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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

GROUP OF SPECIALISTS - EUROPEAN DIPLOMA OF PROTECTED AREAS
24 MARCH 2014 STRASBOURG
ROOM G.05, AGORA

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**Draft new format for the submission of annual reports from the
areas holding the European Diploma**

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INTRODUCTION

Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1 on the European Diploma of Protected Areas includes a particular article with provisions regarding the submission of annual reports by the Diploma holding areas and their analysis. This article states:

Article 7 – Annual reports

1. The authorities directly responsible for managing the area awarded the Diploma shall submit an annual report to the Committee or its Bureau. The report must be based on the model reproduced in Appendix 5 to these regulations. The report must be forwarded to the Secretariat in full by the central authorities of the state concerned, with any comments they may wish to make. It must, *inter alia*, state what measures have been taken to comply with the conditions and/or recommendations mentioned when the Diploma was awarded or renewed. The first annual report must be submitted in one of the two official languages of the Council of Europe by 30 November of the year following that in which the Committee of Ministers awarded the Diploma. Every annual report reflects the previous period from 1 September to 31 August.
2. The Group of Specialists shall examine the annual reports and may submit an opinion or recommendations to the Committee or its Bureau, which shall be forwarded, through the Committee of Ministers and the central authorities of the state concerned, to the authorities responsible for managing the area awarded the Diploma. The Group may also identify some problems encountered in one Diploma site or common to several Diploma areas and make proposals aimed at remedying them.
3. In the event of failure to comply with the foregoing provisions, the Secretary General may, via the government concerned, invite the persons responsible for managing the Diploma-holding area to provide an adequate explanation.

Clause 7.1 indicates the contents of the annual report, and clause 7.2 places obligations of the Group of Specialists. The submission of the annual reports by the Diploma holding areas and their analysis by the Group of Specialists is one of the monitoring mechanisms of the Bern Convention.

Attached to Resolution CM/ResDip(2008)1 there is an appendix providing a model for the annual reports. This annex is attached below as Appendix A to this paper.

The need for revising the tool for reporting

The present system for the submission of the annual reports and the format in which they are submitted appears to have at least three drawbacks.

First, it takes the managers of the EDPA sites a considerable length of time to complete these reports as the model requires reporting on so many topics. In each EDPA site there are administrative layers to deal with before the report is finally sent to Strasbourg. Because of these difficulties, very often reports are submitted late, most often very late, and sometimes not at all.

Second, because there is no clear *pro forma* for the report, it is very difficult for the staff in Strasbourg to assess a collection of 70 or so disparate reports. Each report is very different to all other reports, and although the request is for them to be limited to 6 pages, some reports are 4 or 5 times this length. Besides, there is considerable duplication of material from year to year, which is not required.

Third, Clause 7.2 of Article 7 places an obligation on the Group of Specialists to examine the annual reports and to make recommendations where appropriate. During the last 5 years, various forms of analysis of the annual reports have been implemented, as it appeared to be an impossible task for the Secretariat to analyse them correctly and on time for the meeting of the Group of Specialists, and for members of the Group to review all of the annual reports.

For some years, a compilation of the reports has been prepared - a document extremely difficult to be analysed as it ran into several hundred pages. Members of the Group of Specialists have sometimes been asked to review the reports from their own country, but this means that no-one from the Group has seen more than a very few reports and that there are reports from many countries which are not seen by a member of the Group.

This year (2014), an analysis of the annual reports received for 2013 was ensured by the Secretariat (Document T-PVS/DE(2014) 5). The document will be presented to the attention of the Group of Specialists and the case of few diploma holding areas presenting particular issues will be discussed. However, the Secretariat encountered many difficulties when preparing the analysis and noticed that the most important part of the annual report, i.e. information on the measures put in place for implementing the conditions and/or recommendations attached to an award or a renewal, was in many of the cases unclear, outdated, too vague or simply missing.

A first proposal for revising the reporting under the EDPA presented in 2013

With a view to streamlining the reporting and assessment processes, in 2013 the Chair of the Group of Specialists proposed a new “short” form for the annual reporting by the area managers (Appendix B). He considered it might be appropriate to request annual reports on a *pro forma* so that there is much greater consistency of reporting across all EDPA sites. He further proposed that the short form of reporting is used every year except for the year prior to a decision being made about the renewal of the Diploma. In that one year the full and current report form would need to be completed and submitted to Strasbourg. The Group of Specialists would have access to that full report in order to inform its discussion about whether or not to recommend a renewal.

At their meeting in 2013, the Group of Specialists welcomed the proposal by the Chair and agreed to make a first use of the short form the same year, on a trial basis. However, in the aftermath of the meeting the Secretariat had to keep this decision on hold as the reporting form is annexed to the Resolution on the European Diploma and any changes have first to be agreed by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

New proposal for a revised model form for annual reports

In the frame of the Bern Convention, a new on-line reporting tool is currently being discussed by the Contracting Parties, with a possible implementation by the end of 2014. The new Online Reporting System (ORS) has already been used by several MEAs (AEWA, CMS, CITES, and partially RAMSAR).

The new system would enable a more user-friendly reporting, reducing the burden on the managers of the areas and helping increase reporting rate by the areas. It would help streamlining the reporting under the Bern Convention and would allow the managers of diploma holding areas to store data in one and safe place and make the information easily available to collaborators.

After a careful check of both the current model report and the one proposed by the former Chair of the Group of Specialists, and taking into account the opportunity offered by the new ORS that should be introduced for reporting under the Bern Convention before the end of 2014, the Secretariat proposes a new draft form combining these two forms. This new draft form is presented in Appendix C and should be discussed by the Group of Specialists at their meeting on 24 March 2014.

APPENDIX A

RESOLUTION ResDip (2008) 1

**ON THE REGULATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA
OF PROTECTED AREAS**

*(Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 February 2008
at the 1018th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)*

APPENDIX 5

MODEL PLAN FOR ANNUAL REPORTS

Annual reports should describe the changes that have taken place since the previous year in dynamic terms of management and function and not be limited to basic data. They should not, without justification, exceed six pages. The report of the year preceding the one in which the validity of the European Diploma of Protected Areas is to be renewed should be more detailed. Any new text or map introducing a change in the situation of the area should be attached to the annual report.

State:

Name of the area:

Central authority concerned:

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Fax:

e-mail:

www:

Authority responsible for its management:

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Fax:

e-mail:

www:

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Natural heritage (general abiotic description: geomorphology, geology and hydrogeology, habitats, flora, fauna, landscape) — State of conservation
 - 1.1. Environment: changes or deterioration in the environment, of natural or anthropic origin, accidental or permanent, actual or anticipated
 - 1.2. Flora and vegetation: changes in the plant population and in the vegetational cover; presumed causes
 - 1.3. Fauna: changes in the sedentary or migratory populations; congregating, egg-laying and breeding grounds
2. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context
 - 2.1. Cultural heritage
 - 2.1.1. Changes concerning cultural heritage
 - 2.2. Socio-economic context
 - 2.2.1. Changes concerning the socio-economic context
3. Education and scientific interest
 - 3.1. Visitors — Information policy
 - 3.1.1. Arrangements for receiving and informing the public (building, booklets, maps, cards, etc.)
 - 3.1.2. Frequentation by visitors and behavior (number, distribution in time and space)
 - 3.1.3. Special visits (distinguished persons, groups, etc.)
 - 3.2. Scientific research
 - 3.2.1. Current or completed research (observation, experimentation, etc.; identification or inventory of the species listed in the appendices to the Bern Convention, etc.)
 - 3.2.2. Scientific publications
4. Site description (vulnerability, protection status, ownership, documentation)
 - 4.1. Changes in legislation or regulations
 - 4.2. Changes in ownership title (conversion to public property, rentals, etc.)
 - 4.3. Extension or transfer, new uses (for example, conversion into total reserve)
5. Site management (management plans, budget and personnel)
 - 5.1. Improvements made
 - 5.1.1. Ecological action affecting the flora and biotopes; controls of fauna
 - 5.1.2. Protection against the elements (fire, water regime)
 - 5.1.3. Approaches and thoroughfares (paths, roads, car parks, signposting, fencing, etc.)
 - 5.1.4. Field equipment (hides and study facilities)
 - 5.1.5. Waste management
 - 5.1.6. Use of renewable energy systems
 - 5.2. Management
 - 5.2.1. Administrative department: changes made
 - 5.2.2. Wardens' department: changes made
 - 5.2.3. Internal policing measures
 - 5.2.4. Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action

II. INFLUENCE OF THE AWARD OF THE EUROPEAN DIPLOMA OF PROTECTED AREAS

III. CONDITIONS AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AWARD OR RENEWAL

Progress with measures taken in order to meet the conditions and/or recommendations defined during the award or renewal of the European Diploma of Protected Areas.

APPENDIX B**MODEL PLAN FOR SHORT ANNUAL REPORTS PROPOSED IN 2013**

A full report will be required in the year prior to consideration being given to the renewal of the European Diploma for Protected Areas (EDPA). However, this short report form can be used in other years (i.e. either years 1 to 3 after the award of the EDPA or its renewal for 5 years, or years 1 to 8 after a renewal for 10 years). The short report focuses attention on progress towards achieving the condition and recommendations which were agreed at the time of the award of the EDPA or its renewal.

State:

Name of the area:

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the EDPA:

Central authority concerned:

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Fax:

e-mail:

www:

Authority responsible for its management:

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Fax:

e-mail:

www:

Conditions: List here all conditions which were made when the European Diploma was awarded or renewed. Explain either how the conditions have been totally complied with or progress in complying with the conditions.

Recommendations: List here all recommendation which were made when the European Diploma was awarded or renewed. Explain how each one of these recommendations is being actioned.

Site Management: List here any changes to site management, in relation to both terrestrial and aquatic environments (as appropriate), and in relation to staff and finances, since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe.

Boundaries: Give details of any changes to the boundaries of the European Diploma site since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. If there are any changes, please attach an appropriate map to this report.

Other Information: List here any other information about the European Diploma site which you consider should be given to the Council of Europe.

APPENDIX C**NEW DRAFT MODEL PLAN FOR ANNUAL REPORTS**

State:

Name of the area:

Year and number of years since the award or renewal of the EDPA:

Central authority concerned:

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Fax:

e-mail:

www:

Authority responsible for its management:

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Fax:

e-mail:

www:

1. Conditions: List here all conditions which were made when the European Diploma was awarded or renewed. Explain either how the conditions have been totally complied with or progress in complying with the conditions. Please also indicate any difficulties you could have met and which are not solved yet.

2. Recommendations: List here all recommendations which were made when the European Diploma was awarded or renewed. Explain how each one of these recommendations is being actioned. Please also indicate any difficulties you could have met and which are not solved yet.

3. Site Management: List here any changes to site management, in relation to both terrestrial and aquatic environments (as appropriate), and in relation to staff and finances, since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. Please also indicate any difficulties you could have met and which are not solved yet.

4. Boundaries: Give details of any changes to the boundaries of the European Diploma site since the last annual report was submitted to the Council of Europe. If there are any changes, please attach an appropriate map to this report. Please also indicate any difficulties you could have met and which are not solved yet.

5. Other Information: List here any other information about the European Diploma site which you consider should be given to the Council of Europe.

The following sections of the form should only be filled in if your area is in the year prior to a renewal of its European Diploma of Protected Areas (EDPA), i.e. year 4 after the award of the European Diploma or year 9 after its renewal.

6. Natural heritage (general abiotic description: geomorphology, geology and hydrogeology, habitats, flora, fauna, landscape) — State of conservation

- 6.1. Environment: changes or deterioration in the environment, of natural or anthropic origin, accidental or permanent, actual or anticipated
- 6.2. Flora and vegetation: changes in the plant population and in the vegetational cover; presumed causes
- 6.3. Fauna: changes in the sedentary or migratory populations; congregating, egg-laying and breeding grounds

7. Cultural heritage and socio-economic context

- 7.1. Cultural heritage
 - 7.1.1. Changes concerning cultural heritage
- 7.2. Socio-economic context
 - 7.2.1. Changes concerning the socio-economic context

8. Education and scientific interest

- 8.1. Visitors — Information policy
 - 8.1.1. Arrangements for receiving and informing the public (building, booklets, maps, cards, etc.)
 - 8.1.2. Frequentation by visitors and behavior (number, distribution in time and space)
 - 8.1.3. Special visits (distinguished persons, groups, etc.)
- 8.2. Scientific research
 - 8.2.1. Current or completed research (observation, experimentation, etc.; identification or inventory of the species listed in the appendices to the Bern Convention, etc.)
 - 8.2.2. Scientific publications

9. Site description (vulnerability, protection status, ownership, documentation)

- 9.1. Changes in legislation or regulations
- 9.2. Changes in ownership title (conversion to public property, rentals, etc.)
- 9.3. Extension or transfer, new uses (for example, conversion into total reserve)

10. Site management (management plans, budget and personnel)

- 10.1. Improvements made
 - 10.1.1. Ecological action affecting the flora and biotopes; controls of fauna
 - 10.1.2. Protection against the elements (fire, water regime)
 - 10.1.3. Approaches and thoroughfares (paths, roads, car parks, signposting, fencing, etc.)
 - 10.1.4. Field equipment (hides and study facilities)
 - 10.1.5. Waste management
 - 10.1.6. Use of renewable energy systems
- 10.2. Management
 - 10.2.1. Administrative department: changes made
 - 10.2.2. Wardens' department: changes made
 - 10.2.3. Internal policing measures
 - 10.2.4. Infringement of regulations and damage; legal action

11. Influence of the award of the European Diploma of Protected Areas

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