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## REPORT

Topic: “International nature conservation policy (global, pan-European and the European Union) II.”

AUTHOR: Dr. Jan Plesník, Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic



Association  
of Parks in  
Bulgaria



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“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

International cooperation in nature conservation according to the legally binding (hard and soft laws) consists of:

- a. Implementing the European Union’s legislation (see *International nature conservation policy (global, pan-European and the European Union) I*);
- b. Multilateral biodiversity-related treaties;
- c. International intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations incl. private ones;
- d. International programmes, projects and initiatives;
- e. Bilateral and transboundary cooperation.

### **Multilateral biodiversity-related agreements**

Multilateral biodiversity-related treaties, *i.e.* conventions, agreements or protocols, are, contrary to various strategies or charts, “the hard law”, *i.e.* they are a part of international law. Thus, they are legally binding. Moreover, they are based on a presumption that if a country becomes the (contracting) Party to a treaty it is willing to fulfil all duties resulting from the treaty. Thus, their implementation cannot be enforced, *e.g.* by penalties.

The treaty usually includes the text on its mission, aims, targets and ways of implementation as well as definition of terms. The broader of the treaty’s topic is, the more general text is. In addition, the treaty usually provides a list of protected species, habitats/ecosystem/land cover types or sites in its annexes.

By its content and number of Contracting Parties, **the Convention on Biological Diversity** (CBD, UN 1992, <https://www.cbd.int/>) is the most important multilateral biodiversity-related treaty. It was agreed in Nairobi on 22 May 1992 (the date became the International Day for Biological Diversity) and open to signature by independent countries, United Nations Members, at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, known as the Earth Summit. The negotiations started in 1988 and their intention was to agree on multilateral treaty on protected areas.





“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

Moreover, when the biological diversity was popularized by the book edited by Edward Wilson later on (WILSON 1988), the topic was changed to biodiversity as a whole.

All countries (195) have become a Party to the CBD, except of the United States: the U.S. do not want to accept any regulations of genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The European Community, the European Union respectively has also become a Party to the CBD. The CBD's seat is Montreal and is under the aegis of the United Nations, namely the UNEP (see below).

The convention recognized for the first time in international law that the conservation of biodiversity is "a common concern of humankind" and is an integral part of the human civilization development process.

The CBD has three main goals, going beyond the traditional nature conservation and landscape protection:

- i. Conservation of biological diversity;
- ii. Sustainable use of its components;
- iii. Access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources (ABS).

CBD's objective is to develop national strategies and action plans for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity (NBSAP) in each Party which is at the same time often seen as the key document regarding sustainable development of the respective country.

The CBD is a framework convention which should be supplemented by more specific and detailed protocols. Nowadays, there are two protocols to the CBD:

- a. **Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety** is an international treaty governing the movements of living modified organisms (LMOs) resulting from modern



“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

biotechnology from one country to another. It was adopted in Montreal in January 2000 and entered into force in September 2003.

- b. **Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization** is another supplementary agreement to the CBD. It provides a transparent legal framework for the effective implementation of one of the three objectives of the CBD: the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources. The Nagoya Protocol was adopted in October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan and entered into force in October 2014.

Other attempts to agree a protocol within the CBD, *e.g.* on forest biological diversity, protected areas and ecological networks or invasive alien species, have failed.

Because the CBD's topic is very broad, two types of the activities have been developed for its appropriate implementation by Parties and other stakeholders.

- a) Thematic programmes of work – aim at activities in the main biomes/ecosystem types:
- Agricultural;
  - Dry and sub-humid land;
  - Forest;
  - Island;
  - Inland water;
  - Marine & coastal;
  - Mountain.

Polar biome has been missing among the thematic programmes of work.

- b) Cross-cutting issues – issues going through all the thematic programmes of work:
- Access to genetic resources and benefit-sharing (ABS);
  - Biological and cultural diversity;
  - Biodiversity for development;

“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

- Capacity building and biodiversity;
- Climate change & biodiversity;
- Communication, education and public awareness (CEPA);
- Digital sequence information on genetic resources;
- Economics, trade and incentive measures;
- Ecosystem approach;
- Ecosystem restoration;
- Gender & biodiversity;
- Global Strategy for Plant Conservation;
- Global taxonomy Initiative;
- Health & biodiversity;
- Impact assessment;
- Identification, monitoring, indicators and assessments;
- Invasive alien species;
- Liability and redress;
- New & emerging issues;
- Peace and Biodiversity Dialogue Initiative;
- Protected areas;
- Sustainable use of biodiversity;
- Sustainable wildlife management;
- Technical and scientific cooperation;
- Technology transfer;
- Traditional knowledge, innovations & practices.

**The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat** (Ramsar Convention, <https://www.ramsar.org/>) is the very first multilateral biodiversity-related treaty aiming at protection, conservation and sustainable use of one of the globally most threatened ecosystem types, *i.e.* wetlands. It is named after the city of Ramsar in Iran, where the convention was

“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

signed in 1971 and has now 171 Parties. The Ramsar Convention’s Secretariat is hosted by the IUCN in Gland, Switzerland (see below).

The Ramsar Convention has adopted a very inclusive definition of wetlands as follows: wetlands are areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres (RAMSAR CONVENTION 1971, 2018).

Thus, for the Ramsar Convention practically all places where there is water, permanently or temporary, be it fresh, brackish or salt water, including all the coastal lines up to six meters of depth at low tide, is a wetland. In this sense the application of the Convention in the Parties has a very large remit.

One key instrument of the Convention is its List of Wetlands of International Importance. All Parties to the Convention have the obligations to include in the List at least one site that meets the criteria. Currently, there are 2,422 Wetlands of International Importance, also known as Ramsar Sites, all over the world, in total covering 2,545,904 km<sup>2</sup>, *i.e.* approx. size of Argentina. The highest number of Ramsar Sites can be found in the United Kingdom, the largest area of Ramsar Site was declared in Bolivia.

Parties should generally protect, conserve and wise use all wetlands on their territory. Wise use of wetlands is the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development. The wise use concept implies that wetland conservation need not exclude the human element but rather make human use a promoting factor for the sustainable management of wetlands. The Ramsar wise use concept applies to all wetlands and water resources, not only to those sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance. The concept’s application is crucial to ensuring that wetlands can continue to fully deliver their vital role in supporting biological diversity and human well-being.

“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

The Montreux Record is a register of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference (“a Ramsar Convention Black List”). At present. *i.e* in 2020, there are 45 Ramsar Sites listed in the Montreux Record.

**The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES, <https://cites.org/eng>)** is a multilateral treaty to protect endangered wild plants and animals against overexploitation in the wild caused by international trade. The convention was opened for signature in 1973 in Washington, D.C., therefore, it also is called the Washington Convention. There are 142 Parties to the CITES: each has to nominate national Management, Scientific and Enforcement Authorities. The seat of the CITES is in Geneva, Switzerland and is under the aegis of the United Nations, namely the UNEP (see below).

Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants (living, their parts or products with them) does not threaten the survival of the species in the wild (UN 1973). Roughly 5,000 species or subspecies of wild animals and 29,000 species or subspecies of wild plants are protected by CITES against overexploitation through international trade.

Commercial trade in wild-caught specimens of the species listed in Appendix I of the Convention (approx. 1,200 species or subspecies) is illegal (permitted only in exceptional licensed circumstances). Captive-bred animals or cultivated plants of Appendix I species are considered Appendix II specimens, within Appendix II there are species (approx. 21,000) that are not necessarily directly threatened with extinction, but may become so unless trade in specimens of such species is subject to strict regulation in order to avoid utilization incompatible with the long-term survival of the species in the wild. In addition, Appendix II can include species similar in appearance to species already listed in the

“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

Appendices. International trade in specimens of Appendix II species may be authorized by the granting of an export permit or re-export certificate. In practice, many hundreds of thousands of Appendix II plants and animals are traded annually. No import permit is necessary for these species under CITES, although some Parties do require import permits as part of their stricter domestic measures. A non-detriment finding and export permit are required by the exporting Party, issued by the respective Management Authority consulted with the Scientific Authority. The appendixes are amended at the meetings of the conference of Parties held once in three years and can be checked at <https://cites.org/eng>.

Contrary to other multilateral biodiversity-related agreements the appropriate implementation of the CITES can be enforced, because Parties can agreed that export permits shall not be accepted until the respective Party enhances and improves its CITES implementation, *e.g.* by passing a new more appropriate act or coming with stronger enforcement measures and actions against wildlife crime on its territory.

**The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals** (CMS, <https://www.cms.int/>) is also known as the Bonn Convention because it was signed in Bonn, then West Germany, in 1979 and its seat is located in this city. Similarly to CBD and CITES, it is under the aegis of the United Nations, namely the UNEP (see below). Currently, there are 132 Parties to the CMS. Moreover, some important countries, *e.g.* U.S.A., China, the Russian Federation, Indonesia or Canada have not become a Party to the CMS yet.

CMS provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats on a global scale. CMS brings together the States through which migratory animals pass, the Range States, and lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures throughout a migratory range (UN 1979).



“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

Under the CMS, a migratory species is any species or lower taxon of wild animals, in which a significant proportion of the members of the entire population or any geographically separate part of the population cyclically and predictably crosses one or more national jurisdictional boundaries. Thus, migratory species include not only some birds, but also ungulates, cetaceans (whales and dolphins), carnivores, *e.g.* seals, bats, great apes, reptiles, *e.g.* sea turtles, fish including sharks or even insects, namely butterflies.

The Parties to the CMS should promote, cooperate in and support research relating to migratory species, endeavour to provide immediate protection for migratory species included in Appendix I which includes migratory species threatened with extinction, and endeavour to conclude agreements covering the conservation and management of migratory species included in Appendix II listing migratory species requiring international cooperation.

Current agreements include the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP), Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans of the Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area (ACCOBAMS), Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA), Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (ASCOBANS), Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats (EUROBATS), Agreement on the Conservation of Gorillas and Their Habitats and the Agreement on the Conservation of Seals in the Wadden Sea. In addition, there are 19 Memoranda of Understanding specifically on various migratory animal taxa/groups agreed by some Parties to the CMS.

One of the most important tools for conserving biodiversity at a global scale is **The Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage**, often shortly mentioned as the World Heritage Convention or according to the place of signing in 1972 the Paris Convention



“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

(<https://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/>). It has 193 Parties and is administrated by the United Nations, namely the UNESCO (see below) which hosts the Convention’s Secretariat at its Headquarters in Paris.

Created in 1972, the primary mission of the Convention is to identify and protect the world's natural and cultural heritage considered to be of Outstanding Universal Value. It embodies a visionary idea – that some places are so important that their protection is not only the responsibility of a single nation, but is also the duty of the international community as a whole; and not only for this generation, but for all those to come.

To be selected, a World Heritage Site which can be cultural, natural or mixed, must be a somehow unique landmark which is geographically and historically identifiable and has special cultural or physical significance (UN 1972). The natural World Heritage Sites should

- i. contain superlative natural phenomena or areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance;
- ii. be outstanding examples representing major stages of earth's history, including the record of life, significant on-going geological processes in the development of landforms, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features;
- iii. be outstanding examples representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals or to contain the most important and significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity, including those containing threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

As of April 2020, a total of 1,121 World Heritage Sites (869 cultural, 213 natural, and 39 mixed properties) exist across 167 countries: 36 of them are transboundary. With 55 selected areas each, China as well as Italy are the countries with the most sites on the list. The prestige that comes from being a State Party to the Convention and having sites inscribed on the World Heritage

“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

List often serves as a catalyst to raising awareness for heritage preservation. In the case of sites included on the List of World Heritage in Danger (in 2020, 53 World Heritage Sites), the attention and the funds of both the national and the international community are focused on the conservation needs of these particularly threatened sites.

The natural World Heritage Sites include, *inter alia*, famous Protected Areas, such as the National Parks (*e.g.* Yellowstone, Everglades, Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Iguazu, Manú, Tikal, Doñana, Bialowieza Forest, Plitvice Lakes, the Dolomites, Kaziranga, Komodo, Chitwan, Serengeti, Virunga, Niokolo Koba, Mosi-oa-Tunya/Victoria Falls or Teide) or other whole ecosystems (*e.g.* the Wadden Sea, Danube Delta, Wadi Rum, Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes, Lake Baikal, Great Barrier Reef or the Galápagos Islands).

**The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa** (UNCCD, <https://www.unccd.int/>) is an international community response to one of the environment-related global issues, land degradation, namely desertification and soil quality decline (UN 1994, UNCCD 2017). In 2020, it has 196 Parties and its seat is Bonn.

Its aim is, as stated just in its name, to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought through national action programs that incorporate long-term strategies supported by international cooperation and partnership arrangements. The Convention, the only convention stemming from a direct recommendation of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992, known as the Earth Summit, and it was adopted in Paris in 1994. Together with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), it forms the Rio Convention Group.



“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

In addition to the above global multilateral biodiversity-related treaties, there are two operating in the pan-European region and administered by the Council of Europe (see below). The expert evaluation of proposed natural World Heritage Sites and monitoring those having been declared is provided by the IUCN (see below).

**The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats** (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/bern-convention>) is more known as the Bern Convention, because it was signed in the Swiss capital in 1979. It has 51 Parties including four from Africa and the European Union and its seat is located in Strasbourg at the Council of Europe premises. The Bern Convention inspired the EU legislation, namely Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (the Birds Directive) and Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the Habitats Directive).

It is the only regional (= subglobal) Convention of its kind worldwide, and aims to conserve wild flora and fauna and their natural habitats, as well as to promote European co-operation in this field. The treaty also takes account of the impact that other policies may have on natural heritage and recognizes the intrinsic value of wild flora and fauna, which needs to be preserved and passed to future generations. A special attention is paid to endangered and vulnerable species including endangered and vulnerable migratory species (COUNCIL OF EUROPE 1979).

The Bern Convention is supplemented by a list of strictly protected wild plant species (Appendix I) and of strictly wild animal species (Appendix II) while Appendix III provides a list of wild fauna species which are in need of protection but which can be exploited, *i.e.* hunted in a sustainable manner. Appendix IV was pioneering, because it mentions prohibited means and methods of killing, capture and other exploitation of wild animal species, *e.g.* using snares, tape recorders, motor vehicles in motion or artificial light sources.

“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

Contrary to most of the multilateral biodiversity-related conventions, the Bern Convention has no scientific or technical advisory body: instead, there are various groups of experts on flora and fauna taxa/groups (*e.g.* birds, large carnivores, amphibians and reptiles or invertebrates), biodiversity change drivers (*e.g.*, climate change, invasive alien species or illegal bird killing) and protected areas and ecological networks.

The Emerald Network is an ecological network made up of Areas of Special Conservation Interest built up by the Bern Convention Parties. Because it is based on the same principles and approaches as the European Union’s Natura 2000 network of Protected Areas, the Natura 2000 sites are therefore considered as the contribution from the EU Member States to the Emerald Network. As of April 2020, there are 3,199 Emerald sites proposed by the non-EU Parties to the Bern Convention, covering 14.8 % of their territory.

The European Diploma for Protected Areas is a prestigious international award granted since 1965 by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. It recognises natural and semi-natural areas and landscapes of exceptional European importance for the preservation of biological, geological and landscape diversity and which are managed in an exemplary way. Protected areas may receive the diploma for their outstanding scientific, cultural or aesthetic qualities, but they must also be the subject of a suitable conservation scheme. The unique nature of the Diploma also lies in the fact that it is awarded for a limited duration; the threat that it may be withdrawn has a deterrent effect in respect of dangers liable to cause harm to the area and acts as a stimulus for the preservation and improvement of the site. Since its creation in 1965, 74 protected areas located in 29 European countries have been granted the European Diploma.

The case-file system, dating back to 1984, is a unique monitoring tool based on complaints for possible breaches of the Bern Convention or other problems related with the provisions of the Convention that can be submitted by NGOs or even private citizens. The complaints so received are processed by the

“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

Secretariat, the Bureau and, when particularly relevant, also by the Standing Committee, according to their merits and on the basis of the information submitted. When the Standing Committee or its Bureau considers that further information is needed, they can arrange for on-the-spot visits by independent experts, who report to the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee can publicly issue a set of recommendations to the respective country to fulfil its duties resulted from the Bern Convention. By April 2020, 200 cases were submitted to the Bern Convention Secretariat.

### **The European Landscape Convention**

(<https://www.coe.int/en/web/landscape>), also known as the Florence Convention because it was opened for signature by the Member States of the Council of Europe in this Italian historical city in 2000, is the first international treaty to be exclusively devoted to all aspects of European landscapes. Europe is the only continent having had a multilateral treaty dealing with the landscape as a whole, thus reuniting culture and nature. At present there are 40 Parties to the Convention which is administered by the Council of Europe, therefore its seat is at the Council of Europe premises in Strasbourg (DEJANT-PONS 2006).

The Convention applies to the entire territory of the Parties and covers natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It concerns landscapes that might be considered outstanding as well as everyday or degraded landscapes. The European Landscape Convention is aimed at the protection, management and planning of all landscapes and raising awareness of the value of a healthy landscape. The Convention highlights that the landscape has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields, and constitutes a resource favourable to economic activity and whose protection, management and planning can contribute to job creation. At the same time it contributes to the formation of local cultures and is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity. In addition, the European Landscape

“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

Convention considers the landscape as an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas and to be a key element of individual and social well-being. Therefore, its protection, management and planning entail rights and responsibilities for everyone.

Pursuant to the Convention, the landscape is defined as a zone or area as perceived by local people or visitors, whose visual features and character are the result of the action of natural and/or cultural (that is, human) factors. This definition reflects the idea that landscapes evolve through time, as a result of being acted upon by natural forces and human beings. It also underlines that a landscape forms a whole and its natural and cultural components are taken together, not separately.

Each Party to the European Landscape Convention should:

- i. Legally recognition of landscape as constituting an essential component of people’s surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity;
- ii. Establish and implement landscape policies aimed at landscape protection, management and planning;
- iii. Establish procedures for the participation of the general public, local and regional authorities and other stakeholders with an interest in the definition and implementation of the landscape policies;
- iv. Integrate landscape into regional and town planning policies and in cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as in any other policies, with possible direct or indirect impact on landscape (COUNCIL OF EUROPE 2000, JONES & STENSEKE 2011).

The Landscape Award Alliance of the Council of Europe gathers the exemplary achievements presented by the States Parties to the Council of Europe’s European Landscape Convention. They show that it is possible to promote the

“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

territorial dimension of human rights and democracy by improving the landscape features of people’s surroundings. Since 2006, it has been awarded to 88 projects in 30 countries.

Only countries can become members of the international intergovernmental organizations: these are particularly the United Nations specialized agencies.

**The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization** (UNESCO, <https://en.unesco.org/>) was founded in 1945 and has 193 members. It aims at promoting world peace and security through international cooperation in education, the sciences, and culture. The UNESCO headquarters is based in Paris.

From a point of view of biodiversity protection, conservation and sustainable use, the Man and Biosphere Programme launched in 1971 should be mentioned. It is an intergovernmental scientific programme that aims to establish a scientific basis for enhancing the relationship between people and their environments. It combines the natural and social sciences with a view to improving human livelihoods and safeguarding natural and managed ecosystems, thus promoting innovative approaches to economic development that are socially and culturally appropriate and environmentally sustainable. The best known outputs of the programme are UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, sites for testing interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and managing changes and interactions between social and ecological systems/ecosystems, including conflict prevention and management of biodiversity. In other words, they are learning places for sustainable development, providing local solutions to global challenges. The first UNESCO Biosphere Reserve was declared in 1976. In 2020, there are 714 UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in 129 countries all over the world, including 21 transboundary sites. Most of the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve are protected areas, but they also are those without legal protection. In some countries, *e.g.* in Germany, Biosphere Reserves are a special national protected area category, in some, *e.g.* in the Czech Republic, this is not the case.

“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

UNESCO also administrates the Convention concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage, thus supervising World Heritage Sites.

Another activity dealing with preservation of natural and landscape heritage carried out by UNESCO are UNESCO Global Geoparks. They are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. Their bottom-up approach of combining conservation with sustainable development while involving local communities is becoming increasingly popular. Since 2004, 169 UNESCO Global Geoparks have been established in 44 countries.

In the same year as UNESCO, also the **Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations** (FAO, <http://www.fao.org/home/en/>) was established having been leading international efforts to defeat hunger and improve nutrition and food security. It has 197 members (= countries) and its seat is Rome.

Although it deals particularly with agriculture and farming, its role is crucial also from a point of view of biological diversity protection, conservation and sustainable use because in the United Nations system it is in charge of forestry, fishery, aquaculture, soil protection, integrated pest management, domestic animal (breeds or landraces) and cultural plant/crop (varieties or cultivars) genetic resources and land & water management (FAO 2019, 2020a, 2020b, FAO & UNEP 2020).

**The United Nations Environment Programme** (UNEP, <https://www.unep.org/>) is in charge of coordinating responses to environmental issues within the United Nations system. It was established after the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in June 1972, *inter alia*, as a result of environmental protection movement in the late 1960 and the early 1970s. The UNEP has at present 193 members and it is the only UN

“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

body having a seat in a developing country, namely in Nairobi, Kenya. Since 2012, the UNEP’s governing body has been called the United Nations Environment Assembly.

UNEP’s mandate is to provide leadership, deliver science and develop solutions on a wide range of issues, including climate change, the management of marine, coastal and inland water and terrestrial ecosystems, disaster risk and environmental conflict reduction, harmful substances, resource efficiency and green economic development. The UNEP promotes environmental science and helps national governments achieve environmental targets. It also monitors the state of global environment, proposes solutions to the most important global issues related to the environment/nature, supports environmental research and gathering, assessing and disseminating information on the environment (UNEP 2019). As mentioned above, some legally binding multilateral biodiversity-related treaties, e.g. the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) or the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS or Bonn Convention), have been implemented under the UNEP’s auspices (see above). The UNEP also provides the Secretariat for the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

Contrary to UNESCO or FAO, the UNEP was established quite later and is not a United Nations specialized agency, but a UN programme: therefore, its position in the UN system is weaker than that of both the agencies. There have been a permanent efforts to move UNEP into the UN agencies or even to make it stronger as a World Environment Organization, but they have failed. That is why UNEP has been sometimes recently using the alternative name the UN Environment.

**The Council of Europe** (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal>) is an international intergovernmental organization founded in the wake of World War II to uphold



“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. Founded in 1949, it has now 47 Member States. The Council of Europe is distinct from the European Union (EU), although it is sometimes confused with it, partly because the EU has adopted the original European Flag which was created by the Council of Europe in 1955, as well as the European Anthem. The best known body of the Council of Europe is the European Court of Human Rights, which enforces the European Convention on Human Rights. The Council of Europe’s seat is in Strasbourg.

In addition to activities on human rights and environmental protection interrelations, the Council of Europe administrates the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention) and the European Landscape Convention (see above).

The most important international nature conservation organisation, the **IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature**, officially International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, <https://www.iucn.org/>) displays a mixed character. In 1990 – 2008 it used the name World Conservation Union as the official name, while continuing using IUCN as its abbreviation. Its headquarters is in Gland, Switzerland.

Although having a status of an international NGO with a global scope, it has members from both countries including all the EU Member States and governmental agencies as well as international and national NGOs and indigenous people organisations, thus becoming a government-organized non-governmental organization (GONGO). In April 2020, there are 1,480 members from over 170 countries. More than 18,000 scientists and experts participate in the work of six IUCN commissions on a voluntary basis. IUCN was established in Fontainebleau, France in 1948, when representatives of governments and conservation organizations spurred by the UNESCO (see above) signed a formal act constituting the International Union for the Protection of Nature (IUPN). At

“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

the time of its founding IUPN was the only international organisation focusing on the entire spectrum of nature conservation.

IUCN is the only international observer organization in the United Nations General Assembly with expertise in issues concerning the environment, specifically biodiversity, nature conservation and sustainable natural resource use: the observer status in permanent.

The mission of IUCN is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. Contrary to some other NGOs, IUCN activities have been since the very beginning based on scientific evidences, not on emotions: therefore, it has not been campaigning. The IUCN has been pioneering with some key nature conservation ideas. The Red List of Threatened Species was established in 1964 and has since evolved into the world’s most comprehensive data source on the global extinction risk of species. The similar IUCN Red List of Ecosystems appeared later: both the lists determine which species and natural and semi-natural ecosystem/land-use types merit protection. Through the Green List of Protected and Conserved Areas and the system of IUCN protected area categories IUCN influences how protected areas are managed. It also runs, *inter alia*, the Global Invasive Species Database.

Most recently, IUCN introduced the concept of nature-based solutions (actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits). Simply said. nature-based solutions refer to the sustainable management and use of nature for tackling socio-environmental challenges, *e.g.* climate change, water security, water pollution, food security, human health, biodiversity loss and disaster risk management. In the past, the IUCN initiated international negotiations resulted in adopting the Ramsar Convention, World Heritage Convention, CITES and the Convention on Biological Diversity (see above) and it hosts the Ramsar Convention Secretariat.

“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

Non-private NGO has members among organisations, institutions or associations, not private persons. Some of them have a pan-European or global scope.

The **EUROPARC Federation** (<https://www.europarc.org/>) is the largest European network of protected area managing authorities, consisting of 385 members in 37 countries. It was established as the Federation of Nature and National Parks of Europe in Basel in 1973 and its secretariat is based in Regensburg, Germany. The key aims of the EUROPARC Federation are:

- i. Promote good practice in the management of protected areas;
- ii. Facilitate the establishment of new protected areas;
- iii. Raise the profile of protected areas as a vital means of safeguarding many of the continent's most valuable natural heritage assets, and thereby to increase support for their future protection;
- iv. Influence the future development of public policies and programmes, especially with the European Union, to the benefit of protected areas' objectives.

**BirdLife International** (<https://www.birdlife.org/>) is a global partnership of NGOs that strives to conserve birds, their habitats and global biodiversity, working with people towards sustainability in the use of natural resources. In 2020, there are over 100 members worldwide, usually the most important NGO dealing with bird conservation in the respective country. Therefore, BirdLife International has more than 10 million members and supporters. It was established in London in 1922 was established in London in 1922 International Council for Bird Protection, thus being the oldest international nature conservation organization worldwide and the current name has been using since 1993. Its seat is in Cambridge, the U.K.

“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

Similarly, **Planta Europa** (<https://www.plantaeuropa.com/>) is the network of governmental and non-governmental organizations working together to conserve European wild plants and fungi. It was established in 1995 and nowadays it has 77 members from 35 countries. The seat of Planta Europa is in Paris.

Another NGO dealing with territorial protection, **Eurosite - the European Land Conservation Networks** (<https://www.eurosite.org/>) as a network of natural site managers both governmental and non-governmental and private (organisations as well as persons) from 23 countries deals not only with large protected areas, *e.g.* national or natural parks, but also with smaller protected areas/sites. It was founded in 1989 and its secretariat is based in Tilburg, the Netherlands.

Some of the above European NGOs joined **the European Habitats Forum** (EHF). As an umbrella organisation or meta-NGO, it assembles 23 leading European nature conservation NGOs to provide advice on the implementation and future development of EU biodiversity policy, including improving integration into sectoral policies. Its secretariat is hosted by the IUCN (see above) European Union Representative Office in Brussels. EHF’s activities are carried out through eight topic/thematic working groups.

The EHF

- i. Identifies opportunities for a better implementation and further development of EU biodiversity policy, while fostering policy integration and increase of funding;
- ii. Undertakes common actions to promote, within EU institutions and national governments, a shared view on EU biodiversity policy and in particular on the implementation of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives and the Natura 2000 network;
- iii. Stimulates its members’ networks to undertake priority actions at local and national level;
- iv. Facilitates information exchange between members’ networks to enhance cooperation in the field of EU biodiversity policy.

“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

Citizens from various countries can become members of the private international organizations aiming at nature conservation.

The **World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF International)**, formerly known as the World Wildlife Fund, (<https://wwf.panda.org/>) had been originally founded as the World Wildlife Fund, a body fund-raising for the IUCN (see above), but it became soon an independent important foundation. At the beginning, the WWF was aiming at wildlife conservation, particularly at wild animals in Africa. But its range of activities were significantly broaden: therefore, it changed the name to the World Wide Fund for Nature, keeping the famous abbreviation and a logo of the stylized Giant panda. The logo originated from a panda named Chi Chi that had been transferred from Beijing Zoo to London Zoo three years before WWF became established. Moreover, the World Wildlife Fund remains its official name in Canada and the United States. The WWF’s seat is the same as that of IUCN, at the Swiss town of Gland.

WWF aims to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature. With over five million supporters worldwide, WWF is the world's largest private nature conservation organization, working in more than 100 countries and supporting approx. 3,000 nature conservation and environment protection projects. The fund invested over USD 1 billion in more than 12,000 conservation initiatives only in 1995 – 2020, with more than a half of funds raised coming from individuals and bequests.

**Greenpeace International** (<https://www.greenpeace.org/international/>) deals more with the environmental issues than purely with nature conservation. It was established in 1971 and its goal is to ensure the ability of the Earth to nurture life

“Future Environmentalists - Linking EU Natural Capital Management to Field Research”  
Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

in all its diversity. It has offices in 55 countries and an international headquarters in Amsterdam. Globally, it has more than 3 million supporters, mainly in Europe.

The NGO focuses its campaigning on worldwide issues such as climate change, deforestation, overfishing, commercial whaling, using renewable energy sources, genetic engineering & synthetic biology, geoengineering, ozone layer protection, toxic waste, circular economy and anti-nuclear issues. For achieving its goals, it uses direct actions, lobbying, research and ecotage.

The U.S. based nature conservation NGOs have been becoming globally more and more significant. Because they are often foundations, they can use much higher budget than any European international NGOs.

**Conservation International** (CI, <https://www.conservation.org/>) was established in 1987, is headquartered in Arlington, Virginia, the U.S.A. and has its branches in more than 30 countries. Combining fieldwork with innovations in science, policy and finance, the CI has helped to protect more than 6 million km<sup>2</sup> of land and sea across 77 countries. The organization has been recently paying a special attention to the connections between human well-being and natural ecosystems, indigenous people and marine conservation including deep seas. CI was pioneering in global biodiversity hotspots identification, protection and conservation through the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund.

**The Nature Conservancy** (TNC, [www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org)) has some characteristics similar to those of Conservation International. Founded in 1951, TNC has over one million members globally as of 2020, and through its land trust programmes has protected almost 0.5 million km<sup>2</sup> of land and thousands of kilometers of watercourses worldwide. It also has its headquarters located in Arlington, Virginia, the U.S.A. In 2018. Its revenue reached USD 1.29 billion. TNC works via affiliates or branches in 79 countries, as well as across every state in the US. Recently, The Nature Conservancy's Plant a Billion Trees campaign has been an

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Agreement № 2018-1-BG01-KA203-047962

effort to plant one billion trees by across the globe in forests with the greatest need. The Nature Conservancy is considered to be one of the most effective and wide-reaching environmental organizations in the world.

The third U.S. nature conservation NGO with a global scope is the **Wildlife Conservation Society** (WCS, [www.wcs.org](http://www.wcs.org)). WCS's goal is to conserve the world's largest wild places in 14 priority regions, home to more than 50% of the world's biodiversity. Because it was founded in 1895 as the New York Zoological Society (NYZS), it has headquarters in the Bronx Zoo in New York City. The NYZS played crucial role in saving the American bison (*Bison bison*).

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