

Name: **Ignace Schops**

Nationality/Citizenship: **Belgian**

Member organisation: **Regional Landscape
Kempen and Maasland**

Professional Qualification: **Landscaping expert and
herpetologist**

Current Positions:

- **Director** of Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland vzw
- **Vice president** of Natuurpunt Flanders (largest NGO on Nature Conservation in Flanders)
- **International Advisory board Countdown 2010** Member
- **Associate Member Club of Rome**
- **Board Natuurpunt Limburg**

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Experience

- **Winner Goldman Environmental Prize 2008** – Green Nobel Prize for Nature conservation – www.goldmanprize.org
- **Ashoka fellow** - World Leading Social Entrepreneur – environmental projects – Ashoka is the world leading organization on social entrepreneurship – <http://ashoka.org/> - <http://ashoka.be/>
- **Honorary Doctor – Hasselt University - Belgium (2011)**
- **International Ambassador Biodiversity** – IUCN (World Conservation Union) Countdown 2010 - <http://www.countdown2010.net/about/ambassadors>
- **Associated Member Club of Rome**
- **Author and co-author** of several books and articles on herpetology, nature conservation, landscaping, etc.
- **Awarded as Golden Holliday maker 2009** – best sustainable tourism project in Flanders
- **Awarded as International Tourism Ambassador 2008** - best project on sustainable tourism
- **Winner “Gulden Spoor” 2008** – for international achievements on sustainability
- **Key note speaker at several international conferences**
 - o World Nature Summit - Convention on Biological Diversity - Nagoya, Japan – 2010
 - o World Exhibition Shanghai, China - 2010
 - o International Conferences on behalf of the EU - Belgian Presidency
 - o EU conferences & (Inter)national conferences...

Personal statement

***“Europarc Federation, the strongest and most friendly umbrella network in Europe!
A standard for European policy!”***

Europe's natural and cultural heritage is under threat. The rapid change of land use and the relentless growth of urban areas is probably inevitable. On the other hand: Europe still reveals still the amazing natural treasures with an amazing wildlife and wild places that most of us don't even know it exists. This was possible thanks to the good work of Europarc Federation, its members & partners, you.

As a candidate for the presidency I am convinced that the Federation has still a high potential to influence the future of Europe and to increase the awareness for our precious heritage. Together with all the excellent work of all of you - I would like to collaborate and do my utmost best to help Europarc Federation to become the strongest and most friendly umbrella network in Europe and become a standard for the European policy.

What is your relationship to the EUROPARC Federation and what is your motivation for becoming a member of the EUROPARC Council?

As the director of an NGO in Belgium, close to Brussels, the heart of Europe, we are a member of Europarc Federation for some years now. As we work from an global point of view, I got convinced that working in international networks can make a huge difference. The exchange of information, influencing , capacity building and working closely together bring so many powerful ideas that everybody can use and implement in their own region.

Most important, the Europarc Federation is in my opinion the only network where most of the members still work on the field. Showcasing the localization of globalization! This makes the Federation a unique organization that (re)connects policy practice & (re)connects society! For me, this is the most powerful feature! Using the daily practical work to prove that the natural & cultural heritage is an asset for sustainable development!

What do you think you can offer the EUROPARC Federation and its members?

Since I won the so called “Green Nobel Prize for Nature” I became internationally involved. Suddenly I the international leaders, organizations, CEO’s and VIP’s were asking my opinion. Doing this, I became aware that I was able to get their attention. During the last couple of years I build a network of contacts in Europe and even globally that can be useful for Europarc Federation! It is my intention to use this network to showcase the work of Europarc Federation to become a standard for European policy.

How do you see the role of the members in the Federation and how would you stimulate and encourage their contribution?

I think the Europarc Federation is as strong as their members can be! Together we can make it happen en show Europe is taking responsibility for our precious heritage. What I experienced up until now is that there are so many members showing the sustainable direction. And there is still a fantastic journey to come! We have stay positive! Martin Luther King never started with: “I have a nightmare, he always started with “I have a dream”!

This is the spirit the Europarc Federation needs! Not afraid of problems and always marching towards the sounds of gunfire. Ready to take responsibility as the strongest umbrella network in Europe!

How would you develop the internal communication and cooperation within the Federation?

Internal communication and cooperation is an easy target, but in fact it is hard work! It isn’t a one way direction! Important is our dispatching Centre – the HQ, the Brussels office - the beating heart of the Federation. And – you – all members of the Federation are vital to keep on being healthy! My intention is to make the Europarc Federation the most friendly umbrella network in Europe and become a standard for the European policy! Because:

if we don’t do it, who will do it?

If we don’t do it together, how will we do it?

If we don’t do it now, when will we do it?

Together with all of you I believe we can make it happen. “Yes, we can!”