

German Report on the national implementation of the MAB Programme

Summary of activities since the 30th session of MAB ICC, July 2018 – June 2019

National activities

The German MAB Committee continued its work in new composition in 2018. Since the 30th session of the MAB ICC in July 2018, the National Committee held two official meetings.

On 15th April 2019 Mr. Michael Heugel was appointed as new chairperson of the German MAB Committee.

In early 2019 the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety has published a comprehensive information brochure about the implementation of MAB in Germany. This publication compiles all relevant national and international documents related to the MAB programme in German language and gives a comprehensive introduction to the implementation of the programme in Germany (https://www.bmu.de/fileadmin/Daten_BMU/Pool/Broschueren/mensch_biosphaere_bf.pdf).

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 Bliesgau and Schwabian Alb biosphere reserves in their periodic review processes. The periodic reports will be submitted to

UNESCO in September 2019. In spring 2019, the Committee launched the periodic review process for the Schaalsee biosphere reserve, for submission of the reviews to UNESCO in September 2020.

In 2018, the MAB Committee started to work on its recommendations for transition areas as part of a (iteratively developed) position paper on the zonation of German BRs.

A joint working group of the MAB Committee and directors of biosphere reserves works on a process to develop approaches for an indicator-based quality assurance for biosphere reserves (going beyond the requirements of the “Excellence Process”). The group intensively discusses approaches and potential indicators to evaluate progress towards the achievement of sustainable development of biosphere reserves. A research project has been commissioned to support this work until autumn 2020.

The MAB Committee also closely followed several recent initiatives to establish new biosphere reserves in Germany. In this context a discussion on the representativeness of the network of existing biosphere reserves in Germany is on-going.

Several members of the MAB Committee participated in local/regional events in various biosphere reserves, e.g. the ceremony to celebrate the successful extension of the biosphere reserve Thuringian Forest.

The German National Commission for UNESCO (DUK) has again helped to gear the educational work of biosphere reserves towards Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and to establish robust cooperation with schools. In 2018, the Commission launched an extension, called “naturweit” of its youth volunteering programme “kulturweit”: From March 2019, 20 young Germans will work for 6 months in UNESCO designated sites, mostly biosphere reserves, in the Global South. It also seeks multiple synergies with World Heritage sites, Global Geoparks and Intangible Cultural Heritage properties and continues its cooperation with Danone Waters Germany for the benefit of German biosphere reserves.

International activities

Germany also fosters the role of biosphere reserves in its international cooperation. Altogether, German international cooperation supports projects in and for UNESCO

biosphere reserves around the world with more than 100 million Euro / year. The following selected projects are highlighted:

- The German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) supports, in cooperation with the German BirdLife partner NABU and BirdLife International, a project (2016-2019) on “African biosphere reserves as pilot sites for land based bird monitoring and conservation” (AfriBiRds). The project is implemented in coordination with AfriMAB and various UNESCO offices. The project develops best practices for bird monitoring in the context of biosphere reserves.
- In 2015 BfN commissioned the African Wildlife Foundation to implement a project on “Biosphere reserves as model regions for anti-poaching in Africa” (BRAPA). The project includes research work carried out by five Master students enrolled in five different African universities. A workshop that brought together students, their supervisors and biosphere reserve managers was held in Nairobi in May 2018. The project ended in November 2018.
- Germany continues its support to countries in southern Africa to better use the potential of biosphere reserves as model regions for sustainable development. The first stage of the BfN project in cooperation with the German Commission for UNESCO was a kick-off workshop in Maseru, Lesotho, also involving UNESCO ROSA and the AfriMAB co-chair for Southern Africa. Subsequently, biosphere reserve nomination projects have been supported in cooperation with Eswatini and Lesotho, support is also provided to Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Additionally, there are intense discussions with Botswana and Namibia.
- BfN and the German Commission for UNESCO also supported North-South partnerships of biosphere reserves, such as the partnership of Schaalsee (Germany) and Lake Bosomtwe (Ghana) biosphere reserve, established in 2018. In this context, the German Commission for UNESCO supported the formulation of an education and tourism concept for Lake Bosomtwe.
- In November 2018 a delegation from the Slovak MAB-Committee and Slovakian biosphere reserves visited the biosphere reserves Rhön and Thuringian forest to gain insights in the implementation of the MAB Programme in Germany.
- A new partnership between one German and one Bulgarian biosphere reserve is particularly promising.

- The German Commission for UNESCO has again published the World Map of UNESCO biosphere reserves in four languages (English/French/Spanish/German).

In September 2019 a MAB Youth Forum for participants from German-speaking biosphere reserves will be organised in the Rhön Biosphere Reserve, at the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the first UNESCO biosphere reserves in Germany. 80 participants from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Luxemburg are expected to attend the 4-day forum.

German experts also participate in the Technical Guidelines working groups.

Germany would like to thank Ireland for having organised the EUROMAB 2019 meeting in Dublin. German MAB-Committee members and representatives of German biosphere reserves have attended the meeting. In this context Germany wishes to announce to possibly host the EuroMAB meeting jointly with Luxemburg in 2023 pending budgetary decisions.

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