

EUROPARC Federation



Report to Council

March 6th 2010

Title:

Lobbying and Advocacy Strategy of the EUROPARC Federation

Summary :

To guide the lobbying work of the Federation. This was discussed at the lobbying working in Montage de Reims workshop in January 2010 for which a report will be issued . An action plan to guide this work is in preparation.

Recommendations:

For discussion and adoption

EUROPARC Federation

Policy and Advocacy Strategy

Introduction

The EUROPARC Federation opened an office in Brussels in 2007 to provide a facility through which the Federation can enhance its influence vis-à-vis the institutions of the European Union, regions and other protected area related organisations, thereby representing the interests of its membership more effectively.

EUROPARC's strategy for the period 2008 – 2012 sets out the strategic aims for the organisation; as a basis for activities in the fields of policy and advocacy, EUROPARC needs to set out its aims and objectives relating to EU policy. This paper aims to do that.

A. What we want to achieve

- That protected areas¹ of national and regional interest across Europe, together with Natura 2000 sites, are recognized as part of a **European Protected Area Network**;
- That protected areas' importance² as core areas for nature conservation and as models for sustainable development is confirmed in relevant EU policy statements. EUROPARC promotes a wider concept of what protected areas do and why protected areas are valuable at European and international level, notably in climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- That this importance is reflected in policy and legislation and through the allocation of a certain percentage of the EU financial support in each member state for the effective and efficient management of this European Protected Area Network;

B. Main areas of policy and advocacy work for the Federation

I. Natura 2000

Natura 2000 is the cornerstone of nature conservation policy at EU level. It is vital for the future of Europe that the Natura network is safeguarded, supported and well-managed. As EUROPARC member organisations play a major role in the management of the Natura network across Europe, the role of EUROPARC as an advocate for the Natura network is clear.

The theme "values and benefits" comprises a large section of the EUROPARC strategy and the values and benefits of protected areas do themselves embrace a wide range of policy areas demonstrating the important role that protected areas play as policy instruments.

¹ A protected area is: 'A clearly defined geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values'. There are six protected area categories set out by IUCN that define the management approaches.

² According to research carried out by Roberto Gambino and published in the book *Parchi d'Europa (Edizioni ETS, Pisa, 2008)* more than 18% of the territory of the European Union is covered by protected areas.

EUROPARC seeks to ensure that the benefits and values of protected areas of national and regional interest are recognised, in EU nature conservation policy and eventually across all relevant policy areas. The interests of EUROPARC members need to be identified and represented in EU policy development. EUROPARC has a particular aim to ensure that both the European Commission and the European Parliament consider protected areas, in addition to the Natura 2000 network, part of the European Protected Area Network.

It is also of great importance that members' expertise in the management of Natura 2000 and protected areas is deployed in a policy context. EUROPARC, together with other NGOs, is represented in the new expert working group of DG Environment on the management of the Natura network. It is hoped that this connection of practice and policy will lead to better environmental governance in Europe.

II. EU Funding

EUROPARC's role here is twofold.

Firstly it seeks to provide a regular flow of information to members on different EU funding opportunities, so as to stimulate, encourage and support interregional projects that deliver EU policy aspirations. The benefits of working together and sharing expertise across borders cannot be underestimated. EUROPARC itself also seeks to take greater advantage of EU funding possibilities.

Secondly it is important to represent the interests of the European Protected Area Network in the negotiations relating to the 2014-2020 funding period, with a view to ensuring that the management of the Natura 2000 network is credibly financed. The Federation will work with its member organisations, partner NGOs and European regions to push for a fair settlement.

III. European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

The European Charter is a core part of the EUROPARC strategy and work programme and is a genuine network linking local players with European and global aspirations, which demonstrates that permanent programmes that make a difference do emerge from EU funded projects. It is nonetheless important to ensure that the value of the Charter is greatly enhanced.

As such the EUROPARC Federation will seek to ensure that the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is recognised as a European model and accepted by the European Commission. Ideally this would be in the form of a recognised "brand" but other avenues for appropriate recognition will be explored.

IV. Enhancing governance through best practice

The Federation will also seek to highlight examples of best practice across all themes arising from our membership. This will help EUROPARC to contribute to improvements in European environmental governance and enhance the value of protected areas in policy-making processes and more widely.

One of the key aims of the EUROPARC network – the directorate in Grafenau and Brussels, its sections and members - is to link policy and practice, to link the European with the local. By promoting our members' work and its relevance to EU policies, greater recognition for protected areas will be forthcoming. The active input of the membership and Sections will help to further integrate members into the wider Federation work programme, increasing the value of EUROPARC as a network for members and stakeholders alike.

C. Partnerships

A number of strategic alliances will be forged to facilitate these aims and where there are objectives of mutual benefit.

Existing and potential partners include:

- IUCN WCPA
- Eurosite
- European Habitats Forum
- WWF
- Birdlife International
- European Environmental Bureau
- Slow Food International
- The regions of Europe

Agreement accords will be set up with each organisation detailing the areas of common purpose and on what subject each can represent the interest of the other.

D. Actions for implementation

This strategy will be accompanied by a series of actions embedded in the Federation's work plan. An initial list of ongoing and proposed actions can be found in the Annex.

E. Responsibilities for the development and implementation of a lobbying strategy

1. Europarc Council – coordination, active input.
2. Europarc Directorate – identify financial resources for developing the strategy. Brussels staff provide links to the institutions whilst the rest of the staff build the internal relations.
3. EUROPARC Sections – support fundraising efforts of the directorate, contribute to the strategy, implement activities at the EU and regional level, and facilitate links to members.
4. Members – contribute to implementation at the national and local level.

F. Resource needs

All Federation staff, including those in Brussels, are currently funded through a mix of core and project funding, although with the end of several projects staff costs are now particularly dependent on core funding. In this regard the operating grant from DG Environment is particularly important. Further resources are needed to both secure and expand the existing levels of staffing and for organising the range of activities envisaged. It could be particularly helpful if EUROPARC member organisations could make staff time available to contribute the expertise necessary in developing the policy and advocacy strategy.

Annex A

Ongoing and proposed actions

1. Analysis of current EU legislation and funding programmes to facilitate clearer understanding of measures and resources dedicated to the Natura 2000 network and more generally for biodiversity conservation. See document circulated with this paper. Opportunities for protected areas of national and regional interest will also be examined in this context. Partner organizations and other organisations and institutions will be contacted, i.e. those who are already actively involved in EU work related to nature conservation.
2. Analysis to clarify the overlap between protected areas of national and regional interest and Natura 2000 sites. This will contribute to finding out where: protected areas and Natura 2000 sites are identical, where there are Natura 2000 sites outside of protected areas and where there are protected areas that are outside of Natura 2000 territory.
3. Identification of relevant expertise and resources within the Federation for advocacy work. The EUROPARC Federation will operate utilising the expertise of its membership and sections to represent best practice examples.
4. Identification of relevant committees and working groups across the EU institutions, and lobbying through attendance and correspondence, as well as invitations to meetings will form a major component of the work.
5. Active participation in the activities of existing NGO platforms that are lobbying for aspects relevant for EUROPARC (e.g. European Habitats Forum for Natura 2000 related lobbying).
6. Establish strategic partnerships for advocacy purposes to promote the cause of protected areas.
7. Responding to consultations, monitoring of EU (and other organisations' press releases), daily monitoring of information sources to identify news and information of relevance to members will be carried out. Information and news will be responded to; our own press releases issued together with at least a fortnightly Brussels' news update on the website.
8. Identification of officers within several DGs of the European Commission as well as members of the European Parliament with potential interest in protected areas is important for correspondence and invitation to meetings.
9. Special events will be organised in Brussels together with MEPs and/or the Commission to raise awareness on the role and importance of protected areas and to gain support. With support from members, these events could be extended to member states to amplify impact.
10. Furthermore a series of seminars will be hosted by the EUROPARC Federation. Themed and with member and section participation they will be a regular part of the EUROPARC work programme in Brussels. Selected invited guests will be briefed on Federation priorities at these seminars and followed up with much of the activity listed above.

Annex B

Extracts from EUROPARC Strategy Policy and Advocacy related targets

2 Representative Protected Area Networks

2.2 Advisory work to the European Commission, to national and regional decision makers

Target 2.2.1: Advisory on general questions in the field of Natura 2000 implementation together with other major NGOs at the European level

Target 2.2.2: Recommendations are devised and provided i.e. to the European Commission on the state and future development of wilderness areas / areas dominated by natural processes inside and outside the frame of Natura 2000.

Target 2.2.3: Recommendations are devised and provided i.e. to the European Commission, to national and regional governments on the financing of protected areas / Natura 2000 by 2010 (mid-term evaluation of EU-funding period).

3 Benefits and values of protected areas

3.1 Highlighting values and benefits of protected areas

Target 3.1.1: Protected area values and benefits are better recognised by the European Commission (especially including DG Agriculture), national and regional governments (responsible: Council, sections)

5 Public Relations

5.1 European Day of Parks – Green Days

Target 5.1.2 70 EUROPARC members carry out annual events and activities specifically on Natura2000 themes registering them on the Green Days Calendar. Once a year EUROPARC presents itself, its member protected areas and Sections at the Green Week in Brussels organised by the European Commission.