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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

GROUP OF EXPERTS ON PROTECTED AREAS AND ECOLOGICAL NETWORKS

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EMERALD NETWORK DELIVERY INSTRUCTIONS (V2. OCTOBER 2013)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Emerald Network database is based on national data deliveries by each Contracting Party or Observer country. This database should be kept up-to-date as it is used for many purposes, including publications, analysis (e.g. biogeographic process), research and planning purposes as well as for producing a range of statistics.

The legal basis for the Emerald database is the Emerald Standard Data Form (SDF). The newest version of the SDF was adopted by the Standing Committee to the Bern in 2013. Contracting Parties and Observer countries will be required to transfer their data to this new format and submit them to the Council of Europe. The online **Emerald Network Reference Portal** provides all information necessary to Contracting Parties for establishing their national deliveries.

The current document is intended to compile all useful information on how to correctly deliver a national Emerald database or the equivalent XML document.

2. WHAT IS UNDERSTOOD BY A NATIONAL EMERALD DATA DELIVERY?

A national Emerald data delivery to the Council of Europe, through EEA's CDR is composed of three parts:

1. A descriptive dataset containing the information of the Standard Data Forms (SDF) for all sites (candidate Emerald sites and adopted Emerald sites) in digital format (MSAccess).

2. A spatial component containing the boundaries of all sites in electronic format (ESRI shapefiles).

3. An explanatory note explaining the changes occurring in the database (concerning site boundary changes, additions/deletions of sites, species and habitat types), as compared to the previous database delivery.

Emerald Network data delivery		
Dataset	**Content**	**Format**
Descriptive	Site Standard Data Forms	MS Access
Spatial	Site boundaries	ESRI shapefiles
Explanatory note	Textual description	Text Document (.doc, .txt)

3. SUMMARY OF INSTRUCTIONS FOR A NEW NATIONAL EMERALD DATA DELIVERY

The following instructions have been compiled to ensure that datasets delivered by Contracting Parties can be efficiently processed by the Council of Europe and rapidly included in the Emerald database; basis for the list is Emerald sites. Incomplete, incoherent or non-compliant datasets lead to unnecessary complications and errors. To fully benefit from the possibilities of automation, it is necessary that the datasets respect a certain amount of rules. To facilitate the assessment of the changes occurring in a new dataset and to evaluate their scientific relevance by the thematic experts (ETC/BD) it is important that all documents that are indispensable for this work will be provided. By complying with the following set of instructions, Contracting Parties help the Council of Europe achieve these basic conditions.

Summary of Instructions

1. The dataset must be a full national dataset, including all compulsory information to be delivered to the Council of Europe, meaning the Standard Data Form in electronic format (MS Access database or XML document) and the electronic boundaries of all sites. Incomplete or regional datasets will be rejected.

2. The national delivery will consist of three parts:

   a) A descriptive database comprising the information from the SDF in electronic format;

   b) A spatial dataset comprising the electronic boundaries of the sites and

c) An explanatory note explaining the changes in the database concerning site boundary changes, as well as any additions/deletions of sites, species and/or habitat types, as compared to the previous database delivery.

3. The format of the descriptive database should be identical to the standard SDF template. The structure of the XML document should follow ('validate against') the XML schema (see Emerald reference portal).

4. Spatial dataset:

a) The electronic boundaries should be submitted in ESRI Shapefile format;

b) The electronic boundaries must include a field called SITECODE, containing the Emerald code of the site;

c) The electronic boundaries should be dissolved according to SITECODE. Un-dissolved Shapefiles require additional processing steps;

d) The Shapefiles must contain a projection file (.prj) containing the necessary projection system to view the files;

e) The GIS files may consist of multiple files to accommodate the different projections used by Contracting Parties;

f) In order to minimise the risk of potential coordinate transformation errors in further data processing, countries are encouraged to deliver their GIS data in an ETRS89 (or WGS84) based coordinate reference system, where feasible;

g) The consistency of data from different regions (e.g. no overlap), particularly in the case of Contracting Parties with deferral structure, must be ensured;

h) Paper submissions of site boundaries are not required and

i) Optional: maps in PDF format may be adjoined to the delivery. However, in no way do they constitute a replacement for the electronic boundaries.

5. The national delivery will be sent electronically to the Council of Europe through the CDR.

6. Each data-delivery needs to be "officialised" via letter from the Focal Point of the bern Convention.

4. When to submit an updated national Emerald data delivery to the Council of Europe?

The Emerald database is intended to provide up-to-date information on Emerald sites and therefore needs to be regularly updated on the basis of the best available information. The updating of the content of the Standard Data Forms is to be seen as a continuous process. Therefore, an updated database or XML document can be provided by a Member State in an ad-hoc manner whenever changes have been made. "Change" means when one or more fields in the Standard Data Form of a site or the spatial boundaries of a site have been modified. Either of these two conditions should lead to the submission of a complete, updated national database to the Council of Europe. A convenient updating frequency is once per year. With regard to the practice of producing annual Emerald lists, a deadline for data-deliveries is set on the 1st October.

5. How to submit a national Emerald data delivery to the Council of Europe?

National Emerald data deliveries have to be provided via the Central Data Repository (CDR), a system maintained by the European Environment Agency (EEA). The person(s) nominated as the data suppliers responsible for reporting will be given EIONET accounts with a password. These people will have upload rights to the CDR. It is not possible to deliver data to CDR without upload rights. The delivery process for data suppliers is very simple. You need to log in with your EIONET account and password in CDR. The hyperlinks to the relevant CDR folder for each country are listed in the table below.

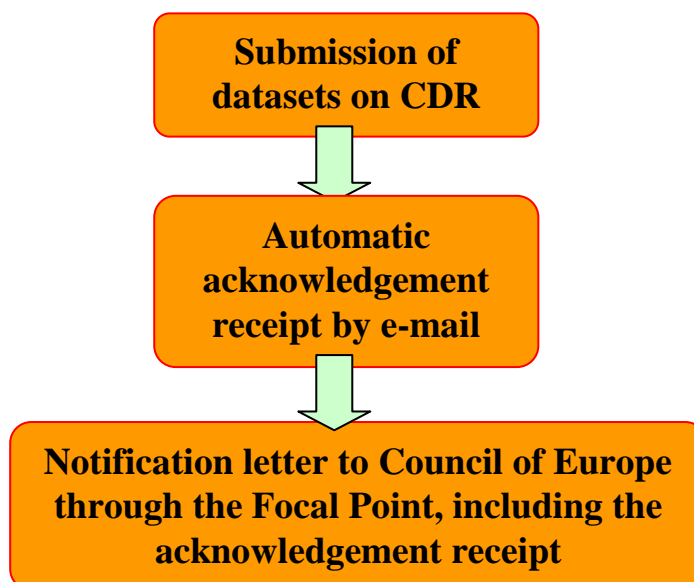The following steps should therefore be carried out:

1. Create the delivery envelope and give the envelope the appropriate metadata

2. Activate the task

3. Upload the files to be delivered from your system to CDR. Both the database (or XML document) and the GIS files should be delivered together, with any other relevant information in the same envelope. The "Restrict from public view" option can be used if there are any files which should not be available to the public.

4. Do not forget to also upload the necessary explanation note regarding the changes contained in the delivery.

5. Release the envelope.

6. Finish the envelope: this will close the envelope and indicate to the Council of Europe that your electronic submission is complete.

7. An automatic acknowledgement of the delivery will be generated in CDR at this stage. This receipt must be used by the Contracting Party Focal Point as an annex to the formal notification of delivery sent to the Council of Europe. Only then the electronic data will be considered as official.

The Nominated Data Suppliers are the person(s) responsible for transmitting national deliveries have been designated by Contracting Parties. In case of changes, please notify the Council of Europe in order to ensure that the necessary user privileges are granted or revoked.

Help needed? If you need any assistance during the delivery process, do not hesitate to contact EIONET helpdesk at helpdesk@eionet.europa.eu or by telephone (details at http://nmc.eionet.europa.eu/helpdesk.html).

6. OFFICIALISING THE NATIONAL DATA DELIVERY

The national dataset on Reportnet will be officialised vis-à-vis the Commission by a note sent through the Permanent Representation of a given Member State. The note must be accompanied by the acknowledgement receipt generated by Reportnet. Datasets *must* be delivered according to the above-described procedure. Incoming datasets on media such as CD's or DVD's will no longer be accepted.

Submission of datasets on CDR

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Automatic acknowledgement receipt by e-mail

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Notification letter to Council of Europe through the Focal Point, including the acknowledgement receipt

7. WHAT NEXT?

On reception of the national dataset, the Council of Europe checks if it is conformant with the above basic rules ("mini-check"). The following steps are performed by the Council of Europe:

1. The files are copied from the CDR to a local archiving repository. The content of the delivery is verified – all required files must be present.

2. In case this is a first delivery ….

3. The data are then submitted to an automated process in order to detect changes. A report highlighting the main changes as compared to the previous dataset is generated.

4. The national dataset and verifies if deletions or reductions of sites, habitats or species have been justified in the accompanying explanatory note. The justifications that are given by Contracting Parties are at this stage not assessed as to their quality & acceptability.

5. Decision on the acceptance or the refusal of the database, which is quality-checked by the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe then informs the Party within 3 weeks after the uploading of the delivery on CDR about the outcome of the mini-check:

> a) If the national data delivery shows no major problems, it waits for its inclusion in the Emerald database, which occurs every twelve months (usually during November). The Emerald database is then used for its various derived products: the lists of Emerald sites, the Bern Convention Standing Committee documents, the Emerald webpage and various other statistics. The Party may be requested however, at this stage, to provide additional documentation concerning the changes occurring in its submitted database.

> b) If a data-delivery shows major problems, (e.g. only partial data-sets, absence of spatial data, deleted/missing sites without any explanation) that effectively prohibit their inclusion in the Emerald database, the Contracting Party (via the CDR contact person and in copy the Focal Point) is informed as quickly as possible and within 3 weeks at latest in order to solve the problem.

Please note: The Council of Europe does not wait for the reception of the official notification of the Focal Point to perform this initial verification exercise. This is to allow time to Contracting Parties for correcting possible issues with the datasets before the yearly Emerald lists deadline.

Quality Assessment & Quality Control (QA/QC): Contracting Parties will receive in regular intervals a QA/QC report on the status of their data. This report will outline the remaining issues affecting the database and possible discrepancies between the spatial and the descriptive database. Contracting Parties are expected to use this report as a basis for improving the quality of their national datasets.

8. IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

For a dataset to be taken into account for the following year's Emerald list, Contracting Parties must submit a new database before the 1st of October of the previous year. Please note that the verification process of the newly submitted database may reveal inconsistencies or unjustified changes that may lead to the need for the delivery of a new dataset or additional information. The time for accomplishing this should be taken into account with regard to the final deadline. Hence, a timely delivery of a new database does not necessarily guarantee its inclusion into the following year's Emerald list as the acceptation of the database may be delayed by pending issues.

9. REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Emerald Network Reference Portal: www.coe.int/emerald
Bern Convention webpage: www.coe.int/bernconvention
CDR: http://cdr.eionet.europa.eu/
ETC-BD website: http://bd.eionet.europa.eu/activities/Natura_2000/index_html