



10th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the
Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

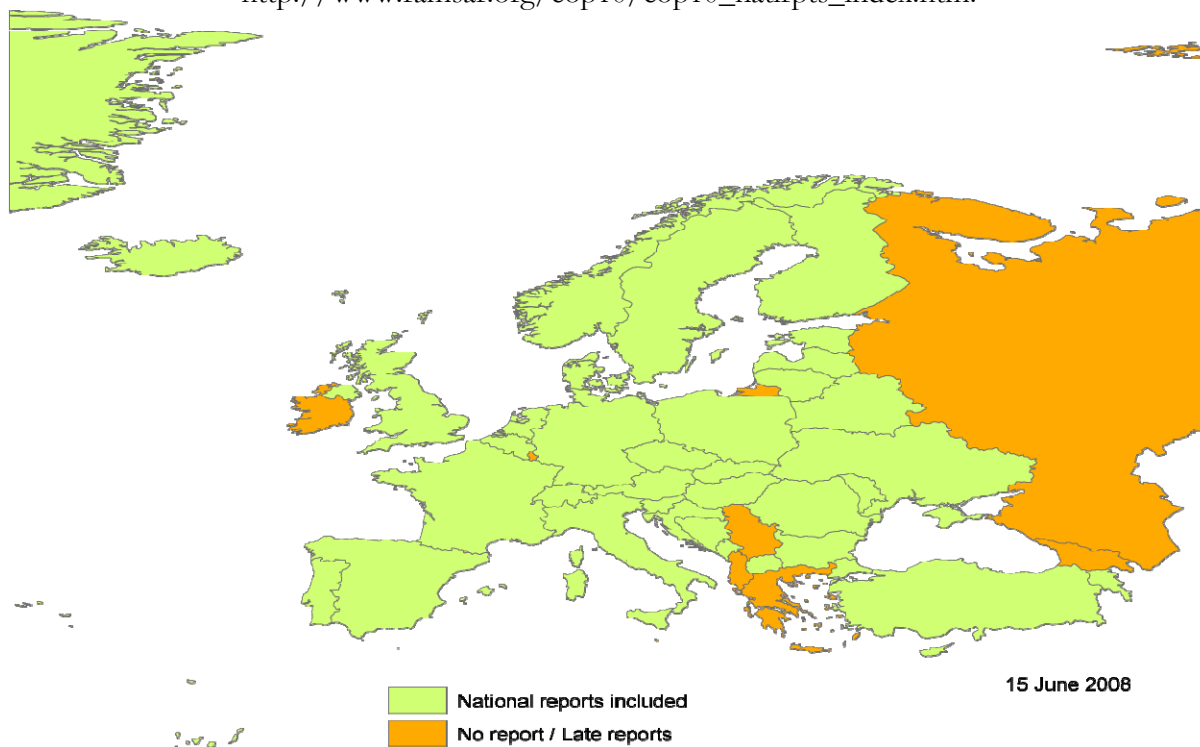
“Healthy wetlands, healthy people”

Changwon, Republic of Korea,
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Regional overview of the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan 2003–2008 in Europe

National Reports upon which this overview is based can be consulted at:
http://www.ramsar.org/cop10/cop10_natlrpts_index.htm.



1. This overview is based on the National Reports submitted by 36 (80%) European Contracting Parties in time for analysis. Countries not included in the analysis are marked below with an asterisk (*).
2. **Contracting Parties in Europe** (45): *Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark (with a separate report for Greenland), Estonia, Finland, France, *Georgia, Germany, *Greece, Hungary, Iceland, *Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, *Luxembourg, *Malta, Moldova, *Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania,

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*Russian Federation, *Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

3. **Contracting Parties yet to submit National Reports (7):** Albania, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Serbia.
4. **European countries not yet Contracting Parties (3):** Andorra, Holy See, San Marino.
5. The **Conclusions** are based on the most salient points from the subsequent analysis of the two sections in the National Reports. The chapter **Main achievements and priorities** provides a general summary of national implementation progress and challenges. The chapter **Implementation activities since COP9** offers responses to the indicator questions in the National Report format, complemented by tabular summaries in the **Annexes**.

Conclusions – and ways forward 2009-2012

6. Stepping up our implementation capacities at national level, coordinated by the Ramsar Administrative Authorities, appears to be the overriding challenge for the Convention in the coming years. We are all struggling to keep up with the increasing pace of pressures facing wetland ecosystems exposed to climate change, reduction of fossil resources, human population growth and raising prices for land, food and other renewable resources. European countries too, including the wealthiest ones, have to fight relative poverty and economic standstill and to develop sustainable models for socio-economic development. The wise use of wetlands and their resources needs to become part of the solutions to be proposed to cope with these challenges.
7. Another key challenge is to make sure that there is an inclusive understanding, established through an official recognition, of the comprehensive and wide-ranging scope of wetlands and their importance for sustainable development. A narrow picture of wetlands in the perception of some Contracting Parties weakens the work of the Convention and underestimates the importance of wetlands as key assets for conservation and development.
8. The national Ramsar Administrative Authorities have a unique opportunity to increase public awareness and understanding of the crucial roles that wetland ecosystems play in the water cycle, climate change mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, and the benefits they provide to our societies. The Ramsar Convention is strategically situated at the crossroads between the needs for local development (e.g., in and around Ramsar sites), for integrated water resources management (responding to climatic change producing more floods and droughts), and curbing the global biodiversity loss.
9. Ramsar administrations and budgets are suffering from repeated cuts, often because governments and decision-makers do not realize, nor do they take fully into account, the manifold wetland ecosystem services, their costs, and their benefits for human well-being. We are left with one solution to overcome these constraints and our limited capacities: sharing our work increasingly with partners, in coordination and cooperation with other

sectors of administration and society at large, including the long-neglected private sector. Such are our imperatives for the coming years.

10. And there is good news, too. The Ramsar Convention is reaching forty years of existence. This has given it time to create and test a number of operational instruments to address these challenges. Priorities are now the further integration of National Wetland Policies with other sectors, the development of effective models for the work of National Ramsar Committees, and increased networking among National Focal Points, within the Administrative Authorities, and also specifically for CEPA- and STRP-related issues. These operative means have shown their ability to overcome financial and institutional constraints, create synergies, and multiply measurable results while economizing costs. A better appreciation of all wetland types and their actual and legitimate values, Outreach, Cooperation and Partnerships are the keywords for the years to come.

Main achievements since COP9 and priorities for 2009-2012

New steps undertaken to implement the Convention (A)

11. Most Parties highlighted specific activities they undertook during 2006-2008. Among them, administrative and legal preparations, followed by the designation of *new Ramsar sites*, were mentioned most often (13 times), closely followed by fundraising, administrative procedures, and concrete actions to provide existing Ramsar sites with better *management* (12x). Implementing specific wetland management and *restoration* projects at national and local scale was also mentioned 12 times.
12. Preparing, further developing, and implementing National Wetland Action Plans or Strategies was a priority for six countries, as well as improving the legal framework for conservation and wise use of wetlands at national level. Five Parties mentioned their work for wetland inventory, assessment and monitoring. Four Parties mentioned the development of integrated water resources management tools, their work to update information on Ramsar sites, to deal with problems of sites listed on the Montreux Record, to implement communication, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) programmes, and to establish wetland centres at Ramsar sites. Wetland training and preparation of a regional initiative were mentioned by one Party each.

Most successful implementation aspects (B)

13. A large number of Parties (15) mentioned progress with the *integration of wetland aspects into relevant national policies* as the most successful aspect. Countries with an operational *National Ramsar Committee* highlighted its importance as a tool to improve national policies and to facilitate their implementation on the ground. *Ramsar site management* was mentioned 14 times among the most successful aspects, followed by the execution of wetland management and restoration projects, CEPA and World Wetlands Day activities, and developing Ramsar centres.

Greatest difficulties in implementing the Convention (C)

14. The *lack of capacities and financial resources* was mentioned most often (14x) as the greatest limiting factor to better implementing the Convention at national level. For many EU

countries, the imperative to implement EU Directives at national level is absorbing much of the limited capacities of the Administrative Authorities at the expense of capacities to fulfill Ramsar commitments.

15. Parties encountered further difficulties when trying to solve *site management* and wise use problems. Difficulties remain due to a lack of *inter-sectoral cooperation*, of clearly established *political priorities* and *enforcement measures*. Remaining perverse incentives are also creating difficulties. The absence of National Wetlands Policies and implementation strategies, and non-operative National Wetlands Committees, are causes for difficulties. Other reported difficulties refer to the lack of wetland site monitoring, gaps in national wetland inventories and knowledge, problems with water management, the lack of visibility of the Ramsar Convention, insufficient wetland awareness, and increasing coastal destruction.

Priority proposals for future implementation (D)

16. Further work on *National Wetland Strategies*, or the *inclusion of wetland issues into other national policies*, on improved national frameworks for wetland *management*, particularly for the wise use and management of *Ramsar sites*, on new Ramsar site designations and the establishment of more *Ramsar centres* and the regular execution of *CEPA programmes* were mentioned most often, followed by many other proposals, referring to a large proportion of the indicators in the Strategic Plan.

Proposals for assistance from the Ramsar Secretariat (E)

17. Parties made many different recommendations about how the Ramsar Secretariat could better assist them with implementation at national level, addressing many of the issues highlighted above. Thus it is difficult to distill major messages. However, a common theme that can be distinguished is that the national Ramsar Administrative Authorities (AAs) call for *increased direct contacts* with the Secretariat. Parties suggested providing more information directly to AAs, announcing upcoming wetland events, helping them to solve problems at national and local scale, and communicating more to the mass media. AAs requested the Secretariat also to reduce the burden and make processes as simple as possible.

Proposals for assistance from IOPs (F)

18. Parties called for more involvement of the *national IOP member organizations* (i.e., of Ramsar's International Organization Partners). Regional IOP programme offices (e.g., in the Caucasus, Central and Eastern Europe, Danube-Carpathian, Mediterranean, CIS, SE Europe) need to focus more on the implementation of Ramsar issues, become actively involved in Ramsar regional initiatives, and support the building of partnerships, especially in cases where cooperative solutions are needed to cope with problems provoked by ecological change at Ramsar sites. Substantive IOP project development and support at national and local level is recognized in many cases. But Parties suggest that there exists a huge potential and need for more Ramsar-related wetland projects and for more support. It was mentioned that IUCN should make reference to the experience provided by Ramsar site management in its work to update its protected areas categories.

How to link Ramsar implementation with other MEAs (G)

19. Parties made a number of concrete proposals, notably to increase communication and *cooperation at national administrative level* (this is also addressed in Draft Resolutions DR11 and 29 submitted to COP10 on partnerships and synergies with Multilateral Environmental Agreements and on the national implementation agencies); to have *joint meetings for National Focal Points* of different MEAs; to coordinate national strategies and site designations among different MEAs (e.g., Natura 2000, World Heritage, Biosphere Reserves); and to continue working to develop a coordinated and *common reporting* scheme, focusing on outcomes, rather than on activities and processes (cf. Decision VII/30 of the Convention on Biodiversity).

How to link Ramsar with water policies and other strategies at national level (H)

20. A large majority of the Party statements underline the need to better link up wetland policies with integrated national water resources management strategies, to coordinate with national programmes of implementation for the EU Water Framework Directive (where existing), and to mutually exchange more information, experience and know-how. It was mentioned that Ramsar's national focal points need to participate in the work of national water resources planning and management groups, and that National Ramsar Committees (where they exist) should also play an active role in this context. The Secretariat should provide the Parties with more guidance on how to go about this. Possibly, the consolidated scientific and technical guidance on wetlands and river basin management, submitted as Draft Resolution DR19 to COP10, can respond to this request?

Implementation activities undertaken since COP9

Goal 1: The Wise Use of Wetlands

National wetland inventories and assessment (*Strategy 1.1*)

21. The Contracting Parties (CPs) adopted in 1999 a *Ramsar Framework for Wetland Inventory* (through Resolution VIII.6). By now, 20 European CPs report that they have a comprehensive National Wetland Inventory (*Indicator 1.1.1*, cf. **Annex 1**). Fifteen other European CPs indicate that a National Wetland Inventory is in preparation or planned. This leaves only a small number of CPs without a National Wetland Inventory, and the percentage of Parties with an inventory is higher in Europe than in the other five Ramsar regions (cf. **Annex 2**). However, since COP9 in 2005, no progress with National Wetland Inventories seems to have occurred, as the number of European Parties with inventories has remained the same.
22. The Ramsar Secretariat would appreciate receiving more detailed information on existing inventories, if possible with a copy of inventory site lists, or an indication where such inventories are accessible through the Internet.
23. Given the importance of national inventories as a baseline for National Wetland Policies, the remaining Parties that have not yet engaged in the preparation of a National Wetland Inventory are strongly encouraged to do so. As *Indicators 1.1.2* and *1.1.3* show, it is important to work with - and to use - wetland inventory data and to make them available to all stakeholders. These data provide a baseline for assessing the status and trends of the ecological character of wetlands. Sixteen CPs indicate that they have such information.

This is fourfold the number of Parties compared to the situation prior to COP9, three years earlier (cf. **Annex 2**) and represents significant progress, particularly among European Parties. The majority of them realize that the need to address adverse change in the ecological character of wetlands is now greater than in the previous triennium (*Indicators 1.1.4a/b*). This unfortunately indicates that pressures on Ramsar sites and other wetlands are increasing throughout Europe.

National wetland policies (*Strategy 1.2*)

24. Ramsar Handbook 3 (3rd edition 2006) provides guidelines for reviewing laws and institutions to promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands (adopted through Resolution VII.7) that should lead to the adoption of a National Wetland Policy or a similar legal instrument. Seventeen European CPs report that they have such a policy in place (*Indicator 1.2.1*, cf. **Annex 1**) – an average percentage compared to other regions. No further progress was reported with the elaboration of National Wetland Policies between COP9 and COP10 (cf. **Annex 2**). Why?
25. Only 11 CPs report that they have assessed the quantity and quality of water available to and required by wetlands (*Indicator 1.2.4*). Clearly, more needs to be done in this field by many Parties. The fact that 22 CPs report undertaking Strategic Environmental Assessments when reviewing policies, programmes and plans that may impact upon wetlands is encouraging. It seems to be a practice more widely established in Europe than in other regions. But many efforts are still needed to make it a well-established procedure in all 45 European Ramsar Parties.

Wetland ecosystem services (*Strategy 1.3*)

26. Armenia, the Netherlands and Turkey report that they have assessed the ecosystem services provided by their Ramsar sites (*Indicator 1.3.1*, cf. **Annex 1**). Twenty-four other European CPs are working on this or are planning such assessments. Three years after the publication of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report on “Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Wetlands and Water” during COP9, more efforts are still needed to have at our disposal quantitative and qualitative assessments of the benefits and services provided by wetland ecosystems in each country. What roles do specific wetland ecosystems play for water supply, coastal protection, flood defence, climate change mitigation, food security, local development, cultural heritage and scientific research? Increasingly, such understanding is crucial to establishing adequate payment schemes for such services, with either public or private funds or a combination of both.

Ramsar’s water-related guidance (*Strategy 1.4*)

27. Only ten CPs report that they are using Ramsar’s water-related guidance in decision-making related to water resource planning and management (*Indicator 1.4.1*, cf. **Annex 1**). This is a small percentage of all CPs in Europe, but represents at least substantial progress since COP9 and since COP8 (cf. **Annex 2**). Over this triennium, Ramsar has reinforced its cooperation on water management guidance with institutions such as UN-Water, UNESCO’s International Hydrological Programme, and the UNECE Water Convention, trying to spread the message that integrated water resources management should be based on an ecosystem approach, and arguing that water resources should not be managed in

isolation from other ecosystem components, living resources, and human needs in the water catchment basins. STRP has therefore consolidated the Ramsar guidance on wetlands and river basin management, submitted to COP10 as draft Resolution 19. With World Water Forum 5 taking place in Istanbul shortly after COP10, and with the continuing changes in the global climate, Ramsar's water-related guidance is likely to become a prime tool for catchment basin planning and management.

Wetland restoration and rehabilitation (*Strategy 1.5*)

28. Twenty-nine CPs report that they implement wetland restoration or rehabilitation programmes (*Indicator 1.5.1*). This is an impressive percentage of all CPs and represents substantial progress since COP9 (cf. **Annex 2**). But only 11 of them used Ramsar's guidance on wetland restoration provided through Resolution VIII.16. Indeed, no specific focus has been put on this subject most recently by the Convention. Possibly, the Ramsar principles and guidelines for wetland restoration are too well hidden in Handbook 15, addressing change in ecological character of wetlands? Nevertheless, with the increasing pressures on European wetlands, rehabilitating and restoring their services will increasingly become a priority, and also a solution to many problems posed by the need to achieve sustainable development.

Goal 2: Ramsar Sites or Wetlands of International Importance

A Strategic Framework for Ramsar site designation (*Strategy 2.1*)

29. The Parties adopted already in 1999 a *Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance* (through Resolution VII.11). It was updated by COP9 and subsequently included in Handbook 14 on designating Ramsar sites. For COP10, 18 European CPs report that they have established a strategy and priorities at national scale for further Ramsar site designations, using the Strategic Framework provided by the Convention (*Indicator 2.1.1*, cf. **Annex 1**). Therefore, the larger part of the European CPs have not yet elaborated such a strategy; a situation comparable to other regions (cf. **Annex 2**). All Parties are therefore encouraged to make better use of the Strategic Framework and to designate further wetland sites for the Ramsar List. Despite the fact that Europe contributes 905 Ramsar sites (52%) to the global list of 1755 sites in July 2008, the European sites are rather small and together cover only 14% of the global area of all Ramsar sites.
30. Since COP9, 17 European Parties have designated 56 new Ramsar sites (cf. **Annex 3**). This is substantially fewer than the 100 new European Ramsar site designations between COP8 and COP9. At global level, the Parties are still well below the target they set for 2500 designated sites, covering 250 million hectares, by the year 2010. Additional designations, based on national designation strategies, are therefore highly encouraged.

Updating information on Ramsar sites (*Strategy 2.2*)

31. Six European Parties have updated information on all of their Ramsar sites during this triennium: Austria, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Poland, and Turkey (*Indicator 2.2.1*, cf. **Annex 1**). Congratulations. The Secretariat is informed that 15 other Parties are actively working on updates for 130 Ramsar sites in Europe, out of a total of 451 sites (50%, or

every second site) in 28 countries, for which information in the database of the Ramsar Sites Information Service (<http://ramsar.wetlands.org/>) is badly out of date (cf. **Annex 4**). During the 6th European Ramsar Meeting (in May 2008), the CPs clarified that updating Ramsar site data and maps should be done whenever a change occurs and simply be submitted via e-mail to the Secretariat. They agreed that it was preferable not to wait until the six year-deadline for updating Ramsar site information, but that this should be done by submitting a partially revised Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) whenever a change occurs.

Maintaining the ecological character of the Ramsar sites (*Strategy 2.3*)

32. The Convention commits Parties to formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the Ramsar sites, to maintain their ecological character, to prevent their deterioration as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interferences, and to consider their international responsibilities, in particular for the wise use of migratory stocks of wetland-dependent species. In response to this Article, ten Parties reported that they have applied measures required to maintain the ecological character of *all* Ramsar sites, and 19 additional Parties have done so at least regarding some Ramsar sites (*Indicator 2.3.1*).
33. Arguably the most tangible indicator for how well armed Parties are to deal with these challenges is the development and implementation of management plans (or strategies) for *all* Ramsar sites. Seven Parties have reached this stage, and twenty-five more are implementing management plans at least at some Ramsar sites. Sadly, four Parties have not yet passed the planning stage (*Indicator 2.3.2*, cf. **Annex 1**). Europe lags behind other regions in the development and implementation of management plans. This is surprising, given the synergies to be established with the implementation of European Union directives when establishing the Natura 2000 network of protected areas, applicable in the majority of all European Parties – surprising also in view of the many training facilities regularly delivered in different parts of Europe.
34. In addition, the number of cross-sectoral management committees operating at European Ramsar sites, and the number of assessments of the effectiveness of their work and management interventions, is relatively low in Europe compared to other regions.

Monitoring the conditions of Ramsar sites (*Strategy 2.4*)

35. European Ramsar sites are coming increasingly under pressure, especially in regions where major national infrastructures for transport, energy provision and industrial development are planned and where extractive industries are developing their businesses. This affects highly populated areas with many conflicting land-use demands, as well as areas in less populated regions with significant natural resources or that are strategically located along transport routes.
36. Since COP9 (November 2005), the Secretariat has been informed about ecological change occurring, or likely to occur because of planned developments, at 62 European Ramsar sites listed below. Despite the fact that Article 3.2 of the Convention commits the Ramsar Administrative Authorities to make arrangements to be informed at the earliest possible time of such changes and to pass such information without delay to the Ramsar Secretariat, it was only in 36 cases (bold below) that the AA was first to inform the

Secretariat about the purported change. In the other 26 cases, such reports were sent to the Secretariat by concerned individuals living close to Ramsar sites or knowing them well, or by Ramsar's International Organization Partners or national NGOs.

37. Only three Ramsar sites, in Poland and Italy, have been removed from the Montreux Record since COP9. Despite repeated requests from the Secretariat, not much information has been provided regarding the other 24 European Ramsar sites still remaining on the Record. When the Parties established this management instrument in 1990 at COP4, they believed the voluntary inclusion of a site on the Record to be useful to demonstrate national commitment to resolve the adverse changes, highlight particularly serious cases at international level, benefit from positive international conservation attention, and provide guidance on how best to allocate resources to solve the issues affecting the ecological character of the site (as explained in the Ramsar Convention Manual, 4th ed.). Many of the European Ramsar sites on the Montreux Record are among the longest listed ones (dating back to 1990). This leads to the conclusion that solving their problems either demands more sophisticated procedures, and these should be prepared without further delay, or that the problems evoked when putting the sites on the Record have been solved or mitigated since, in which case it is high time to remove these sites from the Record, following the procedure outlined in the Annex to Resolution VI.1.

Ramsar sites where ecological change is occurring or likely to occur (Article 3.2) since COP9:

Party (bold, where information was received from the AA)	Ramsar Site	Montreux Record	Ramsar Advisory Mission
Albania	1598 Lake Shkodra and River Buna		
Austria	272 Donau-March-Thaya-Auen	1990	1991
Austria	273 Untere Lobau		
Belarus	1217 Osveiski		
Belgium	329 De Ijzerbroeken te Diksmuide en Lo-Reninge	1999	
Belgium	331 Marais de Harchies		
Belgium	327 Schorren van de Beneden Schelde	1990	1988
Bulgaria	1226 Belene Islands Complex		
Bulgaria	239 Durankulak Lake	1993	
Bulgaria	64 Srebarna	1993	1992, 2001
Croatia	585 Delta Neretve		
Croatia	583 Kopacki Rit	1993	2005
Czech Republic	638 Litovleksi Pomoravi	1997	
Czech Republic	635 Floodplains of lower Dyje river	2005	
Czech Republic	639 Poodri	2005	
Czech Republic	495 Trebon fishponds	1994	
Denmark	141 Ringkøbing Fjord	1990	1996
Denmark (Greenland)	389 Heden (Jameson Land)		
Georgia	893 Wetlands of Central Kolkheti		2005
Germany	561 Mühlenberger Loch		2001
Germany	82 Wattenmeer, Ostfriesisches Wattenmeer & Dollart	1990	1990
Greece	61 Amvrakikos gulf	1990	
Greece	59 Axios, Loudias, Aliakmon delta	1990	
Greece	63 Kotychi lagoons	1990	
Greece	55 Lake Vistonis, Porto Lagos & lagoons	1990	
Greece	57 Lakes Volvi & Koronia	1990	
Greece	62 Messolonghi lagoons	1990	

Greece	56 Nestos delta and adjoining lagoons	1990	
Hungary	185 Kis-Balaton		
Italy	134 Stagno di Cagliari	1990	
Moldova	1029 Lower Prut Lakes		
Montenegro	784 Skadarsko Jezero		2005
Netherlands	581 Bargerveen		
Netherlands	194 Naardermeer		
Norway	13 Åkersvika		
Norway	809 Froan Nature Reserve		
Norway	305 Øra		
Poland	756 Biebrzanski National Park		
Romania	521 Danube Delta		
Romania	1074 Small Island of Braila		
Russian Federation	677 Lower Dvubje		
Russian Federation	695 Moroshechnaya River		
Russian Federation	111 Volga Delta		
Serbia	819 Stari Begej/Carska Bara Special Nature Reserve		
Slovenia	1600 Lake Cerknica and its environs		
Slovenia	991 Skocjan Caves		
Slovenia	586 Secovlje salt pans		
Spain	454 Albufera de Valencia		2006
Spain	234 Doñana	1990	2002
Spain	235 Las Tablas de Daimiel	1990	1988
Spain	708 Marjal de Pego-Oliva		
Spain	449 S'Albufera de Mallorca		
Spain	1264 Txingudi		
The FYR of Macedonia	726 Prespa Lake		
Turkey	945 Gediz Delta		
Turkey	659 Lake Seyfe		
Turkey	661 Sultan Marshes		
Ukraine	113 Kyliiske Mouth		2003, 2005, 2008
United Kingdom	542 Exe Estuary		
United Kingdom	1046 Lewis Peatlands		
United Kingdom	77 Ouse Washes	2000	2001
United Kingdom	298 The Dee Estuary	1990	1993, 1994

Managing shared Ramsar sites and hydrological basins (*Strategy 2.5*)

38. European Parties are pioneering the implementation of the requests formulated in Article 5 of the Convention and have established transboundary cooperation procedures for many Ramsar sites shared by adjacent countries. In their National Reports, 29 Parties indicate that they have identified all such sites in their territory, and Denmark, Latvia, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom report that they have established effective cross-border management cooperation for such sites. This has already resulted in the formal declaration of eight Transboundary Ramsar Sites (four new ones since COP9). These eight transboundary areas are composed of twenty nationally declared Ramsar sites. In spring 2007, the Czech AA organized a study tour for site managers and Ramsar national focal points to a number of these transboundary Ramsar sites in Central Europe to exchange experiences and discuss the benefits and difficulties of transboundary cooperation.
39. At the 6th European Ramsar Meeting, the Parties discussed the benefits of transboundary work to enhance the sustainability of site and water management, raise awareness, and attract more funds. They concluded that existing transboundary commissions, linked to

river basins or protected areas, should be used, and that common goals and objectives, and key fields for common work, need to be agreed mutually. Communication between authorities, NGOs and all parts of the civil society is essential. Formal Memoranda of Understanding between the countries implied can set the right frame.

Regional Ramsar initiatives in Europe (*Strategy 2.6*)

40. The Mediterranean Wetlands Initiative started independently in 1991 and became formally part of the Ramsar Convention in 1999, through the adoption by COP7 of a collaborative structure for Mediterranean wetlands (with Resolution VII.22). Three years later, COP8 adopted general guidance for the development of regional initiatives in the framework of the Convention (Resolution VIII.30). This triggered the development of several new initiatives. In Europe, the Nordic-Baltic Wetlands Initiative was started by nine cooperating countries in 2005 and has been active since. The seven signatory countries of the Carpathian Convention decided to develop a Carpathian Wetland Initiative during a workshop in 2004. And, as part of its partnership programme with the private sector Danone Group, the Ramsar Secretariat was able to provide support to a follow-up seminar for these countries in 2006, to develop further the strategy and work plan for the initiative. In parallel, Wetlands International revived the dormant proposal for a Black Sea Wetlands Initiative (with financial support from the Netherlands) initially prepared in 2000, focusing on the coastal areas of the six countries around the Black Sea.
41. Consequently, four (sub-)regional initiatives are currently operating to different degrees in Europe. What is missing however, is a continent-wide strategy and coordinated view on the objectives and desirable geographical and thematic coverage of such initiatives. No comprehensive European wetlands initiative has been proposed. Some European countries are not involved in any of the existing initiatives, whilst others are covered by two. During its meetings in 2007 and 2008, the Standing Committee discussed the lessons learnt during the early years of operating regional initiatives in different parts of the world, either networks of cooperating countries or regional centres for training and capacity building, or a combination of both as in the case of MedWet. As a result, new operational criteria, against which regional initiatives wishing to be endorsed by COP10 as operating in the framework of the Convention during the years 2009-2012 need to be assessed, are now submitted with draft Resolution DR6 for adoption by COP10.

Goal 3: International Cooperation

Cooperate with other agencies and agreements (*Strategy 3.1*)

42. Coordination of national activities to implement different Multilateral Environment Agreements becomes more of a necessity than ever. Resolutions IX.3 and IX.5 adopted in 2005 by COP9 address this issue. Consequently, 22 European Parties report that they have mechanisms in place at the national level for collaboration between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the focal points of other MEAs (*Indicator 3.1.1*, cf. **Annex 1**). However, this does not reflect any progress since COP9 (cf. **Annex 2**) and does not even cover all 27 EU member states. A substantial number of remaining Parties still need to set up similar mechanisms at national level. Two new draft Resolutions (DRs 11 and 29) submitted to COP10 address these issues through the reinforcement of the cooperation

with other MEAs and by clarifying and harmonizing the roles and functions of the focal points for such agreements at national level.

Goal 4: Implementation Capacity

Involvement of the private sector (*Strategy 4.2*)

43. Eighteen Parties report that they encouraged the private sector to apply wise use principles in activities and investments concerning wetlands. Five Parties report that they have established specific private-sector mechanisms for wetlands. In Resolution VIII.31 on the Convention's CEPA programme, COP8 recognized that wetland issues can increasingly become part of the business of other sectors, not just that of the environment, thereby mainstreaming the conservation and wise use of wetlands into society and government. With the successful partnership between the Danone Group (mineral waters, dairy products, etc.) and the Ramsar Convention, celebrating at COP10 its tenth anniversary, the time is ripe to expand the work with the business sector for wetland conservation and wise use, not only by the Secretariat, but essentially also at national level in each country. Some basic principles to guide such joint ventures under the Convention have been submitted with Draft Resolution DR12 for consideration at COP10. Parties are encouraged to build upon their experiences and to develop further joint projects and programmes with the private sector.

Communication, education, participation and awareness (*Strategy 4.4*)

44. Despite the call issued many years ago to nominate a governmental and a non-governmental national focal point for CEPA activities, only seven Parties report that mechanisms have been established involving these national focal points (where they are identified) to plan and implement CEPA programmes (*Indicator 4.4.1*, cf. **Annex 1**). Given the increasing recognition of the need to link wetland conservation and wise use in all fields with CEPA activities, this is a discouraging result and does not show any progress since COP8 in 2002 (cf. **Annex 2**). In times where major global environmental concerns become increasingly the focus of global and national policies, more communication, education and awareness activities are essential to focus on the services provided by wetland ecosystems in the context of climate change, in terms of flood management, coastal protection, poverty reduction, and curbing the loss of biodiversity. Outreach is a dire need to make the Convention and its concerns more widely understood, followed and applied. A specific analysis of national Ramsar CEPA programmes is provided in COP10 DOC. 16.
45. A CEPA tool to assist the National Focal Points in their planning is currently being developed by the Ramsar Secretariat with support from IUCN. A preliminary version was tested during the 6th European Ramsar Meeting in May 2008. Another, very affordable means to raise wetland awareness is provided by World Wetlands Day (WWD) each year on 2 February. Thirty-three (92%) of the 36 responding Parties report that they have carried out WWD activities. This is an encouraging feedback, supported by impressive lists of WWD activities in many countries, as reported on the Ramsar Web site: www.ramsar.org/wwd/8/wwd2008_reports.htm.

International development cooperation and assistance (*Strategy 4.5*)

46. The Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom report that they have provided funding support for wetland conservation and management in other countries. This summarizes an impressive effort for cooperation and solidarity. Hopefully more EU member countries can soon join this donor group? Looking back over time, there seems however to be a regressing trend. Since COP8, the number of European Parties reporting that they provide international wetland management assistance continues to diminish (cf. **Annex 2**) – a strange result which hopefully does not reflect reality. Since COP9, the European countries Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Estonia and Turkey benefited from funding support for wetland conservation and management by donor countries listed above, which also supported additional projects in countries outside of Europe.

Using National Reports to monitor the implementation of the Convention (*Strategy 4.7*)

47. National Reports for COP8 and COP9 were designed in such a way as to help CPs with the planning and monitoring of their implementation of the Convention's Strategic Plan at national level. The format used for COP9 did also include a section to identify national targets for the triennium 2003-2005, intended to allow regular checks and updates through the triennium on progress with the implementation of its objectives. As only a very small minority of the Parties used the tool in this way for the second triennium running, it was abandoned in the current National Report format for COP10.
48. Planning at national scale, monitoring the implementation of tasks, reporting on progress with work, identifying gaps, and defining new targets are crucial steps of an efficient working cycle. This is encapsulated in Recommendation 2.1 which the Parties adopted already in 1984, stating that they are “aware that the submission of timely and detailed national reports is of vital importance for the purpose of monitoring implementation of the Convention and for the purpose of sharing information on wetland conservation measures taken, on any problems which have arisen and on appropriate methods of dealing with them”.
49. Despite this, only ten Parties report that they have used their previous National Reports in monitoring their implementation of the Convention (*Indicator 4.7.1*, cf. **Annex 1**). The 36 National Reports received in time for analysis prior to COP10 represent only 80% of the 45 European CPs (prior to COP9, 40 National Reports were submitted, representing 91% of the CPs). This shows a significant decline of the return rate of National Reports, despite the fact that the current format was much simplified to make reports easier to prepare, while at the same time ensuring that they reveal the information desired, as requested by the Parties. Again, most CPs only started compiling the National Report at the end of the triennium close to (or only after) the deadline for submission on 31 March 2008. Our challenge therefore remains to develop an efficient and simple-to-use National Report tool, to be used by all Parties – a tool that allows Parties to monitor progress with the implementation of the Convention at national level, across a suite of succeeding periods between COPs. Concrete proposals and suggestions about how best to do this are welcome.

National Ramsar Committees (*Strategy 4.8*)

50. Overcoming the constraints that increasingly limit our capacities to implement the Convention is a main challenge for many of us. This is arguably most perceived at national level, despite the best possible will of Administrative Authorities to do more and better. This situation underlines the need for a review and assessment of national institutions responsible, and for having specific roles to play for the conservation and wise use of wetland ecosystems in each country, in order to identify new partners. It is therefore saddening to read that only 11 CPs were able to complete such a review at national level (*Indicator 4.8.1*, cf. **Annex 1**). The number of Parties reporting having undertaken such reviews is also declining since COP8 (cf. **Annex 2**). Is this as a positive sign indicating that all necessary reviews have been undertaken and have produced the desired effects? Or does it reflect a trend to neglect the strategic need to fully incorporate wetland issues into sectoral planning processes at national and sub-national levels (reported for COP9), or the need for integration and harmonization of wetland policies with other planning processes, particularly those related to biodiversity, desertification, climate change, agriculture, trade, water resources management and environmental planning in general (evoked in the National Reports for COP8)? Let us hope that the Parties will focus again on the need to plan and work intersectorally.
51. Parties addressed at the 6th European Ramsar Meeting again the role of National Ramsar Committees. Often, such committees provide a feasible solution to overcoming capacity limitations. Active National Committees can respond to the need for information exchange, increase the working relationships between different sectors, agencies and ministries, and coordinate activities in different fields. The participation of non-governmental organizations, and in particular national chapters of Ramsar's International Organization Partners, has proved to be very effective where this has been done. Unfortunately, only 13 Parties report that they have an operational National Ramsar Committee (or equivalent body) in place: Austria, Belarus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Liechtenstein, Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, TFYR of Macedonia, and the United Kingdom (*Indicator 4.8.2*, cf. **Annex 1**). This is a peculiar result, as six years earlier (for COP8 in 2002) they were 22 Parties reporting that they have a National Wetland Committee (cf. **Annex 2**). Does the earlier number include nine dormant national committees who never met or worked again since that time?

Working with the International Organization Partners (*Strategy 4.9*)




52. The Ramsar Convention is unique among the multilateral treaties in working formally with a selected group of five International Organization Partners (BirdLife International, IUCN, IWMI, Wetlands International, and WWF). This mutually beneficial cooperation has developed over time, and it still offers a large potential for further development towards more consequent and far-reaching achievements. This cooperation is not only beneficial at international level (concerning the work of the Secretariat, STRP and Standing Committee), but holds an enormous, largely untapped, potential for cooperation at national and local levels as well. Only 14 Parties report that they have received assistance from one (or more) of the IOPs for their implementation of the Convention. A similar number of Parties (15) has, in turn, provided assistance to the work of one (or more) of the IOPs. This is strong evidence that there is still space to develop mutually beneficial cooperative projects in many countries at national and local levels.

Wetland training needs (*Strategy 4.10*)

53. Article 4.5 of the Convention calls on Parties to promote the training of personnel competent in the fields of wetland research, management and wardening. Forty years later, the need for continued professional training remains high, especially in the European countries in transition. Fortunately, some of the early Ramsar CPs do have mechanisms in place, often within their Ministries of Environment or the development assistance agencies, to provide for such training sessions. Sixteen Parties report that they have provided training opportunities for wetland managers in their country (*Indicator 4.10.3*). In many cases, training is an integral part of specific wetland management projects. Now the tendency is to establish more permanent training centres or institutions, increasingly also directly linked to specific Ramsar sites. Indeed, 12 Parties report that they provided support to or participated in the development of wetland training and research centres (*Indicator 4.10.1*). However, in the longer run, it would be more effective to develop further training opportunities based on prior assessments of national and local training needs. So far, only Armenia, Hungary and Liechtenstein report having undertaken such assessments (*Indicator 4.10.2*, cf. **Annex 1**). The Advisory Board on Capacity Building for the Ramsar Convention is in a good position to provide further guidance to other Parties on how to do so.

Annex 1

Overview of the Parties' responses to selected indicators

 "yes"
  "in progress", "partly", or "planned"
  "no"

Wetlands Wise Use, Ramsar Sites and International Cooperation

- 1.1.1 the Party has a comprehensive National Wetland Inventory
- 1.2.1 the Party has a National Wetland Policy or equivalent instrument
- 1.3.1 the Party has conducted an assessment of the ecosystem services provided by Ramsar sites
- 1.4.1 the Party uses/applies Ramsar's water-related guidance in decision-making related to water resource planning and management
- 2.1.1 the Party established a strategy and priorities for further Ramsar site designations, using the Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List
- 2.2.1 the Party has submitted all required updates of the Ramsar Information Sheet on Ramsar sites
- 2.3.2 management plans/strategies are developed and implemented at all Ramsar sites
- 2.5.1 all transboundary/shared wetland systems in the country have been identified
- 3.1.1 mechanisms are in place at the national level for collaboration between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the focal points of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)

Party	1.1.1	1.2.1	1.3.1	1.4.1	2.1.1	2.2.1	2.3.2	2.5.1	3.1.1
Armenia									
Austria									
Belarus									
Belgium									
Bosnia-Herzegovina									
Bulgaria									
Croatia									
Cyprus								n.a.	
Czech Republic									
Denmark									
(Greenland)								n.a.	
Estonia									

Party	1.1.1	1.2.1	1.3.1	1.4.1	2.1.1	2.2.1	2.3.2	2.5.1	3.1.1
Finland									
France									
Germany									
Hungary									
Iceland								n.a.	
Italy									
Latvia									
Liechtenstein									
Lithuania									
Moldova									
Montenegro									
Netherlands									
Norway									
Poland									
Portugal									
Romania									
Slovakia									
Slovenia									
Spain								n.a.	
Sweden									
Switzerland									
TFYR of Macedonia									
Turkey									
Ukraine									
United Kingdom									

Implementation Capacity

- 4.2.2 private sector wetland fora or similar mechanisms have been established
- 4.4.1 a mechanism for planning and implementing wetland CEPA was established with the involvement of the CEPA Government and NGO focal points
- 4.4.5 World Wetlands Day activities are carried out in the country
- 4.4.6 education centres have been established at Ramsar sites and other wetlands
- 4.7.1 the Party used its previous Ramsar National Reports in monitoring its implementation of the Convention
- 4.8.1 a review of national institutions responsible for the conservation and wise use of wetlands has been completed
- 4.8.2 a National Ramsar Committee or similar cross-sectoral body is established and operational
- 4.9.1 the Party is working with the Convention's International Organization Partners (IOPs)
- 4.10.2 an assessment of national and local training needs for the implementation of the Convention, including in the use of the Ramsar Handbooks, has been made













Party	4.2.2	4.4.1	4.4.5	4.4.6	4.7.1	4.8.1	4.8.2	4.9.1/2	4.10.2
Armenia									
Austria									
Belarus									
Belgium									
Bosnia-Herzegovina									
Bulgaria									
Croatia									
Cyprus									
Czech Republic									
Denmark									
(Greenland)									
Estonia									
Finland									
France									
Germany									
Hungary									
Iceland									
Italy									

Latvia									
Liechtenstein									
Lithuania									
Moldova									
Montenegro									
Netherlands									
Norway									
Poland									
Portugal									
Romania									
Slovakia									
Slovenia									
Spain									
Sweden									
Switzerland									
TFYR of Macedonia									
Turkey									
Ukraine									
United Kingdom									

Annex 2

Summary overview of the evolution between COP8 and COP10

Where indicator questions were reasonably similar, the table compares information provided in the National Reports to COP8 and COP9 with those provided to COP10 in order to assess progress during these two triennia, covering the period of Ramsar's Strategic Plan 2003-2008 adopted with Resolution VIII.25. The table also shows whether particular actions reported for COP10 were more (or less) widely addressed throughout the European region, compared to the global average; based on the percentages of Contracting Parties having answered positively.

Strategy	Indicator	Affirmative CPs at COP8	Affirmative CPs at COP 9	Affirmative CPs at COP10	Affirmative at COP10 globally	Progress since COP9
1.1	CP has a comprehensive national wetland inventory (1.1.1)	11	20	20 (53%)	37%	no  progress
	CP has information on wetland ecological status and trends (1.1.3)	n.a.	4	16 (42%)	34%	 significant
1.2	CP has a National Wetland Policy (or equivalent instrument) (1.2.1)	15	18	17 (45%)	40%	no  progress
1.4	CP has used or applied Ramsar water-related guidance (1.4.1)	n.a.	5	10 (26%)	29%	some 
1.5	CP implemented wetland restoration/rehabilitation programmes (1.5.1)	11	24	29 (76%)	66%	 significant
2.1	CP uses the Strategic Framework for Ramsar site designations (2.1.1)	n.a.	15	18 (47%)	50%	some 
3.1	AA collaborates with focal points of other MEAs (3.1.1)	21	23	22 (58%)	56%	no  progress
4.4	CP has an active national CEPA programme task force (4.4.1)	7	6	7 (18%)	22%	no  progress
	CP developed a national (or local) CEPA action plan (4.4.2)	0	4	6 (17%)	14%	some 
4.5	Development assistance agencies provided funds for wetland projects (4.5.1)	15	12	10 (28%)	15%	 regress
4.8	National review of wetland institutions has been completed (4.8.1)	21	13	11 (29%)	26%	 regress
	CP has an operational National Ramsar Committee (4.8.2)	22	21	13 (34%)	45%	 regress

Annex 3

New European Ramsar sites designated since COP9

Including new designations submitted between November 2005 and June 2008.

N.	Country	Number of sites	Area of new sites (ha)
1	Albania	1	49,562
2	Armenia	-	
3	Austria	-	
4	Belarus	-	
5	Belgium	-	
6	Bosnia & Herzegovina	2	49,268
7	Bulgaria	-	
8	Croatia	-	
9	Cyprus	-	
10	Czech Republic	1	11,224
11	Denmark (& Greenland)	-	
12	Estonia	1	5,869
13	Finland	-	
14	France	1	218
15	Georgia	-	
16	Germany	1	7
17	Greece	-	
18	Hungary	4	42,985
19	Iceland	-	
20	Ireland	-	
21	Italy	4	2,659
22	Latvia	-	
23	Liechtenstein	-	
24	Lithuania	-	
25	Luxembourg	-	
26	Malta	-	
27	Moldova	-	
28	Monaco	-	
29	Montenegro	-	
30	Netherlands	-	
31	Norway	-	
32	Poland	-	
33	Portugal	11	12,797
34	Romania	3	19,042
35	Russian Federation	-	
36	Serbia	4	32,877
37	Slovakia	1	1,448
38	Slovenia	1	7,250
39	Spain	14	47,946
40	Sweden	-	
41	Switzerland	-	
42	The FYR of Macedonia	1	2,696
43	Turkey	3	20,182
44	Ukraine	-	
45	United Kingdom	3	679

Total	56	306,709 ha
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Annex 4

Number of European Ramsar sites for which information is out of date (absent or more than six years old)

N.	Country	451 sites with outdated information
1	Albania	1
2	Armenia	2
3	Austria	all updated
4	Belarus	3
5	Belgium	5 (2)*
6	Bosnia & Herzegovina	1
7	Bulgaria	2
8	Croatia	3
9	Cyprus	1 (1)*
10	Czech Republic	8 (7)*
11	Denmark (incl. Greenland)	all updated
12	Estonia	7 (2)*
13	Finland	all updated
14	France	14 (5)*
15	Georgia	1
16	Germany	28
17	Greece	10
18	Hungary	all updated
19	Iceland	3
20	Ireland	45
21	Italy	46 (2)*
22	Latvia	2 (2)
23	Liechtenstein	1
24	Lithuania	5
25	Luxembourg	1
26	Malta	2
27	Moldova	1
28	Monaco	1 (1)*
29	Montenegro	1
30	Netherlands	23 (16)*
31	Norway	22 (10)*
32	Poland	all updated
33	Portugal	12 (6)*
34	Romania	2 (1)*
35	Russia	35
36	Serbia	3
37	Slovakia	6
38	Slovenia	2
39	Spain	35
40	Sweden	19 (8)*
41	Switzerland	2
42	The FYR of Macedonia	1
43	Turkey	all updated

44	Ukraine	22
45	UK	70 (66)*

* Numbers in parentheses refer to the number of sites (included in the overall number) for which the Administrative Authority has submitted updated information that is currently being checked by the Secretariat.