



Natura 2000 Commission

Terms of Reference

Overall Mission

The Commission on Natura 2000 (hereinafter the Commission) is established composed of 5-7 representatives of the EUROPARC members - experts on Natura 2000 with wider consultative group available as a e-forum. The special focus of the Commission is on SACs in the terrestrial part of the EU.

The aim is to run an expert and communication platform helping especially to Natura 2000 site managers to share their experiences and good practice examples. The Commission itself is developing guidelines related to conservation of sites. IUCN WCPA Europe. Experience and knowledge of WCPA network could also provide support on implementation of the directives to EC DG Environment, but also to site-management authorities in delivering the Natura network goals

Background

EUROPARC Federation members are in charge of approx. 40 million hectares of Natura 2000 sites. It means they are nature conservation authority and/or manage those sites. On the one hand, it shows an importance of the EUROPARC Federation in Natura 2000 maintenance and improvement. On the other hand, our efficient contribution requires special focus on the topic.

Link to EUROPARC Strategy

The activity and the results of the Commission will be based on, and coherent with, the [EUROPARC Strategy 2015-21](#) (in particular Strategic Theme 1 and 4 and related specific actions) as following:

STRATEGIC THEME 1		WORKING FOR NATURE	
Priority AREA 1.1	Managing Places for Nature		
Strategic OBJECTIVE	Strategic OBJECTIVE Provide quality standards to site managers to improve management effectiveness by promoting existing standards, recommendations, guidelines and European level programmes.		
OUTCOME	Protected Areas and N2000 sites across Europe will be able to better benchmark their work and apply higher standards to their management.		
STRATEGIC THEME 4		WORKING TOGETHER - BUILDING OUR ORGANISATION	
Priority AREA 4.1	Governance: how we work		



Strategic OBJECTIVE	Improve the governance system of the EUROPARC Federation to meet good governance principles and to increase the effectiveness of the Federation.
OUTCOME	An efficient structure that will fully and effectively deliver the strategy of the EUROPARC Federation is agreed and developed accordingly.

Planned outputs and activities over 2 years

- Field workshop on specific management measures
- The best practice guidelines
- standards and guidelines for monitoring and reporting of Natura 2000 sites
- Support the work of EUROPARC in N2000 related outputs e.g. “greenlisting”, N2000 expert working group of DG Environment
- Support the input of EUROPARC to the IMPACT project on N2000 good practice in management planning.
- Gather best practice case studies on a range of specific topics, to be agreed
- Planning of workshops as needed (if funds allow)
- Planning and application of projects, or seeking of funds to commission research

1. Guidelines on management

Description: Maintenance or improvement (restoration) of Natura 2000 sites is the most demanding part of the implementation process. Although there has been a lot of running activities on how to effectively manage sites, it is still ambiguous issue for a significant number of site managers. It is caused not only by variability of natural conditions throughout Europe, but also by combinations of conservation objectives and overlaps with nationally designated areas.

Task: to provide an advice on efficient management of Natura 2000 sites through participation on biogeographical process (led by the European Commission) and set of separate activities (fields workshop on specific management measures, and elaboration and publication of the best practice guidelines).

Cooperation: EC working group on Natura 2000 management.

2. Natura 2000 selection process

Description: Natura 2000 designation process has not been finished in a majority of the EU countries and is still under development. EUROPARC Federation members are also ministries and state agencies often responsible for site selection at technical level. It gives us an opportunity to actively participate at the selection process especially in the EU candidate countries, i.e. to share with them our experience and support them in the site selection process.



Task: to join current (also project) activities leading to Natura 2000 site selection process in the EU candidate countries and actively promote our experience and potential as their partner (Albania, FYR Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Cooperation: our state members and agencies.

3. Monitoring and reporting on Natura 2000 site state

Description: State of sites is dependent on well done planning which should be based on regular site based monitoring. In other words, we have to know not only the state, but also trends in habitat type quality and species populations. Thanks to limited resources, this part of the implementation process is often underestimated or even avoided. In addition, site managers often do not recognize a difference between site based monitoring and country based monitoring and reporting under the Habitats Directive.

Task: to contribute to common understanding of site based Natura 2000 monitoring approaches by development of standards and guidelines.

Indicators

- at least 5 case studies prepared
- one funded workshop realized

Potential members, resources and potential sources

The group should establish a chair and a secretariat from EUROPARC. **IUCN WCPA** members can be invited to participate.

EUROPARC will support the initial meeting in 2016 and set up the communications platform to encourage online interaction.

One EUROPARC staff member or council member will oversee the group.

A possible project or funding should be sought by the group.



General Information

Why does EUROPARC have Member's Commissions?

The EUROPARC Federation is a membership organisation. It exists to serve the needs of our members as they have identified them in the statutes of the organisation and its recently approved strategy.

However the services expected by the members may not always be able to be provided fully by a team of staff, further one might want to consider that as a membership organisation, the role of and functions of the members in running the organisation and delivering on its goals should form a part of the Federation's governance and structure.

With that in mind the creation of the new strategy offers an opportunity for some renewed thinking on how members can have a role in the functions of EUROPARC.

It may be useful to suspend the attachment to the current structure, or order to pause and consider what is needed and achievable.

The strategy was written with the then existing structure, this does not compel EUROPARC to retain that, as the delivery of the aims and action expressed, should in most cases, take precedence. Further, the need for change to the delivery structures was already indicated in the strategy.

What makes a Good Group?

Groups working together with a common purpose, are good for people in that they can provide members with important social interaction, support and enriched opportunities for learning.

A well-functioning participation group can be

- Good at finding problems;
- Promoting innovation;
- Can make better decisions than individuals on some kinds of tasks;
- Can be good tools for implementation, in that group decisions to which members are committed will be carried out willingly;
- Can also help fend off the negative consequences of large organisational size, by keeping communication lines short and hierarchies relatively flat.

However, it must be noted that, groups can turn sour and be ineffective. The Federation would need to be aware of any difficulties that arise in order to manage.

EUROPARC should endeavour to create differing types of groups, suited to the needs and task required by the Federation, but ensure we maximise the positive opportunities indicated.



What types of Groups will EUROPARC have?

Types of Participation Groups of the EUROPARC Federation		
Internal Participation groups of EUROPARC		
Technical standing committees	to analyse specific aspects of EUROPARC work, particularly existing programmes such as charter and TB	Guidelines of the work of these groups already exists.
Commissions	To undertake a piece research or advise on a given topic or theme , develop a project and prepare a report with recommendations for EUROPARC	Will take over the function of previous working groups with a great emphasis on evidence gathering and outputs
Forum	Predominately e-forum to explore area of works, stimulate discussion	All commissions should have their own platform as well as exchange across the Federation.
Advisory panels	to give overview or audit the work of the Federation on a given topic	International work of the Charter is one such example
External working groups	Groups which the Federation is asked to join a group managed by other organisations. Can also be called "platforms" e.g. large carnivores	Current groups and platforms we are involved in

The creation of new commissions

It is important that the work of the groups is closely aligned to the **Federation strategy**. As such, all outputs need then to be reported to the Federation, its members and to funding bodies. Therefore maintaining and strengthening communication lines with all parties involved is essential. As per current working groups guidelines

To facilitate this, Federation Directorate staff will be assigned, where possible, to support and assist groups. Additionally the council may decide to act as an advocate of the theme/topic within the council if the group does not include a council member. This does not presume financial support to attend commission meetings.



Given an analysis by council and directorate, a call for creation of commission is then made. The strategic remit of each will be identified in the call. Council should give some consideration as to the chairing of such commissions, there can be nominated by council or selected by a group.

Other suggestions by sections and members can be considered but there is a danger of “spreading ourselves too thin” as resources and capacity are limited. Groups can for e-forums at any time and any reasonable suggestion from sections and member will be considered.

Interested parties in a commission should identify a chair, through which a basic proposal for the specific workplan remit of the commission.

This plan would include

Strategic theme addressed by the commission (the directorate will complete any aspects related to the NGO grant or other projects)

- objective,
- planned outputs over 2 years
- indicators
- potential members if the proposal comes from a group of members,
- resources, and potential sources

Plan of meetings, schedule of work will be agreed by the Directorate and the group.

CVs of working group members should be submitted when the request for the establishment of the commission is submitted or soon thereafter.

The numbers of commission the Federation can support will be dependent on the Federation’s income, so the Council will agree by a list of priorities which commission will be supported.

Outputs

Annual meetings of council and chair of commissions should aim to take place at the annual conference. Groups are expected to produce an annual forward plan, directly related to the strategy of the Federation. Outputs of commissions will be presented in the Federation’s annual report and promoted to members in its communications, annual reports and to funders where applicable.

Finances

All Federation monies are accountable to the members and to specific donors. Procedures for eligible expenses will be provided. Ideally working groups would be supported with travel and expense costs within a given agreed allocation. This is our aim although the allocation is speculative, based on an anticipated income, and is therefore regularly monitored and reassessed. Should no project or other tangible work be realised then working groups would be dissolved and an e-forum of interested parties set up in its place. Whilst the Federation would endeavour to reimburse travel and meeting costs within agreed limits, contributions to some of these costs from the member organisations, in recognition of the benefits of having their staff member in a Federation working group, would be appreciated.



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A work plan indicating the groups anticipated output for the forthcoming year should be lodged to the directorate and agreed no later than October of the preceding year to enable budgets to the coming year to be prepared.