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**THE PAN-EUROPEAN ECOLOGICAL NETWORK:  
STATE OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NETWORK - MESSAGE  
TO THE MINISTERS AND POLICYMAKERS**

submitted by

the Council of Europe

through the Ad Hoc Working Group of Senior Officials

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT



UNITED NATIONS



## DEVELOPING THE PAN-EUROPEAN ECOLOGICAL NETWORK

### Message to the Ministers and Policymakers

*"We endorse the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (...) as a framework for the conservation of biological and landscape diversity (...). We call for the promotion of nature protection, both inside and outside protected areas, by implementing the European Ecological Network, a physical network of core areas linked by corridors and supported by buffer zones or other appropriate measures, thus facilitating the dispersal and migration of species".*

Twelve years have passed since the Ministers for Environment and Heads of Delegation of the Region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) made this solemn undertaking at the end of the third encounter, « An Environment for Europe » in Sofia in 1995.

The challenges announced in Sofia are still valid. They are taken up in the Millennium Declaration (New York, 2000) and in the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, 2002). In Kyiv in 2003, during the last ministerial conference, the representatives of the 51 governments present expressed the wish to adopt the appropriate measures and intensify their efforts to improve the global environment. They reiterated their share of political responsibility for the goal of halting the biodiversity loss by 2010 and undertook to provide the necessary resources to set up a Pan-European Ecological Network (PEEN).

As a central component of the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy adopted in 1995, PEEN is now regarded by European States as a key instrument for conserving and managing species, ecosystems, habitats and landscapes, within a harmonious global approach to spatial planning that contributes to the sustainable development of the peoples of Europe. It has also become a major instrument for implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity in Europe.

The Resolution on Biodiversity adopted in Kyiv sets out three successive practical phases by the 2010 deadline:

- Design and development of national action plans and ecological networks ;
- Formulation and implementation of appropriate plans for managing the components of the national ecological networks ;
- Mainstreaming PEEN in sectoral policies

The results obtained so far provide important points of satisfaction.

The challenges and the achievements in the implementation of PEEN indicate the road ahead for political action to achieve the 2010 goal.

## I THE CHALLENGES

We know the disappearance of species and habitats is an age-old phenomenon, linked to major natural cycles. However, globalisation of the economy and of social relations is intensifying the pressures on the environment; it increases demands on natural resources and ecosystem services and combines with climate change to exert ever-greater pressure on biological and landscape diversity. The acceleration of this phenomenon over the last few decades has disturbing impacts for the economy and human well-being, and could jeopardise the sustainable development to which the population aspires if no action is taken. Europe is

no exception to this planet-wide trend; the wildlife and natural habitats of the Pan-European area are also under threat.

### **Why a Pan-European Ecological Network?**

Loss of biological and landscape diversity often originates in causes and phenomena which transcend a country's geographical boundaries, such as cross-border pollution and, above all, climate change, which forces countries to strive for synergy in international co-operation and common approaches. Many international mechanisms already contribute to the preservation of the European biological and landscape heritage and some countries have adopted measures at the national level. All these mechanisms, whether institutional, legal or technical in nature, help to ensure that implementation of PEEN takes account of cultural diversity and the varying political attitudes and methodological approaches that constitute the wealth of the Pan-European region.

PEEN is ultimately intended to ensure:

- conservation of a complete set of ecosystems, habitats, species, genes and landscapes of European importance;
- sufficiently large habitats to facilitate the conservation of species;
- sufficient scope for the dispersal and migration of individuals belonging to these species;
- restoration of damaged components of essential environmental systems;
- protection of such systems against potential threats.

**PEEN provides the partners in the Strategy with a co-ordination mechanism which is flexible enough to satisfy the diverse expectations of the countries of the Pan-European region and which respects subsidiarity and regional, national and local characteristics, while also ensuring overall coherence.**

**PEEN provides the governments of the countries of the Pan-European region with a political framework for action at all levels - local, regional, national and international - enabling them to provide sustainable socio-economic development in their respective countries, by conserving the biological and landscape diversity on which such development is largely based.**

## **II ACHIEVEMENTS**

The countries of the Pan-European region have made major, tangible progress since the Kyiv Conference, which is contributing to ensure greater consideration for biological realities in their policies, legal systems and institutions.

### **A shared political vision**

The need for PEEN is now broadly recognised by public authorities. PEEN is regarded as a modern response to the challenges of the protection of environment and sustainable development. PEEN has shown itself to be a cooperation instrument that is particularly flexible and well adapted to the many local features to be found in the Pan-European area. It creates a political link between countries in the Pan-European area in support of rights, freedoms and security and already plays a vital role in encouraging and facilitating international co-operation concerning the environment. The process under way has prompted the parties involved to be more receptive and attentive to others; it has generated not just shared but joint solutions, reinforcing European unity and helping to cement the construction of the Pan-European area.

It is over the last few years that this key political reality has truly come to the fore. The governments of the countries participating in the process now see PEEN as a fully-fledged spatial planning tool, and many completed projects point to the fact that this consideration is shared by their local authorities.

**By 2010, these achievements must be reinforced to complete the implementation of PEEN. The countries should reinforce their shared vision of sustainable development in Europe. They will encourage practical debate within civil society and foster local-level relations between the players involved in sustainable development in Europe, notably local authorities and the private sector.**

### **The PEEN project well under way**

PEEN is based on identification of its major ecological component units and on maintenance of ecological relations between them. Considerable progress has been made in this field since the Kyiv Conference.

### **PEEN, its components and its functions**

A growing number of natural areas of biological or landscape interest have been officially recognised at international and/or national levels: these areas, which may also have recognised cultural, social and economic importance, make up PEEN's basic structure. Conservation measures will be in application in most of the PEEN core areas, and public authorities increasingly take account of ecological relations between these areas in their policies and their work and development programmes, not least at international level. Mapping of PEEN components is also well under way. These positive efforts must be pursued.

### **By 2010 :**

- the countries should continue to strive towards the establishment of PEEN and ensure coherence between terrestrial, coastal and marine components, taking account of the international and EU projects currently in progress, as well as a balance between regions within the Pan-European area;
- they should support and develop the scientific research concerning ecological connectivity ;
- they should support a research programme of PEEN's role in addressing climate change and its impact on Pan-European biological and landscape diversity ; the work of the UNFCCC and the CBD will be taken into account and lead to the elaboration of a system of control on the adaptation to climate changes ;
- cartography should be completed and updated, ready for presentation at the next Conferences of Parties to the CBD;
- an exchange of information and good practices for creating and managing ecological networks in Europe, within the PEEN framework, should be set up ;
- the estimation of reference status concerning species and habitats should be completed.

### **PEEN and sectoral policies**

Effective mainstreaming of environmental considerations in sectoral policies is one of the principal aims of the Strategy process in view of the direct and indirect effects of some of these policies on the biological and landscape diversity of Europe. The Kyiv Declaration noted the insufficient results achieved here and pointed out that the progress made was limited and not very sustainable since it was more often than not linked to the economic situation or to technical substitution mechanisms.

**These insufficient advances must be placed on a far firmer footing to ensure that, in accordance with the conclusions of the Kyiv Conference, PEEN will be providing guidance by 2008 for the formulation of all major development and planning strategies and for the economic and financial activities of the sectors concerned.**

### *Agriculture*

Many species in fact owe their presence or absence in Europe solely to agriculture. Similarly, many of the landscapes composing Europe's natural heritage have emerged from direct, age-old relationships between rural activities and the environment, which have shaped the continent over the years but which have also contributed to the fragmentation of natural habitats that can be observed today.

#### **By 2010:**

- an environmental audit should be performed of the main European measures to mainstream environmental considerations in agricultural policies and the impact of such measures on biological and landscape diversity;
- a survey should be made of natural areas of particular interest situated within the countries' agricultural ecosystems and map them at the Pan-European level.
- guidelines should be produced to manage them according to the principles of rational agriculture;
- exemplary case-studies should be made of good practices and rational agricultural management of ecologically valuable natural ecosystems.

### *Forestry*

Effective international co-operation between the Strategy process and the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe (MCPFE) has moreover been undertaken over the last few years. This co-operation meets the key Kyiv objectives. It will be further developed in current fields and extended to new ones in connection with the EU Action Plan for the sustainable management of forests, particularly objective 3.2 on enhancement and protection of the environment.

#### **By 2010:**

- countries should further pursue their cooperation with MCPFE and the Environment for Europe/PEBLDS process and explore possible new priority themes<sup>1</sup>. These themes will be addressed in connection with the other international work in progress<sup>2</sup>;
- the dissemination of information on good forestry practices, by all appropriate means should be facilitated.

### *Transport*

Transport policy has a vital role to play in conserving biological and landscape diversity. Of all the sectoral policies, it probably has the greatest structural impact, in particular land and river transport which have the most obvious effects on biological and landscape diversity.

Despite the efforts made in this field, transport schemes, programmes and strategies still take insufficient account of biological and landscape diversity. The international and EU approaches to developing the trans-European transport network must pay more heed to the environmental dimension. The countries will ensure that concrete steps are taken along these lines.

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<sup>1</sup> Connectivity between protected forest areas; transboundary co-operation in the field of forest development and management; clarification and harmonisation of forestry terminology; formulation of guidelines for the conservation and sustainable exploitation of forest biodiversity as applied to pan-European forests; improvement and dissemination of knowledge concerning these forests and their sustainable management (methods, instruments, etc.).

<sup>2</sup> For example, the EU Forest Action Plan, the CBD's extended work programme on forest biodiversity (particularly with regard to the ecosystem approach and the issue of the impact of invasive species); the Intergovernmental Working Group on Forests; the United Nations Forum on Forests and the WSSD implementation strategy.

**By 2010:**

- an environmental assessment of the priority projects for developing the trans-European transport network declared as being of European interest,<sup>3</sup> should be conducted, in accordance with the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context<sup>4</sup> and in relation with the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) and its Pan-European Network of Model Regions ;
- the Code of Good Practice in the Transport Field<sup>5</sup> should be updated and adapted to the functionalities of ecological networks and of PEEN in particular.

***Other sectoral policies***

Many other public policies affect the proper functioning of ecological networks, the conservation of their component parts and the maintenance of biological relations between these component parts. Broadly speaking, a great deal remains to be done on integrating environmental considerations and mainstreaming ecological networks in these sectoral and vertical policies, especially at local level. This requires the use of bottom-up approaches, in which inter-regional co-operation between local authorities is of vital importance. Countries will strive to develop their relevant activities in the most sensitive policy areas - energy, tourism and management of water resources.

**By 2010:**

- the integration of environmental data in the principal policy areas concerned, especially energy, tourism and water should be fostered ; the participation of local stakeholders and territorial cooperation in particular should be encouraged ;
- a "European observation guide to the biological and landscape heritage in a rural environment", on the model of the "Observation guide to the rural heritage"<sup>6</sup> should be produced.

**III TOWARDS FINALISATION OF PEEN**

PEEN, which has now reached a crucial stage in its development, constitutes a fully-fledged pan-European political process, which is original in its approach and ambitious in its objectives. It has now become a coherent system based on a common vision of sustainable development in Europe with sustainable development and biological and landscape diversity as the goals.

**Three principles for action**

Finalisation of PEEN entails an obligation to achieve certain specific results, based on three major principles for action aimed at promoting sustainable development:

- maintenance of ecological connectivity in order to preserve natural processes and conserve ecosystem products and services for safeguard individuals well-being ;
- providing conservation of biological and landscape diversity in overall planning and development policy in order to guarantee socio-economic balance;
- developing a common vision of development in order to adopt the best response to these universal problems and to the globalisation of environmental phenomena.

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<sup>3</sup> Commission White Paper, 2001: "European transport policy for 2010: time to decide"

<sup>4</sup> Espoo, 2001

<sup>5</sup> Council of Europe, 1998

<sup>6</sup> CEMAT, 2002

### **A medium-term objective, being ready for 2010**

With sustainable development as the goal, biological and landscape diversity is a rallying point for the countries of the pan-European area, a chance for their authorities and a guarantee for their inhabitants.

Awareness of these issues among the players participating in the Strategy is spreading at varying rates and via different approaches, which seek to promote a form of socio-economic development more in keeping with the requirements for conserving biological and landscape diversity.

**2010 is nonetheless a deadline common to all the countries in the Pan-European area, with a view to full implementation of PEEN by 2015 in line with the commitments entered into by their governments.**

### *Seven main policy thrusts*

Their action in the medium term is guided by seven main policy thrusts:

- **giving more concrete consideration to ecological relations between the component units of PEEN and the national networks** at all spatial planning levels;
- **making progress with the presentation of PEEN** and continuing to establish inventories for taxa and habitats not sufficiently taken into account at present, particularly as regards marine and coastal ecosystems, in liaison with the Bern Convention Secretariat and specialist bodies;
- **raising the awareness of national and local players, including in the private sector, concerning the process, informing them about it and involving them in it**, within the meaning of the Aarhus Convention, in liaison with its bodies and in line with the conclusions of the work of the Committee on Environmental Policy of the Economic Commission for Europe;
- **taking greater account of landscape diversity in PEEN**, in accordance with the European Landscape Convention (in particular Articles 5 and 6) and in liaison with its bodies;
- **reinforcing integration of sectoral and vertical policies in PEEN** and ensuring practical implementation of the Guiding Principles for the Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent adopted by the CEMAT,<sup>7</sup> particularly principle 4 on planning policy promoting the sustainable development of Europe, and improving knowledge of the effects of such policies on biological and landscape diversity, in liaison with the appropriate bodies (the MCPFE, the CEMAT, etc.);
- **developing inter-regional co-operation on ecological networks**, in accordance with the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities, in liaison with the appropriate bodies (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, etc.);
- **pursuing the co-operation processes between the Strategy and CBD secretariats**, especially in the programmes on forests and protected areas.

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<sup>7</sup> Recommendation Rec (2002) 1 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe