

Tasks and services performed by nature parks
Regions for sustainable development

Nature conservation and countryside preservation

Objectives:

- To preserve old cultural landscapes through sustainable use
- To conserve biological diversity

Activities:

- Countryside preservation
- Nature conservation and biotope network measures
- Visitor guidance management and natural history information
- Involvement in caring for protected areas

Recreation and sustainable tourism

Objectives:

- To create attractive recreation opportunities in harmony with nature and the countryside
- To promote the development of sustainable tourism

Activities:

- Provision of infrastructure for recreation and activity offers
- Target group-based offers for recreation and experiencing nature
- Co-operation with key tourism service providers and organisations

Environmental education and communication

Objectives:

- To enable natural and cultural attractions to be experienced
- To teach nature conservation and sustainable development – education to promote sustainable development

Activities:

- Provision of adventure tours, excursions, lectures and exhibitions
- Provision of training and education for nature park guides
- Provision of offers for schools, children, young people and adults
- Creation of information centres, info points, etc.
- Use of print materials, websites and digital media
- Provision of information by area managers, theme trails, info boards in the park

Sustainable regional development

Objectives:

- To support regional development and value added
- To improve quality of life in the region

Activities:

- Forging of regional identity, culture and tradition
- Marketing of local produce
- Creation of nature park partner networks involving hotels, restaurants, the craft sector and land users
- Sustainable tourism
- Promotion of sustainable mobility
- Promotion of the use of renewables

Nature parks

Initiators and moderators / Network and regional platform



EUROPEAN NATURE PARKS DECLARATION



EUROPE NEEDS NATURE PARKS:

STRONG NATURE PARKS — STRONG RURAL AREAS

Nature parks exist in many European states and, together with other categories of protected areas, they cover up to 25 per cent of the land in individual states, playing a vital role in the wide network of parks across the whole of Europe. They comprise outstanding landscapes with a special wealth of natural and cultural heritage. They are primarily located in rural areas. Nature parks play a forward-looking role in the conservation of biological diversity, nature and the countryside, in nature-oriented recreation and sustainable tourism, and in the sustainable development of rural areas.

NATURE PARKS ARE MODEL REGIONS FOR INTEGRATIVE NATURE CONSERVATION

As integrative protected areas for humans and nature, nature parks combine the protection and use of landscape within the meaning of sustainable development. They make up a large proportion of national protected areas and include many Natura 2000 sites, the European network of protected areas. In addition, they make a crucial contribution to implementing the Water Framework Directive (WFD). At national level, nature parks are protected by conservation laws; internationally, nature parks are recognised protected areas according to category V “Protected Landscape” of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Within the individual states they help to ensure international obligations are met. Such commitments include the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) that has set binding targets for the development of protected areas, which include nature parks.

NATURE PARKS – THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Nature parks can make a vital contribution to the Europe 2020 strategy, which aims at promoting intelligent, sustainable and integrated growth. In the areas of employment, social integration, education, resource and climate protection in particular, nature parks already contribute to the positive development of rural areas by, for instance, promoting knowledge bases in rural areas, restoring, preserving and improving ecosystems, promoting local markets and short marketing chains, and supporting local development in rural areas. In addition, nature parks play a role in coping with demographic change in rural areas.

NATURE PARKS ARE CO-OPERATIVE MODELS

Nature parks can only achieve their goals in co-operation with a large number of partners. They co-ordinate their development objectives in the region with numerous stakeholders, providing a framework for joint commitment to the future-oriented development of the region, involving many partners. They are widely accepted by the population; they forge regional identity in a modern way; and are ideal for promoting voluntary work by citizens.

EXPLOITING POTENTIALS – NATURE PARKS FOR VIBRANT RURAL AREAS IN EUROPE THAT ARE WORTH LIVING IN

Nature parks act as partners to governments in the individual European states to develop rural areas in Europe in a way that unites the conservation of biological diversity with sustainable land management and the creation of jobs. Studies on the tourism value added created by nature parks prove that it makes economic sense to invest public money in nature parks.

The implementation of the new European Union’s funding period 2014–2020 within the Europe 2020 strategy provides the opportunity to make even greater use of nature parks to strengthen rural areas and to achieve the objectives at European Union and individual state level. Nature parks are ideal for meeting the objectives of European cohesion policy (coherence, complementarity, co-operation and co-ordination). Here, nature parks can shape successful projects within the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF).

10-POINT PROGRAMME TO STRENGTHEN RURAL AREAS IN EUROPE BY ENHANCING NATURE PARKS

1. As supporters of integrative nature protection, nature parks know how to involve the population and land users in nature conservation as the region’s asset. They create acceptance of nature conservation in the region. For example, they also help implement European programmes such as Natura 2000 network and the Water Framework Directive.
2. Nature parks enhance the image and tourist development of a region. After all, they are quality features of the region that are officially recognised by the state.
3. Nature parks are the driving force behind regional development in rural areas, including establishing a joint platform for action for people in the region. They also make the region more attractive to tourists by giving it an image and providing offers, as well as strengthening the “soft” site factors such as regional identity and an intact countryside.
4. The work performed by nature parks contributes to mitigating the effect of climate change and to ensuring that adaptation to change is undertaken. Nature protection measures include moor and grassland conservation, as well as strengthening regional cycles and promoting public mobility.
5. Nature parks create value added and promote innovation. For instance, farmers and nature conservationists join forces to create local produce and barrier-free tourism products.
6. Nature parks forge regional identity in a modern way and involve citizens, stakeholders and institutions in their region. They establish a platform for co-operation, creating the basis for citizens’ joint commitment to the region in which they live.
7. Nature parks help children, young people and adults to learn more about the natural and cultural attractions in their region, based on qualified environmental education.
8. Nature parks work to preserve the cultural heritage in their regions as well as to enhance its reputation and value.
9. Nature parks involve their regions in European and international networks and participate in European projects and development programmes.
10. Nature parks help to mitigate the demographic development experienced in rural areas by improving the population’s quality of life, by triggering development impulses such as in tourism, and by projecting a regional identity, also to the younger generation.

Wandlitz in Barnim Nature Park, 16 April 2013

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