

EUROPARC Consulting – report to the EUROPARC Council Meeting, May 2012 in Siggen



Council members will recall the last meeting of the EUROPARC Federation Council in Italy, where EUROPARC Consulting Chairman, Richard Partington, introduced a paper about the company and its current and future working.

The philosophy and ethos of EUROPARC Consulting are the same as the EUROPARC Federation's and we have three aims:

- to provide good-value expert consultancy services;
- to help raise the Federation's profile and
- to generate profits to contribute to Federation funds.

Over the past five years, through our work, we have been able to contribute 85,000 € to the Federation, with a further 17,500 € already earmarked for 2012.

In the past 12 months alone, EUROPARC Consulting, which is 10 years old, has worked with more than 40 protected areas to deliver projects ranging from study tours on ranger services to strategies for communication and new publications on sustainable tourism.

The EUROPARC Consulting Board comprises of our Chairman, Richard Partington (UK), Thomas Hansson (SE), Norbert Heukemes (B), Carol Ritchie (UK) and Hans Schiphorst (NL). At its March 2012 meeting it agreed its new five-year business plan. For the first time the company has set out a plan of its operations, its ambitions and how it intends to work.

This paper sets out:

1. a summary of our new Business Plan and how EUROPARC Council Members can help;
2. an update of our current and future work

EUROPARC Consulting GmbH

1. Business Plan Summary

Where we are and why?

EUROPARC Consulting is ten years old. During these years the company has developed from an idea by a special funding commission of the EUROPARC Federation into a successful business. The Company was created in 2001 and its first Business Plan sets out some basic facts and information and explains the background of the company. It also describes what makes us special, our purpose, vision and the “where” and “why” of EUROPARC Consulting.

Built on the common purpose of the EUROPARC Federation aims of sustainable management for Europe’s protected areas, our joint shared past and relationship is one we wish continue and this Plan helps to chart our future over the next five years – to December 2016.

Where do we want to be in 2016?

Five years can be a long time in business and any successful company needs to be able to respond rapidly to changes and opportunities but this must be guided by its philosophy and purpose. By the end of 2016 we want to be the leading consultancy working in European protected areas which fosters knowledge exchange across all European countries for the wellbeing and benefit of current and future generations. To this end we have set out our goals in our Business Plan as follows:

a) What we want to achieve in the first 2 years of this business plan?

- Transfer at least €17,500 to the Federation budget in 2012
- Return to our previous levels of “turnover” (total of invoiced amounts) circa €200,000/€250,000.
- Maintain our current margins (between what we pay our EUROPARC experts and what we can charge to our clients); this would achieve a gross surplus of between €20,000 and €25,000.
- Identify and allocate budgets for special investment purposes and for additional part-time freelance staffing capacity to support administration/projects.
- Pay special attention to the development/PR and communications, e.g. promotion, advertising & marketing.
- Develop a short, simple yet comprehensive communications strategy with action plan, built on the business plan, once approved.

b) What we want to achieve in 3 to 5 years’ time?

- Endeavour to keep our contribution to the EUROPARC Federation at approximately 10% of the total of invoiced amounts for the years 2013 to 2016.
- Create a “turnover” of around €500,000 by the end of 2016.
- Increase the level of our charges to clients to bring us in line with some of the higher-paid consultancies in Europe, enabling us to pay higher fees to our experts and increase our surplus (and our contribution to the EUROPARC Federation).
- Increase partnership working with other companies.
- Increase the number of larger, multi-year projects work.
- Develop a workable approach, via the Sections and Council members, to feed contracts (or awareness of up-coming contracts) through to us.

How will we manage?

The financial and management aspects of EUROPARC Consulting show a well-run company that could be on the threshold of some major growth. People, resources and equipment are in place and could cope with a doubling of the company's turnover. Costs are well-managed. Fixed costs have remained stable since 2006 and have been reduced in several areas. Other costs vary in line with work carried out. The company is in good financial health.

The company operates in a modern yet unusual "virtual" way with its operations and people in different places, in different countries and languages and with differing legal, financial and currency regimes. It relies on the goodwill of its paid staff, freelance experts and voluntary effort of its Chairman and Board contributing to tens of thousands of unpaid activity. We are managing the current work and planned increased activity through freelance part-time support in administration, PR/ marketing and project development. This approach keeps on-going operational costs to a minimum.

How can EUROPARC Federation Council members help generate contracts?

EUROPARC Consulting's success benefits the EUROPARC Federation. We have enough capacity to double our turnover and our support to the Federation without the need for additional staff or experts and we ask Council Members and EUROPARC Sections to help us generate more business. Our close and very positive relationships with the Federation Directorate and with past Presidents have given us many opportunities to tender for new work. We are not asking for favours, just a chance to quote - and we offer reduced charges to Federation members too.

Our areas of expertise include capacity-building through learning seminars, workshops and study visits, advice on new designations or boundary extensions, research and analysis, visitor centre design, sustainable tourism strategies, management plans, and communications and interpretive strategies. Our inexpensive study visits on sustainable tourism, management planning or ranger services are also gaining quite a following as a great way of engaging staff, members and local people. We can take on task-and-finish projects in a wide variety of areas,

How can Federation Council Members help?

- Can you put us in touch with protected areas and government organisations that you know are looking to place work?
- Can you help raise our profile to get us known so that we can tender for contracts?
- Can you promote our Facebook page www.facebook.com/europarc.consulting or our website www.europarc-consulting.org

EUROPARC Consulting provides great value and high-quality services for protected areas – for an informal conversation contact Wilf Fenten on +44 (0)1729 860 003 or email wilf.fenten@europarc-consulting.org

2. Update of some of our current work

Since February, two separate publications on sustainable tourism have been published from two clients (copies will be available for members to see). Also we are increasing our PR and publicity activity as well as working on the following principle contracts:

Wadden Sea - developing a sustainable tourism strategy and action plan for the whole area: The contract has been extended by a further 30,000 € to include the Danish part of the Wadden Sea area. We are also organising a study tour of a number of stakeholder from the area to visit the Jurassic Coast in the South of England which will add around 10,000 € to the project. Despite it being a very complicated programme, work remains fully on track and on budget.

Sustainable tourism development in the Western Balkans: Our kick-off meeting in Belgrade last March was a resounding success and established us as the leading partner in this project. We are currently submitting further proposals for additional work over the next three years. So far, the project is worth approx. 70,000 € over three year.

European Charter for Sustainable Tourism: Our verifiers have now concluded this year's visits to the Charter applicants' protected areas and we are currently receiving all their reports for preparation to the Evaluation committee.

Study tour to Northern Ireland: In June this year we shall be leading a study tour of Dutch entrepreneurs to business sites in protected areas in Northern Ireland. So far, 25 participants have registered to take part. The aim of the study visit will be to show participants examples of good, and not so good, management and landscaping of camping and caravanning sites within the Causeway Coast and Glens, as well as visitor facilities and sustainable tourism initiatives on the North Coast of Northern Ireland.

During the visit we shall also look at branding and profile-raising of three protected areas and marketing through initiatives such as the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Area as well as how sustainable tourism initiatives and quality local products/produce are developed and marketed and promoted.



For the very best European expertise in protected-area work ask us to tender for projects large or small - you will be amazed by good value.

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