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CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE
AND NATURAL HABITATS

Standing Committee

35th meeting
Strasbourg, 1-4 December 2015

**BERN CONVENTION
PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES AND
BUDGET
FOR 2016 - 2017**

- FINAL -

*Memorandum of the Secretariat
established by
the Directorate of Democratic Governance*

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COUNCIL OF EUROPE BIENNIAL BUDGETARY CYCLE: REMINDER

Overview of the procedure for the adoption of the Council of Europe “Programme and Budget”

Since 2011 the Council of Europe follows two consecutive financial years, called the “biennium”. The Council of Europe “Programme and Budget” presents for each financial year of the biennium the General Budget (including the “Ordinary Budget¹”), and the budgets of the Partial and Enlarged Agreements.

The Committee of Ministers examines the proposal of activities submitted by the Secretary General, including a progress review of the previous and on-going years, as well as the strategic priorities identified for the two forthcoming years (Y1-Y2), together with their budgetary implications.

During the whole process, the proposal is also screened by the Committee of Ministers’ Budget Committee, as well as by an Internal Auditor responsible for evaluating and contributing to the improvement of risk management, control, and governance processes, and by an External Auditor. The latter is appointed by the Committee of Ministers with the task of, inter alia, certifying the annual financial statements and the budgetary management accounts of the Organisation, making observations with respect to the economy efficiency and effectiveness of the financial procedures. The adoption of the “Programme and Budget” by the Committee of Ministers is generally expected by the end of November.

The “Programme and Budget” includes:

- ⇒ the programme of activities for the biennium,
- ⇒ the budget for year N,
- ⇒ the provisional budget for year N+1.

During year N, until 1st November, the member states and the Secretary General may request the re-opening of the debate on the budget for year N+1 so to adjust its programme when necessary in response to political priorities.

If no such request is made, the Committee of Ministers takes the decision to approve the budget.

The Bern Convention Programme of activities

The Bern Convention adapted to the requirements of the Council of Europe biennial programme and budget to ensure the efficient implementation of its own Programme of Activities as well as budgetary discipline. This year, the Committee is requested to adopt its programme of activities for 2016-2017, as well as its budget for 2016 and the provisional budget for 2017.

It should be noticed that the draft Programme of Activities for the Bern Convention is prepared and examined by the Bureau before the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe Programme and Budget. The amounts presented to the Standing Committee are therefore forecasts and takes into account both the expected provision allocated to the Bern Convention via the Ordinary Budget as well as the estimated voluntary contributions to be received from countries.

¹ The Ordinary budget derives from the contributions of Contracting Parties. The calculation of the scales of Member States’ contributions is effected using the average of the data on annual population and GDP (Gross Domestic Product, converted to US dollars) of each MS in respect of the three-year period ending 24 months before the date of entry into force of the scale. In the calculation, the weighting to be given to data on GDP shall be 5 times the weighting to be given to the data on population. In 2013, the Committee of Ministers further adopted CM Resolution (2013)7 concerning “Financial arrangements for the participation of non-member States in Council of Europe conventions”, according to which non-member states should contribute to the costs related to the functioning and operation of Council of Europe’s Convention with monitoring mechanism to which they are Party.

SUMMARY PROGRESS REVIEW – 2014-2015

Institutional matters – Monitoring of the Implementation of the legal aspects of the Bern Convention and launch of the Bern Convention Online Reporting System (ORS)

The Standing Committee clarified the reporting obligations under Article 9 of the Convention. The reports should comply with the conditions set under Article 9 of the Convention and thus: address all of the substantive issues included under Article 9; be submitted every two years; be supplied in one of the Council of Europe official languages; be sent in a format allowing the Secretariat to make them public.

The Committee also decided that, in order to enable EU countries to submit to the Convention the derogations reports prepared under EU regulation, the EU should prepare and submit to the Standing Committee an analysis showing the compliance of the information requested by the EU reporting system with the reporting obligations stemming from Article 9 of the Bern Convention.

Moreover, in order to simplify the task of national authorities in meeting reporting requirements under several biodiversity-related Multilateral Environment Agreements (MEAs), the Standing Committee adopted the Bern Convention Online Reporting System (ORS) as a major step to significantly reduce the reporting burden on Parties. The system is operational since January 2015 and will gradually replace the previous reporting format.



Conservation of natural habitats

1. Protected Areas and Ecological Networks

Work on the setting-up of the Emerald Network progressed steadily in the period 2014-2015. The overall statistics on the Emerald Network coverage significantly improved.

The Network now counts with:

- nearly 3,000 candidate or adopted Emerald sites;
- covering more than 600,000 km² in 16 countries and,
- representing an average of 11-12% of these 16 countries' national coverage.

In 2014, the Secretary of the Bern Convention paid a visit to the High Commissioner on Water and Forests of Morocco. Thanks to the visit the commitment of national authorities at high-level towards the whole Emerald process was secured. The implementation of the possible new Emerald project in Morocco, foreseen to start in 2015, was however delayed due to the lengthy negotiations over the terms of the project contract.

Besides, a mid-term review of the progress achieved since the adoption of the Calendar for the implementation of the Emerald Network 2011-2020 was carried out in 2015. Its findings are included in a detailed report² prepared for the 7th meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks in 2015.

Moreover, the joint Council of Europe/European Union Emerald network's project in Central and Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus, launched end of 2013, produced the results expected for the first two years of implementation. The project debuted with technical and scientific work at national level on the identification of new areas suitable to join the network. A first round of biogeographical evaluation of the Emerald sites' proposals by the seven target countries started in 2015 and will be implemented for 2 years (2015-2016). The success of the scientific evaluation of the sites so far proposed also benefitted of the cooperation from some of the major international non-governmental

² Document T-PVS/PA(2015) 6

organisations in the field of nature conservation, such as Birdlife International, the WWF or the European Habitats Forum.

During the last biennium, the Bern Convention continued the coordination and cooperation with the main partners for the setting-up of the Emerald Network, namely the EEA and the ETC/BD. Both partners provide a vital scientific and technical support, which already translated into very tangible results such as the launching of the new Emerald Network Software or the revision of the lists of species and habitats targeted by the Emerald Network in view of their harmonisation with those of the EU Nature Directives.

The work carried out on the Emerald Network has been reviewed by the Group of Experts of Protected Areas and Ecological Networks at its 5th and 6th meeting, respectively in 2014 and 2015. The preparation of management guidelines for Emerald network sites and the format for reporting on progress on the setting-up of the Network have been deeply discussed. Both documents are expected to be adopted in 2016 at the latest.

In relation to the establishment of the Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN), the long-term partnership with the European Centre for Nature Conservation produced some first results in 2015. As foreseen in the Action Plan for the PEEN endorsed in 2012, the ECNC prepared a brochure on the benefits of the establishment of functional ecological networks at pan-European level, targeting stakeholders and decision-makers at national level. The possible implementation of other actions foreseen in the Action Plan, such as training sessions on ecological networks and their benefits for different stakeholders, is under negotiation between the Secretariat of the Convention and ECNC.

2. European Diploma for Protected Areas

In the past biennium the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe awarded the European Diploma for Protected Areas (EDPA) to two new areas³, raising the membership of the network to 74. Furthermore, the Committee of Ministers renewed the EDPA of the National Park Weerribben-Wieden (Netherlands) for a five-year period.

In 2014, in line with the simplification process initiated under the Bern Convention, the Group of Specialists on the EDPA worked at revising the Diploma regulations namely to prepare a new Model plan for annual reports that has been subsequently adopted by the Committee of Ministers. The new model plan for annual reports was used for the first time in 2015 and helped significantly to improve the reporting rate by the EDPA managers.

The year 2015 has also marked the golden jubilee of the EDPA. National Parks from Germany, Ireland, Italy, Romania, and the Slovak Republic organised national celebrations on this occasion. Moreover, on 21-22 May the Council of Europe celebrated both the 50th Anniversary of the EDPA and the International Day for Biological Diversity through an international Workshop on “Protected Areas in Europe: the next 50 years”. The Workshop took place at the Regional Park of Migliarino, San Rossore and Massaciuccoli (Italy), and counted with the sponsorship of the Ministry of Environment of Italy and of the Tuscany Region, and the cooperation of EUROPARC Federation. The event enabled government representatives, protected areas’ managers, and NGO’s to further plan for future, reflecting on how we can better together protect European common natural and cultural heritage. The workshop highlighted the need to react with innovative and specific responses to societal and technological changes, as well as to existing and new challenges threatening biological diversity.

Participants committed to use the EDPA to trial innovative nature conservation management and demonstrate novel approaches, working with communities to find creative mutually beneficial nature-based solutions. They further adopted the “Pisa Declaration” calling on responsible governments, national and local authorities, local communities, nature conservation NGOs, and the Council of Europe, to ensure that EDPA continues to receive the necessary political and financial support for the further development of its network.

³ The new EDPA sites are Desertas Nature Reserve (Portugal) and Vashlovani Protected Areas (Georgia)



Conservation of Species

1. Invasive Alien Species

In 2014-2015 the work on Invasive Alien Species (IAS) continued to focus on assisting states in the implementation of the European Strategy on Invasive Alien Species and prevent or minimize adverse impacts of IAS on Europe's biodiversity, as foreseen under Aichi target 9.

The dedicated Group of Experts conducted the analysis of some IAS pathways for the further development of voluntary Codes of Conduct and Guidelines. This work led to the finalisation of two new Codes of conduct, namely the European Code of Conduct on recreational fishing and IAS (adopted in December 2014) and the European Code of Conduct on Plantation Forests and Invasive Alien Species. A code of conduct on recreational boating and IAS is also under preparation.

Moreover, the Group of Experts worked towards the harmonisation of biodiversity standards and legislations across Europe, through the analysis of the ways in which the Bern Convention could extend and adapt the measures contained in the recently adopted European Union (EU)'s Regulation 1143/2014 on the Prevention and Management of the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Alien Species to non-EU member states.

Concerning the European Strategy for the eradication of the ruddy duck in the Western Palearctic, the commitment of the Parties involved in its implementation brought tangible results. Notably, the United Kingdom has almost achieved the eradication goal while Belgium, France, the Netherlands and a few other states are deploying additional efforts to meet the targets set by the Strategy.

Finally, a Workshop on the control of feral ungulates in islands of the Mediterranean and Macaronesian regions ended-up with a series of actions to be recommended by the Standing Committee to the concerned countries.

2. Wild-birds crimes and conservation of birds

Two years after the second Conference on the illegal killing of birds and the adoption by the Standing Committee of the Tunis Action Plan 2020, progress in the fight against wild-bird crimes has been remarkable.

A Network of the Special Focal Points (SFP) for illegal killing of birds has been set up and counts with 25 experts appointed by States which selected them as the most suitable interlocutors for each of the specific issues related to wild-bird crimes. The setting up of the Network has already improved synergies at the national and international level among all relevant bodies, by ensuring information flow, sharing on best practices, and better reporting to Standing Committee.

In the past biennium the SFP held two meetings, respectively in Strasbourg and in Madrid (Spain). They set timeframe and milestones for the evaluation of progress in the implementation of the Tunis Action Plan, identified activities needing co-operation of multiple stakeholders and delivered several Recommendations, namely on: the criteria for setting-up national wildlife crime priorities; the gravity factors which the prosecutors and the judiciary should take into consideration when evaluating the seriousness of the committed offence in a similar way across all Parties' jurisdictions; the identification of black spots of illegal killing of birds; a set of basic standards able to fit across different ranges of jurisdictions, to be used as guiding sentencing principles.

The review of implementation of relevant Standing Committee's recommendations showed sensitive progress on a number of issues, namely:

- (i) The adoption or preparation of national action plans against wild-bird crimes (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta, Portugal, Slovak Republic);
- (ii) Higher convictions rates showing improvement of enforcement in some Parties;
- (iii) Training for police officers (organised in Malta and Portugal);

(iv) The systematic reporting on wildlife crime cases (Cyprus, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Slovak Republic) although only a few of them have the necessary resources for combined analysis of the data so collected.

The use of new tools and/or technologies is also progressing and includes, in some countries, the use of DNA forensic analysis applied to wild-life crime cases, as well as satellite tracking for prioritised species.

The SFP also identified a number of new or remaining challenges to be addressed in the coming biennium, such as preventing poisoning, enabling the cross analysis of collected data, improving knowledge sharing about essential but sensitive data (such as maps, black-spots, offenders), capacity building for the judiciary.

International co-operation also improved, particularly with the INTERPOL and the CMS. The INTERPOL made available some of the existing technical tools for the use of the Parties while the CMS adopted a Resolution setting-up a Pan-Mediterranean Task-Force for illegal killing of birds, as foreseen by the Tunis Action Plan. The Task-Force should be operational in 2016.

The work of the SFP was pre-validated, in October 2015, by the Group of Experts on the Conservation of birds. The latter also ensured the follow-up of a number of complaints related to wild birds, as well as the monitoring of the implementation of relevant Standing Committee Recommendations. Finally, the Group reviewed the second draft Action Plan for the recovery and/or reintroduction of the Osprey and decided to set-up an ad hoc working group for its finalisation.

Amphibians and Reptiles

On stand-by since 2006, the Group of Experts on Amphibians and Reptiles met again in July 2015, with a dense agenda focussing on the monitoring of the implementation of past recommendations and Action Plans, as well as on the identification of new challenges. The Group of Experts addressed the situation of a number of species, and discussed about how best encourage specific actions by Parties.

Parties also prepared a draft recommendation on the prevention and control of the *Batrachochytrium salamandrivorans* chytrid fungus, a fungal disease imported from Asia that already caused mass mortality and massive population declines (96% decline) in populations of *Salamandra salamandra* in the Netherlands. The draft Recommendation identifies a series of measures that should contribute to halt or at least slow down the spread of the fungal disease in Europe.

Moreover, the Group of Experts discussed a list of priorities for herpetofauna conservation in Europe to be proposed to the Standing Committee for future work.

Finally, in 2015 the Convention contributed to the organisation, on 19-24 April 2015, of the “5th Mediterranean Conference on Marine Turtles: filling the gaps for basin-integrated management”. The Conference analysed demographic models for the conservation of sea turtles, reviewed the available information about the demographic parameters of the two species of marine turtles nesting in the Mediterranean, as well as the methods to assess the by-catch rate of sea turtles and associated mortality. It delivered a proposal for a basin-wide monitoring project which will be submitted to the Standing Committee for endorsement at its 35th meeting.

3. Large Carnivores

In 2014 the Convention reinforced its cooperation with the IUCN Cat’s Specialist Group and the WWF to enhance leopard conservation in the Caucasus. In this area the species is critically endangered and needs special conservation attention. An International Expert Workshop was organised in October 2014 as part of a wider biennial project, aimed at assessing the implementation of the “Caucasus Leopard Strategy” endorsed by the Convention and the National Action Plans prepared by concerned governments. The outcome of the project is the development of recommendations concerning monitoring and research, as well as targeted conservation actions to be included in a revised regional leopard strategy. The project will end in 2016.

Moreover, the Standing Committee provided advice to Contracting Parties in respect of hybridisation, in particular between wild wolves (*Canis lupus*) and domestic dogs (*Canis lupus*

familiaris), through the adoption of Recommendation No. 173 (2014). The latter recommends, *inter alia*, that Parties monitor, prevent and mitigate hybridisation between wild wolves and dogs, and that government-controlled removal of wolf-dog hybrids takes place after government officials and/or the bodies entrusted by governments for this purpose and/or researchers have confirmed them as hybrids using genetic and/or morphological features

4. Biodiversity and Climate Change

The past biennium has been crucial for the Group of Experts on Biodiversity and Climate Change. At its 8th meeting, in 2014, the Group carried out an overview of its achievements and realised that it had fulfilled its first programme of work. In fact, the Group of Experts produced a number of specific technical reports and a comprehensive set of recommendations, suggesting around 60 specific actions on topics such as climate change adaptation and mitigation, climate change in mountain regions, in protected areas, on European islands, climate change and wildland fires, conservation translocations in the light of climate change, marine biodiversity and climate change, among others. However, at the level of the results implementation from Parties is insufficient and so is their participation to the work of the Group. After assessing Parties' expectations and needs from the Group of Experts, the Standing Committee confirmed its commitment and support to the future work of the Group and set up a restricted working group of volunteering Parties, entrusted with the task of preparing a new work-plan.

The ad-hoc Select Group met in April 2015 and identified current and new priorities that should be addressed by the Bern Convention under the form of a new work-plan. These are: the urgent implementation of existing guidance at national level, including through the assessment or re-assessment of species vulnerability, so to ensure that the species at higher risk are prioritised; the development of a common monitoring scheme for the monitoring of targeted species to assess the effectiveness of conservation measures; the adaptive management of protected areas so to prepare for the expected consequences of climate change and facilitate the responses of species; the assessment of the threats that Arctic biodiversity faces in a changing climatic context; the preparation of communication guidance and toolkits to help delegates of Contracting Parties promoting their national policies on climate change. The next meeting of the Group of Experts under the new mandate should take place in 2016.

5. Threatened species: Red List training workshop

In October 2015 the Convention sponsored the organisation of one of the IUCN Red List training workshops foreseen in the framework of the wider LIFE project "European Red List of Bryophytes, Pteridophytes, Saprobial Beetles, Terrestrial Molluscs and Vascular Plants". The workshop was intended to present IUCN Red List methodology and the Species Information Service (SIS), and to train the participants to use them for the assessment of the extinction risk of ca. 5,500 species.

The European Red List of Species could promote a better implementation of the Bern Convention through the provision of information on the status of species at the European level.

Case-file system

In the biennium 2014-2015 the Convention registered and assessed 10 new complaints and ensured the follow-up of other 22 complaints lodged in previous years. 12 complaints have been closed, some of which through the adoption of Recommendations.

Monitoring of sites at risk and of EDPA sites

A series of on-the-spot visits were organised in the period 2014-2015. These took place in the frame of the two monitoring mechanisms of the Convention: its case-file system and the European Diploma for Protected Areas.

1. Monitoring of areas holding the European Diploma for Protected Areas

Two standard appraisal visits were organised, one in view of the award of the European Diploma for Protected Areas to the Vashlovani Protected Area, in Georgia (on 29th September - 1st October 2014); and a second one in view of the renewal of the award to the National Park Weerrribben-Wieden,

in the Netherlands (16th – 19th June 2014). Both areas were respectively awarded and renewed the European Diploma.

As foreseen by the European Diploma regulations, two exceptional on-the-spot appraisals were organised for monitoring purposes. The first exceptional appraisal was a joint visit to Podyji National Park (Czech Republic) and Thayatal National Park (Austria), and took place on 15th – 17th September 2014. The visit aimed at identifying the possible negative impact of the planned construction of large wind turbines park(s) in Northern Austria and at evaluating the harmonisation of the fishing regulations within the ecological needs of the two parks. Following some detailed economic, scientific and sociological analyses, the Provincial Government of Lower Austria has finally abandoned the plans for the windfarm known as “Windpark Nord”.

The second exceptional appraisal, took place on 24th February 2015 to the Bayerischer Wald National Park (Germany). It aimed at assessing the possible negative effects of a vast windfarm project planned in the close vicinity of the park. After discussing the recommendations proposed by the expert, the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma decided to add a condition on the necessity - prior to any wind park authorisation - of an environmental assessment that guarantees that the natural values having led to the designation of the Bayerischer Wald National Park as a European Diploma for Protected Area’s site will not be significantly affected.

The findings of both exceptional visits supported the preparation of two Opinions with recommendations by the Group of Specialists which were submitted to the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention for possible endorsement.

Between 16th and 17th September 2015, an on-the-spot visit took place to Bialowieża National Park (Poland), with a view to renew the European Diploma for Protected Areas suspended in 2007 due to the non-completion of the procedure to adopt the management plan for the area. The results of this visit, generally positive, will be examined by the group of Specialists on the EDPA in 2016.

2. Monitoring of sites at risk under the frame of the Bern Convention case-file system

In 2014 the Convention carried out an on-the-spot appraisal to Southern Kyparissia Bay (Greece). The appraisal was decided by the Standing Committee following a complaint filed by the environmental NGO MEDASSET. The complaint denounced the degradation of the site, which is also a Natura 2000 site, due to inadequate protection and housing development plans which would affect the protected habitats and species.

The appraisal confirmed a series of conservation problems and identified a set of recommended actions whose implementation should lead to an improvement of the conservation status of the site. The Standing Committee will monitor the implementation of the Recommendation.

On 24th – 25th June 2015, an on-the-spot appraisal was carried out at Mavrovo National Park in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. This visit took place in the frame of a complaint denouncing the impact of two large hydro-power plant (HPP) projects on the Park’s biodiversity. The findings of the appraisal led to a draft recommendation submitted to the Standing Committee for possible adoption at its 35th meeting.

On 28th – 31st July, another on-the-spot appraisal was carried out at Patara and Fethiye SPAs, in Turkey. The mission was organised further to a decision of the Standing Committee in the frame of a complaint submitted by MEDASSET to denounce the lack of adequate management of some of the most important nesting beaches of the country. Based on the expert’s report, two draft Recommendations, one for each area, have been submitted to the 35th Standing Committee meeting for possible endorsement.

The fourth visit of the last biennium took place in Lithuania, on 6 - 9 October 2015, in the frame of a complaint denouncing the impact of a planned Overhead Power Line (OHL) in an environmentally sensitive area in the Lithuanian-Polish borderland. At its 34th meeting the Standing Committee decided to apply the Mediation Procedure to the complaint, as a way forward to facilitate the dialogue between conservation authorities and the complainants. The aim of the mediation procedure was to assess the situation, reach a consensus and record the agreements of possible solutions that would satisfy both sides, in line with the respect of the spirit and letter of the

Convention. The mediation enabled both sides to reach a formal agreement on both general points and points related to species listed in the Convention.

Capacity building, awareness and visibility

1. Marine turtle conservation training

In 2015, for the fifth consecutive year, the Convention sponsored the participation of three national experts into the Marine Turtles Conservation international training course, organised by the Cyprus Wildlife Society. The training focused on conservation, monitoring and management of turtle nesting beaches, protecting eggs and hatchling from predation, and monitoring the turtle population and nesting activity. Participants were selected according to their professional interest and responsibilities, and were requested to work as multipliers after the training by acting as trainer of trainees.

2. Communication

The Convention issued media advisory systematically on its monitoring visits, on major Convention's events, and on the occasion of the International Day for Biodiversity. Several Convention's events, particularly related to monitoring visits or illegal killing of birds' issues, were the subject of media attention. Moreover, on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the EDPA, a video presenting the award, in both English and French, has been launched on Youtube.

Furthermore, the Convention issued two new brochures, one on "Pan-European Ecological Network: Delivering benefits beyond biodiversity conservation", and a second one on the European Diploma for Protected Areas. In addition, a new Leaflet presenting the Emerald Network and its recent achievements was distributed to most of the Bern Convention Parties working on the Network's setting-up.

Thanks to an in-kind contribution from Italy, the "European Guidance on Protected Areas and IAS" were also published in printing in 2014.

Moreover, on 15th May 2015, the Convention joined the Facebook following a dedicated training for the members of the Secretariat. The page is steadily gaining new followers and its outreach goes beyond the traditional public. More focused and dedicated campaigns are being planned and should be launched at the end of 2015 and beginning of 2016, covering a wide range of activities and flagship initiatives of the Convention.

Finally, the website of the Convention has been migrated to a new communication platform after a complete re-styling and redrafting.

3. Visibility

The Convention presented its activities at the following major events:

- 3rd Science in Botanic Gardens Congress, Las Palmas (Spain), 1-4 April 2014: the author of the European Code of Conduct on IAS for Botanic Gardens presented it to a wider audience of botanists and directors of botanic gardens;
- Caucasus Cat Summit, Bakou (Azerbaijan), 7 May 2014: the Convention presented its activities related to the conservation of large carnivores;
- 18th Meeting of the SBSTTA (CBD), Montreal (Canada), 23-28 June 2014: the Convention organized a side event on "The management, control, and eradication of Invasive Alien Species in Europe: the contribution of the Bern Convention to Aichi Target 9";
- IUCN World Parks Congress, Sydney (Australia), 11-19 November 2014: the Convention presented the most recent data regarding the coverage of the Emerald Network and its features;
- 4th European Grid Conference, Brussels (Belgium), 27th January 2015: Keynote address on "Green grids: energy infrastructures and biodiversity";

- IUCN “Little Sydney: Protecting Nature in Europe”, 28-31 May 2015, Hainburg (Austria): the Convention presented its tools for addressing the conservation of protected areas;
- EU workshop on Environment and climate change, organised by the EU by the Eastern Partnership (DG ENV, DG NEAR and EEAS), 2-5 June 2015, Brussels (Belgium): the Convention presented the progress in the setting-up of the Emerald Network.

Partnership and co-operation

The Convention continued to promote co-operation and co-ordination with other stakeholders and, more particularly, cooperated with: the European Union, the CMS, the IUCN, the EEA and its ETC/BD, the UNEP-WCMC, BirdLife International, the FACE, EPPO, the Large Carnivores Initiatives, and the Cyprus Wildlife Society.

ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PARTIES

The following parties sent additional financial contributions to the Bern Convention’s Special Account in 2014:

Andorra, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, the EU, Finland, Monaco, Norway, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Switzerland⁴.

The following parties sent additional financial contributions to the Bern Convention’s Special Account in 2015:

Andorra, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, the EU, Finland, Monaco, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Switzerland⁵.

During the same year, the following parties and observers offered the hosting of meetings of Groups of Experts: Italy, Slovenia, SEO/BirdLife and Spain, Switzerland.

⁴ Updated on 2 September 2015

⁵ Updated on 14 October 2015

**PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES AND BUDGET OF THE
BERN CONVENTION
FOR THE YEAR 2016**

1. Meetings of the Statutory bodies (Standing Committee and Bureau)

The Standing Committee to the Bern Convention, whose existence is foreseen in Article 13 of the Convention for enabling parties to meet regularly to develop common and co-ordinated programmes, is the body composed of the representatives of the parties. It has much of the responsibility for the functioning and monitoring of the Convention and meets once a year.

The Bureau of the Standing Committee takes administrative and organisational decisions in between meetings of the Standing Committee. It includes the Chair of the Standing Committee, the Vice-chair, the previous Chair, and two additional Bureau members, and is assisted by the Secretariat.

2. Monitoring and assistance to Parties in species conservation

The activities planned under this heading aim at assessing and recording the conservation status of the populations of species listed in the appendices to the Convention, identifying species at risk, devising processes affecting loss of wild biological diversity, setting-up models to monitor change in wildlife outside protected areas. Common management standards may be proposed through action plans. Monitoring of the implementation of Articles 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the Convention, as well as of the pertinent recommendations should also be carried out by the relevant Group of Experts.

These activities may directly contribute to the following CBD Aichi Targets: 1, 9, 12, 15.

3. Conservation of natural habitats

The activities planned under this heading aim at ensuring the conservation of natural habitats and the implementation of Article 4 of the Convention, as well as of Resolutions (89) 1, (96) 3, (96) 4, (98) 5, (98) 6 and Recommendations (89) 14, (89) 15 and (89) 16 of the Standing Committee. The setting-up of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCI) in Europe, and the development of the Pan-European Ecological Network are the two main medium-term objectives of the Convention's work in this field.

These activities may directly contribute to the following CBD Aichi Targets: 1, 11, 12.

4. Implementation of Article 3

Article 3 of the Convention sets out the general obligation for each Contracting party to take action individually, with respect to the conservation of wild flora and fauna and all natural habitats in general, by for instance promoting national conservation policies as well as education and information. Through the activity planned under this heading, the Secretariat seeks to provide assistance to parties in building capacities for communicating on the biodiversity advantage.

5. Monitoring of sites at risk

The activities to be implemented under this heading concern the monitoring of the implementation of the obligations of the Convention by parties by examination of case-file complaints or in the framework of the mediation procedure. They may also concern emergencies in the eventuality of a grave ecological damage as a result of a catastrophe, an accident or a conflict situation, and include on-the-spot appraisals organised for the European Diploma for Protected Areas.

Bern Convention Budget for 2016					Euros
		Ordinary Budget available			449 400
		Total Programme costs			670 964
		Total Funds needed			221 563
Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
1. Statutory bodies			55 504	40 035	15 469
Meeting of the Standing Committee (4 days)			45 504	30 034	15 470
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (average: 24 experts*5 per diem). Chair + Countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, BiH, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Portugal, Serbia, Slovak Republic, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine, Morocco, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Senegal</i>	120	175	21 000	12 250	8 750
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts</i>	24	470	11 280	6 580	4 700
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	6	2 204	13 224	11 204	2 020
1st Meeting of the Bureau (1 day)			4 563	4 563	0
<i>Subsistence of Bureau Members (5 experts*1,5 per diem)</i>	7,5	175	1 313	1 313	0
<i>Travel expenses of Bureau Members (5 experts)</i>	5	650	3 250	3 250	0
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	pm	pm	pm		
2nd Meeting of the Bureau (1,5 days)			5 438	5 438	0
<i>Subsistence of Bureau Members (5 experts*2,5 per diem)</i>	12,5	175	2 188	2 188	0
<i>Travel expenses of Bureau Members (5 experts)</i>	5	650	3 250	3 250	0
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	pm	pm	pm		

Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
2. Monitoring and assistance to Parties			79 727	38 477	41 250
<i>Implementation of Article 6</i>					
Select Group on Illegal killing of birds (1,5 days)			17 613	11 575	6 038
<i>Travel expenses of Delegates/Experts</i>	15	470	7 050	4 700	2 350
<i>Subsistence of Delegates/Experts (15 experts*2,5 per diem)</i>	37,5	175	6 563	4 375	2 188
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1	4 000	4 000	2 500	1 500
<i>Countries:</i>					
Select Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species (1,5 days)			14 890	7 970	6 920
<i>Travel expenses of Delegates/Experts</i>	12	470	5 640	2 820	2 820
<i>Subsistence of Delegates/Experts (12 experts*2,5 per diem)</i>	30	175	5 250	3 150	2 100
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1	4 000	4 000	2 000	2 000
<i>Countries:</i>					
Group of Experts on Biodiversity and Climate Change (1,5 days)			29 225	12 932	16 293
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts</i>	15	470	7 050	2 820	4 230
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (15 experts *2,5 per diem)</i>	37,5	175	6 563	3 500	3 063
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	2	4 500	9 000	0	9 000
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	3	2 204	6 612	6 612	0
<i>Countries:</i>					

Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
Technical support to the CMS Pan-Mediterranean Task Force on Illegal Killing of birds			10 000	4 000	6 000
<i>Lumpsum AA</i>	1	0	10 000	4 000	6 000
Capacity building on IAS management including Ruddy Duck			8 000	2 000	6 000
<i>Lumpsum AA</i>	1	0	8 000	2 000	6 000
Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
3. Conservation of Natural Habitats			67 645	39 423	28 223
Group of experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks (1,5 days)			23 317	18 595	4 723
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts</i>	14	470	6 580	5 170	1 410
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (14 experts*2,5 per diem)</i>	35	175	6 125	4 813	1 313
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1	4 000	4 000	2 000	2 000
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	3	2 204	6 612	6 612	0
Emerald Pilot project in Tunisia			0	0	0
<i>Lumpsum</i>	1	p.m.	0	0	0
2nd Emerald Pilot project in Morocco			30 000	10000	20 000
<i>Lumpsum</i>	1	30 000	30 000	10000	20 000
Emerald Pilot project in Turkey			0	0	0
<i>Lumpsum</i>	1	p.m.	0	0	0
Biogeographic evaluation in Norway			5 000	1500	3 500
<i>Lumpsum</i>	1	5 000	5 000	1500	3 500

Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
Group of Specialists on the EDPA (1 day)			9 328	9 328	0
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts</i>	6	470	2 820	2 820	0
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (6 experts*2)</i>	12	175	2 100	2 100	0
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	2	2 204	4 408	4 408	0
Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
4. Implementation of Article 3			17 000	7 000	10 000
Capacity building on the biodiversity advantage, including marine turtles			17 000	7 000	10 000
<i>Lumpsum (training and consultancy)</i>	1	5 000	5 000	3 000	2 000
Awareness and visibility: Communication strategy					
<i>Lumpsum (communication supports)</i>		8 000	8 000	4 000	4 000
<i>electronic publications (lumpsum)</i>	1	4 000	4 000	0	4 000
Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
5. Monitoring of and advise on sites at risk			34 950	19 970	14 980
<i>Travels Experts</i>	10	470	4 700	2 820	1 880
<i>Subsistence Experts</i>	30	175	5 250	3 150	2 100
<i>Consultancy/AA</i>	10	2 500	25 000	14 000	11 000
Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
6. Official Journeys of staff			22 500	20 700	1 800
<i>Travel and subsistence</i>	15	1 500	22 500	20 700	1 800

Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
7. Provision for the Chair			5 000	2 600	2 400
<i>Travel and subsistence expenses (lumpsum)</i>	1	5 000	5 000	2 600	2 400
8. Overheads					
			27 196	27 196	0
<i>Printing Internal</i>	110 000	0,03	3 300	3 300	0
<i>Postage (Lumpsum)</i>	1	400	400	400	0
<i>Prepress (lumpsum)</i>	1	2 500	2 500	2 500	0
<i>Translation Services</i>	636	33,0125	20 996	20 996	0
9. Staff costs*					
			361 442	254 000	107 442
Permanent staff, senior management and office costs	lumpsum		224 000	224 000	0
Pensions Permanent staff	lumpsum		30 000	30 000	0
Temporary staff and office costs	27	3979,33	107 442	0	107 442

The Bern Convention Special Account will be used to cover expenses that cannot be covered by the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe.

The activities that will not receive additional contributions will not or partially be implemented.

The Council of Europe provides around € 449,400 in 2016 (€ 195,400 for financing the programme of activities including overheads, and € 254,000 for staff, office, and high level management costs).

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS FOR 2016

	Meeting	Date	Place
1	3 rd Steering Committee meeting of EU/CoE Joint Programme Emerald Network Phase II	14 January 2016	Strasbourg
2	Group of Specialists on the European Diploma	7 March 2016	Strasbourg
3	1 st meeting of the Bureau	22 March 2016	Strasbourg
4	Select Group of Experts on IAS	31 March – 1 April 2016	Rome, Italy
5	3rd Meeting of the Special Focal Points for Illegal killing, trapping and trade of wild birds	14-15 April 2016	Tirana, Albania
6	Emerald biogeographical Seminar for all habitats and species (except birds) for Belarus, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine	11-13 May 2016	Chisinau, Republic of Moldova
7	Group of Experts on Climate change	2-3 June	Mostar, BiH
8	2nd Emerald biogeographical Seminar for Norway	14-16 June 2016	Trondheim, Norway
9	Emerald biogeographical Seminar for all habitats and species (except birds) for the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine	6-8 September 2016	Kyiv, Ukraine
10	2nd meeting of the Bureau	12-13 September 2016 (provisional)	Strasbourg
11	Group of Experts on Protected areas and Ecological Networks	22-23 September 2016	Serbia
12	Final Project Event of the EU/CoE Joint Programme “Emerald Network - Phase II”	4 October 2016 (t.b.c)	Strasbourg
13	36th Standing Committee meeting	15-18 November 2016	Strasbourg
14	Workshop on the eradication of the ruddy duck	5-6 December 2016	Sevilla, Spain
15	Emerald biogeographical Seminar for bird species for Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia	6-7 December 2016	Tbilisi, Georgia

Bern Convention Draft Provisional Budget for 2017					Euros
		Ordinary Budget available			457 600
		Total Programme costs			674 311
		Total Funds needed			215 211
Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
1. Statutory bodies			55 504	42 055	13 449
Meeting of the Standing Committee (4 days)			45 504	32 054	13 450
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (average: 24 experts*5 per diem). Chair + Countries: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, BiH, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Portugal, Serbia, Slovak Republic, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine, Morocco, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Senegal</i>	120	175	21 000	12 250	8 750
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts</i>	24	470	11 280	6 580	4 700
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	6	2 204	13 224	13 224	0
1st Meeting of the Bureau (1 day)			4 563	4 563	0
<i>Subsistence of Bureau Members (5 experts*1,5 per diem)</i>	7,5	175	1 313	1 313	0
<i>Travel expenses of Bureau Members (5 experts)</i>	5	650	3 250	3 250	0
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	pm	pm	pm		
2nd Meeting of the Bureau (1,5 days)			5 438	5 438	0
<i>Subsistence of Bureau Members (5 experts*2,5 per diem)</i>	12,5	175	2 188	2 188	0
<i>Travel expenses of Bureau Members (5 experts)</i>	5	650	3 250	3 250	0
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	pm	pm	pm		

Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
2. Monitoring and assistance to Parties			85 075	42 967	42 108
<i>Implementation of Article 6</i>					
Select Group on Illegal killing of birds and GoE birds (2 days)			18 925	11 575	7 350
<i>Travel expenses of Delegates/Experts</i>	15	470	7 050	4 700	2 350
<i>Subsistence of Delegates/Experts (15 experts*3 per diem)</i>	45	175	7 875	4 375	3 500
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1	4 000	4 000	2 500	1 500
<i>Countries:</i>					
Group of Experts on Invasive Alien Species (2 days)			23 925	7 960	15 965
<i>Travel expenses of Delegates/Experts</i>	15	470	7 050	3 760	3 290
<i>Subsistence of Delegates/Experts (15 experts*3 per diem)</i>	45	175	7 875	4 200	3 675
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	2	4 500	9 000	0	9 000
<i>Countries:</i>					
Group of Experts on Amphibians and Reptiles (1,5 days)			24 225	14 932	9 293
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts</i>	15	470	7 050	2 820	4 230
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (15 experts *2,5 per diem)</i>	37,5	175	6 563	3 500	3 063
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1	4 000	4 000	2 000	2 000
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	3	2 204	6 612	6 612	0
<i>Countries:</i>					

Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
Technical support on Large Carnivores, Plant conservation (Planta Europa Conference), and the CMS Pan-Mediterranean Task Force			10 000	4 000	6 000
<i>Lumpsum AA</i>	1	0	10 000	4 000	6 000
Capacity building on IAS management [including Ruddy Duck]			8 000	4 500	3 500
<i>Lumpsum AA</i>	1	0	8 000	4 500	3 500
Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
3. Conservation of Natural Habitats			65 645	39 423	26 223
Group of experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks (1,5 days)			23 317	18 595	4 723
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts</i>	14	470	6 580	5 170	1 410
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (14 experts*2,5 per diem)</i>	35	175	6 125	4 813	1 313
<i>Consultancy/technical reports</i>	1	4 000	4 000	2 000	2 000
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	3	2 204	6 612	6 612	0
Emerald Pilot project in Tunisia			0	0	0
<i>Lumpsum</i>	1	pm	0	0	0
2nd Emerald Pilot project in Morocco			20 000	10 000	10 000
<i>Lumpsum</i>	1	20 000	20 000	10 000	10 000
Emerald Phase II in Turkey			3 000	1 500	1 500
<i>Lumpsum</i>	1	3 000	3 000	1 500	1 500

Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
Biogeographic evaluation of national networks			10 000	0	10 000
<i>Lumpsum</i>	1	10 000	10 000	0	10 000
Group of Specialists on the EDPA (1 day)			9 328	9 328	0
<i>Travel expenses of Chair/Delegates/Experts</i>	6	470	2 820	2 820	0
<i>Subsistence of Chair/Delegates/Experts (6 experts*2)</i>	12	175	2 100	2 100	0
<i>Interpretation Services</i>	2	2 204	4 408	4 408	0
Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
4. Implementation of Article 3			17 000	6 000	11 000
Capacity building on the biodiversity advantage, including marine turtles			17 000	6 000	11 000
<i>Lumpsum (training and consultancy)</i>	1	5 000	5 000	3 000	2 000
Awareness and visibility: Communication strategy					
<i>Lumpsum (communication supports)</i>		8 000	8 000	3 000	5 000
<i>electronic publications (lumpsum)</i>	1	4 000	4 000	0	4 000
Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
5. Monitoring of and advise on sites at risk			34 950	21 960	12 990
<i>Travels Experts</i>	10	470	4 700	3 760	940
<i>Subsistence Experts</i>	30	175	5 250	4 200	1 050
<i>Consultancy/AA</i>	10	2 500	25 000	14 000	11 000
Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
6. Official Journeys of staff			22 500	22 500	0
<i>Travel and subsistence</i>	15	1 500	22 500	22 500	0

Expenditure	# Units	Unit cost	Total cost	Total available	Funds needed
7. Provision for the Chair			5 000	3 000	2 000
<i>Travel and subsistence expenses (lumpsum)</i>	1	5 000	5 000	3 000	0
8. Overheads					
			27 196	27 196	0
<i>Printing Internal</i>	110 000	0,03	3 300	3 300	0
<i>Postage (Lumpsum)</i>	1	400	400	400	0
<i>Prepress (lumpsum)</i>	1	2 500	2 500	2 500	0
<i>Translation Services</i>	636	33,0125	20 996	20 996	0
9. Staff costs*					
			361 442	254 000	107 442
Permanent staff, senior management and office costs	lumpsum		224 000	224 000	0
Pensions Permanent staff	lumpsum		30 000	30 000	0
Temporary staff and office costs	27	3979,33	107 442	0	107 442

Appendix I

MAIN EVENTS/MEETINGS ORGANISED OR ATTENDED BY THE CONVENTION IN 2015

January 2015

- Keynote address of the Secretariat in the 4th European Grid Conference, 27th January, Brussels, Belgium

February 2015

- Coordination meeting with the European Union on future collaboration on IAS, 11th February, Brussels, Belgium
- Coordination meeting with the independent consultants contributing to the setting-up of the Emerald Network, 18 February, Houthalen, Belgium
- Coordination meeting with DG Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), 19 February, Brussels, Belgium
- 2nd Meeting of the Special Focal Points for Illegal killing, trapping and trade of wild birds, 24-25 February, Madrid, Spain
- Exceptional on-the-spot appraisal to the Bayerischer Wald National Park (Germany) awarded the European Diploma for Protected Areas, 24-25 February

March 2015

- Annual meeting of the Group of Specialists on the European Diploma for Protected Areas, 13 March, Strasbourg
- Ceremony on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the European Diploma for Protected Areas, 13 March, Strasbourg
- Consultation meeting with the Directorate of Political Affairs of the CoE on the establishment of the Emerald Network in conflict areas of the South Caucasus, 19 March, Strasbourg
- Workshop on Feral ungulates and their impact on Island Biodiversity in the Mediterranean and Macaronesian Regions, 23-24 March, La Gomera, Spain
- 1st Meeting of the Bureau of the Bern Convention's Standing Committee, 31st March, Strasbourg

April 2015

- 5th Mediterranean Conference on Sea Turtles, 19-24 April, Dalaman (Turkey). The organisers are UNEP/RAC – SPA, Bern Convention, the University of Barcelona, the Catalan Institute for the Research on Biodiversity
- Meeting of the Select Group on Biodiversity and Climate Change, 28 April, Rome, Italy

May 2015

- Training of the Secretariat on the use of Social Media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram), 11th May, Strasbourg
- Launch of the Facebook page of the Bern Convention, 15 May 2015
- Workshop “Protected Areas in Europe: the next 50 years” organised on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the European Diploma for Protected Areas, 21-22 May, Regional Park of Migliarino, San Rossore and Massaciuccoli, Italy
- Representation of the Convention at the International Conference: “New Approaches Towards Biodiversity Conservation”, Minsk, Belarus, 21-22 May 2015
- Emerald biogeographical evaluation Seminar for Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia for all habitats and species (except birds) and all biogeographical regions, including Black Sea and Caspian Sea (Tbilisi, Georgia), 27 – 29 May 2015, Tbilisi, Georgia

- Anniversary Seminar for the 50 years of the EDPA, Maremma National Park, Italy, 24 May
- Presentation by the Secretariat (on the Emerald Network and the EDPA) at the IUCN event: "Little Sydney: Protecting Nature in Europe", 28-31 May, Hainburg, Austria

June 2015

- Presentation by the Secretariat on the Convention and the Emerald Network at the Seminar on biodiversity and nature protection, organised by the Eastern Partnership on Environment and climate change (DG ENV, DG NEAR and EEAS), 2-5 June, Brussels, Belgium
- 11th Meeting of the Group of Experts on IAS, 4-6 June, Slovenia
- Anniversary Seminar for the EDPA, Wurzacher Ried Nature Reserve, Germany, 12 June
- On-the-spot appraisal to Mavrovo National Park in the frame of the complaint n° 2013/1, 24 – 25 June, Mavrovo National Park, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"

July 2015

- 5th Meeting of the Group of Experts on Amphibians and Reptiles, 1-2 July, Bern, Switzerland
- International Marine Turtle conservation training, Cyprus, 17-27 July
- On-the-spot appraisal to Patara and Fethiye, Turkey, in the frame of complaint n° 2012/9, 28-31 July

August 2015

- Visit of the Slovak Republic State Secretary for Environment, Strasbourg, 25 August

September 2015

- Anniversary Seminar for the 50 years of the EDPA, Tulcea (Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve), Romania, 1-3 September
- Workshop on "Benefits from international protected areas for Zemplín Region" and Advisory mission to Poloniny National Park, Slovak Republic, 16-17 September
- 7th meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks, Strasbourg, 16-17 September
- On-the-spot visit to Bialowieża National Park (Poland), with a view to renew the European Diploma for Protected Areas suspended in 2007, 16-18 September
- Visit in the framework of the EDPA awarded to the Vashlovani Protected Areas, Georgia, 27-28 September
- Emerald biogeographical evaluation Seminar for Belarus and the Russian Federation, targeting the Arctic and Boreal biogeographical regions, Petrozavodsk, 28-30 September

October 2015

- Mediation procedure, Vilnius, Lithuania, 6-9 October 2015 (Bern Convention PoA)
- 5th Meeting of the Group of Experts on the Conservation of Birds, Strasbourg, 12-13 October 2015
- Red List training workshop - jointly organised with IUCN, Paris, France, 20-22 October 2015
- International Balkan Lynx Symposium, Dajti National Park, Albania, 21-22 October 2015

November 2015

- 19th SBSTTA Meeting, Montreal, Canada 2-5 November 2015
- Emerald biogeographical Seminar for bird species for Belarus, Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, Minsk, 24-25 November 2015

December 2015

- 35th Standing Committee meeting, Strasbourg, 1-4 December
- Workshop on the eradication of the ruddy duck (Nantes, France), 14-15 December 2015

COMMUNICATION AND VISIBILITY**Prepared and implemented by the Secretariat:**

- Redrafting and restructuring of the Convention's website, and migration to a new Council of Europe's web platform;
- Elaboration of a communication strategy for the implementation of article 3 of the Convention at Council of Europe's level;
- Launch of a Facebook page on the Bern Convention;
- Production of a brochure presenting the Bern Convention (on-going);
- Production of a leaflet presenting the Emerald Network, titled 'The Emerald network - a tool for the protection of European natural habitats'. The English version has been printed in 600 copies. It has been presented for the first time at the 7th meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks;
- Production of a booklet on the European Diploma for Protected Areas, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the award;
- Production of a video on the European Diploma for Protected Areas. The video is available in English and French, and has been officially launched at the Workshop "Protected Areas in Europe: the next 50 years";
- Production of a videos presenting the Bern Convention (on-going)

Moreover, the Secretariat prepared the following communications to Press:

- On the monitoring visit to Patara and Fethiye (Turkey)
- On the adoption of the Pisa declaration
- On the 50th Anniversary of the European Diploma for Protected Areas and International Day for Biological Diversity
- On the exceptional monitoring visit to the Bayerischer Wald National Park (Germany)
- On the 2nd Meeting of the Special Focal points on Illegal Killing of Birds
- On the adoption by the Standing Committee of a Recommendation to urge Greece to protect prime European sea turtle habitat in Kyparissia Bay
- An article by the Secretary of the Convention on the implementation of the Tunis Action Plan 2020 has been published in SEO/BirdLife monthly bulletin;

Other's contributions to the Convention's visibility (voluntary or outsourced) :

- An article by Arie Trouwborst on "EU Regulation 1143/2014 and the Bern Convention: allied forces in the war in Invasive Alien Species in Europe" has been published in the European Energy and Environment Law Review, August 2015;
- The European Code of Conduct for Botanic Gardens and IAS has been translated into Russian language and is now available on-line;
- A brochure on "Pan-European Ecological Network: Delivering benefits beyond biodiversity conservation" has been prepared by ECNC and made available for download on the webpage of the Convention (outsourced).