

The background image shows a wide, open landscape under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. In the foreground, there are tall, golden-brown grasses and a light-colored gravel path that leads towards the middle ground. A group of about ten people are walking along the path. In the middle ground, there is a wooden observation tower with a steep, shingled roof and a red rectangular sign on top. The tower is situated on a grassy dune. In the background, there is a body of water, possibly a lake or a wide river, and a distant shoreline with some buildings and trees.

# **EUROPARC FEDERATION ANNUAL REPORT 2023**





EUROPARC Directorate at the Conference 2023 © PDF-Grafie

[www.europarc.org](http://www.europarc.org)

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## President's remarks

*Michael Hošek,  
EUROPARC President.*



### Reflections on a momentous year.

2023 was a landmark year in EUROPARC, where we celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Not every organisation can sustain a long period of time, nor maintain a high and stable membership. **It is a cause for celebration, but also for reflection** on our legacy and future. Today, with approximately 400 members in 40 countries, we are by far **the largest international membership organisation in Europe**, and probably globally in terms of our focus on protected areas and this is due to the vision and commitment of our members.

The Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) for 2030, **achieving 30% coverage of Protected Areas** as well as the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 both recognise that Protected Areas are now recognised by perhaps everyone – not only as a tool for biodiversity conservation, but also for **climate change adaptation and mitigation**, and not least as a model for sustainable use of the landscape. We should not lose that momentum.

There is now the need for a discussion to examine the role of Protected Areas towards future conditions, of climate, economic and politics, that we as yet do not know. That can only come through learning from each other across our network and raising standards in the management of Protected Areas, **something we do better as a common endeavour and is as important now as it ever was.**

**With that, EUROPARC launched as part of the Life Enable project, the European Nature Academy. This is our one stop shop of exchange and learning about and with Protected Areas, look out for new courses as they are launched and join us.**

I myself, had the great opportunity to learn with others at the Protected Areas World Leaders forum in Krkonose National Park (CZ). The conclusion was that the Global Biodiversity Framework can only be a success if Protected Areas can unlock a cascade of benefits. Further the need to gather best practice from around the world to highlight the important role we play as a driver of sustainable development rooted in nature conservation and climate mitigation was stressed.

**forward-looking measures** for a sustainable Europe for nature and people.

This declaration was a key point in **the EUROPARC Conference in Leeuwarden (NL)** in 2023. After 4 days of intense and enjoyable networking and sharing, the Conference concluded that the next 50 years of EUROPARC bring us towards a more mature relationship in harmony with nature. For present and future generations. For all life. And as such adopted 7 principles that can be read on page 8.


EUROPARC is very active in the search for **new funding models for Protected Areas**. Participants of the Siggen Seminar in 2023, indicated at the end of their deliberations that, "representing a cross-section of Protected Areas in Europe, have come together to **unlock emerging opportunities to attract ethical private finance**. The 15 participants from 12 countries stressed the need to become "investment ready", by **creating a shared vision to turn nature restoration projects into investable business models**, in order to access private finance from the ethical and green investment sector.

EUROPARC works closely within the Council of Europe primarily in the Bern and landscape conventions, but has been working with other INGOs to call **for the implementation of the Human Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment in the Council of Europe.**

These are just my highlights of a great year. Inside the annual report you will find **a plethora of** projects and activities. It shows that our 50 years of experience in handling issues and finding solutions can be of great value, if we are capable of linking them to the challenges of tomorrow. I hope you will find there not just inspiration and idea but a sense of pride in the organisation that you are part of, that has sought to serve the Protected Areas community for 50 years and long may it continue.

**Michael Hošek**  
*President*  
EUROPARC Federation






The EUROPARC Strategy is inspired by the aspiration of EUROPARC members to see a **Sustainable Nature; Valued by People**. It guides our actions to improve and champion the policy and practice of Protected Areas to ensure that our natural and cultural heritage is protected and enhanced for current and future generations. The strategy is a collective endeavour, with certain activities delegated by members, to the various arms of the Federation, the Council, Directorate, Sections, Commissions and Task Forces, but underpinned by the participation and work of the members themselves across the Protected Areas of Europe.

There is collaboration across the network, to generate collective insights and expertise for Protected Areas policy and practice. Through cooperation and being open to continuous development, we stimulate new ideas and mutual learning. Our vision of **Sustainable Nature; Valued by People** remains a shared ambition, supported and championed by our members.

Our actions are underpinned by values and principles to create a positive impact within the EUROPARC network and beyond. To exemplify not just what we do but how we do it. Our activities and achievements in 2023 were permeated by and promoted our commitment to **cooperation, enjoyment, inclusivity, sustainability, and excellence**.

*Schiermonikaag Island. © EUROPARC*





**COOPERATIVE:** we learn and work with each other across Europe to **innovate** Protected Area management through engagement, communication and training.

**ENJOYABLE:** we create fun and useful networking experiences to **inspire** our members, other organisations and wider society to value Protected Areas.

**INCLUSIVE:** we actively listen and engage in all aspects of our operations to **inform** our members, partners and colleagues across sectors.

**SUSTAINABLE:** we track the impacts that the work of our organisation has on the natural and cultural heritage to **influence** to ensure that the values and benefits of Protected Areas are recognised and integrated in policy.

**EXCELLENCE:** we embrace continual improvement by providing opportunities to **invest** in our staff, our members' skills and capacities and our inputs to projects and programmes to bring added-value across all areas of our activities.





# Strengthen and grow our Network to deliver our vision

A viable, resilient and active organisation with healthy member participation is the fundament to all activities. Throughout 2023 EUROPARC has ensured our five principles **cooperation, enjoyment, inclusivity, sustainability, and excellence** remain at the heart of all our operations.

EUROPARC has continued throughout 2023, to embrace the change in how we and our members work, with digital tools, reinstating the importance of international cooperation and connection as well as ensuring a place for our youth to be involved.

Through our networking and convening platforms, events and online presence, EUROPARC has worked with our members to generate collective foresight for Protected Areas policy and practice. By being open to an approach of continual development, we stimulate new ways of thinking and learning from each other that will enable different ways in which our shared future can unfold.

Protected Areas need not be passive bystanders of a future shaped by others, but be empowered to bring to bear the huge experience, wisdom and potential of the biggest Protected Area network to shape that future themselves.

*Markerwadden NP Nieuw Land.*  
© EUROPARC





# Increase the human and financial capacity of the network

## Our Members and Directorate

2023 was a special year: our Federation celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Throughout the year, the EUROPARC network experienced significant growth and positive changes. Working across a range of topics, made stronger by the excellent work and active involvement of our 407 members, we progressed further towards our vision. During the year, we welcomed 21 new members and said goodbye to 16, whilst achieving an impressive 95% membership fee recovery.

The Directorate was restructured into three units to streamline our operating processes and ensure strong governance. Building on our strengths, the units are Communications and Capacity Building, Policy and Projects and Finance and Administration. Over the year, staff changes and new awarded projects strengthened and enlarged the team. Team members also had the opportunity to receive Training as Trainer within the Life ENABLE project. Get in touch with us! You can find the team contacts at the end of the report.

## General Assembly

The voices of EUROPARC members are actively heard and their participation is evident across our work areas. This is most obvious during the General Assembly where crucial decisions are made. The report of the General

***Learn more about the General Assembly in the report [here](#).***



Assembly is in the members area of the EUROPARC website. An interactive World Cafe session concluded the General Assembly and helped collect ideas to inspire future work development. The networking continued at the Annual Conference: in 2023, around 400 nature professionals came together in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands.

## Projects

Integral to implementing the EUROPARC Strategy to 2030, we seek to inspire, innovate, invest, influence and inform actions that generate lasting impacts in our Parks and for the People who live and work in them. Our project successes come from many meetings and discussions to build partnerships and develop projects and initiatives that contribute to raising funds and supporting the growth of our organisation. Besides the approved LIFE NGO Grant for 2024, we submitted four international projects:

- 1 Erasmus+ 4Pillars4Youth+ project aims at leader training for youth engagement in Protected Areas (PAs) was approved and will be implemented in 2024.
- 2 Project to support youth engagement in cross-border PAs funded through a non-EU channel by the Waldensian Church of Italy.
- 3 LIFE PLP TrainIn4Nature project focused on capacity building for PA management and nature restoration which, despite passing the evaluation, was not approved for funding.
- 4 LIFE PAME Europe project focuses on Management Effectiveness and has been approved for funding in 2023 and will commence in 2024.

***Learn more about our current projects [here](#).***

*Voting during the General Assembly at the Conference 2023 in The Netherlands.  
© PDF-Grafie*



## Financial Report

The financial health of the Federation continues. We received extremely positive feedback from EU monitors who praised our internal systems and approach to financial management. You can find an overview of our finances on this page:

### Summary of Balance Sheet EUROPARC Federation

ASSETS		2023	2022
<b>Assets</b>	Total fixed assets	8 909,41	8 333,68
	Total current assets	443 980,75	758 723,04
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>452 890,16</b>	<b>767 056,72</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>Profit Reserve</b>		240 069,04	218 611,51
<b>Liabilities</b>	Provisions	34 119,40	30 875,42
	Accounts payable	178 701,72	517 569,79
<b>Total Equity and Liability</b>		<b>452 890,16</b>	<b>767 056,72</b>
<b>Income and Expenditure</b>			
<b>Income</b>			
	Membership fees	358 705,80	355 277,27
Grants	EC core grant	318 308,16	323 699,70
	Project grants	539 498,12	336 773,30
	Other income	118 499,53	250 886,65
<b>Total income</b>		<b>1 335 011,61</b>	<b>1 266 636,92</b>
<b>Simplified Expenditure</b>			
<b>Total Personnel costs</b>		<b>836 183,08</b>	<b>715 948,21</b>
<b>Total Office costs</b>		<b>26 243,08</b>	<b>28 360,92</b>
<b>Total Travel and Subsistence</b>		<b>111 088,29</b>	<b>159 537,19</b>
<b>Total Other direct costs</b>		<b>173 300,13</b>	<b>183 383,61</b>
<b>Total Overhead costs</b>		<b>97 271,62</b>	<b>88 689,89</b>
<b>Total External Assistance/ Professional Fees</b>		<b>69 467,36</b>	<b>73 778,40</b>
<b>Total costs</b>		<b>1 313 553,56</b>	<b>1 249 698,22</b>
<b>Result</b>		<b>24 458,05</b>	<b>16 938,70</b>





ENA Induction Meeting in Schneverdingen, Germany.  
© EUROPARC

# Build the capacity of our organisation and its members

## LIFE ENABLE: transformative capacity building for applied learning to improve management effectiveness

Investing in our members' competences and increasing access to innovative training are crucial to achieve and grow excellence in practice in our Protected Areas. The LIFE ENABLE capacity building and networking courses created this opportunity for 59 selected Natura 2000 and Protected Area managers from 24 countries. The training began in February with an in-person induction meeting in Schneverdingen, Germany, and then transitioned to online sessions on the newly launched European Nature Academy (ENA).

***Learn more about the project here.***



Participants had access to four blended learning courses, including „Core Competencies for Effective Management of Natura 2000 and Protected Areas Across Europe“, „Tools for Natura 2000 Marine Managers,“ „Tools for Natura 2000 Forest Managers“ and „Train the Trainers“. Three in-person workshops built on the content and increased professional exchanges.

Participants who completed the courses received certificates for their achievements. The externally evaluated feedback indicates the high value attributed to the courses by participants: 96% said the training was directly relevant to their work and that they would recommend the courses to colleagues.



The project and all actions are made possible with support from the LIFE financial instrument of the European Community

Integral to the ENA's design was the Train the Trainers course. This was provided to ensure future replicability of the ENA's training courses.





## EUROPARC Conference in The Netherlands

Over 400 Protected Area professionals gathered in Leeuwarden, The Netherlands to pay "Tribute to our Landscape: where nature and people meet in harmony". Through the Knowledge Market, Landscape Festival, Inspiration Sessions, field trips, workshops and invited keynote speakers, participants could learn from each other and reflect on the significance of creating a future in harmony with nature.

Of course, time was also dedicated to celebrate and learn from 50 Years of EUROPARC. A special session brought (former) EUROPARC presidents together to reflect on the organisation's legacy and future needs of Protected Area management. Speaking of the future: thanks to the generous support of Alfred Toepfer Stiftung we invited 14 young people to take part cost-free.

During the Conference, the field trips and the cultural events reinforced our vision that Europe's natural and cultural heritage should be protected, managed and restored. Through international cooperation, we can learn from each other how to best achieve this vision.

To ensure a lasting impact, a Conference Statement was created with seven steps that serve as an inspiration and practical guide to what the EUROPARC Network can do now, to create a future in harmony with nature.

***Learn more about the Conference in the report here.***

- 1 Understanding our past and present helps us to work towards the future: the future we need and want.
- 2 Living in harmony with nature, a stable climate and no pollution requires a change in human attitudes and actions.
- 3 Contact and interconnectedness with nature. Go out there and spend time in nature.
- 4 There is a need to reach consumers, business owners or other stakeholders. Behaviour change is necessary.
- 5 Continue to marvel at nature and landscape beauty. Protected Areas have an essential educational role in reconnecting society with nature.
- 6 Nature exists everywhere: in natural areas, cultural landscapes, cities and towns - they are all connected. New technology can help.
- 7 A roadmap for change is needed, with everyone playing a role, individually and collaboratively.



## EUROPARC 50 Years

For 50 years, EUROPARC has been connecting People and Parks. As such, we wanted to put the spotlight on these connections and the people behind them during our celebrations. This certainly was founded on our principle that working together should be enjoyable!

To do so, EUROPARC interviewed many members and accessed 50+ years of journals and photographs, showcasing the development of Protected Area management and the unique role EUROPARC has played in this, over the decades. The video campaign, where members explain what EUROPARC means to them, resulted in 18 videos that gathered over 15,000 views and impressions across YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and X.

*Delegates could provide input at the Conference. © PDF-Grafie*







*Landscape festival at the Conference.*  
© PDF-Grafie

All this accumulated into the interactive storybook of the EUROPARC Federation, which was launched during the Award Ceremony at the Conference. It includes videos, pictures, spoken words and texts, and encapsulates the core of EUROPARC's work: connecting people and parks.

***Discover the EUROPARC Storybook here.***

We honour those who built our story and left us in 2023 by looking back to their generation with gratitude.

- ⦿ Prof. Dr Hans Köpp, who worked closely together with Alfred Toepfer, was one of the founding fathers of EUROPARC and the editor of the EUROPARC bulletin from 1973-1985.
- ⦿ Dr. Rauno Väisänen was a two-time member of the Council. Founder and President of the Nordic-Baltic Section and recipient of the Alfred Toepfer Medal. A loyal supporter of EUROPARC, he remained an enthusiastic advocate of all international cooperation.
- ⦿ Wilf Fenten, former Director of EUROPARC consulting, member of the Charter for Sustainable Tourism evaluation committee and contributor to various projects.
- ⦿ Dr Arnold Boer, former member of EUROPARC council as Treasurer and avid contributor to the Transboundary Programme since its inception.
- ⦿ Gordon Miller, founding father of the International Ranger Federation and Alfred Toepfer Medal winner.

***Learn more about their contributions here.***

## Webinars

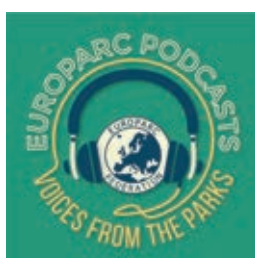
Our webinars are one of our most popular and easily accessible networking and experience-sharing tools. Addressing a wide range of topics relevant for Protected Area management, 1,358 people attended ten webinars in 2023. Our audiences continue to increase as webinar recordings are available to watch through YouTube. Through case studies and expert presentations, they help to develop an understanding of best practices across all areas of our activities.

***Learn more about the 2023 webinars here.***

## Podcasts

EUROPARC Podcasts, "Voices from the Parks", expands our tools for sharing experiences and outreach about the importance of Protected Areas for society. We produced three podcasts in 2023, two focused on nature restoration in Protected Areas and one on our Golden Jubilee. In the latter, conversations with former EUROPARC Presidents revealed stories about the people and events that have made our anniversary possible.

***You can listen to the podcasts here.***





## Protected Areas In-Sight

We based our annual journal on the Conference's theme, whilst honouring our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as well. The journal features 15 articles from our members, detailing how Europe's Protected Areas serve to connect people to parks, all the while conserving our natural heritage.



**Discover the PA Insight here.**

## Commissions

Bringing experts around the table is an important element of capacity building. Our member Commissions ensure opportunities for direct participation on specific topics. They operate at two levels: as a core group that drives the agreed agenda and they take on an advisory role, providing inputs, ideas and information. Currently, four Commissions and three Task Forces operate involving various members. You will find information on their work throughout this publication.

**Learn more about the commissions here.**

- ⦿ Sustainable Agriculture and Protected Areas Commission
- ⦿ Healthy Parks Healthy People Europe Commission
- ⦿ Periurban Commission
- ⦿ Management Effectiveness Commission
- ⦿ Sustainable Tourism Task Force
- ⦿ Transboundary Cooperation Task Force
- ⦿ Nature Regional Landscape Parks Task Force

## Promote greater inclusion and equity within and by our network



**You can watch the webinar here.**

## Support to Ukraine

We prioritise respect, care, and empathy in everything we do. The ongoing war in Ukraine is having devastating impacts on people and the environment. In collaboration with EUROPARC-Spain, EUROPARC hosted a special webinar where Anastasiia Drapaliuk, a local Ukrainian professional working on the protection of Ukrainian biodiversity, shared her story with the network. Additionally, we reiterated our call for donations to support Ukrainian Protected Areas, which were met with a positive response.





# Strengthen the Status of Protected Areas for a Stronger more Sustainable Nature

**EUROPARC champions the role of Protected Areas in addressing the challenges faced by people and nature to policy makers. Through advocacy, we work to ensure Parks and Protected Areas get the support and recognition they deserve. By stimulating our network to work across borders and sectors, we interconnect issues such as climate change mitigation, health and well-being, biodiversity and agriculture.**







## Champion the value and benefits of Protected Areas in response to environmental and societal challenges

Influencing policy is central to EUROPARC's work. We strive to ensure that policymakers recognise and integrate Protected Areas' values and benefits into their policies. Our focus is directed towards strengthening the development and implementation of relevant EU and global policies and strategies by asserting the role and function of Protected Areas and Natura 2000 sites in Member States of the EU and across all of Europe.

In 2023, we crafted an action plan for the EUROPARC Policy and Advocacy Strategy to 2030. This plan aims to implement and monitor progress across our policy work. Our focus extends to biodiversity policies, management practices, fostering synergies among projects and different areas of work, all with a positive impact on policy and advocacy efforts.

### Policy Advisory Group

New Terms of Reference for a new Group of Policy Advisors (Policy Advisory Group-PAG) whose advice will improve our cooperation channels and gather input on policy matters. The PAG will consist of individuals with expertise in different policy fields. We have identified priority areas of work and compiled a list of potential candidates from our network, with the support of the Council and Sections. Candidates have been invited and the PAG will start advising EUROPARC work in 2024.



European Parliament in Brussels. © EUROPARC

## Cooperation with EU Institutions and other organisations

Ensuring the contribution of Protected Areas and Natura 2000 sites to policy and the implementation of conservation targets, we maintained our regular cooperation with the EU Parliament (EP), European Commission (EC), and European Committee of Regions (CoR). On behalf of our members, we contributed to relevant expert groups, committees and intergroups, both live in Brussels and online. Among important EU events and initiatives, we participated in and contributed to the Green Week, LIFE events, Week of Regions and Natura 2000 Awards. However, a substantial part of our network operates outside the EU and our participation in the Bern Convention of the Council of Europe is particularly important for them.

EUROPARC continued to closely work together with other organisations to advance our policy work. Our active participation in conferences, workshops and technical meetings serves to gather information, share knowledge and expertise, as well as to coordinate actions for policy development and implementation. In 2023, discussions focused on biodiversity, restoration and Protected Area targets. We contributed to meetings of the EU Directorate-General for the Environment (DG ENV) and to the European Habitat Forum (EHF) thematic working groups (protected areas, nature restoration, pollinators).

## EU Nature Restoration Law

EUROPARC has closely followed the legislative process of the EU Nature Restoration Regulation and actively worked to support its successful approval. The proposed legislation will be crucial for nature recovery and we want to ensure Protected Areas can actively contribute to its implementation.

Instead of formulating our policy on this specific matter, we decided to contribute to the debate and legislative process in collaboration with other NGOs. We subscribed to formal letters and positions addressed to the EU Institutions and decision-makers at strategic times of the process. We also joined communication initiatives, like the campaign [#restorenature.eu](#) promoted by Birdlife, EEB and WWF through participating in a so-called 'Twitter Storm' and creating dedicated posts across social media. Furthermore, we disseminated information to our members to support the approval of an ambitious legislation for nature restoration.

We actively contributed to the EU Biodiversity Platform and the Expert Group on the Nature Directives (NADEG) by sharing inputs from our network on:

- ⊙ Biodiversity Strategy Implementation
- ⊙ Nature Restoration Regulation
- ⊙ Nature Directives
- ⊙ Coexistence with Large Carnivores
- ⊙ Member States' Pledges for Protected Areas targets
- ⊙ Management Effectiveness of Protected Areas
- ⊙ Marine Expert Group



## Coexistence with Large Carnivores

The return of large carnivores continues to be a 'hot topic' across Europe. EUROPARC actively participated in the EU Platform for the Coexistence between People and Large Carnivores by engaging in coordination meetings with the secretariat and the European Commission, as well as contributing to the annual plenary meeting. We also shared good practice examples like the case study from a shepherd of the Sibillini National Park (IT) presented during the 2023 plenary. During the EUROPARC Conference, a workshop was based on the toolkit developed by the EU platform. Furthermore, we echoed concerns about the EC initiative to downgrade wolf protection and coordinated actions with other NGOs on this matter.

## Council of Europe - CoE

As EUROPARC's membership stretches well beyond the 27 countries of the EU, we maintained our close cooperation with the Council of Europe (CoE) with a main focus on Protected Areas and biodiversity via the Bern Convention. Representation in the CoE ensures that EUROPARC works closely on the development and implementation of relevant policies and strategies to reflect the perspectives of Protected Areas from all over Europe. It enables EUROPARC to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and expertise particularly to members for whom the Bern Convention is the principal European nature framework. EUROPARC also contributes to ensuring coherence between EU policies and Council of Europe initiatives.

In this framework, we actively contributed to the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) in Strasbourg, playing a part in shaping the vision and strategic plan of the Bern Convention towards 2030. Additionally, we contributed to the CoE effort to recognise a healthy environment as a human right.



CONFERENCE OF INGOs  
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
CONFERENCE DES OING DU  
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

***Learn more about the Bern  
Convention here.***



## LIFE UrbanGreeningPlans

The completion of the LIFE Urban Greening Plans project marks a significant milestone after two years of dedicated work across five European cities, involving collaboration of two NGOs. Our health and well-being depend on cities' capacity to implement successful Urban Greening Plans (UGPs). The creation of these plans should embrace Nature-based Solutions, allowing room for greenery and monitoring.

Urban Greening Plans, Green Infrastructure and Nature-based Solutions will be crucial for cities to effectively tackle the pressing biodiversity and climate crises. Therefore, the project has gathered and disseminated extensive experience from leading cities in this field. This valuable information is available in various formats on an online Knowledge Hub and serves as a long-lasting resource for planners, park managers, and policymakers.

***Discover the Greening Plans  
Knowledge Hub here.***



The Life UrbanGreeningPlans project has received funding from the LIFE Programme of the European Union.

# Develop and nurture cross-sectoral partnerships

## Sustainable Agriculture and Protected Areas

The alliances between Protected Areas and organisations from other sectors are crucial for influencing policy and innovating practice. EUROPARC's commitment and ongoing efforts to promote and value sustainable agriculture practices in and around Protected Areas continued in 2023. The position paper "Protected Areas as Laboratories for Sustainable Agriculture" was further promoted.

The Sustainable Agriculture Commission continued its work over 2023. It carefully explored various options for the submission of a project application to develop a Charter for Sustainable Agriculture. Furthermore, alternative pathways for submitting a proposal in 2024 are currently under consideration.

Also, we have continued our policy work in dialogue with EU institutions and partner NGOs. EUROPARC's involvement in the European Food Policy Coalition and the CAP NGO platform reflects our commitment to fostering cooperation and knowledge exchange on agricultural policy developments within Europe.

## Transboundary Programme

EUROPARC's Transboundary Parks Programme promotes and facilitates greater cooperative management of European Protected Areas and their natural and cultural heritage. In 2023, Binntal Veglia Devero Transboundary Park (IT-Switzerland) submitted a candidacy for renewal. Moreover, we initiated productive engagement with several areas expressing interest in joining the programme, laying the groundwork for future network expansion.

The Transboundary Cooperation Task Force played a crucial role in advancing the programme by organising a stand at the EUROPARC Conference Market Place and facilitating discussions with potential new members such as the Pyrenees Park of Three Nations (ES/AD/FR), the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (NL/DE/DK), the Dunes de Flandres (FR/BE), and the Dinarides Parks Network in the Balkans.

***Learn more about the TransParcNet here.***



*Participants of the TransParcNet Meeting 2023. © A. Claassen.*

The TransParcNet meeting focused on transboundary cooperation to address natural disasters exacerbated by climate change. Hosted by the German-Dutch Nature Park Maas-Schwalm-Nette, the event gathered 35 participants from 13 countries. The exchange focused on collaborative disaster prevention and management strategies, with presentations highlighting fire management, flood prevention, and the impact of human activities like lignite mining on ecosystems. Experts emphasised the interconnectedness of Protected Areas and the need for coordinated responses. The meeting also addressed the integration of climate change adaptation into park management plans.

***Learn more about the event here.***

## New partnership with Rewilding Europe

EUROPARC works closely together with a range of other NGOs. We were excited to formalise one of our alliances during the EUROPARC Conference in the Netherlands with Rewilding Europe. This collaboration will empower our organisations to join forces in championing and showcasing Protected Areas' successful efforts in restoring nature. The goal is to inspire and motivate others in the wider landscape to do the same. A joint work plan will be initiated in 2024.







# Enhance the status of nature on land and sea and people's connection to it

**EUROPARC contributes to a society where equitable access to and enjoyment of nature are core values. We support initiatives that help people improve their connection to nature in sustainable ways. Our network encourages professionals across Protected Areas to improve their practices, are inclusive of youth and inspire everyone to participate in this endeavour.**



*Nature Park Maas-Schwalm-Nette. © Lisa Bardot*





*Participants of the NaturaConnect workshop in Leipzig. © Hildegard Meyer.*

## Improve Protected Areas governance, planning and management effectiveness

### Management Effectiveness Commission

We do not need more paper parks. Instead, we need Protected Areas that are managed effectively and valued by those living in and around them.

To drive this work on a European level, the EUROPARC Council created a new Management Effectiveness Commission (EMEC), composed of eight experts. The EMEC met regularly online and once live over the year, and had a crucial role in the elaboration of a new project application: LIFE PAME EUROPE. The project proposal, aiming at developing an EU methodology for Protected Area management effectiveness assessment, was submitted in September. The application was successful and this new project will start in 2024. Most of the EMEC members will be partners and advisors in the new project.

### Horizon Europe NaturaConnect

Managing nature effectively also means the need for better connections between our natural spaces.

In 2023, NaturaConnect continued its mission to design a coherent and resilient Trans-European Network of Protected Areas and to support the EU Member States in their efforts to achieve the 30x30 target. At the beginning of the year, the project kick-started its stakeholder engagement processes in Brussels with a participatory event organised by EUROPARC. Stakeholders were asked about enabling factors and barriers to achieving connected Protected Areas in Europe. Valuable insights were gathered from the over 70 participants. They highlighted the need to carefully identify areas for renewable energy systems that do not conflict with nature protection, to identify specific taxa to monitor connectivity, and to invest efforts in disseminating and communicating the findings of the research with national and sub-national authorities.



Throughout the year, we supported several other engagement activities across the project and ensured that stakeholder inputs were considered in the research. To share information about NaturaConnect with the EUROPARC network, a stand at the Market Place was organised during the EUROPARC Conference 2023.

Effectively managed and planned nature also means that working across sectors is essential. As such, results from the project's research partners have been made available to conservation practitioners on the ground. EUROPARC has designed a self-paced training course available through the European Nature Academy (ENA). It contains various modules on conservation planning, stakeholder engagement and finance mechanisms. We also built a Training Needs Assessment platform that helps to identify training needs on competences especially needed for the planning and implementation of conserved and Protected Areas.

***Learn more about the project here.***

Milestones achieved by the project include:

- ⊙ The first pilot of possible TEN-N configurations based on available data.
- ⊙ Participation in three Biogeographical Seminars sparked interest from several Member States using the project outcomes and data to inform their pledges. NaturaConnect case studies have supported country efforts to prepare their pledges and identify priorities for TEN-N implementation in at the national level in Finland, Portugal and France.
- ⊙ A guideline document to support connectivity projects in Europe across scales has been drafted and will be available in 2024.
- ⊙ Progress was made in identifying best practices in the governance of Protected Areas, with inputs from EUROPARC members. Funding instruments are being revised and compiled in factsheets, which will be available in 2024.
- ⊙ A Scenario Framework for the TEN-N was defined through a participatory process, using the IPBES Nature Futures Framework (NFF).



NaturaConnect receives funding under the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement number 101060429

*NaturaConnect Stakeholder Engagement Event in Brussels.  
© EUROPARC Federation*







*Winning photo from European Youth in Parks Day by Will George. © Cairngorms Junior Rangers*

## Involve youth in the work of Protected Areas

### Youth Actions

Whilst looking back on 50 years of EUROPARC, it also once again becomes clear how important it is to look to the future and shape the next generation of nature professionals! As such, we are happy to report that the Junior Ranger Programme grew: 12 more parks signed the partnership agreement committing to long-term youth work and engagement.

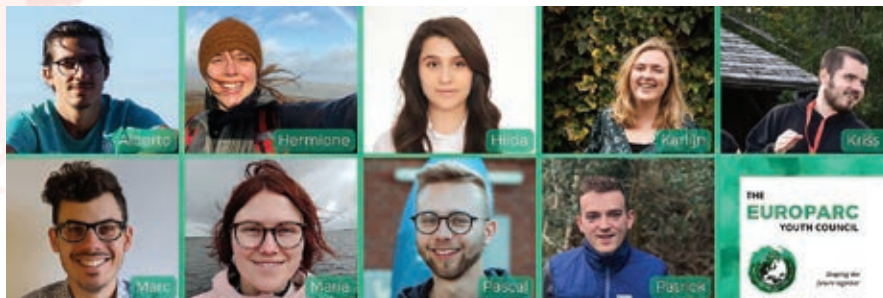
A yearly highlight is the International Junior Ranger Camp. The 19<sup>th</sup> edition was hosted by Frederikshavn Kommune, Denmark. It was a big success, with 60 participants from 17 Protected Areas. Additionally, Gauja National Park, Latvia, hosted a three-day Nordic-Baltic Youth Seminar focusing on effective communication tools and techniques.



The Youth+ community were active locally and internationally. A group of nine joined the Conference Youth Core Team, organising youth events and supporting events to ensure a youth perspective.

EUROPARC hosted two youth-focussed webinars; one to upskill mentors on data protection, safeguarding and visibility; and, one promoting the work of Youth+ during a side event for EU Green Week titled "Young People creating a just transition in rural areas". To further amplify the voice of young people, a new episode was added to the EUROPARC Podcast on "Young People involved in Nature Restoration".

The pilot of a 'European Youth in Parks Day' was a success with 20 events organised across 10 countries, which also achieved high visibility on social media. The Cairngorms Junior Rangers won the "Our Nature, Our Future" photo competition. Feedback resulted in a decision to make it an annual event on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September, similar to the European Day of Parks.



### Youth Council

To strengthen our commitment to empowering young people in our network, the EUROPARC Youth Council was established in 2023. Selected by youngsters, it is made up of 9 passionate individuals from nine different countries. Over the next two years, they will strengthen the voice of young people in EUROPARC's work, as well as contribute as ambassadors for Protected Areas.

***Learn more about the EUROPARC Youth Council [here](#).***



***Learn more about EUROPARC Youth Programmes [here](#).***



*International Junior Ranger Camp in Denmark. © James Jackson*



Winners of the Alfred Toepfer Scholarship 2023 at the EUROPARC Conference in The Netherlands with President Michael Hošek (far right) and Alfred Toepfer Stiftung Council member Andreas Holz (far left). © PDF-Grafie

## Alfred Toepfer Scholarship

Empowering young professionals and providing them with opportunities to network and learn across borders is essential if we want to create the next generation of skilled nature managers. The Alfred Toepfer Natural Heritage Scholarship provides young professionals with the opportunity to visit other Protected Areas and learn from experts on a topic of their choice. Get to know the 2023 winners here:



### Emmanuelle Déon

Emmanuelle works as a Sustainable tourism project manager in Montagne de Reims Regional Park. With her scholarship, she aims to study how Parks can get involved in developing social tourism whereby there is more inclusive and equitable access to sustainable tourism, especially from people at risk of poverty. To deliver this, she will visit several Protected Areas in Europe which have worked on this issue to identify and disseminate best practices within European Parks.



### Hayden Bridgeman

Hayden works as a North Area Ranger for the New Forest National Park Authority. Here, she leads a local initiative to enable refugees to access the UK's National Parks. Her Scholarship will help her continue to learn more about how we can remove more of the barriers this community faces when accessing nature, by learning from other professionals about some of the opportunities they have created in their Protected Areas for marginalised communities.



### Lucia Ursu

Lucia works as an educator in Protected Areas, where she has witnessed first-hand the vital role that parks play in promoting sustainable development and preserving our natural heritage. She strongly believes that Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is crucial in our efforts to create a more sustainable future, not just for Protected Areas, but for



nature in general. Through the Scholarship, she wants to learn more about ESD and make a positive impact in her community and beyond.

These lucky individuals will be the last ever Alfred Toepfer Scholars. Changes within the Alfred Toepfer Stiftung means these valuable study tours will no longer be funded. EUROPARC however is keen to revive a new EUROPARC young professionals scholarship and will work to develop that during 2024.



# Inspire everyone to look after Parks

## Alfred Toepfer Medal

The Alfred Toepfer Medal is awarded in recognition of those people who have made a significant contribution to nature conservation in Europe. It is awarded during our Award Ceremony at the EUROPARC Conference.

In 2023, it was awarded in the framework of our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The award was presented to Prof. Dr Hans Köpp, who played a pivotal role in the founding years of the EUROPARC Federation, alongside Alfred Toepfer. We interviewed him at his home in Göttingen at the end of 2022 to learn more about these early days of the Federation and it was a true joy to hear his stories.

As such, it was with great sadness that we were informed that Dr Köpp passed away in June 2023. His contribution to the EUROPARC Federation, especially as editor of the Bulletin, cannot be underestimated and our network will forever hold him in high regard.

We were fortunate enough to be able to invite his son Dr Matthias Köpp to accept the award on his father's behalf. His moving acceptance speech highlighted how strongly his father's involvement with the Federation marked Matthias' childhood, underlining once again that the Federation marks people's lives far beyond the 'professional' context.

***Learn more about Dr Köpp here.***



*Matthias Köpp receives the award on behalf of Dr Hans Köpp. © PDF-Graphie*



## European Day of Parks

Thanks to the support of our members and partners, the European Day of Parks was once again a big success! With the fitting theme, "Building on our Roots", EUROPARC invited Parks and Protected Areas to explore their heritage: from the natural heritage Parks are protecting, to the heritage of the managing organisation. The goal was to raise awareness about the responsibility we have to keep this natural and cultural heritage for future generations and discover how we can build upon it.

156 events were registered on our website, with many more taking place on the ground.

Furthermore, the event generated an exciting online "buzz". Hundreds of posts on social media marking this special day resulted in a massive reach of thousands of people. The official guidelines were viewed over a 1,700 times, highlighting the high interest of Parks and Protected Areas to participate in this event.

The European Day of Parks remains one of EUROPARC's most important events to put the work and services of Protected Areas on the map.

***Learn more about the EDoP 2023 here.***





# Promote sustainable development tools and approaches for people and nature

**EUROPARC actively supports Parks and Protected Areas of Europe to be Change Makers of the Future for the benefit of our climate, our biodiversity and our health. The values and principles permeating our organisation generate tangible improvements in management practices that spark investment and allow us to realise our vision: Sustainable Nature; Valued by People and Championed by EUROPARC members.**



*Markerwadden NP Nieuw Land*  
© EUROPARC



## Strengthen the role of Protected Areas in delivering health and well-being



*GREENHEALTH project study visit in Sierra Espuña, Murcia Region, Spain.  
© GREENHEALTH project*

### Healthy Parks Healthy People Europe Commission

We see the sustainable nature of Europe's parks and Protected Areas as a key asset for health and well-being. In 2023, the Healthy Parks Healthy People Europe (HPHPe) Commission continued its work to support Protected Areas to develop better health outcomes for people. It provided inputs to the IUCN WCPA Health and Well-Being Specialist Group and spoke at the event "Nature-inclusive: boost national parks and health" organised in June 2023 at the National Parks Bureau of the Netherlands.

The Webinar, "Connection to Nature: supporting people living with dementia and their carers", took place in July and was the first event focusing on a specific medical condition.

In October, during the EUROPARC Conference, the 'walkshop' „Five ways to healthier people and healthier parks" allowed participants to experience the five ways to well-being approach in a local urban park.

The Interreg Europe project GREENHEALTH was approved and started in March 2023. The HPHPe Commission set the basis for cooperation with six new partner regions and provided a methodological framework based on the HPHPe toolkit. The commission remains the principal advisor to the project.





## Interreg Europe GREENHEALTH

The Interreg Europe GREENHEALTH project aims to create linkages between health and environmental policies and incorporate human health initiatives into Protected Area programmes. The project is led by the Murcia Region, General Directorate of the Natural Environment, Spain, and we are the advisory partner for communication, capacity building and engagement. This implies setting up the basis for cooperation with six new partner regions, including some outside the EUROPARC membership.

The HPHPe Commission strongly backed the partnership by providing training during the kick-off meeting in May 2023, through an online session on the HPHPe programme and toolkit as well as through a “creative thinking and discussion forum”. It “framed”

potential good practices from the six project regions, based on the results of the project’s regional studies. The HPHPe toolkit serves as a compass, guiding the project methodology. It helps to showcase what are the enabling factors that allow for good cooperation and successful regional or local initiatives that simultaneously achieve health and biodiversity outcomes.

To share information about GREENHEALTH within our network, we took the chance to present information about the project during the EUROPARC Conference 2023 Market Place.

Stay up to date with the project’s developments through the GREENHEALTH Social Media Platforms Instagram, X, YouTube, and Facebook, by subscribing to the project newsletter and checking the project website.



Interreg  
Europe



Co-funded by  
the European Union

GREENHEALTH

***Learn more about  
the project here.***

***Learn more about  
HPHPe here.***

*GREENHEALTH project partners and stakeholders at the Kick-Off Meeting in Murcia Region, Spain. © GREENHEALTH project*



# Improve visitor management and sustainable tourism

## European Charter for Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable Tourism can be a tool to guide visitors and stimulate regional development as well as be a means to positive nature conservation action, activities and behaviours in visitors and communities within Protected Areas. That is why in 2023 we remained committed to the roll-out and implementation of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST), to promote Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

A total of 14 Protected Areas received the ECST Award. Among them, 11 were re-awarded and three were new awards. As always, the ECST award ceremony took place at the European Parliament, in Brussels, where we were kindly hosted by MEP Tilly Metz of the Greens/European Free Alliance.

The Sustainable Tourism Task Force, appointed in November 2022, was fully operational throughout 2023. It met every two months online and had one hybrid meeting during the 12<sup>th</sup> ECST network meeting in Bled, Slovenia. The meeting consisted of two days of extensive networking and co-learning among the 90 participants, coming from 20 countries.

In June 2023, EUROPARC was invited to be part of the "Together for EU Tourism Expert Group", which aims to provide recommendations to DG GROW on different aspects of Tourism. Specifically, EUROPARC belongs to the green transition subgroup which focuses on sustainability. One of the main aspects tackled are indicators and labels within the sustainable tourism sector.

Of course, we cannot create Sustainable Tourism without businesses and tour operators. We are happy to report that Parts 2 and 3 of the ECST are also being further developed. In 2023, we welcomed the first ECST business partners in the Baltics.



Two well-visited webinars were organised:

- Tools for a greener future. Measuring the Environmental Impact of Ecotourism in Protected Areas.
- Four benefits of better sustainability marketing & communication.

## SEE Project and Outdoor Sports

Apart from tourism, Outdoor Sports are another sector that impacts Protected Areas: as such, it's important to make connections and work together. In 2023, the cooperation with the European Network of Outdoor Sports (ENOS) was further strengthened through the ERASMUS+ project Sustainability and Environmental Education in Outdoor Sports (The SEE Project).

The SEE project ran for three years (2020-2023). It focused on developing mechanisms to train instructors, guides, and leaders on how to communicate good environmental practices to reduce environmental impacts. The main output is a toolkit that guides the process of how to implement education for sustainable development and environmental training into Outdoor Sports courses. The toolkit also provides motivational and fun activities for environmental training and education for sustainable development.



***Learn more about the award [here](#).***



***Discover the educational toolkit [here](#).***



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



European Network  
of Outdoor Sports





ECST Award Ceremony 2023. © EUROPARC

- 1 Respect the natural environment and regulations.
- 2 Plan your activity carefully.
- 3 Take good care of your four-legged companions.
- 4 Take good care of yourself and others.
- 5 Everyone wants to enjoy the place.
- 6 Leave no trace.
- 7 Night is for species to be alone.
- 8 Keep secret places secret.
- 9 Avoid excessive noise.
- 10 See it, Say it, Sort it.

## 10 Good Principles

In 2023, EUROPARC continued to advocate for good conduct in Protected Areas by further promoting their 10 Good Principles for Outdoor Sports Practitioners, which were developed together with ENOS. To reach an even wider audience, we enlarged the existing promotional material in several languages with a series of short videos. These were promoted on Instagram, Facebook and YouTube and together gathered over 10,000 views.

***Discover the video playlist [here](#)***



SEE Symposium 2023. © EUROPARC



# Protected Areas role in climate change mitigation and adaptation

## Natur'Adapt Project

Climate change continues to be one of the main challenges nature and humanity face. The need to work together to better understand the impacts of climate change on our natural heritage is more important than ever: we must raise our voices for Protected Areas' essential role in mitigation.

The Natur'Adapt project continued to further develop tools and practical case studies to inspire and help Protected Area managers to integrate climate change adaptation into their practices and management planning. After the conclusion of the LIFE Natur'Adapt project and the related work of the EUROPARC climate change Task Force in 2023, we started to explore ways to further develop this work, taking stock of the project results.

To exchange results, EUROPARC organised an online seminar, which discussed case studies from Protected Areas and European and regional strategies. To upscale the learnings on climate adaptation, a Toolkit for Protected Areas Managers was developed. It supports managers in making the necessary commitments and adjustments to minimise the impacts that climate change continues to have in the natural spaces they safeguard.



***Learn more about the Online Seminar here.***

## Pledge for Climate

The EUROPARC Pledge for Climate is a valuable legacy of the LIFE Natur'Adapt project. It takes inputs and recommendations received from park management authorities to dialogue with EU institutions, the Council of Europe and other project partners. This call for engagement aims to accelerate the transition towards a nature-inclusive and climate-resilient society to safeguard a sustainable living environment in the future.



***Learn more and endorse the pledge here.***

## Climate Change Adaptation in Europe's Living Landscapes

To underline the important role Nature Regional Landscape Parks (NRL) play in the climate change adaptation and mitigation processes, our NRL Task Force developed their Climate Declaration. It is a tool to raise awareness amongst policymakers and governing authorities to stimulate investment in and close cooperation with the Parks. The Declaration was officially signed at the EUROPARC Conference in Leeuwarden and publicly launched during a webinar in November, which highlighted specific examples from Nature Parks around Europe and their efforts in climate change adaptation. The Declaration has already been signed by 10 Nature Parks across Europe.

***Learn more about the task force here.***

***You can watch the webinar here.***



*The NRL Task Force signed the Climate Declaration at the EUROPARC Conference 2023. © PDF-Grafie*





*Participants of the Siggen Seminar 2023. © EUROPARC*

## Strengthen the role of Protected Areas in the transition to a green economy

### **Siggen Seminar on Innovative Financing**

Protected Areas can play a vital role in changing our economic system to one that is more in balance with nature.

Thanks to ongoing cooperation with Palladium and taking into account the model developed in the UK National Parks, the 2023 Siggen Seminar was dedicated to Innovative Financing in Protected Areas. The Seminar explored ways to develop and implement innovative financial mechanisms in Parks related to biodiversity, and habitat restoration, based on the work with

Palladium. A joint commitment was expressed by Seminar delegates to work on a joint project concept and to identify possible financing opportunities. After an invitation from DG ENV, a project concept was presented and opportunities were explored for a LIFE project in 2024. Unfortunately, it was not selected for funding.

***Learn more about the seminar here.***



# Our European Network

Over the years, the Federation has supported the creation of regional and national sections. The EUROPARC Sections fulfil many of the Federation's aims, working to implement the Federation's strategy, whilst reflecting the priorities and characteristics of the areas they cover. The articles were written by the Sections themselves.



- ◎ EUROPARC Atlantic Isles
- ◎ EUROPARC Central and Eastern Europe
- ◎ EUROPARC Francophone
- ◎ EUROPARC Italy / Federparchi
- ◎ EUROPARC Low Countries
- ◎ EUROPARC Nordic-Baltic
- ◎ EUROPARC Spain
- ◎ Nationale Naturlandschaften e.V. (EUROPARC Germany)

*Sections sign a new agreement  
at the EUROPARC Conference.  
© PDF-Grafie*

[europarc.org/sections](https://europarc.org/sections)



# EUOPARC Atlantic Isles

Yet another busy and active year of co-operation for EUOPARC Atlantic Isles (EAI).

## Webinars

We have continued our webinar programme and, as in previous years, some of these were in partnership with the Nordic-Baltic Section. Subjects covered included:

- ⦿ Perspectives on using the diversity of different designations to protect our Landscapes
- ⦿ Creative ways of engaging with visitors in Protected Landscapes
- ⦿ Exploring the need to diversify the protected Landscapes workforce and governance
- ⦿ Mitigation, nature inclusive design and Compensation measures for Coastal wind farms - lessons from The Netherlands
- ⦿ Mobile big data for understanding people in nature
- ⦿ Biodiversity Credits
- ⦿ Assessing Social Impacts of European Protected Areas

Speakers from a range of sectors and countries contributed, providing a diverse range of experience, ideas and perspectives on different subjects and challenges that Protected Area managers face. We engaged with over 700 people online from 12 different countries.

## Site Visits

This year we also organised a learning site visit to the Peatland Restoration work conducted by Nature Scot in Kirkconnell Flow, Dumfries Scotland.

## Consultation

In the UK, the different nations are looking at designating some new National Parks and EAI has been active in the consultation processes both formally and informally, as well as Defra 'deep dives' on targets for Protected Areas.

## Representation

EAI always aims to play a representative role by being present at national events and promoting the Section and the wider EUOPARC network. Therefore, we have been present at the National Landscapes conference and launch, Green Finance workshop and UN Green Finance hackathon, EUOPARC Federation Conference in the Netherlands, where we also held a lively and very well attended Sections meeting.

EAI was actively involved in a range of the Section meetings and played an active role in constructing the new partnership agreement between the EUOPARC Federation and the Sections. EAI actively promotes all the opportunities offered by the wider EUOPARC network, including webinars, scholarships, Siggen Seminar, events and development opportunities.

This year and in the coming year, EAI have a focus on EDI especially in the workforce and governance of Protected Areas. We are keen that this is achieved through partnership and using the experience of others and EAI takes an active role in facilitating connections.

We are keen to ensure a continued relationship with European colleagues and try to facilitate collaboration between our members and also between members of other Sections and the wider EUOPARC network, its Commissions and Task Forces.



*Site visit to peatland restoration in Kirkconnell Flow, Scotland. © Anita Prosser*



**EUOPARC**  
Atlantic Isles

***Learn more about the section here.***



## EUROPARC Central and Eastern Europe

The Section was happy to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the EUROPARC Federation by actively participating in the EUROPARC Annual Conference and General Assembly in the Netherlands. The conference and exchange of ideas, as always, was stimulating and very motivating. The event was indeed a great meeting with many of our friends and colleagues and gave new energy to discuss the new challenges facing the Section and to revitalise the partnership agreement between the Federation and the Section. Furthermore, the Section was active on the regular Section Coordinators' Meetings and participated in numerous events, both online and in person.

"Building on our Roots": the theme of this year's European Day of Parks brought many exciting ideas for events to highlight the importance of our natural heritage and the heritage of related organisations across Europe. The Section contributed to the campaign with interactive walks, guided excursions, photo tours, bird watching programmes and a wide range of outdoor educational activities. With around 20 organised activities, there was an enjoyable programme for every audience.

The new partnership agreement between the Federation and the Section was signed at the 2023 EUROPARC Conference in Leeuwarden. The renewed agreement will provide new scope for the effective implementation of the common EUROPARC Strategy by strengthening the relationship between the Section, the Council and the Directorate. By providing priorities and information, the Directorate supports the Section in the implementation of the EUROPARC Federation's Strategy and objectives, which will be made more effective by the renewed cooperation agreement. The Central and Eastern European Section can contribute to the work of EUROPARC with a new boost, bringing its expertise even more productively into our network, ensuring a more intensive direct contact between the Federation and its members in the countries concerned.



***Learn more about the section [here](#).***

*EUROPARC Conference field trip to Terschelling Dynamic dune area. © Szilvia Gőri*





# EUROPARC Francophone

## New strategy and operation

In 2023, a new partnership was signed with the French Biodiversity Agency (OFB) to continue running the section.

## OFB and FPNRF partnership

This partnership will focus on two areas over a two-year period (October 2023 - October 2025):

### I- Developing the Francophone section and cooperation with the EU

Action I.1: Restructuring secretariat governance and operation

- ⦿ Defining a joint office with one designated person per country (who validates meeting agendas) with a view to rotating governance by country (setting up a joint European project)

Action I.2: Continued management of EUROPARC's Francophone section activities

- ⦿ Organising six videoconferences
- ⦿ Organising three in-person meetings at one of the member's premises

Action I.3: Representing the interests of French and French-speaking Protected Areas within EUROPARC

- ⦿ Taking part in EUROPARC events (e.g. Seminar Dialogue)
- ⦿ Contributing French-speaking positions to EUROPARC (e.g. lobbying for greater networking of European tourism service providers)

Action I.4 : Helping to set up European projects

- ⦿ Monitoring calls for projects relevant to the section: (e.g. Interreg ENO / Interreg Euro-MED, etc.)

### II- Setting up a working group for French border Protected Areas

Action II.1: Identifying the needs of managers of French border Protected Areas:

- ⦿ Distributing and analysing a questionnaire for managers

Action II.2: Coordinating a group of French border Protected Area managers

- ⦿ Organising two days of technical exchanges on priority topics
- ⦿ Organising four webinars on identified priority themes

Action II.3: Promoting the group to networks of European Protected Area managers and players in cross-border cooperation

- ⦿ Communicating and taking part in events (articles, social networks, stands, etc.)

In conjunction, these two areas will foster the development of projects with various cross-border players/managers (a LIFE or INTERREG project) and thus boost cooperation between European Protected Areas.

In total, four Francophone section meetings were held in 2023: in February, April, June and November 2023. These meetings provided an opportunity to take stock of EUROPARC network news and get to know each other better (for example, we learned more about how French peri-urban parks work, through the example of Parc Miribel Jonage, and about the new (and first) Walloon national park: Entre Sambre et Meuse).

## Participation in the EUROPARC Conference in Leeuwarden

The Annual Conference organised in Leeuwarden was an opportunity for some of our members to meet in person and for us to welcome new French-speaking members!

## Organisation of a themed meeting on adapting to climate change

This meeting of the Francophone section in April 2023 enabled us to explore this theme of major interest further, always in connection with tourism, which seems to be the dominant theme of our working group. This is illustrated by the measures implemented by the Ardennes Regional Nature Park (Ardennes Ecotourism Interreg Project: Green Destination label) and by the Scarpe-Escaut European Park (LIFE Natur'Adapt project).



**EUROPARC**  
FRANCOPHONE SECTION

***Learn more about the section here.***





*Alta Murgia National Park ECST Part 2.  
© Federparchi*

## EUROPARC Italy / Federparchi

During 2023, Federparchi played an active role in promoting and implementing the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (ECST, CETS is the Italian acronym), in close collaboration with the EUROPARC Federation and Italian and European Protected Areas. Activities carried out by Federparchi related to CETS and EUROPARC covered various areas, from piloting projects to raising awareness and providing training for tourism operators and local communities.

One of the key activities undertaken by Federparchi was promoting the ECST within Italian Protected Areas. Through workshops, seminars, and information sharing meetings, Federparchi provided technical support and consultancy to Protected Areas interested in joining the Charter, illustrating the benefits and opportunities offered by sustainable tourism. As a result of these initiatives, numerous Italian Protected Areas expressed interest in adopting ECST as a tool to promote responsible and sustainable tourism in their territories.

In parallel with promoting ECST, Federparchi also supported Italian Protected Areas in implementing actions outlined by the Charter, particularly ECST Part 2 and Part 3. Through sharing best practices and organising training sessions, Federparchi equipped tourism operators and management authorities with the necessary tools and knowledge to develop sustainable tourism strategies, enhance the management of tourism infrastructure and actively involve local communities in tourism planning and management. Italy is the European country with the highest number of Protected Areas awarded with the ECST Part 1 (39 PAs) and Tourism enterprises involved in the ECST Part 2 (almost 600).

Federparchi and its members actively participated in the EUROPARC Conference held in The Netherlands in October 2023. During the Conference, the candidature of ASINARA National Park, in Sardinia, for hosting the 2025 EUROPARC Conference was promoted and supported.



Another significant objective for Federparchi in 2023 was monitoring and evaluating the impact of tourism activities on Italian Protected Areas. Through case studies, field surveys, and data analysis, Federparchi assessed the effectiveness of measures taken to promote sustainable tourism and identified any critical issues and areas for improvement. This information was crucial for guiding future policies and strategies aimed at promoting increasingly sustainable and responsible tourism.

In addition, Federparchi played a key role in raising public awareness and environmental education on topics related to nature conservation and tourism sustainability. For example, the LIFE A-MAR NATURA 2000 project, which will end in 2025, will carry out communication and information actions that will mainly cover Natura 2000 marine sites in the Mediterranean, in Italy and Spain, and will involve all sea users, including fishermen, divers, boaters or managers of accommodation/tourism/nautical activities. The project envisages sailing campaigns, educational events and volunteer activities which Federparchi will use to engage citizens, students, and tourists in the protection and enhancement of Italian coastal Protected Areas, promoting greater awareness of the benefits of sustainable tourism and the necessary actions to preserve our natural and cultural heritage.

In 2023, Federparchi implemented a series of communication initiatives to promote awareness and interest in Protected Areas and sustainable tourism. The list below provides some of the main communication initiatives carried out by Federparchi, along with the newspapers where they were published:

- ⊗ Monthly newsletters: Federparchi published monthly newsletters containing updates, news and informative articles regarding the activities of Protected Areas and sustainable tourism projects. These newsletters were published in local newspapers such as „La Voce dei Parchi“ and „Il Corriere delle Aree Protette.“



Mr Sergio Mattarella with Federparchi president Luca Santini. © Federparchi

- ⊗ Press releases: Federparchi issued press releases to announce events, projects, and initiatives related to the conservation of Protected Areas and sustainable tourism. These press releases were published in national newspapers such as „La Repubblica“ and „Il Sole 24 Ore.“
- ⊗ Social media and blog: Federparchi maintained active profiles on social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, where it shared informative content, photos, and videos of Protected Areas and awareness-raising activities. Additionally, it managed a blog dedicated to environmental issues and sustainable tourism, publishing in-depth articles and success stories.
- ⊗ Collaborations with influencers: Federparchi collaborated with influencers and personalities in the environmental sector to amplify the message of conservation and sustainable tourism. These collaborations led to the publication of sponsored articles and posts on specialised blogs and websites such as „Viaggiando Verde“ and „EcoTravel Magazine.“
- ⊗ Events and conferences: Federparchi organised events, conferences, and workshops to engage the public and promote awareness of the conservation of Protected Areas and responsible tourism. Information about these events was disseminated through announcements in local and national newspapers, as well as through invitations and online publications.

One of the most important events was the participation of the President of the Italian Republic, Mr Sergio Mattarella, in a meeting with Luca Santini, President of Federparchi, at the Monastery of Camaldoli in the Foreste Casentinesi, Monte Falterona e Campigna.

Moreover, during 2023, Federparchi undertook a diverse array of news and communication activities aimed at promoting awareness and engagement with matters concerning Protected Areas and sustainable tourism. These efforts encompassed a spectrum of initiatives designed to inform, educate, and inspire various stakeholders.

Overall, Federparchi's communication and promotion efforts in 2023 were characterised by a multifaceted approach, encompassing traditional media, digital platforms, community engagement, and strategic partnerships. Through these activities, Federparchi effectively conveyed its mission of conserving Protected Areas and promoting sustainable tourism, inspiring individuals and communities to become active stewards of our natural heritage.

 **Federparchi**  
FEDERAZIONE ITALIANA PARCHI E RISERVE NATURALI



***Learn more about the section here.***





*Jan van de Venis signing the sections agreement during the Award Ceremony at EUROPARC Conference. © EUROPARC*

## EUROPARC Low Countries

The transition of the policy in The Netherlands and the Belgian regions 'Flanders' (Dutch speaking) and 'Wallonia' (French/German speaking) concerning national parks, is still ongoing and has an impact on the activities of the Section. With local priorities taking precedence, in each region and country, therefore there was only a limited amount of (in)formal meetings, mostly digital and bi-lateral between EUROPARC members.

In both Belgian regions (Flanders and Wallonia), new national parks were launched, so the Belgian members focussed on promoting and communicating about the added value of a EUROPARC Federation membership. These new parks recently started attracting staff, so it will take some extra time to make them part of the Section. Also in the Netherlands, the implementation of new policy and financing instruments concerning national parks costs a lot of energy and staff to enable these transitions, including shifting of staff members.

Nevertheless, a successful meeting of the Section was organised on the 3rd of October during the EUROPARC Conference in Leeuwarden, signing the Partnership agreement with the Federation.

During this meeting, Jan van de Venis was installed as the Section's president, while the Section's secretariat was voluntarily supported by National Park Hoge Kempen (Belgium).



**EUROPARC**  
Low Countries

***Learn more about the section here.***



## EUROPARC Nordic-Baltic

In 2023, we continued to leverage the advantages of engaging members online, to soften the impact of budget reductions in the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and strive for greater inclusivity amongst all members. The first biannual Section Members' Meeting was held virtually in June 2023, followed by an opportunity for Section members to meet in person during the EUROPARC Conference in Leeuwarden, Netherlands.

### Capacity building

To facilitate capacity building, the Section continued the collaboration scheme with the EUROPARC Atlantic Isles Section. We organised a series of joint webinars for our members to learn from the leading experts in their field. Subjects covered:

- ④ Diversity of different designations to protect our Landscapes - Geoparks, Regional Parks, World heritage status, etc. (Norway/UK)
- ④ Using Mobile Big Data for Understanding People in Nature (Digital Geography Lab, Finland)
- ④ Establishment of biodiversity credit market and issues/opportunities for protected areas (UNDP, Biodiversity Credit Alliance)
- ④ Assessing social impacts of European Protected Areas (FIDELIO Project, UK)

We also partnered with Small World Consulting (UK) and organised an online workshop for our members to learn more about consumption-based carbon accounting for protected areas – methodology and practical application.

### European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST)

Our sustainable tourism focal point has directed efforts towards promoting the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST) and plans to involve more Nordic-Baltic countries in the future. Nele Sober, the Section representative in the Sustainable Tourism Task Force in EUROPARC, was involved in updating the Charter I methodology, which now integrates a stronger emphasis on addressing climate change and developing an awarding system aimed at encouraging tour operators and travel agencies to implement Part III of the ECST.

### Joint project ERASMUS "Know Nature" 2023-2025

Several member organisations from Estonia, Latvia, and Sweden started the implementation of the joint project ERASMUS "Know Nature," aimed at enhancing baseline knowledge among tourism stakeholders in Protected Natural Areas for more sustainable tourism in the



*ERASMUS "Know Nature" kick-off meeting, Kullaberg Nature Reserve, Sweden.  
© Elena Bazhenova*

Nordic-Baltic region. The project's kick-off meeting was held in Kullaberg Nature Reserve, Sweden, in April. Following this, a study trip brought a group of tourism stakeholders from the three partner countries to Latvia in October 2023. Participants had the opportunity to learn about the Green Certificate, an eco-label affirming environmental quality in vacation properties that conserve natural resources, utilise them judiciously and provide comprehensive information on local natural, cultural, and historical attractions to visitors.

### Professional exchange

We arranged a study trip for experts from the Nature Conservation Agency of Latvia to Southern Sweden as part of the Nordic-Baltic mobility programme for public administrations. They visited Visitor Centers or „naturum“ in Sweden, namely in Söderåsen National Park, Kristianstads Vattenrike Biosphere Reserve, and Naturum Öresund in Malmö, exchanging experiences and learning best practices in communication and non-formal nature education.

### Looking ahead

As we conclude the coordination term with the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and mark our Section's twentieth anniversary, members have agreed to re-assess our approach to Section management and devise a new strategy to ensure its vitality for many years to come: despite the challenges faced by the countries in our region in recent years, we extend our best wishes to the incoming coordination team!



***Learn more about the section here.***



# EUROPARC Spain

EUROPARC Spain is the main professional forum on Protected Areas. The Spanish Section of EUROPARC, thanks to the legal support of FUNGOBE, is composed of 26 members. All are public administrations responsible for planning and management of Protected Areas.

## **LIFE Red Bosques Clima project: “good practice” from an Ecosystem-based Adaptation perspective**

One of our objectives of the LIFE RedBosques\_Clima is to agree with the group of Protected Area and forest managers what criteria an adaptation action should meet to be considered a “good practice” from an Ecosystem-based Adaptation perspective. To this end, we evaluated four demonstration sites where actions have been implemented that can contribute to improving their adaptive capacity. Based on this experience, we have developed criteria to guide the design and implementation of adaptation measures ensuring that: future climate scenarios are considered; elements vulnerable to climate change are identified; there are explicit adaptation objectives; adaptation is proposed through the improvement of the conservation status of the forest ecosystem: participation of local actors is encouraged and social benefits are ensured; and, results are evaluated.

## **23rd edition of the Master’s Degree in Protected Areas followed by 30 participants**

The Master’s degree, organised by three public universities and managed by FUNGOBE with the collaboration of EUROPARC-Spain, was developed online: however face-to-face activities have been maintained, such as the study trip to a Biosphere Reserve in Galicia. This synchronous online course facilitates the participation of active managers from anywhere, avoiding the difficulties of travel, while ensuring active interaction between students and teachers.

## **“Building on our roots”**

Within the framework of the European Day of Parks 2023, a face-to-face event was organised in Madrid focussing on the need to know, value and conserve the intangible heritage, especially ethnobotany. Also, it was possible to enjoy the living folklore of the Biosphere Reserve of the Sierra del Rincón.

## **Carrying capacity studies in Protected Areas**

The Technical Office of EUROPARC-Spain supports and advises environmental administrations in the elaboration of carrying capacity studies. In 2023, carrying capacity studies have been carried out in Doñana and on an island in the Mar Menor.

## **EUROPARC Spain promotes the communication campaign “Our Protected Natural Areas”**

EUROPARC-Spain promotes this communication campaign, whose main product is ‘The Protected Lives’ series. The different episodes bring us closer to people who live in or have a close link to a Protected Area. In 2023, the third season was released with 8 new episodes.

## **Successes and challenges**

The main challenge for the coming years is the development of the “Programme 2030, Global change and Protected Areas: living conservation territories for human well-being”. It was elaborated following a participatory process, providing a framework to develop actions towards conservation and restoration, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, cooperation with sectoral policies and the social and economic benefits of conservation.



*Learn more about the section here.*

# Nationale Naturlandschaften e.V. (EUROPARC Germany)

The German Section is the national umbrella organisation Nationale Naturlandschaften e. V. (NNL e. V., in English: National Natural Landscapes), which includes also the Verband Deutscher Naturparke e. V. (in English: the Association of German Nature Parks) the National Natural Landscapes (NNL) of Germany, an alliance of 16 national parks, 18 biosphere reserves, over 100 nature parks and 3 wilderness areas.

## Participation in the National Platform Future of Tourism

The current Federal Government is working on the further development of the „National Tourism Strategy“. The central instrument for this is the „National Platform Future of Tourism“. At the invitation of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Protection, NNL e. V. is the sole explicit representative of nature conservation in the steering committee as well as in two working groups on the topics of „climate neutrality / environmental and nature conservation“ and „digitalisation“. These committees base their work, among other things, on the fact that participating associations, companies and other stakeholders provide active contributions – so-called initiatives. On this basis, the nationwide networking and further development of German tourism can be organised. NNL e. V. is responsible for the initiative „Digitalisation of the nature experience infrastructure in the NNL and establishment of digital visitor guidance to promote nature-friendly, sustainable tourism“.

The aim of our participation in federal policy fora is to demonstrate the importance of the NNL for sustainable, nature-friendly and climate-friendly tourism and regional development in rural areas and to articulate the resources required for this in the central fields of action.

## Nature-based climate protection in the NNL

In April 2023, VDN e. V. and NNL e. V. launched the project „Potential study for nature-based climate protection measures in the NNL“, funded by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation with funds from the Federal Ministry for the Environment. The aim of nature-based climate protection is to strengthen or restore ecosystems such as peatlands, forests, floodplains and coasts in their function as nature-based climate protectors, in order to tackle the ecological double crisis of global warming and species' extinction.

We have now selected 44 NNL as model areas for nature-based climate protection. In these model areas, we have identified 118 projects with the likely potential to be implemented through the Federal programme, „Nature-based Climate Protection Action Programme“.



*Founding members of the MAB Youth Germany at the kick-off meeting in the Southeast Rügen Biosphere Reserve. © Lars Korn*

The project's focus is on measures that enable permanent carbon storage, landscape adaptation to climate change and the protection and restoration of biodiversity. In addition, we want to make the topic of nature-based climate protection present and tangible in our society through project-related public relations work.

## Nationwide youth network on biosphere reserves

Several participants of the third nationwide MAB Youth Forum on Biosphere Reserves (Man and the Biosphere) founded the MAB Youth in November 2023 – a self-organised youth network by and for young people, from and with an interest in biosphere reserves.

The MAB Youth Forum strives to promote dialogue between young adults through regular meetings and to motivate young people to get involved in shaping their biosphere reserves through workshops and excursions. A central aim of the group is to improve representation of the interests of young people in biosphere reserves both locally and nationally. The young adults also want to support the biosphere reserves with plans and projects in the area of youth participation.

In 2024, the group will be structured and developed internally, thereby laying a stable foundation for the future growth of the network. Three network meetings will be held in various biosphere reserves for this purpose. The name and logo also still need to be decided. As an umbrella organisation, we are on hand to advise the young people and are looking forward to seeing how things develop!

**Nationale  
Naturlandschaften**



***Learn more about the section here.***



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National Park De Alde Feanen. © Thea Peters

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