

## E-News October 2008 - full article

### Stepping up to the challenge — EUROPARC 2008



Romanian dancers at the opening evening.  
Picture: Alex Moses

A dozen Romanian dancers, brimming with vitality, kicked off the 2008 EUROPARC conference in Poiana Brasov with strength and style.

Three busy days later, it seemed as if some of their exuberance was catching, as smiling delegates joined hands and, led by dancers, circled the room in a lively traditional folk dance at the closing celebration dinner.

Over 250 protected area professionals from 26 countries around Europe and beyond had gathered, listened, debated, voted, and studied together at what, in their words, was 'inspiring, provocative and positive' - a conference which 'will help us operate effectively'.

From the start - with opening addresses from no less than two ministers - to the end, when one man's lifetime of conservation work was honoured, the event lived up to its 'High Conservation Values – High Management Standards' title.

EUROPARC Federation President Erika Stanciu's welcoming wish, that 'most of all I hope you will benefit from the exceptional contacts you can make' came true, as lively connections and conversations were sparked across the rich range of over 50 presentations, training sessions, seminars and outings.

Opening proceedings, minister Attila Korodi of the Romanian Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development said it was an honour to participate: 'Protected areas are an important topic on the agenda at European level – the role of the Europarc Federation is key. It is a great framework for co-operation.'

Next, Laurian Gheorghe, a counsellor of the Ministry of Environment, introduced delegates to Romania's uniquely diverse natural and cultural riches, ranging from the Danube Delta, to rare populations of large carnivores, to pristine forest and lively customs and traditions.



EUROPARC President Erika Stanciu.  
Picture: Alex Moses

Conference delegates. Picture: Alex Moses



He outlined its history and systems of protected areas, with the first designated in 1935; and the latest new law for nature protection passed in 2007. A national agency for protected areas is being created, he said. 'We are at the beginning; increasing regulation, management and growth and going forwards.'

Fast forward to the final evening, when Erika Stanciu pronounced the event a success: 'It was good to be in Romania, and we had excellent support from the authorities – ministries and the World Tourism Organisation included. It was hard work, but I hope colleagues have learned a lot about this region.'

She paid tribute to her 'great team, who did a tremendous job in a short time' and highlighted the value of linking the event with the immediately preceding Carpathian Network of Protected Areas conference to create 'an exceptional week of networking and cooperation'.

Michael Baltzer, Director of co-host WWF's Danube Carpathian Programme, agreed that the conference had been 'a solidarity building exercise, part of building an ecological network across the Carpathians. We have a very special co-operation with EUROPARC, working well together to make exciting links, like welcoming Ukrainian colleagues this week. It has put this important mountain region on the map as the heart of wild Europe, the refuge of European diversity, and the last bastion of wilderness and large carnivores.'

Conference flags. Picture: EUROPARC



Article written by Lucy Galvin.