

Report Session Vn: Protected area category certification

Chair: R. Crofts (UK)

Rapporteur: P. Galland, Switzerland

Around 40 people, $\frac{3}{4}$ from Europe.

After a short introduction by M. Zupancic-Vicar, A. Sovinc (Parks for Life coordinator, Slovenia) presented a discussion paper on European verification procedure developed by a working group of WCPA Europe under the leadership of Marija Zupancic-Vicar, Slovenia. The UN list and its results for Europe were then presented, emphasizing the difficult procedure for collecting the data and showing that 40 % of the PAs are not assigned to IUCN categories. Two experiences from Austria and Spain were then presented to illustrate the difficulties of assigning protected areas into the IUCN categories and the usefulness to have it done in a satisfactory manner and possibly certified by an independent IUCN team of experts. Obviously the PA managers and the national responsible authorities are facing 2 problems, slightly different but very closely related:

How can we ensure that the data published in the UN list are coherent and really reflect the situation? and how to re-conciliate the management categories defined at country and national sub-entities level with the global IUCN system ?

The collection of comprehensive and correct data is very difficult for the WCMC: in Europe it passes through different organizations, namely the Council of Europe, the European Environmental Agency and the WCMC itself, and currently there is no validation of the data before publication of the list. Country focal points are strongly encouraged to review their data and to communicate any changes to the WCMC.

The assignment to categories is complicated by the federal structure of many European countries, with different laws in the different Länder or provinces. Also often protected areas were created by adding different parts during a long period of time. Eventually the emergence of new management bodies, like local communities, further complicates the procedure.

Lively and interesting discussions lead to the following findings:

Nobody suggested important modification of the category system, despite some difficulties in using it. It was considered as workable, but improvements are needed, especially regarding its implementation. IUCN should keep the control of the system and its implementation through its WCPA expert network.

Different types of needs were expressed by the participants; they can be grouped in 3 categories:

- Training of staff in charge in the responsible country / region offices
- Improved and more specific guideline, in particular adapted to the regional context
- Trained experts for advising and, upon request, for certification

No major objections were expressed concerning pushing forward an experimental procedure of verification at the European level, providing it is made on a voluntary basis. Certification could be made at three levels: national legislation, entire national PA system or individual sites. The certification procedure should help to promote an efficient use of the PA categories, to improve the management and to ensure more coherence at the regional level.