



### **Dutch speaking Europarc section**

Since 2005 SNP (Samenwerkingsverband Nationale Parken, the Dutch National Parks Foundation) is working as the umbrella organisation for the 20 national parks in the Netherlands. SNP is a partnership between the twenty National Parks, governments, landowners, conservation organizations and IVN (the organisation dealing information and interpretation in the national parks).

The aim of the SNP help the National Parks to be special and attractive protected areas with opportunities for outdoor recreation, research, information and interpretation. Thus, more people realize the importance of nature for the Netherlands.

Flanders also has a national park, the National Park Hoge Kempen and additionally there is a crossborder national park with a special status: Grenspark de Zoom Kalmthoutse Heide.

SNP (including it's crossborder member) and Hoge Kempen National Park in Flanders have the desire to create a Dutch speaking Europarc section.

Europarc has approximately 430 members: protected areas, governments, NGOs and companies in 35 European countries involved in the protection and management of green treasures of Europe. Because nature knows no borders, the Europarc federation encourages the cooperation in the field of protection and management in the broadest sense of the word. Exchange of expertise, experiences and best practices, and cooperation with other parties who have an interest in protecting and managing those green trasures (eg parties active in the field of sustainable tourism) are core activities of the Federation.

The SNP, the individual national parks and major site managers in the Netherlands and Hoge Kempen National park are all Europarc Federation.

### **Europarc sections**

Europarc has seven sections, eg the Nordic-Baltic section, Europarc Atlantic Isles and Europarc Deutschland. Sometimes in a section several countries are united, as in the Nordic-Baltic section, but sometimes just one country like Europarc Deutschland. Main role of a section is the "translation" of the work of Europarc to the members, bringing members closer to the Europarc Federation and conversely "feeding" the Federation with ideas from section members

### **Added value of a Europarc section**

- bringing together organizations in a transnational perspective. At first we shall primarily deal with the Dutch National parks in Belgium and the Netherlands. A wider membership, such as regional parks, national landscapes etc. will be considered later on
- A Europarc section is closely linked to the Europarc Federation, the umbrella organization of protected areas in Europe. A Dutch speaking Europarc section is the window to knowledge, information, experience and expertise in a European context. A link with this gives relatively easy access a European network and "best practices"
- Relatively easy access to a Eurean network in order to participate in European projects which are helpfull to achieve national parkobjectives (as a example The Nordic-Baltic section has been invited to become a partner in the EU Grundtvig funded project "Volunteer Management in European Parks" led by EUROPARC Germany)
- Nature and landscape is without borders: as the responsibility for protected areas is increasingly a provincial / regional responsibility, it is more and more desirable to strengthen transnational cooperation in order to safeguard collaboration
- Strong transnational cooperation can contribute to reinforce the advocacy of management and conservation, due to easier and closer contact with the European Union
- An extra incentive for professional development due to easier access from elsewhere

- Easier access to the network of the Europarc Federation. As a result it is easier to participate and to contribute in that network
- Easier to contribute to the European programs of Europarc: Charter for Sustainable Tourism, Junior Ranger network etc.

#### **Conditions for the formation of a Europarc section**

- The members of a Europarc section should also all individual member of Europarc (all current partners within the SNP and Hoge Kempen National Park are already Europarc members)
- To an annual work program (effectively meaning an integrated work programm for Hoge Kwempen National Park and SNP)
- Active participation in the work of Europarc Besides asking Europarc on the trigger of a section to actively participate in meetings of Europarc (which in turn assists in: again, knowledge.

**Hoge Kempen National Park and SNP agree on the formation of a Dutch speaking Europarc section and kindly ask the Europarc Federation Council to agree on this, resulting in the start of a Dutch speaking Europarc section during the Europarc Conference in Genk, October 2012.**