



## 9th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

*“Wetlands and water: supporting life, sustaining livelihoods”*

Kampala, Uganda, 8-15 November 2005

### Ramsar COP9 DOC. 11

## Regional overview of the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan 2003-2005 in Europe

The National Reports upon which this overview is based can be consulted on the Ramsar Web site on [www.ramsar.org/cop9/cop9\\_natlrpts\\_index.htm](http://www.ramsar.org/cop9/cop9_natlrpts_index.htm).

**Contracting Parties in Europe (44):** Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, \*Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, \*Greece, Hungary, Iceland, \*Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, \*Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

**Contracting Parties yet to submit National Reports (3):** Greece, Ireland, Monaco.

**European countries not yet Contracting Parties (3):** Andorra, Holy See, San Marino

1. This overview is based on the National Reports submitted by 40 (91%) European Contracting Parties in time for analysis. Those not included in the analysis are marked by an asterisk (\*) above.

### 1. Main achievements since COP8 and priorities for the next triennium

2. The following points are based on the analysis of the National Reports for COP9 summarized in section 2 and on direct exchanges throughout the triennium with the Administrative Authorities of many European Contracting Parties. The conclusions and recommendations of the 5<sup>th</sup> European regional meeting on the implementation and effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention in December 2004, Yerevan, Armenia, are also taken into account (cf. [www.ramsar.org/mtg/mtg\\_reg\\_europe2004\\_index.htm](http://www.ramsar.org/mtg/mtg_reg_europe2004_index.htm)).

#### 1.1 Main achievements since COP8

3. Within the European region, more than half of the Contracting Parties (CPs) have taken action and progressed significantly since COP8 in the following areas of the Strategic Plan 2003-2008:

For reasons of economy, this document is printed in a limited number, and will not be distributed at the meeting. Delegates are requested to bring their copies to the meeting and not to request additional copies.

- A1 National wetland inventory and assessment has progressed substantially since COP8, although far from all Parties have completed a comprehensive wetland inventory. Progress has also been achieved with the assessment and monitoring of wetland resources.
- A2 Wetland restoration and rehabilitation activities are carried out for priority sites by many CPs in Europe. This reflects substantial progress since COP8, and European countries are more active in this domain than Parties in other regions.
- A3 Joint management of shared wetland sites is gaining ground among European CPs. Due to the fact that there are many national borders across Europe, this is a priority for the coming triennium. During the 2003-2005 triennium European Parties became the first to formally jointly designate transboundary Ramsar sites.
- A4 European CPs began to establish formal mechanisms of cooperation at national level between Ramsar Administrative Authorities and focal points of other multilateral environmental agreements. Further coordination and streamlining of tasks in order to create synergies is needed, but significant progress has already been achieved since COP8.
- A5 A number of European CPs provided support for the establishment and running of regional wetland centres providing training and facilitating wetland research.
- A6 European CPs were rapidly starting to apply the guiding principles for taking into account cultural values of wetlands for the effective management of sites. This shows a rapid implementation of guidance adopted at COP8. Also in the next triennium, European Parties are likely to be drivers in this context.
- A7 Since COP8, European CPs have designated 84 new Ramsar Sites, a significant number, especially of under-represented wetland types. Many CPs are actively implementing the Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List.
- A8 European CPs are increasingly applying the new Ramsar guidelines for management planning. Despite increasing land-use pressures on many of Europe's Ramsar sites, the rate of maintenance of their ecological character was not diminishing during the recent triennium. However, a substantial number of European Ramsar sites are facing, or are likely to face, human-induced negative change to their ecological character..

## 1.2 Priorities for 2006-2008

- 4. The analysis of progress with the implementation of the Convention during the triennium shows that European CPs are particularly slow, and below the global average, with the implementation in the following areas of the Strategic Plan 2003-2008. The following issues should therefore receive priority attention for implementation during the coming triennium leading to COP10:
  - P1 Integrating wetland policies fully into other strategic and planning processes, in particular those related to biodiversity, climate change, agriculture, water resource management, integrated coastal zone management, and environmental planning remains a high priority for many European CPs who have not progressed much in this domain yet.

- P2 Integrating wetland conservation and wise use into river basin management needs to become a central priority for many European CPs who have so far neglected to do so. The synergies to be gained through coordinated efforts in this domain together with the water management authorities are underlined by the clear timetable prescribed for the implementation of the European Union Water Framework Directive, applicable in a majority of European CPs.
- P3 Communication, Education and Public Awareness is still considered too marginal by many European CPs who have not yet elaborated a national CEPA action plan or established national task forces to undertake needs analyses and set priorities.
- P4 The creation of networks among wetlands sharing common features for knowledge sharing and training, across countries and continents, has progressed little so far. It should receive more attention in the coming triennium.
- P5 Very few efforts were made by European CPs to mobilize funding for wetland projects. Increased contacts and exchanges with development assistance agencies are needed, as well as support for wetland project preparation to be submitted to them. Ramsar's Small Grants Fund is still frustratingly under-resourced in relation to the number of high quality project proposals submitted each year, and still waits for a year with sufficient funding support. The wealthier European CPs should seriously investigate how to set the SGF on a firm financial footing, rather than simply provide *ad hoc* voluntary funding.
- P6 Far from all European CPs have designated national focal points for the Scientific and Technical Review Panel and for CEPA programmes and activities. European CPs should also assure that the Convention Secretariat has an adequate budget at its disposal to correctly serve these focal points and assure that they can provide an optimal feedback to the processes of the Convention.
- P7 Fewer than half of the European CPs have established a National Wetlands or Ramsar Committee or an equivalent body. Those CPs who have done so, and have good experiences with such committees, should more actively advise and convince those who still need to establish such committees.
- P8 CP members of the European Union should create a task force to evaluate possible ways of closer cooperation with the institutions of the European Union, notably the Commission and the Parliament. More formal relations need to be established. Ramsar and EU instruments need to complement each other with their respective strengths.

## **2. Implementation activities undertaken since COP8**

### **2.1 National planning and reporting: how best and what for?**

5. The "National Planning Tool" and format for the "National Reports to COP9" (adopted by Standing Committee in February 2003) was designed in a way to help Contracting Parties (CPs) with the planning and monitoring of their implementation of the Convention's Strategic Plan 2003-2008 at national level. Seventeen (39%) European Contracting Parties made use of this tool to identify national targets for the triennium 2003-2005. However, 27 CPs (61%) missed this opportunity. The format of the "National Planning Tool" followed the structure of the Strategic Plan to allow regular checks and

updates throughout the triennium on progress with the implementation of its objectives, but only a small minority of the CPs used the tool in this way. Most Parties started filling in the reporting section - to a greater or lesser extent - close to (or only after) the deadline for submission of the "National Report to COP9" at the end of the triennium. The conclusion is therefore that for the second time running (after the triennium 1999-2002), the national planning tool and report format was not used according to expectation. What are the reasons for this? What needs to be changed?

6. 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. As long ago as 1984, the CPs adopted Recommendation 2.1, 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". They further recommended that the Secretariat "should draft a simplified version of the questionnaire upon which national reports are based with a view to making the reports easier to prepare while at the same time ensuring that they reveal the information desired".
7. The following assessment focuses on a series of selected key indicators of achievements for a number of the Strategic Plan Operational Objectives. It does not provide an exhaustive analysis of all the many actions in the National Report Format, but draws on the answers to these where appropriate.
8. A number of CPs indicated in their report that they wish to participate in preparing the new reporting format for the triennium 2006-2008. All such CPs are urged to engage in this work, through discussions during COP9 and the work of the new Standing Committee.

## 2.2 Wetland inventory and assessment (*Operational Objective 1*)

9. The Convention promotes and encourages the use of standard wetland inventory methodologies following the *Ramsar Framework for Wetland Inventory* (Resolution VIII.6). In their reports for COP9, 19 CPs (43%) indicate that they have a comprehensive National Wetland Inventory. However, only ten of them provide the number of sites listed in the inventory. The Ramsar Secretariat appreciates receiving more detailed information on existing national wetland inventories, and if possible a copy of the national inventory lists themselves, whether they are in a working language of the Convention or not. A further 20 CPs (46%) indicate that work on a comprehensive inventory is under way. This reflects substantial progress since COP8 (see the comparative table in the Annex of this document). More countries currently have comprehensive National Wetland Inventories in Europe than in other regions.
10. Given the importance of such inventories as a baseline for sustainable National Wetland Policies, the current situation is still significantly below the target for each CP to have a comprehensive National Wetland Inventory. The description of the extent of wetland resources, in order to inform and underpin the implementation of the Convention, is underlined through the large number of indicators listed under this Operational Objective (1.1), to which European CPs have indeed provided a fair amount of information in their National Reports.

11. Assessing and monitoring the condition of wetland resources (*Operational Objective 1.2*) is the next important step. So far, 8 CPs (18%) indicate that they have assessed the water quality and quantity available to, and required by, wetlands, to support the implementation of the *Guidelines for the allocation and management of water for maintaining the ecological functions of wetlands* (Resolution VIII.1). Another 22 CPs (50%) indicate that this work is in progress. The elaboration of Ramsar guidance on matters concerning the inter-relationship between water and wetland ecosystems started only recently, but has been taken up rapidly by a significant number of CPs during this triennium, and will hopefully be complemented by the “*Integrated framework for the Ramsar Convention’s water-related guidance*” submitted to COP9 as Annex C of Draft Resolution 1 with a specific focus on river basin and groundwater management.

### 2.3 Policies and legislation, including impact assessment and valuation (*Operational Objective 2*)

12. The Convention urges Parties to specify the most appropriate policy instrument(s) to be used to ensure the wise use of wetlands. Eighteen CPs (41%) indicate that wetland issues (conservation, wise use, restoration, rehabilitation) have been incorporated into sectoral strategic or planning processes and documents at national, regional, provincial and/or local level. Another 16 (36%) CPs indicate that this incorporation is progressing or only partly achieved.
13. Ensuring that wetland policies are fully integrated into and harmonized with other strategic or planning processes, in particular those related to biodiversity, desertification, climate change, agriculture, trade in endangered species, water resource management, integrated coastal zone management and environmental planning in general is a crucial objective. It is therefore surprising that the number of CPs now stating that this has been achieved is only half that of the 36 CPs (82%) who reported having achieved this in 2002. This may indicate that the extent of integration needed and the work to be accomplished have earlier been underestimated, and that the 2005 responses reflect greater realism. However, it is disturbing to reflect that Europe lags behind in the integration of wetland issues in other policies compared to other regions.
14. No progress seems to have been made with the development and/or the application of methodologies for the valuation of economic, social and environmental benefits and functions of wetlands, which provides an important basis for sound decision-making. The number of CPs, 11 (25%), responding that progress was made in this field is the same as reported to COP8. What is the reason for this lack of progress? Will the “*Integrated framework for wetland inventory, assessment and monitoring*” submitted to COP9 as DR1 Annex E provide support for a more consistent approach across Europe?

### 2.4 Integration of wetland wise use into sustainable development (*Operational Objective 3*)

15. Wetland wise use and conservation policies need to be integrated into planning activities and decision-making processes, particularly concerning territorial management, groundwater management, river basin management, coastal and marine zone planning, and responses to climate change. In Europe, this need is reinforced by the requirement to integrate wetland policies into updated, new and emerging European Union legislation (notably the Water Framework Directive) directly applicable in 25 CPs, and on a voluntary

basis in a number of other non-EU member states, notably those in the Danube basin, through the work programme coordinated by the Danube Commission (ICPDR).

16. The National Reports for COP9 provide an alarming picture regarding whether the COP7-adopted *Guidelines for integrating wetland conservation and wise use into river basin management* (Ramsar Handbook 4) have been used: only 5 CPs (11%) responded affirmatively (Armenia, France, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland), while three years earlier 14 CPs (32%) reported having done so. Adding to these five CPs those that replied that such integration is progressing or happening in some cases, 24 CPs (55%) respond affirmatively now compared to 30 CPs (68%) back in 2002: still a clear and puzzling decline. This indicates that CPs are either not implementing a crucial concern of the Convention or that they are not reporting correctly. Both are reasons for concern.
17. Only 5 CPs (11%) report that the *Guidelines for allocation and management of water for maintaining ecological functions of wetlands* (Resolution VIII.1) have been used in decision-making related to freshwater. At least another 14 CPs (32%) report on progress with such integration. However, the result shows a significant lack of action to implement essential objectives of the Convention as well as of binding EU and other regulations.
18. Only 3 CPs (7%) ensured so far that national policy responses to the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, including revegetation and management, afforestation and reforestation did not lead to damage to the ecological character of wetlands. It is possible that action on this may have been delayed by the late coming into force of the Kyoto Protocol. Hopefully, this will receive increased attention during the coming triennium, in relation to ensuring synergistic implementation of international commitments.
19. The Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP), through its work in the triennium leading to COP9, has made efforts to provide the Convention with an updated set of guidelines and methodological tools to integrate wetland wise use into sustainable development. Notably, this is reflected in the additional guidance submitted to COP9 as DR1 Annex A, which provides a “*Conceptual framework for wise use of wetlands and the maintenance of their ecological character*”. In addition, the STRP has also identified gaps in the available set of guidance tools and lists the priorities in COP9 DR2 on the “*Future implementation of scientific and technical aspects of the Convention*”.

## 2.5 Restoration and rehabilitation (*Operational Objective 4*)

20. Twenty-four Parties (55%) have identified priority wetlands where restoration or rehabilitation would be beneficial and yield long-term environmental, social or economic benefits and implemented necessary recovery programmes. Another 11 CPs (25%) undertook restoration measures for at least some of the identified priority sites. This shows a significant progress of wetland restoration activities during the triennium, when compared with the reports for COP8 (see Annex). European countries are more active in wetland restoration than the global average. It is hoped that by COP10 the remaining CPs also will have identified priority sites for restoration and undertaken recovery measures.
21. Wetland restoration is increasingly also seen as a means of preventing natural disasters or mitigating their effects. Notably floods and droughts are phenomena occurring at an alarming frequency in many parts of Europe. Wetland ecosystems fulfilling their functions in the water cycle can provide relatively cheap and efficient services to avoid the worst

effects of such climatic extremes on human societies. COP9 DR10 addresses the “*Role of the Ramsar Convention in natural disaster prevention, mitigation and adaptation*”.

## 2.6 Local communities, indigenous people and cultural values (*Operational Objective 6*)

22. Eight CPs (18%) report that they used and applied the *Guiding principles for taking into account the cultural values of wetlands for the effective management of sites* (Resolution VIII.19). Three of them (7%) report that resource information and case studies on cultural values of wetlands have been compiled. Another 15 CPs (34%) have applied the guiding principles at least in part as well as having compiled at least some information on case studies.
23. Wetland cultural values were recognized in the preamble to the Convention. It then took nearly thirty years to elaborate guiding principles on how to take them into account, adopted at COP8 in 2002. But since COP8, it seems that CPs have been quick in taking up these issues and gaining experience in this matter. During COP9, a technical session will discuss the issue of culture and knowledge in wetland management, with a view to have the outstanding issues clarified for COP10.

## 2.7 Communication, education and public awareness (*Operational Objective 9*)

24. Communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) are considered central and cross-cutting elements for implementing the Convention. In 1999, the Parties adopted the first *Outreach Programme* for the Convention (Resolution VII.9). This was followed at COP8 with the adoption of a sequel programme on CEPA for 2003-2008 (Resolution VIII.31). Fifteen CPs (34%) report on its implementation and note that they have developed pilot projects to evaluate a range of approaches for applying CEPA in promoting the wise use of wetlands, in particular involving those who make a direct use of wetland resources.
25. However, in only 6 CPs (14%) has a national wetland CEPA task force been established, ensuring suitable stakeholder and NGO representation, to undertake a review of CEPA needs, skills, experts and options, and to set priorities for the implementation of the programme of work. Four additional CPs (9%) report that a task force is in place which is at least partially fulfilling these requirements. However, at the time of COP8, 7 CPs (16%) reported that a national wetland CEPA task force was in place, and 8 additional CPs (18%) indicated that a committee fulfilling at least part of these tasks was active. If CPs reported correctly on this matter, the number of established task forces at national level has diminished significantly over the last three years. This is a disturbing finding given that at the same time the importance of CEPA is recognized more and more widely.
26. Three CPs (7%, Germany, Hungary, Spain) report that a national action plan for wetland CEPA has been developed and have sent a copy of their document to the Ramsar Secretariat. Six additional CPs indicate that they are working on such a national action plan. This shows some progress since COP8 when 4 CPs reported working on the elaboration of a national action plan. Does the reduced number of CEPA task forces remaining in European CPs reflect the fact that some of them were only intended to coordinate the elaboration of a CEPA action plan and do not exist any longer?
27. Six CPs (14%) report that multi-stakeholder bodies are in place to guide and inform river basin planning and management, and that these bodies include appropriate expertise in

CEPA. Another 14 CPs (32%) report that CEPA expertise has been incorporated at least in some cases into river basin planning.

28. CEPA activities and coordinated action plans are crucial to attain our goals and to reach out to other sectors of society, and CEPA remains prominently on the agenda of the Convention. COP9 DR19 proposes the “*Establishment of an Oversight Panel for the CEPA activities of the Convention*”.

## 2.8 Designation of Ramsar sites (*Operational Objective 10*)

29. Fifteen Parties (34%) report that a strategy and priorities have been established for further designation of Ramsar sites, in application of the *Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List*. Another 15 CPs (34%) report that this work is in progress or being planned. Before COP8, 26 CPs (59%) reported that a strategy had been established, and 2 CPs (5%) reported that this was progressing. The currently lower number of CPs with an established strategy for priority Ramsar site designations is puzzling. However, one interpretation could be that a substantial number of CPs have revisited their earlier established strategy, notably for the designation of under-represented wetland types for inclusion in the Ramsar List, and are again working on this issue according to the new guidance provided with Resolution VIII.10.
30. A large percentage of CPs report actively dealing with Ramsar site designations. Notably, 16 CPs (36%) have designated 84 new Ramsar Sites since COP8 (see also COP9 DOC 6 concerning the status of wetlands on the List of Wetlands of International Importance), and another 16 Ramsar site designations by three CPs are currently in progress. On the negative side remains the fact that a third of the European CPs have still not started to address this question seriously.
31. The experience gained over the last two triennia has been incorporated into the STRP’s preparation of a “*Revised Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance*” (COP9 DR1 Annex B). Hopefully this will assist all European CPs to become active in working towards the comprehensive and coherent national and international networks of Ramsar sites.
32. A substantial and continuing challenge is the timely update of the Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) and the submission of maps, so as to provide up-to-date, publicly available, information on Ramsar sites. Only eight CPs (18%) have submitted all required updates to the Secretariat (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Monaco, United Kingdom [currently under review]). Further updated RISs and maps covering 382 sites (47%) are expected from the other 36 CPs (see the list below). The percentage of outdated information on European Ramsar Sites is much larger than in other regions. This often concerns Wetlands of International Importance designated some considerable time ago. Information on key indicators, in order to be a useful tool for management and monitoring, needs regular updating. The majority of the European CPs have an important task to catch up rapidly now. COP9 DR16 on “*The status of sites in the Ramsar List*” addresses these issues in detail.
33. The number of European Ramsar sites for which information is not up to date (outdated Ramsar Information Sheets, older than six years, and/or low quality maps):



Albania	1	Luxembourg	1
Armenia	2	Malta	2
Austria	4	Netherlands	23
Belarus	1	Norway	22
Belgium	6	Poland	8
Bulgaria	2	Portugal	10
Croatia	4	Republic of Moldova	1
Czech Republic	1	Romania	1
Estonia	6	Russian Federation	34
France	13	Serbia and Montenegro	4
Georgia	2	Slovakia	9
Germany	22	Slovenia	2
Greece	10	Spain	37
Iceland	3	Sweden	21
Ireland	45	Switzerland	1
Italy	46	The FYR of Macedonia	1
Liechtenstein	1	Turkey	9
Lithuania	5	Ukraine	22

## 2.9 Management planning and monitoring of Ramsar sites (*Operational Objective 11*)

34. At COP8, substantially extended and updated *New Guidelines for management planning for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands* (Resolution VIII.14) were adopted. Ten CPs (23%) report that they have applied these. Another 27 CPs (61%) report that their use of the new guidelines is progressing or at least planned. This still leaves a substantial number of CPs that have apparently not yet taken notice of this new wetlands management tool of the Convention. Europe's performance in this regard is slightly below the global average.
35. The rate of occurrence of ecological change at Ramsar sites remained relatively stable over the last two triennia in Europe. Since COP7 (1999), the Secretariat has received information about ecological change occurring, or likely to occur, at 125 European Ramsar sites (16%). According to Article 3.2 such information shall be passed without delay to the Secretariat. In only nine cases did the national Ramsar Administrative Authority (AA) do so. In the large majority of cases, the Secretariat was informed by concerned individuals or NGOs. Following the receipt of such information, the Secretariat contacted the respective AAs regarding 99 cases (not considering the threat of ecological change concerning the other 26 cases to be sufficiently urgent to merit a formal enquiry). Unfortunately, in 26 of these 99 cases (26%), the Ministries responsible for Ramsar implementation at national level have never responded to such enquiries. On the positive side, in 13 cases, the responses received by the AAs showed that ecological change was insignificant, unlikely to happen, or that mitigation and/or compensation measures were taken. This allowed the Secretariat to close these files. However, to date, 86 cases (11% of the European Ramsar sites) concern "open files" where the problems are not yet solved.
36. The Convention has established mechanisms to address such cases, notably the Montreux Record (MR) and Ramsar Advisory Missions (RAM). Currently, out of the at least 60 Ramsar sites where ecological change is known to be occurring, only 27 (45%) are listed on the Montreux Record, some of them for 15 years (since COP4), without major breakthroughs in finding a sustainable solution. During the reporting period since COP8,

three Ukrainian Ramsar Sites were removed from the Montreux Record. Belgium, Denmark, Spain, and the United Kingdom informed the Secretariat that their Ramsar sites on the Montreux Record are not yet ready for removal. Answers are pending from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy and Poland concerning their sites. Two new Czech sites were added to the Record (N°635 Floodplains of the lower Dyje river, and N°639 Poodri), due to the possible significant change to their ecological character from the planned construction of the Danube-Odra-Elbe navigation canals. This planned development project would also affect the Austrian Ramsar Site N°272 Donau-March-Auen which has been on the Record for more than 15 years, for the same reason.

37. Since COP8, the Secretariat has organized four Ramsar Advisory Missions to address problems occurring at Ramsar sites in Croatia, Georgia, Serbia and Montenegro (and Albania) and Ukraine (for details see the table below). In addition, during the triennium the Ramsar Secretariat has participated in seven on-site visits addressing issues affecting Ramsar sites in Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Norway, Spain and Turkey. The Secretariat remains at the disposal of CPs to do so for other sites, particularly those listed on the Montreux Record.

**List of Ramsar sites where ecological change is occurring or likely to occur (Article 3.2):**

CP	Ramsar Site	MR	RAM	on-site visit
Albania	1290 Butrint			
Austria	272 Donau-March-Auen	1990	1991	
Austria	273 Untere Lobau			
Austria	864 Lafnitztal			2004
Belgium	329 De Ijzerbroeken	1999		
Belgium	331 Marais de Harchies			
Belgium	327 Schorren van de Beneden Schelde	1990	1988	
Bulgaria	293 Durankulak Lake	1993		2003
Bulgaria	64 Srebarna	1993	1992, 2001	
Croatia	582 Crna Mlaka			
Croatia	583 Kopacki Rit	1993	2005	
Cyprus	1081 Larnaca Salt Lake			2005
Czech Republic	638 Litovleksi Pomoravi	1997		
Czech Republic	635 floodplains of lower Dyje river	2005		2004
Czech Republic	639 Poodri	2005		
Czech Republic	494 Sumava peatlands		2001	
Czech Republic	495 Trebon fishponds	1994		
Denmark	141 Ringkøbing Fjord	1990	1996	2001
Denmark (Greenland)	381 Aqajarua and Sullorsuaq			
Denmark (Greenland)	384 Kitsissunnguit			
Estonia	913 Vilsandi National Park			
France	519 Rives du lac Léman			2005
Georgia	893 Wetlands of Central Kolkheti		2005	2000
Germany	561 Mühlenberger Loch		2001	1999
Germany	88 Rheinauen zw. Eltville und Bingen			
Germany	82 Ostfriesisches Wattenmeer	1990	1990	
Greece	61 Amvrakikos gulf	1990		1999
Greece	59 Axios, Loudias, Aliakmon delta	1990		1999
Greece	63 Kotychi lagoons	1990		1999
Greece	55 Lake Vistonis, Porto Lagos & lagoons	1990		1999
Greece	57 Lakes Volvi & Koronia	1990		1999
Greece	62 Messolonghi lagoons	1990		1999
Greece	56 Nestos delta and adjoining lagoons	1990		1999, 2002

Iceland	167 Myvatn-Laxá region		1992	
Iceland	460 Thjörðsarver			
Italy	124 Laguna di Orbetello		1998	
Italy	134 Stagno di Cagliari	1990		
Italy	133 Stagno di Molentargius	1990		
Italy	295 Torbiere d'Iseo			
Netherlands	581 Bargerveen			
Netherlands	428 Engbertsdijkvenen			
Norway	809 Froan Nature Reserve			
Norway	308 Ilene & Pesterödkilen			
Norway	306 Kurefjorden			
Norway	802 Nordre Tyrifjord			
Norway	311 Tautra & Svaet			1997, 2004
Poland	285 Jezioro Siedmiu Wysp	1990	1989	
Poland	282 Slonsk Reserve	1993		
Portugal	827 Ría de Alvor			
Republic of Moldova	1029 Lower Prut Lakes			
Romania	521 Danube Delta			
Romania	1074 Small Island of Braila			
Russian Federation	691 Beresovye Islands			
Russian Federation	690 Kurgalsky Peninsula			
Russian Federation	689 Southern coast of the Gulf of Finland			
Serbia and Montenegro	784 Skadarsko Jezero		2005	
Spain	592 Aiguamolls de l'Empordà			2002
Spain	454 Albufera de Valencia			2002
Spain	235 Las Tablas de Daimiel	1990	1988	
Spain	706 Mar Menor			1998, 2002
Spain	234 Parque Nacional de Doñana	1990	2002	
Spain	453 Rías de Ortiguera y Ladrado			
Spain	1264 Txingudi			
Sweden	22 Hornborgasjön		1988	2001
Switzerland	231 Bolle di Magadino			2002
Switzerland	504 Les Grassettes			2003, 2004
Turkey	945 Gediz Delta			2003
Turkey	657 Göksu Deltası			2000
Ukraine	764 Dniestr-Turunchuk crossrivers area			2003
Ukraine	113 Kyliiske Mouth		2003, 2005	
United Kingdom	663 Humber Flats, Marshes and Coast			
United Kingdom	1046 Lewis Peatlands			
United Kingdom	74 Lough Neagh & Lough Beg		1989	
United Kingdom	645 Medway Estuary & Marshes			
United Kingdom	77 Ouse Washes	2000	2001	
United Kingdom	965 Solent and Southampton Water			
United Kingdom	1038 South West London Waterbodies			
United Kingdom	1025 Thames Estuary and Marshes			
United Kingdom	298 The Dee Estuary	1990	1993, 1994	

## 2.10 Management of shared water resources, wetlands and wetland species (*Operational Objective 12*)

38. Fifteen CPs (34%) indicate that all transboundary (or shared) wetland systems in their country have been identified. Another 16 CPs (36%) report that work on this is progressing. This is encouraging news. The CPs are invited to send a copy of their lists to the Secretariat to be taken into account when updating the “*List of transnational Ramsar sites in Europe*”, sent to all CPs in June 2005 for comment. Wetland systems shared between different countries are particularly abundant in Europe with its many national borders and

river basins. The preliminary list therefore contains 20 existing transboundary sites with national Ramsar designations on each side of the border but without a formal joint designation, 34 transboundary wetlands so far designated within the territory of only one CP, and 12 such designated Ramsar sites that merit clarification as to whether their extension to include designation of a part in the neighbouring country would be beneficial.

39. During this triennium European CPs were the first to jointly and formally designate *transboundary Ramsar sites*, notably the “Trilateral Ramsar Site Floodplains of the Morava-Dyje-Danube Confluence” (composed of the earlier national designations of the Austrian site N°272, the Slovak site N°604 and the Czech site N°635), the “Vallée de la Haute-Sûre” (composed of the Belgian site N°1407 and the Luxemburg site N°1408), the “Dolica-Baradla Cave System” (composed of the Hungarian site N°1092 and the Slovak site N°1052), and the “Upper Tisza Valley” (composed of the Hungarian site N°1410 and the Slovak site N°1411). A workshop on transboundary Ramsar sites took place during the 5<sup>th</sup> European Regional Meeting in 2004 and discussed the issues in depth and compared first experiences. This contributed much to the development of COP9 DR6 on the “*Designation and management of transboundary Ramsar sites*”.
40. Twenty-one CPs (48%) report that they have been involved in the development of a regional initiative in the framework of the Convention. This concerns the MedWet initiative for the Mediterranean region launched many years ago already in 1991, the Nordic-Baltic wetland initiative launched during a preparatory meeting in 2005, and the Carpathian wetland programme presented at a workshop in 2004. While the former has established its procedures, regular committee meetings, technical working groups, and a coordination unit in Athens, it is hoped that the latter two can take off during the coming triennium and become formally part of the Convention’s implementation procedures as outlined in COP9 DR8 on “*Regional initiatives in the framework of the Ramsar Convention*”.

#### **2.11 Collaboration with other institutions** (*Operational Objective 13*)

41. Twenty-three CPs (52%) report that they have mechanisms in place at the national level for collaboration between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the focal points of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). Another 12 CPs (27%) indicate that setting up such mechanisms is progressing. This is encouraging news and a clear progress since COP8 when only 21 CPs (48%) responded affirmatively. The need for such cooperation, notably to ease the burden of administrative tasks at national level through the creation of synergies and by sharing work most effectively, is ever increasing. COP9 DR5 on “*Synergies with other international organizations dealing with biological diversity; including collaboration on, and harmonization of, national reporting among biodiversity-related conventions and agreements*” is addressing these issues and needs careful attention during COP9.

#### **2.12 Sharing of expertise and information** (*Operational Objective 14*)

42. The creation of networks among wetlands sharing common features for knowledge sharing and training, across countries and continents, is considered a very effective tool to progress with the implementation of the Convention’s requirements. In their reports to COP9, 20 CPs (46%) indicated that twinning arrangements among wetlands sharing common features have been established. This is more than the global average. However, in 2002, 24 CPs (55%) were reporting to COP8 that they had established twinning arrangements. Why is there this apparent reduction in such arrangements? The Secretariat

would be most interested to be sent more detailed information on twinning arrangements, in order that experiences gained and lessons learnt can be shared among CPs.

### **2.13 Financing the conservation and wise use of wetlands** (*Operational Objective 15*)

43. Sixteen CPs (36%) with development assistance agencies indicate in their report to COP9 that they have mobilized funding support for wetland issues. However, back in 2002, there were 20 CPs (46%) saying so. Furthermore, while many European countries have development assistance agencies, proportionally fewer European countries made efforts to convince these agencies to invest in wetland issues than the global average.
44. Fourteen eligible CPs report that they submitted project proposals related to wetlands to the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Fourteen eligible CPs indicated that they have submitted project proposals related to wetlands to development assistance agencies. The negative trend over time is also detectable here, as there were 21 CPs saying so before COP8. It is rather discouraging to see all these opportunities missed.
45. The Convention's own Small Grants Fund continued to finance worthy incentive projects in developing countries and countries in transition. All European projects produced highly valuable results for wetland conservation and wise use. However, they were very few, due to serious underfunding of the SGF, depending entirely on voluntary donations by a few CPs. COP9 DR14 submitted to COP9 on the "*Evaluation of the Ramsar Endowment Fund as a mechanism to resource the Small Grants Fund*" submits the latest thinking on the issue to the Contracting Parties.

### **2.14 Institutional mechanisms of the Convention** (*Operational Objective 17*)

46. Only 28 CPs (64%) state that a national focal point for Ramsar's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) has been nominated. There were 36 CPs (82%) in 2002 having nominated STRP focal points. Unfortunately, the budget allocated by COP8 to the STRP was insufficient to serve the STRP network of national focal points specifically and provide it with guidance and regular input. This may be part of the reason for the decline in the number of national STRP focal points. National focal points can fulfil a useful role by relaying the work in progress of the STRP to national networks of expertise and feeding their comments back to the STRP. COP9 DR12 "*Revised modus operandi of the STRP*" covers important changes proposed for making the work of the Panel more efficient and regionally-relevant, and includes as a priority for the coming triennium mechanisms to develop and engage the STRP National Focal Point network.

### **2.15 Institutional capacity of Contracting Parties** (*Operational Objective 18*)

47. Twenty-nine CPs (66%) report that a review of national institutions responsible for the conservation and wise use of wetlands has been completed or is under way. This shows significant progress since COP8 when only 22 (50%) indicated so. Nevertheless, a third of the European CPs have not yet done such a review, and many countries reported activity on the related indicators in the National Report format, such as: the establishment of a coordinating committee among focal points of environment-related conventions; the establishment of mechanisms to ensure cooperation between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and other national institutions directly or indirectly responsible for wetland

issues, in particular water and biodiversity; and with relevant professional, scientific or educational societies, including social heritage issues.

48. Twenty-one CPs (48%) report that a National Ramsar Committee (or equivalent body) is in place. In 2002, they were 22 CPs (50%) reporting so. This seems to be an indication that where national committees do exist they are not always active: some have not met for years. The Secretariat would very much welcome receiving more information on the work of national committees. Austria, France, the United Kingdom and others include the Ramsar Secretariat on their committee's mailing list - a very helpful procedure. Six countries report that they are planning to establish a national committee: Croatia, Georgia, Lithuania, Portugal, Romania and the Russian Federation. No national committees exist in Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark (including Greenland), Finland, Iceland, Italy, Norway, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Malta, Serbia and Montenegro, and Switzerland. Improving this situation is an urgent priority for the coming triennium. Fewer European countries benefit from the work of a national committee than the global average.

#### **2.16 Training** (*Operational Objective 20*)

49. Ten CPs (23%) indicate that they provided support to the development of regional wetland training and research centres. It may be useful to share these programmes more widely. This would provide the CPs with an opportunity to learn from experiences gained by these existing centres.

#### **2.17 Membership of the Convention** (*Operational Objective 21*)

50. European membership of the Convention is almost complete, but has not progressed over the last triennium. Despite repeated messages received from Andorra since 2002 that it is preparing for accession, this has not yet materialised. Andorra does have very valuable mountain wetland ecosystems that qualify for the Ramsar List. The only other European countries not yet part of the Convention are the Holy See and San Marino. Here, wetlands may not form a major governmental priority. However, this should not preclude further thoughts on the utility of these countries also joining.

## Annex

### Summary statistics of progress with implementation since COP8

The table provides a general overview of the Actions from the Strategic Plan 2003-2008 briefly analysed above. Where possible, the table compares information provided in National Reports to COP8 with those provided to COP9 in order to assess progress during the triennium. In several cases, work on the implementation of a specific issue seems to have regressed. It is unclear whether this is a true reflection of a changing situation or an artefact of inadequate or inconsistent reporting.

The table also shows if particular actions are more (or less) widely addressed in the European region, compared to the global average; based on the percentages of the Contracting Parties having answered positively. Percentages in this table refer to the total number of CPs that have submitted National Reports (i.e. 40 CPs [91%] in Europe for both periods, 110 CPs [75%] globally). These percentages are slightly higher than those given in the main text, referring to the absolute number of CPs (44 in Europe).

Operational Objective	Indicator	Affirmative countries in Europe at COP8	Affirmative countries in EUROPE	Affirmative countries GLOBALLY	Progress in Europe since COP8
1	<b>Inventory and Assessment</b> country has a comprehensive national wetland inventory (1.1.1)	28 %	<b>48 %</b>	35 %	significant
	water quality and quantity available to, and required by, wetlands has been assessed (1.2.7)	n.a.	<b>20 %</b>	14 %	some
2	<b>Policies and Legislation, Impact Assessment and Valuation</b> wetland issues have been integrated in other sectoral strategic or planning processes (2.1.2)	<b>90 %</b>	45 %	<b>49 %</b>	<b>regress</b>
	progress made in the development and/or application of valuation methodologies for economic, social and environmental benefits and functions of wetlands (2.2.4)	<b>28 %</b>	<b>28 %</b>	24 %	
3	<b>Integrating Wetland Wise Use into Sustainable Development</b> guidelines for integrating wetland conservation into river basin management are applied (3.4.2)	<b>35 %</b>	13 %	<b>18 %</b>	<b>regress</b>
	freshwater decisions take guidelines for allocation and management of water for wetlands into account (3.4.6)	n.a.	<b>13 %</b>	12 %	some
	implications of the Kyoto Protocol for wetland conservation have been assessed (3.4.9)	n.a.	8 %	<b>9 %</b>	some
4	<b>Restoration and Rehabilitation</b> wetland restoration programmes established, especially in major river	28 %	<b>60 %</b>	53 %	significant

	systems and areas of high conservation value (4.1.2)				
<b>6</b>	<b>Local Communities and Cultural Values</b> guiding principles on cultural values have been used or applied (6.1.6)	n.a.	<b>20 %</b>	13 %	significant
<b>9</b>	<b>CEPA</b> pilot projects developed to evaluate different CEPA approaches (r9.ii.i)	n.a.	38 %	38 %	some
	national wetland CEPA task force established (r9.iii.ii)	<b>38 %</b>	25 %	25 %	<b>regress</b>
	national wetland CEPA action plan developed (r9.iii.iii)	0 %	8 %	10 %	some
	CEPA expertise has been incorporated into river basin planning and management tools (r9.vii.iii)	n.a.	15 %	14 %	
<b>10</b>	<b>Ramsar Site Designation</b> strategy and priorities for the future designation of Ramsar Sites established or in progress (10.1.1)	70 %	<b>75 %</b>	68 %	some
	all required RIS updates submitted to the Secretariat (10.2.4)	n.a.	18 %	<b>31 %</b>	some
<b>11</b>	<b>Management Planning and Monitoring of Ramsar Sites</b> new management planning guidelines have been used (11.1.2)	n.a.	25 %	<b>26 %</b>	
	changes in ecological character at RS have occurred or may occur (11.2.4)	58 %	<b>68 %</b>	65 %	
<b>12</b>	<b>Management of Shared Wetlands</b> all transboundary/shared wetland systems have been identified (12.1.1)	n.a.	<b>37 %</b>	35 %	some
	CP has been involved in the development of a regional initiative (12.3.2)	n.a.	<b>53 %</b>	44 %	some
<b>13</b>	<b>Collaboration with other Institutions</b> mechanisms in place at national level for collaboration between the Ramsar AA and focal points of other MEAs (13.1.1)	53 %	<b>58 %</b>	55 %	some
<b>14</b>	<b>Sharing of Expertise and Information</b> twinning arrangements among wetlands sharing common features have been established (14.1.3)	<b>60 %</b>	50 %	36 %	<b>regress</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>Financing for Wetlands</b> countries with development assistance agencies mobilized funding for wetland issues (15.1.1)	50 %	40 %	<b>60 %</b>	<b>regress</b>
	wetland project proposals have been submitted to development assistance agencies (15.1.8)	<b>53 %</b>	35 %	51 %	<b>regress</b>
	wetland project proposals have been submitted to the GEF (15.1.9)	n.a.	<b>45 %</b>	42 %	
<b>17</b>	<b>Institutional Mechanisms</b> national focal point for STRP nominated (17.1.6)	<b>82 %</b>	64 %	65 %	<b>regress</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>Institutional Capacity of CPs</b>	55 %	<b>73 %</b>	71 %	significant



	review of national institutions responsible for wetlands has been completed (18.1.1)				
	National Ramsar or Wetlands Committee in place (18.1.2)	55 %	53 %	<b>57 %</b>	<b>regress</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>Training</b> support has been provided to the development of regional wetland training and research centres (20.1.8)	n.a.	25 %	25 %	