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**Joint Programme funded by the European Union
and implemented by the Council of Europe**

Preparation of the Emerald Network of Nature Protection Sites – Phase II

**INTERIM NARRATIVE REPORT
8 October 2012 – 28 February 2014**

1. Description of the Programme

1.1 Name of beneficiary of grant contract:

Council of Europe

1.2 Name and title of the Contact person:

Mrs Iva Obretenova, Project manager, Directorate General of Democracy, Directorate for Democratic Governance, Department for Democratic Initiatives, Secretariat of the Bern Convention

1.3 Name of partners in the Action:

NA

1.4 Title of the Action:

“Preparation of the Emerald Network of Nature Protection Sites – Phase II”

1.5 Contract number:

DCI-ENV/2012/289-173

1.6 Start date and end date of the action:

9 October 2012 – 08 October 2016

1.7 Target countries:

Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine

1.8 Final beneficiaries and/or target groups:

Target groups:

- Armenia: European Projects Implementation Unit
- Azerbaijan: Department for Biodiversity Protection and Specially Protected Natural Territories, Ministry of Ecology and Natural resources
- Belarus: Belarusian Public Association “Ecological Initiative”
- Georgia: NGO NACRES – Centre for biodiversity and
- Moldova: Biosafety Office
- The Russian Federation: Charity Organisation “Biologists for nature conservation”
- Ukraine: NGO Interecocentre

Final beneficiaries:

Nature protection NGOs, local authorities, stakeholders and population, school practitioners, academia and University staff, research organisms and the citizens of the targeted countries through a strengthened natural environment.

2. Assessment of implementation of Action activities

2.1. Executive summary of the Action and highlights¹

The current Action seeks at improving biodiversity protection in the seven target countries, through the establishment of an ecological Network of areas of special conservation interest (the Emerald Network), aiming to ensure the long-term survival of threatened species and habitats of European importance. The project specifically aims at achieving a full operational launch of the Pan-European Emerald network of the Bern Convention by 2020 and thereby works towards achieving the following expected results: (1) identifying all the potential Emerald sites in the target countries, (2) assessing scientifically the sufficiency of these sites for ensuring the long-term survival of the targeted species and habitats and (3) developing specific guidelines on the national designation and management of the adopted Emerald sites.

The first sixteen months of implementation of the Action encompassed the launching phase of the project and its first complete implementation year. The period was dedicated to **(1) the re-establishment of the Emerald Network teams in the seven target countries**, giving a priority to continuity with the first project implemented in the period 2009-2011; **(2) the dissemination of information on the new project and its objectives** to various actors and potential partners both in at national level in the target countries and at European level to the institutional partners of the Council of Europe and Bern Convention Secretariat; **(3) the organisation of the launching event of the project**, where all target countries were allowed to exchange their experiences, work plans and views on the project implementation and **(4) the organisation of the first national events in the target countries and the further revision and development of their Emerald Network databases**.

A key issue for this first implementation year was the identification of additional Emerald sites - additional to the ones already identified and described in the first project implemented in the period 2009-2011 (expected result 1). Both the kick-off meeting and the national events which took place throughout 2013 were dedicated to the exchange of views and preparation of national strategies for the identification of additional areas suitable for the Network and its purposes.

Since the beginning of the first project in 2009, countries have been selecting areas, preparing their national biodiversity inventories and describing the ecological features of these areas. All countries have already proposed the main wilderness areas on their territories for joining the Emerald Network. These areas are of particular importance and their contribution to the conservation at the long-term of the species and habitats of European importance is substantial. Most of these areas are already protected at national level, sometimes strictly, through the necessary national legislation and often concrete management plans.

However, the difficulty of finding new areas, additional to these already protected nationally and often wilderness areas and proposing them for joining the Network (project specific objectives) has now emerged. In all of the countries, the difficulties encountered are linked to the fact that most of the national territory is heavily used for agricultural activities, including forestry, as well as other for socio-economic needs and activities linked to everyday life of local communities.

At the kick-off meeting of the project in April 2013, it was clearly demonstrated that the main protected areas in the countries will not be sufficient for covering the requirements of the Emerald Network. Although these countries benefit from larger and wilder areas than heavily fragmented European Union countries, they will still need to identify additional areas which are not protected yet at national level, including areas where agricultural and other social activities are taking place. In order to be complete, the Emerald Network requires that sites within one country should:

- represent a good cover of distribution within a bio-geographical region within a country;
- represent a good cover of variation within a bio-geographical region within a country;

¹ Translation of the executive summary in Russian language is provided in Annex 2

- represent a significant cover of a total area represented in a country;
- represent a fair connectivity with similar protected habitats across international borders, to ensure maintenance of structure and function as well as survival of dependent species;
- include potential ‘stepping stones’ for dispersal of individuals from one site to another;
- represent a fair share of genetic and ecological variation;
- represent a well-adapted network to different distribution patterns across Europe.

In March 2013, all target countries started the scientific work towards the identification of additional potential Emerald sites (expected result 1) and submitted their final 2013 Emerald sites database by the end of January 2014, as requested. The results obtained by the national teams, after the finalisation of the quality checks performed by the project scientific and technical experts, can be summarised as follows:

Table 1: Potential Emerald sites: Number of sites and total area covered by January 2014

| Country | Sites | Total Area (ha) | % country coverage 2012 | % country coverage 2014 |
|---------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Armenia | 13 | 296 326,28 | 7,68 | 9,88 |
| Azerbaijan | 12 | 845 538,42 | 11,46 | 9,72 |
| Belarus | 16 | 980 626,00 | 4,39 | 4,71 |
| Georgia | 21 | 919 934,05 | 8,42 | 13,20 |
| Moldova | 18 | 388 465,00 | 12,24 | 11,53 |
| Russia | 923 | 31 163 623,34 | 7,13 | 8,0 |
| Ukraine | 159 | 4 469 530,00 | 7,20 | 7,4 |
| Total: | 1154 | 39 040 691,29 | Average: 7,15 | Average: 9.2% |

A good increase of the total coverage of the proposed Emerald sites can be concluded, in comparison with the same percentage at the end of the previous project (expected result 1). Although countries like Moldova and Azerbaijan seem to have decreased the total coverage of the national territories they cover with their Emerald sites, it is important to underline that the sites boundaries are often changing and will be considered as final only at the end of the Action period. Through some additional work on the identification of new sites in 2014, we expect that countries will be ready for the initiation of the scientific assessment of the Emerald sites in all seven target countries (expected result 2) in 2014.

It should equally be noted that in almost all of the countries (Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine), the implementation of the Emerald Network has been included in the national biodiversity strategies, which is a clear sign of the strong commitment of the countries towards the Emerald process, the action and their international commitments in the field of biodiversity protection (overall project objective).

The Action equally supported for the improvement of the target countries’ knowledge on biodiversity on their territories. The data available on biodiversity in the countries has been greatly enriched and in particular helped update the knowledge on threatened species and habitats of European importance, for which only basic or very old records could be found in specialised literature.

During this first implementation year, the project coordination team at the Council of Europe (one project manager, one assistant and two scientific experts) helped build capacities within the national project teams regarding the requirements of the Network and its methodology. It further facilitated the experience sharing between the target countries themselves and with countries working on the Natura 2000 Network. Capacity building was equally ensured during the national events organised in the countries, as well as during the Steering Committee meeting of the project. Throughout 2013, a help desk support was ensured by the coordination team for all legal, scientific and technical questions which were raised by the national teams working on their new Emerald databases.

2.2. Activities and results

Activity 1 (Expected results 1 and 3): Side event on the launching of the Joint Programme, 27 November 2012, Strasbourg (France), 51 contracting parties to the Bern Convention

On 27 November 2012, a side event for the launching of the Joint Programme was organised during the 32nd meeting of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention. The event raised awareness among all Bern Convention Contracting Parties (51 Contracting Parties in 2013) on the project, its objectives and work programme. The competent national authorities of the seven project target countries were present at the meeting as well, reconfirming their commitment towards the establishment of the Emerald network on their territories (Bern Convention) and the obligations (Aichi targets) they have under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (project specific objective).

Activity 2 (Expected result 1): Quality check of the 2011-2012 national Emerald databases, March 2013

The project scientific and technical expert prepared detailed quality check reports on the Emerald databases of the countries, either the databases submitted at the end of the previous project (2011), or those further developed by the countries after the end of the first project, through 2012.

These summary quality reports give detailed indications on the technical quality and completeness of the data fields in each of the data tables in the Emerald Sites Database as well as guidance on the directions the countries need to take in the new project in order to improve the quality of their databases. These reports however do not represent any assessment of the scientific quality of the sites proposed to join the Emerald Network with regards to the long-term survival of the species and the habitats respectively of Resolution No. 6 (1998) and Resolution No. 4 (1996) of the Bern Convention, as this complex task is one of the expected results (expected result 2) of the current project.

These reports were the basic reference documents used for the preparation of the country terms of reference for 2013, taking into account the state of their national databases and in particular their readiness to be the subject of a scientific evaluation of Phase II of the Emerald Network constitution process (expected result 2).

The seven individual quality check reports on the country Emerald databases submitted up to 2012, before the initiation of the current project can be found on the national dedicated pages to all target countries: <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/emerald-network>

Activity 3 (Expected results 1 and 3): Kick-off meeting of the project, 24-26 April 2013, Kiev (Ukraine)

A kick-off meeting of the project was organised in Kiev, 24-26 April 2013, gathering representatives of the Ministries of Environment, Emerald team members and NGOs from all target countries. The requirements for the initiation of phase II of the Emerald Network constitution process (expected result 2) were presented and discussed. Countries debated work paths for the further identification of potential Emerald sites and exchanged views on possible conservation standards for future Emerald sites, their management and reporting measures.

All target countries demonstrated a good understanding of the scientific and technical component of the project. Relevant Ministries for nature protection in the target countries show a strong political commitment to the Network establishment. In the Russian Federation, it was concluded that efforts on dissemination of information on the project and its objectives with the regional level (Oblast) in European Russia have to be speeded up.

The full report of the kick-off meeting can be consulted [here](#).

Activity 4 (Expected result 1): 1st National Emerald Workshop for Ukraine, 26 April 2013, Kiev

The 1st national Emerald Workshop was organised back-to-back with the meeting of the Kick-off meeting of the project. The project scientific expert met the members of the Emerald team from the country and discussed with them the result of the quality check of the latest 2012 Emerald database of Ukraine. A discussion was also held on the methodologies that the country team can adopt for identifying additional areas to the ones already proposed. The team decided to proceed to further field research and most importantly, involve more local biodiversity experts in the work on the Network setting-up, as their knowledge on the presence and population/distribution of some species and habitats is very extensive and up-to-date.

Activity 5 (Expected results 1 and 2): Project implementation in Ukraine during 2013

Throughout 2013, the national team composed of 10 experts worked on the revision and completion of their national Emerald database, following the advices received during the national workshop.

Various activities were held in country aiming at increasing the visibility and understanding of the Network and its features, in particular targeting school and university students, biology teachers, local administration, etc.

As a final result of the Activity in 2013, the Emerald database for Ukraine for species, habitats and other relevant information was prepared for 159 proposed Emerald Sites (8 new sites were proposed in 2013). The Ukrainian Emerald Team has prepared a database and digital boundaries for the 159 sites: 18 Nature Reserves; 6 Biosphere Reserve; 43 National Nature Parks; 31 Wildlife Reserves of National and local importance; 18 Regional Landscape Parks; 6 Ramsar Wetlands; 13 wetlands and 24 areas with high biodiversity, species and habitats from the Res. 4 (1996) and Res. 6 (1998) of the Bern Convention.

These 159 sites cover the area representing 7.4% of the total area of Ukraine (expected result 1). This percentage exceeds the existing national network of protected areas in Ukraine, covering 6.0% of the national territory.

The full report on the project implementation in Ukraine in 2013 can be consulted [here](#).

Activity 6 (Expected result 1): 1st National Emerald Workshop for the Republic of Moldova, 14-15 May 2013, Chisinau

The first national workshop for Moldova gathered the members of the national Emerald team in the country and the project scientific expert. The results of the quality check of the Moldovan Emerald database from 2012 was debated and a concrete work plan was agreed for the implementation of the project in the country regarding the identification of additional sites and the correction of the database shortcomings. Enhanced cooperation between the Ministry of Environment, the State Forestry Agency and the Ministry of Agriculture and Food was recommended for finding and agreeing on the new areas to join the Network.

Activity 7 (Expected results 1 and 2): Project implementation in the Republic of Moldova during 2013

During the year 2013, the team from the Republic of Moldova gathered a big amount of information on species and their distribution through the organisation of several field trips with scientific purposes. The revision of their database was an important task for the various experts working on the project in the country, in particular on taxonomic groups present in the country for which there is very little and outdated knowledge

However, the team concentrated some efforts in streamlining the Emerald Network process into the national strategy for biodiversity and the legal framework for nature conservation in the country. The objective of this work was the analysis of the sufficiency of the legal provisions for management of protected areas, under the local public authority jurisdiction, for the needs of the Emerald Network.

In addition, the national Emerald team paid particular attention to drawing young generations' attentions to the implementation of the Emerald Network. The team organised various visibility activities, including a bus traveling around the country and providing information on the Network to schools around the Republic, public administration and NGOs at local level. A meeting was organised with biology students from the Faculty of biology in Chisinau and ways on including them in the further monitoring of species and habitats of European importance to be protected under the Emerald Network.

One additional site, to the 17 already identified in the country in 2012 was described for its ecological features and included in the country database. The country has so far proposed about 11, 53% of the country territory to be included in the Network (expected result 1), which represents a significant 5% more than the currently nationally protected areas.

A full report on the implementation of the project in the Republic of Moldova in 2013 can be consulted [here](#).

Activity 8 (Expected result 1): 1st National Emerald Workshop for Belarus, 22-23 May 2013, Minsk

In Belarus, the first national Emerald Workshop was held in May in Minsk, gathering the members of the Emerald team in the country, relevant Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and various academia, NGOs and university staff. The European Commission Delegation in the country was also present. The event attracted a lot of media attention, in particular thanks to the fact that Belarus signed and ratified the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats the same year 2013. This is also the result of 3 years of hard work and enhanced cooperation of the country on the setting-up of the Emerald Network. It represents a strong achievement as it reinforces Belarus's commitment of the country towards the establishment of the network and aligns its nature protection standards with the Bern Convention and EU ones (project specific objective).

The agenda of the workshop covered issues like the overview of the results and achievements of the first project (2011), a discussion on the priorities of the second project and discussion on the possible future management measures for the Emerald sites. Information on the presence and distribution of species and habitats of European importance in the country is particularly outdated, which is an important obstacle for the further identification of areas suitable for the Emerald network.

Activity 9 (Expected results 1 and 2): Project implementation in Belarus during 2013

In January 2014, the country submitted their 2013 database composed of the ecological and spatial data for 16 sites. 4 new potential Emerald sites have been identified and thanks to the information collected during expert field trips and submitted by management units of the areas, their Emerald database has been filled in. The proposed sites currently cover a little bit less than 5% of the country territory and the country will deploy all their efforts during 2014 for the identification of more suitable areas, following the guidance and support of the technical and scientific experts of the project.

During 2013, the country was also in discussing issues on implementation of the provisions of the Bern Convention in Belarus were discussed, including the development of the appropriate national legislation base, strengthening of the institutional capacity and future management of Emerald sites. A round table was organised in July in Minsk, gathering all relevant Ministries, the representatives of other UNDP and EU funded projects implemented in the country and targeting nature protection, allowing finding synergies and enhancing cooperation (project specific objective).

More information on the activities implemented in Belarus during 2013 can be consulted [here](#).

Activity 10 (Expected result 1): 1st National Emerald Workshop for Azerbaijan, 5-6 June 2013, Baku

A first national workshop was organized in Azerbaijan, by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan in Baku on 05-06 June 2013. The main purpose was to introduce the national team to the principals and technical aspects of Phase II of the Emerald Network constitution process and to organize training for the team for the identification of gaps in the country Emerald database and future methodology.

Activity 11 (Expected results 1 and 2): Project implementation in Azerbaijan during 2013

During 2013, a lot of practical and technical work was achieved by the Emerald team members and the project scientific expert, to correct the database from the inconsistencies and gaps identified. Clear milestones and planning was made for the national team in the country, to be implemented during the year, in particular targeted field research and improved special data.

The national Emerald team organised field research to some of the proposed sites, where additional scientific information was requested regarding the distribution and population of some habitats and species. The results of these field studies were included in the national database.

During 2013, the team reviewed and updated scientific data for 11 previously identified sites, in the period 2005-2012. This data was added by the national technical experts to the country Emerald database. 2 new potential sites were also identified (Abheron and Gobustan). The total coverage of the proposed Emerald sites reached 9, 72%, representing 12 sites throughout the country (expected result 1).

For more complete information on the project results achieved in Azerbaijan during 2013, please consult a more detailed report [here](#).

Activity 12 (Expected result 1): 1st National Emerald Workshop for Georgia, 11-12 June 2013, Tbilisi

The Georgian national Emerald team organised the 1st workshop in the frame of the project in June. The event, as for all the target countries, was dedicated to the revision of the 2011-2012 database of the country, analysis of the gaps and inconsistencies and planning of action to be taken to remedy to the eventual shortcomings. The NGO implementing the project works in close cooperation with the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources.

The Emerald Team discussed a methodology to be used for the implementation of the project during the year and agreed that it was necessary to verify some of the data already submitted, in particular through field studies to areas where scientific knowledge was not sufficient and through desktop studies to collect any new data from recent studies.

Activity 13 (Expected results 1 and 2): Project implementation in Georgia during 2013

21 Emerald Network candidate sites or Areas of Special Conservation Interest (ASCI), 1 additional site to the 20 already identified through the first project 2008-2011. During 2013, these sites were agreed with the Georgian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources. The total country territory coverage of these sites reaches more than 13%, an indication that the team also worked on enlarging the territory of the 20 sites proposed in the previous project. A significant progress in the percentage of coverage is thus present, from 8.42% in 2012 to 13% in 2013 (expected result 1).

The team worked closely with academia, Universities and other NGOS and internationally funded projects to ensure coherence and avoid duplication of work in particular when it comes to species and habitats population and distribution surveys.

One of the most important achievements of the national Emerald team during 2013 was the inclusion of the Emerald Network in the draft EU/Georgia Association Agreement. In addition, the country is in the process of updating its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and many of the members of the National Emerald Team have been fully involved in drafting certain sections of the document including those dealing with species and habitats conservation. Consequently, the

development of the Emerald Network and the conservation and sustainable management of species and habitats covered by the Bern Convention have become an integral part of the current final draft NBSAP (project specific objective).

For more information on the developments achieved through the Action in Georgia please consult their national report for 2013 [here](#).

Activity 14 (Expected result 1): 1st National Emerald Workshop for Armenia, 25-26 June 2013, Yerevan

The first national workshop in Armenia was organised in the continuity of the ones organised in the other target countries, with discussions held on the existing country Emerald database up to 2012, on the gaps and inconsistencies of this database and the methodological implementation of the project in Armenia. A calendar with milestones was agreed, for the project implementation throughout 2013.

Activity 15 (Expected results 1 and 2): Project implementation in Armenia during 2013

The country Emerald sites proposals grew from 9 in 2012 to 12 in 2013, with three additional areas identified as corresponding to the Network requirements. The total area of the 12 Emerald Network sites covers 291329.0 ha and it covers around 9.88% of the total country territory, which is a significant increase (expected result 1).s

The national Emerald team has equally been working towards streamlining the implementation of the Emerald network in the country strategies for biodiversity and climate change adaptation and mitigation. Close cooperating was established with the UN Climate Change Convention Program Coordinator, who is preparing the 3rd National Communication of Armenia under the UNFCCC.

The assessment of the vulnerability of ecosystems, including terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands, has been initiated and cooperation between the two projects ensured in particular in terms of data exchange. This has also put a clear emphasis on the need of studying the climate change impact on the particular species and habitats to be protected through the Emerald Network (project specific objective).

For more complete information on the project results achieved in Armenia during 2013, please consult a more detailed report [here](#).

Activity 16 (Expected result 1): 1st National Emerald Workshop for the Russian Federation, 2-5 October 2013, Valdai

The 1st national workshop was organised in the Russian Federation (Valdai, 2-5 October 2013) and developed as a scientific event, where several back-to back meetings were organised:

- 3th International Scientific Conference «Geographic basis of the establishment of ecological networks in Northern Eurasia»;
- Technical meeting between the project Emerald team and the Joint Programme Manager and scientific coordinator;
- Special Session of the Russian Geography Society (RGS) Commission for Environmental Management.

32 participants met in Valdai, while an electronic dissemination of the materials during the conference made it possible to combine efforts of about 60 experts from Council of Europe, Finland, Ukraine, and a number of Russian regions. The event achieved to decide on the follow-up to be given and methodology to be adopted for the further implementation of the Emerald Network in the country. The necessity to pay particular attention to regional authorities (oblasts) and their possible contribution to the Network was agreed, after the presentations made at the meeting by several regional authorities.

Activity 17 (Expected results 1 and 2): Project implementation in the Russian Federation during 2013

Although the Russian Federation implements the Action in its European part only, the importance of the territory covered is closer to the territory covered by the current European Union. Therefore, the contribution of the regional entities in the European Russia appeared to be of key importance.

In August 2013, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation appealed to the conservation authorities of Russia's sub-federal entities to support the establishment of the Emerald Network. The national Emerald team established contacts with the majority of the regional conservation authorities which should be further developed in the period 2014-2016.

In addition to the sites described in 2009-2011, new information about 160 potential Emerald sites was entered into the Emerald Database during 2013. In total, 900 potential Emerald sites were identified with the participation of regional experts, covering approximately 8% of the territory of European Russia (expected result 1).

More information on the project achievements in Russia, please consult a more complete report [here](#).

Activity 18 (Expected results 1 and 3): 1st Project Steering Committee meeting, 18 October 2013, Strasbourg (France)

The 1st project Steering Committee meeting was the second opportunity during the year 2013 for Emerald team leaders and national authorities to meet and exchange practices and views, while agreeing on the project implementation during the second project year 2014.

A list of questions was sent to the national project leaders ahead of the meeting, aiming to guide the presentations they were requested to make on the achievements of the project implementation at national level during 2013. Many of the project leaders in the countries welcomed these questions, as they found them very helpful in guiding their presentations, but also the work they need to do at national level to prepare their databases for Phase II.

The national team leaders from the countries presented how the national Emerald teams have estimated the gaps in the sufficiency of the sites proposed so far in their countries, how they work towards identifying for which species and habitats they need to propose additional sites and where. Some National project leaders underlined the difficulties encountered during the identification of the possible presence of certain species or habitats in their countries. The field research appears as extremely necessary, although the periods for its possible organisation are often very restrictive and time and equipment-consuming.

The full report of the 1st meeting of the Steering Committee of the project can be consulted [here](#).

Activity 19 (Expected result 2): Quality check of the 2013 national Emerald databases, March 2013

The project scientific and technical experts prepared detailed quality analysis/quality check reports on the Emerald databases of the seven countries, submitted by the end of January 2014, through EEA's EIONET Central Data Repository: <http://cdr.eionet.europa.eu/>

The seven country specific reports consist of (1) an analysis of the technical completeness of the database, (2) an analysis of the completeness of the country spatial data and (3) an analysis of the overall scientific soundness of the database.

The information provided in these reports will be thoroughly considered and every comment included by the experts will be analysed and relevant action undertaken by the national Emerald teams throughout 2014. The experts further submitted concrete questions which will be used by the countries for running a self-assessment/internal check of the Emerald Network sites proposed so far

and thus evaluate for which species and habitats they still need to identify new areas (expected results 1 and 2).

These reports will help the countries ensure the completeness of their Emerald Network sites with regards to the long-term survival of the species and the habitats respectively of Resolution No. 6 (1998) and Resolution No. 4 (1996) of the Bern Convention (expected results 3 and 4). They will also be debated at the Second national Emerald Workshops organised in each of the project target countries in spring 2014. The can be found on the national dedicated pages to all target countries: <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/emerald-network>

2.3. Please list activities that were planned and that you were not able to implement, explaining the reasons for these.

All events and activities planned for 2013 have taken place and were implemented according to the planning. The action launching phase of 3 months (October 2012 – January 2013) helped the project manager and experts to prepare the implementation of the first project year (2013) in good terms and ensure all activities are correctly planned and realised.

This period was therefore very necessary and useful, as the preparations for the launching of the project and its activities at national level was a time-consuming exercise. The launching phase consisted of (1) the re-establishment of the national Emerald teams, (2) the reception of letters of support from the national authorities in the target countries, review and agreement on the project lifecycle planning, etc.

2.4. What is your assessment of the results of the Action so far?

The coordination of the project implementation has been very smooth during the first implementation period. The coordination team at the Council of Europe consists of one project manager, one part-time assistant and one technical and scientific expert responsible for the analysis of the quality of ecological data submitted by the target countries, in relation to the objectives of the Emerald Network. These three persons were joined by an additional scientific expert at the beginning of 2014. In terms of contribution to the achievement of the project overall objective -improved biodiversity protection in the target countries-, this first implementation year was very successful, in particular for the improvement of the target countries' knowledge on biodiversity on their territories. The data available on biodiversity in the countries has been greatly enriched at the end of this first year. The national Emerald teams have developed very comprehensive and updated inventories of the presence of threatened species and habitats on their territories. Very often, information on species presence and habitats distribution at national level was really outdated. In some countries, whole taxonomic groups were not studied since the mid 50'. A lot of the information gathered throughout the year (field studies, desk research, species presence observations and verifications, etc.) and submitted through the EEA's EIONET CDR is very detailed. It should be noted that the biodiversity inventories developed through the collection of the national Emerald databases are approaching the standards used by the EU member states in their post-designation reporting on their Natura 2000 sites and their impact.

The inclusion of the Emerald Network as a priority in some of the countries national biodiversity strategies is a clear sign of their commitment to both the project and the process under the Bern Convention. In Georgia, the Emerald Network is mentioned in the EU/Georgia association agreements. As foreseen in the project specific objectives, countries now correctly understand the link between the implementation of the Emerald network on their territories and the achievement of their commitments towards the UN Convention on Biological diversity and its world targets. Coordination with other UN instruments is also ensured in some of the countries, such as the Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Regarding the achievement of the expected result 1 –the outstanding potential Emerald sites in all target countries will be identified and their ecological databases completed-, it can be concluded that most of the seven countries have perfectly understood the need to reach out for areas outside their

nationally protected ones. This is translated in practice by the need to propose the richest of these additional areas in terms of biodiversity for joining the Network. While the surface of the proposed Emerald sites at the end of 2013 is increasing (see table summarising this on page 3), countries will have to put all their efforts in identifying the right new areas to join the network. The project manager and the scientific and technical experts working on the coordination are supporting these efforts at national level with country specific guidance and advice. Reaching beyond the nationally protected areas, through the inclusion in the Emerald Network of new biodiversity rich areas is also a way to achieve the commitments of the countries towards the UN CBD and its Aichi targets (specific project objective).

In addition, all the work achieved during 2013 and that will be accomplished in 2014 is a prerequisite for the successful achievement of the expected result 2 of the project. In order to start the scientific evaluation of the potential Emerald sites in all seven target countries for their sufficiency to ensure the long-term survival of the Bern Convention species and habitats, the databases submitted by the countries have to have a very good quality, including for the spatial data submitted. Work in 2014 will also be directed towards achieving the requirements for the national databases, in particular regarding their completeness.

It is worth noting that during 2013, the identification of more areas suitable to join the Network thanks to the rich biodiversity they hold has led to some strong discussions between different Ministries. Due to the different interests the Ministries can have regarding the use of these areas, their inclusion in the Network is a subject of negotiations and discussions. Inter-ministerial meetings have been organised in the countries, with the support of the national Emerald teams, aiming to increase the understanding of the objectives of the Network. Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine were particularly active on this, with regular inter-ministerial meetings organised. These meetings are the perfect occasion for chasing away existing misunderstandings on what it entails to include some agricultural, forestry and other areas in the Network. It is therefore of outmost importance that adequate information is disseminated, at national and ministerial level, on the network objectives and its potential benefits as well. This will be a priority for the work throughout 2014 as well.

For the needs of the implementation of the Action (expected results 1 and 2), contracts called Administrative Arrangements are signed annually with each national Emerald implementer, appointed to work on the project by the competent Ministry in each of the target countries. This tool is considered as the most appropriate one as it allows for the preparation of annual country specific terms of reference. These terms of reference are included in each annual contract with each national implementer. They correspond to the specific needs of each country for the year to come, which are decided by the project manager and the experts working on the action coordination, taking into account the results of the analysis of the national Emerald databases. The tasks included in the contracts are linked to the organisation of national events, meetings, field research, visibility activities, preparation of publications or other materials and expert fees. The Administrative Arrangements are annual and always cover a period of 9 to 10 months depending on the needs of the country and the period necessary for their drafting and agreement. The same practice was followed during the first Joint Programme (2009-2011).

Please find below a table summarising the different contracts signed in the frame of the action for the period covered by this report:

| Nationality of beneficiary (ISO Code) | Beneficiary | Action duration (months) | Grant Amount |
|--|---|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| AM | Environmental Project Implementation Unit (EPIU) | 9 | 27 840,50 |
| AZ | Department for Biodiversity Protection and Specially Protected Natural Territories, Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources | 9 | 28 000 |
| BY | Belarusian Public Association "Ecological | 10 | 59 795 |

| | Initiative ² | | |
|----|--|----|--------|
| GE | NGO NACRES | 9 | 27 973 |
| MD | Biosafety Office | 9 | 20 000 |
| RU | Charitable Organisation Biologists for Nature Conservation | 10 | 69 076 |
| UA | NGO Intereccentre | 10 | 65 000 |

2.5. Please provide an updated action plan ²

The second implementation year (2014) will be dedicated to the finalisation of the identification of potential areas suitable to join the Emerald Network in the target countries. The national sites databases, to be submitted by the end of 2014, should include suitable areas for all species from Res. 6 (1998) and habitats from Res. 4 (1996) of the Bern Convention present on the territory of the country. The countries will further submit a single GIS package for all sites (previously identified and additional new sites). At national level, inter-ministerial cooperation and coordination on the identification of additional forestry and agricultural areas suitable to join the Network will be further encouraged and guided during 2014.

In addition, the autumn period of 2014 will be dedicated to a simulation (preparation) exercise of a real biogeographical seminar, where the national sites proposals will be assessed for their sufficiency to ensure the long-term survival of the Emerald species and habitats (the same as those for Natura 2000).

| Year 2014 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------------|---|---|---|---|---|------------|---|---|----|----|----|-------------------|---|
| Activity | Semester 1 | | | | | | Semester 2 | | | | | | Implementing body | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | | |
| Expected result 1: The outstanding potential Emerald sites of protected areas in all target countries will have been identified and their ecological databases completed. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Signature of contract (ToRs) and implementation of the action in Moldova for 2014 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Biosafety Office, Moldova |
| 2nd National Emerald Workshop for the Republic of Moldova | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Council of Europe and Biosafety Office, Moldova |
| Signature of contract (ToRs) and implementation of the action in Georgia for 2014 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | NGO NACRES |
| 2nd National Emerald Workshop for Georgia | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Council of Europe and NGO NACRES |
| Signature of contract (ToRs) and implementation of the action in Azerbaijan for 2014 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan |
| 2nd National Emerald Workshop for Azerbaijan | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Council of Europe and Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan |

² This plan covers the financial period between the interim report and the next report.

| Activity | Semester 1 | | | | | | Semester 2 | | | | | | Implementing body |
|--|------------|---|---|---|---|---|------------|---|---|----|----|----|-------------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | |
| Expected result 2: Potential Emerald sites in all seven target countries will have been assessed in view of their sufficiency for ensuring the long-term survival of the Bern Convention species and habitats. | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Expected result 3: Guidelines on the national designation and management of the adopted Emerald sites will have been drafted and national authorities of the target countries will have started using them | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Analysis of the 2014 databases submitted by the seven target countries | | | | | | | | | | | | | Council of Europe |

3. Partners and other Co-operation

3.1. How do you assess the relationship between the formal partners of this Action (i.e. those partners which have signed a partnership statement)? Please provide specific information for each partner organisation.

NA

3.2. How would you assess the relationship between your organisation and State authorities in the Action countries? How has this relationship affected the Action?

All countries targeted by the action are Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention, with the exception of the Russian Federation which is an Observer State. It is under the Bern Convention that the Emerald Network is being set-up. Therefore the Ministries competent for environment in these countries have the responsibility for the national designation of the Emerald sites, to be selected in the frame of the action.

The implementation of the project at national level requires various technical and scientific skills, which are not always found within the competent Ministry. These competences are usually found in academia, NGOs or scientific communities. For this reason, the implementers of the project are the so-called “national Emerald teams”, appointed in each target country by the competent Ministry. Since the project implementation involves various scientific and technical competences, the Emerald teams are multidisciplinary and composed of people with a diverse and much specialised background, providing the whole range of expertise required for the practical project implementation.

The Bern Convention Secretariat at the Council of Europe, in charge of the project implementation, is in constant contact with both the ministries competent for of environment and biodiversity matters and the national Emerald teams. All the targeted countries are active Contracting Parties and Observer States to the Bern Convention and cooperation with them is very productive. This contributed significantly to the implementation of the action, as although the project is implemented through an NGO or specialised Office at national level, the ownership of the whole process at the level of the national authorities is always ensured.

It should be noted that the positive impact of the current action as well as of the previous project implemented in the period 2009-2011 greatly contributed to the decision on the acceleration of the accession of Belarus to the Bern Convention, which became full Contracting Party in June 2013.

3.3. Where applicable, describe your relationship with any other organisations involved in implementing the Action:

The identification of the potential Emerald sites is a complex process involving not solely the mere selection of possible sites which corresponds to the criteria for the choice of sites under Emerald. It further involves the description of the ecological features of each selected site, as well as the collection of a number of quality ecological and biological background data on the most threatened species and habitats for which the Emerald Network is being build up in each country.

For the achievement of the expected result 2 of the project, the scientific evaluation of the target countries' Emerald site proposals, there is a need of building various partnerships in the frame of the project. This will support the establishment of a background database that will be used as a mean for the verification of the sufficiency of the proposed Emerald sites.

For this reason, the action is implemented with the support of various actors and contributors, with which the Project Manager and experts are in constant contact with:

- European Environment Agency and its European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity
- Birdlife International
- Planta Europa
- Large Carnivore Initiative for Europe (LCIE)
- Barents Euro-Arctic Council
- IUCN

3.4. Where applicable, outline any links and synergies you have developed with other actions.

The Action aims at enhancing the overall biodiversity conservation in the target countries, but its achievements and biodiversity data gathered is of key importance for various initiatives and projects, in particular in the field of ecosystem services and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Cooperation with projects implemented in the target countries both by other international donors and national funds is sought and ensured. In Moldova and Ukraine cooperation with the ENPI FLEG project is ensured, while in Armenia, the colleagues from the national Emerald team have sought coordination with the UNDP-GEF project on preparation of Armenia's 3rd National Communication under the UNFCCC. In Azerbaijan and Georgia, coordination with WWF and their activities is ongoing. In Belarus, collaboration with the GEF/UNDP project «Mainstreaming Biodiversity Conservation into Territorial Planning Policies and Practices» is developed, as well as with the EU/UNDP project «Support to the development of a comprehensive framework for international environmental cooperation in the Republic of Belarus».

3.5. If your organisation has received previous EU grants in view of strengthening the same target group, in how far has this Action been able to build upon/complement the previous one(s)? (List all previous relevant EU grants).

The current Action is a continuation of a previous Joint EU/CoE Programme on the setting-up of the Emerald Network, implemented in the period 2009-2011 in the same target countries. It builds directly on the results of the previous project and this is strongly reflected both in the description of the Action and in the other sections of this report.

For information, the previous EU/CoE Joint Programme title was: "Support for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity Programme of work on Protected areas in the EU neighbouring policy East area and Russia: Extension of the implementation of the EU's Natura 2000 principles through the Emerald Network" (DCI-ENV/2008/149-829).

4. Visibility

A new project webpage has been prepared during the second half of 2013 and since January 2014 is published and replacing the provisional project webpage which was put in place in the beginning of 2013. The new webpage is using the web platform Liferay and can be consulted here: <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/emerald-network>. The creation of this webpage was a time-consuming process, but now it is fully operational and its regular updates are easier to implement. The EU/CoE joint logo is visible on the webpage.

EU's financial contribution and logo is always mentioned during each meeting organised in the frame of the action, but also in the frame of the Bern Convention institutional meetings. EU Delegations in

the target countries have also been invited in all national meetings and present in some of them to ensure the visibility of the support from the EU to the action and thus support its implementation.

The target countries have also implemented various visibility activities and produced different materials to support this process. The project manager ensures the EU/CoE joint logo for the action is present on all materials produced at national level and in the local languages by the Emerald teams:

- Colleagues from the Moldovan Emerald team organised a travelling bus, visiting schools around the country and presenting the Network, the project, but also aiming to explain to young generations what is biodiversity and what is its importance for the well-being of humans of Earth. The Emerald Network and its methodology were included in the curricula of ecology classes in the State University in Chisinau.
- In the Russian Federation, the scientific team working on the action implementation produced an Emerald Book, presenting the most valuable biodiversity areas in European Russia, which are proposed for inclusion in the Network and their features. The Emerald Book of Russia targets more academia, nature conservation specialists and NGOs as well as University students and staff. The Book can be consulted on the dedicated webpage of the country on the Action webpage: <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/emerald-network/russian-federation>
- In Armenia, the project team prepared an Environmental friendly Year 2014 Calendar, featuring all important days celebrated around the world and in Armenia, as well as pictures and information on the potential Emerald sites in the country.
- In Ukraine, the Emerald Network and the action were reported on in several local newspapers. Information on the Network and its methodology is included in biology school books and various extra-curricular activities in the field of ecology proposed in some schools feature information on the Emerald Network.

A new booklet presenting the Emerald Network and its implementation in the target countries is going to be prepared during 2014.

The European Commission may wish to publicise the results of Actions. Do you have any objection to this report being published on the EuropeAid website? If so, please state your objections here.

No objections.

Name of the contact person for the Action: Iva Obretenova, Project Manager

Signature:

Location: Council of Europe, Strasbourg

Date report due: 18 March 2014

Date report sent: 29 April 2014

Annex 1: Revised project logical framework, version April 2014

| LOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROJECT | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|--|
| | Intervention logic | Objectively verifiable indicators of achievement | Sources and means of verification | Assumptions |
| Overall objective | Improved biodiversity protection - especially the long-term survival of threatened species and habitats - through Emerald sites in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evolution of the protected areas surface in the countries ▪ Improvement of the national environmental data on biological diversity ▪ Evolution of species and habitats in the Emerald sites ▪ Adoption of national strategy on protected areas and their development, according to requirement of the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National legislative acts on protected areas ▪ National environmental statistics ▪ National progress reports to CBD and Bern Convention ▪ Opinion of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention ▪ EEA and EIONET data from ENPI East countries | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Political stability within the target countries ▪ Political will in the target countries to take further measures to protect biodiversity ▪ Sufficient financial resources committed by the target countries' authorities to nature conservation |
| Project Objective | Full operational launch of the Pan-European Emerald network of nature protection sites of the Bern Convention by 2020, thereby (i) supporting the implementation of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and its Aichi Targets on protected areas by the ENP East countries and Russia and (ii) aligning nature protection standards in this region with the standards of EU and its Natura 2000 Network. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Surface of the nationally protected areas proposed to become part of the Emerald Network ▪ Surface of sites without any national legislative protection to become part of the Emerald Network ▪ Percentage of the total national territory represented by the proposed Emerald sites ▪ Inclusion of marine areas in the proposed Emerald sites ▪ Creation of management plans for the proposed Emerald sites ▪ Effective implementation of legislation on protected areas and of the management plans of the Emerald sites | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National progress reports to CBD and Bern Convention ▪ National legislation on protected areas ▪ Management plans on protected areas ▪ Statistics from National authorities ▪ Statistics from NGOs ▪ Interim and final reports of the project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Political ownership of the project and its objectives by the national authorities in all target countries ▪ Sufficient financial resources engaged by the target countries to protected areas identification and management |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| | | | | |
| Expected Result 1 | The outstanding potential Emerald sites of protected areas in all target countries will have been identified and their ecological databases completed. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Surface of the potential Emerald sites and their respective percentage of total national territory ▪ Number of selected potential Emerald sites ▪ On-time delivery of ecological data by countries ▪ Quality checks of the technical and ecological data submitted for each site | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data deliveries per country ▪ Quality check reports by the project scientific expert ▪ Quality checks opinion by the ETC/BD experts when necessary ▪ Adjustments to the size and/or number of proposed Emerald sites when necessary ▪ Progress and final reports of project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Political stability within the countries ▪ National Emerald teams involved in the 1st Joint EU/Coe Programme are maintained ▪ Full cooperation by national authorities in the countries where the implementer is not directly the Ministry in charge |
| Expected Result 2 | Potential Emerald sites in all seven target countries will have been assessed in view of their sufficiency for ensuring the long-term survival of the Bern Convention species and habitats. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ First agreed list of proposed Areas of Special Conservation Interest per biogeographic region, to be submitted for adoption to the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention ▪ Conclusions on the sufficiency of proposals by each country for each species and habitats in each biogeographic region ▪ Biogeographic reference lists of species and habitats for each biogeographic region | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conclusions of scientific assessment of proposals by the ETC/BD, in cooperation with the Council of Europe and the project scientific expert ▪ Nomination as ‘official candidate sites’ by the Bern Convention Standing Committee for all proposed sites by all target countries ▪ Conclusions of national, biogeographical and Steering committee meetings ▪ Adjustments to the size and/or number of proposed Emerald sites when necessary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stakeholder (NGOs) involvement to ensure successful implementation of the biogeographical Seminars |
| Expected Result 3 | Guidelines on the national designation and management of the adopted Emerald sites will have been drafted and national authorities of the target countries will have started using them | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specific guidelines for the development of management plans for the Emerald sites in the region, to be prepared and submitted for adoption to the Standing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National progress reports to CBD and Bern Convention ▪ National legislation on protected areas ▪ Management plans on protected | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National authorities’ and NGOs’ input to the development of the management guidelines ▪ Dialogue is established between the responsible national |

| | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---|---|---|
| | | <p>Committee of the Bern Convention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preparations for national designation of the adopted Emerald sites are started and the guidelines prepared are used ▪ Number and territory coverage of the protected Emerald sites to reach the Aichi target 11 rate ▪ Inclusion of the regional/local authorities and communities in the sites management | <p>areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conclusions of national, biogeographical and Steering committee meetings ▪ Opinion of the Bern Convention group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks and of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention | <p>authorities from the targeted countries and the NGOs and international actors in the field of nature and biodiversity conservation</p> |
| Activities | <p><u>Expected result 1 - Finalisation of Phase I and preparation for Phase II of the Emerald Network constitution process:</u> <u>Russian Federation, Belarus, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project kick-off meeting ▪ identification of the second half of potential sites and the respective sites data collection and delivery ▪ 1 Emerald National Seminars per country ▪ Preparatory Biogeographical Seminar for the 4 countries <p><u>Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project kick-off meeting ▪ Quality check of the ecological and technical data delivered and corrections when necessary ▪ 1 Emerald Seminar per country ▪ Preparatory Biogeographical Seminar for the 3 countries <p><u>Expected result 2 - Phase II of the Emerald Network constitution process:</u> <u>All target countries:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 Biogeographical Seminar | <p>Means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project manager ▪ Secretary (half time) ▪ International scientific expert to the Council of Europe ▪ National Emerald teams composed of project leader and scientific experts in various fields of nature conservation, as well as an expert in GIS mapping ▪ Technical equipment and facilities for the national Emerald teams ▪ Kick off and final project events ▪ Steering committee (2 representatives per target country, one from implementing organisation, one from the national authority responsible) ▪ Organisation of coordination meetings Project manager/scientific expert and Steering Committee meetings ▪ Travel expenses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Data deliveries per country ▪ Quality check results by the project scientific expert ▪ Quality checks opinion by the ETC/BD experts when necessary ▪ Progress and final reports of project ▪ Guidelines for management plans for the Emerald sites, for the 7 ENPI countries, adopted by the Bern Convention Standing Committee | |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 4 Bilateral Seminars when necessary <p><u>Expected result 3 - Developing guidelines on management plans for the Emerald sites, reporting and monitoring measures</u></p> <p><u>All target countries:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project kick-off and final event ▪ Consultations and development of guidelines on Emerald Network management plans and reporting and monitoring mechanisms, in cooperation with the national Emerald teams (2013 & 2014) ▪ Submission of the guidelines for discussion by the Bern Convention Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks (2014) ▪ Submission of the guidelines for adoption by the Bern Convention Standing Committee (2015) ▪ Information on the Natura 2000 management plans and reporting obligations, provided to Emerald National teams during the kick-off, national and bilateral seminars (2013 - 2016) <p><u>Expected results 2 and 3 - Improving trans-boundary cooperation in the region</u></p> <p><u>All target countries:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Project kick-off and final event ▪ Inclusion of trans-boundary co-operation issues in the Specific Guidelines on Emerald Network management plans and reporting and monitoring mechanisms (2014), to be prepared in the frame of the project ▪ Dialogue on conservation standards | | |
|--|---|--|--|

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|--|--|--|--|
| | for future Emerald sites, in particular the ones which straddle border, is established between the countries' national authorities | | |
|--|--|--|--|



Annex 2: Резюме направлений деятельности и основные вопросы

Данное Направление деятельности призвано содействовать улучшению защиты биоразнообразия в семи целевых странах благодаря созданию экологической сети районов, представляющих особый интерес с точки зрения охраны (Сеть Изумруд), с целью обеспечения долгосрочного выживания имеющих общеевропейское значение видов и сред обитания, находящихся под угрозой. Конкретная цель проекта – дать полномасштабный старт деятельности общеевропейской сети Изумруд в рамках Бернской конвенции к 2020 году и тем самым начать работать над достижением следующих ожидаемых результатов: (1) определение всех потенциальных районов Изумруд в целевых странах, (2) проведение научной оценки достаточности этих мест для обеспечения долгосрочного выживания целевых видов и сред обитания и (3) разработка конкретных руководящих принципов в отношении национального обозначения и управления утвержденных мест деятельности в рамках Сети Изумруд.

Первые 16 месяцев реализации данного Направления деятельности включали стартовый этап проекта и его первый полный год выполнения. Данный период времени был посвящен **(1) восстановлению групп Сети Изумруд в семи целевых странах**, при этом приоритет уделялся преемственности в работе в связи с первым проектом, который осуществлялся в 2009-2011 годах; **(2) распространению информации о новом проекте и его задачах** среди различных участников и потенциальных партнеров, как на национальном уровне в целевых странах, так и на европейском уровне, включая институциональных партнеров Совета Европы и Секретариат Бернской конвенции; **(3) организации стартового мероприятия проекта**, где все целевые страны могли обменяться своим опытом, рабочими планами и мнениями о реализации проекта и **(4) организации первых национальных мероприятий в целевых странах и дальнейшему пересмотру и развитию баз данных Сети Изумруд**.

Основным вопросом этого первого года реализации проекта было определение дополнительных районов осуществления проекта Изумруд – помимо тех, которые уже были определены и описаны в первом проекте, осуществлявшемся в 2009-2011 годах (ожидаемый результат 1). Стартовая встреча и национальные мероприятия, которые проходили в течение 2013 года, были посвящены обмену мнениями и подготовке национальных стратегий по определению дополнительных районов, подходящих для Сети и ее задач.

С самого начала первого проекта в 2009 году страны выбирали районы, готовили описание своего национального биоразнообразия и изложение экологических особенностей этих районов. Все страны уже предложили основные районы дикой природы на своих территориях при присоединении к Сети Изумруд. Эти районы имеют особо важное значение и вносят значительный вклад в сохранение в долгосрочном плане видов и мест обитания европейского значения. Большинство из этих районов уже защищаются на национальном уровне, иногда строгим образом, на основании необходимого национального законодательства и часто конкретных планов управления.

При этом в настоящее время выявилась трудность в определении новых районов, дополнительно к тем, которые уже защищаются на национальном уровне и часто являются районами дикой природы, для того чтобы предложить их при присоединении к Сети (конкретные задачи проекта). Во всех странах возникшие трудности связаны с тем, что большая часть национальной территории активно используется для сельскохозяйственной деятельности, включая и лесное хозяйство, а также с учетом других социально-экономических потребностей и деятельности, связанной с повседневной жизнью местных сообществ.

На стартовой встрече проекта в апреле 2013 года было четко продемонстрировано, что основные защищенные районы в странах будут недостаточны для того, чтобы ответить на требования Сети Изумруд. И хотя в этих странах имеются более широкие и более дикие

районы, чем в весьма фрагментированных странах Европейского Союза, тем не менее, необходимо определить дополнительные районы, которые еще не защищены на национальном уровне, в том числе и те районы, где осуществляется сельскохозяйственная и иная социальная деятельность. Для того чтобы Сеть Изумруд имела полный характер, требуется, чтобы районы в рамках одной страны:

- представляли собой хорошее покрытие распределения в биогеографическом регионе в стране;
- представляли хорошее покрытие разнообразия в биогеографическом регионе в стране;
- представляли значительное покрытие общего региона, представленного в стране;
- представляли эффективную связь с аналогичными защищаемыми средами обитания поверх международных границ для поддержания структуры и функций, а также выживания зависящих от этого видов;
- включали потенциальные "мостики" для распространения существ из одного района в другой;
- представляли собой хороший баланс генетического и экологического разнообразия;
- представляли собой хорошо адаптированную сеть к различным формам распространения в Европе.

В марте 2013 года во всех целевых странах началась научная работа по определению дополнительных потенциальных районов Изумруд (ожидаемый результат 1) и, как об этом просили, к концу января 2014 года была представлена их окончательная база данных районов Изумруд на 2013 год. Результаты, полученные национальными группами после завершения проверки качества, осуществлявшейся научными и техническими экспертами проекта, могут быть резюмированы следующим образом:

Таблица 1: Потенциальные районы Изумруд: количество районов и общая территория, охватываемая на январь 2014 года

| Страна | Районы | Общая территория (га) | % покрытия страны в 2012 году | % покрытия страны в 2014 году |
|---------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Армения | 13 | 296 326,28 | 7,68 | 9,88 |
| Азербайджан | 12 | 845 538,42 | 11,46 | 9,72 |
| Беларусь | 16 | 980 626,00 | 4,39 | 4,71 |
| Грузия | 21 | 919 934,05 | 8,42 | 13,20 |
| Молдова | 18 | 388 465,00 | 12,24 | 11,53 |
| Россия | 923 | 31 163 623,34 | 7,13 | 8,0 |
| Украина | 159 | 4 469 530,00 | 7,20 | 7,4 |
| Итого: | 1154 | 39 040 691,29 | В среднем: 7,15 | В среднем: 9,2% |

Можно сделать вывод о том, что имеется хороший рост общего покрытия предлагаемых районов Изумруд, по сравнению с тем же процентом на конец предыдущего проекта (ожидаемый результат 1). И хотя в таких странах, как Молдова и Азербайджан, как представляется, снизилось общее покрытие национальной территории, с точки зрения их районов в рамках проекта Изумруд, важно подчеркнуть, что границы районов часто меняются и будут рассматриваться как окончательные лишь на конец срока осуществления данного Направления деятельности. Мы ожидаем, что благодаря определенной работе по выявлению новых районов в 2014 году, страны будут готовы начать научную оценку районов Изумруд во всех семи целевых странах (ожидаемый результат 2) в 2014 году.

Следует также отметить, что в большинстве этих стран (Армения, Беларусь, Грузия, Республика Молдова и Украина) создание Сети Изумруд было включено в национальные стратегии биоразнообразия, что является очевидным свидетельством сильной приверженности

стран процессу Изумруд, этой деятельности и их международным обязательствам в сфере защиты биоразнообразия (ожидаемые результаты 3 и 4).

Данное Направление деятельности содействовало также улучшению в целевых странах знаний биоразнообразия на своих территориях. Данные о биоразнообразии в этих странах в значительной степени были обогащены и, в частности, помогли обновить знания о видах и местах обитания, находящихся под угрозой и имеющих европейское значение, в отношении которых можно было найти лишь самую общую и зачастую устаревшую информацию в специализированной литературе.

Во время первого года реализации группа координации проекта в Совете Европы (один менеджер проекта, один помощник и два научных эксперта) помогла создать потенциал в национальных группах проекта, с учетом требований Сети и ее методологии. Это также способствовало обмену опытом между самими целевыми странами и со странами, работающими в Сети Натура 2000. Был повышен потенциал участников и во время национальных мероприятий, которые были организованы в этих странах, а также на встрече руководящего комитета проекта. На протяжении всего 2013 года обеспечивалась поддержка со стороны группы помощи, благодаря группе координации, по всем юридическим, научным и техническим вопросам, которые поднимались национальными группами в ходе работы по их новым базам данных в рамках проекта Изумруд.