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# TOWARDS A WILDER EUROPE

**DEVELOPING AN ACTION AGENDA FOR WILDERNESS  
AND LARGE NATURAL HABITAT AREAS**

*Opinions expressed are those of the contractor and participants  
at the Prague Conference and do not represent the official position of the European Commission*

**Front page photo**

Scotland's landscape represents high potential for wilderness restoration © Alan Watson/Forest Light

## Foreword

There are few truly wild areas remaining in our highly developed continent, yet they represent an invaluable part of Europe's natural heritage.

In addition to their intrinsic spiritual and landscape qualities, and their important contribution to biodiversity conservation, such areas can offer significant economic, social, cultural and environmental benefits to local communities, landholders and society in general.

For this reason preventing further loss of wilderness, and ensuring implementation of large scale restoration opportunities, are important challenges.

However we do not yet have a common vision for these vital areas and for their place in the broader objective of halting biodiversity decline.

So the Prague Conference on Wilderness and Large Natural Habitat areas, jointly hosted in May 2009

by the Czech EU Presidency and the European Commission, together with the Wild Europe partnership, provided a critical platform to advance Europe's agenda in this field.

A key outcome from the Conference was the development of the 'Message (Poselství) from Prague', which contains 24 recommendations from the participants on policy, research, awareness raising and partnership building.

An Action Agenda was agreed in December 2009 at a meeting in Brussels of the Wild Europe partnership. Implementation of these recommendations, which has since begun, would create a Europe richer in wildlife with wild areas where natural processes predominate, maintaining and reinstating the natural identity of our continent for the profound benefit of future generations.

May 2010



**LADISLAV MIKO**

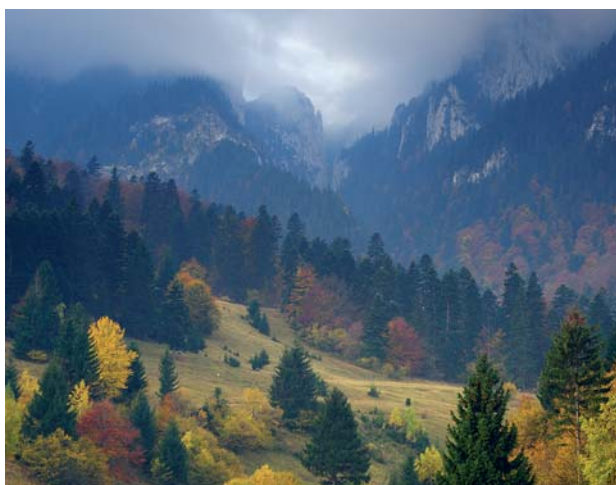
Director, Natural Environment, DG Environment, European Commission. Former Minister of Environment, Czech Republic



Europe's new Wild West – Vermuelen, Holland © Twan Teunissen FREE Foundation







Wilderness of mixed habitats © Peter Cairns, Wild Wonders

Many of Europe's last remaining wilderness and wild places are increasingly under threat of destruction, degradation and fragmentation from inappropriately located logging, intensification of agriculture, mining, development of infrastructure – and from the effects of climate change.

At the same time, there is unprecedented opportunity for the restoration of a network of large natural habitat areas along with their natural processes, linked by biological corridors into a functioning ecosystem.

This opportunity is underwritten by two main drivers. On the one hand there is growing appreciation

of the wide range of economic, social and environmental benefits offered by such areas. Equally, and notwithstanding recent increases in commodity prices, more marginal areas of farmland and forestry are becoming increasingly uneconomic. Changes in agricultural practice coupled with reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), together with pressure for free trade through the World Trade Organization, provide substantial potential for changes in land use. There has already been extensive land abandonment.

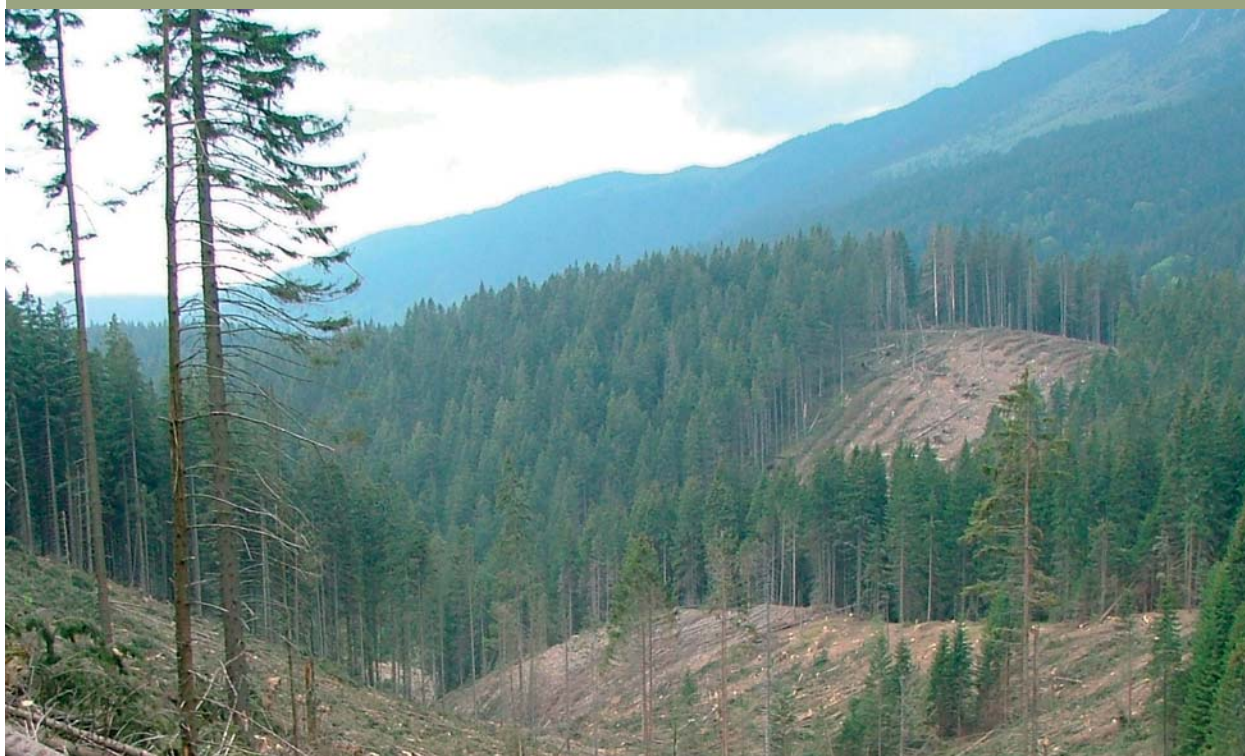
This in turn offers considerable scope for restoration initiatives that combine wilderness and biodiversity objectives with utilisation of socio-economic benefits, and are linked to rural development agendas.

## THE URGENT NEED FOR ACTION

The opportunities for large-scale protection and restoration initiatives may be of limited duration, in some areas at least.

This is not simply because of the urgency of threats from modernisation of agriculture or programmes for new infrastructure. In Central and Eastern Europe, where there are still substantial amounts of unallocated or abandoned land, the market is actively consolidating. Price trends are rising, with frequent resale for quick capital gain where privatisation or reallocation to former owners has occurred. This has already led, for example, to extensive logging of old growth forest areas.

Romania's old growth forests disappearing under the chain saw, Horatiu Hanganu, Wild Europe Carpathia programme, Romania



# The Prague Conference

6

It was these threats and opportunities, which provided the background for the Prague Conference on Wilderness and Large Natural Habitat Areas.

Organized by the Wild Europe partnership and jointly hosted by the Czech EU Presidency and European Commission, the Conference was part of a wider aim by the partnership over the last four years to promote a coordinated strategy for protection and restoration of

Europe's wilderness and wild areas.

More than 238 participants from 36 countries took part in the two day Conference, representing government ministries, conservation agencies, NGOs and academic institutions, as well as a wide range of interests from landowning, agriculture, forestry, business, academic and other sectors.

For the first time they joined efforts to focus action on the wild areas of Europe.

Key contributors included:

Vaclav Havel, former President of the Czech Republic

Ladislav Miko, Environment Minister for the Czech Republic

Michael Hamell, Acting Director of the European Commission DG Environment

Jeffrey McNeely, Chief Scientist to IUCN

Joel Giraud, Member of the French Parliament

Pavan Sukhdev, Coordinator of the study on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) funded by the EC and EU Member States representatives.



Keynote speakers for the opening session (left to right): Toby Aykroyd (Director, Wild Europe), Ladislav Miko (Environment Minister, Czech Republic), Vaclav Havel (former President, Czech Republic), Mike Hammell (Acting Director, European Commission, DG Environment), Luc Marie Gnacadjia (Executive Secretary, United Nations CCD)



## A popular mandate

A key outcome from the Conference was the development of the Message (Poselství) from Prague which contains 24 recommendations from the participants for the protection and restoration of wilderness and wild areas – as listed on pages 12 and 13.

Many of these recommendations were foreshadowed in February 2009 by a Resolution from the European Parliament calling for improved protection of wilderness areas.

With 538 votes in favour and only 19 against the Resolution, this massive cross party support reflects growing realization of the value of Europe's remaining wilderness and wild areas, and of the need to protect and restore them. As such it represents a strong popular mandate for action.

Aiming to formulate and propose policy recommendations for wilderness and wild areas, the Conference assessed a number of key issues, including:

- The definition and location of wild and nearly wild areas
- Determining the contribution such areas can make to halting biodiversity loss and supporting the Natura 2000 network of protected areas
- Recommendations for their improved protection, within the existing legal framework
- Review of opportunities for restoration of large natural habitat areas
- Proposals for more effective support for such restoration
- Identifying best practice examples for non-intervention and restoration management
- Defining the value of economic, social and environmental benefits from wild areas



Pavan Sukhdev, economist and coordinator of the TEEB Report. Wild area ecosystems have measurable value, Teebweb.org



The European Parliament resolution in 2009 provided a popular mandate for wilderness conservation

## Definitions – where is wild?

8

There are a few parts of Europe where wilderness can currently be found in the sense of the IUCN classification, referring to substantial areas that are scarcely touched by the hand of man, where natural habitat and process remain intact, which are often protected and managed so as to preserve their natural condition.

Wilderness occupies around 1% of Europe's land area. Even at their maximum extent, existing and restored wild places would still only take up a very small proportion of the continent.

Wilderness occurs in parts of Finland, Sweden, Norway, Ukraine and Western Russia together with bordering states. There are also elements in Central and Southern Europe and the Caucasus.

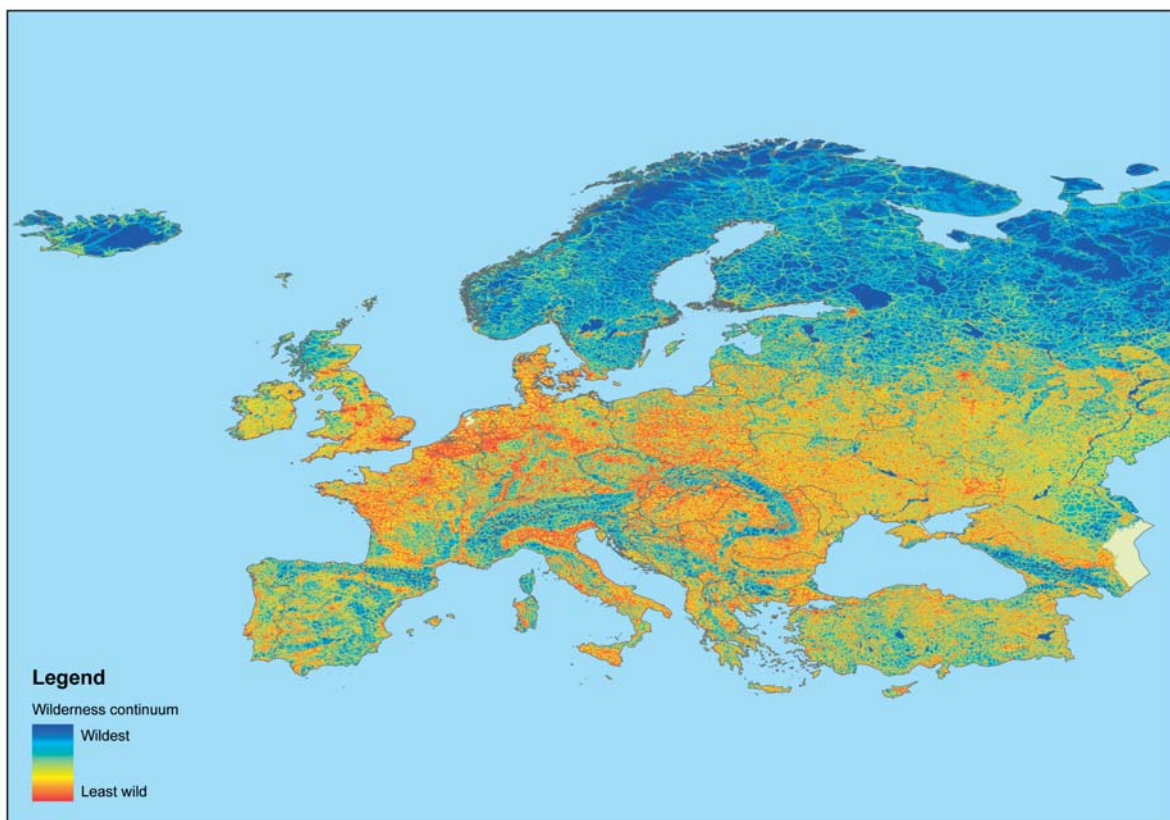
By contrast smaller wild areas, where the condition of natural habitat, process and relevant species is often

either partially or substantially modified by forestry, grazing, sporting activity or general imprint of development, are scattered across the continent. They are sometimes located within protected areas that are not classified as wilderness, including many in the Carpathians, Pyrenees and Alps as well as parts of the Balkans.

### WILD – WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Any definition involves a number of considerations. Size is a key factor along with ecological integrity and visual landscape impact. Ability to deliver significant ecological services – most notably in addressing climate change – is emerging as an increasingly significant issue. It is further determined by subjective experience: the spirit of wildness that enables solitude, sense of wholeness, belonging, healing, awareness and self-development.

Wilderness in Europe (criteria: naturalness of land cover, population density and remoteness from road/rail access), source: Wildland Research Institute, UK







In this 'wild area' context, there is recognition of the desirability of progressing over time to increased stages of naturalness – through restoration of habitat, natural processes and wildlife. Attainment of "wilderness" status is the ultimate goal in this process wherever scale, biodiversity needs and geography permit.

Wildness can thus be measured along a 'continuum' with wilderness at one end and marginal farmland and forestry at the other.

Finally, there is the issue of zonation, where identification of core, buffer and transition areas – each with different types and levels of intervention – can assist in articulation and planning of 'wildness' and address the issue of spatial development over time. The inner "core zone" would have no extractive activity or human impact. The "buffer zone" around the core would have minimal impact activities. In the "transition zone", outside the buffer zone, the emphasis would be on maintaining a visually stable landscape.

Zonation is used in several wild areas particularly those in Eastern Europe and Russia that contain substantial wilderness.



Brown bear is one of the emblematic wilderness species benefiting from the increased attention on wilderness conservation in Europe.

# The benefits of wild areas

10



Jeffrey McNeely, IUCN Chief Scientist, explains the benefits of wild areas to biodiversity

Beyond their traditional landscape and spiritual attributes, wild areas can offer wider biodiversity, environmental, social and economic benefits for a wide range of interested parties – including local communities, landholders, farmers and foresters as well as society in general.

## CONTRIBUTION TO BIODIVERSITY

Despite the substantial progress that has been made in recent years, Europe's biodiversity is under continued pressure linked principally to habitat destruction, pollution and climate change as well as the impact of invasive alien species.

Protecting the last remaining wilderness areas, together with appropriate restoration, can make a key contribution to achieving the EU biodiversity targets. These areas are important for their ability to preserve species and habitats that are dependent for their survival on natural processes or large relatively remote areas. Because of their size they can support more extensive gene pools for long term species sustainability, and provide opportunity for adaptation and migration in response to climate change – enabling development of more resilient ecosystems.

They can also host income earning tourism and social therapy activities that could conflict with conservation interests in smaller areas.

It should be feasible to achieve aims for protection and restoration of wilderness and wild areas within the structure of the Natura 2000 programme where spatial overlap occurs, by incorporating regimes



Undisturbed forest and wetland habitats have a higher storage capacity for carbon emissions

of 'non-intervention' and restoration management for Natura 2000 sites that contain such areas.

Outside the EU, in adjacent countries where very important areas of wilderness still remain, alternative approaches by their governments and other interested parties will be required – but the benefits for biodiversity could be just as significant.

## ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

There is growing recognition that large wild areas provide ecosystem services that are essential to society, including carbon sequestration and flood mitigation and alleviation of soil and water pollution – which are important benefits in tackling the impacts of climate change.

In contrast with more traditional nature reserves, the size of wild areas offers important advantages, as does their unmanaged natural condition – for example undisturbed old growth forests and wetlands have considerably greater carbon storage capacity than more managed equivalents.

Wild areas thus have the ability to engage funding sources, including those not previously aligned with conservation: carbon markets already provide corporate support and will increasingly generate finance from high energy users and polluters.

Similarly, protection or restoration of upland watersheds and lowland sinks can be rewarded on a cost-effective basis by local authorities, utility and insurance companies anxious to reduce the expense of downstream flood prevention, compensation claims and water treatment.





Wild area therapy can help address inner urban issues such as youth crime, vandalism and addiction

### SOCIAL BENEFITS

For many years wilderness experience has been recognised as beneficial for personal therapy and social skills development. A range of newer ventures has thus emerged – many of which, combined with more traditional treatment regimes, address important inner urban issues such as youth at risk, youth development, rehabilitation, healthcare and reconciliation.

One project in this latter category, managed by the Wilderness Foundation UK, brings together former terrorist adversaries from the Northern Ireland conflict as a recognizably successful element in the ongoing peace process.

The value of these social attributes can also be quantified – in terms of the financial benefit to society of lower criminal re-offending rates, improved

physiological health, and through the income and employment benefits they can bring for local communities and landholders.

Crucially, they also provide a link between biodiversity interests and the social concerns of mainline urban politicians, which few aspects of the 'traditional' conservation agenda are as capable of achieving. This is vital for helping to raise the funding and policy profile of conservation generally.

### ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Nature tourism ventures in wild areas already contribute substantially to many local economies, an effect reinforced by the impact of growing financial support for provision of ecosystem and social services. Promoting a combination of benefits can produce a compelling case for protection and restoration of wild areas, as proposed at the Conference by Pavan Sukhdev coordinator of the report on The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) which is identifying cost-effective initiatives that deliver a high rate of return.

This can be particularly important in more remoter rural areas where alternative sources of income and employment are relatively scarce.

Further work is required to ensure that economic, ecosystem and social benefits are tied to payment systems that can directly benefit local communities and landholders, in return for enabling appropriate protection and restoration measures.

There is substantial opportunity for a joint approach between conservation, landholding and other interests – building on mutual interests to secure appropriate policy reforms in order to achieve this.

Local communities gain from wild area tourism – Maramures, Romania © Frans Schepers, WWF Netherlands



# Policy Recommendations – the Message from Prague

The following recommendations, produced in the Message (Poselství) from Prague, call for the European Commission and EU Member States and non EU States, with the support of other stakeholders, to undertake the following actions:

12

## A. POLICY DEVELOPMENT

1. Provide guidance on how wilderness qualities could receive legal protection both under the Natura 2000 regime and outside the EU, without compromising concrete protection of species and habitats in Europe.
2. The management of the Natura 2000 network should take account of the need to protect ecological processes as well as habitats and species.
3. Guidance should be developed concerning the protection of wilderness areas in the context of the EU nature legislation, addressing issues such as natural changes to sites, response to climate change, the maintenance of specific succession states and non-intervention.
4. Assessment and implementation of means by which links with neighbouring countries can more effectively support protection of wilderness and wildland areas outside EU boundaries.
5. In the light of a clearer definition of wilderness and wild land in different parts of Europe, and the extent to which this is protected by existing legislation and policy, consider and promote the action needed to ensure existing legislation protecting wilderness and wildlands is monitored and enforced effectively by all responsible authorities and steps are taken to fill the gaps in protective cover that are identified.
6. Promote connectivity of existing protected areas, restoration of degraded areas, and the setting up of corridors and ecological networks.
7. To identify and promote opportunities within the 2012 Common Agricultural Policy review that can benefit protection and restoration of wilderness and wildlands, especially in relation to abandoned agricultural land and ecosystem-based adaptation to climate change.
8. To further develop awareness in the conservation sector of the contribution wilderness and wildland areas can make to halting biodiversity loss and supporting Natura 2000 and the Emerald Network.
9. To develop a programme promoting the values of wilderness and wildlands to organizations and decision-makers in all relevant sectors, including landholding, agriculture, forestry, business, local and national government, health, institutions, media and education, so as to ensure that these values are reflected in appropriate sectoral plans, including the EU Forestry Action Plan, EU Fisheries policy, EU Agricultural policy. Differences in natural bio-geographical regions should be taken into consideration.
10. To invest in mass communication to the wide European audience about wilderness and wild values.

## B. AWARENESS BUILDING

8. In the short run, to incorporate recommendations from the Conference into relevant reports (including TEEB), government meetings (upcoming EU

Presidencies), international conferences (CBD/Nagoya, UNFCCC/Copenhagen) and other events – facilitated by compilation of a relevant schedule and production of appropriate policy documents.

9. To further develop awareness in the conservation sector of the contribution wilderness and wildland areas can make to halting biodiversity loss and supporting Natura 2000 and the Emerald Network.
10. To develop a programme promoting the values of wilderness and wildlands to organizations and decision-makers in all relevant sectors, including landholding, agriculture, forestry, business, local and national government, health, institutions, media and education, so as to ensure that these values are reflected in appropriate sectoral plans, including the EU Forestry Action Plan, EU Fisheries policy, EU Agricultural policy. Differences in natural bio-geographical regions should be taken into consideration.
11. To invest in mass communication to the wide European audience about wilderness and wild values.

The 238 participants at the Prague conference proposed 24 recommendations





### C. FURTHER WORK AND INFORMATION NEEDS

12. Finalisation of a definition of wilderness and wild areas, taking into account the globally agreed definitions, criteria and characteristics and the continuum of natural habitats and ecological processes, the range of ecological and cultural interpretations of these terms and their application in different parts of Europe.
13. Compilation of a Register of Wilderness using existing databases, such as the European Environmental Agency and the World Database of Protected Areas identifying in tandem with appropriate interested parties the remaining areas of wilderness and wildlands, the threats and opportunities related to these, and their economic values, with practical recommendations for action.
14. Completion of mapping wilderness and wildland areas in Europe, involving appropriate definitional and habitat criteria and level of scale to effectively support plans for protecting and monitoring such areas.
15. Identification of key opportunities for prospective restoration of wild natural habitats and processes, involving mapping, biodiversity design and benefit assessment for relevant parties including local landholders and communities.
16. Further investigation into the scientific rationale underpinning the linkage between wilderness, wildlands and delivery of societal benefits in support of social programmes – e.g. for youth development, youth at risk, conflict reconciliation and healthcare.
17. Quantification of the value of non-extractive economic, social and environmental benefits of wilderness and wildland, identifying key beneficiaries.
18. Identification and promotion of how ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, flood mitigation, water purification, erosion control, and pollution alleviation can be linked to specific payment mechanisms, via landholders, communities and other beneficiaries, for protection and restoration of wilderness and wildland. The public goods benefits of wilderness will require public funding.
19. Review of how to secure opportunities for gaining of value from social benefits (e.g. healthcare, youth development, youth at risk, conflict resolution) – linked to proactive development of new markets (e.g. probationary and health services) and delivery infrastructure.

### D. SUPPORTING CAPACITY

20. Further development of the Wildland Support Network, especially to support implementation of recommendations from the conference.
21. Establish a website and network based Wildland Information Exchange to collate and disseminate good practice and model projects to demonstrate the value of wilderness benefits, link initiatives and enable coordinated response to threats and opportunities.
22. Develop examples, based on best practice, of how local communities and landholders can secure value from recreation, tourism and other initiatives.
23. Undertake a full assessment of government, institutional and private sector funding opportunities for protection and restoration, as part of broader conservation programmes.
24. Build inter-sector consensus and support by developing initiatives for joint approaches based on common ground with other sectors including: landholders, forestry, agriculture, business.

ions for wild area conservation in Europe



## Next steps: Developing a Wild Area Support Network

14

The development of a Wild Area Support Network was a key proposal from participants at the Prague conference to support the implementation of their recommendations.

The Network is comprised of existing members of the 'Wild Europe' partnership which developed the Conference, including participants from BirdLife International, Europarc Federation, IUCN, Natuurmonumenten, PAN Parks Foundation, Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts, WWF and UNESCO. It will be also be expanded to involve other organizations.

The Network will seek to provide a joint platform on wilderness and wild areas in Europe. Run through a small secretariat, it would operate in three main areas:

- Policy representation: supporting implementation of the Message from Prague, promoting a strategy for wild area protection and restoration, helping to coordinate a collective approach on CAP reform
- Project support: catalysing reforms to improve support and incentives for protection and restoration initiatives - the latter would particularly focus on backing for the Wild Europe Field Programme furthering joint development of a Wilderness Register and subsequent protection plans
- Communication: profiling the value of wild areas, developing a Wild Area Information Exchange website, catalysing a wild area research agenda.



Influencing the decision takers. Joel Giraud, member of the French Parliament and advocate of wild areas

To achieve these aims the Network will seek to build partnerships based on common ground with landholding, forestry, farming, business and urban social interests. This would include development of a broad-based Advisory Group and a Business for Wilderness Forum.

It would also seek to consolidate links between wilderness, sustainable rural development and urban social needs agendas, with emphasis on benefits for local communities and landholders as well as other interested parties.

Rothie in Scotland has a great wilderness potential © Peter Crains, Northshots





# An urgent need for protection

The threats to Europe's last remaining wilderness and wild areas are widespread and imminent.

Many such areas are still offered scant protection in practice, even when they appear secure.

A coordinated strategy to address these threats is rapidly required, involving monitoring and enforcement of existing legal provision, assessment of further measures needed and development of incentives for protection. These measures should so far as possible be founded on a clear identification, valuation and promotion of the full set of benefits attributable to wild areas.

Three elements of this strategy in particular were recommended at the Prague conference.

## 1. A REGISTER OF WILDERNESS

Before wild areas and their biodiversity can be adequately protected, their location and status must be accurately recorded. Development of a Wilderness Register, originally proposed by the Wild Europe partnership, should form a key element in this process.

Identified at grassroots level, in coordination with local governments, NGOs, local communities and other relevant parties, priority wild areas will be nominated and their location, habitat type and other attributes recorded, along with the nature of threats and opportunities for addressing these. Individual protection plans can then be drafted for implementation.

A central facet for both protection and restoration programmes involves cost-effective monitoring, and the intention is to trial remote sensing by satellite in combination with regular on-the-ground checks.

Another important element in protection practice involves early reporting of new threats – either before their impact has become serious, such as illegal logging, or where plans are still on the drawing board as with infrastructure projects. For this purpose, development of an Early Warning System to help coordinate action and support local NGO involvement, is being assessed.

## 2. GUIDANCE FOR WILD AREA MANAGEMENT

Within the European Union, a considerable proportion of wilderness and wild areas lies within the Natura 2000 protected network. Careful coordination with conservation interests can help ensure that 'non intervention management' techniques are adopted for such areas, involving encouragement of natural regeneration and succession. It has been recommended that guidance for this approach be developed for Member States by the European Commission.

Outside the EU, similar mechanisms and incentives need to be secured, tailored to different political and socio-economic contexts.

An active research agenda is required to assess and implement best practice in the management of protected areas and development of appropriate policy and support structures.

Illegal hunting and baiting is widespread. Imperial eagle poisoned, Derventski Hills, Bulgaria.  
© Vladimir Triphonov [www.SaveRaptors.org](http://www.SaveRaptors.org)





### 3. Communications

16

A communications strategy is needed to raise the profile of wild areas and their benefits. Closer linkage between existing wild area initiatives is also required.

There is great scope for developing a website-based facility that seeks to integrate all aspects of a wilderness 'sector' with a unified strategic vision. It will promote protection and restoration initiatives, helping to facilitate contacts and enable exchange of information, including best practice.

#### KEY INITIATIVES FOR PROTECTION

In addition to management, policy and communication measures, there is a need to highlight and support the many excellent initiatives already seeking to protect wild areas in Europe. Just three of these are outlined here.

PAN Parks, a joint venture between WWF and Molecaten, a commercial tourism operator, has created a network of certified wilderness areas that cover 236,000 hectares, providing both protection and opportunity for improved livelihoods from nature tourism among local communities.

Equally, the WWF Danube Carpathian Programme seeks to link neighbouring countries into an alliance to safeguard some of the wildest habitats of Europe's heartland, including the last remaining areas of old growth forest. WWF is proposing the establishment of a large-scale protected landscape across the Southern Carpathians from Djerdap national park in Serbia to Brasov in Romania – involving around 1 million hectares of existing protected areas, including some wilderness, that together would represent Europe's single largest protected landscape.



Janusz Zaleski, Under Secretary of State of the Polish Ministry of Environment, recently confirmed a historic plan to substantially increase the protected area for the ancient Bialowieza Forest, a World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve where adjacent areas have been threatened by logging.

There is considerable scope for supporting this initiative with a sustainable development approach based on wild area benefits that can be linked to local interests.

Old growth forest in Bialowieza National Park © Evelina Jaszcz





# The potential for restoration

There are great opportunities emerging for large scale restoration of natural habitats and processes, creating a network of wild areas linked by ecological corridors.

This is already occurring both naturally and with human assistance in many areas across Europe, bringing a range of attractive advantages such as enriched biodiversity, improved ecosystem services, and socio-economic benefits.

## NEW VISIONS FOR PRACTICAL ACTION

The case for restoration of natural wild areas can be powerfully conveyed using appropriate combinations of these benefits in tandem with more traditional biodiversity arguments.

There is for example great potential for representing a proactive strategy for reform of the Common Agricultural Policy – whereby existing subsidy support, rather than being lost to both farming and conservation under probable current scenarios for budget reduction, can be reallocated towards restoration programmes that benefit local communities and landholders as well as wild area objectives.

Natural restoration or re-wilding often follows land abandonment, for instance in Peneda Geres National Park in Portugal, where staff recently compiled a map of wilderness areas within the Park.

Restoration can involve a significant degree of initial intervention where areas have been substantially modified, such as marginal farmland and forestry. This may include managed planting from external seed sources, breaking up ground compacted by heavy



Beaver, successfully reintroduced to 27 European countries © Simon Kertys

grazing and reinstatement of natural processes. At the same time, there is a need to recognise the importance of natural grazing in the maintenance of diverse habitat structures.

Restoration can also involve reintroduction of species previously occurring, such as European bison to the Rothaargebirge region in North-Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, or beaver to Argyll in West Scotland.

Local communities in Abruzzo National Park, around 110 kilometers from Rome, now gain better livelihoods from tourism based on the return of the wolf to restored areas of natural habitat than they previously earned from livestock herding.

Such reintroductions can be controversial and require sensitive handling with full prior consultation, but they can help restore more balanced natural processes.

Konik horses running free in Oostvaardersplassen, only 40 kilometers from central Amsterdam © Hans Kampf



Originally reclaimed from the sea for industrial development in the 1960s it is now roamed by large herds of Heck cattle (closest relative of the auroch, extinct since the 17<sup>th</sup> century), Konik horse and red deer, complemented by a profusion of bird life.



Wilderness principles lie at the heart of this Programme, with non-intervention management practiced in core areas. The initiative is substantially based on opportunities arising from large scale abandonment of agricultural areas in Europe, which have provided unprecedented potential for re-wilding and creation of very substantial stretches of wilderness linked with existing protected areas. There is an important focus on utilizing nature tourism and other low impact activities to provide income and employment for local communities and landholders. Wherever possible, such benefits will be supplemented by facilitation of payments for ecosystem services.

The Wild Europe Field Programme is a vision already based on firm reality. Less than 40 kilometers from the centre of Amsterdam, in the highly developed epicentre of Europe, lies a 6,500 hectare miracle of wildness.

The project is a tribute to cooperation between conservation, national and local government, business and urban social interests.

There is an important message in support of global conservation emerging from all these initiatives.

If we in Europe are seen to be protecting and restoring large areas of our own wild natural heritage, and doing so moreover for economic and social as well as conservation motives, that sends a powerful signal to countries elsewhere in the world who are currently determining future land use options for their own often much larger and comparatively pristine ecosystems.





# Building a wild Europe for future generations

There is now unprecedented opportunity for tackling the threat to wilderness and putting into practice a vision for landscape scale restoration of large natural habitat areas linked into an ecologically functional network across Europe.

This is underlined by the impetus of the Parliamentary Resolution for protection of wilderness and the high level consensus reached at the Prague conference.

The next step is implementation of the Action Agenda from Prague, with the support of the Wild Europe partnership.

Success will require a coordinated consensus of interested parties reaching beyond conservation to encompass governments, landholding, forestry, farming, business and urban social interests among many others.

If this can be achieved, the vision has every chance of being realized.

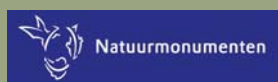
May 2010



*Wilderness has new prospective in Europe, Tatra National Park, Slovakia © Karol Kalisky [www.wildlife.sk](http://www.wildlife.sk)*

**The Wild Europe partnership  
includes the following organizations:**

BirdLife International • Countdown 2010 • Europarc Federation • IUCN  
Natuurmonumenten • PANParks Foundation  
Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts (UK) • UNESCO • WWF



[www.wildeurope.org](http://www.wildeurope.org)