



Strasbourg, 16 August 2011
[pa05e_2011.doc]

T-PVS/PA (2011) 05

**CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS**

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

3rd meeting
19 – 20 September 2011
Council of Europe, Strasbourg,
Room 6

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

STATE OF PROGRESS AS OF 30 AUGUST 2011

*Secretariat Memorandum
prepared by the Directorate of Culture and of Cultural
and Natural Heritage*



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 30 August 2011

Programme title	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
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

1. 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;

2. Assessment of implementation of Action activities

2.1. Executive summary of the Action up to August 2011

During the third and last implementation year of the Joint Programme, the achievement of the project objectives is progressing according to the initial planning for all the target countries. New contracts for the implementation of the programme in 2011 at national level have been concluded with three countries in January (Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus), with three other countries in February/March (Georgia, Russia and Armenia) and in April 2011 with Azerbaijan. The delay for the signature of the contract with Azerbaijan is due to a change in the Emerald Network team leader in the country, at the beginning of 2011.

National teams have been able to continue the scientific work of 2010 and to prepare their national workshops according to the initial planning, thanks to the timely signature of their contracts. Only the National Workshop in Azerbaijan was postponed and took place in June, instead of May. Thus a third and last National Workshop has been organised in each target country, between February and June 2011.

The main objective of these last national workshops was to provide the national Emerald team members with a feed back on the quality of data provided in 2009 and 2010 and to discuss together with them a delivery agenda and milestones for the 2011 final data delivery. The workshops have been a good opportunity for the members of the national teams to meet with the project manager, as well as with the project scientific consultant, to present the issues they have encountered in their work and to find a common solution. The workshops included also practical work on identifying inconsistencies between the different databases delivered, on species and habitats, on the distribution per biogeographical regions, on GIS distribution data for species and habitats, etc. . Special attention was given in all workshops to the transformation of the existing habitat data to the new version of resolution 4, using the EUNIS habitat classification.

All national workshops ended or were preceded by a field visit to a potential Emerald site as well as a meeting with the potential site direction and management teams.

Kiev, Ukraine, 9-10 February 2011:

A field visit to the potential Emerald Site “Zakaznik Chernobylskyi” preceded the working part of the event. A meeting with the Administrator in charge of the exclusion zone around the former power plant was held, as well as with representatives from the Ecology Centre of the zone. The issues they meet currently (due to radioactivity) while managing and conserving nature in the zone were discussed, as well as the state of nature 25 years after the Chernobyl disaster.

During the second day, when the actual workshop took place, opening remarks were done by the European Commission representative and the Special Representative of the Secretary General in Ukraine. A review of the Ukrainian database delivered so far was done and clear milestones and timetable were decided upon with the team for the final delivery to be received before 30/11/2011. Aside from the scientific work completed during the meeting, an example on how visibility and public awareness on the Emerald Network and its setting-up is developed in the country was presented.

Chisinau, Moldova, 28 February – 01 March 2011:

After a welcoming and opening session, a review of the national database delivered up to December 2010 was done. Clear milestones and timetable were decided with the team for the final delivery to be received before 30/11/2011, in particular on the mapping of species and habitats. The presence of the Deputy Minister of Environment and Natural Resources Mr Gheorghe Salaru at the event was highly appreciated, thus ensuring the interest and ownership of the project by the national authorities and their commitment to the Emerald Network. In addition, the presence of participants from NGOs, the academia and the national authorities was appreciated for capacity building and visibility of the Emerald Network and the project in general.

A discussion was held, as in the rest of the target countries of the current Joint Programme, on how Moldova can complete the objectives set for their country in terms of percentage of the national territory to be covered by the selected potential Emerald sites. A field visit to the potential Emerald Site “Padurea Domneasca” Scientific Reserve, close to the Romanian border, followed the working part of the event.

Minsk, Belarus, 23-25 March 2011:

During the working part of the event, opening remarks were done by the European Union Delegation representative and a representative of the Ministry of Natural Resources of Belarus. A review of the Belarus database delivered up to December 2010 was done. Clear milestones and timetable were decided with the team for the final delivery to be received before 30/11/2011.

Discussions were also held on the possible mechanisms to protect species and habitats in the selected Emerald sites, which do not enter in the national protected areas system. It is currently discussed the possibility to sign contracts with land owners, but without financial compensation. In addition, a new law on protected areas is about to be decided upon. It is expected that their percentage will be raised

from 7.7% to 8.3%. A field visit to the potential Emerald Site “Narochansky” National Park followed the working part of the event. A meeting with the Administrator in charge was also held.

Valdai, Russian Federation, 5 April 2011:

The national workshop ran according to the general scheme adopted for this kind of meetings (please see the attached agenda). It has been moderated by the project scientific expert and the project manager. The Russian national team had the opportunity to discuss its national data delivered so far and plan its own work ahead of the final delivery deadline (30 November 2011). They have also received advices on how to ensure a smooth finalisation of their work under the project and the achievement of all the project objectives set for their country.

The presence of the representatives from the Russian Oblasts was extremely beneficial for our Joint Programme event too. For many of the nationally protected nature sites, such as Nature Parks, Zakaznik, Natural monument, etc. the management responsibility falls into the competences of local and regional executive agencies. A discussion was also held on the benefits the Bern Convention and what its mechanisms could bring to the Russian Federation. A very positive sign was the adherence of the representatives from the regional and local level, as well as the scientific body to the Bern Convention and its instrument the Emerald Network. Thanks to the implementation of the Joint Programme which has proved to be useful and to produce tangible results, the scientific community in the Russian Federation is now fully aware of the Bern Convention Annexes, Appendices and Resolutions and is using them in its work.

Yerevan, Armenia, 28-29 April 2011:

A field visit to the potential Emerald Site “Koshrov Forest State Reserve” preceded the working part of the event. Discussions with the director and the staff of the visitors’ centre and the small natural museum in the Koshrov district allowed reviewing the opportunities to include the area in the Emerald Network. This Reserve might also be proposed to the Council of Europe to be rewarded with the European Diploma of Protected Areas.

During the second day, when the actual workshop took place, a review of the Armenian database delivered so far was done and clear milestones and timetable were decided upon with the team for the final delivery to be received before 30/11/2011. Special attention was given to the harmonisation of GIS distribution data and to the delivery of GIS site boundaries.

Tbilisi, Georgia, 17 May 2011:

The Georgian national team had the opportunity to discuss its national data delivered so far and plan its own work ahead of the final delivery deadline (30 November 2011). They have been informed on some inconsistencies and gaps in their database from 2010. They have also received advices on how to ensure a smooth finalisation of their work under the project and the achievement of all the project objectives set for their country. The importance of a complete filling-in of the Emerald Network database was underlined, particularly for a smooth entrance into the Phase II of the Emerald Network setting-up process, in view of the possible Joint Programme follow-up. Phase II consists of the evaluation of the sufficiency of the proposed Emerald sites for the long-term survival of the Bern Convention species and Habitats listed for protection.

A very positive outcome of the National Seminar was the extremely good cooperation between the nature conservation NGO NACRES, the implementer of the programme, and the State Agency of Protected Areas. This cooperation is extremely positive and was developed thanks to the implementation of the Joint Programme which has proved to be useful and to produce tangible results.

Baku, Azerbaijan, 6-7 June 2011:

Although the national workshop in Azerbaijan had to be postponed with one month, it took place according to the general scheme for these workshops and benefited from the experience and results of the six previous workshops held in the frame of the project. The Azeri national team had the opportunity to discuss its national data delivered so far and plan its own work ahead of the final delivery deadline. Because of the recent change of person responsible for the project, some of the expertise is now missing in the country. Time has been spent during the meeting for practical work between the project scientific expert and the team in order to help the team with some questions which arose since the changes in the team. The Azeri team has requested a second visit from the project scientific consultant, in order to review together with the national experts the database they have been working on during the summer period.

A field trip to a potential Emerald site has followed the official part of the national workshop. The Shahdag National Park is a very large, more recently established conservation area. Parts of the area were visited in the presence of the director, including the unique broadleaved forest along the shores of the Caspian Sea near the border with the Russian Federation.

In addition to the national Workshops, two sub-regional Workshops have taken place, one in the Russian Federation for four out of the seven target countries on 6-7 April 2011 and one in Georgia for the three other countries on 7-8 April 2011. These events took place according to the planning and have provided national team members and leaders from the participating countries with the opportunity to meet and exchange information on their own progress and share good practices. Since 2009, national teams have been making their national lists of species to be mapped. During the workshop, they had the opportunity to exchange their views on these species and to work towards selecting the maximum possible number of common species. This will allow for the production of a more complete sub-regional biogeographical map

In addition, the sub regional events have been a perfect opportunity for discussing common issues such as the lists of species and habitats to be added to the Bern Convention Resolutions No 4 (1996) and No 6 (1998). As these third and last project sub-regional events, the participants knew each other very well. They have used the time provided by the official part of the meeting, but also the moments dedicated to more informal discussions and to discuss joint actions they could undertake for the update of the Bern Convention instruments such as Resolutions 4 (1996) on habitats and Resolution 6 (1998) on species to be protected.

Last but not least, the sub regional events are an 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 last meeting of the project Steering Committee took place on October 25, 2010 in Strasbourg, in presence of the project external monitor and the Responsible for the Joint Programme at the European Commission.

All data deliveries in 2010 have been done through the Common Data Repository (CDR), managed by the European Environment Agency and the European Topic Centre for Biological Diversity. This will be case for 2011 final data deliveries. The same repository is used by the rest of the countries working on the setting-up of the Emerald Network, such as Norway, Switzerland and six Balkan countries.

2.2. Assessment of the project results available up to August 2011

Under the supervision of the project scientific coordinator, Mr. Roekaerts, all 7 countries have improved their accomplishments during 2010 and beginning 2011 and they are on very good track to achieve the overall objectives of the Action, as stated in the project logframe.

As illustrated in table 1 below, presenting the number of proposed Emerald sites, the % of the national territory covered and the total area coverage for each of the countries as delivered for 2010, all countries (Ukraine to a lesser extend) are on a very good track to achieve their project objectives. 2011 confirmed to be a crucial year for the project overall successful implementation.

Table 1: Number of proposed Emerald sites, total area and % coverage for each of the countries as delivered for 2010

Number of sites and total area			
Country	Number	Total AREA (ha)	% country coverage
Armenia	8	228734,30	7,62
Azerbaijan	9	823658,42	9,47
Belarus	7	616052,00	2,96
Georgia	17	596475,63	8,56
Moldova	17	361163,00	10,67
Russia	103	16378358,00	4,14
Ukraine	88	1732666,30	2,87
Total:	249	20713854,75	4,15

Although the number of sites is rather small it should be stressed that most of the proposed sites are large and represent already a fare proportion of the total terrestrial area of the 7 countries, corresponding to the expectations within the three-year program.

Table 2: Number of data records for the country site databases

Table name	AM	AZ	BY	GE	MD	RU	UA	Total 2010	Total 2009
biotop	8	9	7	17	17	103	88	249	143
actvty	68	49	130	61	69	520	1465	2362	1412
amprep	83	28	19	14	10	23	193	370	250
bird	612	561	353	421	98	1544	5181	8770	5234
desigc	8	26	7	15	3	103	90	252	153
desigr	3	3	23	3	3	110	126	271	175
fishes	7	23	29	6	1	41	496	603	348
habit1	25	22	85	52	34	360	646	1224	850
habit1A	5	11	33	9	1	205	172	436	395
habit2	39	16	56	53	12	358	615	1149	633
histry					2			2	2
invert	9	18	67	45	6	41	484	670	357
mammal	113	70	35	114	9	249	261	851	591
map		7	28		2	225	44	306	128
photo			6		5		107	118	118
plant	3	22	29	14	3	79	148	298	185
RegCod	8	9	10	17	3	111	91	249	152
Resp		1	1	1	1	1	1	6	1
Sitrel					1		1	2	0
Spec	111	9	27	120	12	696	2918	3893	2528

The figures from table 2 indicate a well distributed data collection over the different groups of necessary information and a clear progress from 2009 to 2010, resulting from the multidisciplinary composition of the national Emerald expert teams.

Table 3: Number of species and habitats recorded as present in each of the 7 countries, with reference to the total number of species and habitats in the Bern Convention Annexes and Resolutions.

Total*	Taxonomic group	AM	AZ	GE	BY	MD	RU	UA
683	Plants	7	16	12	19	10	90	47
29	Amphibians	1	1	1	2	3	3	6
208	Birds	117	119	112	73	51	146	114
79	Fish	5	8	2	12	3	19	18
138	Invertebrates	5	8	10	24	3	59	22
63	Mammals	16	16	18	12	10	35	24
30	Reptiles	4	5	5	1	3	6	4
	Species Total:	155	167	161	143	89	358	235
179	Habitats, Resolution 4	14	18	15	26	24	85	77

* Total number of species or habitats within the annexes and resolutions

2.3. Please provide an updated action plan¹

2.4.

2009													
Activity	Semester 1						Semester 2						Implementing body
	Month 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Preparatory work for the launch of the Joint Programme													Council of Europe
National Workshop for the launch of the Emerald Network Joint Programme in Armenia													Ministry of Nature protection, European Projects Implementation Unit
National preparation meeting for the launch of the Emerald Network Joint Programme in Georgia													Protected Areas Agency, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and the NGO NACRES
National Workshop for the launch of the Emerald Network Joint Programme in Moldova													Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Biosafety Office
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) of the Emerald Network in Moldova, Year 1													Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Biosafety Office
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) of the Emerald Network in Ukraine, Year 1													State Agency for Protected Areas, Ministry of Environmental Protection, and the NGO Interecocentre, Ukraine

¹ This plan will cover the financial period between the interim report and the next report.

Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCI) of the Emerald Network in Armenia, Year 1														Ministry of Nature protection, European Projects Implementation Unit
2009														
Activity	Month 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Implementing body	
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCI) of the Emerald Network in Belarus, Year 1														Belarusian Public Association "Ecological Initiative"
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCI) of the Emerald Network in Azerbaijan, Year 1														Department for Biodiversity Protection and Specially Protected Natural Territories
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCI) of the Emerald Network in Georgia, Year 1														Protected Areas Agency, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and the NGO NACRES
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCI) of the Emerald Network in the Russian Federation, Year 1														Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and the organizations "Biologists for nature conservation"
National Workshop for the launch of the Emerald Network Joint Programme in Georgia														Protected Areas Agency, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and the NGO NACRES
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCI) of the Emerald Network in Georgia, Year 1														Protected Areas Agency, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and the NGO NACRES
National Workshop for the launch of the Emerald Network Joint Programme in Belarus														Belarusian Public Association "Ecological Initiative", Belarus
National Workshop for the launch of the Emerald Network Joint Programme in Azerbaijan														Department for Biodiversity Protection and Specially Protected Natural Territories

2009													
Activity	Semester 1						Semester 2						Implementing body
	Month 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Second visit for the implementation of the Emerald Network Joint Programme in the Russian Federation													Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and the organizations "Biologists for nature conservation"
First subregional Workshop: Strasbourg													Council of Europe, AIDCO, all countries
Steering Committee Meeting: Strasbourg													Council of Europe, AIDCO, all countries
First data delivery													Council of Europe, AIDCO, all countries
Technical analysis of data													Council of Europe
Ensure proper project management													Council of Europe
2010													
Activity	Semester 1						Semester 2						Implementing body
	Month 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) of the Emerald Network in Armenia , Year 2													Ministry of Nature protection, European Projects Implementation Unit
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) of the Emerald Network in Azerbaijan , Year 2													Department for Biodiversity Protection and Specially Protected Natural Territories
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) of the Emerald Network in Belarus , Year 2													Belarusian Public Association "Ecological Initiative", Belarus
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) of the Emerald Network in Moldova , Year 2													Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Biosafety Office
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) of the Emerald Network in the Russian Federation , Year 2													Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and the organizations "Biologists for nature conservation"

Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) of the Emerald Network in Ukraine , Year 2																State Agency for Protected Areas, Ministry of Environmental Protection, and the NGO Interecocentre, Ukraine
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) of the Emerald Network in Georgia , Year 2																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, European Projects Implementation Unit
Second National Workshop of the Emerald Network Joint Programme in Moldova																Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Biosafety Office
2010																
		Semester 1						Semester 2								
Activity	Month 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12			Implementing body	
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 Azerbaijan																Department for Biodiversity Protection and Specially Protected Natural Territories
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 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
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
2011													
Activity	Semester 1						Semester 2						
	Month 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Implementing body
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) of the Emerald Network in Armenia , Year 3													Ministry of Nature protection, European Projects Implementation Unit
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) of the Emerald Network in Azerbaijan , Year 3													Department for Biodiversity Protection and Specially Protected Natural Territories
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) of the Emerald Network in Belarus , Year 3													Belarusian Public Association "Ecological Initiative", Belarus
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) of the Emerald Network in Georgia , Year 3													Protected Areas Agency, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, and the NGO NACRES
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) of the Emerald Network in Moldova , Year 3													Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, Biosafety Office
Implementation of the programme of identification of the potential Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCIs) of the Emerald Network in the Russian Federation , Year 3													Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and the organizations "Biologists for nature conservation" and "Baltic Fund for Nature", European part of the Russian Federation

3. Partners and other Co-operation

Relationships with the national authorities have been further developed since the beginning of the third and last implementation year. In most of the countries, state authorities are direct beneficiaries of the Action and are implementing the project in their country. In addition, it is important to underline that with the exception of Azerbaijan where the project team leader has been changed in beginning 2011; all the national Emerald teams have remained the same since the beginning of the project implementation. This ensures the continuity of the work of the national teams in complex and time consuming processes such as the Emerald Network constitution one. Sustaining human resources and capacity at national level is also contributing to the establishment of a long-standing and trust relation between the national Emerald teams, the project manager in Strasbourg and the Bern Convention Secretariat in general.

Consultations with the officials of DG DEVCO in Brussels and the EU Delegations to the target countries continue to take place on a regular basis. A meeting of ENPI East Regional Projects on environment, Statistics, Civil Protection and Climate Change was organised by DG DEVCO in March 2011. The meeting aimed at discussing and proposing ways for more cooperation and synergies with other projects funded via the ENPI East instrument, in the field of Environment, Statistics, Civil Protection and Climate Change. During the meeting, the project manager presented the Emerald Network Joint Programme, its objectives, its current state of progress as well as the interim results for 2010. Questions from the audience were answered, on the scientific data deliveries already received from the national Emerald teams in the targeted countries and those expected by the end of the programme in 2011.

A coordination meeting was held with representatives of the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity in Paris, on 16 June 2010, in order to discuss the continuous co-operation between the EEA and the Council of Europe (within the framework of the existing Memorandum of Cooperation between the two institutions). Co-operation with EEA and ETC/BD is further intensifying within the whole Emerald Network constitution process, being particularly helpful for the successful achievement of this particular Activity results.

The assistance of ETC/BD was decided upon in carrying out the scientific assessment of the proposed Emerald sites at national level. It is thus with the assistance of ETC/BD that the second phase of the Emerald Network setting-up process will be initiated. A first preparatory biogeographical seminar for 6 West Balkan countries which have completed a previous CoE/EU CARDS (Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation) project between 2005-2008 has taken place on 26-27 January 2011 in Paris. These countries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”.

Again in relation to the increased cooperation with EEA and ETC/BD, since 2010 the national Emerald teams in the project have been using a new uploading system through the Central Data Repository for their annual deliveries. The CDR is a tool used by countries for reporting on their various international obligations, i.e. NATURA 2000 reporting obligations. It is managed by the European Environment Agency. This is a very significant improvement for the whole Emerald process and one may underline that all countries in the Joint Programme are now successfully using the CDR uploading procedures. The CDR already proved to be extremely helpful not only for the national Emerald experts, but also for the programme scientific consultant and for the Council of Europe Secretariat.

When it comes to the strategic development of the Emerald Network, many important documents, prepared by the Secretariat of the Bern Convention, some of which in cooperation with the EEA, the ETC/BD and Marc Roekaerts, have been adopted at the 30th meeting of the Bern Convention Standing Committee: (1) the criteria for assessing the National Lists of proposed Areas of Special Conservation Interest and the procedure for examining and approving Emerald candidate sites; (2) the revised Annex I of Resolution 4 (1996) of the Bern Convention as well as (3) the Information form for species

and habitats to be integrated to the Bern Convention Annexes and Resolutions. These documents are of particular importance for the Emerald Network constitution process and future development.

4. Visibility

The Project manager continues to send information about the Programme, including the contract, the updated work-plan and second progress report to each European Commission Delegation to the targeted countries.

The website of the Council of Europe's Biodiversity Unit is regularly updated with information on the project and the dedicated page on the Joint Programme published in 2009 is regularly updated (http://www.coe.int/emerald/econetworks/JP_en.asp). Press releases on the national events published by the Council have mentioned the funding source. The Joint Programme and the EU contribution are mentioned in each activity where CoE officials and the international consultant participate. The Programme's brochure now exists in English, French, Georgian and Russia languages, and copies have been printed for wider dissemination and visibility of the Programme. The national beneficiaries have received copies of the brochure for further distribution at national level.

For the final implementation year of the project, a video presentation of the project and its achievements in each target country has been produced. The video is aimed for wider public and distribution via internet. The official presentation of the video will take place during the 31st meeting of the Bern Convention Standing Committee; end November/beginning December 2011. The presence of delegates from all Bern Convention Contracting Parties will be an asset for a wider distribution, as well as the presence of many international environment NGOs.

5. Follow-up of the project

On 27 May 2011, a meeting was held with DG DEVCO and DG ENV on the follow-up of the current CoE/EU Joint Programme: "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".

The meeting aimed at presenting a first outline of a follow-up project to our counterparts in the European Commission and at identifying possibilities for further financing of the Emerald Network constitution process by the Commission. The importance of avoiding big time gaps between the current project and its continuation was underlined, in order to ensure sustainability in the Emerald Network constitution process and the effective use of the national human capital gained through the JP implementation. A project proposal of activities in the 7 target countries was presented there, for a 4 year follow-up project. The Commission counterparts are currently looking for funding opportunities and negotiations are underway.