



CATALONIA DECLARATION

Adopted by the EUROPARC Federation in October 2004

The European Union and governments across Europe have set ambitious targets to halt the loss of biodiversity throughout Europe by the year 2010 as their contribution to achieving the global targets set by the Convention on Biological Diversity and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. This goal can only be realised if all the relevant stakeholders throughout Europe share the ambition to achieve this 2010 target. The Federation has identified four priorities to guide all its work over the next five years. These are transboundary co-operation, working with young people, the charter for sustainable tourism and Natura 2000. None of these aspects can be considered in isolation and all can contribute to achieving the 2010 target. The Federation and its members commit to the integration of the actions which follow into all aspects of its work, strengthening in particular the links which derive from closer ties to local communities through their elected representatives at local, regional, national and European levels.

The EUROPARC Federation recognises the significance of this challenge and believes that Natura 2000 provides one of the principal tools for achieving the 2010 goal.

Much of Europe's most highly valued biodiversity is located in Natura 2000 sites, many of which are themselves located within designated protected areas. EUROPARC members currently safeguard the integrity of many Natura 2000 sites and their collective management expertise also shapes the natural and cultural integrity of many of Europe's protected areas.

To achieve the 2010 target, the individual and collective values of all these sites, must be effectively safeguarded and enhanced. Furthermore the benefits which they bring to the broader landscape and the overall context within which they sit must be emphasised. To do this, the management and administration of Natura 2000 sites and protected areas, be they terrestrial, coastal or marine, must be better coordinated and more mutually supportive. In addition, the EUROPARC Federation recognises that the retention of the biodiversity status of certain areas in Europe, especially those associated with bird and other animal migration routes, relies on the integrity of natural sites beyond European boundaries being maintained. The EUROPARC Federation therefore acknowledges the need for trans-continental as well as transboundary cooperation, if the conservation values of all these sites are to be retained. This can be best achieved if Natura 2000 sites and protected areas are managed as complementary components of an interdependent and more unified network of national and transboundary European heritage sites.

The principles which will guide the future management of individual sites within this network should flow from a single long term vision. That vision is:

Objectives should link sites to each other more effectively and to the areas which surround them and that their management planning and practices, should enhance their individual and collective values. The benefits of this approach will however only be realised if the values and needs of Natura 2000 sites are better understood and their capacity to respond to change more objectively evaluated and monitored.

The magnitude of all these challenges should not be underestimated. Increased public awareness and support for the opportunities offered by a Natura 2000 network is crucial. Effective partnerships between national, regional and local authorities, local communities in and around protected areas, NGOs and with relevant stakeholders should be reinforced, to ensure that the Natura 2000 agenda is delivered in an effective, collaborative and democratic manner. To achieve this, the EUROPARC Federation calls on national, regional and local governments to increase their commitment to Natura 2000 and protected areas and to work more closely with the EUROPARC Federation to fulfil the aims of this Declaration.

The EUROPARC Federation recognises that through its members it can make a significant contribution to this process by facilitating the exchange of skills and experiences amongst its own members and encouraging them to share this knowledge with others. In fulfilling this pledge and in recognition of the 2010 target, the EUROPARC Federation through its members will therefore during the next five years:

- Increase awareness and understanding of the objectives of Natura 2000 by demonstrating to the European Union, decision-makers, EUROPARC members, and the public, how its own activities will help achieve the Natura 2000 target.
- Establish the means by which all its members, working in partnership with national, regional and local governments, influence decision makers within the European Parliament and European Commission.
- Promote Natura 2000 sites as places which offer significant biodiversity, community, leisure, educational and wider social benefits, when managed in a sustainable manner.
- Ensure that the interrelationship between the marine, coastal and terrestrial environment is reflected in the vision for the Natura 2000 network.
- Seek to integrate protected areas into the principles of spatial planning more effectively, by demonstrating their socio-economic relevance as well as their environmental value and benefits.
- Develop effective partnerships which ensure that the enhanced governance and management of Natura 2000 sites, is achieved in conjunction with protected areas.

- Share knowledge, experience and good management practices amongst its own members and improve the co-ordination and activities of its national and regional Sections throughout Europe.
- Celebrate the successes of the network of Natura 2000 sites and protected areas within their boundaries and beyond.
- Inform and raise awareness within the European Commission of the value and opportunities that the EUROPARC Federation offers in delivering the objectives of Natura 2000.

In acknowledging these aims and seeking to further the principles of the El Teide Declaration, the EUROPARC Federation through its members commits itself to prepare a five year Action Plan which:

- Delivers a pan European contribution to the global agenda for the conservation of biological diversity and demonstrates how this can be linked to the implementation of sustainable development principles.
- Identifies the outstanding challenges associated with the implementation of the Natura 2000 programme.
- Develops a more unified and complementary management vision for Europe's protected areas and Natura 2000 sites, which recognises the opportunities and benefits of managing networks of marine, coastal and terrestrial areas in a more integrated manner.
- Highlights the management and financial needs of Natura 2000 sites within and beyond protected areas.
- Demonstrates at the national, regional and community level how the management of Natura 2000 sites adds value to the distinctiveness of protected areas.
- Develops with other European institutions, responsible administrations and centres of research, an appropriate methodology for monitoring the condition of all Natura 2000 sites and the integrity of the proposed European network.

Throughout this process, the EUROPARC Federation in association with its members will endeavour to increase understanding of the benefits of the integrated approach it proposes for European protected areas including its action plan for Natura 2000. As confidence in this approach grows and improved partnerships are established with decision makers in the EU Commission, the EUROPARC Federation will endeavour to ensure that dedicated funds are made available by the Commission for Natura 2000 to fulfil the 2010 target.