

**PRESS RELEASE:** For Immediate release

**What:** Tourism and Biodiversity in Protected Areas

- 8th European Charter Network Meeting and Charter Awards 2013

**Who:** EUROPARC Federation, MEP Gaston Franco and Marche Region

**Where:** Brussels, Marche region representation and European Parliament

**When:** 6 November 2013

**Why:** Celebrate EUROPARC 40 years working for Nature



***EUROPARC brings Protected Areas managers, tourism experts and local businesses from all over Europe to Brussels - to share good practices on tourism management, brainstorm for innovative ideas and strategies, and to honour sustainable tourism achievements across Protected Areas in Europe. Celebrating 40 Years working for nature at the heart of the EU institutions, this year brings a brighter light to the Charter for Sustainable Tourism Awards.***

To celebrate its 40 years Working for Nature, EUROPARC Federation and MEP Gaston Franco are hosting the Award Ceremony of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. The one-day event will include the 8th European Charter Network Meeting in the morning with workshops and plenary sessions at the Marche Representation, followed by the 2013 Charter Award Ceremony in the afternoon at the European Parliament. More than 70 participants, from 12 countries will be present, among which 19 protected areas will be awarded.

A high level panel will contribute to inspire the audience and to animate the discussions with good practices examples and recent policy updates. Among them: Gaston Franco, Member of the European Parliament – Rapporteur for the 7<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme of the EU and Member of the Board and then Chair of the Mercantour National Park (2005-2008); Stefan Leiner European Commission, Head of the Nature Unit; Francesca Tadini, European Commission, Head of the Tourism Policy Development Unit; the EUROPARC's President Mr. Thomas Hansson; Maura Malaspina, Minister for the Environment and Agriculture, Marche Region; Alfredo Fermanelli, Head of protected areas and N2000 Unit, Marche Region.

The Charter Network Meeting will be a great occasion to gather the like-minded tourism experts, present the recent updates on the management of the Charter for Sustainable tourism across the EUROPARC network and to further raise the voice of protected areas at the highest European political level.

The Charter has proved to be an effective tool to assist protected areas with the development and implementation of sustainable tourism strategies in their regions, with benefits for nature, for people and local communities. The EUROPARC Federation began developing the Charter in the 1990s through a LIFE project, and today 119 areas are following the principles of the Charter in conducting their tourism activities.

## 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 European Charter for Sustainable Tourism:

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is a practical management tool for ensuring that tourism contributes to a balanced economic, social and environmental development of protected areas in Europe. The Charter is a voluntary agreement and aims to encourage good practice by recognising protected areas, which are meeting agreed requirements for the sustainable development and management of tourism. The Charter has been awarded to 119 protected areas from 13 European countries.

### About the Marche Region:

The Marche Region is a high touristic destination - with more than 11M touristic presences per year - well known at national and international level, famous for its Adriatic coast, for the richness of its mediaeval villages, but getting more and more attractive for the beauty of its landscape and richness of its nature. The Region has then proactively supported the implementation of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism among its network of protected areas which cover around 10% of the territory, and is welcoming today about 35% of the annual touristic presences of the region. The four Regional Parks of Marche (Sasso Simone e Simoncello, Monte San Bartolo, Gola della Rossa e di Frasassi and Conero) together with the Sibillini National Park – which was one of the first parks to get the Charter at European level in 2001 - are being awarded with the Charter this year.

### Interview opportunities:

- Thomas Hansson, EUROPARC President
- Gaston Franco, MEP, Member of the Board and then Chair of the Mercantour National Park (2005-2008)
- Maura Malaspina, Minister for the Environment and Agriculture, Marche Region

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### For more information, visit:

[www.europarc.org](http://www.europarc.org), [www.european-charter.org](http://www.european-charter.org)

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