



# EUROPARC

## Low Countries

### Introduction

Discussions to start a EUROPARC Low Countries section began in 2012, resulting in a unofficial start in Genk in October 2012. In 2013 a first working program was initiated and currently we are seeking formal approval of the EUROPARC Federation based on a Council decision.

This document is intended to set the scene for the EUROPARC Low Countries section: who are (current) members, the sections board, it's goals and articles of association.

The provisional EUROPARC Low Countries section currently has 20 members  
Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland, on behalf of Hoge Kempen National Park, Belgium  
Meinweg National Park, Netherlands  
Groote Peel National Park, Netherlands  
Zoom-Kalmthoutse Heide, Transboundary National Park, Belgium/Netherlands  
Oosterschelde National Park, Netherlands  
Maasduinen National Park, Netherlands  
Loonse en Drunense duinen National Park, Netherlands  
Biesbosch National Park, Netherlands  
Utrechtse Heuvelrug National Park, Netherlands  
Veluwezoom National Park, Netherlands  
Sallandse Heuvelrug National Park, Netherlands  
Zuid-Kennemerland National Park, Netherlands  
Weerribben Wieden National Park, Netherlands  
Dwingelderveld National Park, Netherlands  
Drents-Friese Wold National Park, Netherlands  
Beek en Esdorpen Landschap Drentsche Aa National Park & National Landscape Netherlands  
Duinen van Texel National Park, Netherlands  
Alde Feanen National Park, Netherlands  
Lauwersmeer National Park, Netherlands  
Schiermonnikoog National Park, Netherlands  
Transboundary National Park Maas-Schwalm-Nette

The Dutch National Parks are working together in the "Stichting Samenwerkingsverband Nationale Parken (SNP)". The foundation is the umbrella organisation for the national parks in the Netherlands. All individual National Parks and SNP are individual EUROPARC Federation members. Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland, on behalf of Hoge Kempen National Park also is an individual EUROPARC Federation member.

We are working on broadening the membership of the section –at the end of the day resulting in Federation members as well of course- with Regional Landscapes in Flanders and National Landscapes in the Netherland. The 17 Regional Landscapes in Flanders are united in "Vlaams

*Handwritten signatures and initials in blue ink.*

Overleg Regionale Landschappen (VORL)”, the Dutch National Landscapes are united in the “Servicenet Nationale Landschappen”.

EUROPARC has 500 members, representing about 400 protected areas in 39 countries. Members are mainly protected areas. Recognizing the importance of encouraging inter-European collaboration and building a strong network in Europe, we wish to stimulate more active engagement of the above mentioned networks in a European arena. The Low Countries section invites it's (potential) members to join the EUROPARC Federation.

After consultation undertaken between representatives of SNP and Hoge Kempen National Park, it was decided in 2012 to set up a EUROPARC Low Countries section, to develop the articles of association and to call upon the EUROPARC Federation Council to officially establish the Low Countries section on the basis of these articles of association.

The following articles of association defines the conditions for establishment and operation of this section.

#### **Articles of association of the EUROPARC Low Countries section**

##### *Article 1:*

Officials of National Parks in Flanders and the Netherlands decide to establish a EUROPARC Low Countries section. The section will be open to all organizations dealing with protected areas, as far as they are members of EUROPARC Federation.

##### *Article 2 :*

The Low Countries section is a grouping of organizations of dealing with protected area management safeguarding biodiversity and the repositories of the natural and cultural heritage in the Netherlands and Flanders (Belgium), but is a structure without legal personality.

##### *Article 3 :*

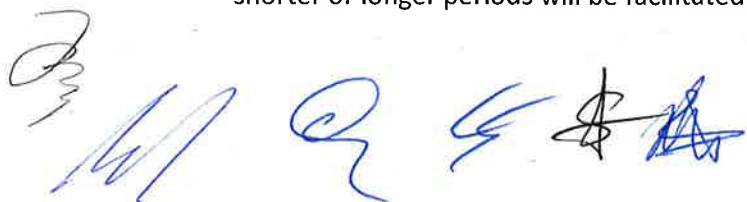
To join the Low Countries section, partners will be or become EUROPARC Federation member. In contrast, an organization may be a EUROPARC Federation member without joining the Low Countries section.

##### *Article 4 :*

##### **General Objectives of the Low Countries section:**

The Low Countries section will facilitate the cooperation in various ways, for instance by providing best practices and examples. This workprogramme provides a framework outlining the scope of activities to be undertaken and a tool for daily work of the coordinator and the president of the section. Having said all that, the activities of the section rely on the active involvement of the section members and continuous efforts will be made to increase membership in all member countries. These goals will be fulfilled through the organisation of workshops, seminars, study visits, staff exchange and information exchange.

The section will above all function as a forum for exchange of information as well as a forum for capacity building and communication of best practices. Upcoming events, such as conferences, seminars and workshops arranged by the members and/or other international organizations, will be communicated by the section, using the webpage, email list and newsletter as information channels. Topical workshops and seminars will also be arranged by the section itself. Workshops and seminars will not only function as a method for capacity building, i.e. transferring experiences and knowledge, but will also be utilised to promote project preparation. Exchange of staff for shorter or longer periods will be facilitated.



### **Key objectives**

The key objectives and role of the Low Countries Section are to:

- **Contribute to** the fulfilment of the goals of the EUROPARC Federation, and especially to:
  - Facilitate exchange of information and expertise between the members of the section
  - Facilitate exchange of information and expertise between the section and other EUROPARC sections and the EUROPARC office.
- **Contribute to** a new EUROPARC network organisation as the most important European organisation for managers of protected areas, by:
  - Facilitating and stimulating the implementation of joint projects and other activities in the Low Countries
  - Emphasising the role of the section members as key actors in the management of protected areas,
  - Increasing the membership of the Low Countries section in both member countries.
- **Contribute to** raising issues regarding environment, biodiversity and cultural heritage as being a basis for a healthy society and a sustainable economic development, by:
  - Disseminate related knowledge and experience
  - Communicate and interpret related knowledge and experiences
- **Contribute to** expanding the use of the Charter for Sustainable Tourism in protected areas by:
  - Supporting existing European Charter Parks
  - Disseminate the knowledge and the awareness of sustainable tourism and the process of sustainable tourism
  - Encourage members to participate in the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism
- **Contribute to** transboundary cooperation by:
  - Supporting existing transboundary cooperation and the EUROPARC Transboundary programme when necessary
  - Supporting and stimulating potential transboundary networks
- **Contribute to** project partner search by:  
providing the members with help for project partner search in project preparation, both within the Low Countries and in relation to other EUROPARC members and sections. Section members will be able to get assistance from the coordinator as a focal point for project partner search. Project preparation relies otherwise mainly on the activity of each section member. The coordination effort will not be restricted to new projects only, but also provide information about ongoing activities and "lessons learned"
- **Contribute to** exploring new funding opportunities:  
Most of the funds needed for management of protected areas are provided through state budgets. However, the importance of other funding sources is growing: European grants, foundation of financial trusts, heritage lottery funds are increasingly important to support the work of PA's. The section will play an active role in the dissemination of new developments and support funding applications
- **Contribute to** internal communication by:  
Organizing a members assembly at least once year. At the members assembly the work plan for the year is to be approved. Section meetings will also be held in advance of the annual EUROPARC conference in order to coordinate a shared view on issues related to the EUROPARC General Assembly.  
Regular contacts with the EUROPARC Federation will be maintained as a part of the communication routine. A connection to the EUROPARC council will also be guaranteed.

7



The members of the section will be provided with information about the work of the other EUROPARC sections, and the Low Countries section may seek cooperation with other sections on specific topics.

- **Contribute to** external communication by:  
Communication with international organisations, such as WWF, IUCN, Eurosite, Wetland International and others in order to maintain a high level of information exchange to members.

#### **Article 5 : Constitution , dissolution**

- The Low Countries section will be installed during an official constitutional meeting, by a vote of members, and signing of this document by members, constituting commitment to participate in the section, and to respect the articles of association
- This section shall be instituted after review and approval of the articles of association by the EUROPARC Council . The written agreement of the Council EUROPARC allows the section to use the name and logo EUROPARC .
- The Low Countries section may be dissolved if three quarters of those Low Countries partners present at a meeting decide to dissolve the section

#### **Article 6 : Composition**

- The section consists initially of organizations dealing with protected area's and the repositories of the natural and cultural heritage in Flanders and the Netherlands
- Every organization in Flanders and the Netherlands dealing with protected areas and the repositories of the natural and cultural heritage can apply to be a partner in the section. Being a Low Countries section member implies membership of the Federation
- The new bodies will have to apply by mail justifying section membership
- Applications are validated by the members of the section , and the integration results in a signature of the articles of association
- A member who ceases EUROPARC Federation membership loses its access to the Low Countries section
- Any member may leave the national section by sending a letter of resignation to the section . Nothing prevents the resigning to maintain EUROPARC Federation membership.
- In case of non- compliance with the articles of association, a member may be excluded from the section by majority of votes in plenary session.
- Modification of the articles of association of the section should be in consultation with the EUROPARC Federation Council .

#### **Article 7 : General Operation of the structure**

- Each member of the section has two votes .
- In case of equality of votes, the Chairman casts the final vote
- The secretariat of the section is based at the structure holding the Presidency .
- Invitations are sent by the President or on behalf of the President to all members of the section observing a minimum period of 14 days .
- A person may vote not only on behalf of the organization he or she is presenting, but he or she can also execute a maximum of two proxy-votes.
- The section will meet for formal decisions at least once a year .
- The EUROPARC section can not officially represent EUROPARC .
- An agreement with another organization must collect EUROPARC agreement.



**Article 8 : appointment of President and secretariat**

President and secretariat are appointed by members for a maximum period of 5 years and can be re-appointed only one more period. The election shall be by a majority of votes cast. In case of equality of votes in the election, there shall be designated by a random draw .

- Meetings are conducted by the President appointed by the membership. If unavailable , it is substituted by another person designated by the membership

**Article 9 : Duties of the President and secretariat**

- The President and secretariat shall convene the members in the assembly, as many times as it deems necessary , and at least once a year .

- prepares the agenda of the meeting and provides stakeholders.

- manages the section for the duration of its mandate and according to the articles of association.

- represents the section in the contacts and discussions with EUROPARC .

- It participates in the annual EUROPARC conference at the annual meeting of Presidents section .

- is responsible for the flow of information between the members of the section.

**Article 10 : Relations with EUROPARC**

- The articles of association must be approved by the EUROPARC Federation Council, as is the same for changes in the articles of association .

- The section informs EUROPARC all meetings of the section, preferably by presenting an annual working program.

- A EUROPARC representative may attend meetings of the section.

- The President and secretariat of the section is responsible for submitting an annual activity report,

to transmit to the President of EUROPARC before the annual conference.

- The EUROPARC section can generate revenue but will have no budget issued by the Federation.

In case of joint actions, the charges will be distributed in due proportion to each organization.

- The EUROPARC section should encourage members of his section to quickly adjust their annual contribution to the EUROPARC Federation on centralized account of the latter.

- The EUROPARC section may vote at general meetings of EUROPARC .

**Article 11:**

- This document comes into force when it is approved by the EUROPARC Federation Council and the section members .

Hereby, the meeting decided to appoint Joke Kersten as President of the Low Countries Section. The Secretariat will be established as EUROPARC Low Countries Section – Address: PO Box 2527 8375 AA Oldemarkt, the Netherlands.



