

For immediate release, October 18

Tel.: +49 (0)941 5993598-0
Fax: +49 (0)941 5993598-9
www.europarc.org
office@europarc.org

EUROPARC 2013: A show of hands for another 40 years Working for Nature!

What: EUROPARC Federation brings together the present and future leaders of protected areas at Europe's largest gathering of its kind under the theme "40 years Working for Nature"

When: 9th – 13th October 2013

Where: Debrecen, Hungary

Event host: EUROPARC Federation together with Hortobágy National Park Directorate (www.hnp.hu)

Languages: English, German, French, Hungarian

300 experts from 34 countries, responsible for managing Europe's natural resources met in the Hortobágy National Park Directorate, Hungary, this month to plan for the future and seek solutions for the integrated management of protected areas. The event that brought them together, the EUROPARC Conference 2013, celebrating 40 years working for nature, being the largest networking opportunity in Europe of its kind, this year introduced a parallel conference for the youth participants, aged 17- 25.



In the spirit of the 40th Anniversary of both, the foundation of Hortobágy National Park Directorate and the EUROPARC Federation, participants from all over the continent took part in a variety of workshops and field trips, met internationally recognised experts, discussed highlighted topics on the integrated management of protected areas, such as sustainable tourism, management plans, invasive plants and agri-environmental schemes. Conference delegates, the stakeholders of our natural parks, presented innovative new ideas for increasing ways of the integrated management, that will bring benefits for nature and for people.

Keynote speakers such as Julia Marton-Lefèvre, Director General of IUCN; Peter Ogden, Director of CPRW; Professor Emeritus Dr. Varga Zoltán of Hungary's Debrecen University and Ignace Schops Director of the Belgian NGO Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland talked about the many assets that nature has to offer society and the great work of protected areas, looking as well into the role of PAs concerning the climate change, PAs management plans, examples from the Panonian habitats and the role of Protected Areas in providing nature based solutions to global challenges.

Clearly, one of the most impressive moments of the conference was the message from the youth participants to the delegates of the main conference – stating - “We want to be heard!” Europe’s nature is an insurance policy for the future generations who will rely even more upon the wealth of our natural heritage, therefore the importance of including children and youngsters into environmental education at the early stage has to be the goal of each protected area. Technical innovations and the trend to live in urban environments results in people losing their connection to the natural environment, especially youngsters. This often means the awe inspiring beauty of a landscape and the positive effects of that connection are lost or forgotten. Europe’s protected area managers, should even more acknowledge and encourage all age groups to rediscover the value of nature, experience the joy of open space and fresh air and to recognise the immediate benefits that the quality management of and investment in nature can bring.

EUROPARC conferences are renowned for their multicultural diversity and international exchange providing the perfect setting for people of many different backgrounds who consider the future of European parks. This year, EUROPARC had the great pleasure of renewing a Memorandum of Understanding with the IUCN WCPA and signing a new one with the Baikalsky State Nature Biosphere Reserve, Baikal Eco-Tourism Association and GNF agreeing on working together and supporting the environmental friendly and socially responsible tourism in the Baikalsky State Nature Biosphere Reserve and its surroundings as a model project for the Republic of Buryatia and the Russian Federation

The aim of EUROPARC conferences is to deliver innovative, forward-looking approaches for the next decade that guarantee the effective sustainable management of protected areas in Europe. This year the conference was hosted by the UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site, Hortobágy National Park in Hungary’s Pannonian region. The conference was dedicated to ‘40 years Working for Nature’ and the achievement of Europe’s protected areas to society over that time.

-END-
509 WORDS

**Full quality photos available on request*



EUROPARC Federation, Waffnergasse 6, D - 93047 Regensburg, Bank Name: Sparkasse Freyung - Grafenau, Account number/ Kontonummer: 190007351, BLZ: 740 512 30, IBAN: DE25 7405 1230 0190 0073 51, BIC/Swift Code: BYLADEM1FRG

Präsident/President/Président: T. Hansson (SE), Schatzmeister/Treasurer/Trésorier: P. Castro (PT), Vorstand/Council/Conseil: R. Auzins (LV), D. Lévêque (F), M. Jager-Wöltgens (NL), I. Schops (BE), G. Sammuri (IT), C. Castell (E), E. Baird (UK), G. Szilágyi (H), Geschäftsführung/Directorate: Carol Ritchie

Notes for editors:

About the EUROPARC Federation:

EUROPARC is the umbrella organisation for Junior Ranger programmes throughout Europe. The aim of the network is to facilitate the increase of new partners throughout Europe by providing interested parks with information on the most important aspects of a Junior Ranger programme. EUROPARC Federation is an independent, non-governmental organisation whose membership brings together organisations responsible for the management of most of Europe's protected areas. Currently it represents over 400 members in 36 countries. These include protected areas, governmental departments, NGO's and businesses who themselves manage the green jewels of Europe's land, sea, mountains, forests, rivers and cultural heritage.

About the Hortobágy National Park:

Hortobágy is the largest continuous natural grassland in Europe. The Hortobágy National Park, established in 1973 is the country's largest protected area of 82 thousand hectares. Hortobágy has outstanding landscape features and is a unique example of the harmonic coexistence of people and nature based on the considerate use of the land, maintaining great biological variety in respect of species and habitats. However, at first sight there is nothing here. If you look around, the most conspicuous thing is that your eyes are not arrested by any buildings, hills or mountains. The mirage can be a spectacular sight on hot summer days, where you see something that is not in fact there.

Interview opportunities:

- Thomas Hansson, EUROPARC President
- Carol Ritchie, EUROPARC Director

Contact

Dea Mijakovac
Communications and Marketing Officer
E: d.mijakovac@europarc.org
S: dea.mijakovac.europarc
T: +49 (0)941 599 35 983

Edina Kanai
Communications Officer at Hortobágy National Park,
W: www.hnp.hu,
E: europarc2013@hnp.hu, kanaiedina@hnp.hu

For more information, visit our websites:
www.europarc.org
www.europarc2013.eu

Stay connected on our EUROPARC Facebook
[http://www.facebook.com/EUOPARConference](http://www.facebook.com/EUROPARConference)
Stay connected on our EUROPARC Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/EUROPARC>