

EUROPARC TransParcNet Meeting

The Netherlands, 04 – 07 June 2013

This report corresponds to the objective:

1.1.1 CLIMATE CHANGE – Development and implementation of EU policy

Contribute to improve the management of N2000 sites and protected areas facing Climate change impact, particularly in a transnational situation.

Funded by the European Union



The production of this report has been supported financially in the framework of the European Commission's 2013 LIFE funding programme of operating grants for European Environmental NGOs.

Introduction

The EUROPARC Federation is the largest non-governmental organisation representing protected areas of different kinds across Europe. EUROPARC is built on the principle that Europe's natural heritage can be better conserved and managed through international cooperation. To this end the organisation seeks opportunities for networking, exchange and collaboration in all areas of protected area work. EUROPARC is committed to the continual improvement in the management of nature conservation and sustainable development, to build a coherent green network across Europe.



Nature knows no boundaries and cooperation between protected areas that adjoin across or lay adjacent to international borders make a significant contribution to the conservation of both natural and cultural heritage and the achievement of sustainable regional development. Such cooperation also promotes international peace and understanding, and makes an important contribution to the development of a common Europe.

With its Transboundary Parks – Following nature's design initiative, EUROPARC meets the demands for guidance on the promotion of best practice in cross-border cooperation in Europe. The Federation's Transboundary Parks Programme is a special verification and certification system that aims to promote and facilitate cross-border cooperation between European protected areas.

The programme runs in its 10th year now and unites 19 protected areas forming nine EUROPARC Transboundary Areas. Together they manage more than 800.000 ha and over 280.000 ha of N2000 sites co-operatively. Every year they get together at the so called TransParcNet meeting in a different cross-border area to share their experiences and new ideas in managing Europe's natural and cultural heritage across international borders.

5th TransParcNet meeting in Maas-Schwalm-Nette Nature Park (NL) 2013



The Dutch-German Nature Park Maas-Schwalm-Nette invited the members of the TransParcNet to hold the annual meeting in their protected area. This time more than 30 people followed the invitation and came together in Roermond. In a landscape of heath lands, rivers and bogs the participants discussed project ideas, reflected on cultural differences and learned about examples of climate change research and mitigation in their fellow parks. Of special interest for many of the participants was to learn about the

challenges of nature conservation in a densely populated area.

Representatives of 15 European countries came together for a three day event, where policy and theory met practice.

Successful cross-border cooperation

At the beginning of the 5th TransParcNet meeting, the team of Maas-Schwalm-Nette Nature Park, Leo Reyrink and Silke Weich, presented the results of the Cross Border Project INTERREG IVA National Parkregion Meinweg. This project aimed at a cross-border improvement of the quality of nature and landscape through nature development and connection of endangered habitats.

Collaborating with neighbouring countries brings its own particular challenges, adding another layer of complexity to the already difficult task of managing a protected area. To make transboundary cooperation successful it is vital to be aware of cultural differences that are reflected in attitudes and actions of the cooperating parties. In a workshop facilitated by Carla Seifert, expert in intercultural communication, the participants could reflect on their own cultural habits and those of their colleagues. Two hours of exploring European manners showed the participants the strengths of cross-border communication but also urged them to respect the particularities of their foreign partners.

In the afternoon a vox-pops session on climate change and mitigation and the affect on biodiversity management took place. In 2007 EU endorsed an integrated approach to climate and energy policy and committed to transforming Europe into a highly energy-efficient, low carbon economy. With particular regard to nature conservation and the delivery of ecosystem services, as well as taking action against the loss of biodiversity, protected areas across Europe need to be working collectively towards this goal. The issue of climate change naturally transcends political borders. Therefore EUROPARC believes that the experiences and expertise of EUROPARC's Transboundary Areas on that topic is invaluable and can serve as good practice examples for a wider European network.



For the vox-pops session the participants of the TransParcNet meeting brought examples of research activities and projects from their transboundary protected areas on climate change and mitigation and the affect on biodiversity management. Case studies from Germany, Finland, Norway, Russia, Italy and Slovenia were presented in an interactive panel with the other members of the meeting.

The partner protected areas Prealpi Giulie Natural Park (I) and Triglav National Park (SLO) are participating, together with seven other protected areas in the transboundary cooperation project „Climaparks“ between Italy and Slovenia, which goal is to monitor climate change in protected areas in order to limit its impact on the environment. The protected areas have been involved in promoting research activities related to flora and fauna, increase and encourage the public transport and in the realization of a photovoltaic system in the headquarter of a project park in Prato di Resia. An energy plan has been drafted in order to be able to make proposals to implement sustainable interventions and to raise awareness on the issues of waste and the consumption of energy savings. The plan will also encourage the use of renewable energy sources in the area as solar, water and forest biomass. The series of interventions proposed could have resulted in 2020 in the reduction of the detrimental emission of about the 35%.

The poster presented by Trilateral Area Pasvik-Inari (FIN/NO/RUS) explained the research project that the three countries run together to measure the affects of climate change on the rich natural resources of Europe's far north. Transportation and industries in the area are fast developing, creating the need to monitor environmental effects in order to predict and reduce any harmful impacts of the growing activity. Global warming also possesses a challenge in the northern areas. The project can be seen as an example of good quality cooperation not only between different protected areas in various countries but also as a model for jointly developing tools used by

environmental authorities and researchers when assessing the impacts of airborne emissions, regulations of waterways and climate change. Of most interest for the participants of the TransParcNet meeting were, amongst others, the research activities of modelling the dispersion and deposition of airborne pollutants to assess possible climate change. The expected result of this research activity is a model animation showing the airborne concentrations and deposition of sulphur and heavy metals and assessment report on observed climate changes in the border region.

A controversially discussed topic, Assisted Migration – Biological, ethical and legal aspects, was presented by the former director of the Transboundary Area Oulanka-Paanajärvi (FIN/RUS) and representative of Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Service. Assisted migration is a new approach to counter the loss of biodiversity caused by climate change and habitat fragmentation. The rapidity of environmental change, forces species to adapt to evolving conditions, disperse to other regions or go extinct. Since many species won't be able to adapt in due time, the moving of species to an area where they are predicted to move in the future anyway, could be a new chance to halt the loss of Europe's biodiversity. On the other hand this practice challenges the values of conservation, e.g. authenticity, might come with biological risks and must not be necessarily ethical or even required for saving species. More research has to be undertaken; discussions are to be raised in the community of protected area managers and policy makers.

The fourth example on climate change adaptation was a study undertaken by the Bavarian Forest National Park (D). The research shows impressively the effects of climate change on midrange mountain species and populations and that they are disproportional sensitive to climate change. Furthermore the results support the view that mobile ectothermal arthropods show a direct response to climate fluctuations, but not birds and plants. Communities are undergoing a process of reorganization in their species compositions.

These examples drawn from protected areas practice show that climate change and its impact on ecosystems, habitats and species is beginning to be more widely understood. However the information is somewhat fragmented and the impact of climate change must also be factored into the management of N2000 sites to ensure the diversity of and connectivity between natural areas and to allow for species migration and survival when climate conditions change.

Where climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives have been developed in one region, through our networking opportunities, these can be shared across the whole network and help to develop a more coordinated strategic and coherent approach. The examples presented by transboundary protected areas will be further discussed at an event on climate change and green infrastructure in Brussels in November/December 2013 and also find entrance into a report by EUROPARC to the European Commission on the effects of climate change in protected areas.



The day continued with a bus and hiking excursion to explore the National Park De Meinweg. The participants gained insight into the work of the Nature Park Maas-Schwalm-Nette, especially in the field of visitor management by exploring the new viewing tower and enjoying a cross-border hike on well maintained and marked paths. They could see and experience the results of the Interreg IV project run by the Nature Park that was presented in the morning. The cultural experience ended with dinner in a German restaurant associated through a gastronomic project of the Maas-Schwalm-Nette Nature Park which aims to link visitors to local businesses and herewith promote the culinary treasures of the region.

The day continued with a bus and hiking excursion to explore the National Park De Meinweg. The participants gained insight into the work of the Nature Park Maas-Schwalm-Nette, especially in the field of visitor management by exploring the new viewing tower and enjoying a cross-border hike on well maintained and marked paths. They could see and experience the results of the Interreg IV project run by the Nature Park that was presented in the morning. The cultural experience ended with dinner in a German restaurant associated through a gastronomic project of the Maas-Schwalm-Nette Nature Park which aims to link visitors to local businesses and herewith promote the culinary treasures of the region.

Creativity in cross-border projects

The second day of the TransParcNet meeting was dedicated to the topic of creativity in cross-border projects. The Transboundary Working Group of EUROPARC is looking for a new cross-border project to develop. Therefore the experiences and expertise of the members of TransParcNet were gathered, to see what has been realised already within the membership. A questionnaire sent out to the Transboundary Areas prior to the meeting collected the necessary information, which was later presented by Leo Reyrynk at the meeting itself.



In the following workshop facilitated by Carol Ritchie, the group developed transboundary project ideas in the fields of environmental education, recreation and tourism, communication and marketing, and nature conservation. The four ideas, drawn from the needs and wishes of the Transboundary Areas to manage their protected areas better, were handed over to the Transboundary Working Group who will now elaborate a project application that will take the TransParcNet forward. Although the topic of green infrastructure was not further elaborated during that workshop, EUROPARC believes that transboundary protected areas developing measures of green infrastructure are an excellent possibility together with N2000 sites to counter habitat fragmentation and herewith biodiversity loss.

After the workshop session Juan Lloret had the pleasure to introduce Hainaut Cross-border Nature Park in France/Belgium as host of the TransParcNet 2014. Hainaut Cross-border Nature Park is about to be evaluated in the framework of the EUROPARC Transboundary Parks Programme and is an excellent example of a long standing cooperation, showing innovative approaches by working towards a common legal structure for the protected areas on both sides of the border until 2022. Bringing the meeting to France is a great opportunity to give more visibility to the network in the west and south of Europe, where many cross-border areas exist and already work closely together with N2000 sites in their region, especially those managed by private landowners and communities. It is a chance to invite and attract transboundary protected areas from France, Switzerland and Spain and share the experiences gained in 10 years of successful Transboundary Parks Programme with them.

The meeting concluded with a bike excursion to the former ammunition depot Brüggen-Bracht, which after the retreat of British military got declared a protected area. After 40 km pedalling the flats of the Dutch-German border, the participants whiled away the summer evening exchanging experiences and making plans for next year's TransParcNet meeting.



More information can be obtained through the EUROPARC Federation. Please contact us: transparcnet@europarc.org. All presentations are available on the EUROPARC TransParcNet website. Pictures of the meeting can be found on Facebook.