protection lists.

January – August 2010

Contracts for the implementation of the project in 2010 were concluded in January 2010 with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, thus improving last year performance where longer delays in the administrative procedure were noted. For what concerns Georgia, two contracts were concluded in March, one with the NGO NACRES for the scientific and technical work, and another one with the Agency of Protected Areas of Georgia, for the co-ordination and visibility.

A National workshop was organised in each country between February and June 2010; two sub-regional workshops were organised respectively in Georgia and in the Russian Federation. It is important to note that due to air traffic disruption following the eruption of the Vulcan in Iceland, in April 2010, both the national workshop and the sub-regional workshop in Georgia were carried out through a web-conference connection. The tool proved to be effective in this particular case, especially because it allowed respecting deadlines and providing the necessary training to the Georgian National team. However, it didn't allow for informal discussions with the participants thus making active participation more difficult. Therefore a second National workshop was organised in Georgia in August 2010.

The National workshops were carried-out according to the following general scheme:

- The background of the project as well as its legal framework were reminded to participants, and the « Bern Declaration » as well as the « Cibeles priorities » were recalled as two documents which have an impact on the international expectations towards the results of the project.
 - Participants got a detailed and personalised delivery agenda, listing the milestones leading to the 2010 interim data delivery.
 - The national team members presented the conclusions of their scientific and field work as well as the lessons learnt in 2009.
 - The workshops included practical work on collection and registration of data on species and habitats, as well as on distribution data per bio-geographical regions, on the draft list of those species and habitats not included in the Bern Convention's Resolutions, on updating the Habitats Interpretation Manual, and GIS distribution data for species and habitats.
- All the workshops ended with a field visit to a potential Emerald site.

The sub-regional workshops enabled the national teams to enter in a “group” dynamic, sharing information and adapting their respective results to the project's needs. For instance, the teams reviewed their own lists of species to be mapped in 2010, in order to select the maximum number of common species and to produce a more complete sub-regional map. They were also the occasion for insisting on the need for a high level political commitment towards the real implementation of the

Emerald Network, through management plans and allocation of resources at the national level after the project's completion.

The Steering Committee meeting will take place in Strasbourg on 14 October 2010.

The interim data delivery for 2010 is scheduled on **30 November**.

National partners:

Good trusting relationships have been built up between the Secretariat, the scientific co-ordinator and all the scientific national teams.

Close co-operation and proactive communication have enabled both the Secretariat and the National partners in Armenia, Belarus, Georgia and Moldova, to anticipate and solve small problems related to the financial reporting.

All partners provided adequate venues and excellent organisation for the national workshops. In particular, project partners in Belarus and the Russian Federation were also successful in building-up good relations with the media. The Ukrainian and Russian NGOs worked in very close contact with their respective governments thus fully involving the Ministries of Environment in the implementation of the project and ensuring a high level of attendance in their workshops, as well as government commitment towards the project's goals.

Concerning Azerbaijan and its Department for Biodiversity Protection and Specially Protected Natural Territories, some difficulties that had arose at the very beginning of the second implementation period were overcome through good communication with the Minister of Environment.

European Commission Delegations to the targeted countries

Excellent co-ordination has been ensured with the European Commission Delegations to Azerbaijan, Belarus and to Ukraine. However, poor participation was shown by the Delegations of the other targeted countries.

Smooth co-ordination and good trusting relationships were developed between the Council of Europe and AIDCO Project managers, although the Project manager in charge of the Emerald project in AIDCO changed already twice in 2010.

Follow-up of the project

The Council of Europe is preparing the follow-up to this project, namely by fostering co-operation with partners who might help in assessing the project results. In line with the Memorandum of Co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Environment Agency, the Secretariat is intensifying contacts with EEA, focusing on the possibility to use EEA's enhanced tools to support data-flows around CDDA and Natura2000 for the development of the Emerald Network, as well as for registering data in the CDR and handling GIS distribution data on species and habitats from the countries targeted by this project.

The Council of Europe is also discussing the possibility to co-operate with EEA for the organisation of bio-geographical seminars targeting the countries which implemented a previous CoE/EU CARDS (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation) project, in order to facilitate the assessment of the proposed Emerald Network sites. Particular attention is also given to the harmonisation of the species coding system developed by the Council of Europe, and its compatibility with EUNIS and Natura2000, in order to sustain the results of this project.

Calendar of activities (January – August 2010)

February 2010

- Second national workshops for the setting-up of the Emerald Network in Armenia (Erevan, 1-2 February), Ukraine (Kiev, 10-11 February) and Moldova (Chisinau, 23-25 February)

March 2010

- Co-ordination meeting with the European Environment Agency and the European Topic Centre (Paris, 18 March)

April 2010

- Second national workshops for the setting-up of the Emerald Network in Georgia (Web-conference, 19 April)
- Sub-regional workshop for the setting-up of the Emerald Network in the ENPI East countries (Web-conference, 20-22 April; participants from Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan)
- Co-ordination meeting with the International consultant of the Programme (Strasbourg, 27 April)

May 2010

- Second national workshop for the setting-up of the Emerald Network in Belarus (Minsk, 4-5 May)
- Second national workshop for the setting-up of the Emerald Network in Azerbaijan (Baku, 19-20 May)

June 2010

- Second national workshop for the setting-up of the Emerald Network in the Russian Federation (Sebezh State Nature Reserve, 14 June).
- Sub-regional workshop for the setting-up of the Emerald Network in the ENPI East countries (Sebezh State Nature Reserve, 15-16 June).

August 2010

- Third national workshop for the setting-up of the Emerald Network in Georgia (Tbilisi, 31 August – 1 September).

Work-plan (January – December 2010)

2010													
	Semester 1						Semester 2						
Activity	Month 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Implementing body
Implementation of the programme in Armenia													Ministry of Nature protection, Bio-resources Management
Implementation of the programme in Azerbaijan													Department for Biodiversity Protection and Specially Protected Natural Territories

Implementation of the programme in Belarus													Belarusian Public Association "Ecological Initiative", Belarus
Implementation of the programme in Moldova													Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Biosafety Office
Implementation of the programme in the Russian Federation													Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and the organizations "Biologists for nature conservation"
Implementation of the programme in Ukraine													State Agency for Protected Areas, Ministry of Environmental Protection, and the NGO Interecocentre, Ukraine
Implementation of the programme in Georgia													Protected Areas Agency, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and the NGO NACRES
Second National Workshop of the Emerald Network Joint Programme in Armenia													Ministry of Nature protection, Bio-resources Management
Second National Workshop of the Emerald Network Joint Programme in Moldova													Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Biosafety Office
Second National Workshop of the Emerald Network Joint Programme in Ukraine													State Agency for Protected Areas, Ministry of Environmental Protection, and the NGO Interecocentre, Ukraine
Second National Workshop of the Emerald Network Joint Programme in Georgia													Protected Areas Agency, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and the NGO NACRES
Sub-regional workshop in Georgia													Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan
Mid-term Coordination meeting with the scientific consultant													Council of Europe
Second National Workshop of the Emerald Network Joint Programme in Azerbaijan													Department for Biodiversity Protection and Specially Protected Natural Territories

Second National Workshop of the Emerald Network Joint Programme in Belarus													Belarusian Public Association "Ecological Initiative", Belarus
Second National Workshop of the Emerald Network Joint Programme in the Russian Federation													Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and the organizations "Biologists for nature conservation"
Sub-regional workshop in the Russian Federation													The Russian Federation, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine
Third National Workshop of the Emerald Network Joint Programme in Georgia													Protected Areas Agency, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and the NGO NACRES
Second Steering Committee Meeting													Council of Europe, AIDCO, all countries
Second data delivery													Council of Europe, AIDCO, all countries
Technical analysis of data													Council of Europe
Ensure proper project management													Council of Europe