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DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

European Union – Council of Europe Joint Programme for the preparation of the Emerald Network of Nature Protection Sites, phase II

DCI-ENV/2012/289-173

Version 2, May 2014

Beneficiaries/target countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Russian Federation and Ukraine.

Project implementation period: October 2012 – October 2016

1. Policy background

Protected areas (PA) are a vital contribution to the conservation of the world's natural resources. Their values range from the protection of natural habitats and associated flora and fauna, the maintenance of environmental stability of surrounding regions, the protection of ecosystem services, to mitigation of climate change. Ecological networks of protected areas can positively influence the conditions for the survival of species populations in the fragmented natural areas and human dominated landscapes in Europe. In addition, they allow for a suitable and sustainable use of natural resources through the interconnectivity of their physical elements with the landscape and existing social/institutional structures.

The 10th meeting of the Conference of Parties (COP) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted a [Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets](#), which includes 20 targets. The document represents a flexible framework relevant to all biodiversity related conventions and aims at promoting the effective implementation of the CBD. More particularly, target 17 requires that “by 2015, each Party has developed, adopted as a policy instrument and commenced implementing an effective, participatory and updated national biodiversity strategy and action plan”. When it comes to protected areas, target 11 requires that “by 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water areas, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes.”

In addition, the Conference of the Parties adopted a [Decision on Protected Areas](#), whose overall purpose is to support and strengthen the implementation by 2020 of comprehensive, effectively managed and ecologically representative national and regional systems of protected areas (both terrestrial and marine areas). This global network of PA will contribute to achieving the Aichi biodiversity targets and to significantly reduce and halt the current rate of biodiversity loss. The Decision also includes clear objectives and tasks for the global, regional, national and sub-national levels.

At pan European level, the [Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats](#) was opened to signature in 1979 and came into force in 1982. The convention aims to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats, to promote cooperation between states, to monitor and control endangered and vulnerable species, and to assist Contracting Parties on legal and scientific issues. Moreover, the Bern Convention is a useful tool for the regional implementation of the CBD at pan European level.

On 3 May 2011, the European Commission adopted "[The 2020 biodiversity strategy: our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU biodiversity strategy to 2020](#)". Despite a growing network of protected areas and various other actions, pressure on Europe's biodiversity is increasing while only 17% of EU's species and habitats present a favourable conservation status: the Commission hopes to redress the balance. Among the targets of this new Strategy there is the full implementation by 2020 of the [Directive 2009/147/EC of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds](#) (Birds Directive) and [Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora](#) (Habitats Directive), reinforced by measurable targets on improving the current conservation status of habitats and species under both Directives.

Natura 2000, the EU-wide network of protected areas is the instrument of the EU Member States to implement and manage the biodiversity areas of European importance in accordance with the Birds and the Habitats Directives. It now covers some 18% of the territory of the EU-27 and has been extended to marine areas. It is the cornerstone of EU biodiversity strategy. The EU being a Contracting Party to the Bern Convention, Natura 2000 was set-up to comply with the legal obligations set under Article 4 of the Bern Convention.

The [Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest](#), launched by the Council of Europe in the framework of the Bern Convention is an equivalent initiative for neighbouring countries to the EU. Both the Convention and the Habitats Directive are international legal instruments aimed at the conservation of wild flora, fauna and natural habitats. Their main differences come from the territory they apply to (European Union Member States for the Directive and the whole of Europe and part of Africa for the Convention) and to the legal approach they are built on (hard legislative approach for the EU Directives and soft law approach for the Bern Convention).

In December 2010, at its 30th meeting, the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention endorsed the proposed [Calendar for the implementation of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest 2011-2020](#), presenting a step-by step planning of the setting-up of the Emerald Network, where work is divided in the following three Phases:

Phase I: Selection of potential sites suitable for ensuring the long-term survival of the "Emerald" species and habitats (at country level) and delivery of database with scientific information to the Bern Convention Secretariat;

Phase II: Evaluation of the efficiency of the proposed sites done on a species by species and habitat by habitat basis (at (sub)regional and biogeographical level), in cooperation with the European Environment Agency; Submission of the final database site list -after the end of the scientific assessment process- for final adoption by the Bern Convention's Standing Committee

Phase III: Designation at national level of the Emerald sites, for integration into the Emerald Network.

2. Action background

This project builds on the results achieved during the Council of Europe/European Union Joint Programme called "*Support for the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity Programme of Work on Protected Areas in the EU Neighbourhood Policy East area and Russia: extension of the implementation of the EU's NATURA 2000 principles through the Emerald Network*", successfully implemented in the period 2009-2012 (DCI-ENV/2008/149-825).

Its overall objectives were to extend the philosophy and methodology of Natura 2000 to 7 target countries from Central and Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus, promoting the Bern Convention and EU's environmental principles in the field of habitats and species protection out of the borders of the European Union and helping these countries meeting internationally agreed commitments. The

project also helped the target countries foster the exchange of information on key challenges and best practices in implementing the CBD Programme of Work on Protected Areas as well as their obligations under the Bern Convention.

More specifically, it aimed at the identification of potential sites of the Emerald Network in the 7 target countries (covering the above-mentioned Phase I of the Emerald Network process). In particular, the objectives, which varied from one country to another depending on the surface area of the country and the state of development of the Emerald Network there, were the following:

- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova: identification of all of potential Emerald sites and their corresponding technical/ecological database;
- Ukraine: identification of 80 % of the potential Emerald sites¹ and their corresponding technical/ecological database;
- Belarus and the Russian Federation²: identification of 50 % of the potential Emerald sites their corresponding technical/ecological data;

The Joint Programme resulted in the identification of 957 potential Emerald sites of a total surface of 357.000 km² in ENP East region and Russia (see Table 1 below for more details). These results correspond to the expectations for the final project delivery objectives. The final project results equally show that countries have been able to achieve their objectives in terms of sites' GIS distribution maps, they have gained very good skills when using the Emerald Software (N2000 Software) and are now proficient on the requirements of the ecological networks and their constitution process.

Table 1: Number of proposed Emerald sites, total area and % coverage for each of the countries:

Number of sites and total area			
Country	Number	Total AREA (ha)	% country coverage
Armenia	9	228814.28	7.68
Azerbaijan	10	992515.42	11.46
Belarus	12	912241.00	4.39
Georgia	20	586831.50	8.42
Republic of Moldova	17	414230.00	12.24
Russian Federation	740	28 269 014,30	7,13
Ukraine	149	4348432.54	7.20
Total:	957	35,708,479	7.15

When it comes to the ecological/technical databases of the potential Emerald sites, national Emerald teams from the 7 countries have achieved to deliver the final data as foreseen in the project objectives and within the given deadlines. Some minor gaps remain in terms of ecological data and site identification – although a major part of the technical inconsistencies was corrected at the beginning of 2012 – in particular for the Republic of Moldova, where some delays in the collection of ecological data intervened, causing the achievement of approximately 80% of the identification of potential sites, although 100% were expected. The achievement rate for the other countries was: 100% for Armenia, 100% for Azerbaijan, 100% for Georgia, 80% for Ukraine and 50% for the Russian Federation and Belarus.

¹ The estimation of potential Emerald sites in a given country at the beginning of the project was based on the scientific assessment of the presence of threatened species and habitats on its territory. The methodology is the one used by the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity for Natura 2000.

² The Action targeted 15 Republics in the Russian Federation.

Significant progress was also achieved in channelling and assembling in a coherent manner the knowledge and national expertise in the biodiversity field in each partner country, as well as in updating the national data on the population and distribution of species and habitats, through the financing of field visits. Building up countries' capacities while preparing the Emerald Network brings the target countries closer to EU methods and standards on nature and biodiversity conservation. The project activities also contributed to raise, even more, the attention of national authorities on the need to continuously manage and monitor their biodiversity.

The exercise of building up a network of sites comparable to the EU's Natura 2000 is also beneficial to the international efforts e.g. to provide for a resilient and effective network of protected areas to mitigate the effects of climate change on the distribution of species and natural habitats.

In all participating countries, the implementing organisation has been the relevant national authority (Ministry of Environment/of natural resources and Environment, etc.) alone or in cooperation with a national NGO on nature conservation. In addition to promoting the participation of civil society, the project fostered the cooperation and the exchange of scientific information between the NGOs, representatives of scientific organizations and research institutes and national governments.

3. Geographical area and target groups

The countries covered by the project are the ENP East countries (i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine) and the Russian Federation that were also targeted by the predecessor project. The target groups are the relevant Ministries (which will be responsible for the designation of the Emerald sites at national level) and stakeholders working on the national biodiversity strategies and in nature conservation. The national Emerald teams, created in the frame of the first project will be associated and will contribute to this project, under the guidance of the national Ministries.

4. Objective, purpose and expected results

4.1. Overall objective

The overall objective of the project is 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.

4.2. Specific objectives

Specifically, the project aims at achieving a 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.

4.3. Results and activities

The main strategy of the project is to assist nature protection at pan-European level by supporting the implementation of the Emerald Action Plan of the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest (2011-2020), in the ENPI East and the Russian Federation.

The expected results at the end of the project are:

1. The outstanding potential Emerald sites of protected areas in all target countries will have been identified and their ecological databases completed.
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.
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.

The activities which will lead to the achievement of the project expected results are:

Completing the identification of the potential Emerald sites in all target countries

- Russian Federation³ and Belarus: Completing the identification of the remaining 50% of the potential Emerald sites in the countries and collecting and delivering the ecological technical data linked to these additional sites by the national Emerald teams.
- Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova: Completing the identification of the remaining 20% of potential Emerald sites in both countries and collecting and delivering the ecological technical data linked to these additional sites by the national Emerald teams.

The activities leading to the achievement of this objective include data collection and ecological description of sites which will include:

- a) Sites database for the potential Emerald sites with all respective ecological data, including information on general site character, quality, importance and ownership of the site;;
- b) Digital boundaries for all proposed Emerald sites in GIS;
- c) Distribution maps of selected species and habitats in GIS;
- d) Population estimate and distribution per biogeographical region in each country of all species and habitats of Resolutions No. 4 (1996) and No. 6 (1998) of the Bern Convention and Annex I of the Habitats Directive;
- e) Site protection status at national and regional level.

Assessing the sufficiency of the potential Emerald sites to ensure the long term survival of Bern Convention species and habitats (fully compatible with the EU Habitats and Bird Directive) in the seven target countries

- Preparation of the ecological and technical data delivered through the first project on the proposed Emerald sites and correction of gaps if relevant for the beginning of Phase II; production of reference lists per biogeographic region on all species and habitats and quality assessment of the data delivered during the first Emerald network project in 2011.
- Assessment of the sufficiency of the proposed Emerald sites to ensure the long term survival of species and habitats (in collaboration with the European Environment Agency and the European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity), through biogeographical and bilateral Seminars. When necessary, adjustments to the size and/or number of proposed Emerald sites on the national level (national or sub-national responsibility) will be made.

³ The Action targets 15 Republics in the Russian Federation.

The activities leading to the achievement of this objective is the organisation of national technical and biogeographical Seminars for all target countries (for more details see table 2 below). Phase II of the Emerald Network constitution process consists in assessing at biogeographical level, to which extent candidate Emerald sites will ensure the long term survival of species and habitats listed in the Bern Convention's Resolutions⁴. The first step of the biogeographic assessment procedure is the establishment of reference lists per biogeographic region, database submissions (ecological data) and the following quality assessment/quality control procedures. The assessment is organised by regions and the map is based on potential natural vegetation (Emerald and Natura 2000 Networks use the same biogeographical regions map). The objective of the assessment is to check whether the proposed sites host sufficiently large and representative samples of each habitat and species or give a proportionate response for the rarest habitats and species.

The results of the biogeographic seminars are:

- biogeographic reference lists of species and habitats for each region;
- conclusions on sufficiency of proposals by each country for each species and habitats in each biogeographic region;
- a first agreed list of proposed Areas of Special Conservation Interest per biogeographic region, to be submitted to the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention for adoption.

Developing specific guidelines on the management of the Emerald sites, reporting and monitoring measures for the 7 target countries

In order to facilitate the work of national authorities in Phase III of the Emerald Network constitution process, specific guidelines on the management of the Emerald sites for Eastern and Central European countries and South Caucasus will be developed and discussed with the national teams, national and local NGOs and the responsible Ministry and afterwards proposed for adoption by the Bern Convention Standing Committee.

These guidelines are planned to be developed (and later implemented) with the help of national and local NGOs and stakeholders/actors in addition to the Emerald team members. Their involvement (also in data gathering) is essential and has been ensured in the first Emerald project (2009-2012).

Wider public participation and transparent information-sharing should be encouraged, in particular through specific actions at national level. Various issues such as agriculture and forestry management, which are of particular importance in the target countries, will be debated and included in the guidelines to be developed.

Information on the Natura 2000 management plans and reporting obligations will be provided to the Emerald national teams in the countries, as well as to the relevant national authorities, during the biogeographical and bilateral Seminars to be organised in the frame of the project.

Improving trans-boundary cooperation in the region, through the Emerald Network setting-up process

The current project, operating through a regional approach, will also aim at improving the conservation potential of many proposed Emerald sites which straddle country borders. Reaching higher levels of co-operation between the countries involved, in view of bringing closer and enhancing the future management practices of the Emerald sites, is the fourth specific objective of the current project.

⁴ Resolution No. 4 (1996) of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention listing natural habitats requiring specific conservation measures and Resolution No. 6 (1998) of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention lifting the species requiring specific habitat conservation measures.

Phase II of the Emerald Network process is aimed at involving national NGOs and their representatives in the biogeographical process of evaluation of the sites' sufficiency. In addition to seeking the involvement of ecological NGOs in the Emerald process, as already successfully initiated in Phase I, work within the project should be coordinated with other actors in the field of nature conservation, in particular with IUCN and UNEP/GEF.

Communication and consultation between national authorities in charge of setting-up the Emerald Network and local authorities and actors shall be improved when necessary, thus contributing to the establishment of a broader and coherent systemic approach to conservation. All meetings planned in the project will also be organised accordingly for the purpose.

The first five months of the project lifetime will be dedicated to an inception phase consisting in consultations with the European Commission, the EEA, and relevant Ministries and the Emerald teams participating in the first Emerald project; these will focus on the implementation of the objectives and the work plan. The involvement of nature conservation NGOs from the national and local levels in the target countries will be seek out.

The detailed activity planning is indicative and is planned to be organised in the following way: see Table 2 below on the Activities planned through the project 4-year lifespan.

Table 2: Activities planned through the project 4-year lifespan (provisional)

Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
Jan./ May	<p>Inception Phase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality check of the ecological and technical data delivered in 2011 for each site for all target countries Project kick-off meeting (Strasbourg, France, 2 days): discussion on the project priorities and the timeframe planning of the project; exchange of information/ideas on the Natura 2000/Emerald management plans and reporting obligations; dialogue on conservation standards for future Emerald sites, in particular the ones which straddle border Re-establishment of the national Emerald teams, cooperation with NGOs + involvement of responsible at Ministry level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National technical Emerald Seminars for all target countries (7 meetings x 2 days each) aiming at facilitating the preparatory biogeographical Seminars to follow during the year (finalisation of the N2000/Emerald methodology compatibility and involving local authorities, local stakeholders and national NGOs) Continuation of the consultations on the guidelines on the Emerald Network management and reporting and monitoring mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National level: follow-up to the preparatory biogeographical seminars: additional field research identification of the remaining potential sites and the sites data collection and delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 to 4 Bilateral Seminars (1.5 days, venue tbd) for target countries where there is a need
June July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National level: identification of the remaining potential sites and the sites data collection and delivery in MD, UA, BL and RU; field research and data gathering through the national Emerald teams; technical; data correction and if necessary identification of additional sites for AZ, AM & GE Consultations on the guidelines on Emerald Network management and reporting and monitoring mechanisms, including the agriculture/forestry activities and forests fires management in Emerald sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparatory Biogeographical Seminar (1.5 days, Georgia, Tbilisi) for Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia 		
Aug.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalisation of specific guidelines on Emerald sites' management and reporting for Central and Eastern European countries and South Caucasus; submission to the Group of Experts on Ecological Networks & Bern Convention Standing Committee 	
Sept. Oct.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparatory Biogeographical Seminar (1.5 days, Kiev, Ukraine) for the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Belarus and Russia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Biogeographical Seminar (5 days, venue tbd) for all target countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final project event (1.5 days, Strasbourg or Brussels) for dissemination/awareness raising on project results and discussion of work ahead at national level on the designation of Emerald sites
Nov.	1 st Steering Committee	2 nd Steering Committee	3 rd Steering Committee	
Dec.				

5. Consistency with EC policy, programming framework and aid effectiveness agenda

The project is fully consistent with Targets 1, 2 and 6 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 (COM (2011) 244final) on: halting the deterioration in the conservation status of species and habitats in the EU by implementing the EU legislation (Habitats and Birds Directives); establishing green infrastructure to restore at least 15% of degraded ecosystems; and stepping up EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

Today, the Natura 2000 Network is largely established in the EU, however according to the last assessments, only 17% of the species and habitats have a favourable conservation status. In this context, major efforts on the operational implementation and management of the Natura 2000 sites are foreseen. The European Commission is currently planning to launch a new biogeographical process aimed at analysing the results of the assessments of the conservation status of species and habitats in the EU and to plan possible future measures to be implemented by Member States to redress the situation. Coordinated and collaborative approaches among EU Member States are considered to be the most suitable answer to the loss of biodiversity, in particular within the shared biogeographical context.

The Emerald Network represents a useful tool for the conservation of areas of great ecological value and a framework for co-operation within a homogeneous network of areas covering the whole continent. By applying similar methods to the whole pan European area it can be expected that the level of protection enjoyed by the species that move across frontiers will improve. The Emerald Network thus promotes the coherence of species and habitats conservation standards throughout the European continent and its shared biogeographical regions. As provided for and planned in the 2020 Emerald Calendar, the development of Emerald guidelines on management, monitoring and reporting will be done in line with existing Natura 2000's tools, taking into account the new EU biogeographical process.

As foreseen in the [Criteria for assessing the National Lists of proposed Areas of Special Conservation Interest](#) and the procedure for examining and approving Emerald candidate sites, more detailed guidelines for sites' selection and for the evaluation concerning certain taxonomic groups (e.g., birds, fish) or environments (e.g., marine) will be further developed when countries involved in Phase II of the Emerald Network constitution process will have acquired more experience. Under the first Emerald Network project (2009-2011), several countries have already considered the inclusion of marine areas in the Network. This is a major development expected in the coming years.

Hence, this project is relevant to several of the priorities of 2011-2013 Environment and Natural Resources Thematic Programme (ENRTP) Strategy, namely its Priority 2 on Environment for Development: Biodiversity, forest conservation and desertification and Priority 3 on Strengthening environment and climate governance: encouraging implementation of and compliance with MAEs. The ENRTP Strategy aims at contributing to halting biodiversity loss and the degradation of the planet's key ecosystems. It also aims at supporting neighbouring countries' capacity to implement and gain ownership of their respective commitments in the major MAEs, including the CBD and the Bern Convention.

The project will provide inputs to the EU's environment and nature protection dialogues on a bilateral level, as well as to relevant regional activities of the Eastern Partnership.

6. Consistency with Partner Government(s) policies and strategies

The countries targeted by the proposed project are all signatories to both the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Bern Convention. Therefore the proposed activities are part of their commitments under these international treaties. The countries agreed to set up the Emerald Network through Resolution No. 3 (1996) of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention and have called on those in a position to do so to provide assistance to this end. Through the adoption of the Emerald 2011-2020 Calendar, the Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention have also agreed on a clear timeframe for the completion of the Network. The active participation of countries targeted by the first Emerald Network project (2009-2012) has proved their commitment in this sense.

Through the first Emerald Network Joint Programme, the 7 targeted countries have strengthened their administrative capacity in the field of nature conservation and biodiversity protection. The national authorities are working towards improving their contribution to the CBD Aichi global targets and to the Bern Convention also through a full implementation of the Emerald Network. In many of these countries, the constitution of the Emerald Network is already included in their respective National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plan. Most of the countries are already looking at the management and reporting tools for the Emerald sites, requesting for their quick adoption by the Bern Convention's Standing Committee, on the basis of the EU Natura 2000 example. The latter is also linked to their willingness to prepare an eventual future accession to the EU or to harmonise management of protected areas at pan European level.

An active effort will be done by the project team to liaise and coordinate scientific approaches with:

- target countries nature protection systems on a national and sub-national level (e.g. Zapovednik nature protection sites in the Russian Federation, Ukraine and other countries of the region);
- other relevant international protection regimes in which the seven partner countries participate (UNESCO World Heritage Sites, IUCN protection categories, Ramsar Convention, etc.).

7. Crosscutting Issues

Environmental sustainability is the essence of this nature protection project. Positive effects on climate change are expected, both on mitigation (forests, peatlands, and other sites as carbon sinks), as well as on adaptation (enhanced fire resistance and tempered effects inundation through protected forests and intact soils, greater resistance of permafrost zones through improved protection status,...). Depending on the international climate change negotiations, positive effects for site conservation can also be expected by international investments for the protection of forests and other habitats in ENPI East and Russia. Gender and human rights effects are not expected but shall nevertheless be studied in the framework of the national and regional project workshops. Good governance shall be enhanced through the application of good nature protection practices, strengthening also the participation of local populations in decision making.

The project will strive to support local ownership and public participation in the management of nature protection, by, among other measures, transparent information-sharing and reporting. National and local decision-makers will be invited to pro-actively address potential conflicts between nature protection and the users and/or habitants of the respective sites. Nature protection initiatives emanating from local populations and ethnic minorities shall wherever possible be integrated into and supported by the future Emerald network.

The issue of forest fire prevention shall also be addressed by the project.

8. Visibility

In addition to the provisions on visibility of Article 6 of Annex II, the Communication and Visibility manual for EU External Actions will be followed closely.

Visibility actions at national level will also be organised, using the various materials prepared in the frame of the first Emerald network project implemented between 2009 and 2011 (promotional video on the results in English and Russian, project booklet in English, French, Russian and local languages) as well as new ones to be developed in the frame of the Action. Two specific events, a kick-off and closing event are foreseen and should be used for the improvement of the visibility, the comprehension and ownership of the Emerald Network in the target countries.

9. Evaluation and audit

Evaluations and audits will be carried in accordance with the provisions of the Joint Declaration on cooperation and partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Commission signed on 3 April 2001, and the Framework Agreement between the Council of Europe and European Commission signed on 13 August 2004. Furthermore, the project shall be regularly monitored in the framework of external Results-oriented Monitoring (ROM) programme of the European Union.

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 	<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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Political stability within the countries ▪ National Emerald teams involved in the 1st Joint EU/Coe Programme are maintained

		<p>Emerald sites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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"> ▪ 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"> ▪ 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 Committee of the Bern Convention ▪ 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ National progress reports to CBD and Bern Convention ▪ National legislation on protected areas ▪ Management plans on protected areas ▪ 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 	<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 authorities from the targeted countries and the NGOs and international actors in the field of nature and biodiversity conservation

<p>Activities</p>	<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 ▪ 4 Bilateral Seminars when necessary <p><u>Expected result 3 - Developing guidelines on management plans for the Emerald sites, reporting and monitoring measures</u> <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 	<p><i>Means:</i></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
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	<p>Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks (2014)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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 for future Emerald sites, in particular the ones which straddle border, is established between the countries' national authorities 		
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