

EUROPARC Federation
Report to General Assembly 2013
10th October 2013

Paper no 4

Title:

EUROPARC President's Report

Summary:

Update on the activities of the President and the Council

Recommendations:

- ❖ To note the report

Now the mid-term of my presidential period has coincided with the 40 years celebration of the Federation. I hope you have been following the communications on EUROPARC's 40 years "Working for Nature" from the Directorate.

The work of Protected Areas in these days is demanding and everybody is pressurized to do more work with less time with the same economy. This however hopefully leads us to find new solutions for the Federation. Working in nature conservation may mean that we are quite conservative in our actions, but I hope you can see that we are developing new levels of work.

The discussions on the creation of the new network with Eurosite has also this year taken much energy and effort deriving from last year's General Assembly decisions, although most work has been done by the Organizational Development Committee.

The visibility of the Federation in the European Commission and other institutions is developing and we have been especially present to develop criteria for sustainable tourism with DG enterprise, we are participating in the work for the European Habitats Forum with the DG environment and for the work with Volunteers we have a fruitful communication with the DG Education and Culture in Lifelong Learning programs through the GRUNDTVIG projects.

I am grateful for the support and help from the Council and the Directorate in making the work for the Federation, we all bring different experiences and skills and that adds to the ongoing work outcomes for the members of the Federation.

EUROPARC priorities and tasks are limited by the prevailing economy and more so on satisfied members who pay their fees, although I can fully understand in the economic situation over Europe that this isn't too easy. However we appreciate very much the continued support and investment of our members in the network, continuing to ensure that nature conservation is improved through international cooperation. We still see wounds in the public economy and we need to find more ways of funding our common values in nature and its management.

Sections

During this period there have been some interesting events that I have been participating in. The Nordic Baltic section celebrated its first 10 years. The former Presidents were invited by the active President to discuss the past period, the good works, the problems and the vision for having the section and its future. It culminated in a celebration event in Helsinki where the section first started and we were at the brand new Haltia visitor's centre which is an extraordinary tribute to Finnish nature.

Many of the Czech sections representatives were at the Krkonoše 50 year's celebration of Mountain habitat preservation, where I was asked to present a keynote speech on behalf of the Federation.

When it was time for the German Section's annual meeting, which I was hoping to attend, nature showed who rules, and Bad Schandau, where the section venue was, had some extra 10 meters of water due to the flooding of the Elbe. I hope to attend the postponed section meeting that will take place this autumn.

TransParcNet

As the South and East of Germany was flooded in early June, I had then the possibility to visit the meeting with our members that are in the Transboundary Parks. This year's meeting was hosted by the Maas – Nette – Schwalm Park and showed an incredible active group of members. I really encourage you who have transboundary possibilities to join this group if you haven't already.

European Charter for Sustainable Tourism

I see more and more the value of our Charter for the local work of our members. For me it has been possible to join several on-site events for the Charter. Other Council members have also been representing the Federation on different events related to the Charter.

Since it has grown very much and is now covering almost a third of the membership, we in the Council see that we have to intensify the relations with Charter Park members. Therefore we have decided that the Directorate manages overall the Charter process and the verification is handled preferably by our Consultancy –EUROPARC Consulting. We see that the charter still grows and needs to be directly handled in the headquarters together with the sections.

EUROPARC Consulting

Since more than ten years we have had a Consulting Company, the Federation is the owner and the President as the owner's representative attends an advisory board connected to the company. The company is commercially active and is delivering both goodwill and good reputation to the Federation as well as monetary compensation which is most welcomed. The Council has been impressed in the business and good profit of the best quality work done by EUROPARC Consulting. The value of the Consulting business is in a separate report.

Visibility and Cooperation for Contact with the Commission DG Environment

During the year we have been in contact with the Commissions representatives and it has been very good to have Ignace Schops from the Council close to Brussels in Belgium to have the possibility of presence often at short notice. The office in Brussels is of course essential for this relation to EU administration and Policy, the Council of Europe and interaction with other environmental NGO's.

Strategy and Future

This is still a vital task to perform; we must be looking to continually develop the Federation in the interests of its members. During the year there has been a great work done by Council representatives in the Organizational Development Committee, working on the development of a new network. The report of the committee has shown some possibilities but also opened our eyes for the risks and uncertainties which are present. Related to the committee report and in the views

of last year's General Assembly decision, we in the Council, after much discussions and deliberation, decided to present a separate paper with our recommendations to our members. That is a separate report in the agenda. We have been working a long time on this issue and now we are ready to advance our position, we have had a long time of outreaching but now we need to decide how to go on.

Council meetings

Over the year the Council has had 3 meetings. The first took place in Porto, Portugal in January hosted by Paolo Castro. In May we met in Sigulda, Gauja National Park hosted by Rolands Auziņš and his colleagues at the national park. In August we had our first teleconference meeting and in October we will meet in Hortobágy national park hosted by Gábor Szilágyi and his colleagues. The minutes of the meetings are always available on the members' login pages of the EUROPARC website.

Time and Thanks

I also wish to express my thanks to all of you who have worked for the EUROPARC Federation, especially those hardworking volunteers in the working groups, to our partners and for all hospitality performed for me and my colleagues on visits to events and meetings as well as on visits in your protected areas!

Yours,

Thomas Hansson