



EUROPARC
F E D E R A T I O N

EUROPARC Council Election 2017

Election candidate information

Name: Ignace Schops

Nationality/Citizenship: Belgian

Member Organization: Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland

Position to be elected for (council member, treasurer, president): **President**

Nominated by: *Krkonose Mountains National Park*

Current Position: Director Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland National Park



Please introduce yourself in a few sentences, your background, interests, and experience.

For more than 20 years I am employed in the environmental world. I am trained as a landscape expert and herpetologist and was formerly regional director of Natuurpunt, the largest nature conservation organization in Belgium. With my NGO RLKM, we established the (Re)connection Model; the first and only national park in Belgium - the Hoge Kempen National Park; the RiverPark Maas-valley and the BorderPark Kempen~Broek. Thanks to a lot of very successful projects I could extend my expertise with management techniques, new governance approaches, and strategic planning methodologies. I am often asked as an international expert in sustainable and environmental related topics. Since 2008 I was several times awarded, even at the highest international level. See overview below:



Director - Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland, Belgium



President EUROPARC Federation



Recipient Goldman Prize – Green Nobel Prize



ASHOKA fellow – World Leading Social Entrepreneur



Full Member Club of Rome - EU Chapter



Honorary Doctor Hasselt University, Belgium



Commander of the Order of the Belgian Royal Crown



Full member of the Climate Leadership Corps – Al Gore



Full Member Rewilding Europe Circle



Council Member Natuurpunt Flanders, largest nature conservation organization Belgium

Experience relevant to the EUROPARC Federation.

Strategic Thinking & Governance

My experience as board member in several local and international organizations and my experience as advisor in various topics related to the natural heritage, tourism, climate change, ... resulted in excellent management techniques, governance methodologies, and strategic thinking. I am skilled in leading council and board meetings and high-level conferences. During the years I am trained to team with teams and to co-create with other organizations and stakeholders. I am able to organize and create awareness for the natural heritage and climate change and translate the direct- and indirect benefits of environmental issues into the socio-economic and political context.

Long standing member of EUROPARC Federation

Specifically related to EUROPARC Federation: my organization RLKM is a long standing member. During the last six years, I first served as a convinced council member. Since the last 3 years, I serve as president. During this period, the members of EUROPARC Federation across Europe helped, trained and educated me in various topics and due to their efforts – and with me the whole Council – I am able to showcase the work and projects of the Federation at the EU policy level and at many occasions.

Participative approach

EUROPARC Federation provides a platform where members, sections, and working groups can exchange values, share knowledge, develop joint projects and build friendships. An outstanding value. A good connectivity with the executing team – the directorate – is key for a good translation from strategy to concrete development.

Communication & dissemination

Due to my expertise, I can represent EUROPARC Federation at various (international) levels. It is possible to communicate and disseminate our achievements of our network and open new relationships with the public-, non-governmental-, private- and business sector. The translation of our work into a language that is understandable to our partners and stakeholders is crucial to convince them in creating new alliances.

Languages are spoken and level of fluency (basic, moderate, good)

Dutch – Good

English – Good

French – moderate

German – Basic

Personal statement (please answer the questions below as concisely as possible)

Think globally, act locally and change personally!

The EUROPARC Federation needs a group of strong leaders in the Council who are willing to invest time in taking the organization forward and raising its profile and who will represent it at national and European level.

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

Europe's natural and cultural heritage is still 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 most fantastic natural treasures with an amazing wildlife and wild places that most of us don't even know it exists. It is due to the hard work of many the heroes of the field, members, and sections of EUROPARC Federation and some other great organizations that we still can enjoy these fascinating landscapes ...

I am currently President of EUROPARC Federation. In the last three years we – the council & the directorate – were able to build, connected, develop and prepare our organization for the future.

And on top of a first period of being a council member, I am proud to chair and lead on behalf of EUROPARC Federation. It was an honor to learn and experience from inside out and was able to feel the heartbeat of the Federation.

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

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

Sustainable nature, valued by people!

The vision "Sustainable nature, valued by people" was adopted with the strategy 2015-2021. This vision describes what we want as an organization. And our vision resonates very well with the intentions and objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN. The strategy is the guideline for our constituency: stable and structured enough to develop our objectives, priorities, actions, and projects. Flexible enough to react to new opportunities and challenges.

Involved in several other national and international organizations (see above) and experienced as a president I can offer leadership, responsibility, empathy and hard work. I am a team player who likes to take leadership and strongly believe in the strength, knowledge, and expertise of the directorate, the members, and the sections.

“Glocal view”

Due to my work for the Regional Landscape Kempen & Maasland in Belgium and with a fantastic team we experienced international cooperation and developed successful projects. In executing this, I was able to get expertise in local, regional and global items related to biodiversity, the natural heritage, cross border cooperation, peri-urban parks, junior rangers, sustainable tourism, climate change, ...

The combination of working locally with my team and internationally as frequently asked an expert and as president of EUROPARC Federation results in performance, excellent experience, and integrated skills.

I can still see with the eyes of project manager or biologist and be highly involved in local and international strategies and policies at the same time. In other words: a glocal view

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

As the largest network organization in Europe, EUROPARC Federation is built on membership. Members are the basis, the core of our constituency. In the annual General Assembly members decide, give a mandate, discuss and debate on the directions of the Federation. So the role of members cannot be misinterpreted.

As a happy member of EUROPARC Federation, I believe in “international cooperation” that creates a platform for all the members to exchange knowledge, expertise & projects and can operate as a federation to showcase, discuss, lobby and cooperate with and throughout pan-Europe.

The interaction of members and sections is vital for a healthy Federation. A priority. There is a window of opportunities for increasing the interaction and contribution of members and sections. Our projects can be an interesting vehicle to connect within and outside the membership with new stakeholders.

Especially in these hard socio-economic times, we need to join and come forward with good ideas and projects. Together we need to design the best working model. The new strategy can help in finding and fine-tune the collaboration and integration. In other words: we need to be the change we want to see.

As we work from a global point of view, I became convinced that working with EUROPARC Federation can make a huge difference. Working on protected areas, national parks, regional nature parks, peri-urban parks, ...makes us the value. For a European Commissioner, a mayor, an alderman. For an entrepreneur. For people in the streets. For park managers, farmers and tour operators... For you and me.

With 400 members in 38 countries, covering over 40 million hectares (40% of Natura 2000) we are the standard in Europe. With our successful products like sustainable tourism, transboundary cooperation, health, ecosystem services, peri-urban parks, junior rangers, sustainable agriculture, business relations ... we create positive examples of a sustainable place to live. We make a difference day after day.

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.

Importantly, the EUROPARC Federation is the only network where so many field workers are represented as well! A huge advantage, because we have the hands, the feet, eyes, and ears of the field! Showcasing the localization of globalization! This makes the Federation unique and (re)connects

policy with 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!

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

Internal communication and cooperation look like an easy target, but in fact, it is hard work! And it is not a one-way direction! Communication - internal and external as well – and cooperation (platforms) needs to be designed with and on the scale of the full membership, then organized, agreed and clarified to the membership. Complexity needs to be avoided. General communication needs to be simple, easy to understand and clear for everyone.

The directorate in Regensburg with our hub of Fedenatur in Barcelona and our office in Brussels are the dispatching communication centers. Together with the new focal points – where the sections are the entry points of EUROPARC Federation – we are able to better communicate to our members. With members, sections and other parts of the membership, we need interaction & openness. In a fast changing world where everything is going viral ... we need to evaluate the (internal)communication & cooperation constantly.

Our new strategy has to be the guideline to take some next steps. “Subsidiarity” is maybe interesting to look into. Who is responsible for what on which level and how does it respond to the federations objectives.

EUROPARC is an organization that is constantly developing and that needs to stay on top of the political agenda whilst thinking about the needs of its members.

What should the principal functions of the EUROPARC Federation be in the coming years?

Our strategy 2015-2021 provide the guidelines for the next period. Nevertheless, we see a fast changing world with new challenges and ambitions. So we need to be flexible, ready and able to adjust without losing our core values. EUROPARC Federation can build on 40 years of experience and a pallet of successful projects, strategies, and policies. It gives confidence and helps in our reaction to new or changing political agendas. Within the Council we constantly debate on how we can stay on top of the political agenda, taking into account the needs of our members. And since the last years, we bring this topic on the agenda of the General Assembly.

In our current organizational work, we build several links and opportunities for members, sections, working groups to identify problems, challenges, and opportunities and formulate new ways of addressing key political directions. Several mandated people of EUROPARC Federation operate in various international working groups to keep our values on top of the political agenda.

In the framework of the EU policies it is vital we present ourselves as the biggest and strongest umbrella network to the EU. Because there are big challenges to come, like the implementation of the EU biodiversity strategy, the EU climate strategy and the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP reform). We need to be the protectors of Natura 2000, of the Bird- and Habitat directive, of the peri-urban nature, etc. and there are lots of opportunities in other parts of the EU like in research and innovation, the circular economy strategy, ...To do so the council and the Directorate invested in extra staff in our Brussels office.

Secondly, we need to see how the Federation can be designed for the future: how do the sections will be involved? How do we highlight the sustainable tourism charter and can we make it into an internationally acknowledged standard (branding)? What can be the future role of protected areas in

relation to agriculture and climate change? What will be the role of based solutions in the future economic strategy and how does it affect the circular economy?

And, of course, we need a special place for the youth: they are the future generation. The faster they are connected and interlinked, the more opportunities there will be for EUROPARC Federation.

In the last council period we – the council, the directorate and all parts of our constituency – were able to deliver some major accomplishments: we clarified the roles and responsibilities and the cooperation between the council and the Directorate; we build financial stability; we managed to be internationally recognized by the EU and we implement our strategy; we clarified the role and the position of the sections; we integrated with Fedenatur; we started for the first time ever a membership campaign; we structured the levels participation; we evaluated the work of the council, etc. As a council, we gave some recommendations for the next council.

EUROPARC Federation is designed to be successful!

We are the unique network who is able to organize & develop; co-create & co-operate; participate & share; communicate & translate. We are the unique network that can make the difference!

In what areas, e.g. lobbying, funding, does EUROPARC need to maximize its external relationships and with whom?

As the biggest network organization in Europe, EUROPARC Federation has a big responsibility. During the last years, we were able to build expertise based on the success stories, challenges, and opportunities of our members, sections and working groups.

EUROPARC Federation can nowadays be considered as the experts and as “living laboratories” where governing methods and managing activities are undertaken to ensure the coexistence between people and the natural and cultural heritage. We were able to build successful strategic partnerships, collaborate on the Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and are preparing new partnerships with the business sector.

To ensure our vision: “sustainable nature, valued by people” we integrate several fields of expertise (...) and we developed some successful tools, programs, projects, and actions. At several international levels and topics, members are representing EUROPARC Federation and we were able to disseminate our work and expertise with excellence. This resulted in an increased recognition of the EU, who now regularly asks the Federation for advice.

Besides the areas we are already touching increasingly, we need to invest in the new challenges that relate to our vision and objectives. Most likely there will be an increased attention to marine biodiversity, climate change, circular economy, sustainable agriculture, and health.

Moreover, it is interesting to connect our work with the UN Sustainable Development Goals in order to underline the relation and responsibility we have at the global, continental, regional and local level.

Ignace Schops

June 2017