REPORT OF POLAND FOR THE AQUATIC WARBLER MOU AND ACTION PLAN

This reporting format is designed to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan associated with the Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Conservation Measures for the Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*. Reporting on the Action Plan's implementation will support information exchange throughout the range and assist the identification of necessary future actions by the Signatories. The questions presented here go beyond the scope of information already requested from CMS Contracting Parties for national reports to the CMS Conference of the Parties.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Which agency or institution has been primarily responsible for the preparation of this report?		
Department of Forestry, Nature and Landscape Conservation Ministry of the Environment		
List any other agencies, institutions, or NGOs that have provided input:		
Ogólnopolskie Towarzystwo Ochrony Ptaków (Polish Society for Protection of Birds)		
Reports submitted to date:		
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OBJECTIVES

1.0 POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE

- 1.1. To promote national and international broad policies and legislation which favour the conservation of the Aquatic Warbler and its habitat
- 1.1.1. Promote the full protection of the Aquatic Warbler and its habitats through national and international legislation
 - a) Is the Aquatic Warbler protected under national legislation in your country?
 - X Yes, the species is protected and protection level is sufficient
 - □ Yes, the species is protected, but protection level is not sufficient
 - \Box No, the species is not protected
 - b) If Yes, please describe the state of protection and limitations and conservation responsibilities this protection status imposes on the state, conservationists and land-users.

"Strictly protected" under Nature Conservation Act and under paragraph 2 of order of Minister of the Environment in case of protection of wildlife animals

- c) If the Aquatic Warbler is not protected or protection level is not sufficient, please describe what your country is planning to do to ensure highest possible protection of the species.
- d) Is there national legislation in place in your country that ensures effective protection of Aquatic Warbler habitat (breeding, stop-over and wintering sites), including prevention of potentially detrimental activities (drainage, mineral extraction, industry, etc.).

 \Box Yes X No

- e) If Yes, please provide details.
- f) If No, please describe measures taken to ensure protection of Aquatic Warbler breeding habitats.

Most of Aquatic Warbler breeding sites are within protected areas (national narks, nature reserves).

1.1.2. Seek national or international policy incentives to maintain suitable farming practices at breeding sites which are impacted by drainage or threatened by succession

Are there any national or international policy incentives to maintain suitable farming practices at breeding sites in your country (agro-environmental schemes, etc.)?

☐ Yes X No ☐ Country is outside of breeding range

If yes, please describe briefly the nature of the incentives and whether they are effectively applied or used by farmers and land-managers.

If no, please describe what measures are being taken to ensure availability of such incentives. New polish agro-environmental scheme 2007-2013 propose suitable farming practices on Aquatic Warbler habitats.

2.0 SPECIES AND HABITAT PROTECTION

- 2.1. To promote adequate protection of the breeding sites and remove key factors adversely affecting the breeding habitat
- 2.1.1. Seek designation as protected areas of all sites regularly holding breeding Aquatic Warblers.
 - a) In the table attached (Annex I), please provide details for all regularly occupied Aquatic Warbler breeding sites in your country and indicate their protection status (*please expand the table if necessary*).

See attachment.

b) If Aquatic Warbler breeding sites currently are not fully protected or protection level is not sufficient, please provide information about constraints and what your country is planning to do to ensure full and adequate protection of these sites.

Constraints:

Important part of the breeding sites are private owned. To ensure adequate protection of these sites is necessary:

1. To purchase land within AW breeding sites and develop appropriate management.

2. To ensure full protection of sites by establishing nature reserves.

Even given availability of resources and intention of conservationists to implement.

For *Acrocephalus paludicola* the most urgent conservation actions, these intentions may be hampered by the absence of rights to implement management on a given *Acrocephalus paludicola* breeding ground. This problem is especially acute at small project sites outside protected areas (Biebrza NP Buffer Zone, Krajnik, Miedwie, Rozwarowo, Zajecze Legi), but also at protected areas with a substantial proportion of private land (Biebrza NP).

Plans:

Land purchase and management plans will be prepared within just starting LIFE project "Conserving Aquatic Warbler in Poland and Germany".

c) If Site Management Plans have not been developed for all Aquatic Warbler breeding sites, please describe what hampers development of Management Plans and what your country is doing to ensure development, approval and implementation of Site Management Plans for regular Aquatic Warbler breeding sites.

Lack of experienced staff and proper funds for development of Management Plans for each sites. Preparation of the Management Plan for Biebrza National Park was started in 1996. Due to the large area of the Park, the difficulties of accessing the area, limitations of funds and, in particular, several changes of the rules governing National Park management plans preparation, the Management Plan is not yet officially approved. It is currently with local government units for review.

Some of Management Plans will be developed within running LIFE project.

d) Please advise what assistance you would require to complete or improve existing Site Management Plans.

Possible twinning projects with more experienced country partners can be helpful in developing Site Management Plans.

- 2.1.2. Prevent habitat alteration, habitat fragmentation, pollution and other factors that could be detrimental to the Aquatic Warbler in its breeding sites
 - a) Are new *development* projects that could potentially have a detrimental effect on current or potential Aquatic Warbler breeding sites (such as drainage, peat extraction, construction of highways, etc.) subject to environmental impact assessment in your country?

X Yes D No Country is outside of breeding range

b) Have there been any potentially detrimental projects *implemented* in any Aquatic Warbler habitat in your country since signing this Memorandum of Understanding?

 \Box Yes X No

- c) If yes, indicate sites involved, give details and describe the outcome of impact monitoring if available.
- d) Has implementation of any potentially detrimental project in any Aquatic Warbler habitat in your country been *halted* since signing this Memorandum of Understanding?

 \Box Yes X No

e) If Yes, please give details.

2.2. To manage the breeding habitat to increase numbers, productivity and distribution

- 2.2.1. Regulate water levels and restore natural water conditions
 - a) Has water management been implemented at Aquatic Warbler breeding sites in your country?

X Yes D No Country is outside of breeding range

b) If Yes, please describe actions taken, sites involved and effects expected/achieved.

Building the dams on drainage dikes at Chelm Landscape Park and Polesie National Park (Lublin - Polesie) and Karsiborska Kepa (Western Pomerania). At Biebrza National Park to improve hydrological conditions, 26 dams have been built in ditches to date.

c) What constraints are limiting implementation of these activities at other sites in need of effective water management?

Important part of the breeding sites and adjacent land is private owned. To ensure appropriate water management of these sites is necessary to purchase land within AW breeding sites.

- 2.2.2. Prevent natural succession of the vegetation by undertaking management where necessary
 - a) Has vegetation management been undertaken at Aquatic Warbler breeding sites in your country to prevent natural succession?

X Yes D No Country is outside of breeding range

c) If Yes, please describe actions taken (mowing, bush-removing, etc), what equipment was used for vegetation management and how efficient it was. Please refer to reports if available and comparative analysis of different types of equipment if it was conducted.

Several projects have already been undertaken to restrain plant succession in Biebrza National Park. These have covered an area of about 2,500 ha. In order to stop plant succession, conserve valuable habitats (open non-forest wetlands) and protect species linked to such biotopes, the Management Plan envisages mowing of an area of 32,562 ha, including 8,000 ha where bushes will be removed first. Some drier parts of the land are still used by farmers, who conduct traditional, Acrocephalus paludicola-friendly, low intensity agriculture on about 5,000 ha in wet years (e.g. 2001) and about 11,000 ha in dry years (e.g. 2003).

c) If No, what constraints are limiting vegetation management at other sites where it is needed and what is your country doing to ensure proper vegetation management at Aquatic Warbler breeding sites?

2.2.3. Hand-scything and mowing

a) If historical information is available, please describe to which extent current Aquatic Warbler breeding sites were hand scythed and mown.

Those methods of traditional low-intensity farming are necessary at sites, where drainage and eutrophication impact the mire and succession (intrusion of bushes or reeds) takes place. Due to access problems, the only practicable means of keeping the vegetation down in many plots is hand-scything. In the past, vegetation was scythed every year, though the effects of this practice on the Aquatic Warbler are still poorly understood.

b) Are hand-scything and mowing being applied for habitat conservation for the Aquatic Warbler in your country?

X Yes D No Country is outside of breeding range

b) If Yes, please describe how this was approached, which sites were involved and the area covered. Please provide details if conservation effect of hand-scything and mowing has been evaluated. Please refer to published materials if available.

Thanks to WWF initiative, for the last years meadows in the heart of the Biebrza National Park have been hand mown within the project "The Ruff Meadow". This idea is promoted by the annual Polish Championship in hand-mowing the water-meadows for nature, which was initiated in 1999.

d) What constraints are limiting hand-scything and mowing at sites where extensive habitat management is needed?

In many areas within the species' range in Poland these practices are rapidly disappearing as uneconomic. Without intervention, agriculture in many sites may have completely ceased within 5–10 years. It is therefore essential to seek policies that enable people to maintain these traditional methods of farming while still enjoying a reasonable standard of living. National or supra-regional agricultural land-use policies that increase incentives for damaging management of Aquatic Warbler habitat should be opposed or modified.

2.2.4. Controlled burning

a) Is controlled burning a legal habitat management tool in your country?

 \Box Yes X No

- b) If Yes, is burning used as a habitat management tool for Aquatic Warbler? Please describe actions taken, sites involved and effects achieved or expected. Please refer to published materials if information regarding the effects of controlled burning has been summarized and published.
- c) If No, then what actions are being undertaken to legalize controlled burning?

It is possible that in new Nature Conservation Act will be regulation about controlled burning as a legal habitat management tool.

2.2.5. Grazing

a) Has grazing been used for habitat management at Aquatic Warbler breeding sites in your country?

X Yes D No Country is outside of breeding range

b) If yes, please describe which animals are used, which sites are involved and what effects are expected/achieved. Please give reference to published materials if information regarding the effects of grazing has been summarized and published.

Cows at Western Pommerania (Karsiborska Kepa Reserve) and Polish Konik's at Biebrza National Park.

- 2.2.6. Disseminate habitat management recommendations to land managers
 - a) Are Aquatic Warbler habitat management recommendations being disseminated to land managers and other interested parties in your country?

□ Yes X No □ Country is outside of breeding range

b) If Yes, please describe ways of dissemination of habitat management recommendations to land managers used: events, publications, etc. Please give reference to published materials.

c) If No, then what constraints are limiting dissemination of habitat management recommendations and what should be done to overcome these constraints?

In this year it is planed to create and implement national action plan for protection of AW in Poland. One of the points of this program will be promotion of AW habitat management to land managers

d) Please advise if there is successful experience other Range States can draw on and what assistance your country would require to help share this information.

2.3. To protect the Aquatic Warbler and its habitat in the winter quarters and along the migration route

- 2.3.1. Promote the protection and appropriate management of wintering and passage sites
 - a) In the table attached (Annex I), please provide details about major Aquatic Warbler passage and wintering sites in your country (*please expand the table if necessary*)
 - b) Are primary Aquatic Warbler passage/wintering sites appropriately managed in your country?

□ Fully □ Partially X No

- c) Please list on-going and implemented projects and provide brief information about results achieved.
- d) What are the remaining gaps and what is your country planning to do to ensure sufficient protection and management of primary passage/wintering sites?

Aquatic Warbler passage sites in Poland are not recognised.

2.4. To restore habitats for the Aquatic Warbler

- 2.4.1. Undertake the ecological restoration of potential breeding sites
 - a) Have potential or irregularly occupied Aquatic Warbler breeding sites in your country been evaluated?

□ Fully XPartially □ No □ Country is outside of breeding range

b) If Yes, what initiatives aimed at ecological restoration of potential breeding sites have been undertaken in your country? Which sites are involved and what effects are expected/achieved?

LIFE project "Conserving Aquatic Warbler in Poland and Germany" is aiming to recreate c.1500ha of new potential habitat in Pomerania and Biebrza.

c) If No, what are the constraints and which actions should be taken in order to overcome these constraints?

3.0 MONITORING AND RESEARCH

3.1. To develop and implement a monitoring programme enabling population trends to be tracked

- 3.1.1. Distribution of a methodology for counting Aquatic Warblers
 - a) Is the methodology adopted for counting Aquatic Warblers used on the national level *different* to what is advised in the Aquatic Warbler Species Action Plan?

Yes X No □ No methodology is adapted

- b) If Yes, please describe briefly possible differences and amendments.
- c) Does your country have experience applying this methodology and what can be learned from this experience?
- d) What does your country do to distribute and familiarize relevant institutions/specialists with this methodology?

In our country most institutions and specialists knows this methodology. When national plan for protection of AW in Poland will be ready and implement than it will be send to interested institutions and specialists.

- 3.1.2. Undertake national surveys to estimate breeding populations
 - a) Have national (all-country) surveys of Aquatic Warbler breeding population been undertaken in your country?
 - X Yes (give years): 1997, 2003
 - □ No
 - \Box Country is outside of breeding range
 - b) If Yes, what methodology is used (full counts, transect counts, etc.) and what organization was coordinating the survey?

Full counts, OTOP (Polish Society for Protection of Birds)

c) What is the size and trend of the national breeding population (vocalizing males)? Please refer to published materials if applicable.

Year of survey: 1995-97	Year of survey: 2003
Population size: 2883-2993	Population size: 3386-3494

Krogulec, J. & J. Kloskowski. 1997. Population size and habitat selection of Aquatic Warbler (*Acrocephalus paludicola*) in Poland in 1997. Technical Report OTOP Gdańsk.

Maniakowski M. 2003. All-country survey on the Aquatic Warbler distribution, habitat condition and threats at the breeding sites. Technical Report. OTOP Warszawa.

- d) If Yes, to which extent was the territory of your country covered by the survey:
 - X Fully (> 90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - □ High (60-90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - □ Medium (30-60 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - \Box Low (< 30 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
- e) When is the next national (all-country) survey of the Aquatic Warbler planned in your country?

2007 - 2009

f) If no national surveys have been conducted, please indicate existing constraints and what you country going to do to ensure that national surveys of the Aquatic Warbler are conducted?

3.1.3. Collect data at the major known passage sites and identify further resting sites

a) Have studies at known Aquatic Warbler passage sites been conducted in your country?

□ Yes X No

- b) If Yes, please describe briefly, which major passage sites are being monitored, what monitoring is being conducted (Aquatic Warbler population, habitat parameters, impact assessment, migration strategy, etc) and which organizations are involved?
- c) What are the main findings and what conservation implications do they have?
- d) If Yes, to what extent are major known Aquatic Warbler passage sites are being monitored in your country?
 - \Box Fully (> 90% of known sites)
 - $\Box \quad \text{High} (60-90 \% \text{ of known sites})$
 - $\square \qquad \text{Medium (30-60 \% of known sites)}$
 - \Box Low (< 30 % of known sites)
- f) To what extent have major Aquatic Warbler passage sites been identified in your country?
 - \Box Fully (> 90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - □ High (60-90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)

- □ Medium (30-60 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
- \Box Low (< 30 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
- X No monitoring is conducted
- g) What are the gaps and what is your country doing to address them?

3.1.4. Identify major wintering areas

a) Have studies aimed at identifying Aquatic Warbler wintering areas have been conducted in your country?

☐ Yes ☐ No X Country is outside of wintering range

- b) If Yes, what are the main findings and conservation implications? If available, please refer to published reports.
- c) If Yes, To what extent was the territory of your country covered by the survey of wintering areas?
 - \Box Fully (> 90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - □ High (60-90 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - \Box Medium (30-60 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
 - \Box Low (< 30 % of suitable habitats surveyed)
- d) If wintering sites have been identified, to what extend are these sites being monitored during migration?
 - \Box Fully (> 90% of known sites)
 - \square High (60-90 % of known sites)
 - \Box Medium (30-60 % of known sites)
 - $\Box \quad \text{Low} (< 30 \% \text{ of known sites})$
 - \Box No monitoring is conducted
- e) If your country is outside of Aquatic Warbler wintering range, which international initiatives aimed at identification of Aquatic Warbler wintering grounds has your country been involved in? What are the main findings?
- f) What are the gaps and what needs to be done to help address them?
- 3.1.5. Research into habitat characteristics at migration and wintering sites
 - a) Has research into habitat characteristics at migration and/or wintering sites been conducted in your country?

□ Yes X No

- b) If Yes, please provide a list of on-going and completed studies with references if results are already published.
- c) What are the main findings and conservation implications?

d) What are the remaining gaps and what needs to be done to address them?

3.1.6. Research on movements during the breeding season / exchange of subpopulations

Has research on Aquatic Warbler movements during breeding season/exchange of subpopulations been conducted in your country?

X Yes I No Country is outside of breeding range

If Yes, please describe which territories were covered, what methods were used (colour ringing, radio-tagging, etc.) and what were the main findings. Please give reference to published materials if available.

On the Biebrza Marshes using colour ringing.

Dyrcz, A. & W. Zdunek. 1993b. Breeding ecology of the Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* on the Biebrza marshes, north-east Poland. Ibis 131: 298-300.

If Yes, was the research on movements during the breeding season coordinated with researchers from neighbouring Aquatic Warbler Range States.

 \Box Yes X No

If the research hasn't been conducted, what is your country planning to do to initiate such cooperation?

It is not established yet, probably with Belarus and Ukraine.

3.1.7. Develop and implement an international monitoring programme

Is your country participating in development and/or implementation of international Aquatic Warbler monitoring programmes?

X Yes 🛛 No

If Yes, please list on-going and completed projects and indicate which areas they focus on and which other countries are involved. Please provide reference to published results if available.

LIFE project "Conserving Aquatic Warbler in Poland and Germany" is aiming to develop international Aquatic Warbler monitoring programmes within whole AW range.

Are there areas that haven't been properly addressed, if so, what needs to be done to assist your country in addressing these gaps?

No

3.2. To promote research useful for the conservation of the Aquatic Warbler in the future

- 3.2.1. Undertake comparative studies on breeding success and population recruitment in different habitats
 - a) Have studies on breeding success and population recruitment in different habitats been conducted in your country?
 - □ Yes, in collaboration with other Range States
 - X Yes, on the national scale
 - □ No comparative studies have been conducted
 - \Box Country is outside of breeding range
 - b) If available, please list on-going and completed studies and give reference to published reports.
 - b) What are the main findings of these studies?

Dyrcz, A. & W. Zdunek. 1993b. Breeding ecology of the Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola* on the Biebrza marshes, north-east Poland. Ibis 131: 298-300.

- d) Are there any future comparative studies your country is able to initiate? What would be needed to do this?
- e) If no comparative studies are being implemented, what is your country planning to do to stimulate this research and what assistance would be required?
- 3.2.2. Assess the effect of burning, scything, mowing, grazing and water conditions on breeding populations
 - a) Effect of which of the following factors and potential habitat management techniques on Aquatic Warbler breeding population was assessed in your country?

__ (what)

- □ Controlled burning
- \Box Scything
- \square Mowing
- X Water conditions
- □ Other ___
- □ No assessment has been conducted
- b) What are the main findings and conservation implications? If available, please give reference to published reports.

Kloskowski, J. & J. Krogulec. 1999. Habitat selection of Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus* in Poland: consequences for conservation of breeding areas. Vogelwelt 120: 113-120.

c) Are there any gaps? What limits further assessment of this factor's effects?

3.2.3. Develop collaborative research and monitoring programmes between range-states

a) Is your country involved in international collaborative and monitoring programmes on the

X Yes D No

c) If yes, please provide brief details about on-going and completed projects. Which Aquatic Warbler range states are involved? What fields studied?

Just starting LIFE project "Conserving Aquatic Warbler in Poland and Germany" is aiming to develop international Aquatic Warbler monitoring programmes within whole AW range.

- c) What are the main findings and conservation implications?
- d) What are the gaps and what is needed to address them?

4.0 PUBLIC AWARENESS

4.1. To ensure development of a strong network of organisations and individuals committed to the conservation of the Aquatic Warbler

a) Does a network of organisations/individuals committed to the conservation of the Aquatic Warbler exist in your country?

X Yes 🛛 No

b) If Yes, how broad is this network and what organizations/individuals are taking the lead in facilitation and coordination of its development?

Nationwide, coordinated by OTOP.

c) What actions does your country undertake to broaden the circle of organisations and individuals committed to conservation of Aquatic Warbler?

When national action plan for protection of AW in Poland will be implemented probably more organisation and institution will be included to conservation of AW.

- d) What successful experience can other Range States draw on?
- e) What would be needed to establish a network if it does not already exist or to improve an existing one?

4.2. To use the Aquatic Warbler as a flagship species

Has the Aquatic Warbler been used as a flagship species in your country for the inventory and protection of wetlands?

X Yes □ No

If Yes, please briefly describe how and provide examples if available.

Aquatic Warbler has been used as a flagship species for the inventory and protection of Biebrza Marshes and Chelm Marshes on Lublin Polesie.

If No, what limits promotion and use of the Aquatic Warbler as a flagship species and how does your country plan to address this?

4.3. To prepare educational materials promoting and giving information

- a) Have any educational and promotional materials about Aquatic Warbler been developed in your country?
 - □ Yes, specifically devoted to the Aquatic Warbler.
 - X Yes, the Aquatic Warbler is included into materials with a broader context.
 - □ No, Aquatic Warbler is not covered in educational and promotional materials.

If Yes, please describe the nature of such materials and how they were disseminated. Please give reference to published materials if available.

Leaflets produced and distributed by OTOP, publications in OTOP magazine "Ptaki".

If No, please describe what limits development of such materials and give details about what your country is planning to do to promote Aquatic Warbler and its conservation.

PART II. COUNTRY-SPECIFIC ATIONS

Please report on the implementation of the country-specific actions listed for your country in Part II of the Action Plan and provide information if that is not already covered by your answers under Part I. Please describe not only the measures taken but also their impact on the Aquatic Warbler or its habitat in the context of the objectives of the Memorandum of Understanding and the Action Plan. Where you have already answered on country-specific actions in Part I, please only add a reference to the relevant answer here.

Poland

1.1 Promotion of the conservation of the Aquatic Warbler in protected areas and in areas utilised for economic purposes.

2.1 Promotion of the adequate conservation of the main breeding sites of the Aquatic Warbler.

2.1.1 Launch of measures to make a habitat inventory.

2.2 Development of methods for the conservation of the Aquatic Warbler.

2.3 Launch of the designation of sites for the ecological restoration of Aquatic Warbler habitats.

2.4.1 Promotion of measures to ecologically restore Aquatic Warbler habitats.

3.1 Implementation of Aquatic Warbler monitoring.

4. The measures to conserve the Aquatic Warbler will be taken particularly at its main living sites:

1. Biebrza valley.

2. Upper and Middle Narew valley.

3. Lublin Polesie.

4. Lower Odra valley (Odra floodplain, especially southern part of Swina mouth).

All above mentioned objectives are covered by just starting LIFE project "Conserving Aquatic Warbler in Poland and Germany".

Does protection Site Aquatic Warbler population level fully reject Management Status Area of the (B - breeding, supported (vocalizing males Total area of Name of the site, possible Plan Year of survey Type of protection site under W - wintering (breeding) or individuals geographical coordinates the site detrimental (D - developed, protection P – passage) (migration or wintering)) developments? A - approved, [Yes/No] I - implemented) Biebrza Marshes В 1.1 D (53°12'49"N-53°44'45" N / National Park/ National 2693-2726 2003 59,223 ha 59,223 ha No 22°26'00" E-23°30'44" E) Park Buffer Zone Lublin, Polesie В D (51°9'36"N-51°21'34" N/ National Park. 23°18'5" E-23°35'29"E) Nature Reserves, No 557-607 2003 8700 ha 8700 ha Landscape Park Narew Marshes В D 65-82 2003 7350 ha 7350 ha National Park No (53 4 23N/22 52 56E) Western Pomerania В D/-National Park/ Landscape (53°14'35"N-53°51'57"N/ 70-79 2003 4030 ha 1100 ha No Park /not protected 14°21'20"E-14°50'36"E) Mazury, Kurpie В Nature Reserve/ not D/-5 1995-97 No 3500 ha 3100 ha (53 53 50N/ 21 48 4E) protected Central Poland В D 1 2003 300 ha 300 ha National Park No (52 20 44N/20 35 19E) **Poland - TOTAL** В 3386-3494 2003 83.103 ha 79.773

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Seite: 3 [E1] Seite: 4 [E2] [E3]