European Union/Council of Europe
Joint Programme
Emerald Network of Nature Protection Sites, Phase II
(DCI-ENV/2012/289-173)

Kick-off meeting
of the EU/CoE Joint Programme Emerald Network Phase II
Kiev (Ukraine), 24-26 April 2013
Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine

MEETING REPORT

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1.   Introduction

The kick-off meeting of the Joint EU/CoE Joint Programme "Preparation of the Emerald Network of Nature Protection Sites – Phase II" took place in Kiev from 24 to 26 April 2013. The event gathered representatives of national authorities responsible for nature conservation and protected areas from the seven target countries, leaders and members of the national Emerald teams and representatives from NGOs active in the field of nature conservation.

As the official launching event of the Joint Programme in the region, the meeting aimed at discussing the project objectives and expected results, planning the project activities for the 4 years ahead as well as presenting the requirements for the initiation of Phase II of the Emerald Network constitution process consisting of the assessment of the sufficiency of the Emerald site proposals by the target countries to ensure the long-term survival of the species and habitats of European importance from the Bern Convention lists.

The meeting was also the right fora for identifying future work paths for the further identification of potential Emerald sites in the target countries, for exchanging views on how the management and reporting on the Emerald sites will be organised as well as to debate the possible conservation standards for future Emerald sites.

2.   Opening remarks and presentations

Igor Ivanenko, Deputy Director of Protected Areas Department in the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine, welcomed the participants and expressed the appreciation that the project kick-off meeting takes place in Kiev. He confirmed the commitment of the Ukrainian authorities to the implementation of the project and its objectives, especially regarding the alignment of national legislation and practices with European standards of management and use of natural protected areas. He reminded that 151 sites on Ukrainian territory were proposed to join the Emerald Network and officially nominated as candidate Emerald sites by the Bern Convention Standing Committee. He concluded by stressing that the Ukrainian authorities count on the country's participation in the Emerald network project for helping improve their protected areas management and use practices.

Jan Plesnik, Chair of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention, recalled that an impressive total of 957 sites, proposed by the seven target countries during the first Emerald project implemented in 2009-2011, were successfully nominated as candidate Emerald sites in 2012 at the level of the Bern Convention. He stressed that more than half of the species of European importance holds their habitats in Eastern part of Europe, thus underlying the importance that the target countries step up their efforts to designate and quickly start managing their Emerald sites. With regards to the objectives of the project, there is a need for countries to quickly identify additional Emerald sites to complete the sufficiency of the Network coverage on their territories and allow for the successful organisation of the scientific evaluation of their candidate Emerald sites. He concluded that a remaining challenge is to ensure the process of evaluation is based on strong and updated scientific evidence, up-to-date date remaining a continuous preoccupation for all biodiversity related projects and programmes.

Olena Litvinenko, Deputy Head of the Council of Europe External Office in Ukraine, presented the work of the CoE Office in Ukraine and the Council of Europe priorities in the country, in particular judicial reform and anti-corruption activities. She underlined that the Office in Kiev is ready to support

the work of the national authorities in the implementation of the project as much as possible but confirmed their confidence in that all target countries will reach the project objectives – in particular the establishment of a Pan-European Ecological network, formed by the EU Natura 2000 and Council of Europe's Emerald Network which is fully operational by 2020.

Walter Tretton, Head of Operations on "Development related to infrastructure, energy, transport and environment" at the EU Delegation in Ukraine, underlined that, although the EU Delegation is responsible for the bilateral cooperation, the extension of network within EU/CoE joint actions, has been identified as one of the indicators of success of EU action in the country and region.

Jesús Laviña, Head of Unit at DG DEVCO, European Commission, recalled that the EU objectives in supporting the Emerald network are: 1) creating a pan-European network of protected areas by 2020 and 2) contributing to the achievement of the Nagoya biodiversity targets. The latter objective equally appears as a priority under environmental chapters in EU cooperation activities in the targeted ENP region. He expressed his appreciation with the results of the initial phase implemented during 2009-2011, aiming at identification of the sites of special interest, but stressed the need to ensure an efficient follow-up that should also include awareness-raising activities among large public as much as decision-makers and practitioners.

3. Project objectives and expected outcomes

Iva Obretenova, project manager at the Council of Europe, presented the project objectives, activities and expectations for the 4 years of project implementation ahead. The identification of additional Emerald sites and the organisation of one round of biogeographic Seminars for all target countries (Phase II of the Emerald Network constitution process), are the key expected outputs of the project.

Marc Roekaerts, scientific expert to the project, presented the results of the initial phase of the Emerald project, 2009-2011, summarized in the table below:

Total number of candidate Emerald sites and total area of country coverage			
Country	**Number of sites**	**Total area covered (ha)**	**% of country coverage**
Armenia	9	228 814,28	7,68
Azerbaijan	10	997 015,42	11,46
Belarus	12	912 241,00	4,39
Georgia	20	586 831,50	8,42
Moldova	17	414 230,00	12,24

Total number of candidate Emerald sites and total area of country coverage			
Country	Number of sites	Total area covered (ha)	% of country coverage
Russia	740	28 269 014,30	7,13
Ukraine	151	4 329 081,61	7,20
Total:	**959**	**35 737 228,11**	**7,15**

4.   Strategic development of the Emerald Network

Iva Obretenova further presented the results and expected results of recent and on-going processes aimed at ensuring an increased harmonisation between the Emerald and the Natura 2000 Networks, which strategically develop the Emerald Network constitution process. These developments have an impact on the current work by the national teams on the implementation of the Emerald Network. National Emerald leaders in all countries should be fully aware and closely follow these developments and adapt accordingly the work of their teams throughout the project implementation.

The most important recent and on-going changes include:

- a recent translation of Annex I to Resolution No. 4 (1996) on natural habitats requiring specific conservation measures into the EUNIS habitats classification;
- a comparison exercise between the species listed under Annex I to Resolution No. 6 (1998) and the list of species of Annex I of the Birds Directive and Annex II of the Habitat Directive, which resulted in a revised Annex 1 of Resolution No. 6 (1998) adopted by the Standing Committee in 2011;
- a similar comparison exercise currently taking place between the lists of habitats targeted by Resolution No. 4 (1996) of the Bern Convention and the Annex I of the Habitats Directive this year - this exercise will result in a revised Annex I to the Res. No. 4 in 2013;
- a newly adopted Resolution No. 8 (2012) on the national designation of ASCIs and their management and reporting;
- ongoing development of an Interpretation Manual for habitats from Res. 4 (1996), using the EUNIS habitats classification.

In conclusion, Iva Obretenova reminded that the meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological networks under the Bern Convention, which meets every year, is a particularly important forum for following and contributing to these on-going strategic developments on the Emerald Network. National Emerald leaders in the project are advised to be in close contact with the experts designated by their Ministries to follow the work of this Group. In some countries the member

of the Group of Experts is the same person as the Emerald project leader. For the rest of the countries, it is strongly recommended to strengthen cooperation at national level between these two persons.

5.   Emerald biogeographic process, Phase II of the Network constitution process

Otars Opermanis, expert from the National Museum of Natural History in Paris, presented the methodology of the Emerald biogeographical process, which will be used during the upcoming biogeographic Seminars for the project target countries. The methodology used for the assessment of the Emerald sites is largely inspired by the methodology of Natura 2000 biogeographic process. The idea behind the biogeographical process is not to assess the sites proposed as such, but their contribution to ensure the conservation of the Bern Convention species and habitats. He stressed the importance of the biogeographical process for reaching and ensuring consistency in terms of the network outcomes across Europe.

He addressed the difficulties that may arise in carrying the assessments, caused by remaining errors and inconsistencies in the Emerald databases delivered by the countries. This is why it is of vital importance for the successful implementation of Phase II that the maximum quality for national data is ensured, following the recommendations of Mr. Roekaerts.

Otars Opermanis detailed the principles and approaches applied to evaluate the sites proposed for individual species and habitats to be protected according to Res. 4 and Res. 6. He mentioned the specificities of the assessment approach for birds. He concluded by presenting how the seminars are organized practically, who is invited and what are the different steps before, during and after the seminar. All biogeographical Seminars will be concluded with the following outcomes:

- biogeographic reference lists of species and habitats for each target country;
- conclusions on sufficiency of proposals by each country for each species and habitats in each target country.

6.   National Emerald databases: current state of play and pathways for further development

All national Emerald team leaders presented the state of play of their Emerald database, as developed by the end of the initial phase if the Emerald project (2009-2011) and throughout the following year 2012.

Hasmik Ghalachyan, project leader in Armenia, underlined her country priorities for 2013 which consist of the identification of additional Emerald sites and improvement of trans-border cooperation for some candidate Emerald sites, in particular Lake Arpi which is trans-border with Javakheti National Park in Georgia. She further stressed that her team focused on ensuring cooperation with other biodiversity and in particular climate change related Conventions (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change) and projects. The country considers that the evaluation of the vulnerability of ecosystems of Armenia including in existing Emerald sites, based on modeling of changes in sites based on the Holdridge's Life Zone system will be a good basis for identifying additional Emerald sites as well as for planning conservation and adaptation measures in management of all Emerald sites.

Rashad Allahverdiyev, project leader in Azerbaijan, presented the 10 candidate Emerald sites, resulting of the identification of potential sites in the country during the initial phase of the Emerald project (20096-2011). He detailed their biodiversity features in terms of landscapes, species and habitats. He further underlined that during 2013 his team, located at the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources, will concentrate their efforts in improving the quality of the current Emerald database for Azerbaijan as well as in identifying additional potential Emerald sites.

Yuri Solovjev, project leader in Belarus, stressed that the key result from the implementation of the initial phase of the Emerald project during 2009-2011 was the following accession of Belarus to the Bern Convention, an important achievement for the country. He underlined that the accession has given a great impulse to biodiversity conservation in the country, including further potential Emerald site identification, increase in the areas covered by some existing protected areas and candidate Emerald sites, as well as increasing the state budget for sustainable development and management of protected areas. Two new sites are identified as suitable for joining the Network and will be thoroughly described with their ecological data during 2013; both of them are to become republican landscape reserves. Work on the Emerald Network further improved trans-border cooperation in protected areas conservation with Ukraine.

Kakha Artsivadze, project leader in Georgia, presented the country achievements in the initial phase of the Emerald project up to 2011 and the identification and official nomination as candidate Emerald sites of 20 areas in the country. He underlined the inclusion of the Emerald network implementation as a specific target in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan of Georgia, aiming at achieving 20% coverage of the country territory by the Network. The same Strategy foresees a full harmonization of the Georgian habitats classification with the EUNIS classification. The national Emerald team is currently working on the identification of additional sites suitable to join the Network, as well as on gathering of up-to-date data on some important species, such as large carnivores, the otter and the bezoar goat.

Angela Lozan, project leader in the Republic of Moldova, presented recent developments in the country since the finalisation of the initial phase of the Emerald project in 2011. She explained that the Emerald Network and its full establishment in the country have been included in the National Strategy for biodiversity and the relevant Action Plan. She further presented various visibility events which have taken place in the country in relation to the Network and underlined that they have been active in identifying areas and sites which can allow for strengthening cooperation with neighboring countries like Ukraine and Romania, through the setting-up of the Emerald Network.

Nikolay Sobolev, project leader in the Russian Federation, informed on recent developments in the national legislation relating to protected areas, in particular a new Governmental decree providing for a new Programme on biodiversity which includes a new target for total protected areas coverage which should reach 13.5% by 2020. In the Lenigradskaya Oblast a new Territorial Development Scheme includes all candidate Emerald sites on the territory of the region and is a model for development of the Network in cooperation with regional authorities. He further informed on the establishment of new National Parks and restoration works in some candidate Emerald sites in Russia. The national Emerald

team works towards evaluating the suitability of these areas for the Emerald Network. Cooperation was further established with other internationally funded projects, to support their work on the identification of additional potential Emerald sites: i.e. UNDP/GEF project on steppe biome in Russia; UNDP project on marine protected areas of Russia; a project funded by the Barents Euro-Arctic Council on High Conservation value forests in the northern part of European Russia.

Leonid Protsenko, project leader in Ukraine, presented the achievements of the Emerald team in the country since the end of 2011. He stressed that since the end of the previous project, the team has been active in particular through visibility activities such as the publication of a book on the Emerald network in Ukraine. The members of the team have been collecting ecological data through desk research and contacts with managers of protected areas in the country and updating existing Emerald data as delivered in 2011. Cooperation was ensured with other internationally and nationally funded projects in the field of biodiversity, such as the KfW project Feasibility Study for strengthening Protected Areas system in Ukraine, as well as a project funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands on the development of the Azov-Black sea Coastal marine ecological corridor. Through both projects valuable biodiversity data was published and existing practices of Pas management were reviewed. The latter objectives will support the current discussions on the future management practices to be implemented in the candidate Emerald sites in the country. The team is further working on identifying additional potential Emerald sites during 2013.

7. Quality analysis of Emerald databases by the project target countries

Following the introduction by Mr. Opermanis on the methodology of the biogeographical process, Mr. Roekaerts presented the data quality reports he has prepared for each target country ahead of the kick-off meeting. These reports were drafted individually for each country, guiding the national teams through quality control of their Sites database. **The follow-up to be given by national teams, in terms of data corrections and quality improvement, in addition to the selection of additional potential sites, will be a key issue for the individual country workshops and the work of the teams during 2013.** He reminded again that submitting correct GIS data and high quality individual data records for each species and habitats is critical for the initiation and analysis in phase II.

Marc Roekaerts reminded the different features of the Emerald Network database which need to be revised by the national Emerald teams. He provided examples in order to illustrate the typical inconsistencies encountered in all target countries'' databases. He presented the recent developments on the Emerald Standard Data Form (SDF) and Software, which are currently under development and reminded the Emerald team members that they need to closely follow all developments at the level of the Bern Convention Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks. The project manager in Strasbourg will keep the team leaders informed when a new Standard Data Form is adopted and the following revision of the Emerald Software (on the model of the new N2000 Software).

He further presented the draft EUNIS Habitats Interpretation Manual and its role and reminded that comments are still expected from the Emerald team members for improving the Manual and its features. A final deadline for receiving the comments was set for 26/06/2013. It was reminded that the

Manual is a tool to be used by the habitat/plan experts in the national Emerald teams for identifying the presence or non-presence of a certain habitat type in their country or given area.

8. Relevant "other" species and habitats to be proposed for inclusion on the Bern Convention Resolutions No. 4 (1996) and No. 6 (1998)

Iva Obretenova reminded the participants of the history behind this agenda item and the need for the update of the lists of species and habitats to be protected under the Emerald network (to correspond more closely to the ecology of the Eastern and South Caucasus countries). By the end of the initial phase of the project, the seven target countries have identified more than 600 species potential candidates for inclusion in the Res. 6 of the Bern Convention.

In January 2013, a coordination meeting between the EEA and the Bern Convention took place, in the framework of the Memorandum of Cooperation between the two organizations. It was decided to perform a "mechanical" sifting of the proposed species, using existing information sources. A full scientific screening at this stage seemed to be too time consuming and premature, taking into account the status of some of the species proposed. From the initially proposed 640 species, 206 remained after a "mechanical sift" based on three internationally recognized information sources:

1. EUNIS species module: http://eunis.eea.europa.eu/
2. IUCN Red List: http://www.iucnredlist.org/
3. The Catalogue of Life (species 2000): http://www.catalogueoflife.org/

Iva Obretenova underlined that updating the lists of species and habitats for the Emerald Network is a responsibility of all Contracting Parties to the Bern Convention. 6 out of the 7 target countries are Parties to the Convention and the decision on proposing a new species using the adopted Information Form for new species and habitats (adopted by the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention in 2011) lies with national authorities.

Iva Obretenova and Marc Roekaerts made some recommendations to the national authorities present at the meeting (for more concrete recommendation please see the [explanatory document presented at the meeting](#)) and in particular: investigating if the relatively high numbers of Invertebrate and Plant species cannot be handled through the protection of their specific habitat. If this habitat is already mentioned in Resolution 4, it can be suggested to add the species names to the Interpretation Manual of Resolution 4 habitats, rather than listing the species separately on Resolution 6. If the habitat is not listed yet, one could investigate if such habitat needs to be listed in the Resolution 4 (1996).

A discussion on the intentions of national authorities regarding the proposal for additional species has taken place. Nikolay Sobolev from the Russian Federation agreed with the proposal for looking at the habitat of the species first, before submitting any new proposal to Resolution No. 6. The Ukrainian authorities informed that they are going to launch a call for proposals for the identification and description of the possible new species and that the recommendations from the Bern Convention Secretariat and the ETC/BD are going to be followed. The delegate from Moldova underlined that cooperation between national authorities of the seven countries should be strengthened, in particular in

identifying possible new species for Res. 6 and in filling in the relevant Information form for submitting a proposal.

9. Cooperation with other projects and national NGOs and their involvement in Phase II of the Emerald constitution process

Iva Obretenova reminded that national Emerald teams in some of the target countries already make full use and enjoy fruitful cooperation between national authorities and NGOs, i.e. Russia, Georgia, Belarus, Ukraine. Cooperation with national and local NGOs is essential to the Emerald process, including because of the key role NGOs will play during Phase II or the biogeographical Seminars. NGOs hold up-to-date data on various species and habitats and often have expertise in some specific features of the Network setting-up process, such as GIS distribution maps, etc.

NGOs, but also various stakeholders such as hunters, anglers and land owners associations and land owners will also be invited to attend and contribute to the biogeographical Seminars. NGOs have a watch dog role during Phase II, as they can identify additional areas that should, according to them, be added to the list of Emerald sites in each country.

Jesús Laviña informed that 11 other projects, in addition to the Emerald network initiative, are funded by DG DEVCO and have a regional approach. He strongly advised national Emerald teams as well as the Emerald project manager in Strasbourg to seek to strengthen cooperation with 3 particularly relevant initiatives:

1) FLEG II - Improving Forest Law Enforcement and Governance, aiming at contribute to legal and sustainable forest management and utilisation, and improved local livelihoods in the same 7 target countries;

2) Clima East - Supporting Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation in the seven target countries – aiming at providing technical assistance to support climate change and to implement pilot projects on ecosystems-based approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation (permafrost, boreal forests, peatland re-wetting);

3) SEIS-ENP - Shared Environmental Information System, which aims at enhancing cooperation, content and infrastructure in the environmental field through enhanced networking with the various national capacities in the field. The main objective for SEIS-ENP is improving the reporting system on various environment indicators, one of which is biodiversity.

Lincoln Fishpool from BirdLife International made a presentation on how his organisation and the BirdLife national partners present in each of the seven target countries can contribute to the setting-up of the Emerald Network. He presented the methodology behind the identification of BirdLife Important Bird Areas (IBAs), including the difference criteria used, insisting on the fact that IBAs in the EU member state countries have been used as basis of reference for the identification of N2000 SPAs (sites designated under the Birds Directive). He concluded by reminding the all national partners of BirdLife can provide valuable species and suitable areas information to the national Emerald teams.

10. Management of the Emerald Network sites: draft guidelines on the management of Emerald sites, including with respect to climate change

Luydmila Dimitrova, protected areas expert from Bulgaria, presented the revised draft of a document aimed at providing guidance on the management of Emerald sites, including with respect to climate change. The document presents a step-by-step approach to planning the most suitable management measures to be put in place for each Emerald site, based on current practice in Natura 2000 sites. The draft document further provides recommendations and practical advices on how climate change mitigation and adaptation can be integrated in the management of Emerald sites, already from the planning phase.

The document is to be considered as a manual for decision-makers, managers and practitioners and represents an ideal model for planning and implementing management measures. It is the responsibility of these different types of actors to decide which of the proposed steps are suitable for implementation in a particular area. The guidance is going to be revised with any suggestion expressed during and after the meeting, so Emerald teams and national authorities from the countries targeted were invited to give their opinion.

Iva Obretenova reminded that after the discussions and contributions, the expert Luydmila Dimitrova is going to prepare a guidance document specifically aimed at the seven target countries, proposing recommendations on management planning and institutional frameworks for the implementation of the Emerald Network at national level.

During the round table discussions on the proposed guidance, many of the national delegates underlined that the part of the guidance related to the financing of the management and compensatory measures for the Emerald sites should be further developed. State financial resources are scarce and the need for identifying other funding sources is more and more pressing. Private/public partnerships and well as the involvement of business in the implementation of management measures is of great importance for ensuring the sustainability of the schemes. The use of other measures that pure financial compensations to land owners have been mentioned, such as reductions in tax payments, possible land exchanges, etc.

Igor Ivanenko underlined the difficulties encountered with private land users such as agriculture, which do not understand the scientific reasons behind the implementation of management measures. The question of motivation for land owners to "play the game" was equally raised, including how the recommendations on management measures will be understood by the non-biodiversity specialists.

Participants further stressed that there is a growing need for the adoption of management approaches that integrate how to mitigate critical ecosystems use and conservation both in protected areas and in their buffer zones. The management approaches should further address livelihoods and conservation issues through participation, connectivity and communication.

Discussions were also held on the issue of managing protected areas, including Emerald sites, in todays' multi-actor settings. National authorities, NGOs, economists, farmers, foresters, tourism

agencies and local communities all share a competence over the management and planning of protected areas today. These competing groups claim resources and power over the areas at stake and become inextricably interconnected. The challenge therefore is to find ways for the various stakeholders to work together most effectively to achieve both the nature conservation and the socio-economic objectives. It was stressed that there is a need to build capacities (1) to use sustainably the economic values of biodiversity and (2) to provide decision-makers and communities with information regarding economic impact of both environmental conservation and degradation.

Iva Obretenova reminded again how important it is to organise timely and targeted awareness-raising activities which accompany the Emerald scientific and political process at national level. These activities have to address relevant stakeholders (land owners, hunting organisations, NGOs and local communities), but equally general public. The main aim should be to explain the rationale behind the Emerald Network and thus chase away the preconceived ideas in larger public opinion about the practical translation of Emerald sites presence for local communities.

It was reminded that the designation of Emerald sites does not translate in a strict protection of the area, unless this is already the case for the Emerald sites which benefit from initial national designation. Many economic activities are allowed and often even recommended.

Luydmila Dimitrova explained that in Bulgaria, each management plan for a N2000 site includes a part on societal and economical aspects of the management planning and the different business activities and anthropogenic impacts in the area.

11. Reporting requirements under the Emerald Network

Iva Obretenova presented the rationale behind this agenda point, reminding that the Emerald Calendar 2020 foresees the development of guidelines on management, monitoring and reporting tools in line with N2000 tools. The newly adopted Resolution No. 8 (2012) includes a last paragraph indicating that the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks "will prepare a reporting format to be used for the purpose of this reporting". Again according the Resolution No. 8, the first reporting exercise for countries implementing the Emerald Network should take place in 2018.

Marc Roekaerts reminded the Reporting under Natura 2000 is governed by Article 17 of the Habitats Directive and Article 12 of the Birds Directive. EU legislation thus foresees that every six years the reporting "shall include in particular information concerning conservation measures" as well as on the "impact on conservation status" of habitats and species listed in the annexes of both Directives.

The three different exercises achieved so far by the EU regarding reporting have been very different in their scope. The first reporting period (1994 – 2000) was focused on progress in the legal transposition and implementation of the directive at national level and the progress achieved by the EU member states in establishing the Natura 2000 network, i.e. administrative aspects. The second reporting period (2001 – 2006) represented a first assessment of the conservation status based on best available data for each species and each habitat type. The third reporting exercise which is on-going

(2007 – 2012) focusses on assessment of conservation status, based on established monitoring system and on the assessment of the effectiveness of the Natura 2000 network.

Mr. Roekaerts presented three options for the development of the first reporting exercise under the Emerald Network, which will be debated at the next Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks.

4. Option 1: Follow entirely the third EU reporting exercise and its guidelines and implement them by 2018
5. Option 2: develop a reporting format focusing on the legal and administrative implementation of the Emerald Network
6. Option 3: option 2, with few elements of option 1, i.e. reporting focusing on administrative and legal implementation of the Network, including the selection of species and/or habitats for which conservation status information will have to be provided.

National delegates expressed a strong opinion in favor of the simplest possible reporting format for the first Emerald reporting exercise, as at the time the reporting will be due, countries will be very busy with the planning and implementation of management measures and can hardly start evaluating the impact of the Network on the species and habitats conservation. The delegation from Ukraine informed that they will be very much in favor of the development of a reporting format similar to the one currently in use for Ramsar sites.

Iva Obretenova urged the delegations to express their opinions at the next meeting of the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks (18-19 September 2013, Strasbourg), in charge of the development of the reporting format.

12. Ensuring the visibility of the Emerald Network: presentation of the project webpage and possible activities at national level for improving visibility

Iva Obretenova presented the newly launched webpage of the Emerald Network Joint Programme and informed that a separate webpage will be created for each of the target countries. Cooperation from the national project leaders is expected in enriching the content of the webpages, including in local languages in order to allow for a wider possible distribution at national and local level.

In addition, the Emerald Network Reference Portal was presented: www.coe.int/emerald-portal. The Portal is designed to become the main consultation and reference point for all persons involved in the Emerald Network setting-up. National Emerald leaders and members are advised to consult the Portal regularly for all reference documents adopted at the level of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention, relevant for the on the practical work on the constitution of the Emerald Network.

Many national delegations made proposals on materials which could be sent and published on the webpages dedicated to their countries.

13. Reaching the necessary conservation standards and practices for future Emerald sites

Luydmila Dimitrova made two presentations on Bulgaria's experience with N2000 and its implementation at legal and institutional level.

The national Biodiversity Conservation Act of Bulgaria provides the necessary legal framework for the establishment of a national ecological network, including both N2000 sites and territories to be protected outside N2000 sites. On this legal basis, a subsequent Regulation on the management planning of N2000 sites foresees that a management plan is elaborated for each N2000 site on the territory of Bulgaria. The management plan should cover the following features:

1. Nature habitats, habitats and populations of animal species (without birds) and plants;
2. Habitats of protected birds, as well territories where significant number of birds are concentrating during the reproduction, wintering or migration;
3. Conservation status of habitats and/or species;
4. Measures for achievement a favorable status on nature habitats and on habitats of species.

During the drafting of each Management plan (MP), all regional and local specifics, economic, social and cultural expectations of local communities are taken into account, in particular during the planning of the allowed and/or prohibited activities. These activities are clearly indicated in the MP, which is a subject of a public hearing before its approval by the Government and its publication in the country official gazette.

Luydmila Dimitrova further presented the institutional framework and capacities around which the management of each N2000 site in Bulgaria is organised. She insisted on the fact that the legal acknowledgement of the Emerald Network will facilitate the process of policy and regulatory developments for the Emerald sites. The planning tools for the Emerald sites should be integrated into mainstream planning practices and policies for local development. The latter will request effective inter-institutional governance assured by the creation of voluntary management partnerships.

Mrs. Dimitrova presented different options for the organisation of governing bodies responsible for the planning and implementation of the management measures for each Emerald site, including the pros and cons for each of the models presented – single state body; multi agency state body; multi stakeholder state body; multi stakeholder independent body and multi stakeholder government and non-government body.

In response to the several proposals for strengthening trans-border cooperation between the seven target countries, Mrs. Dimitrova equally gave an example of trans-border cooperation in N2000 sites management. The initiative concerns bilateral trans-border cooperation for the establishment of ecological corridors and the monitoring of conservation processes between Bulgaria and Romania (Comana and Lomovete N2000 sites).

She insisted on the criteria used for the establishment of a cross-border ecological corridor and the analysis of the biological diversity in the protected areas in the context of species movement.

14. Conclusions of the meeting

The meeting proved to be a good opportunity for national authorities and scientists from the Emerald teams in the seven target countries to meet and exchange ideas and practices, as well as to share information on the difficulties encountered and foreseen in the upcoming years and for the implementation of Phase II of the Emerald Network constitution process.

All countries showed good understanding of the requirements and methodology for the initiation of Phase II of the Network constitution process. The need for additional identification of potential Emerald sites, already made clear at the end of the first JP (2009-2011), is well understood by all national teams and efforts are deployed in this direction at national level.

Planning management measures for future Emerald sites in the countries is only starting to be considered. Particular difficulties are foreseen by many of the national authorities regarding the management of Emerald sites which are not corresponding to areas already protected at national level.

The need for initiating awareness-raising and visibility activities among all stakeholders linked to different types of land use was concluded, as a mean to inform on the objectives of the Network and thus chase preconceived ideas regarding the practical translation of the designation of an N2000/Emerald Network site.

Annex 1: Agenda of the meeting

Kick-off meeting of the EU/CoE Joint Programme Emerald Network Phase II
Kiev (Ukraine), 24-26 April 2013
Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine

Agenda

Wednesday, 24 April 2013	
09:00 – 09.40	1. **Opening and welcoming remarks** ▪ Deputy Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine ▪ Mr Jan Plesnik, Chair of the Standing Committee to the Bern Convention ▪ Mrs Olena Lytvynenko, Deputy Head of the Council of Europe Office in Ukraine ▪ Mr Jesús Lavina, DG DEVCO, European Commission
09:40 – 10:00	2. **Presentation of the project objectives, activities and expectations** ▪ Mrs Iva Obretenova, Project Officer, Council of Europe ▪ Mr Mark Roekaerts, Project scientific expert
10:00 – 10:10	3. **Strategic development of the Emerald Network** ▪ Mrs Iva Obretenova, Project Officer, Council of Europe
10:10 – 10h40	4. **Emerald Biogeographical process: presentation of the methodology** ▪ Mr Otars Opermanis, Expert, Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris ▪ Questions and discussion
10:40 – 11:50	5. **State of play of data on Emerald sites identification by the end of 2012 (including coffee break)** ▪ Mrs Hasmik Ghalachyan, Project leader (Armenia) ▪ Mr Rashad Allahverdiyev, Project leader (Azerbaijan) ▪ Mr Yuri Sovoljev, Project leader (Belarus) ▪ Mr Kakha Artsivadze, Project leader (Georgia) ▪ Ms Angela Lozan, Project leader (Republic of Moldova) ▪ Mr Rustam Sagitov, Project leader (Russian Federation) ▪ Mr Leonid Protsenko, Project leader (Ukraine)
11:50 – 12:10	6. **QA/QC of Emerald database: overview, examples of necessary corrections and requirements for entering Phase II of the Emerald Network constitution process** ▪ Mr Mark Roekaerts, Project scientific expert
12:10 – 12:30	7. **Reference lists of Emerald species and habitats present in the countries: overview and further needs** ▪ Mr Mark Roekaerts, Project scientific expert
12:30 – 14:00	**Lunch**
14:00 – 14:15	8. **Emerald Standard Data Form (SDF) and Software** ▪ Mr Mark Roekaerts, Project scientific expert
14:15 – 14:30	9. **GIS distribution data: overview of achievements and requirements** ▪ Mr Mark Roekaerts, Project scientific expert

14:30 – 14:45	10. **EUNIS Habitats Interpretation Manual** ▪ Mr Marc Roekaerts, Project scientific expert
14:45 – 15:10	11. **Relevant "Other" species and habitats: draft proposals for updating the Bern Convention lists** ▪ Mrs Iva Obretenova, Council of Europe ▪ Mr Marc Roekaerts, Project scientific expert
15:10 – 15:40	12. **Discussion on the intentions of national authorities regarding the proposal of additional species and habitats to the Bern Convention lists** ▪ National authorities and experts from target countries
15:40 – 16:00	**Coffee break**
16:00 – 16:40	13. **Cooperation with other regional and national initiatives in the field of nature protection and protected areas**
16:40 – 17:30	14. **Cooperation with national and local NGOs and their involvement in Phase II of the Emerald constitution process** ▪ Mr Lincoln Fishpool, BirdLife International ▪ Questions and discussion
18:30	**Dinner**

Thursday, 25 April 2013	
09.30 – 10:00	15. **Management of the Emerald Network sites: Presentation of draft guidelines on the management, including with respect to climate change** ▪ Mrs Lyudmila Dimitrova, external consultant to the Council of Europe
10:00 – 11:00	16. **Round table on national considerations regarding the management of future Emerald sites** ▪ National authorities and experts from target countries
11:00 – 11:20	**Coffee break**
11:20 – 11:40	17. **Possible reporting formats and requirements on the Emerald Network** ▪ Mr Marc Roekaerts, Project scientific expert
11:40 – 12:10	18. **Round table on national considerations regarding possible Emerald Network reporting requirements** ▪ National authorities and experts from target countries
12:10 – 12:30	19. **Ensuring the visibility of the Emerald Network: presentation of the project webpage and possible activities at national level for improving visibility**
12:30 – 14:00	**Lunch**
14:30 – 17:30	20. **National workshop on the setting-up of the Emerald Network in Ukraine (for the Ukrainian Emerald national team only)** Mediator: Mr Mark Roekaerts, Project scientific expert
14:30 – 17:30	21. **Working group on sub-regional cooperation and on reaching the conservation standards for future Emerald sites** Mediator: Mrs Lyudmila Dimitrova, external consultant to the Council of Europe ▪ Existing national legal base for protected areas and possible ways for

	including the Emerald Network and its requirements (including case study: Bulgaria and its experience with N2000) ▪ Preparing for managing Emerald sites and ensuring the long term survival of the Emerald species and habitats: institutional models and capacity assessment ▪ Bilateral and transborder cooperation in the field - Ecological corridors and monitoring of processes
17:30 – 17:45	**22. Conclusions and closing of the meeting**
18:30	**Dinner**

Friday, 26 April 2013
08:30 – 17:00 **Field research visit to Kanevskyi Nature Reserve**