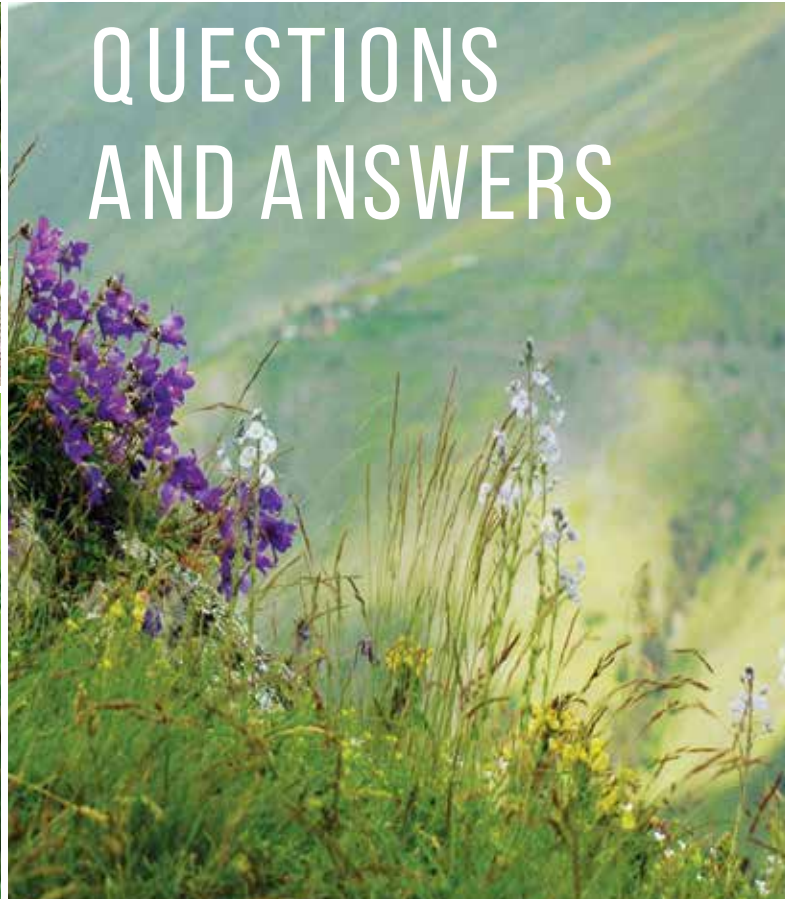


EMERALD NETWORK QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS





This publication has been prepared by the NGO NACRES, in the frame of the 'Integrated Biodiversity Management in South Caucasus' (IBiS) programme implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

The information and views set out in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of GIZ and/or BMZ.



The second updated edition. Tbilisi, 2020



FOREWORD

This brochure is an attempt to inform the public, especially decision-makers, about the establishment, official designation, and management of the Emerald Network. Our goal is to provide detailed answers to as many as possible questions that have occurred to the stakeholders since 2009, after Georgia initiated the process of the development of the Emerald Network, as stipulated by the Bern Convention. Particularly more questions have been raised within the last few years, because the establishment of the Emerald Network also became an obligation under the EU-Georgia Association Agreement.

It is also important to note that this publication should not be expected to clarify all possible issues and questions regarding Emerald Network development and management - many aspects are yet to be defined and the existing experience of other countries and adaption to the national context of Georgia will be examined.

Our intention was to ensure as much as possible that the brochure be useful and informative for the general public and decision-makers alike. We interviewed multiple stakeholders, including the Government, non-governmental organizations, and academia, and collected specific questions on which this publication is based.

This publication was prepared with the support of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

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ESSENCE, OBJECTIVES, AND GOALS OF THE EMERALD NETWORK

WHAT IS “THE EMERALD NETWORK”?

The Emerald Network is a pan-European ecological network with the goal to preserve the biodiversity of Europe. Its establishment is one of the requirements of the *Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats* (Bern, 1979), also known as the Bern Convention. The Emerald Network is one of the main mechanisms for its implementation. Georgia became a Contracting Party to the Convention in 2009.

The Bern Convention is built around the principle that the long-term survival of wild species is only possible by protecting their habitats. Subsequently, habitat conservation is its main focus.

Throughout Europe, sites that are particularly rich in species and habitats protected by the Bern Convention are selected. These sites are referred to as Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCI), and they are intergraded into a unified ecological network - the Emerald Network. Often, ASCIs are referred to as ‘Emerald Network sites’ or simply ‘Emerald sites’.

ASCI’s are subject to a special and yet relatively flexible management regime, which is to ensure the long-term conservation of species and habitats protected under the Bern Convention. The concept of ‘favourable conservation status’ is used to measure the long-term conservation of species and habitats. If a species

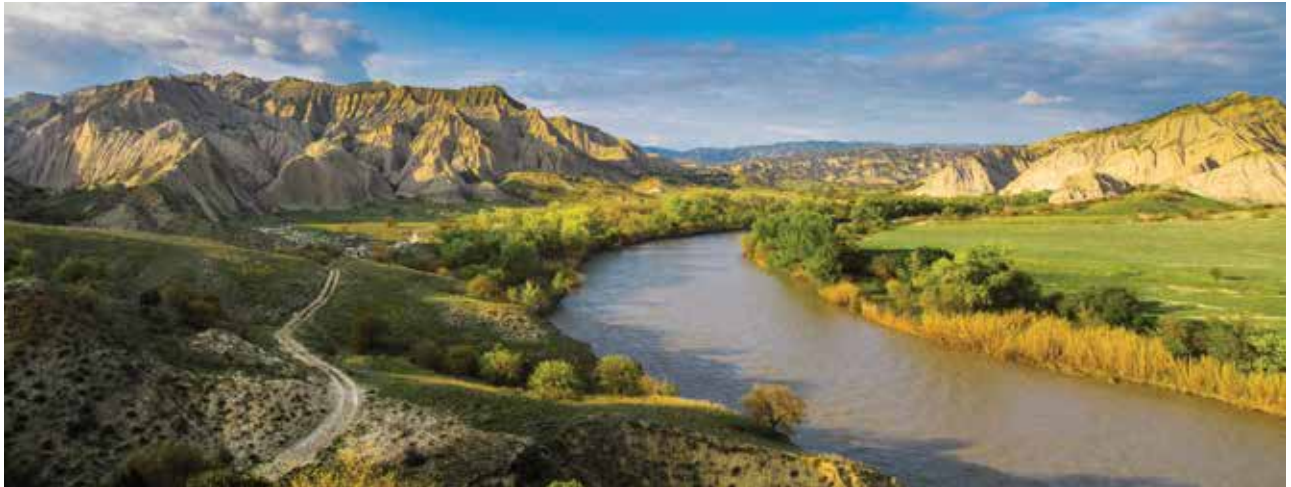
or habitat already has a ‘favourable conservation status’, this status must be maintained. If the status is ‘unfavourable’, the management of a site must be planned in such a way that the favourable status is achieved.

What is a ‘favourable conservation status?’

A favourable conservation status is a condition when a habitat has sufficient area and quality and a species has a sufficient population size to ensure its survival in the medium to long term, along with favourable future prospects in the face of pressures and threats.

The analogue to the Emerald Network for the EU member states is Natura 2000. Its management is based on the ‘Habitats Directive’ and ‘Birds Directive’ and is binding for all EU States.

The Bern Convention extends beyond the borders of the European Union (e.g. Switzerland, Georgia, and Ukraine). Therefore, the Emerald Network is considered a pan-European ecological network and the Natura 2000 is a part of this network. It is possible that the two will merge into one in the future. The Emerald Network is still developing, but once the process of the legal designation is complete, it will be the world’s largest ecological network.



Besides being an obligation to be fulfilled under the Bern Convention, the development of the Emerald Network is stipulated by the EU-Georgia Association Agreement. Therefore, its implementation is of a paramount significance for Georgia's efforts towards European integration. Notably, the development of the Network is also part of the Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan of Georgia (2014-2020).

From the conservation point of view, the Emerald Network provides an innovative and flexible tool for integrating principles of biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of natural resources in various sectors. The Network will help to ensure continuous benefits and provisioning of ecosystem services, such as clean air and water, prevention of soil degradation, protection from erosion and floods, services to agriculture such as pollination, provision of timber and non-timber forest products, maintenance of tourism and recreational potential, etc.

WHICH SPECIES ARE PROTECTED BY THE EMERALD NETWORK?

The Emerald Network protects those species for which survival is impossible without preserving their natural habitats. These species are defined in Resolution No. 6 (1998) adopted by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention '**On Listing species requiring specific habitat conservation measures**'.

The resolution includes nearly 1200 European species, more than 200 of which are present in Georgia. Georgia as a Contracting Party to the Bern Convention is required to protect habitats of these species.

WHICH HABITATS ARE PROTECTED BY THE EMERALD NETWORK?

The Emerald Network protects habitats defined by Resolution No. 4 (1996) adopted by the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, '**On listing endangered natural habitats requiring specific conservation measures**'. The list includes about 200 habitats in Europe. 50 habitats from the list are found in Georgia. Subsequently, Georgia is stipulated to protect these habitats.

HOW ARE THE EMERALD SITES SELECTED?

A territory can be designated as an Emerald site if it serves to conserve species and habitats defined by Resolution No. 4 (1996), 'On listing endangered natural habitats requiring specific conservation measures', and Resolution No. 6 (1998), 'On listing species requiring specific habitat conservation measures'.

In addition, it is desirable that each site fulfils at least one of the criteria listed below:

- a. it contributes substantially to the survival of threatened species, endemic species, or any species listed in Appendices I and II of the Convention;
- b. it supports significant numbers of species in an area of high species diversity or supports important populations of one or more species;
- c. it contains an important and/or representative sample of endangered habitat types;
- d. it contains an outstanding example of a particular habitat type or a mosaic of different habitat types;
- e. it represents an important area for one or more migratory species; or
- f. it otherwise contributes substantially to the achievement of the objectives of the Convention.



WHICH TYPES OF TERRITORIES CAN BECOME PART OF THE EMERALD NETWORK?

The Emerald Network can encompass various ecosystems including forests, lakes, rivers, marine ecosystems, meadows, caves, etc. It can also include areas with an already designated legal status such as different categories of protected areas or their parts, lands under state or private ownership, agricultural lands, and even urban areas.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO DESIGNATE PRIVATELY-OWNED TERRITORIES AS EMERALD SITES?

European experience demonstrates that privately-owned territory may be designated as an Emerald site if it has a high value for conservation and there is sufficient scientific evidence demonstrating that it is irreplaceable. This is particularly relevant for those countries in which the majority of land is under private ownership. In Georgia, such a situation is unlikely but, theoretically, it is possible that a specific species protected under the Bern Convention is present (for example is nesting) only in a specific area and this area is under private ownership. It often happens in Europe that the owner is interested in their territory becoming an Emerald/Natura 2000 site. This can be beneficial for attracting visitors and good publicity or done simply for the reason of contributing towards nature conservation. If the state considers it a necessity to establish an Emerald site,

certain limitations might be imposed on the owner. In turn, the owner is eligible for compensation. Georgia does not yet have such mechanisms.

HOW ARE EMERALD SITES DESIGNATED?

At the first phase, participating countries identify species and habitats that are protected by the relevant resolutions of the Bern Convention [Resolution No. 4 (1996) and Resolution No. 6 (1998)]. Next, the countries select potential sites which are suitable for ensuring the long-term survival of those species. The database containing scientific information on species and habitats of the proposed sites is developed and submitted to the Bern Convention Secretariat. The Standing Committee evaluates each proposed site based on certain procedures and guiding principles. If a site fulfils the criteria, the Standing Committee will confirm the site as an *Officially Nominated Candidate Emerald Site*.

The next step implies the designation of a candidate site as an Emerald site. Designation is entirely the prerogative of the contracting party. National authorities officially designate ASCIs and notify the Convention's Secretariat and the Council of Europe.

The Bern Convention has developed a quality evaluation and control mechanism. It implies the evaluation of the database, potential sites, and the entire network to determine their compatibility with the Bern Convention requirements, goals, and objectives. *The European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity*, also known as *the Paris Topic Centre*, (<http://bd.eionet.europa.eu/>)

is tasked with being the quality controller. The centre is an international consortium under the European Environment Agency which is based in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The final assessment results are discussed at the *Biogeographical Evaluation Seminar* on the sufficiency assessment of the proposed and candidate Emerald Network sites. Experts of the Paris Topic Centre as well as evaluators, representatives of national authorities, NGOs, independent experts, and observers participate in the seminar. Its goal is to discuss the results of the analysis conducted by the Topic Centre and to provide conclusions and recommendations on the Emerald Network or its specific components and ways of addressing specific gaps. The recommendations may include the modification of the existing Emerald sites or the designation of new sites.

WHO GOVERNS THE BERN CONVENTION AND HOW ARE DECISIONS MADE?

The governing body of the Bern Convention is the Standing Committee made up of each contracting party represented by a relevant Government official. For example, an official from the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture would participate in the meetings of the Standing Committee on behalf of Georgia. The same official would also serve as a focal point of the Bern Convention. Non-member states as well as international and national NGOs may participate in the Standing Committee meetings as observers, without having the right to vote. Two thirds of member



votes are necessary to take a decision which becomes binding for all member states.

The Standing Committee meets annually in Strasbourg, France. The Bureau of the Committee handles administrative and organizational matters in between meetings. The Bureau includes: the Chair of the Committee, the Deputy Chair, the former Chair, and two Bureau members elected by the Standing Committee.

The Council of Europe provides the Secretariat of the Bern Convention with any administrative needs as well as any necessary services to the Standing Committee. The Secretariat is also responsible for convening meetings and preparing and circulating all documents and reports among the Standing Committee and its Bureau members, as well as to the Groups of Experts and ad hoc working groups set up under the Convention.



WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EMERALD NETWORK IN GEORGIA?

Three sites (Lagodekhi, Vashlovani, and Batsara) were officially designated as Emerald sites on the initiative of the Georgian Government in 2017, marking the first precedent in the Caucasus region.

As of January 2020, the Network comprises 58 sites, including the three above mentioned sites, whereas the latest status of the Network follows as: 46 officially adopted and 12 proposed sites.

All 58 sites combined cover 18,45% of the country's territory and 44% of the network coincides with existing National protected areas.

WHEN WILL THE EMERALD NETWORK BE FULLY FUNCTIONAL IN GEORGIA?

According to the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, Georgia is required to ensure a fully functional Emerald Network by 2020. This implies official designation of at least the candidate sites and that already happened in December, 2019. However, this in itself will not complete the Emerald Network as its development is a persistent and dynamic process due to the following two reasons: 1) The long-term survival of species and habitats and the effectiveness of the Emerald Network in general requires a comprehensive and adaptive approach, where emerging needs and issues may pose new demands and such may involve the establishment of new sites or expansion of existing ones. 2) The lists of species and habitats protected under the Bern Convention are dynamic. Conservation needs might determine the necessity of the addition of new species or habitats. New species and habitats imply new conservation objectives for the Network, hence the need for revision. Theoretically, it is also possible that a site, at a given



geographic location and with its current borders, is no longer relevant to the conservation objectives for which it was originally founded. Natural processes such as ecological succession, for instance, may result in such changes. Unfortunately, anthropogenic pressures may also contribute to this, so may climate change and associated vertical or horizontal shifts in habitat/species distribution. If a site loses its original conservation value, certain modifications may be considered relevant.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE OFFICIAL DESIGNATION?

According to the regulations of the Bern Convention, an Emerald site must have a management plan within six years after the moment of its designation and its implementation must start immediately. In addition, there must be a management plan and a monitoring system in place. Each site's objectives are re-evaluated and revised as appropriate every five years.

HOW LONG DOES THE EMERALD SITE STATUS LAST?

The status, once designated, is indefinite. In rare cases, a member state may appeal to the European Council with a request to withdraw the site, if solid scientific evidence exists that, without direct human interference, species or habitats to be protected are no longer present or the Bern Convention criteria are no longer applicable.

WHAT POSITIVE RESULTS CAN THE EMERALD NETWORK BRING TO GEORGIA ON AN INTERNATIONAL ARENA?

As mentioned above, Emerald Network development is a requirement under the Bern Convention. Georgia, as a contracting party to the Convention, is required to fulfil this obligation. Additionally, the Emerald Network is important within the context of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement. Finally, the development of the Network will represent Georgia's input in global efforts of preserving the world's biodiversity, and towards the achievement of goals laid out by the Convention on Biodiversity, also known as the Aichi Targets.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE SIZE OF AN EMERALD SITE? IS THERE A MINIMUM/ MAXIMUM SIZE?

The Bern Convention determines functional rather than quantitative criteria. This means that there are no size limitations or minimum requirements (there is no rule on the number of Emerald sites either). For example, a site may be as small as only several hectares. Instead, the determining factor is a site's compatibility with the Bern Convention and the Emerald Network goals and objectives. For instance, the Ghliana Cave in Tskaltubo, Western Georgia, only covers several hectares, as it aims to protect bat species, living in this specific cave. Tusheti, on the other hand, is one of the largest adopted sites in Georgia, comprising 114,375 hectares.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TERMS 'NATURA

Natura 2000 is an ecological network similar to the Emerald Network but exclusively for EU member states. Since Georgia is not an EU member state, the Emerald Network is applicable. If Georgia becomes a member of the EU, its Emerald Network will transfer to Natura 2000.



HUNTING AND FISHING ON EMERALD SITES

IS HUNTING PERMITTED ON EMERALD SITES?

Emerald sites are not protected areas (PA), where use of wild species (including hunting) and other activities are regulated or completely banned according to the PA category. The Bern Convention does not provide specific restrictive regulations regarding hunting within Emerald sites. If national legislation regulates hunting on a site (for instance if the site coincides with a national park or a strict nature reserve), then the relevant regulations will apply. New hunting restrictions on a site may apply if hunting is incompatible with the goals and objectives of an Emerald site.

Currently, hunting in Georgia is regulated by the 'Georgian Law on Wild Fauna'. The Law states that hunting, excluding migratory bird species, is permitted solely within specially designated hunting areas (hunting farms) and based on nationally determined quotas. The hunting of migratory birds is regulated by the Ministerial (Environmental Protection and Natural Resources) Decree #95, 'Concerning the adoption of regulations on the rules of extraction of objects of wildlife according to species, the relevant timeline, weapons and equipment applicable for extraction'. Therefore, the Convention does not impose any additional restrictions on the hunting of migratory birds.





HUNTING FARMS WITHIN EMERALD SITES?

Theoretically, it is possible to establish a hunting reserve within an Emerald site. So is the inclusion of parts of Emerald sites within hunting farms, provided that the hunting reserves are not in conflict with the goals of the Emerald sites and do not hinder their conservation objectives. Naturally, a management plan and regular monitoring must be in place. However, a reverse scenario is more likely - when an existing hunting reserve or its part becomes an Emerald site (the owner

may decide to include their reserve or its part, into an Emerald site to contribute to nature conservation; there are numerous such examples in Europe).

IS SPORT AND RECREATIONAL FISHING PROHIBITED ON LAKES AND RIVERS WITHIN EMERALD SITES?

Similar to hunting, fishing per se on Emerald sites is not prohibited. Additional restrictions besides national regulations may be applicable only if fishing directly

contradicts the goals and objectives of a given Emerald site.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO BREED CERTAIN SPECIES OF FISH IN LAKES AND RIVERS WITHIN EMERALD SITES?

Breeding fish is restricted only when it directly contradicts the goals and objectives of an Emerald site.

In some instances, breeding may be encouraged by the site's management plan, if fish provides enrichment of food source for species (for instance, if one of the objectives of a site is to conserve the pelican population, breeding certain species of fish will support the same objective). Naturally, the intervention must comply with national rules and regulations. In addition, breeding of native species shall always be preferred even if the issue is not regulated (e.g. outside of protected areas).

OF INDIVIDUALS OF A GIVEN SPECIES FROM AN EMERALD SITE?

Extraction of a limited number of individuals for the purpose of scientific research, as well as research activities, are not restricted on Emerald sites. The Network leaves it up to the national legislation to regulate the issue (e.g. the Law on the System of Protected Areas or the Law on the Red List of Species).



PROTECTED AREAS AND EMERALD SITES

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EMERALD NETWORK SITES AND PROTECTED AREAS IN THEIR CLASSICAL DEFINITION (NATIONAL PARK, STRICT PROTECTED AREA, MANAGED NATURE RESERVE)?

The Emerald Network, unlike classical protected areas, does not impose standard limitations on human activities. Each category of protected areas establishes a set of restrictions, which are uniform across the same categories of protected areas. Unlike protected areas, restrictions on Emerald sites may vary. Practically, all types of activities are permitted, provided that they do not cause adverse impact on the species and habitats for which the given site was created.

A definition of goals and objectives, as well as the development of management and monitoring plans, is necessary once a site is designated. The Management plan must list the species and habitats, which are to be protected within the site. Subsequently, the document must also define activities and forms of modification that will adversely impact the site's integrity and that are to be prohibited.

CAN EMERALD SITES BE MANAGED BY PROTECTED AREA ADMINISTRATIONS?

If an Emerald Network site coincides with a protected area, the latter's administration will be responsible for the site's management based on the protected area management plan. The management plan must include the goals and objectives of the Emerald site and subsequent activities (a separate management plan will not be necessary).



INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT ON EMERALD NETWORK SITES

IS IT ALLOWED TO IMPLEMENT AN INFRASTRUCTURAL PROJECT, WHICH CAUSES ADVERSE IMPACT ON SPECIES AND HABITATS PROTECTED BY THE BERN CONVENTION, ON AN EMERALD SITE? ARE THERE ANY EXCEPTIONS?

It is the State's responsibility to protect the Emerald sites and to avoid projects on or near them which will adversely impact the site's integrity. However, there may be instances when a concrete project is classified as serving so called 'overriding public interest'. If such a project causes adverse impact on the integrity of an Emerald site and if it is impossible to be remedied with any mitigation measures, it is mandatory to select a similar territory as compensation, so that the favourable conservation status of the impacted species and habitats is maintained.

Subsequently, the realization of such projects requires a detailed 'appropriate assessment' of their effects on the integrity of the site(s) in question, and the subsequent selection of alternative territories with scientifically proven relevance is also necessary. The concept of overriding public interest is discussed and clarified in

detail in the EU legislation. Georgian national legislation does not yet regulate this issue. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that according to the Georgian Constitution, applicable international law stands higher in legal hierarchy as compared with the national laws. Therefore, it is imperative for Georgia to follow the requirements of the Bern Convention and the EU's Habitats Directive and Birds Directive.

HOW DOES THE CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCESS EVALUATE IMPACT ON AN EMERALD SITE?

If a development project is implemented within the Emerald Network site borders, more detailed research is necessary to assess the potential impact on the site, including its species and habitats.

The development of the Emerald Network is still in its initial stages and not all aspects related to the impact on the Emerald sites are defined legally. Natura 2000 uses an 'appropriate assessment' according to the Habitats Directive. The process comprehensively analyses anticipated implications of a development project on a site. Georgia is planning to adopt a similar procedure.



As we already mentioned, Georgia's constitution prioritizes International Law and regards it as a higher law than the national legislation. Therefore, it is imperative to consider the requirements of the Bern Convention, in spite of the fact that not all procedures related to its

implementation are written out in national laws. The national environmental impact assessment procedures must include the assessment of impacts specifically on the species and habitats of the Bern Convention.

USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES ON EMERALD SITES

WHAT ARE THE RESTRICTIONS OF THE EMERALD NETWORK REGARDING THE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES?

The only outright restriction of the Emerald Network is the adverse impact on the species and habitats of the Bern Convention. Any activity or action that interferes with the achievement or maintenance of a 'favourable conservation status' is prohibited. The Emerald Network does not limit any use of natural resources within or around the sites, as long as they do not adversely impact species or habitats of the Bern Convention.

Therefore, there are no prohibitive concrete regulations on natural resource use (for example timber or non-timber forest products, water, etc). The matter must be discussed on a case-by-case basis and individually decided for each site. Many sites will support the continuous and long-term provision of ecosystem services to the communities.

WHAT RESTRICTIONS MAY APPLY ON TRADITIONAL OR AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES OF THE LOCAL POPULATION?

As already noted, the Emerald Network is not a standard regulatory instrument prohibiting certain types of actions. The Network prohibits only activities that adversely impact the Bern Convention species and habitats. In fact, the Network supports the sustainable traditional activities of local communities by preserving healthy ecosystems. There are instances in Europe when traditional activities (such as traditional grazing) are even encouraged, because they are instrumental for maintaining certain habitat types.





WHAT TYPES OF FORESTRY ACTIVITIES WILL BE PERMITTED ON THE EMERALD NETWORK SITES?

There are no specific limitations to forestry activities. Restrictions depend on the goals and objectives of a site's establishment. If, for instance, the objective is to preserve a forest habitat in its natural form, then the activities hindering this goal will be restricted.

EMERALD NETWORK MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

HOW IS AN EMERALD SITE MANAGED AND WHICH AGENCY IS RESPONSIBLE?

The Bern Convention does not provide specific guidance as for which agency should manage Emerald sites. In practice, this is usually the agency or person who owns the territory. For instance, if an Emerald Network site coincides with a protected area, it will be managed by the Agency of Protected Areas. If the area overlaps with the National Forest, the manager will be the National Forestry Agency. In case when the territory is under municipal or private ownership, the site will be managed by the local government or a physical person, respectively. Natura 2000, for example, gives management responsibility to the owner of the land, if the site is within private ownership. However, where the national government cooperates with an owner and in the case certain activities are limited, it provides adequate compensation measures. Georgia is in the process of developing such schemes and most likely, a similar approach will be applied.

National bodies responsible for environmental protection (most frequently Environmental Ministries) of Contracting Parties of the Bern Convention are in charge of the implementation of the Emerald Network. They approve management plans and supervise monitoring activities. In addition, they are responsible for the regular reporting to the Convention's Secretariat on the status of Emerald species and habitats.



The prerequisite for the Emerald Network site management is a management plan. The document determines goals, objectives, and activities, which are necessary to ensure the 'Favourable Conservation Status' of the species and habitats.

IS AN INDEPENDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN NECESSARY FOR AN EMERALD SITE OR IS IT POSSIBLE TO INTEGRATE IT INTO AN EXISTING MANAGEMENT PLAN OF THE TERRITORY (E.G. A FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN)?

Internationally, there are various flexible models of Emerald/Natura 2000 site management. If an Emerald site is located within a national forest area, it is only logical that its management matters (conservation

goals and objectives) are integrated into an existing management plan. However, if necessary, a separate management plan may be developed.

HOW WILL THE EMERALD NETWORK DEVELOPMENT BE FUNDED?

In accordance with the requirements of the Bern Convention, research and monitoring activities are the responsibility of the Contracting Parties. The main source of funding can be international donor support, state budgets, and various EU programs.

Research activities necessary for Emerald Network development in Georgia have been underway since 2009. They have, up to now, been fully funded by international donor organizations. In 2009-2011 and 2013-2016 studies were conducted with the financial support of the Council of Europe and the European

Union. Research in 2015-2019 was implemented with support of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ).

WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MONITORING THE EMERALD NETWORK AND ITS SITES?

The agency/person responsible for the overall management of a site will also be responsible for its monitoring. A specific programme and activities related to the monitoring of a site will be defined by the site's management plan.

Countries are also required to carry out the monitoring of the species and habitats under the Bern Convention at a national level, both within and outside of the Emerald Network framework, as part of the national unified monitoring system.



WHAT DOES EMERALD NETWORK MONITORING IMPLY?

The purpose of monitoring is to evaluate the conservation status of species and habitats protected by the Bern convention. The evaluation will reveal the extent of a site's effectiveness in achieving the goals and objectives set forth. As a result, the planning of measures needed to modify sites/network or to improve their management will be possible.

The Bern Convention stipulates that a contracting party develops a long-term monitoring programme of its Emerald Network sites. The programme must set achievable goals within a specific timeline, which must be based on objectively verifiable indicators.

Emerald Network monitoring is an ongoing process. However, the monitoring activities must be planned in accordance with the timeline of reporting to the Bern Convention. Every 6 years Georgia is required to present a report to the Convention and the Council of Europe.

HOW ARE THE HABITATS ASSESSED?

The guideline for habitat assessment is under development. The Bern Convention and the Association Agreement require the conservation of Resolution #4 and Resolution #6 features, which implies their assessment and monitoring. It is important that habitats that are assessed and monitored are classified according to the European Nature Information System (EUNIS) habitat classification.

DO EMERALD SITES HAVE 'BUFFER ZONES'?

Buffer zones around Emerald sites are not mandatory. However, the requirement to assess potential impact of any activity or project not only within but also outside an Emerald site will ensure the existence of functional buffer zones.



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