



**EUROPARC**  
F E D E R A T I O N

# EUROPARC

2008 - 2012 STRATEGY

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# Foreword

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The purpose of this document, developed during 2007 and completed and approved by the General Assembly in autumn 2007, is to present the strategy for EUROPARC until December 2012. It includes a situational analysis and Strategic Plan 2008-2012, that sets out the strategic objectives for EUROPARC's overall efforts to support protected areas work in Europe. A detailed business plan will be developed to deliver the strategy



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## Situation Analysis

### *Challenges and opportunities for European protected areas*

Figure 2: Distribution of EUROPARC sites per country

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Figure 1: Map reflecting geographic distribution of represented countries.

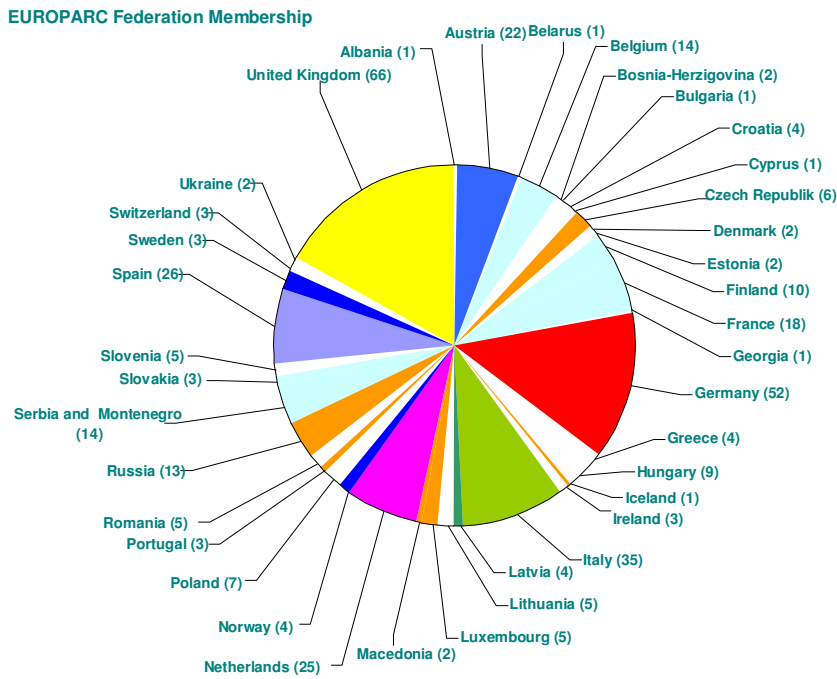


Figure 2: Distribution of EUROPARC sites per country

# Situation Analysis

## *Challenges and opportunities for European protected areas*

In preparation for the strategy and work programme, an analysis of the current situation and trends was undertaken by the council and section representatives to provide the foundation for the development of the strategy. The analysis was used to define the mission and goals and all subsequent plans presented in the strategic plan. A summary of the analysis and implications for the strategy of the organisation is presented below.

### 1. Current conditions for nature conservation work in Europe

The general trend in Europe is an increasing recognition of the importance of environment and indeed that of biodiversity as basis for a healthy society and sustainable economic development. However, there remain important differences in legislation and conservation measures between countries and still significant efforts are required to achieve efficient and effective biodiversity conservation.

Most European countries are signatories of various international and regional conventions that promote and support biodiversity and cultural heritage conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

The last three decades have seen significant changes in terms of biodiversity conservation in the European Union. Whilst EU countries have differing legislation and management systems for national and regional protected areas, those areas possessing biodiversity values of community interest are being integrated into the Natura 2000 network. This network partly overlaps with the national protected areas. Furthermore, many countries are assimilating the Natura 2000 sites with protected areas.

The Birds and Habitat Directives have potential to become the most efficient tool for biodiversity conservation in Europe, by establishing the framework for maintaining or achieving a good conservation status for Natura 2000 sites. Nevertheless, greater resources are needed for effective implementation of these directives Europe-wide.

The European Commission has proposed an ambitious strategy to protect more effectively the marine environment across Europe. The thematic Strategy on the protection and conservation of the marine environment aims to achieve good environmental status of the EU's marine waters by 2021 and to protect the resource base upon which marine related economic and social activities

#### **The relevant international conventions for nature conservation**

- Convention on Biological Diversity and the Programme of Work on Protected Areas
- EU Habitats Directive
- EU Birds Directive
- EU Water Framework Directive
- European Landscape Convention
- Alpine Convention
- Carpathian Convention
- Ramsar Convention

depend. The need for a system of protected areas in the marine environment is increasingly urgent, especially in coastal areas where the connection with land is so important. In addition the EU is promoting Integrated Coastal Zone Management through its communication of 2002, a crucial process for making the connection, which all protected areas on the coast should be closely involved with and contribute to.

In addition to EU policies with a special focus on biodiversity, there are other priority areas identified within the 6<sup>th</sup> Environmental Programme that are significant and will influence protected area management. These include: climate change; nature and biodiversity; health and environment; resources and waste.

In recent years Central and Eastern European countries have faced very rapid changes that have a significant effect not only on the social, economic and political environment, but also natural and cultural heritage. These countries are generally characterised by a high level of biological diversity due to the maintenance of large areas of habitats, diversified landscapes and less intensive management practices. However, rapid changes in land ownership and economic environments in these countries are creating significant pressures on biodiversity, natural resources and valuable landscapes. Conversely, support for the management of existing protected areas is decreasing or almost non-existent in some of the countries. National protected area systems and newly designed Natura 2000 networks are facing huge challenges and the need for management support is continually growing.

'Climate change' can be defined as the environmental changes that affect the processes that determine the functioning of the planet as a system. This is often used to refer to the effect of human activities on the global climate system.

Although environmental changes have occurred throughout history, the speed of these changes recently is unique and are directly caused by one only species, *Homo sapiens*.

There are two phenomena key to understanding the recent global change: rapid growth in human population; and increase in the rate of consumption of natural resources. These have resulted in a rapid change of land use patterns: cultural landscapes, usually heterogeneous and with a high biological and cultural diversity, are being converted into homogeneous landscapes (mainly intensive agricultural lands and urban settlements). Natural landscapes with habitat types that do not depend on cultural influence are often subject to cultivation and/or fragmentation. The result is a decrease in habitat and species biodiversity.

Protected areas can contribute to mitigating climate change effects through:

- Influencing protected area and landscape planning policies;
- conserving areas that can offer shelter for endemic and relict species and habitats;
- the provision of large areas and corridors that offer opportunities for nature to show how species and habitats can adapt to changes;
- awareness raising and education activities driving people to actively influence human activities in a positive way.

At the same time protected area management will have to adapt to the effects of climate change by increasing research on potential impact and on how management measures can help to respond to climate change and to mitigate the effects. Networking will probably become even more important in helping to find solutions and to give nature space to adapt to the changes climate change will bring.

Protected areas are recognised in most European countries as essential for the conservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage. However, economic development and outcomes from the Lisbon agenda remains the primary focus in most if not all European countries. Pressures on protected areas are thus in many cases still present and indeed increasing, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, but also in parts of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic with increasing tourism and residential pressures.

Ongoing changes in the political, economic and social environment of protected areas, such as: loss of biodiversity; climate change; decreases in staffing, financial and other resources in many public authorities; changing responsibilities and the greater role of public-private-partnerships, require increased efforts to optimise management of protected areas, so that they can achieve their objectives now and in the future.

Protected areas make an important contribution to the sustainable development of rural areas in Europe. Consequently, the activities of integrated regional developments including: employment; sustainable tourism; regional marketing; health; traffic; education; and instruments such as the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) are important considerations for protected areas strategies with the new European Funding period (2007-2013) and beyond.

The value of protected areas in providing environmental services and in mitigating impacts of natural disturbances on human settlements could be better recognised. Protected areas play a significant role in preventing flooding through appropriate wetland and forest management, in maintaining sand dunes to reduce impacts of tidal surges, and in soil and land stabilisation through maintenance of vegetation cover.

Levels of governmental support for protected area management vary from country to country and depend largely on the political situation and on the level of awareness and support of the general public.

## 2. Needs and opportunities for protected areas and for EUROPARC

Whilst most countries still consider identification and designation of new protected areas important for biodiversity and cultural heritage conservation, demonstrating benefits for local communities and management effectiveness and efficiency in protected areas is becoming an increasingly significant issue for many European countries.

However, situations differ across Europe and there is great variation in protected area needs and opportunities between regions. Although the policy framework and resources allocated to protected areas have a certain stability in many Western European countries, in most of Central and Eastern Europe the policy framework is not sufficient, there are significant gaps in implementation and there are little or no resources allocated to long-term protected area management or resources are not secure.



**EUROPARC has a significant role in providing a European platform for exchange of experience and know-how to support protected areas in their planning and management activities. EUROPARC is well placed to influence decision makers at the National and European level using the technical and professional expertise within its membership.**

# Mission and Strategic Plan

2008 – 2012

## 1 EUROPARC Vision and Mission

### 1.1 The Vision of EUROPARC

**Protected areas in Europe are valued by all as inspiring models for nature conservation and the preservation of wilderness. They are also living-working landscapes / seascapes: models of sustainable natural resource use benefiting society and maintaining Europe's cultural heritage and traditional rural livelihoods.**

In order to achieve this vision and ensure protected areas are maintained and their management continually improved, there is a clear need to support and maintain a strong network of protected area professionals. Protected areas embrace both the terrestrial and marine environment and the connection between them. Further, EUROPARC needs to become the voice of European protected areas, convincing decision makers and the wider public of the importance of protected areas in maintaining the best of our natural and cultural heritage for the future.

### 1.2 Mission of EUROPARC

**EUROPARC is the leading European organisation for protected areas bringing together dedicated professionals, government agencies, decision makers, and supporters to increase effectiveness in conserving and enhancing natural and cultural heritage on land and sea for the well-being and benefit of current and future generations**

The mission will be achieved by:

- promoting good practice and contributing to the effectiveness of protected area management;
- becoming the voice of protected areas and landscapes in Europe, influencing public policy and programmes to ensure the objectives of protected areas and landscapes are

incorporated;

- raising the profile of protected areas and increasing support for their protection and management;
- contributing to the formation of viable protected area networks through facilitating establishment of new areas and encouraging transboundary co-operation.

### 1.3 EUROPARC - the current situation

EUROPARC is the umbrella organisation for protected areas in Europe, a platform for highly motivated and dedicated professionals and supporters of protected areas. An international organisation reflecting national and local characteristics. Membership consists of protected area managers, national authorities and institutions responsible for protected areas, universities and research institutes, NGOs and individuals.

EUROPARC works throughout Europe, with 391<sup>1</sup> members in 38 European countries. More than 500 protected areas are managed and/or supervised by EUROPARC member organisations.

EUROPARC works to improve protected area management mainly through:

- capacity building and experience exchange programmes;
- developing guidelines and sharing best practice to support practitioners in their day-to-day activities;
- facilitating networking and dialogue between protected area practitioners and supporters;
- highlighting the values and benefits of protected areas to politicians and the public at a range of levels;
- contributing to policy and programme development and performing an advocacy role towards relevant institutions.

EUROPARC's primary activities are:

- providing information to members on protected area management issues, and on events related to protected areas initiated by various institutions and organisations;
- organising working groups on priority topics requested by members to support the development of specific guidelines and recommendations;
- developing and implementing projects for the benefit of members;
- facilitating the establishment of partnerships between members;
- organising seminars and conferences on protected area related topics for protected area staff and for local community representatives, NGOs and businesses.

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<sup>1</sup> Data from May 2007

## The present structure and main initiatives of EUROPARC

Based in Grafenau, Germany, EUROPARC has active members in 38 countries, sub-divided into 7 regional sections: Atlantic Isles, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Nordic-Baltic Section and Spain. In addition to the HQ, a new office was established in Brussels in 2006. EUROPARC is governed by a council of 7 members including the president with the option to co-opt 3 additional members

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas and network was developed by EUROPARC to provide a framework for protected areas to make a contribution to sustainable development by generating good practice in the management of tourism in protected areas. The Charter seeks to recognise protected areas following approved approaches in developing and managing sustainable tourism. In June 2007 the network of certified Charter Parks comprised 36 protected areas in eight European countries.

The 'Transboundary Parks – Following Nature's Design' initiative was formally launched in 2002 with presentation of the first certificate to the national parks of Neusiedler See-Seewinkel and Fertő-Hanság on the Austrian-Hungarian border. This was followed by a worldwide launch at the 5<sup>th</sup> World Parks Congress in Durban, South Africa.

Since the first EUROPARC junior ranger programmes started in 2003 numerous protected areas across Europe have implemented activities and programmes for junior rangers living in or close to the park. Many young people have taken part in junior ranger camps learning about the value of protected areas and the work of the ranger. The EUROPARC junior ranger network has grown substantially and brings both junior rangers and rangers together at international junior ranger camps and training events.

Working groups on key topics are organised by request from members, with approval of the Council and with the aim of collecting information and providing guidance for members. There are currently working groups focusing on Natura 2000, Wetlands, Coastal and Marine Protected Areas and Higher Education.

Task forces were set up by the Council in 2006 considering the development of project proposals for the benefit of members working in the areas of Youth & Education and Economic Benefits of Protected Areas

In order to support its work and generate additional income, the EUROPARC founded a consultancy arm, EUROPARC Consulting GmbH. It was established in order to provide the vast range of experience within EUROPARC's pan-European network to varied clients in the form of reliable, cost-effective consultancy services. The company is registered in Germany where it shares an office with the EUROPARC Federation. Its managing director resides in the United Kingdom where its office is situated in the North of England.

Its main personnel resource, however, is its pool of some 60 to 70 experts, drawn from the EUROPARC network and engaged for individual assignments according to their particular expertise. Thanks to the many members of the EUROPARC Federation in 38 European countries, EUROPARC Consulting can call upon experts across the full spectrum of protected-area management for the particular requirements of any assignment.

EUROPARC Consulting is exclusively contracted to evaluate the work of European protected areas applying for recognition under the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas and "Transboundary Parks – Following Nature's Design".

For the last six years, EUROPARC Consulting has implemented the evaluations of all protected areas wanting to subscribe to one of the above labels. The company provides the expert verifiers for on-site assessments of, for example, the candidate park's work with local stakeholders, its commitment to sustainable tourism development or its protection of natural ecological processes.

The elements of the EUROPARC strategy are combined into an approach below. EUROPARC will work through three main strategic headlines, each integrated and combined to achieve the central vision and goals.

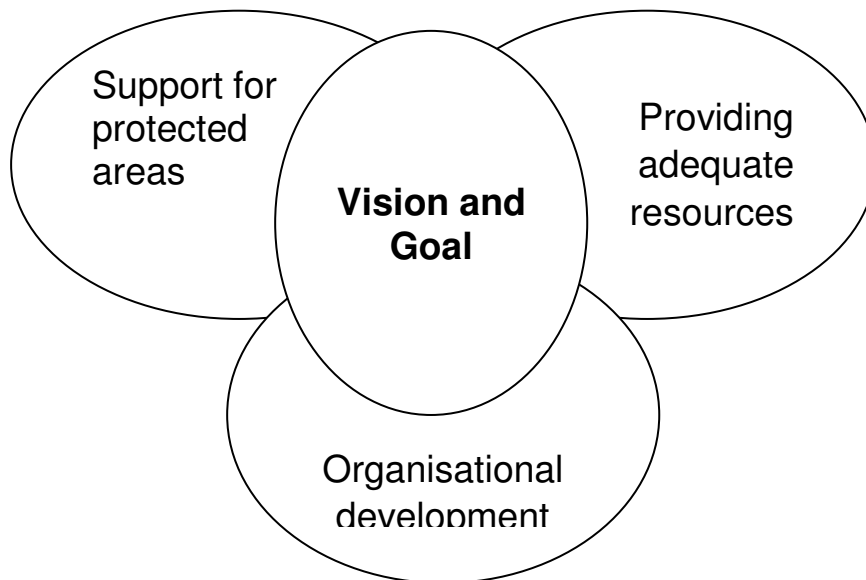


Figure 3: Strategic Pillars of the EUROPARC Strategy

**Support for protected areas** will be provided through:

- supporting / contributing to *quality management* of protected areas;
- *influencing policy* at the European, regional and national level;
- *networking*;
- *co-operation* with partner organisations.

**Providing adequate resources** through fundraising and by developing the capacity of EUROPARC and its members to develop projects in partnership and by using the advantages of networking. These are considered essential for the success of the organisation.

**Organisational development** is seen as key to the future of EUROPARC and will be geared to ensure:

- an effective and efficient structure of EUROPARC, needed to fulfil the mission, the tasks and to respond to the needs of the membership;
- efficient and enabling internal structures, that have sufficient flexibility to face new challenges;
- coherence and continuity;
- the visibility of EUROPARC by developing/improving its corporate identity.

- The completion of an immediate and detailed review and start implementation. see 10.1.3

## 2 EUROPARC 2008 - 2012 Strategy

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This section outlines the Strategy for 2008 - 2012 for improving the effective management of protected areas and securing support from decision makers for protected areas in Europe. This strategy will guide the activities of EUROPARC.

### 2.1 2012 Goal

**Ensure that member protected areas are managed by a network of highly professional, well informed practitioners, held together by a strong network and supported by decision makers at the national, regional and European level.**

To achieve the vision of preserving the best of our natural and cultural heritage in Europe through terrestrial and marine protected areas, EUROPARC must consolidate the professional network of protected area managers and secure the policy framework at the national, regional and European level. After 2012, the next steps will be to build on, and magnify these structures in order to progressively ensure that protected areas continue to be highly valued by the general public and provide viable models for conservation and natural resource management.

This overall goal supports a commitment to the global Convention for Biological Diversity. EUROPARC aims to contribute best expertise to the Programme of Work on Protected areas that aims by 2012, to complete "comprehensive, effectively managed and ecologically-representative national systems of protected areas".

Within this lies several sub-goals:

- Protected areas that ensure a viable network of ecosystems providing sufficient space for species to thrive in our heavily modified continent, and management planning that overlooks physical and political boundaries;
- A network of highly dedicated professionals managing protected areas, continuously improving management practices by learning from each other and sharing experience;
- Protected areas are models for conservation management that provides ecosystem services and other benefits to local communities and the public at large;
- Policy frameworks at the European and national levels provide support for the effective management of protected areas;
- EUROPARC is equipped and resourced for the tasks it is setting out to achieve.

EUROPARC will work with partners to achieve these goals.



## 2.2 Thematic Fields – Overview

Within each of the strategic headlines, thematic fields have been identified for the future work of EUROPARC. This section presents these thematic fields and the aims / main activities. Further detail on the objectives and targets, as well as on projects and activities forming part of EUROPARC's EUROPARC's present programme are, to be found in the Annex and will be incorporated into the Business Plan that will be developed based on the present strategy. Annual work plans will be developed to guide EUROPARC's progress towards achieving the objectives and associated targets as presented in the *Annex*.

### Support for protected areas

EUROPARC core activities will aim to support protected area practitioners and decision makers to improve effectiveness and efficiency of protected area management, to demonstrate the benefits and values of the protected areas they manage and to further improve the protected area network.

#### 1. Management

To contribute to the improvement of protected area management in Europe, EUROPARC will:

- Foster networking, including the establishment of a data base for members;
- Contribute to the evaluation of management effectiveness and efficiency by providing quality criteria for assessments based on existing experiences;
- Use the rich and valuable experience of members and collect and provide good practice and develop guidelines for protected area management activities (for e.g. species and habitat management, community benefits, participatory management);
- Introduce quality management systems.

#### 2. Efficient and representative protected area networks

EUROPARC aims to develop an inventory and database of protected areas, analyse gaps and identify corridors and influence policies to support the completion of a viable protected area network in Europe. Work on transboundary protected areas, Natura 2000, marine and coastal protected areas will make a significant contribution to this thematic field.

#### 3. Benefits and values of protected areas

EUROPARC is able to demonstrate and promote benefits and values of protected areas. Special attention will be given to:

- *biodiversity* and *cultural* values fostered by protected areas and;
- benefits in domains where EUROPARC has significant expertise and results such as *tourism*, or for domains with increasing significance such as *climate change*, *environmental services*, *health*, *well-being* and *employment*.

#### 4. Capacity building, training and education

- EUROPARC will have the capacity and resources to provide capacity building and training programmes for protected area staff. Capacity building programmes are strongly linked and should adequately reflect the main issues related to the thematic fields identified as important to EUROPARC.
- Engaging the wider public and particularly youth in the work of protected areas.

### **Providing adequate resources**

#### 5. Financial support

- EUROPARC aims to develop and diversify to achieve a stable funding base from public and private sources to support its programme of activities;
- Active engagement of members and sections for fundraising and gaining supporters;
- EUROPARC will have to actively engage in identifying strategic partners and supporters and in building partnerships to increase its capacity to lobby decision makers and other key stakeholders to contribute to achieving its goals.

#### 6. Other support

EUROPARC will ensure its staff and council are adequately equipped to fulfil its objectives.

EUROPARC will seek to promote active member participation.

### **Organisational development**

#### 7. Communications

Effective communications will be required to ensure internal communication, visibility and the support needed to achieve EUROPARC's objectives and to support the ability to influence policy makers.

Effective internal and external communications are important to ensure:

- that all EUROPARC's constituent parts have the information they need and;
- that the organisation and members attain good external visibility and the support needed to achieve EUROPARC's objectives.

## 8. Capacity

EUROPARC will have the structure, capacities, and presence needed to respond and adapt to changing conditions, challenges and opportunities for protected areas in Europe, and provide the support needed by members.

## 9. Efficiency and Effectiveness

EUROPARC strives for an efficient operational systems to provide smooth and effective support and wise and effective use of resources.

Regular review of the structure will ensure it remains fit for purpose to deliver EUROPARC's goals and support its objectives.