

German Report on the national implementation of the MAB Programme

Summary of activities since the 33rd session of MAB ICC, July 2021 – May 2022

National activities

The German MAB National Committee continued its work throughout 2021 and 2022. Since the 33rd session of the MAB ICC in June 2021, the National Committee held two official meetings. The first took place in the UNESCO biosphere reserve Wadden Sea of Schleswig-Holstein, the second in the national biosphere reserve Karstlandschaft Südharz in May 2022, together with all biosphere reserve directors (such joint meetings are held once every 2 years). The latter meeting allowed the participants to explore a biosphere reserve soon to be nominated to UNESCO.

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 a core 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 Biosphere Reserve Schorfheide-Chorin, the Biosphere Reserve Berchtesgadener Land and the Biosphere Reserve Wadden Sea in Schleswig-Holstein in their periodic review process. The reports will be submitted in September 2022. The MAB Committee also closely accompanied several initiatives to establish new Biosphere Reserves in Germany and to extend existing Biosphere Reserves. The Biosphere Reserve Wadden Sea in Lower-Saxony and the Biosphere

Reserve Wadden Sea Hamburg made great efforts and progress for an extension of their transition areas (in line with ICC recommendations). All three Wadden Sea Biosphere Reserves of Germany have agreed to submit their periodic reviews and extension applications jointly from now on, to stress their close relationship and joint approaches.

The MAB Committee is closely accompanying the nomination of a new Biosphere Reserve Drömling in Lower Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt. The application will be submitted in September 2022 as well.

The MAB Committee is experiencing great interest in Biosphere Reserves and the MAB Programme throughout Germany with currently three initiatives in very early stages of discussion. The German state of Baden-Württemberg is currently evaluating the feasibility of its third biosphere reserve, whilst another initiative is starting in Bavaria (Spessart region). The MAB committee and its secretariat are accompanying these and all further discussions.

The most visible MAB initiative in Germany in 2022 is the national image campaign “Verrückt auf Morgen!”¹ (Crazy About Tomorrow!). This campaign was launched in April 2022 and is fully organized and financed by the German biosphere reserves themselves; they do this in consultation with the German Commission for UNESCO. The image campaign is an outstanding once-in-a-lifetime project to improve the publicity of Biosphere Reserves in the broader public. It features a Roadshow across Germany as well as online campaigns together with well-known German TV actors.

In addition, the campaign addresses young people through a participatory competition, allowing them to develop their project ideas that promote a sustainable world of tomorrow and to implement them together with biosphere reserves.



¹ <https://verrueckt-auf-morgen.de/>

To contribute to improved interlinkages and cooperation within the World Network of Biosphere Reserves and to foster research in, for and with biosphere reserves, Germany hosted a large international conference from 16th till 21st of May 2022 in the Biosphere Reserve Schorfheide-Chorin, organized by the "Biosphere Reserves Institute" of Eberswalde University of Applied Sciences. More than 100 research managers of Biosphere Reserves as well as early career researchers exchanged their research results and experiences.

The German Commission for UNESCO (DUK) continues its strong support to Biosphere Reserves, working hand in glove with the MAB Committee. Since 2019, DUK had supported the successful establishment of a working group of parliamentarians of the German Federal Parliament (Bundestag) whose constituencies include a biosphere reserve. In the new legislative period after the elections late 2021, DUK supported the resumption and continuation of the working group. So far this year, two meetings have taken place, attended by numerous parliamentarians. A large MAB event is foreseen in the German parliament for November.

DUK closely accompanied and supported the application of the "Biosphere Reserves Institute" of Eberswalde University of Applied Sciences as a UNESCO category 2 center, which was officially submitted to UNESCO in March 2022.

Internationally, DUK continued its youth volunteering program, through which young Germans can work for 6 months in UNESCO designated sites, mostly Biosphere Reserves, abroad. 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. DUK has again supported the publication of the World Map of UNESCO Biosphere Reserves.

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 2nd German MAB Youth Forum for young people aged 18 – 25 years took place in the Biosphere Reserve Swabian Alb. BMUV and BfN are already preparing a 3rd German MAB Youth Forum in autumn 2023 in the Biosphere Reserve Palatinate Forest.



International activities

Germany fosters 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 fifth consecutive year to countries in southern Africa to better use the potential of Biosphere Reserves as model regions for sustainable development. At the upcoming 34th session, the ICC will decide about the

designation of the proposed Kafue Flats Biosphere Reserve, which has received critical financial and expert support. Support has been and/or is currently provided to the recently designated Lubombo Biosphere Reserve in Eswatini, the recently designated Matseng Biosphere Reserve in Lesotho, and the recently designated Quirimbas Biosphere Reserve in Mozambique. In Lake Chilwa Biosphere Reserve, local partners and experts are collaborating to develop a consolidated management plan for the area. Upcoming events include workshops on specific, relevant topics identified by local partners (e.g. branding and certification) and the next MAB-regional workshop, which will take place in August 2022 in Eswatini. Various MAB-stakeholders and partners from the southern African region (e.g. from the National Commissions) will participate and share their experiences.

- A 3rd policy brief was launched in the context of the project in 2022, "Making UNESCO's MAB Programme work - Maintaining Momentum after the UNESCO Designation through Quality Management". In the second round of its COVID-19 emergency support programme #SOSAfricanHeritage in 2021, DUK has provided support to four Biosphere Reserves in Africa.
- South-North partnerships are further promoted, such as between the Biosphere Reserves Schaalsee (Germany) and Lake Bosomtwe (Ghana); and Rhön (Germany) and Oxapampa-Ashanika-Yanesha (Peru).
- BfN has also organized a series of three workshops for European Biosphere Reserves to foster exchange and collaboration upon appeal from EuroMAB to extend the cooperation among the European Biosphere Reserves. At the end of march/beginning of April 2022, the third workshop on participation of the local population and stakeholders in European UNESCO biosphere reserves took place at BfN's International Nature Conservation Academy on the Isle of Vilm.