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Advancing Conservation Standards in Moldova: Emerald Implementation and Natura 2000 Readiness

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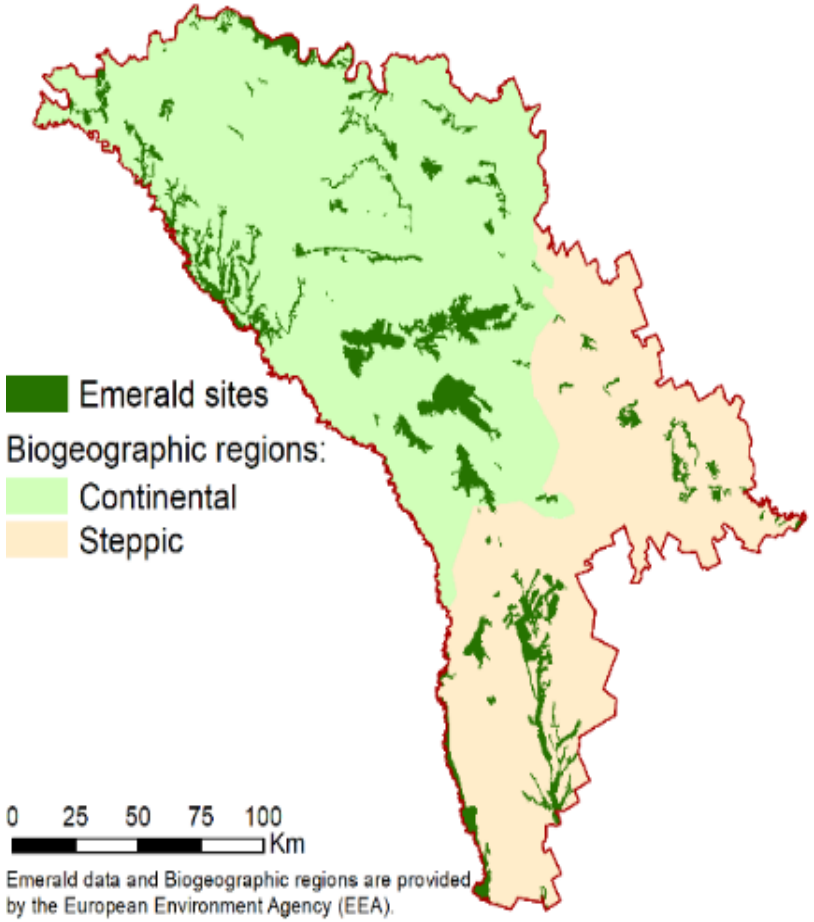
Moldova's Emerald Network: factsheet



- ✓ 61 adopted sites are fully recognized as part of the Emerald Network
- ✓ 8.1% (277,157 ha) of terrestrial area is currently covered by the Network.
- ✓ 24% sufficiency index; this proportion of species and habitats is adequately protected for their long-term existence within the current network.
- ✓ 46% have management plans
- ✓ Emerald Network ensures preservation of 38 types of habitat and 162 species of European importance (Law 94/2004 on NEN, amended 2023)

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Coverage by Management Plans

Nine MPs developed covering 128,463 ha (46%). The MoE is finalizing legal adoption by the end of 2025

66,617 ha covered by the World Bank (EU4Env):

1. ESNJ (*Emerald Site "Nistrul de Jos"*): 59,972 ha
2. SEC (*Emerald Site "Codru"*): 6,498 ha
3. SESV (*Emerald Site "Sector de Stepă Vrănești"*): 147 ha

33,206 ha covered by the IEG/MSU (GoM):

1. ES Cărbuna: 678 ha
2. ES Pădurea Hîrbovăț: 3,821 ha
3. ES Pohrebeni: 998 ha
4. ES Pădurea Hîncești: 11,290 ha
5. ES Lacurile Prutului de Jos: 16,420 ha

28,640 ha within National Park Orhei (Moldsilva/GoM):

1. ES "Codrii Orheilui": 28,640 (within the NPO 33,792 ha with MP of the PA)

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Targets for 2030

Coverage: from 8.1% to 11%

Sufficiency index: 80%

Management Plans: 80%

Alignment with Natura 2000 standards

Challenges

- Almost no [natural] land left for expansion
- Misalignment between conservation objectives and land-use practices
- Insufficient communication and engagement with stakeholders

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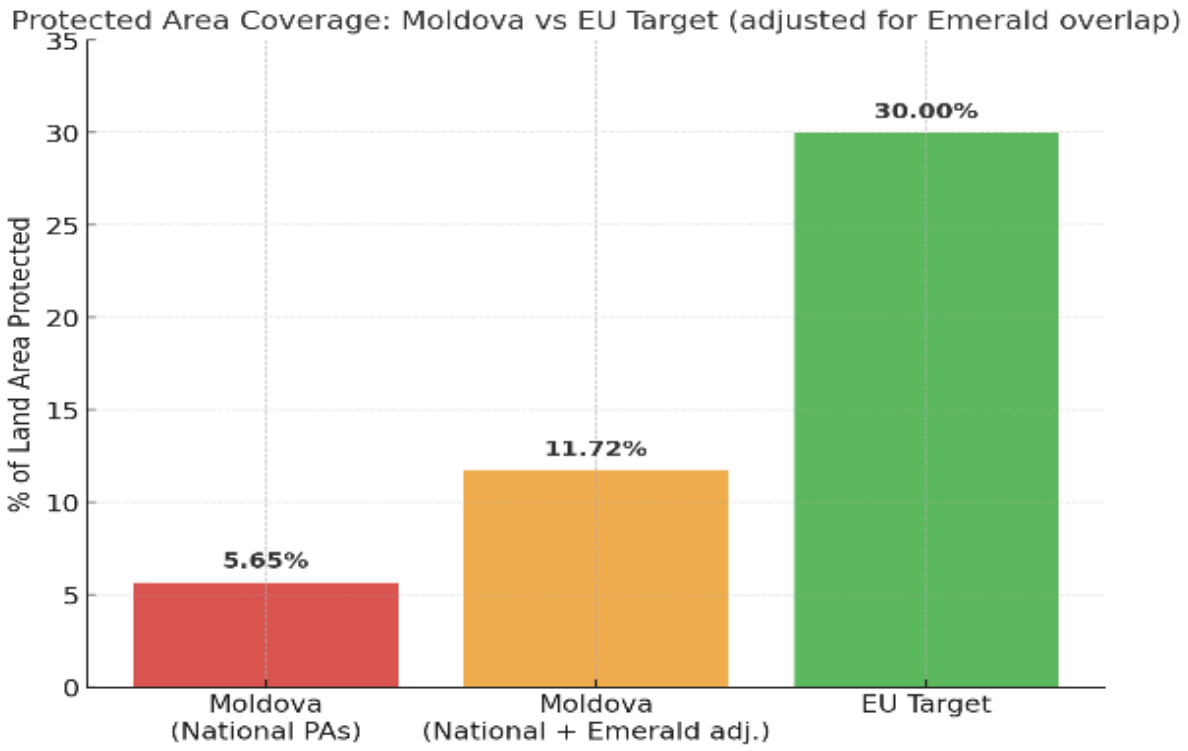

Source: Ministry of Environment (2024); Emerald Network data; EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030.
Note: Combined PA + Emerald adjusted for ~25% estimated overlap.

Comparative data: PA in Moldova vs EU

- PA coverage (5.65 / 11 %) remains far below the EU's 30% target.
- 25% overlap between national PA system and Emerald Network
- Combined PAs+Emerald Network covers only 11.7% of its land

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Emerald Network: a stepping-stone toward Natura 2000

EU pre-accession transition instrument:

- Builds capacity for Natura 2000 management
- Prepares institutions, data systems, and planning approaches
- Facilitates the transition of identified Emerald sites to Natura 2000 sites with limited adjustments

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Future Natura 2000 designation in Moldova

- **Build Natura 2000 primarily on existing PAs and Emerald sites**
- **Use current PAs as core ecological nuclei around Natura 2000 sites**
- **Expand where needed into ecologically justified areas (steppe, riparian corridors, forest refugia)**
- **Integrate reorganized Ramsar wetlands and harmonize their boundaries with Natura 2000 logic**
- **Apply selective redesign of PA and Emerald boundaries for ecological coherence and EU compliance**

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Steps for developing Natura 2000 candidate sites

- **Identify gaps not covered by the existing PA + Emerald network**
- **Add new candidate areas only where ecological value is proven and land constraints allow**
- **Align conservation objectives with EU Birds & Habitats Directive requirements**
- **Prioritize connectivity corridors linking fragmented habitats and PA (or new area) as cores**
- **Prepare unified designation packages: boundaries, species/habitat justification, objectives, monitoring**

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EcoConnect regional project (GBFF) to help

- Supports countries (Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Moldova, Ukraine) in preparing and aligning their PA and Emerald systems with Natura 2000 standards
- Strengthens biodiversity digitalization: Red Lists, habitat & species databases, monitoring tools
- Facilitates identification of Natura 2000 candidate sites based on ecological criteria
- Promotes regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and harmonized approaches to EU approximation
- Includes pilot restoration actions to improve ecological connectivity and climate resilience
- Provides Moldova with technical, institutional, and data support essential for Natura 2000 designation

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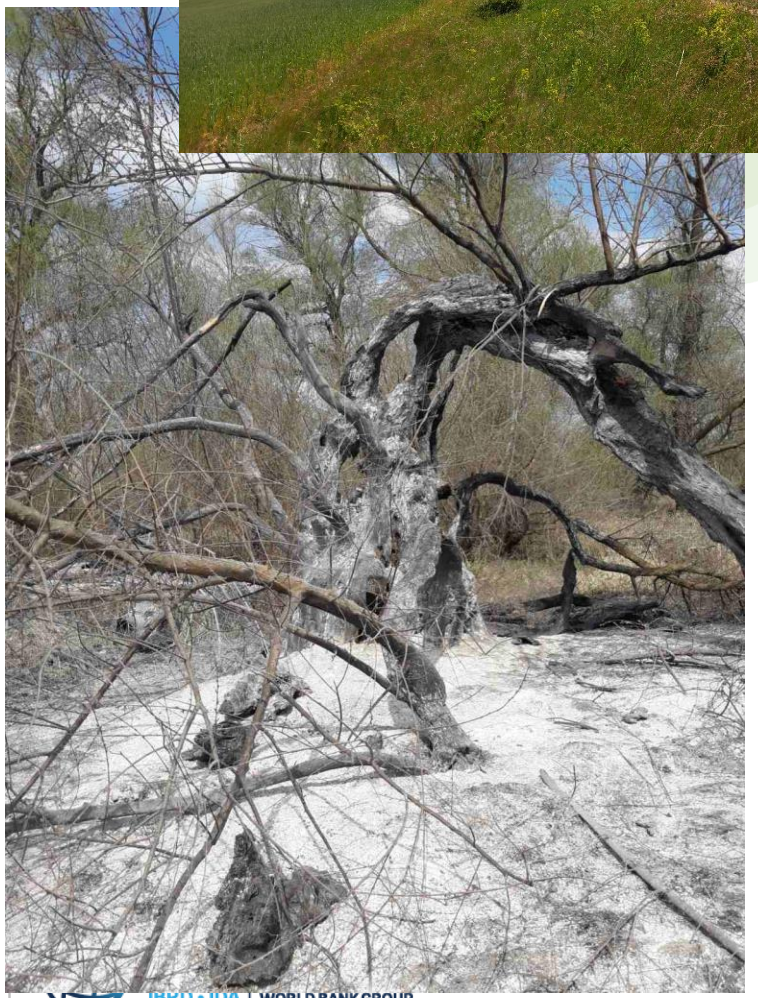

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