

## **German Report on the national implementation of the MAB Programme**

### **Summary of activities since the 32<sup>nd</sup> session of MAB ICC, October 2020 – August 2021**

#### National activities

The German MAB Committee continued its work throughout 2020 and 2021. Since the 32<sup>nd</sup> session of the MAB ICC in October 2020, the National Committee held two official meetings. Both of them were virtual meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A new MAB National Committee has been appointed in June 2021 now encompassing 20 members. Furthermore, the MAB committee has been complemented by two representatives of the youth.

The MAB Committee closely advises and interacts with the 16 German UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, supporting and promoting the German Biosphere Reserves to become fully-fledged model sites of excellence for sustainable development, which is the objective of the German implementation of the MAB programme. Through field missions in the context of periodic reviews, position papers, meetings with senior ministry representatives and based on scientific studies, the National Committee intensively supports action to safeguard the high quality of German UNESCO Biosphere Reserves. Implementing the 2015 MAB strategy and the Lima Action Plan is at the centre of the activities of German Biosphere Reserves.

The MAB Committee is currently accompanying the Biosphere Reserve Spreewald, the Schorfheide-Chorin Biosphere Reserve and the Biosphere Reserve Berchtesgadener Land in their periodic review process. The periodic reports will be submitted to UNESCO in September 2022. In September 2021, the Committee will submit the periodic review of the transboundary Biosphere Reserve Palatinate Forest – Vosges du Nord to UNESCO in close cooperation with the French MAB National Committee as well as the national periodic report of the BR Palatinate Forest.

The MAB Committee also closely followed several recent initiatives to establish new Biosphere Reserves in Germany and to extend existing Biosphere Reserves. The Biosphere

Reserve Wadden-Sea in Lower-Saxony is making great efforts and progress for an extension of its transition area. The MAB Committee is also closely accompanying the nomination of a potential new Biosphere Reserve Drömling in Lower Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt. The application is planned for 2022.

In 2020 and 2021, the MAB Committee finalised its work on its recommendations for transition areas as part of a (iteratively developed) position paper on the zonation of German Biosphere Reserves.<sup>1</sup>

A research project has been commissioned to support the joint working group of the MAB Committee and directors of Biosphere Reserves to develop approaches for an indicator-based quality assurance for Biosphere Reserves. The project resulted in a set of indicators and parameters to evaluate progress towards the achievement of sustainable development of Biosphere Reserves as well as a set of concrete practical instruments (“toolbox”) to use these indicators in the day-to-day work of the Biosphere Reserves.<sup>2</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the work of the Committee and to a much greater extent the work of the Biosphere Reserves as it did last year. Over the last 18 months, Biosphere Reserves had to and still do face challenges in their working routine. The MAB Committee acknowledges the dedication and hard work of all Biosphere Reserves in Germany – and worldwide. The directors and staff of Biosphere Reserves in Germany met several times virtually to discuss topics such as ways to cope with the effects of the lockdown and COVID-19 restrictions. The Biosphere reserves also continued their work on developing a national image campaign.

The German National Commission for UNESCO (DUK) continues its strong support to Biosphere Reserves, working hand in glove with the MAB Committee. At the national level, it has successfully supported the establishment of a working group of federal parliamentarians whose constituencies encompass a Biosphere Reserve. So far, three meetings have been held with the participation of numerous members of the German Federal Parliament. Safeguarding the continuation of this working group of parliamentarians after the upcoming parliamentary elections in September 2021 is a priority at present. Internationally, DUK substantially supported the Excellence Process and the TGBR; it also continued its youth

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.bfn.de/fileadmin/BfN/internationalernaturschutz/Dokumente/MAB/MAB-NK\\_Positionspapier\\_Zonierung\\_2021\\_final.pdf](https://www.bfn.de/fileadmin/BfN/internationalernaturschutz/Dokumente/MAB/MAB-NK_Positionspapier_Zonierung_2021_final.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bfn.de/fileadmin/BfN/service/Dokumente/skripten/Skript593.pdf>

volunteering program, through which young Germans can work for 6 months in UNESCO designated sites, mostly Biosphere Reserves, abroad. At the initiative of the DUK, Biosphere Reserves were active participants in several side events of the UNESCO 2021 World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development, hosted by Germany. DUK continued its cooperation with Danone Waters Germany for the benefit of German Biosphere Reserves and initiated and supported the negotiation of the cooperation between Volkswagen and UNESCO for Biosphere Reserves in Germany, Poland and Spain.

German experts also participated in the Technical Guidelines working groups as well as in the ad-hoc working group on the Excellence Strategy.

Germany acknowledges the important role of youth engagement in nature conservation and aims at strengthening youth participation within the MAB Programme. In September 2021, the 2<sup>nd</sup> German MAB Youth Forum for young people aged 18 – 25 years will take place in the Biosphere Reserve Swabian Alb.

### International activities

Germany fosters the Biosphere Reserves in and through its international cooperation. Altogether, German international cooperation supports projects in and for UNESCO Biosphere Reserves around the world with more than 10 million Euro / year. The following selected projects are highlighted:

- The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation, through its financial and technical agencies KfW and GIZ, provides significant support to Biosphere Reserves such as Prespa (Albania and Northern Macedonia), Trifinio (El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala), WAP (Benin, Burkina Faso and Niger), Tonle Sap (Cambodia), La Selle and Jaragua-Bahoruco-Enriquillo (Dominican Republic and Haiti).
- In cooperation with a number of African partner organisations and the ROSA field office of UNESCO, as well as the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN), Germany continues its support in the fourth consecutive year to countries in southern Africa to better use the potential of Biosphere Reserves as model regions for sustainable development. At the upcoming 33<sup>rd</sup> session, the ICC will decide about the designation of the proposed Matseng Biosphere Reserve and the proposed (re-

submitted) Lower Zambesi Escarpment Biosphere Reserve, which have both received critical financial and expert support. Support is currently provided to the recently designated Lubombo Biosphere Reserve and each and every of its communities, with a pioneering bottom-up, needs-driven funding programme. The Management Manual for Biosphere Reserves managers in Africa has been published in Portuguese language.

- In the second round of its COVID-19 emergency support programme #SOSAfricanHeritage, the DUK provides support in 2021 to four additional Biosphere Reserves in Africa, with additional support from the Canadian Commission for UNESCO. Until June, interested World Heritage Sites and Biosphere Reserves from all African countries could apply with proposals to address impacts of the pandemic. An international jury selected 12 projects out of the 85 applications received, which now receive funding of up to 20,000 Euros each from August to November 2021.
- BfN in cooperation with Russian partners and the Michael Succow Foundation also supports the nomination of a Biosphere Reserve in the Kaliningrad Region, Russian Federation.
- A new partnership between the Biosphere Reserve Rhön and the UNESCO-Biosphere Reserve Oxapampa-Ashanika-Yanesha (BIOAY) in Peru was founded.
- The DUK has again supported the publication of the World Map of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves.
- To contribute to the interlinkages and cooperation within the World Network of Biosphere Reserves and to foster research in, for and with biosphere reserves, a large international conference will take place from 16<sup>th</sup> till 21<sup>st</sup> of May 2022 in the Biosphere Reserve Schorfheide-Chorin. More than 100 research managers as well as junior researchers will have the opportunity to exchange research results and experiences.
- BfN also manages a series of three workshops for European Biosphere Reserves to foster exchange and collaboration on relevant topics thereby reacting on the appeal from EuroMAB to extend the cooperation among the European Biosphere Reserves. In July 2021, the second workshop on participation of the local population and stakeholders in European UNESCO biosphere reserves took place in Elbe River Landscape Biosphere Reserve.