

2010 – a tough and challenging year

**An overview of
EUROPARC Consulting activities**



Work and progress, January to December 2010

2010 – A tough and challenging year

1 General remarks

In an average year, the work of EUROPARC Consulting usually consists in more or less equal parts of:

- projects in Western Europe,
- projects in Central and Eastern Europe and
- work for the European Charter for Protected Areas.

Given prevailing economic climate there was, however, in 2010 a steep downturn in contracts from Western Europe, particularly from the United Kingdom. In previous years, we could always count on regular work from protected areas in England and Wales. In 2010, however, we did not manage to gain any contracts here. Fortunately, both our work in Eastern Europe and the Charter work held up well.

Despite this temporary set-back EUROPARC Consulting is striving to increase its turnover year on year until we can at least cover the cost of one Federation staff post. At its next meeting in May, the EUROPARC Consulting Board will consider our 2010 contribution.

2 The year 2010 in retrospect

The first half of 2010 was very much overshadowed by the sudden illness and subsequent death of the Board chairman, Aitken Clark. Apart from losing a mentor and friend with unrivalled experience (and much more), EUROPARC Consulting also lost a tireless worker for the company, largely without remuneration. Fortunately, during the second half of 2010, other directors rallied round with great support. Finally, at the meeting of the EUROPARC Consulting Board in November 2010, Richard Partington was elected new chairman of the Board.

Since then, Richard has engaged strongly with the work of EUROPARC Consulting. At its November meeting the Board started to address issues to take the Consulting business forward and Richard and Wilf have been working together on developing on a five-year business strategy which will be discussed by the Board at its meeting at the end of May 2011.

The first half of 2010 also saw the UK market shrink to almost nothing and even the planned regular seminars for EUROPARC Atlantic Isles were all postponed to 2011, due to cuts on grants.

The response to the Charter remains good. Since Petra Dippold left the EUROPARC Federation, Anne Webster has taken over some of Petra's work for the Charter, especially keeping a record of all Charter areas including reminders for any forthcoming re-evaluations. Thanks to the generous sponsorship of TUI, we were also able to revise and redesign the complete set of Charter documents. In the spirit of co-operation between the EUROPARC Federation and EUROPARC Consulting we made no profit on the work for the Charter documents and used every cent to complete the whole set.

In 2010 we also completed the three-year WWF DCP project. The work for 2010 was already considerably less than in previous years. Despite the relatively slim profit margin, the importance of this project for EUROPARC Consulting cannot be overestimated. It consolidated our experience in Eastern Europe to an extent we never anticipated and increased our reputation amongst protected areas in general.

Anne Webster and Wilf continue to work closely together in the UK. Rachel Wieting, who took over the bookkeeping for the company in October 2009, has proved a most valuable asset.

Although she has so far resisted all our efforts to involve her more in our work, this could change in future as her children grow up. It is good to have her knowledge and experience still at the end of a telephone/Skype line.

As before, Anne Webster continues to provide mainly project support which means that the cost of her work can be passed on virtually in full to our clients. The arrangement is most useful during the rush of the Charter applications at the beginning of each year. There is now a good routine for the liaison between the EUROPARC Federation and EUROPARC Consulting during the Charter process. As soon as Charter candidates have registered with the EUROPARC Federation (where it needs to be established that the candidate is a *bona fide* member and has paid its registration fee for the Charter), EUROPARC Consulting begins its work and carries out the full implementation of the process, up to the handing-over of the certificates at the annual Conference.

We regularly check for possible tenders with EU and UNDP websites but have not as yet found projects for which we could prepare suitable tenders. However, we still continue to get ourselves known, for accessing projects at the EU or UNDP level. Any help the Council could offer would be appreciated.

3 Specific work in 2010

3.1 European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (across Europe)

In total, we received applications for 5 evaluations and 9 re-evaluations for 2010. A lot of the work was particularly time-consuming this year. The French Charter applicants were in the middle of their own re-appraisal of the PNR legal status which meant much confusion, change of staff and late payments. Constant changes of procedure, sub-standard application dossiers and delays in payment of up to 6 months make for a very labour-intensive process.

The problems with the French protected areas have all been solved. As for the Junta de Andalucía in Spain, Wilf Fenten met with one of the senior managers in July and also at the EUROPARC Conference. In addition, a meeting was arranged between representatives of the Junta, Josep Prats and Wilf Fenten, to sort out any remaining issues. The Junta is one of our largest clients. Sorting out the legal and technical issue is therefore important.

2010 EVALUATIONS	2010 RE-EVALUATIONS
PN Bahía de Cádiz (ES) Dovrefjell NP (NO) PNR Camargue (FR) PNR Queyras (FR) PN Sierras de Tejada, Almirajara y Alhama (ES)	PN Monti Sibillini (IT) Forest of Bowland AONB (GB) PN Los Alcornocales (ES) PN Sierra de Grazalema (ES) PN Sierras de Cazorla, Segura y las Villas (ES) PNR Vercors (FR) PNR Scarpe Escaut (FR) PN Sierra de Aracena y Picos de Aroche (ES) PNR du Pilat (FR)

All applicants were awarded or re-awarded the European Charter.

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

Another successful study tour with participants from the Ukraine Carpathians took place in September this year. It further strengthened our work in Eastern Europe.



Protected-area experts from Ukraine on top of the Brocken mountain, Harz National Park (DE)

We are trying hard to gain further projects in Ukraine. To that effect we have begun to liaise with Peter Seccombe of Red Kite Environment. Peter was well-known to Aitken and has worked with EUROPARC Consulting in the past. His experience in Eastern Ukraine and Georgia may help us find more contacts in these areas.

3.3 Protected Areas for a Living Planet (WWF Danube Carpathian Ecoregion programme)

Since early in 2007, EUROPARC and WWF have worked closely together on this programme which has now been completed.

Since the middle of 2009, this work has been carried out by EUROPARC Consulting Limited (UK). This arrangement has continued throughout 2010. The work is now completed. In this way we saved ourselves considerable exchange rate losses which occur with every transfer from the Euro zone to outside. As EUROPARC Consulting Limited is not registered for VAT we also saved our client 19% which could be used for the project instead.

The first event for 2010 took place in May in the Pieniny National Park in Poland. This training event 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.

The second event in September 2010 included a combination of workshops/seminars in Šumava National Park, followed by a study tour to the Bavarian Forest National Park. Both Erika Stanciu and Carol Ritchie were able to meet the participants during this event. EUROPARC Consulting had also prepared certificates for the Training Champions who followed the whole course of this 3-year training event.



Budding Training Champions at the training event in Pieniny National Park, Poland

3.4 Activities other than project work

- **Website:** Our website (www.europarc-consulting.org) has now been up and running for about 10 months and is constantly being updated. We upload new stories regularly to our News Update page, including a full report on the recent study tour in Ukraine. We have postponed further development of the website such as a multi-language version in order to save cost.
- **New flyer:** Our old brochure contained the names of the directors and some other details which aged quickly. Instead of a new “prestige” brochure we are now using a lively, colourful flyer which can be easily adapted. We had around 500 copies printed as a first run. Most of these were distributed at the EUROPARC Conference. In addition, we were able to produce a Dutch version which has proved useful already.

4 EUROPARC Consulting Limited (UK)

EUROPARC Consulting Limited started trading in the United Kingdom in July 2009 and has since dealt exclusively with work for WWF DCP, as mentioned above. As the company is not yet registered for VAT it will keep its turnover below GB£ 68,000 until we are sure that we regularly exceed this amount. If we do, we shall have to register for VAT. The UK company will continue to take over much of the work outside the Euro zone in order to avoid the otherwise frequent exchange rate losses.

The UK company files its accounts annually and submits them each year to the second meeting of the EUROPARC Consulting GmbH Board.

5 Successes and Challenges

All of us who work for EUROPARC Consulting are particularly delighted that the new network of colleagues in protected areas in Eastern Europe has been strengthened through the various projects and programmes we have been able to carry out there. The work we implemented was a resounding success and received enthusiastic feedback. We are also proud to have contributed to raising the profile of the EUROPARC Federation and to play an increasingly important role in promoting sustainable tourism all over Europe.

The current year 2011 will, however, see some important challenges. In many parts of Europe protected areas are battling with financial cuts. These are times of financial restraint but also an opportunity for Consulting to convince protected areas that the company can optimise their funding by offering real value for money. EUROPARC Consulting offers reduced rates for all members of the EUROPARC Federation.

6 A plea to the EUROPARC Council and all EUROPARC Sections

EUROPARC Consulting continues to ask the Council and all EUROPARC Sections to become more involved with us. We have enough experts and general capacity to double our turnover. All we are asking is that members of the EUROPARC Federation give us the opportunity to tender for projects. We are not asking for favours, just a chance to quote. The benefits of working closely together within the EUROPARC Federation family are many:

- All our projects are carried out by experts from within the Federation's network. That means increased co-operation and better exchange of ideas Europe-wide. There are also opportunities for networking, staff development and co-funding.
- Working more closely together increase the number of projects and programmes EUROPARC Consulting deals with. That means more turnover and ultimately a higher contribution to the EUROPARC Federation. After our contributions in 2008 and 2009 we are keen to do as much as possible to continue on that path.



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