

PRESS RELEASE: For Immediate release

What: EUROPARC's 1st International Youth Conference
Youth Conference - looking to the future it's in our hands!

Who: EUROPARC Federation

Where: Debrecen, Hungary

When: 9th to 13th October 2013



1st EUROPARC Youth Conference a resounding success!

The voices of the young people of Europe gave a loud and clear message to European managers and directors of Protected Areas in Hungary last week; "We want to be heard!"

The youth conference was organized by the EUROPARC Federation to run alongside its 40th Anniversary celebration conference held in Debrecen, Hungary in partnership with Hortobágy National Park Directorate. Young people from all over Europe applied to attend the conference and had the full endorsement of their park directors to represent them. All of the participants have been previously involved in EUROPARC Junior Ranger activities.



The youth programme was partially integrated with the main programme of the conference so that all delegates could get to know and learn from each other, this was received very well on both sides and began the essential lines of communication. The main aim of the youth conference was to look at the role of young people in nature conservation over the next 40 years and to present their findings at the closing ceremony of the main conference. Through listening to the keynote speakers, going on the field trips and having their own workshops and discussions they came up with 3 clear messages for park managers:

- "We want green / nature (environmental) education to be a part of mainstream schooling throughout all of Europe and we want you to talk to your governments to help make this happen!"
- "We want there to be youth representation on the managing committees / boards of protected areas and for this voice to be taken seriously!"
- "We want you to create effective partnerships between parks, the public sector and private commercial organisations for the mutual benefit of all!"

Despite the short time for preparation the presentation of the youth, to the main conference went very well and received the loudest and most enthusiastic response of the evening! Alan Smith, one of the conference organisers commented: *"The young people of Europe have done themselves proud and worked hard to create clear, coherent and relevant messages that reflect their passion and commitment to the future of nature in Europe, it was a privilege for us all to meet and to work with them."*

Tribute must go to the hard work, commitment and passion of the youth delegates; in a short space of time they demonstrated how people from diverse backgrounds but with a common cause can work together to great effect. Already the ripples are spreading through Europe with promises of new Junior Ranger Programmes in Romania, Wales and the Netherlands and of youth representation in Scotland and the UK. Laura Peters, a youth participant on the press conference said: *"Our mission here is to go on the stage the last evening and tell the people our vision of the future, and we will do that!"* And indeed, that was what they have managed to achieve, the youth presentation has been a clarion call to parks in Europe to think deeply about how the future guardians of nature are involved and nurtured not just in the future but from right now!

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501 words



Notes for editors:

About the EUROPARC Federation:

EUROPARC is the umbrella organisation for Junior Ranger programmes throughout Europe. The aim of the network is to facilitate the increase of new partners throughout Europe by providing interested parks with information on the most important aspects of a Junior Ranger programme. EUROPARC Federation is an independent, non-governmental organisation whose membership brings together organisations responsible for the management of most of Europe's protected areas. Currently it represents over 400 members in 36 countries. These include protected areas, governmental departments, NGO's and businesses who themselves manage the green jewels of Europe's land, sea, mountains, forests, rivers and cultural heritage.

Interview opportunities:

- Alan Smith, Conference Organising team
- Janice Burley, Conference organising team
- Thomas Hansson, President
- Carol Ritchie, Director

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