

General Assembly Documents

EUROPARC Consulting report

2011



Great improvements, despite difficult financial situation in Europe ...

**An overview of
EUROPARC Consulting activities**



Work and progress from September 2010 to August 2011



Use the experience, knowledge and commitment of our professionals working with you and together we support the EUROPARC Federation - use us and we all win! All the professionals we use have first-hand experience of protected areas.

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1 General

1.1 The year so far

In our tenth year of operation and after several years of uninterrupted growth, much of 2010 presented us with much tougher times. Many protected areas all over Europe were and still are experiencing cut-backs in their budgets. Plans are curtailed, projects shelved. Competition is getting fiercer and good programmes are becoming scarcer.

However, since the election last November of a new Board Chairman, Richard Partington, and an ever closer working partnership between us and the EUROPARC Federation, we have achieved a number of significant new projects. We want to thank all our colleagues and experts from all over Europe who are giving us such great support, in particular Carol Ritchie and the whole team at the EUROPARC Federation Directorate in Regensburg.

We are very conscious that our business has to grow and change to maximise the contribution to the Federation. Despite last year's downturn, our contribution to the EUROPARC Federation since 2008 has now topped 85,000 € and we are on target to make a further contribution from this year's activities.

An important aspect of our work is in raising the profile of EUROPARC Consulting and the EUROPARC Federation. During the year, our marketing has become targeted and lively with updates to the website, a new leaflet and electronic advertising. A lot of energy has gone into preparing tenders for new projects as well as into strategic thinking and future business planning. Approximately a third of our time throughout the year is spent on the Federation's best-known product, the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

In addition, we have spent a great deal of time and work to foster closer contacts with a number of countries, regions and individual protected areas in order to prepare the way for future work. For example we are encouraged that new work, in the medium term, will be developed in Norway, Germany, the South of France and the East of England.

1.2 The EUROPARC Consulting Board

Legal regulations require that EUROPARC Consulting GmbH as a commercial organisation, must be completely separate from the EUROPARC Federation which fully owns the company. The Board consists of the two *ex officio* members from the EUROPARC Federation, the President and the EUROPARC Federation director, Carol Ritchie. Erika Stanciu has been a most diligent and active member of the Board and we should like to express our deepest thanks for all the work she has carried out over the years. Her term as President will end with this year's EUROPARC Federation General Assembly and we are looking forward to welcoming the new President to our Board.

In addition, there are the three independent members, Norbert Heukemes (BE), its Chairman 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.



For the very best European expertise in protected-area work ask us to tender for projects large or small - you will be amazed by good value.

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2 Some specific examples of our work over the past 12 months

2.1 Wadden Sea Sustainable Tourism Strategy

Our team has just begun work on a major contract to develop a sustainable tourism strategy for the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site stretching from the most northern part of Germany's North Sea coast Germany to much of the Dutch North Sea coast. This contract is a major success for EUROPARC.

The work includes baseline studies, seminars and workshops plus the all-important final strategy with action plan. Our approach is based on an adaptive model of the Charter process which means that there will be extensive communication and discussion of all stakeholders as part of a sustainable tourism forum both in Germany and in the Netherlands.



People enjoying the drama of the Wadden Sea)

2.2 European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (verification across Europe)

At this year's EUROPARC Conference, the President will be able to hand over Charter certificates to 17 Charter areas. We are very encouraged that virtually all protected areas that have previously been awarded the Charter are renewing their commitment to sustainable tourism by applying for a re-evaluation after 5 years despite the many budget restraints facing protected areas.

2.3 Study Tours

Protection and Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in Ukraine Carpathians

Our involvement with the Danube and Carpathian regions of Ukraine continues and is now in its third year. It began in 2008 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.



Study tour group of Ukrainian protected area expert to the Harz National Park in Germany 2010

It has since continued with intensive study tours, first to the Bavarian Forest and Šumava National Parks, followed by the Harz Mountains. For 2011, a visit to several protected areas in the South of France is planned to study environmental education, partnerships and outreach.

Rangers in protected areas - a key front-line service for visitors and communities

For the Lithuanian Baltic Environmental Forum, we led a study tour to Scotland's Loch Lomond National Park and Clydemuirshiel Regional Park to study the work of Rangers. Our challenge was to organise this event at short notice with a very limited budget but positive feedback from the group showed us we rose to the challenge. We would like to express our thanks to our key partners who highlighted the work of their Rangers in the sun, rain and the wind!

2.4 Seminars, Conferences and Workshops - organisation

EUROPARC Consulting is very well 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 many years, we have organised very successfully workshops and seminars for EUROPARC Atlantic Isles. These seminars have been very successful and to widen the perspective of participants, EUROPARC Consulting ensures that several speakers from other European countries are invited, proving all the time how important the EUROPARC network is.

In February 2011, we planned and organised another seminar in this series **for EUROPARC Atlantic Isles**, this time in Oxford (UK), focusing on optimising the economic benefits of protected landscapes under the title "Protect and Prosper".



Title slide of one of the EAI seminar presentations

The seminar highlighted how protected areas can make most of them, exploring ongoing research initiatives, project work and practical examples. The presentations from different European countries ranged from academic research to very practical suggestions on how we can get the right economic benefits from our designated landscapes.

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.

A request to all EUROPARC Sections

EUROPARC Consulting has experts and capacity to double our turnover. We would like to ask members of the EUROPARC Federation to give EUROPARC Consulting an opportunity to tender for projects – no favours but just the opportunity to tender please.

The benefits of our work include:

- the transfer of €85,000 to Federation funds since 2008. 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.
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One day or one week: our study visits, training seminars or learning workshops are great value - use us to learn the latest European innovations on Rangers, sustainable tourism, management plans, eco-system services and more...

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