

General Assembly Documents
EUROPARC Consulting report
September 30th 2010



Tougher times ahead ...

An overview of EUROPARC Consulting activities



**Work and progress
from EUROPARC Conference 2009
to end of July 2010**



EUROPARC
CONSULTING

1 General

1.1 The year so far

After several years of uninterrupted growth, it now seems that we have entered a period of much tougher times ahead. Many protected areas all over Europe are experiencing cut-backs in their budgets. Plans are curtailed, projects shelved. Competition is getting fiercer and good programmes are becoming scarcer.

Despite the international credit crunch EUROPARC Consulting was doing well last year and we were busier than ever. However, the first half of 2010 was disappointing in that there were very few tenders to pursue and not many new work opportunities.

Then there was the great blow of losing our most fervent supporter, our greatest asset: Professor Aitken Clark. His untimely death left a huge gap in our company. Not only did we lose a great friend but also a tireless fighter for the good of protected areas. His absence makes our work all the more difficult and we continue to miss him terribly.

1.2 The new EUROPARC Consulting Board

At the first Board meeting after Aitken's death the Board elected Richard Partington as his successor. The Board now consists of the two *ex officio* members: the President of the EUROPARC Federation, Erika Stanciu, and the EUROPARC Federation director, Carol Ritchie. In addition, there are the three independent members, Norbert Heukemes (BE), Richard Partington (UK) and Hans Schiphorst (NL). The Board also co-opted Richard Blackman as advisor to the Board. That was very much welcomed as we wanted to keep in touch with him and his long experience.

1.3 Raising the Profile of EUROPARC Consulting and the EUROPARC Federation

We continue to work intensely for the Federation's best-known product, the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. We constantly strive to promote the aims of the Federation as a whole whilst, at the same time, streamlining the process and making Charter work more and more efficient. Thanks to the generosity of TUI we have been able to revise and re-design the whole Charter documentation: the full text of the Charter itself, the Charter manual and all the forms necessary for the evaluation and re-evaluation process. It has been a lot of work but it was necessary. The newly revised documents should be ready in time for this year's EUROPARC Conference.

2 Specific work since the last EUROPARC Conference in Strömstad 2009

2.1 Protected Areas for a Living Planet - *WWF Danube Carpathian Ecoregion programme*

This ambitious programme is nearing completion. The last full event will have taken place shortly before the Conference. Once the necessary feedback and the final report are completed we can look back on a most successful programme.

Since early in 2007, EUROPARC and WWF have worked closely together on this programme which was to ensure that:

- the Carpathian protected areas are supported by a network of skilled professional protected-area practitioners;
- we can achieve an increased participation of key stakeholders in protected-area design, management and benefit sharing;
- critical gaps in the protected-area network are filled, with a particular focus on the creation of large intact blocks, freshwater eco-systems, wilderness and trans-boundary protected areas.



A significant part of the work was sub-contracted to EUROPARC Consulting and Consulting's involvement in the Carpathian Eco-region continues to progress vigorously.



Most of the budding Training Champions participating in the "Train the Trainers" programme in Poland this spring (photo by Marek Majerczak).

For the spring seminar our participants and trainers met in the Polish spa and ski town of Szczawnica, in the Dunajec valley, close to the Pieniny National Park and just across the river from Slovakia. The training course focused on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), and on continuing to develop skills related to management planning, sustainable tourism, and training and communication. For this event Betsy King from WWF Scotland, an expert in ESD, joined the lead trainers Rosie Simpson and Keith Buchanan.

By now, all the trainees are able to lead their own training programmes and spread their skills right across their own areas and beyond. When the course certificates for this course were presented to the first class of Training Champions at the final event in the Bavarian Forest (DE) and Šumava (CZ) just before the EUROPARC Conference, we were able to look back on a significant achievement in capacity-building and establishing a network of well-trained protected-area practitioners.

2.2 WWF DCP - Protection and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in Ukraine Carpathians

The Danube and Carpathian regions of Ukraine belong to the priority eco-region for the WWF network in general and for WWF-DCP (World Wide Fund for Nature – Danube Carpathian Programme) in particular. Building on work in several other countries of this eco-region, we were privileged to be involved with some of its work. It began last year with two programmes, dealing with communication and awareness-raising activities for three focal protected areas and also with work for capacity building for protected-area staff from the same region.

With its work in Ukraine our team was able to help create excellent connections and networking. This was followed by one of the most successful study tours EUROPARC Consulting has ever organised. Nineteen senior officers from the three key protected areas visited the Bavarian Forest and Šumava National Parks. Both our team and our colleagues from the Bavarian Forest National Park had worked closely together to provide a programme of excellence and depth. Being so near the Federation head office was, of course, a great help too.





Protected-area experts from Ukraine on their study tour to Bavarian National Park, meeting with colleagues from EUROPARC Federation and EUROPARC Consulting.

This much-lauded event was followed a short while ago (in the second week of September) by an equally successful educational visit to the Harz National Park (DE). This Harz tour with 15 leading protected-area officers was organised by our colleagues on site and accompanied by Wilf Fenten, EUROPARC Consulting's Geschäftsführer, and Lucy Galvin who has been involved in many EUROPARC Consulting programmes dealing with communication, outreach and public relations.

2.3 European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (across Europe)

At this year's EUROPARC Conference, our President Erika Stanciu will be able to hand over Charter certificates to 15 Charter areas. We are particularly proud that virtually all protected areas that have been awarded the Charter before are renewing their commitment to sustainable tourism by applying for a re-evaluation after 5 years. Despite the many budget restraints facing protected areas they are still committed to the Charter.



Our verifier Jacques Decuignières on his evaluation visit to PNR du Queyras, one of the new Charter areas.



Next year, the first Charter areas will have their second re-evaluation. After a decade of having the Charter awarded to them it will be interesting to see how well the Charter has taken root in these areas and what effect it will have had. The new documentation, as pointed out in 1.3, will make it a great deal easier to carry out the process and make both evaluations and re-evaluations that little bit easier.

2.4 Successful seminars in Denmark, Latvia and the UK

EUROPARC Consulting is rightly known for its expertise in organising seminars, conferences and workshops. **Working with EUROPARC Sections** is also a natural part of EUROPARC Consulting's work. For several years now, we have organised workshops and seminars for EUROPARC Atlantic Isles, usually twice a year. These seminars have been very successful since the series started. To widen the perspective of participants, EUROPARC Consulting always makes sure that several speakers from other European countries are invited, proving all the time how important the EUROPARC network is.



Last November we planned and organised another seminar in this series for **EUROPARC Atlantic Isles**, this time in Edinburgh (UK), focusing on how to achieve real results, not just artificial “outputs”.

We also participated in a regional seminar on sustainable tourism in nature parks in Denmark. The idea was to provide inspiration for further work within the region, and especially with regard to **Maribosoerne Nature Park**, also asking questions about the very nature of sustainable tourism in protected areas. This nature park hopes to become a Charter area soon as a part of the Parks & Benefits InterReg Baltic Sea Project.

Then there was a seminar in **Kemeru, Latvia**, in January this year, where our expert led discussions for protected-area staff from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, on how to implement the

Charter. Giving advice, highlighting best practice, showing good and bad examples, we were right in our element. After all, the Charter is very familiar to EUROPARC Consulting and its team of experts. However, we were not used to what seemed to us as extreme cold but the warmth of the local team and the participants made up for it.

2.5 Vereniging Natuurmonumenten (NL)

Something a bit different this time, but it shows the variety of our work. One of the EUROPARC Consulting Board members, an expert in his own right in many fields, worked for us on the application of De Wieden Nature Reserve (NL) for the European Diploma of Protected Areas of the Council of Europe. Like Natuurmonumenten we were convinced that awarding the Diploma would strengthen the position of this nature reserve as an important part of the biggest freshwater marshland in north-western Europe. It proved to be a useful piece of work and shows the versatility of EUROPARC Consulting. Amongst our EUROPARC team we can find experts for almost anything.

2.6 Activities other than project work

The first phase of our new website has **now been completed** and we hope that everybody will have a good look at www.europarc-consulting.org as it has some excellent new features:

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- It shows photographs of protected areas from all over Europe with their wonderful landscapes, fauna, flora, buildings and people from dozens of protected areas for whom we have worked in the past.
 - It contains a section with regular news and photos of places where we work.
 - The new website has a clear “family resemblance” to the EUROPARC Federation website, whilst keeping a separate identity as we are always keen to show our close links to and support of the Federation.
 - We are now working on the second phase in order to provide a multilingual site in the near future.

A request to all EUROPARC Sections

EUROPARC Consulting has been successful in many countries with members of the EUROPARC Federation. We still have enough experts and capacity to double our turnover. We want members of the EUROPARC Federation to give EUROPARC Consulting an opportunity to tender for projects. The benefits of working closely together within the EUROPARC Federation family are many, for example:

- As a result of our work we were able in 2009 to transfer €50,000 to Federation funds. More projects from you will mean a larger sum for the EUROPARC Federation, which is in all our interests.
- All our projects are carried out by experts from the Federation's network. That means increased co-operation and better exchange of ideas Europe-wide. All members are invited to offer their expertise.

Appendix The Origins of EUROPARC Consulting GmbH

Some EUROPARC members may not be familiar with the origins and background of EUROPARC Consulting GmbH. For them, a summary of the various points we presented at the last two EUROPARC Conferences may be useful.

It all started in 1999 with a funding commission appointed by EUROPARC Federation Council to explore ways of generating funds for the work of the Federation.

Two initiatives were selected by the Federation Council for further development:

1. Preparing a donor/sponsor membership category which would seek to engage corporate funding support with a range of benefits for the corporate member – however, with a non-voting status.
2. Or setting up of a commercial consulting unit, which would be:
 - a. wholly owned by the Federation,
 - b. providing expert protected-area management consultancy services,
 - c. using the range of member expertise from across the Federation's network, in open competition with other commercial companies.

These two initiatives were presented to members at the General Assembly and were endorsed unanimously by members for further development. The funding commission obtained funds from outside the EUROPARC Federation from a private foundation, sufficient to provide start-up capital for EUROPARC Consulting GmbH.

They also asked lawyers to carry out research on the most appropriate legal basis for the company and its relationship to the Federation. They were advised to operate as a commercial trading company, where representation on the board by Federation office holders was required not to exceed 40%. A five-member board was therefore assembled with the following Federation representation:



- the holder of the office of President, also acting as the only shareholder on behalf of the Federation (share capital reserves of 25,000 EUR) and
- the EUROPARC Federation Director.

Three other board members, not having official office holder or voting status within the Federation, were chosen from the original funding commission, from different parts of Europe, then Germany, Spain and the UK. The board appointed its chair from the independent members. All board members were required to act in an unpaid capacity.

Legal advice obtained stressed the importance of EUROPARC Consulting keeping an appropriate legal distance from the Federation in order to guarantee its commercial trading integrity.

They chose as the most appropriate structure the status of a GmbH (limited company) which required registration according to German law with appropriate tax status and financial regulations. For the moment, EUROPARC Consulting GmbH remains registered at the Passau District Court und HRB 1352, registered address Grafenau. However, since the Federation's move to Regensburg we are now looking at a change of address as well.

In 2001, the detailed proposal for the new company was approved by Federation Council, presented to and endorsed by the General Assembly in open session.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS	
Question	Answer
Has EUROPARC Consulting ever drawn funds from EUROPARC Federation?	No, not at any time.
Is EUROPARC Consulting self-supporting financially?	Yes, entirely.
Is EUROPARC Consulting generating profit?	Yes. After the initial two years of development, the company moved into profit and is continuing to generate profits year on year.
What is the purpose of EUROPARC Consulting?	Threefold: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to provide low-cost high-quality expert consultancy services for the Federation network by engaging appropriate experts from its pool; 2. to generate profits in order to transfer funds to the Federation; 3. to help raise the Federation's profile in Europe.
How does EUROPARC Consulting link on an on-going basis with the objectives of the Federation, particularly with regard to its strategy and its work plans?	The board chairman of EUROPARC Consulting or its managing directing is invited to report to the EUROPARC Federation Council. They also keep in constant touch with the EUROPARC Federation President and Director.
How can a Federation member engage with EUROPARC Consulting?	First, by offering their expertise for inclusion on the list of experts, currently numbering between 60 and 70, to undertake specific project work on a modest paid basis. Secondly, by inviting EUROPARC Consulting to tender for a project alongside other commercial consultancies.

