



OPEN LETTER TO THE LEGISLATORS OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC: National parks are not a priori political decisions, but above all a social consensus and a tool for the future

As the President of EUROPARC Federation - the largest European professional association of Protected Areas - I would like to express our opinion on the ongoing discussion on the designation of the Křivoklátský National Park and the related amendment to the Act on Nature and Landscape Protection in the Czech Republic.

National parks are not a political symbol. They are a proven tool for the protection of natural and cultural heritage, which brings concrete benefits to the whole of society - from conserving biodiversity, to ensuring the quality and thus the possibility of using natural resources, to promoting sustainable tourism and local development. They are an investment in the future and proof of social maturity.

We welcome the intention to designate the Křivoklátský National Park. However, we are concerned that its establishment could be conditioned by limiting the competencies of other national parks and weakening their technical background and planning tools. If the amendment to the Act were to lead, for example, to the abolition of binding planning documents, weaken the independence of the Parks' administrations or undermine long-term planning, it would be a step in the wrong direction, a step against the continual development of the national parks and thus their regions.

The current national parks in the Czech Republic - Šumava, Krkonoše, Podyjí and Bohemian Switzerland - have a strong transboundary character and operate within the framework of long-term international cooperation not only with their transboundary partners. These links are based on trust, expertise and a stable legal framework. Challenging these foundations could jeopardise not only this cooperation but also the perception of the national parks, or the Czech Republic, as respected partners at the European level.

Each country has the right to define the category 'national park' in its own way. In the Czech Republic, however, its essence is clearly defined: the protection of natural processes in more than half of its territory. The balance between protection and the rational use of nature has been respected so far and represents a strong national framework. After all, it is often the photos from the parks that first greet visitors on arrival at Prague airport. However, the proposed change to the law fundamentally challenges this balance.

We therefore urge Czech legislators to ensure that the designation of a new national park does not become a reason to weaken existing ones. National parks are not a place for political bargaining, but a tool for cooperation - between municipalities, administrations, experts, visitors and the state. This is the direction in which we should be heading.

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We express our support for the directors and teams of the Czech national parks, who do their daily work for the benefit of nature and society - and deserve our trust and stable conditions, not questioning the basic principles of their work.

With respect,
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President of the EUROPARC Federation