

EUROPARC Consulting - report to EUROPARC Council meeting, 3 February 2012



EUROPARC Consulting GmbH was created in 2001 as an ‘in-house’ consultancy to help individual protected areas use the skills, knowledge and expertise of professionals from across the EUROPARC network. We offer a commercial service by providing advice, specialist expertise, knowledge training and learning across all protected area work – and through these commercial activities provide an income stream to support the work of the EUROPARC Federation.

Between 2008 and the end of 2011, EUROPARC Consulting contributed €85,000 to the EUROPARC Federation budget. It is planned to transfer another €17,500 or more before the end of February 2012, bringing the total to over €100,000 in five years.

The object and aims of the company

The company's 2001 Articles of Association says, ‘... that the object of the company is to act as consultants and to render services to private and public institutions in connection with planning establishing and managing nature and national parks and similar protected areas including conservation areas of all kinds for the protection of nature, animals and landscapes, as well as to act as consultants and render services in connection with animal, nature and landscape conservation projects of all kinds.’

The company was established following the work of a small EUROPARC ‘funding commission’ has formal Articles of Association, its legal seat is in Regensburg and we have one Shareholder – the EUROPARC Federation. We have an excellent and extremely capable Managing Director in Wilf Fenten and he is supported by an Advisory Board of five which always includes the Federation President and its Director and three other volunteers (Richard Partington, Hans Schiphorst & Norbert Heukemes).

The company also has a UK operation, EUROPARC Consulting Ltd, which was established to accommodate business outside of the Eurozone.

The philosophy and ethos of EUROPARC Consulting is the same as the Federation. We are part of the Federation and, since 2007 the company's three aims have been to:

- provide good value-for-money and high-quality expert consultancy services for the EUROPARC Federation network and beyond, with experts mainly drawn from the EUROPARC pool;
- help raise the Federation's profile in Europe;
- contribute financially to EUROPARC Federation funds, aiming to provide funds for one full-time member of staff.

Our current focus is to increase our profile to make us better known, build the business and contribute more to the Federation. Our immediate goal is to develop our business model, minimise risks, identify challenges and maximise opportunities and set a course to achieve our medium and long term aspirations.

Despite the current financial restraints in the public sector all over Europe we are set to return to a "turnover" (total of invoiced amounts) in the region of €200,000 to €250,000. In fact, it could well be that these figures are exceeded in 2012. The Board is currently reviewing its Business Plan and Operational Manual and is setting a medium-term aspiration for a "turnover" of around €500,000 by the end of 2016 although it is quite possible to reach this figure by the end of 2014. That "turnover" could reach €750,000 by the end of 2016 or 2017.

What makes EUROPARC Consulting special?

There is no other consultancy firm which deals exclusively with protected areas as its subject matter. EUROPARC Consulting should be the natural choice for all protected areas and local authorities dealing with protected areas. EUROPARC Consulting is not only about money, it is also about people. It is about connecting people with great ideas and creative expertise as well as with specialist knowledge of protected areas – such as governance and management, nature conservation, working with businesses, developing sustainable tourism, designing good communications, working with stakeholders, training Rangers or writing management plans.

Because virtually all of our experts are drawn from the EUROPARC pool, we can compete with relatively low fees although individual consultants can undercut us. In addition, some of the rapidly developing consultancies in Eastern Europe charge very low fees, although they rarely match the high quality of our services.

How can EUROPARC Council members and EUROPARC sections help?

Across Europe, protected areas let hundreds of contracts every year for advice and services – EUROPARC Consulting seeks no favours but we would like to be asked to tender. We know our existing clients are very pleased with our service and we think our new clients will also be delighted. Council members could really help encourage individual protected areas, local authorities and government agencies to come to us and ask us to quote - we offer a tailor-made and flexible service, use EUROPARC experts with commitment and protected area know how. Our comprehensive web site has much more information at: www.europarc-consulting.org

Current and future work

For the last eight months EUROPARC Consulting has been experiencing a significant revival of our activities. Compared with 2010 and the first half of 2011, when we struggled hard to get new orders, the period from mid-2011 to now was marked by some great new orders and even more new enquiries and tenders. This turn-around has been due to some excellent team work between our UK office, the EUROPARC Consulting Board and the EUROPARC Federation team in Regensburg.

Work over the past 12 months has included:

- Managing and processing the applications, re-evaluations and verification visits for the European Charter for sustainable tourism.
- Study Visit for the Lithuanian Baltic Environmental Forum to Scotland's Loch Lomond National Park and Clyde-Muirshiel Regional Park to study the work of Rangers.
- Developing a sustainable tourism strategy for the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site in Germany, the Netherlands and now extended to Denmark.
- Sustainable Tourism manual for Dutch client ECEAT – transferring knowledge and expertise.
- Report on Public Private Partnerships for the PARKS & BENEFITS programme.
- Study visit by national park officers from Ukraine to Southern France to study environmental education, especially for young people, the production and marketing of local produce through co-operatives and other forms of organisation, sustainable tourism etc.
- Workshop coordination for the EUROPARC Conference 2011.

Our future work may include:

- Three study visits in 2012 - one for Dutch business people to protected areas in Northern Ireland; another one for a group of people from the Danish, Dutch and German Wadden Sea areas to the Jurassic Coast in Southern England and a proposed a study tour for national park officers from the Western Balkans.
- Capacity-building and communications work in the Western Balkans - this contract is still being negotiated. Our client would be WWF Mediterranean (WWF MedPO) and we come highly recommended by Erika Stanciu from WWF DCP in Vienna. Evidently, WWF MedPO was impressed by our past work in the seven countries of the Danube Carpathian Eco-region and also our work in the Ukraine; they now would like us to repeat this success in the Western Balkans (mainly the countries of former Yugoslavia). A three-year contract starting in 2012.
- Together with a German commercial partner, PEM GmbH, a reputable company of surveyors, we submitted an Expression of Interest to the *Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau* (KfW) for some important work in Georgia. This prequalification is on behalf of the Ministry for Environment Protection of Georgia (MoEP). The "Support Programme for Protected Areas in the Caucasus – Georgia" ("Programme") is part of the Caucasus

Initiative, launched by the German Ministry of Cooperation and Development (BMZ). It supports the Georgian share of the Eco-regional Nature Conservation Programme for the Southern Caucasus (ENCP) which aim is the preservation of the outstanding biodiversity and natural ecosystems and at the same time improving the socio-economic situation of the adjacent communities. For the implementation of the Programme, the following priority conservation areas have been selected in co-operation with Georgian representatives: Kazbegi National Park, Kintrishi Protected Areas, Algeti National Park, and planned Pshav-Khevsureti protected area. EUROPARC Consulting would be well qualified to carry out the protected areas work whilst PEM GmbH would mainly deal with the surveying work. They also have people in the area which is most helpful. We expect a notification any time soon when we shall know if we need to submit a full tender.

- Nord-Schwarzwald (Black Forest) in Germany: We are also part of a four-company consortium that has submitted Letters of Interest for four large studies in connection with the possible creation of a national park in the Northern Black Forest. Since the election victory of the Green Party in Baden Württemberg last year, these plans have become accelerated. We have just heard this week that we are short-listed for two tenders which we are currently preparing.

EUROPARC Consulting

30 January 2012

