



**EUROPARC Federation
Report to Council
28th September 2014**

Title:

Report for Council on Conference 2015 decision

Summary :

Analysis of options for members meeting in 2014

Recommendations :

- ❖ To approve the venue for the Conference 2015

Accompanying paper:

5a_Conference_2015_Aproximate_calculation_compar
ative_prices_estimate

Conference 2015

As we had no bids from members to host the 2015 EUROPARC conference, it has been necessary to investigate other options. The ever increasing burden and costs of an annual 4-day conference, is also a pattern of operations that itself should be given some consideration. Therefore given that this change is needed for 2015, it may be a pattern of working, council can consider for the years following.

Council will need to decide the form of "member meeting" they wish for the Federation in 2015. In considering options, I would suggest the following criteria and needs of the Federation:

- general assembly;
- networking opportunities for members;
- gathering of PA managers to consider topic relevant to PAs (through speeches/workshops);
- internal EUROPARC sessions, meetings of sections/ working groups;
- the promise of a youth conference;
- ability of team to organise event at a given location.

All of these are of course all underpinned by COST.

1. General assembly.

We are obligated to have a general assembly annually. This is the ultimate decision making body of the organisation. It will also be essential to meet if any statute changes are needed to further the action in the strategy. We have not had a standalone general assembly (i.e. one that is not embedded in a larger conference for decades and therefore it is untested how many members would attend for a business meeting. This affects the entire budget of both business meetings only or a one and half day event. Although some suggestion regarding electronic attendance have been suggested, these will take some time to investigate, legally and practically and would not be in place for 2015.

2. Networking opportunities for members.

The EUROPARC conference is regularly the principal gathering of PA managers in Europe. The current conference format has been designed through field trips and workshop to provide opportunities to come together, share ideas and good practise and develop initiative. This is a fundament to both the *raison d'être* and *modus operandi* of EUROPARC.

3. Gathering in PA managers.

Not only is there the networking opportunities but the consideration of a topic through bringing expert input keeps members up to date with strategic thinking policy and practice in area relevant to their work.

4. Internal EUROPARC Sessions.

The annual gathering provides a platform for various EUROPARC work groups to be progressed through face to face meeting with interested topic groups.

5. The promise of a youth conference.

In 2013 EUROPARC committed to having a youth conference every two years. Although the council requested one in 2014, the Irish hosts were unable to provide that. Therefore considering what kind of youth event/conference should be delivered is also needed.

6. Ability of team to organise event at a given location

The Directorate team plays a huge role in every EUROPARC conference. Taking full responsibility for all aspects of the management of the conference is not a huge additional burden, but sufficiently more to have a knock on effect on other areas of work. Off course with staff principally involved in planning and managing the conference based in Regensburg, the choice of that location in 2015 and every 2nd year thereafter would be advantageous.

Cost is off course crucial. We can only operate within our means. Additional income would be required to fund a meeting of any size in 2015, a number of options will be required to be investigated, such as:

- delivering the meeting/conference through the NGO grant if we are successful;
- follow up funding from Alfred Toepfer Stiftung for the youth event;
- charging for both the youth event and members event to offset costs;
- additional sponsorship.

All elements will need to be decided now as the NGO grant application and subsequent budgets will need to be submitted before 10th October 2014. If all funding applications are unsuccessful, a minimum plan for a GA will be needed.

The Directorate investigated 2 locations and 3 options. Regensburg and Brussels are considered as the team have contacts and connection in both locations. I ruled out any other location, since we are about to have a change in council, I can have no certainty of those who will be elected and therefore cannot seek their assistance in offering location. Further I have no dates for any section or other EUROPARC meetings that a GA could be attached to in 2015.

As the burden on the team to deliver a meeting in a location with which we have no direct connection would be more than difficult. I restricted the option to Regensburg and Brussels.

I will present these in a ppt at the Council meeting with figure and photographs for each.

In both scenarios we considered a one and half day meeting with GA, plenary session, a few workshops / EUROPARC meetings, a small youth gathering and networking events, such as gala dinner, receptions. No field trips or extensive workshop programme were considered. We calculated an attendance of 200, including delegates, youth, staff, council etc. Room sizes and costs have been estimated on that basis. The event would need to take place in late October.

The City of Regensburg has a special conference team who offers expert assistance and support in the planning and delivery of a conference there. The team is off course based there therefore making planning detail much easier. There is also a possibility of discounted offers if it looks like we can commit to a 2-year cycle of ongoing meeting. Regensburg can offer a range of hotel

accommodation, is relatively easily accessible from a number of mainland European countries. There is also a saving in staff costs as staff wouldn't have to travel to the conference and planning meetings.

In Brussels we would have no support, and with the main members of the team who would be involved in the planning and management of the conference based in Regensburg an additional cost in travel and attendance. There is the consideration that we can raise our profile amongst other NGO and commissions etc, but in the huge number of events that take place in Brussels we could easily be lost. NO definitive action on gaining parliamentary event has been taken, as we are yet to find a supportive MEP. Having looked at number of options – parliament, committee of regions and representative member state facilities, we identified the Bavarian facilities as offering the best option. The Committee and the Regions and other are also available, but not with multiple rooms. However in order to have access to the facilities the event would need be a joint event with the Bavarian authorities and no agreement on this has been as yet discussed.

I have prepared a table of comparative costs. See excel file “5a_Conference_2015_Aproximate_calculation_comparative_prices_estimate”. In each case a one and half day event may cost around 40,000 Euros, and needing to raise fees of around 24,000 Euros, excluding a youth conference fee at this stage but excluding the gala dinner which would be an additional fee. Further sponsorship / income would need to be found.

Given that the NGO application for 2015 is imminent, and will need to be included in the budget, there can be no further delay in a decision on this matter.

Council therefore needs to consider the options presented and indicate a clear decision on location and format of a members meeting for 2015.

Carol Ritchie
EUROPARC Director
September 2014