



EUROPARC FEDERATION ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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President's remarks

Dear Members and Partners,

I am pleased to present the EUROPARC Annual Report 2024. This year has been a period of significant initiatives and further strengthening of our work across the continent. That all happened regardless of the fact that international cooperation, which is the cornerstone of our existence, is currently undergoing a major 'stress test'. While we have experienced steady development over the past decades, 2024 has marked a shift: protectionist approaches are increasingly hindering progress to international cooperation, reversing hard-won regional achievements. In this context, the importance of our collective efforts and your activities as Members has been critical.



Michael Hošek, EUROPARC President.

One of the highlights of the year was the European Day of Parks, held on 24 May under the slogan „Vote for Nature“. This campaign highlighted the key role of Protected Areas in the implementation of environmental policies and called the public to actively support nature. Thanks to our Members and partners, hundreds of events were held across Europe, bringing the importance of nature conservation to the forefront of public awareness.

In October, we gathered for the 13th meeting of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism network in Westport, Ireland. Over 100 participants from 19 countries discussed strategies for sustainable tourism and effective visitor management in Protected Areas. These meetings strengthen our collective capacity to tackle the challenges of tourism and conservation.

In November, we hosted our first-ever online e-Forum, which focused on the effectiveness of Protected Area management. This virtual platform allowed experts from across Europe to share best practices and discuss innovative approaches to nature conservation. Furthermore, our Members elected the Council for the next four years, ensuring a dynamic representation and forward-thinking direction for the future of EUROPARC.

2024 also marked a milestone in youth engagement. In July, we celebrated the 20th International Junior Ranger Camp in Wales, where young people from 11 countries came together to deepen their understanding of conservation and share experiences. In addition, the role of the EUROPARC Youth Council was strengthened, actively contributing to our initiatives and bringing new perspectives to our work.

What you will find in this report is merely a glimpse. The complete picture lies in the stories, progress, and partnerships that fill the following pages.

Let's not forget: cooperation, especially across borders, is never guaranteed. It requires commitment, vision, and trust. We'll need all three in the years ahead.

With gratitude and solidarity,

Michael Hošek
President
EUROPARC Federation

EUROPARC Directorate at the Team Time in 2024 © EUROPARC



This Annual Report is aligned with the EUROPARC Strategy, which is driven by the collective aspiration of EUROPARC Members to see a **Sustainable Nature; Valued by People**. The Strategy shapes and guides our efforts to improve and champion the policy and practice of Protected Areas, ensuring that our natural and cultural heritage is protected and enhanced for the benefit of current and future generations. In this collective endeavour, certain activities are delegated to the various arms of the Federation, the Council, Directorate, Sections, Commissions and Task Forces, but underpinned by the participation and work of Members themselves across the Protected Areas of Europe.

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



Connemara National Park in Ireland.
© EUROPARC

Our actions are underpinned by values and principles to create a positive impact within the EUROPARC network and beyond. They define and guide not just what we do, but how we do it. Our activities and achievements in 2024 were permeated by and promoted through our commitment to **cooperation, enjoyment, inclusivity, sustainability, and excellence.**

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 thriving, resilient organisation with active and engaged Members is the foundation of our activities. Throughout 2024, EUROPARC has ensured that our five principles - **cooperation, enjoyment, inclusivity, sustainability, and excellence** - remain at the heart of all our operations. As the way we work continues to evolve, EUROPARC has embraced digital tools to foster international cooperation. Through our networking platforms, events and online presence, we have worked with our Members to shape the future of Protected Areas policy and practice.

By encouraging continuous development and fostering a culture of mutual learning, we are inspiring new ways of thinking that will help us collectively navigate the future. Protected Areas should be empowered to shape that future themselves, using the wisdom and potential of Europe's largest Protected Area network.

*NaturaConnect meeting 2024 in
Grenoble, France. © EUROPARC*

Increase the human and financial capacity of the network

Our Members and Directorate

We welcomed 19 new Members in 2024 who joined us in advancing our vision. To celebrate and further engage our network of 397 members, we launched the 'Members Spotlight' campaign, showcasing their excellent work across our social media and e-News. Furthermore, we honoured the Members that have strengthened the Federation over a long period of time with the Members Decaders awards. While we said farewell to 15 Members, we achieved a 91% recovery rate of invoiced membership fees, reflecting our good financial stewardship.

The Directorate team continues to thrive. We welcomed a Policy Development Manager to drive forward our initiatives and partnerships, and a part-time Administration Officer to support our everyday operations. These new staff members support the ongoing work of streamlining processes and ensuring the Federation runs as efficiently as possible. Get in touch with us! A team overview and contact details can be found at the end of the report.

General Assembly

The voices of EUROPARC Members resonate powerfully throughout our work, shaping decisions and driving progress. This engagement is especially evident during the General Assembly, where key choices that guide our future are made. This year's edition was held online, enabling broad participation from Members across Europe. A new council was also elected, marking an exciting chapter for EUROPARC's leadership.

The energy and collaboration carried on seamlessly into the e-Forum. This digital format provided another way to network, as there was no face to face Conference. More detailed information on the e-Forum can be found later in this report. The report of the General Assembly is available in the Members' area of the EUROPARC website.

Learn more about the General Assembly in our members' area here.

Projects

Leading and participating in European projects are integral to implementing the EUROPARC Strategy to 2030. Through these projects, 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 stem from meetings and discussions to build partnerships and develop initiatives that contribute to raising funds and supporting the growth of our organisation. In addition to the approved LIFE NGO Grant for 2025, we have submitted proposals for the "Biodiversity and Transformative Change" call of Biodiversa+ and the CEB Award for Social Cohesion from the Council of Europe Development Bank. Furthermore, we have established a partnership with the University of Warwick to co-develop a training course within the European Nature Academy (ENA).

Learn more about our current projects here.

EUROPARC Council Members 2024-2028:

- ⦿ Michael Hošek (CZ) - EUROPARC President
- ⦿ Marta Múgica (ES) - Vice President
- ⦿ Matti Tapaninen (FI) - Vice President
- ⦿ Elliott Lorimer (UK)
- ⦿ João Cardoso de Melo (PT) - Treasurer
- ⦿ Lidia Bai (IT)
- ⦿ Sabrina Caire (FR)
- ⦿ Nikos Pangas (GR) - Periurban Representative
- ⦿ Sonja Miller (DE) - Sections Representative
- ⦿ Michelle Herrmann (DE) - EUROPARC Youth Representative
- ⦿ Myrthe Fonck (NL) - Specialist Advisor
- ⦿ James Stuart (UK) - Internal Auditor

Learn more about the current EUROPARC Council and President here.

Financial Report

An overview of the Federation's income and spending can be found on this page.

BALANCE SHEET		2024	2023
Assets	Total fixed assets	8 060,87	8 909,41
	Total current assets	790 499,02	443 980,75
Total Assets		798 559,89	452 890,16
LIABILITIES			
Profit Reserve		237 003,92	240 069,04
Liabilities	Provisions	59 905,69	34 119,40
	Accounts payable	501 650,28	178 701,72
Total Equity and Liability		798 559,89	452 890,16

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE		2024	2023
Income			
Membership fees		377 178,00	358 705,80
Grants	EC core grant	318 651,80	318 308,16
	Project grants	439 423,09	539 498,12
Other income		158 571,81	118 499,53
Total income		1 293 824,70	1 335 011,61
Simplified Expenditure			
Total Personnel costs		847 596,03	836 183,08
Total Office costs		24 309,06	26 243,08
Total Travel and Subsistence		92 043,51	111 088,29
Total Other direct costs		130 401,44	173 300,13
Total Overhead costs		119 857,82	97 271,62
Total External Assistance/ Professional Fees		82 682,48	69 467,36
Total costs		1 296 890,34	1 313 553,56
Result		-3 065,64	24 458,05



LIFE ENABLE end-of-project networking event in Castelfranco Veneto, Italy. © EUROPARC

Build the capacity of our organisation and its members

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

Concluded in July 2024, LIFE ENABLE's main goal was to support Member States to achieve progress towards targets and priorities defined in the EU Biodiversity Strategy, by improving the quality and effectiveness of nature management practices. Recognising the crucial role of Protected Areas' staff in achieving these targets, the project targeted practical capacity building for those working on the ground.

To this end, LIFE ENABLE created an innovative training system: the European Nature Academy (ENA), which was launched in January 2023 to function as the knowledge hub of a co-learning community of experts, Natura 2000 and Protected Area practitioners. Nine competence-based training courses were developed and delivered in the following areas:

- 🕒 Management planning - production and processes
- 🕒 Conflict resolution - building cross sectorial relationships
- 🕒 Stakeholder engagement - participatory management
- 🕒 Effective communication - techniques and tools.

A total of 166 participants from 34 countries scored the ENA and its courses highly (4.5 / 5). From the feedback received, it became clear that the learning met their needs and can be applied to benefit their work.

To meet EU policy targets for restoration or increased protection, training demands are certain to grow. If we want to achieve more for Europe's biodiversity, it is clear that technical skills, knowledge and experience are not enough: nature's management must be effective, sustainable, flexible, cost-efficient and inclusive of a wide spectrum of views and expectations. The ENA meets this need heads-on.

Learn more about the project here.



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





e-Forum

EUROPARC is committed to fostering connections and experience exchange within our network. While our in-person conference now follows a two-year cycle, our dedication to networking remains strong. That's why, in 2024, we launched the first-ever EUROPARC e-Forum—an accessible, interactive, one-day digital event.

Under the theme *Effective Management, Better Parks*, the e-Forum brought together 90 experts, practitioners, and enthusiasts in Protected Area Management Effectiveness. The programme was built on four key pillars: Planning, Governance, Capacity Building, and Communication.

Expert insights came from Sue Stolton, co-founder of Equilibrium Research and a member of IUCN's World Commission on Protected Areas, and Brian MacSharry, Head of Group, Nature and Biodiversity at the European Environment Agency (EEA).

True to EUROPARC's spirit, interaction and knowledge exchange were at the heart of the event. Discussion Hubs encouraged participants to share experiences on crucial aspects of Protected Area management. Meanwhile, the Speakers' Corner provided a platform for the EUROPARC network to showcase real-world initiatives driving better-managed Protected Areas.

Learn more about the e-Forum here.



Mentimeter results from the Discussion Hub on Capacity Building

Ensuring Protected Areas thrive to be more than 'paper parks' requires:

- 🕒 Smart management;
- 🕒 Strong governance;
- 🕒 Effective communication.

Insights from the EUROPARC e-Forum highlight the need for **adaptive, action-oriented plans** that tackle real-world pressures.

Governance remains complex, requiring **training and a willingness to adapt**. Protected Area managers juggle diverse skills, from conservation practices to stakeholder engagement and financial planning, making ongoing learning essential.

And communication? It's more than outreach—it's about **breaking silos, fostering collaboration, and measuring impacts**. Creating spaces for exchange, both online and in-person, is key to lasting success.

Klaus Toepfer Fellowship Programme

EUROPARC's expertise in Protected Area Management is recognised across Europe. As such, we are also asked to deliver training in the framework of initiatives and programmes being run by external organisations. In 2024, we delivered a two-day training module on area-based conservation for the Klaus Toepfer Fellowship Programme, implemented by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN). This Fellowship Programme aims to develop more integrated approaches, built on the personal capacity of early-career conservation professionals from Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia.

The EUROPARC module covered a range of topics, including the rationale and history of Protected Areas, their definitions and values, IUCN Protected Area Management Categories, international agreements and negotiations related to Protected Areas, and effective communication strategies for Protected Areas. The training was designed to ensure that all participants gained a comprehensive understanding of these critical topics and how they can be applied in diverse regions and communities.



Klaus Toepfer Fellowship Programme Vilm Germany. © EUROPARC

Learn more about the fellowship programme here.

Webinars

EUROPARC webinars continue to gather high praise and attendance, making them one of our most popular platforms for networking and experience-sharing. Participation almost doubled compared to 2023: in 2024, our 13 webinars attracted 4,476 participants, with many more watching the recordings later. 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 2024 webinars here.



Protected Areas In-Sight

Celebrating excellence is of particular importance for the EUROPARC Federation. To do this, amongst the many outlets we use, EUROPARC's Protected Areas In-Sight is the longest standing testament to our network's creativity and ingenuity.

In 2024, following the theme of the e-Forum, the journal dived into Protected Area Management Effectiveness. 12 articles, many written by our members and partners, detail the work happening across Europe to create better, more equitable, managed Protected Areas.

Discover the PA Insight here.

Commissions

EUROPARC Commissions are established by the EUROPARC Council and serve as Member-led groups focused on advancing work in specific areas. In addition, EUROPARC Task Forces are also Member-led but arise from a specific need and often work on EUROPARC Programmes. The work of both of these groups is detailed throughout the Annual Report.

Learn more about the commissions here.

The following Commissions and Task Forces were active in 2024:

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

Promote greater inclusion and equity within and by our network

EUROPARC's work on inclusion and equity does not stand alone: rather, it stretches across our different topic areas of work.

Discussions on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are particularly prominent in EUROPARC's youth work and have a high priority in the Atlantic Isles Section. During the International Junior Ranger Camp, a workshop was held on EDI as it had been identified by youth mentors as a key focus for conservation. Although formal data on this topic in Junior Ranger programmes is lacking, mentors expressed that almost all groups are safe spaces where children with ADHD and diverse genders and sexualities can be themselves and grow in confidence.

Learn more about the International Junior Ranger Camp here.

Further work on the topic of inclusion and equity was conducted in September 2024 as part of the GREENHEALTH project. EUROPARC contributed to a key inter-regional learning event on Sustainable Inclusivity, hosted by the Podkarpackie Region in Poland. This concept focuses on ensuring that all citizens can access and benefit from Protected Areas and their ecosystem services, while safeguarding their long-term conservation. At its core, Sustainable Inclusivity aims to expand the diversity of visitors, promote accessibility regardless of health or economic status, and assess the carrying capacity of Protected Areas.

Learn more about the GREENHEALTH Learning Event here.



International Junior Ranger Camp. © EUROPARC



Strengthen the status of Protected Areas for a stronger more sustainable nature

EUROPARC positively advocates the crucial role that Protected Areas play in addressing the pressing challenges faced by both people and nature. Through our advocacy efforts, we ensure that Parks and Protected Areas receive the recognition and support they deserve. We focus on strengthening the development and implementation of relevant EU and global policies and strategies by asserting the critical roles and functions of Protected Areas and Natura 2000 sites in Member States of the EU and across all of Europe.

By facilitating cross-border and cross-sector collaboration within our network, we highlight the interconnections across issues like climate change, biodiversity, health and sustainable agriculture. This collaborative approach ensures that the importance of Protected Areas is fully acknowledged by policymakers and integrated into broader strategies for environmental and societal well-being.

*NaturaConnect meeting 2024 in
Grenoble, France. © EUROPARC*



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

Policy

EUROPARC is an advocate for Protected Areas. We represent the interests of Protected Areas at different fora in Europe. We bridge policy with practice by bringing insights of Protected Area practitioners to the European policy tables.

Our aim is to help policymakers make informed decisions on issues that affect Protected Areas. Also, we showcase how Protected Areas contribute to implementation of policies. To support this work, the EUROPARC Policy Advisory Group was formed in 2024. In addition, we refreshed the EUROPARC website's policy pages for updated information on our policy work.

Learn more about our policy work here.

EUROPARC contributed actively to the EU Biodiversity Platform and its subgroups, such as the Expert Group on the Birds and Habitats Directives (NADEG) and the Marine Expert Group (MEG), especially on these themes:

- Implementation of EU Biodiversity Strategy and its Protected Area targets, including designation and management effectiveness of Protected Areas, strict protection and Member States' pledges on Protected Area targets
- Nature Restoration Regulation and its implementation in Protected Areas
- Implementation of Nature Directives, especially Natura 2000
- Coexistence with Large Carnivores

Policy Advisory Group

The EUROPARC Policy Advisory Group (PAG) is made up of policy experts from EUROPARC Members. Its task is to support implementation of the EUROPARC Federation Policy and Advocacy Strategy to 2030. The PAG enhances the capacity of the Directorate in development of policy and EUROPARC policy positions by providing advice, insights and expertise across different policy areas, connecting them with Protected Area management practices.

The PAG members participated actively in the 2024 Seminar Dialogue. The PAG was asked to advise on the position paper on biodiversity financing as an important topic for Protected Areas.

Learn more about the Policy Advisory Group here.

Seminar Dialogue

One of the most important annual policy events for EUROPARC Members is the Seminar Dialogue, co-organised with the Directorate-General for Environment (DG ENV). By bringing together representatives of the European Commission (EC) and Protected Area professionals, we highlight the contributions of Protected Areas to the achievement of European policy goals, whilst giving the EC a clear insight into the work conducted and challenges faced by professionals in the field.

The Seminar Dialogue in 2024 was held in a hybrid format with participants in Brussels and online. The discussions focused on three key areas: Protected Area Management Effectiveness, Protected Area designations, and Biodiversity financing and funding.

Learn more about the Seminar Dialogue 2024 here.

Dialogue with European Institutions

EUROPARC has maintained close dialogue with key European Union institutions, such as the European Commission and the European Committee of the Regions. We actively participated in various expert groups and events, contributing with valuable inputs on critical issues related to Protected Area management.

As a member of the European Habitats Forum (EHF), EUROPARC collaborated with other environmental NGOs to produce the position paper "Nature priorities for the new EU Mandate". This document highlighted the vital role of Protected Areas and their effective management, prioritisation of nature restoration and the need for securing funding for nature and biodiversity.

EUROPARC participated actively in expert working groups of the Bern Convention under the Council of Europe offering advice on indicators for the Bern Convention Strategic Plan, especially regarding Protected Areas. Additionally, we participated in the first meeting of the Council of Europe's Landscape Convention in several years: this provides an important platform to share our Members' expertise on landscape approaches and management.



Seminar Dialogue 2024. © EUROPARC



CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONFÉRENCE DES MINISTRES
DU CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



Learn more about our dialogue with European institutions here.

Biogeographical Seminars

EUROPARC is an active participant in the EU Natura 2000 Biogeographical Seminars. The expert article “EU Biodiversity Targets 2030 – where are we now?”, by our President Michael Hošek summarises the results from the two seminars held in 2024, in Cyprus for the Mediterranean region, and Czechia for several regions. It also outlines the status of pledges made by EU Member states for the EU Biodiversity Targets 2030, and the immediate challenges and tasks for nature conservation in the European Union.



Read the article here.

EU Nature Restoration Regulation

The Nature Restoration Regulation was approved in June 2024 by the Council of the European Union. It entered into force in August 2024. As it is an EU regulation, it applies to all EU Member States automatically and it is binding. Protected Areas are at the heart of the Nature Restoration Regulation as it states that Member States should give priority to restoration efforts in Natura 2000 sites up to (& beyond) 2030.

EUROPARC supported the approval of the Regulation as it is important for Protected Areas and as a tool for the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy.

***Learn more about the
Nature Restoration Regulation here.***

Coexistence with Large Carnivores

EUROPARC participated in the meetings of the EU Platform on Coexistence between people and large carnivores. Case studies in the EUROPARC Knowledge Hub were provided by EUROPARC Members who are working to minimise conflict between people and large carnivores. Also, a webinar was organised to showcase young people's efforts in awareness raising and advocacy for large carnivores.

We also participated with other NGOs to express our concern for the downgrading of the wolf protection status within the Bern Convention. The proposal was made by the European Union and was approved in the Standing Committee meeting of the Bern Convention. EUROPARC stressed the importance of preventative measures for coexistence with large carnivores.

Members of the Penpont Youth Leadership Group explore the peaks of the Bannau Brycheiniog. © Andy Pilsbury.



Develop and nurture cross-sectoral partnerships

Sustainable Agriculture and Protected Areas

EUROPARC advocates that sustainable agriculture and Protected Areas can coexist. In 2024, we followed sustainable agriculture issues that are important to Protected Areas through the EU Common Agricultural Policy Network and EU Food Policy Coalition.

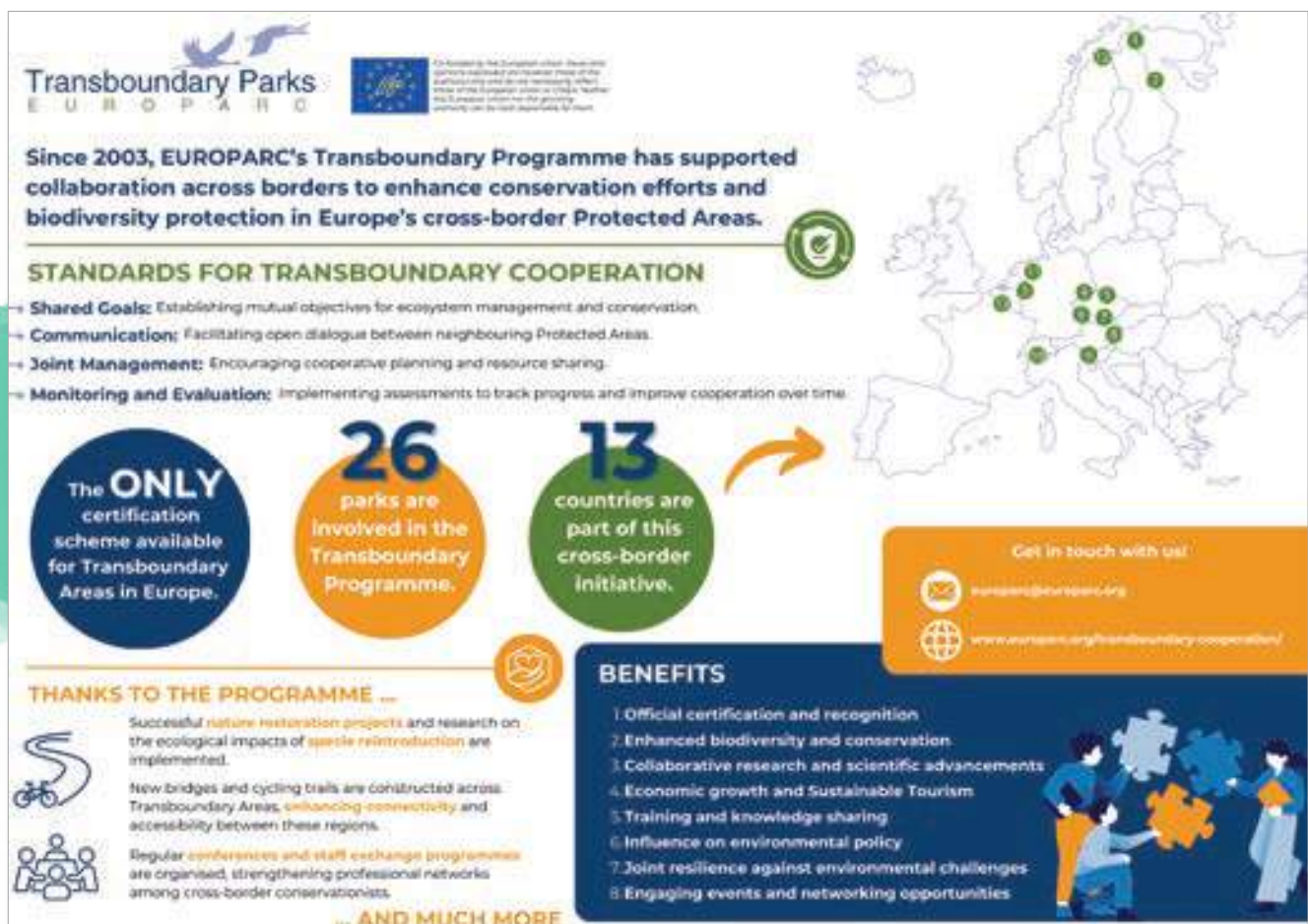
Agriculture and nature conservation are often seen as competing interests, but agriculture practitioners and Protected Areas can and must be allies. Two case studies from EUROPARC Members were published to showcase the importance of working together to achieve tangible results. These case studies show farmers, landowners, local stakeholders and young people who have come together to unite forces for nature through nature restoration activities. The EUROPARC Sustainable Agriculture Commission also produced a case study related to restoration through natural grazing.

Transboundary Programme

The TransParcNet made significant strides in strengthening transboundary conservation in 2024. Online outreach of the programme was increased, leveraging social media to engage new partners and raise awareness. Additionally, an infographic summarising key data was created to support the promotion of the programme. Despite capacity challenges, we re-elected co-chairs, engaged potential new members, and maintained strong collaborations with external partners. Additionally, we collected a comprehensive case study document showcasing best practices named "Practical Guidelines For Transboundary Protected Area Managers In Europe".

Learn more about the TransParcNet here.

Learn more about the case studies here.



Moving forward, we are committed to build on these successes, reinforcing our network and enhancing the programme's long-term impact across Europe.



Learn more about the Practical Guidelines here.



TransParcNet 2024

From September 2-5, 2024, the Hálldi Transboundary Area hosted the TransParcNet Meeting. Bringing experts together to tackle climate change impacts on Protected Areas, discussions focused on Arctic ecosystem changes, such as shifting plant communities and wetland loss.

Innovative strategies were presented, including Finland's adaptive management approach using spatial data, remote sensing for habitat monitoring, and restoration projects in the UK. Fire management efforts in Bohemian Switzerland and wetland restoration in Šumava were also highlighted. The success of Arctic Fox conservation underscored the power of cross-border collaboration. The event also explored EU policies supporting transboundary conservation.

With a strong emphasis on cooperation and innovation, the meeting set a high standard for future climate adaptation strategies.

Learn more about the event here.



Participants of the TransParcNet Meeting 2024. © EUROPARC

Partnership with Rewilding Europe

In 2023, EUROPARC Federation and Rewilding Europe signed a partnership agreement to work together to explore how rewilding principles could be used in the management of Protected Areas, especially as an approach to nature restoration within Protected Areas.

In March 2024, representatives of Rewilding Europe visited the EUROPARC Directorate in Regensburg: over two days, a work plan to bring our shared vision of creating 'landscapes where nature and people thrive' to life was co-developed.

To further disseminate information on rewilding to EUROPARC Members, a new section "Rewilding and Protected Areas" was established as a part of the EUROPARC Knowledge Hub. This section features case studies provided by EUROPARC members showcasing their rewilding experiences and insights.



*Wilder Parks Meeting in Regensburg, Germany.
© EUROPARC*



Learn more in our Knowledge Hub here.



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



EUROPARC is committed to fostering a society where equitable access to and enjoyment of nature are recognised as fundamental values. We support initiatives that help people deepen their connection to nature in sustainable ways, ensuring that future generations can enjoy its benefits. Our network encourages professionals working in Protected Areas to continuously improve their practices, embrace inclusivity - especially among youth - and inspire active participation in this vital effort.

By strengthening this bond between people and nature, we foster a sense of shared responsibility and care for Europe's natural heritage. The enhancement of governance frameworks and management structures are key elements to enhance broader connections.



PAME Europe Kick-Off Meeting in Regensburg, Germany. © EUROPARC

Improve Protected Areas governance, planning and management effectiveness

LIFE PAME-Europe

The LIFE PAME-Europe project started on 1 September 2024. There are 5 project partners, Metsähallitus Parks and Wildlife Finland, DHP Conservation (CZ), Nationale Naturlandschaften e.V. (DE), Departament de Territori, Habitatge i Transició Ecològica (ES) and EUROPARC as lead partner. The project has resulted from the work of the EUROPARC Management Effectiveness Commission.

Currently, evaluation of Protected Area Management Effectiveness in Europe is variable. Some Member States rely on national or international systems, while others have no system in place. This leads to incomparable data, making it challenging to form a clear picture of biodiversity trends across the EU.

LIFE PAME-Europe seeks to change that, not by imposing yet another methodology, but by building upon what already exists. The project will analyse established European Management Effectiveness methodologies, such as the IUCN Green List, European Diploma, and the Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT), and national approaches. By identifying their strengths, LIFE PAME-Europe aims to create an adaptable framework that can meet EU Member States' diverse needs.

Learn more about the project here.



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EUROPARC
FEDERATION



METSÄHALLITUS
FORSTSTYRELSEN
MEAH CIRÁÐDEHUS

Nationale
Naturlandschaften



DH&P
CONSERVATION



Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament de Territori, Habitatge
i Transició Ecològica

Running until September 2028, following the Kick-Off Meeting in Regensburg in October 2024, the main steps include to:

- ⊗ Assess existing ME approaches;
- ⊗ Develop the LIFE PAME-Europe Framework;
- ⊗ Pilot the framework in up to 40 Parks;
- ⊗ Assess the Pilots;
- ⊗ Create capacity building on the use of the framework

Siggen Seminar

The Siggen Seminar 2024, “Catching the wave: How can we achieve more effective management in Marine Protected Areas?”, focused on management effectiveness in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). It gathered 10 experts from diverse parts of Europe to exchange knowledge and experience. The discussions covered key topics, including why management effectiveness is central to EU conservation strategies and the main challenges undermining the effectiveness of MPAs. Additionally, participants explored some of the most recommended indicators for assessing management effectiveness.

From the key takeaways, it was evident that management effectiveness is far from being a standardised process and is perceived as a somewhat abstract process, making it difficult to move from theory to implementation. It was also emphasised that a holistic approach that goes beyond the indicators and evaluation of species and habitats is crucial for assessing management effectiveness. This approach should include key factors such as governance, communication, and stakeholder engagement.

Learn more about the Siggen Seminar [here](#).



Participants of the Siggen Seminar 2024. © EUROPARC

Participants of the NaturaConnect Annual Consortium Meeting 2024 in Grenoble, France © EUROPARC



Horizon Europe NaturaConnect

NaturaConnect aims to design a coherent and resilient Trans-European Network of Protected Areas and to assist EU Member States in achieving 30x30 goals of the Biodiversity Strategy. The project has made progress in its pan-European analysis and in the set of six case study areas across Europe. By using spatial prioritisation methods, the project identifies top priorities that maximise conservation benefits for over 1000 species and more than 200 habitat types. Milestones achieved in 2024 were:

Analysis of best practices for and challenges to ecological connectivity governance on the ground. The report provides recommendations for possible governance actions and interventions for implementing authorities based on an in-depth analysis of several countries.

Financing Protected Areas. A series of factsheets details public and private funding options for Protected Areas and Parks.

Recommendations and existing methods for mapping connectivity. "Guidelines for connectivity and conservation planning Europe" and a public database of connectivity projects in Europe can facilitate the exchange of experiences and provide detailed information on connectivity concepts and approaches.

Applied method to map TEN-N on a pan-European scale. These and more technical insights are outlined in the report on network design and conservation targets.

Learning Platform. EUROPARC has created the project capacity building hub featuring a self-paced, free training course. The first modules are available through the European Nature Academy (ENA), with additional modules being developed in collaboration with partners and set to be added soon.

NaturaConnect training modules launched in 2024:

- 🕒 **TEN-N module** sets the context of how the project offers scientific support for designing the TEN-N by upholding the principles of CARE: Comprehensiveness, Adequacy, Resilience, and Effectiveness
- 🕒 **Nature Futures Framework (NFF) module** indicates how to develop positive scenarios and models for people and nature by considering three narratives for Europe: Nature for Nature, Nature for Society, Nature as Culture
- 🕒 **Stakeholder Engagement module** provides tools for establishing an iterative and participatory engagement process with your stakeholders. A webinar showcased three examples of successful stakeholder engagement and conflict management.

Explore the Learning Platform here.

Learn more about the project here.



NaturaConnect receives funding under the European Union's Horizon Europe research and innovation programme under grant agreement number 101060625

Learn more about the case studies in six short videos here.

-  **The Danube-Carpathian Transboundary region:** Cross-border region (15 countries).
-  **Finland, France and Portugal:** National.
-  **The Doñana region:** Sub-national and transboundary level.
-  **Leipzig-Halle peri-urban floodplains:** Sub-national urban level.



Involve youth in the work of Protected Areas

Youth Actions

The EUROPARC Junior Ranger Network continues to grow, bringing together 50 Protected Areas and nearly 1,900 Junior Rangers across Europe. In 2024, the International Junior Ranger Camp welcomed 10 international teams in the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley National Landscape, co-funded by Landscape Wales. In the Central Bohemian Highlands, the Association of Nature Conservators of the Czech Republic and the Czech Association of Nature Conservators Ophidia Litoměřice hosted a regional camp: this provided more opportunities for young people to connect with nature.

Two online networking events were held for mentors, creating space for knowledge exchange and strengthening the Junior Ranger community.

The Youth+ programme was also further developed and launched a new toolkit under the 4 Pillars for Youth+ Project using Erasmus+ funding. In addition, the Youth Council organised a mini Youth+ Camp in the Netherlands. This network is growing with new Youth+ groups joining and collaborations with other similar minded networks such as the European Young Rewilders. These initiatives were highlighted in two webinars held in October 2024.



Learn more about EUROPARC Youth Programmes here.

Explore the Youth+ Toolkit in 7 languages here.

4 PILLARS YOUTH+

Increasing tools for quality youth work in Protected Areas



Co-funded by the European Union



YOUTH PROGRAMMES

Our mission is to inspire young people to become passionate ambassadors for Protected Areas. Since 1998, EUROPARC's Youth Programmes connect young people to nature and to one another, building a strong network across Europe.

REGISTERED PROTECTED AREAS

50 Protected Areas across 21 countries
16 groups across 12 countries

YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED

1,900 EUROPARC Junior Rangers
~5,000 Junior Rangers in Programmes led by national organisations
200 EUROPARC Youth+

KEY INITIATIVES

- EUROPARC Junior Ranger Programme
- EUROPARC Youth+ Programme
- EUROPARC Youth Representative
- EUROPARC Youth Council
- EUROPARC Youth Manifesto
- European Youth in Parks Day

PARTNERSHIPS

CAMPAIGN FOR NATIONAL PARKS, MAB YOUTH, EUROPEAN COMMISSION, EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

BENEFITS

- EUROPARC International Junior Ranger Camp: Annual conservation camp for young rangers.
- EUROPARC International Youth+ Camp: Leadership and community for young adults.
- Online Networking Events: Regular events for sharing insights and networking.
- Monthly Newsletter for Mentors and Programme Coordinators: Updates on activities and success stories.
- Database of Funding Opportunities: Info on project funding, awards, and Erasmus+ partners.
- Mentoring by Experienced Programme Leaders: Guidance for new coordinators and leaders.
- Facebook Group for Programme Coordinators and Mentors: Platform for sharing resources.
- Youth+ WhatsApp Community: Sharing opportunities & connecting.

Empowering Future Environmental Leaders

Only EUROPARC members can join these programmes!

Parks registered in EUROPARC youth programmes

"It felt like I was really making a difference and helping to restore something. I'm proud that it might be there for another few hundred years."

— Junior Ranger from the Strzegome Hills National Landscape

Get in touch with us!

Instagram: @europarc_youth, Facebook: europarc.youth, Twitter: @europarc_youth, LinkedIn: europarc-youth, YouTube: europarc-youth, Website: europarc-youth.eu

European Youth in Parks Day

The first annual European Youth in Parks Day took place on September 15. Protected Areas across Europe marked the occasion with local events and media outreach to showcase the positive impact of youth engagement in nature conservation.

The Youth Council had selected the theme for 2024, focusing on fun, accessible, and sustainable transport—aligning with youth priorities and encouraging greater connection to Protected Areas.



Youth Council

The EUROPARC Youth Council started their mandate with a review of youth action towards the EUROPARC 2030 Strategy. They began with a youth dialogue survey to assess the priorities of young people and then chose the European Youth in Parks Day theme based on the outcomes. They went on to represent EUROPARC at external events such as the LEADER Youth Forum, the EuroMAB conference and the IPBES Youth Workshop in Namibia. They also played an active role in EUROPARC events such as at the ECST meeting and the Atlantic Isles Conference. Lastly, they set up a process to select the next youth representative and presented the EUROPARC Council with two candidates, which were both co-opted into the Youth Council as well.



Learn more about European Youth in Parks Day here.

Learn more about the EUROPARC Youth Council here.

Inspire everyone to look after Parks

European Day of Parks

The European Day of Parks (EDoP) aims at bringing people closer to nature by offering a diversity of activities and events in Protected Areas across the EUROPARC Network. From Spain to Sweden, and from England to Ukraine, events took place all over Europe. Under the theme “Vote for Nature”, we raised awareness about the importance of Protected Areas for the successful implementation of nature policies in Europe.

Protected Areas are builders of bridges. These special places are able to connect international policy decisions and agreements with local communities: furthermore, they are essential not just for the successful execution of these policies, but also to help shape wide-spread acceptance of the need to protect nature amongst citizens. EUROPARC asked Parks and Protected Areas to organise events to showcase how they are bringing policy decisions to life. The Protected Area community answered with 100s of events all over Europe.

Parks and Protected Areas also mobilised online to ensure that our message was heard by as many people as possible. Thanks to a special Social Media Pack created by the EUROPARC Federation, this was easier than ever before. The result? Thousands of people interacted with #EuropeanDayofParks content. We



196 events registered on our website
+4200 plays of the promotional video
+1000 views of the official guidelines
+5200 views of the EDoP page on our website

Learn more about the EDoP 2024 here.

could hardly keep up with the many posts and stories that were created by our community! All this activity created a big multiplier effect, bringing attention to the essential work of Parks and Protected Areas across Europe.



Promote sustainable development tools and approaches for people and nature

EUROPARC is dedicated to empowering Parks and Protected Areas across Europe to become change-makers for the future, benefiting our climate, biodiversity and public health. The values that underpin our organisation drive tangible improvements in management practices, stimulate investment and contribute to the realisation of our vision: Sustainable Nature, Valued by People. Through these efforts, we are paving the way for a more sustainable and harmonious relationship between people and nature, ensuring long-term benefits for all.

*Participants of the
TransParcNet Meeting, 2024.
© EUROPARC*

Healthy Parks Healthy People Europe

Since 2021, EUROPARC's Healthy Parks Healthy People Europe (HPHPE) Programme promotes Europe's Parks and Protected Areas as a key asset for health and well-being

KEY NUMBERS

- 1 Programme Toolkit
- +20 Case studies
- +10 Webinars
- YEARLY Workshops

CORE AREAS FOR ACTION

- Policy Development in Protected Area Management
- Public Outreach with a 'nature for all' approach
- Investment in nature programmes that yield public health benefits

WHY HPHPe MATTERS

More time in nature creates significant health benefits! HPHPe harnesses Europe's extensive network of Parks and Protected Areas, transforming them into essential hubs for public health improvement and biodiversity conservation.

KEY INITIATIVES

GREENHEALTH project and Good Practices: These collaborative initiatives integrate health and conservation practices within Parks, demonstrating how natural spaces can be catalysts for community wellbeing and ecological preservation.

Case Studies: Explore inspiring examples of Parks that have achieved remarkable public health impacts through innovative nature-based programmes and cross-sectoral partnerships, showcasing the transformative power of connecting with nature.

EU-Wide Partnerships: By actively engaging with health sector networks, HPHPe drives awareness of the programme and promotes collaborative efforts at national and regional levels, fostering a united approach to health and conservation.

BENEFITS FOR EUROPARC MEMBERS

Ready to join the network and become a catalyst for change?

- Adopt and promote health-focused nature policies in your community.
- Join engaging webinars and events.
- Share case studies to boost community engagement and public awareness of the health-nature connection.

Tools for Action and Policy Influence

- Use the HPHPe Toolkit to drive action and influence policy.
- Contribute to shaping European health policies.
- Get access to resources to inspire new audiences about the wonders of nature.

Increased Visibility and Collaboration

- Elevate your profile through webinars and a vibrant LinkedIn network.
- Showcase your initiatives to a wider audience.
- Engage in EU-wide health initiatives to amplify your impact.
- Drive meaningful change for people and the environment.
- Strengthen your brand and gain recognition as a leader in health and conservation.

Get in touch with us!

<https://www.healthy.com/groups/UTTS2024/>

europarc@europarc.org

<https://www.europarc.org/managing-parks/healthy-parks-healthy-people-europe/>

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

Healthy Parks Healthy People Europe Commission

We promote the importance of Europe's Parks and Protected Areas for improving health and well-being.

In 2024, the HPHPe Commission continued its support for Protected Areas to develop better health outcomes for people. It contributed to the IUCN WCPA Health and Well-Being Specialist Group and delivered a presentation at the II Global Summit Science, Nature and Health, in April, organised by the Forest Therapy Hub and the Diputació de Barcelona.

In the field of Capacity Development, the Commission led a HPHPe planning-focused training in co-management of Protected Areas in Portugal and served as a technical advisor to the consortium of the IE GREENHEALTH project

The webinar titled, "Forest Ecosystem Services for Human Health: Theory and Practice from Southern Europe," was held in December. It showcased the remarkable collaboration within the Catalan region and the innovative research emerging from Italy regarding the health benefits provided by ecosystem services in and around Protected Areas.

Stronger connections have been forged with the EUROPARC Periurban Commission as we explored and discussed synergies.

Watch the webinar here.

Learn more about HPHPe here.



Interreg Europe GREENHEALTH

The Interreg Europe GREENHEALTH project - started in 2023 - 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 EUROPARC is the advisory partner for communication, capacity building and engagement.

The HPHPe Commission actively supported the initiative contributing insights during two inter-regional learning workshops and online discussions. The core discussion areas in 2024 were: partnerships and cooperation for health and well-being in Protected Areas; and, promoting sustainable inclusivity for health and well-being through ecosystem services.

EUROPARC also had the opportunity to host an Interreg Youth Volunteer for six months to support project dissemination efforts.

Learn more about the project here.

Periurban Commission

The Periurban Parks Commission has worked together with the Health Commission in advancing a common agenda on the role of Periurban Parks in mitigating health related issues. For that, the Commissions held several meetings, both in-person and online. The barriers and enablers to apply the Healthy Parks Healthy People programme in Periurban Parks were analysed.

The Periurban Commission organised two webinars in 2024:

- Exploring Carrying Capacity – Navigating visitor management in Protected Areas;
- Balancing safety & ecology: management of dead & dying trees in Periurban Parks.



HPHPe and Periurban Commissions meeting in Siggen, Germany. © EUROPARC



*By the tower on Jeleniowaty in Poland.
© Marshal's Office of Podkarpackie Region in Rzeszów, GREENHEALTH project*

***Watch the webinar
on carrying capacity here.***

***Watch the webinar
on safety & ecology here.***



ECST Award ceremony at the European Parliament in Brussels, Belgium. © EUROPARC

Improve visitor management and sustainable tourism

European Charter for Sustainable Tourism

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST) Award was granted to 19 Protected Areas in 2024. Of these, 17 were re-awarded, while two received the distinction for the first time: Parco del Beigua, a UNESCO Global Geopark; and, Riserva Naturale Regionale Monte Genzana Alto Gizio.

The ECST Award ceremony took place at the European Parliament (EP), in Brussels. During the event, we also presented the STAR Awards, recognising sustainable businesses operating within Charter areas.

In 2024 we had the opportunity to exchange at the 13th ECST network meeting, held in the 'Wild West of Ireland'. The event focused on visitor management in Protected Areas and gave participants the chance to explore the beautiful Connemara and Wild Nephin National Parks.

Learn more about the ECST network meeting here.

The STAR Awards winners were:

- **El Rei del Mar** from Montgrí, Illes Medes i Baix Ter Nature Park, for advancing marine conservation and sustainable tourism practices.
- **Descoberta** from Garraf, d'Olèrdola i del Foix Parks, for fostering community engagement and local economic development.
- **Travel Today** from the Parco Nazionale delle Colline Metallifere – Tuscan Mining UNESCO Global Geopark, for innovative approaches to minimising tourism's ecological footprint.
- The overall winner was **Soomaa.com**, by Viis Aastaaega OÜ, from Soomaa National Park, for exceptional efforts in promoting the cultural and natural heritage of the park while inspiring sustainable practices.

Learn more about the awards ceremony here.



Participants of the ECST network meeting 2024. © EUROPARC

Additionally, on behalf of DG GROW, we organised and facilitated the very successful webinar "Measuring EU Tourism Environmental Impacts: Setting the frame". The webinar aimed to advance the process of identifying necessary actions and finding common ground at the European, national, or local level in terms of measuring environmental impacts arising from tourism.

Watch the webinar here.



Outdoor Sports

Throughout 2024, the fruitful cooperation with ENOS has continued. The ERASMUS+ project CONNECT was submitted and approved for the period 2025-2027. This project seeks to better connect the Protected Area and Outdoor Sport sectors. Additionally, EUROPARC organised the workshop “Periurban Park Challenges and Innovative Solutions - Tackling the conflict: Navigating the Intersection of Digital Tools, Conservation and Stakeholder Management”, at the 7th Outdoor Sports Euro Meet 2024, in Lecco. At that event, the call for a Joint EUROPARC/ENOS Award was launched. The aim is to recognise outstanding initiatives in the field of outdoor sports and nature restoration.

Learn more about the joint award here.

World Trails Conference

EUROPARC’s Executive Director Carol Ritchie was invited as a keynote speaker to the World Trails Conference in Ottawa, hosted by Trans Canada Trail. To prepare and accurately represent the European context on this world stage, EUROPARC organised the webinar, “Connecting Nature and People: The Transformative Power of Trails”.

This inspiring webinar, a prelude to the World Trails Conference in Ottawa, explored how trails connect us—to nature, history and each other. Speakers shared powerful insights on how trails heal, protect and transform communities: from Austria’s Lynx Trail to cutting-edge trail technology, we saw how trails boost health, economies and sustainability. Trails unite people and landscapes, offering a path to a better future. During the webinar, Mike McClure also introduced ENOS’s European Declaration on Trails, reinforcing their vital role.

During her keynote address, Carol Ritchie shared this message with the international audience: furthermore, she challenged the trails community to design with nature in mind and reverse the inter-generational amnesia of how our nature can and should be experienced on the trails.

Learn more about the conference here.



Protected Areas role in climate change mitigation and adaptation

MP4Change

The project MPA4Change started in January 2024 and aims to enhance the role of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and restoration as nature-based solutions for climate change adaptation.

In 2025, MPA4Change will deploy a hybrid training programme targeting MPA managers to build their capacities to implement climate change adaptation plans.

Additionally, specific actions are being undertaken to foster liaison and cooperation between relevant organisations, such as MedPAN, Union for the Mediterranean and the SPA/RAC, and MPAs at the North and South of the Mediterranean basin.

In 2025, the project will also launch the 100MPA MedAlliance initiative, in order to foster the engagement of MPAs in the up-take of the project solutions and to build the necessary alliances to provide continued support in this process after the project ends.

Learn more about the project here.

Explore the training programme here.

Capitalising on previous initiatives to set climate change adaptation measures in MPAs of the Mediterranean region, the project comprises a set of actions to:

- Transfer validated toolkits for climate change adaptation in areas such as monitoring, vulnerability assessment, participatory approaches and citizen science.
- Support the policy dialogue to integrate recommendations on climate change adaptation in Marine Protected Areas at EU, Mediterranean and Global ICZM/MSP Strategies.
- Support the implementation of policies and tools during and after the project closure through the creation of a roster of experts.



Participants of the MPA4Change project at the kick off meeting. © EUROPARC

Interreg
Euro-MED



Co-funded by
the European Union

MPA4Change



ICM Institut de Ciències del Mar

CSIC



BRIJUNI
National Park



portofino

Universidade de Vigo

FUTURE OCEANS LAB

DAN



AP MARINE



CCMAR



EUROPARC
FEDERATION

UAlg

Fitter for the Future: Our evolving landscapes in the 21st Century

As an alternative to the EUROPARC Conference, supported by the EUROPARC Federation, EUROPARC Atlantic Isles, EUROPARC Low Countries, and EUROPARC member PWN, co-organised the joint event "Fitter for the Future".

To foster peer learning and international exchange, the event began with a field trip to National Park Zuid-Kennemerland in the Netherlands, organised by PWN. This was followed by a seminar in Sheffield. Bridging these two elements was an innovative workshop on the Eurostar, supported by EUROPARC Atlantic Isles, where participants engaged in an interactive climate change adaptation game, stepping into the shoes of others to envision a resilient landscape.

The event embodied the true EUROPARC spirit. Through interaction with and inspiration from practitioners on the ground, participants were encouraged to think big and sustainably about what it truly means to create landscapes that are fit for the future. Some key themes that emerged included inclusiveness, a strong sense of community and ownership, structured youth involvement and the courage to embrace new approaches.



„Fitter for the Future“ participants in National Park Zuid-Kennemerland, the Netherlands. © EUROPARC

Climate Change Adaptation in Europe's Living Landscapes

Under the European Green Deal, the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 commits to planting at least 3 billion additional trees in the EU by 2030. The Nature Regional Landscape (NRL) Parks of Europe play a major role in that. Tree plantings are essential actions necessary for the resilience of our lands. One example of a tree planting project in our NRL Parks is the project “A Tree for Picardy Wallonia”, in Belgium. Together with stakeholders, they are planting up to 350,000 trees and shrubs between 2015 and 2025. With their efforts in tree planting, Wallonia already became the first region to contribute to this European objective by planting 2,653,884 trees.

By combining community engagement with nature restoration activities like tree planting, as exemplified by Wallonia, NRL Parks contribute immensely to the 3 billion tree target of the EU.

Living Dark Landscapes has also been one of the major themes of the NRL Parks in the last year. To highlight existing efforts, the NRL taskforce organised a webinar on Dark Skies in November, highlighting several ongoing initiatives, outlining the benefits of dark skies and providing information on the international DarkSky certification programme. The Dark Sky initiative is gaining momentum across Europe and is surely one of the priority topics for NRL Parks in the upcoming years.

Learn more about the task force here.

Read the guest article here.

Watch the webinar here.





Háldi Transboundary Area, Finland and Norway. © EUROPARC

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

Biodiversity funding and financing

One of the themes of the 2024 Seminar Dialogue organised together with the European Commission Directorate-General for Environment was biodiversity financing and funding as this is a topic of growing importance for Protected Areas. Palladium Group provided a corporate take on the topic in their presentation and provided interesting examples as a basis for possible future work.

Watch the webinar here.

The webinar, “Exploring new ways to finance conservation – Innovative funding for Nature and People”, presented two case studies focusing on Payment for Ecosystem Services and Nature-based Solutions.

Together with other environmental NGOs, EUROPARC participated in the development of the joint statement, “Unlocking funds for nature: How the next EU budget must deliver for biodiversity”. It recognises the urgency and opportunities that the new EU budget presents to elevate biodiversity conservation efforts across Europe.



Read the joint statement here.

Our European Network

Throughout its history, the EUROPARC Federation has proudly fostered collaboration by supporting the establishment of regional and national Sections. EUROPARC Sections play a vital role in advancing the Federation's mission, working closely to implement its strategic goals while addressing the unique priorities and characteristics of their respective regions. Discover how these networks drive impactful change across Europe's protected landscapes.



- ⊙ 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

EUROPARC Atlantic Isles

The EUROPARC Atlantic Isles (EAI) unites Protected Areas across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and the Republic of Ireland. It promotes good practice in Protected Area management and training through networking and ensures the continued relationship with the wider European network of protected landscapes. The EAI aligns with EUROPARC's goals while tailoring initiatives to its unique coastal and island landscapes.

In 2024, the programme of timely and thought-provoking webinars continued, and EAI remained active within the EUROPARC network, contributing to regular section meetings and co-hosting this year's flagship conference, in Sheffield, UK. It also supported the candidacy of Elliott Lorimer for the EUROPARC Council.

EAI hosted a larger, in-person members' event, welcoming colleagues from across Europe. The conference theme was: *Protected Landscapes 2030 – Fitter for the Future: Our Evolving Landscapes in the 21st Century*. To increase accessibility and inclusion, as part of a pre-event programme, the event reflected site visits to Cumbria and Connemara National Park, and three accompanying webinars.

A unique component of the event included a cross-border connection between the Netherlands and the UK, with a pre-conference visit to National Park Zuid-Kennemerland, followed by a workshop on the Eurostar— the '*Sustainability Express*'.

A key goal was to amplify new and diverse voices driving change. Attendees heard from a variety of speakers, including an inspiring group of young people from two Yorkshire National Parks whose message resonated deeply with participants.

Watch the Yorkshire National Parks presentation here.



Cumbria National Park in England. © EUROPARC Atlantic Isles

The conference proved highly successful and thought-provoking for all involved. Key messages were:

- ⦿ We need to broaden our conversations and listen to others.
- ⦿ We need to support and engage with young people to live and work in protected landscapes - this includes giving attention to many social issues such as housing, transport and apprenticeships.
- ⦿ We need a wider conversation about land use decisions and ensuring greater engagement with communities inside and adjacent to protected landscapes.
- ⦿ We need to get more "green heads" or champions into political systems.

Looking Ahead

A Young Professional mentoring Scheme was developed following the EAI section meeting at the last EUROPARC Conference in the Netherlands. The scheme will be launched in the Spring of 2025.

EAI will continue to offer learning opportunities for members through webinars, site visits, and mentoring. However, the year ahead may present challenges, as significant budget cuts across protected landscapes could impact the activities. 2025 will also mark a transition, as Section Coordinator Anita Prosser, who has been involved with EUROPARC since 1989, will retire. Her contribution to the network has been immense and deeply valued.



EUROPARC
Atlantic Isles

Learn more about the Section here.



EUROPARC Central and Eastern Europe

The EUROPARC Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) Section unites Protected Areas across Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. It promotes transboundary cooperation through communication and experience sharing, and ensures the integration of Natura 2000 sites into the national systems. The CEE Section aligns with EUROPARC's goals while tailoring initiatives to a region rich in ancient forests and large carnivore habitats.

The Section was delighted to welcome a new member in 2024, the UNESCO Chair for the Sustainable Management of Conservation Areas (MCA) based at the University of Applied Sciences Carinthia, Austria (EUROPARC member since 2021).

The UNESCO Chair for the Sustainable Management of Conservation Areas (MCA) provides excellent research and inspiring learning experiences for nature conservation in the 21st century: its activities are based on an interdisciplinary, holistic and integrated understanding of conservation areas, as advocated and exemplified by UNESCO Biosphere Reserves, (natural) UNESCO World Heritage sites and UNESCO Geoparks. Carinthia University of Applied Sciences UNESCO Chair on Sustainable Management of Conservation Areas works in key priority areas related to UNESCO's fields of competence on: Sustainable Management of Conservation Areas; monitoring biodiversity in Protected Areas; and, other effective area-based conservation measures, with particular in-depth and valuable experience in Protected Area planning and management.

Under the theme of the 2024 European Day of Parks, "Vote for Nature", Section members organised a variety of engaging events. These included interactive walks, guided excursions, photo tours, birdwatching activities, and a wide range of outdoor environmental education programmes.

To renew the Section's engagement and prepare for the upcoming presidential handover, a workshop was organised in late September 2024 in Krkonoše National Park. Unfortunately, due to severe flooding in the Czech Republic, the event had to be postponed. We remain hopeful and look forward to rescheduling the meeting in the coming year.



Learn more about the Section here.

EUROPARC Francophone

The EUROPARC Francophone Section unites Protected Areas across France, Switzerland, Luxembourg, and Wallonia. It promotes innovative approaches to the sustainable development of rural and Periurban areas, and ensures coordination around long-term integrative and participative territory projects. The Francophone Section aligns with EUROPARC's goals while tailoring initiatives from alpine ranges to coastlines, encompassing vast rural landscapes.

Strategy and operation

Building on the renewed partnership established in 2023 with the French Office for Biodiversity (OFB), 2024 marked the implementation and experimentation of this new dynamic. Spanning from October 2023 to October 2025, the initiative is structured around two major axes aimed at enhancing coordination across French-speaking territories.



From left to right: Clara Fontana (FPNRF), Baptiste Hottekiet (Parc des Collines en Belgique), Patrick Thommes and Christine Lutgen (Parc Haute-Sûre Luxembourg).

Development and cooperation with the EU

Online meetings

- ⊗ Discussions on section organisation focusing on cross-border cooperation and the development of joint initiatives (31 January 2024).
- ⊗ Focus on sustainable tourism and funding for Protected Areas. This included presentations on European projects, with emphasis on inclusiveness and cross-border collaboration (25 March 2024).
- ⊗ Addressed funding strategies and advocacy with DG Environment, particularly around enhancing LIFE funding for projects related to light pollution and ecological restoration (16 September 2024).

In-person events

- ⊗ Natura 2000 Congress in Ballon des Vosges Regional Nature Park (24 to 26 June 2024). Participation of the Upper Sûre (Luxembourg) and Collines (Belgium) parks. In this event, the focus was on European funding and its obstacles for cross-border cooperation and on possible contributions to the National Nature Restoration Plan.
- ⊗ NRP Congress in Narbonne (23 October 2024). Matters discussed included a collective update on the section, preparation of the Seminar Dialogue on November 14, and presentation of an INTERREG project on soil restoration and pollard tree maintenance.





From left to right: Clara Fontana (FPNRF), Jérôme Chapelier, (Parcs wallons), Francine Keiser (Parc de l'Our au Luxembourg), Baptiste Hottekiet (Parc des Collines Belgique), Simone Zanter (Our), Naik Faucon (OFB), Marorie Jouen (CORP), Laurence Chabanis (OFB).

NaturaConnect meeting 2024 in Grenoble, France. © EUROPARC



Representation of French-speaking Protected Areas within EUROPARC

- ⊗ Participation in the EUROPARC Policy Advisory Group, represented by Marjorie Jouen (Jacques Delors Institute).
- ⊗ Participation in the EUROPARC Board is represented by Sabrina Caire, elected as a new member at the end of 2024.
- ⊗ Participation in the Seminar Dialogue in Brussels (14 November 2024) to advocate for the reinforcement of LIFE funding within the framework of the EU's multiannual financial negotiations.

Support for the development of European projects

Ongoing efforts include monitoring relevant funding opportunities (e.g., Interreg ENO, Interreg Euro-MED) and supporting the formulation of joint projects. Key priority themes identified for future proposals include:

- ⊗ Light pollution mitigation;
- ⊗ Cross-border cooperation;
- ⊗ Environmental restoration.



EUROPARC
FRANCOPHONE SECTION

Learn more about the Section here.



CETS MEETING with Parco Regionale Colli Euganei, Italy. © Federparchi

EUROPARC Italy / Federparchi

The EUROPARC Italy / Federparchi Section unites the country's diverse terrestrial and marine Protected Areas. It promotes sustainable tourism strategies and the benefits of ecosystem services, and ensures the maintenance and development of good practice and traditional cultures. Federparchi aligns with EUROPARC's goals while tailoring initiatives to leverage Italy's rich biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Throughout 2024, Federparchi engaged intensively with the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST) and expanded its European-level activities. Special attention was given to potential updates to national regulations governing protected natural areas.

A major focus was on advancing 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. This outreach sparked significant interest across the country, with many Protected Areas recognising ECST as a valuable framework for fostering responsible and sustainable tourism in their territories.



Federparchi also supported the implementation of actions outlined in ECST Part 2 and Part 3 by sharing best practices and organising training sessions for tourism operators and park managers. These initiatives equipped stakeholders with the tools and knowledge to design effective tourism strategies, improve infrastructure management, and involve local communities in planning and management.

In parallel, Federparchi monitored and evaluated the impacts of tourism through case studies, field surveys and data analysis. This work identified critical areas for improvement to inform future strategies and ensure tourism remains sustainable and aligned with conservation goals.

These efforts were highlighted in a comprehensive article published in the January 2025 issue of *Reticula*, the scientific journal of ISPRA, dedicated to the specific theme: „Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, the Complex Balance between Local Development Needs and Biodiversity Protection“. The article by Federparchi, titled „A European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas“, explored the evolution of the ECST, analysed its implementation, and discussed legislative proposals to support its wider adoption in Italy.

Federparchi also ensured broad visibility for ECST initiatives through its website, newsletters (including Parchi News), and press releases. Emphasis was given to the ECST Forums of the Euganean Hills Regional Park and the Metalliferous Hills Park in February.

From April onward, key EUROPARC events such as the Star Awards, the March seminar on Marine Protected Areas in Siggen (Germany), and the June webinar on funding for Protected Areas were actively promoted. In October, coverage extended to the international ECST meeting in Ireland.

The initiatives for the European Day of Parks on 24 May were numerous and well-attended. Due to local elections in Italy, the slogan „Together for Nature“ was used instead of EUROPARC’s official theme, in accordance with national electoral communication regulations.

Additional milestones included the ECST renewal assessment at Sila National Park in July, and in September, an interview by Federparchi President Luca Santini with Adn-Kronos. He emphasised the growth of sustainable tourism in Italian Protected Areas and the fundamental role ECST is playing as a quality indicator for tourism offered in parks.

In November, during the EUROPARC Federation General Assembly, Federparchi Board Member Lidia Bai was elected to the EUROPARC Board. She later participated in the General States of Protected Areas, held in Rome from 17 to 19 December.

This two-day event gathered park representatives from various parties and institutions, including Minister Gilberto Pichetto Fratin (from the Italian Ministry of Environment and Energy Security) and many other members of the Italian government. The high-level discussion and debate on the situation and prospects of Italian Protected Areas included the possibility of updating the Italian parks law (no. 394/1991). The goal is to make the functioning of park authorities more effective and efficient in their mission of biodiversity protection, whilst also aiming to create an integrated system of Italian Protected Areas.



Stati Generali delle Aree Protette, general meeting of Italian Protected Areas in Rome, December 2024. © Federparchi.



Learn more about the Section [here](#).

EUROPARC Low Countries

The EUROPARC Low Countries unites certain Protected Areas from Belgium and those from the Netherlands. It promotes activities focusing on ecosystem services and the need for new financial sources. The Low Countries Section aligns with EUROPARC's goals while tailoring initiatives to a region characterised by high population density and intensive land use.

The Netherlands has officially welcomed the Van Gogh National Park, located in the heart of Brabant, the region where Vincent van Gogh spent his formative years. This unique landscape is full of winding streams, vast nature reserves, farmland, estates and beautiful city and village views. Here, the iconic artist found inspiration in the surrounding nature and the hardworking people who would later become central figures in his world-famous works of art. The park not only preserves this cultural and natural heritage but also expands the existing Loonse en Drunense Duinen National Park, seamlessly connecting villages and towns with the surrounding countryside.

In June, the Dutch National Parks welcomed a new president, Mr. Gijs de Kruif (Nationaal Park Utrechtse Heuvelrug). He will take over the lead from Jan van de Venis, who is now again vice chair.



Climate change game on the train. © Myrthe Fonck



Climate change game on the train. © Myrthe Fonck

We organised a joint networking event, hosted by EUROPARC Atlantic Isles and the Low Countries Section. The event highlighted the importance of cross-border collaboration and 'out of the box' thinking to ensure the resilient nature and landscapes for the future. Our journey started with a field trip in National Park Zuid-Kennemerland, where participants shared thoughts and experiences about the adaptive capacity of nature and people and the importance of communication. The dynamic landscape inspired lots of ideas, and participants were encouraged to 'dare to dream'!

The journey continued on the 'Sustainability Express' to the UK: this innovative workshop on the train combined learning, networking and sustainable travel. Participants were invited to step on the train not as themselves, but as citizens of a shared landscape. The challenge was to provide a fitter for the future plan for their area, acknowledging all the different roles and interests. As soon as common ground was found, collaboration and creative ideas gained momentum.



Learn more about the Section here.



Háldi Transboundary Area, Finland and Norway. © EUROPARC

EUROPARC Nordic-Baltic

The EUROPARC Nordic-Baltic unites Protected Areas across Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Iceland. It promotes climate adaptation and sustainable practices, and ensures the exchange of information and expertise in transnational conservation. The Nordic-Baltic Section aligns with EUROPARC's goals while tailoring initiatives to a region of vast boreal forests, Arctic tundra, and coastal ecosystems.

2024 has brought both challenges and inspiration. Despite limited resources, the Nordic-Baltic Section has remained committed to fostering collaboration throughout the region. Daniel Åberg continued as President until the end of the year, supported by Kristian Bjørnstad, who has served as coordinator. However, the current structure is not sustainable in the long term. To ensure the continued functioning and development of the Section, we are actively seeking funding for a permanent coordination role. We are exploring all avenues for support and warmly welcome input and suggestions from across our network.

Key activities and achievements

- 🕒 **Webinars & Knowledge Exchange:** We partnered with the EUROPARC Atlantic Isles Section to deliver a series of webinars on topics such as Geoparks, digital geography, and carbon accounting in Protected Areas.
- 🕒 **European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST):** Sweden and Estonia have actively implemented ECST Part II, recognising tourism businesses that operate within protected areas.
- 🕒 **ERASMUS "Know Nature" Project:** This initiative, involving partners from Estonia, Latvia, and Sweden, aims to enhance knowledge on sustainable tourism in protected natural areas.

- 🕒 **Transboundary Cooperation:** Nordic-Baltic members have been engaged in the Transboundary Programme, with Tiia Henrika Kalske from Finland chairing the Strategic Transboundary Evaluation Committee (STEC). The recent TransParcNet meeting was hosted in Norway and Finland.
- 🕒 **Nature Restoration & Dark Sky Initiatives:** Nature restoration continues to be a growing priority in alignment with the EU Nature Restoration Law. Additionally, Norway designated its first Dark Sky Place in Øvre Pasvik National Park, marking an important milestone in preserving night-time environments.

Looking Ahead

Securing sustainable support for the Nordic-Baltic Section is our top priority. We are exploring various funding opportunities and welcome dialogue on how to evolve and strengthen the Section's structure moving forward. We remain dedicated to advancing conservation, sustainability, and collaboration throughout the region and look forward to continuing our work within the EUROPARC Federation network.



Learn more about the Section here.

EUROPARC Spain

The EUROPARC Spain Section comprises public administrations responsible for Protected Areas, with the legal support of FUNGOBE, operating a Technical Office staffed by 11 professionals who catalyse a network of thousands of people. It promotes more sustainable, equitable, and supportive management, and ensures sustainable tourism, research, and the improvement of professional skills. The Spanish Section aligns with EUROPARC's goals while tailoring initiatives to harmonise regional autonomy with national and European strategies.

ESPARC Conference 2024

The XXII Conference of EUROPARC Spain was held in Sigüenza, in the Castilla-La Mancha region. The event brought together 170 participants from across Spain. The workshops analysed key topics such as the conservation and restoration of natural systems, the incorporation of climate change into management, the contribution of Protected Areas to demographic challenges, the compatibility between tourism and conservation, the communication of the social benefits derived from Protected Areas and their enhancement as spaces for people's health.



Official opening of ESPARC 2024, XXII Conference of EUROPARC Spain.

Third edition of the Inspiring Experiences in Protected Areas Awards

In the "Member" category, the award went to the "Gran Canaria Pastoreia" project, led by the Cabildo de Gran Canaria. The initiative implements socioeconomic actions which contribute to the adaptation to climate change, facing key challenges such as the prevention of forest fires.

In the "Other Entities" category, the award recognised the "Integral management of the Buixcarró Reserve" project, developed over 20 years in the Serra de Mariola Natural Park by the Victoria Laporta Carbonell Foundation.



Ceremony of the third "Inspiring Experiences in Protected Areas Award", promoted by EUROPARC Spain.

LIFE RedBosques_Clima project

In 2024, the first mobility exchange under the project was carried out in Sierra Norte de Guadalajara Natural Park, with the participation of ten professionals. Additionally, the fourth technical seminar was held in Ports Natural Park, where twenty attendees shared nature-based solutions for adapting forest ecosystems in Protected Areas to climate change.

Field visit during the IV Technical Seminar of RedBosques_Clima, held in Ports Natural Park.





Students during a field visit as part of the Master's Degree in Protected Areas.

ECST Membership of Tourism Companies in Sierras de Cazorla, Segura and Las Villas

A training and technical support programme was delivered for tourism companies aiming to join the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST) in the Sierras de Cazorla, Segura y Las Villas Natural Park, Andalucía. In September 2024, a ceremony was held to present certificates to the 37 companies that successfully adhered to the ECST principles.

24th Edition of the Master's Degree in Protected Areas

Twenty-seven participants from Spain and Latin America completed the 24th edition of the Master's Degree in Protected Areas. Since 2022, the programme has been delivered online via video-conferencing, making it accessible to professionals across the Spanish-speaking world. Additionally, it retains a face-to-face study trip component that, in this edition, was to the Marismas Coruñesas Biosphere Reserve.

European Day of Parks 2024: Vote for Nature

Spanish Protected Areas took part in the celebration of the European Day of Parks 2024, organising more than 400 activities nationwide. EUROPARC Spain contributed to the dissemination of all the activities and presented an institutional manifesto in support of Protected Areas during the ESPARC congress.

Read the manifesto here.

More than thirty videos in the "Our Protected Areas" Campaign

EUROPARC Spain is actively promoting the "Our Protected Areas" campaign, which features the video series "Protected Lives". More than 30 episodes highlighting the people and stories behind the conservation of these vital landscapes are available here:

Learn more about the campaign here.



Looking Ahead

A key challenge for the coming years is the development of the "Programme 2030, Global Change and Protected Areas: living territories of conservation for human well-being".



Learn more about the Section here.



Annual conference of NNL e. V. and VDN e. V. including the founding event of the National Natural Landscapes Foundation © Patrick Appelhans | VDN e. V.

Nationale Naturlandschaften e. V. (EUROPARC Germany)

The German Section, as the national umbrella organisation Nationale Naturlandschaften e. V. (NNL e. V.) together with the Verband Deutscher Naturparke e. V. (Association of German Nature Parks) represents the National Natural Landscapes (NNL) of Germany: the alliance of 16 national parks, 18 biosphere reserves, 104 nature parks and 3 wilderness areas. NNL e. V. aligns with EUROPARC's goals while tailoring initiatives to biodiversity conservation, climate protection, sustainable development, experiences in nature, and environmental education.

In 2024, we established the Stiftung Nationale Naturlandschaften (National Natural Landscapes Foundation) as a non-profit limited liability company. Operating at the federal level, this foundation functions

as a central service and networking hub, dedicated to nature conservation, natural climate protection, and sustainable development. It also fosters education for sustainable development, civic engagement, sustainable tourism, and regional development.

Communication strategy for the alliance of the National Natural Landscapes

The NNL's role in addressing nature conservation, climate protection and sustainability is more crucial than ever. Covering one-third of Germany's total area, the NNL significantly contribute to fulfilling both national and international environmental commitments. However, the public perception of our work is often unsatisfactory.



To change this, we developed a multi-level communication strategy in 2024. Its aim is to increase awareness and strengthen recognition of the NNL's role in politics and society, while clearly communicating the value of our work. The various outreach initiatives, which will be implemented gradually in 2025 and 2026, include posters, postcards, social media content, press releases and the relaunch of our alliance's website, which is planned for 2025.

Enhancing the visibility and accessibility of sustainable and climate-friendly offers in the National Natural Landscapes

In addition to the communication strategy, we have been working to increase the visibility of nature experiences and certified partner offers within the NNL. To this end, we are closely collaborating with the Deutsche Zentrale für Tourismus (German National Tourist Board) and state-level tourism organisations.

Our goal is to make sustainable and nature-friendly offers easier to find, to enable more targeted visitor management and to increase the appreciation for the services and offers of the NNL. The groundwork for this is being laid through a ten-month project (June 2024 – March 2025), funded by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Protection. In the future, certified NNL offers with verifiable quality will be presented on tourism platforms to ensure broader reach and visibility.

Promoting sustainable and climate-friendly caravanning tourism in the National Natural Landscapes

Since 2024, we have been cooperating with the Caravaning Industrie Verband Deutschland e. V. (CIVD – German Caravanning Industry Association) to further develop the range of pitches and overnight parking spaces in Germany's most beautiful landscapes for caravanning tourists. The focus is on preserving biodiversity, strengthening sustainable regional value creation and unique nature experiences.

Innovative solutions for pitches should meet the needs of travellers as well as raise awareness of nature conservation and sustainability through experiences in nature. Over the next two years, we will support several pilot projects in NNL throughout Germany to test and multiply practical concepts.



*From left to right: Bernd Löher (President CIVD), Jan Wildefeld (Executive Director NNL e. V.), Daniel Onggowinarso (Executive Director CIVD), Ulrich Köster (Executive Director VDN e. V.) at the launch of the cooperation at Schaalsee Biosphere Reserve.
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Ing. Harald Striewski GmbH*

**Nationale
Naturlandschaften**



Learn more about the Section [here](#).

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*Cover page: NaturaConnect meeting 2024 in Grenoble, France. © EUROPARC
Back page: Participants of the Siggen Seminar 2024. © EUROPARC*

Háldi Transboundary Area, Finland and Norway. © EUROPARC

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