



## 22 May 2017: International Day for Biological Diversity

*« Biodiversity and sustainable tourism » is the main theme chosen for this years' International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB), 22 May. The IDB was proclaimed more than 15 years ago by the United Nations. Every year, the Bern Convention supports global efforts in raising awareness on, and increasing the understanding of, the interrelation between the quality and sustainability of life on Earth, the protection of the environment, nature conservation and the use of natural resources.*

Strasbourg, 22 May 2017 – The need to reduce the impact of tourism on biodiversity conservation is the first most obvious link one can make between these two sectors. Nevertheless, tourism offers an important opportunity to raise the awareness of the larger public, the business sector and relevant national authorities on the need to preserve the unique biodiversity of our Planet, for the benefit of all. This is particularly valid when taking into account the multiple benefits nature provides for human health, including through time spent in nature.

In Europe, the cornerstone of nature conservation is based on its protected areas and the ecological Networks they form. The Bern Convention contributes to this endeavour thanks to its Emerald Network of nature protection sites. When well-planned and managed, truly sustainable tourism in specific multipurpose Emerald Network sites can significantly contribute to the long-term conservation of European natural heritage.

On the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity 2017, the Bern Convention is launching the **Emerald Network Viewer**. This on-line tool, developed with the support of the European Environment Agency and the European Union, offers the possibility for any interested actor or individual to consult each adopted or candidate Emerald site in the 16 countries currently implementing the Network. The Viewer offers different features, including the possibility to consult the list of species and habitats to be protected by a given Emerald site, while more are to be developed and launched in the near future.

The new Emerald Network Viewer can be found [here](#).

## **Additional information**

### **The Bern Convention**

For more than 30 years the [Bern Convention](#) (Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, Bern 1979), has underlined humankind's role in the conservation of the European natural heritage. Human beings have the duty to preserve wild flora, fauna, and their natural habitats, including water, both for the benefit of future generations and for the numerous services that nature provides for all of us. One of the main lines of action of the treaty is the establishment of a coherent system of protected areas at pan-European level. The Convention launched its own Network of protected sites in the late '80s – the [Emerald Network](#).

### **The Emerald Network**

The Emerald Network is an ecological network of areas of interest for biodiversity conservation. It is considered a tool for Contracting Parties to comply with their obligations under the Convention. Areas adopted as Emerald sites on the territory of Parties have to be managed in such a way that it supports the overall Network objective, the long term survival of the species and habitats of the Bern Convention. The Bern Convention is currently very active in the practical establishment of the Network in the neighbouring countries of the European Union. The Union has already fulfilled its obligations towards the Convention with the creation of the Natura 2000 Network on the territory of its 28 member States. In 2017, the Emerald Network represents nearly 3 500 candidate or fully certified sites in 16 countries, covering almost 700 000 km<sup>2</sup> and an average of 12.7% of the national territories of the countries involved.

[Video](#) of the Bern Convention

[Video](#) of the Emerald Network under the Bern Convention

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