



## **Report of the 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the EUROPARC Transboundary Parks Network**

Hotel Lepanina, Kabli, Estonia,  
Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> – Friday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2009



## **Opening of Meeting**

Arnold Boer (Chair, Transboundary Steering and Evaluation Committee - STEC) opened the meeting, introduced the STEC and reminded participants that the EUROPARC transboundary certification system had been endorsed by IUCN/WCPA. He then looked ahead to the agenda of the meeting, and the item for discussion on how the network will function and how parks will participate in the network.

## **Introductory Remarks**

Richard Blackman welcomed everybody on behalf of the EUROPARC Federation Directorate and thanked Lassi Karivalo, Andris Urtans, Agu Leivits and Murel Merivee for all their work in making the meeting possible.

He explained that EUROPARC's work on transboundary cooperation has a long history and that it is a subject that goes to the heart of what EUROPARC is about. The Transboundary Parks: Following nature's design initiative has a central role in the EUROPARC Strategy, which identifies some targets to reach by 2012 and imply a range of activities and the rationale for developing the network:

- an increase in the number of park (partnerships) to have received the transboundary certificate to 12 in Europe.
- a network of examples of best practice in transboundary cooperation.
- partners of the network are providing technical support to other transboundary protected areas in Europe.

He stated that the meeting would provide a good opportunity to examine certified parks' work in the context of the EUROPARC basic standards and to gain an overview of the challenges the parks have faced, as well as the benefits that transboundary cooperation has brought and any weaknesses in the system. It would also give us an indication of how the evaluation system is working.

During the meeting everybody will have an opportunity to think about the role of the network, what it should do and how to develop it. The network is certainly one way to enhance the value of the certification system and promote parks' transboundary work.

He also stated that it was necessary to think about the wider context in which the parks' operate. For example, by looking at the role of transboundary protected areas in adapting to climate change, connectivity and ecological corridors, transboundary Natura 2000 sites; how cooperation between transboundary protected areas can contribute to regional development and sustainable rural development. There is a need to consider the linkages with some of these broader issues if there are to be more opportunities to promote, gain support for and even finance the network.

## **The work of the transboundary parks**

### **Naturpark Maas-S(ch)walm-Nette**

With a joint Dutch-German administration, the park has a very important role in the region. Its area includes the De Meinweg National Park, which has a separate governance structure. The Maas Schwalm Nette Nature Park is part of the advisory board. The central area of the park is protected under EU directives, and tourism and recreation are particularly important. Seven million people live within a 100km radius of the park, which has just two staff, whose main role is to be an intermediary bringing people together in different projects. There is a basic budget of €180,000, of which 25% comes from the state of North Rhine Westphalia, 25% from the province of Limburg, 25% from other partners, and 25% funded by projects. It has numerous strengths, but weaknesses include the fact that the open landscape is threatened by infrastructure development and that the park has only two staff.

In terms of nature protection the park helps those partners responsible to raise money. There is a big difference in responsibilities on the Dutch and German sides of the borders, with big organisations such as Natuurmonumenten and Staatsbosbeheer on the Dutch side, as well as other NGOs, but primarily local authorities in Germany.

The benefits of undertaking the certification process included learning a lot about themselves, as well as evincing great pride in the region.

### **Pasvik-Inari**

Pasvik-Inari is a trilateral partnership embracing the Vätsari Wilderness Area, Øvre Pasvik National Park & Pasvik Nature Reserve and the Pasvik Zapovednik. There are approximately 33,000 inhabitants in the surrounding areas. An EU financed project that ran from 2006-08 included information dissemination and sustainable nature tourism, with a trilateral working group independent of the Board. A new wilderness trail is about to be opened in June. Nature monitoring and research is an important function particularly for key species such as the brown bear and golden eagle. Harmonization of methodologies should result.

Strengths of the partnership include long traditions and the networking of experts. Opportunities relate to the uniqueness of the wilderness, the diverse cultures in the region, a shared history, active municipalities and entrepreneurs, networking at all levels, recognition of traditional livelihoods and the Sami culture.

Weaknesses include the different legislation with different levels of recognition of protected areas, the lack of a mutual language, differences in operational cultures, the need for external funding and a large focus on authorities. An action plan with new project financing (ENPI – EU) is tackling the weaknesses described above. Threats include border restrictions, an unpredictable political situation, infrastructure problems, and vulnerability to pollution and climate change.

The benefits of going through the certification process included using the scheme as a tool, to calibrate with the rest of Europe. It also acted as a political help. It was felt that the EUROPARC scheme was the best tool available for the partnership and that they could not have proceeded without it. It also served to raise knowledge of the area, with more interest from the media as a result.

### **The Bavarian Forest and Šumava National Parks**

Both parks are working jointly in the context of the Wild Heart of Europe initiative. Opportunities for the two national parks to work together came with the designation of Natura 2000, which enabled the area to be seen as one and overcome the artificial border.

The presentation focused on a number of areas of joint work, including national park newspapers, the wilderness and hands-off management philosophy, natural development of the forest, habitat of the capercaillie, 1999 memorandum, mapping of Natura 2000, telemetry to gauge red deer and other species' location, the transboundary reintroduction of the Ural Owl, a joint junior ranger project, the crystal ark project reflecting the region's culture, the tourism concept *tierisch wild*, campaigns to convince local people of the regional economic benefits of the national park, as well as the German-Czech youth forum.

The need to connect local people was also emphasised, as was the importance of the old EUROPARC Expertise Exchange project for fostering capacity and links, including language skills.

The parks' strengths include large staff and financial resources, and the governmental support, especially in Germany. Weaknesses include the fact that it is not a statutory duty to work in regional development and that there is not yet full support for the parks' objectives from local people.

### **Krkonoše and Karkonosze National Parks**

The presentation included references to the peat bogs, the many species typical of Scandinavia and glacial features. The parks' status as a Unesco Man and Biosphere Reserve was also highlighted, likewise the designation as a Ramsar site and that the whole area of the national parks lies in the Natura 2000 network.

Fields of cooperation include conservation, administration and management, education and communication, recreation and tourism, society and economy. The basis for the cooperation is general and detailed agreements. Meetings take place at administrative and scientific levels, the parks boards cooperate on strategies and main issues. There is cooperation on ecological education and junior ranger projects, as well as sharing of data on species. There is a particular need to improve tourist infrastructure, land use planning and information exchange.

As a benefit of going through the certification process, it was stated that the transboundary certificate had given extra credibility in funding applications.

## **Oulanka and Panajärvi National Parks**

There are 180,000 visitors to Oulanka annually, and 5,000 to Panajärvi which is three times as big. The backbone of the partnership is a joint Vision for 2015. Officially it is a joint entity of two national parks, whose management principles and information systems are harmonized. Environmental education and research are key priorities and it is an aim to be the most attractive wilderness tourism destination in Europe. Threats to losing core nature values are prevented through cooperation and the twin park concept works as model for worldwide cooperation and the use of international certification systems is very important in this context. Both parks are IUCN category II, safeguarding rare flora, diverse river water systems, and vegetation.

Varied activities include meetings, seminars, field work, excursions, training, research, and setting up joint infrastructure. Funding through EU is important and projects have been run under Interreg II, Tacis, Interreg IIIa, and the Neighbourhood Programme. Oulanka already has PAN Parks status and it is further planned to be first transboundary PAN Park, with the aid of the EUROPARC transboundary certificate. The protection of biodiversity, execution of the CBD Protected Area Work Programme, mainstreaming of protected areas with a view to their integration in other policy areas, and sustainable tourism were all highlighted as priorities.

Discussion on the work of the border commission was entered into with colleagues from Inari-Pasvik. Fences at the border limit some animals such as reindeer, but carnivores invariably get over or under the fences.

## **Thayatal and Podyji National Parks**

There has been cooperation since 1989. 1991 saw the establishment of the Podyji National Park, with 1999 witnessing an agreement between ministries in the Czech Republic and Austria, followed by the establishment of the Thayatal National Park in 2000. In 2002 agreement was reached on common principles and the basis of management. Both parks have been awarded the Council of Europe diploma.

The transboundary certificate has enabled recommendations to be put into practice, whilst the external audit also functioned as methodological assistance. Benefits included the updating of agreements on management principles and data exchange, coordination of a joint approach to the management of the national parks, joint management interventions, joint working groups, a network of trails and joint ranger services. The freedom of the Schengen space has also created benefits and contributed to transboundary work. Events are coordinated jointly and promoted mutually. Projects are prepared jointly, and research and monitoring data is shared. Czech-Austrian governance structures have been formalized, producing a better flow of information to governmental bodies.

The certificate has become a mark of quality and can be used to promote the administrations' activities. For the future it hoped to be able to change public perception of the parks towards a single unit.

The river is in the middle of the park, and is also border. Austrian parks are effectively private companies, which is very different to the administration on the Czech side. There is no common logo. The parks are part of the European Green Belt, but it's not very strong in Austria. The EU Water Framework Directive is an issue and research has taken place led by the Austrian government.

### **Neusiedler See – Seewinkel and Fertő Hansag National Parks**

The parks are recognised internationally in many ways. Their joint history goes back to 1989 and the Austro-Hungarian National Park commission is fixed into the National Park law.

The proximity to Vienna has resulted in changes in the pattern and structure of tourism over recent decades. The visitor management system is very important.

Joint projects of both parks include PA-NA-NET, the networking of West Pannonian protected sites, and FERTO-NEU-NAT, a media and communications project.

Pasturing within the national park, management of the cultural landscape, and the parks' role as a resting site for migratory birds are all the focus of joint work, as is cooperation on activities for young people.

### **Triglav National Park & Biosphere Reserve and Prealpi Giulie Nature Park**

Both nature and culture are very important in the two parks, which are the first alpine candidates for transboundary certification.

It is the Triglav Biosphere Reserve rather than the National Park that borders the Parco Naturale Prealpi Giulie.

Content of management of both parks rests in the IUCN categories II and V.

Cooperation exists in administration and management, common international designations, conservation, education and communications, recreation and tourism, society and economy. Two Interreg projects have been carried out jointly.

Both parks are implementing junior ranger projects.

### **Nigula Nature Reserve and North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve**

These protected areas in North Livonia are not yet in the EUROPARC process, although they are transboundary Ramsar sites. Cooperation has derived from personal contacts that started in the 1990s, and a mutual cooperation agreement was signed in 1995 and followed up by joint projects.

A lack of resources has forced cooperation across borders, which has resulted in better planning and sharing of resources. Combining resources has demonstrated

complementarity, whilst innovation has been compelled as a result of the lack of manpower. The paradigm of management has changed and the protected areas are looking more at adaptive management. The internet is a major tool for cooperation, and Natura 2000 has led to some harmonisation with common management strategies and joint fieldwork.

Weaknesses in the cooperation include the continued existence of different management structures and changes in the systems of governance and legislation, as well as dependence on projects for funding. Communication between organizations often depends on personal contacts, and cultural and linguistic differences have to be overcome too.

## The Development of TRANSPARCNET

Participants were called on to express their ideas, comments and visions for the network, and were asked to define their needs and expectations of a European transboundary network.

- Need for the network to meet;
- Themes for meeting reflecting different issues and different country perspectives;
- Advisory group, expert working groups in different fields;
- Meetings to create platform for exchange of information, our challenges are often different, but sometimes the same.
- Exchange with Russia;
- Involvement of tourism entrepreneurs;
- Forum for ideas and problem solving, perhaps have annual meeting with theme, informal rather than bureaucratic.
- Involvement of younger people in the network to learn from more experienced colleagues.
- Linkages on parks' websites, platform on EUROPARC website, staff exchange, exchanges of junior rangers, communication and marketing of network to governments, communication to local citizens
- Need for handbook with examples of best practice cooperation.
- Give strength to marginal areas, socio-economic aspects, recognition by local people.
- Lobbying function of network,
- Using label for better understanding of PAs.
- Collect best practice and experiences, use network to expand the network.
- Network could be used for fundraising, staff exchange, junior ranger exchange.
- Networking basis for common projects, best practice exchange, marketing of EUROPARC and transboundary label.
- Projects, PR activities of the TBPA network
- Forum or platform for exchange of information,
- Exchange of experience of key factors (i.e. beyond just information) in transboundary cooperation, involving local people, quality of visits etc...
- Difficult to get clear positions because we are so different, let network grow from our start as a "baby"
- Platform for exchanging information, organize database of best practice also to identify experts, network to market network at local, national and international level.
- Have fund to facilitate travel, local reps to join award ceremony – exchange and involvement of local "key persons", marketing each other in publications.
- Linking websites, needs more marketing by parks and EUROPARC to be made more well-known across Europe, to make network more attractive.
- Theme on harmonizing legislation, combining management approaches – best practice, visions for transboundary cooperation.
- Best practices, promotion through cultural events – common presentation
- influence on political changes
- Multitude of concepts – what's the overlap or umbrella. How do we differ? Meet with others e.g. World Heritage, PAN Parks etc...



- Collate transboundary literature.
- Overcome differences in management e.g. strict PA and National Park.
- Marketing – define to whom; need for different message.

## **Common priorities for the network**

### *Group 1*

- Define objective of the network
- Needs include exchange of experience
- Loose network – meeting annually
- Role of network

### *Group 2*

- What do we want to reach, when and how. Clear vision for the network, strategy for short, medium and long term
- What is the message of the network? Big need for handbook, platform for communication and exchange.

### *Group 3*

- Annual meeting on certain themes, to help experts.
- Marketing and lobbying: common vision.
- Common resolution for actions in Europe. (Brussels)
- Exchange platform

## **Needs and Expectations**

Based on the above discussion Martin Šolar identified three areas for further discussion:

- i. Structure/Organisation
- ii. Strategy
- iii. Practical activities expected and needed

### Structure/Organisation

- network meetings – ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in importance by delegates
- small expert groups on particular theme – 2nd
- Governance: EF / STEC / Network – 3rd
- funds/budget for TB EUROPARC TransParcNet – 4th
- advisory group

### Strategy

- Preparing the vision, goals and work programme for TransParcNet – ranked 1<sup>st</sup> in importance by delegates
- Communication (marketing) strategy for TB – 2nd
- Development of the EUROPARC TB Certification system – 3rd
- Comparative study of different TB guidelines / basic standards / manuals – 4th
- Handbook

### Activities

- platform for exchange information, experience, data – 1st
- exchange of staff, stakeholders – locals, young people etc. – 2nd
- common exhibition – 3<sup>rd</sup>
- topical seminars, e.g. harmonisation of mgt objectives, youth – 4th
- promoting each other – 5th
- website links

Expectations were looked at in more detail in groups.

Expectations of the EUROPARC Federation (incl STEC) included a web page, communication support, political support, lobbying European institutions– easier access to European funds and administrative support relating to funding programmes.

Expectations of the TBPAs / Transparcnet included taking turns in organising the annual networking meeting, the inclusion of non-certified parks too, the exchange of staff, responsibility of preparing information for marketing, providing help to non-certified parks to raise their level, linking websites, informing other parks of interesting meetings in the network, as well as the promotion of the network in their own areas.

**An invitation to go to the Neusiedler See National Park at the end of April 2010 for the next networking meeting was issued by Kurt Kirchberger.**

### Presentation of project idea

Richard Blackman gave a short presentation on a project concept that had been developed by the STEC in 2008 with a view to submitting an Interreg IVc application. Five of the park complexes were interested in the possibility. As a preparatory move it was agreed that Richard Blackman, Robert Brunner and Leo Reyrink would work together to draw up a summary project proposal.

## Conclusions

That TransParcNet has been born is a simple and satisfying fact.

### *Facts and figures of the meeting*

Almost everybody who was invited came! Only two transboundary protected areas (TBPAs) did not come, but all transboundary complexes were represented with 29 participants from 13 countries and including 13 park directors and one park president.

### *Presentations*

There are three different types of TBPAs, with the most usual form consisting of two protected areas. There is also one trilateral TBPA, as well as a unique form of a single protected area covering both sides of the border.

Despite very diverse cases and backgrounds (states with very different political systems, levels of administration, size, ecosystems etc...) transboundary cooperation works!

The most common fields of successful transboundary cooperation have included:

- common projects and common events;
- tourism and visitor management;
- environmental education, junior ranger;
- research and monitoring;
- nature conservation (also Natura 2000);
- common web site;

All TBPAs have found transboundary certification / cooperation beneficial and there were many more strengths and opportunities outlined than weaknesses and threats.

The main benefits of going through the process included:

- self assessment;
- external audit;
- knowing and respecting each other;
- national and international recognition;
- successful project applications;
- common management in different fields of work;
- tool for promotion.

The following needs and expectations, relating to the structure and organization of the network were identified:

- governance in the framework of EUROPARC;
- the organisation of a regular network meeting;
- some availability of funds / budget for the TransParcNet;
- small informal expert working groups.

A number of needs and expectations, relating to strategy, were also identified:

- the need to prepare a vision, aims and goals of the TransParcNet;
- the preparation of a communication strategy;
- the continued development of the transboundary certification system;
- to compare different transboundary guidelines and basic standards.

Ideas, needs and expectations for activities of the network included:

- the establishment of a platform for exchanging information, experiences and data;
- Linking of parks' web sites;
- The promotion of transboundary activities;
- to help each other.

A number of common priorities were identified by the group:

- an annual network meeting (on a subject of mutual interest);
- the need for a clear vision with common goals (programme of work);
- the development of a common platform with information, data, etc;
- the preparation of a communication strategy.

Tasks and requests for EUROPARC

- provision of more information on the EUROPARC web site;
- communication support;
- generation of political support (to find easier access to EU funds);
- provision of administrative support during the TB certification procedure.

Tasks and requests for TransParcNet

- organisation of an annual meeting;
- provision of greater information;
- web site linking;
- to promote each other;
- to help each other.

Further steps

- To set up an e-mail address database of the focal points in the transboundary protected areas;
- Prepare report of 1st TransParcNet meeting and send to the network;
- Enhance the EUROPARC transboundary web pages
- To draft the vision, aims and goals of the TransParcNet
- Fundraising / Project idea with initial interest shown by some members in potential of Interreg IVc project. A summary project outline is to be drafted by Richard, Robert and Leo to define the concept further. This is for the network to develop although the Interreg timetable very uncertain
- The next TransParcNet meeting will be in the Nationalpark Neusiedlersee – Seewinkel, Austria, April / May 2010

The conclusions were approved unanimously.

## **Annex 1**

### **News and Information**

#### **Verifications in 2009**

Two transboundary partnerships are to be verified in 2009 – Triglav / Pre-Alpi Giulie and Bayerischer Wald / Šumava. If the evaluation is successful, the award of the certificate will be made in Sweden at EUROPARC 2009.

Further potential candidates include the Nigula Nature Reserve and the North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve.

#### **Re-evaluations**

Re-evaluations will begin in 2009. It is a condition of the award that every five years there is a re-evaluation, where progress to be tested. Papers for re-evaluation are being sent to the Neusiedler See – Seewinkel National Park.

Re-evaluation is essentially a self-assessment exercise. There may be a need to send a verifier if self-assessment highlights problems. It was further noted that the re-evaluation would check whether the parks are still fulfilling the basic criteria as well as measuring progress.

#### **IUCN/WCPA Expert Group on Transboundary Cooperation**

There will be a meeting in June in Finland of the expert group, which will provide an opportunity to look at working together and combining forces. This can be discussed further with Stig Johansson.

#### **EUROPARC 2009 Annual Conference**

A new marine transboundary park is being inaugurated, which will have an impact on the conference. A workshop is being held, led by Martin Šolar, which will look at the basic standards in the marine environment, and discuss the necessity of and possible new criteria. It was suggested that a representative of PAN Parks could be invited as they have recently rethought their criteria in the light of the Archipelago National Park's interest in PAN Parks.

## Annex 2

### List of Participants and Protected Areas

Martin Šolar	Triglav National Park, Slovenia
Lassi Karivalo	Metsahallitus, Finland
Tomas Rothröckl	Podyji National Park, Czech Republic
Robert Brunner	Thayatal National Park, Austria
Marjeta Albinini	Triglav National Park, Slovenia
Andrzej Raj	Karkonosze National Park, Poland
Jan Hrebacka	Krkonoše National Park, Czech Republic
Frantisek Krejci	Šumava National Park, Czech Republic
Michal Valenta	Šumava National Park, Czech Republic
Karl Friedrich Sinner	Bayerischer Wald National Park, Germany
Alessandro Benzoni	Pre-Alpi Giuli Nature Park, Italy
Sergio Barbarino	Pre-Alpi Giuli Nature Park, Italy
Agu Leivits	Environmental Board, Estonia
Murel Merivee	Environmental Board, Estonia
Andris Urtans	North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve, Latvia
Leo Reyrink	Maas Schwalm Nette Nature Park, Netherlands / Germany
Silke Weich	Maas Schwalm Nette Nature Park, Netherlands / Germany
Bente Christiansen	Finnmark County, Norway
Tiia Kalske	Finnmark County, Norway
Riian Tervo	Metsahallitus, Inari Finland
Kirsi Ukkonen	Metsahallitus, Inari Finland
Richard Blackman	EUROPARC Federation
Arnold Boer	EUROPARC Federation
Rolands Auzins	Nature Protection Board, Latvia
Aleksandr Bizhon	Panajärvi National Park, Russia
Franz Haider	Neusiedler See – Seewinkel National Park, Austria
Kurt Kirchberger	Neusiedler See – Seewinkel National Park, Austria
Kari Lahti	Metsahallitus, Oulanka National Park, Finland
Valerijs Seilis	North Vidzeme Biosphere Reserve, Latvia

## Annex 3 Meeting Programme

# EUROPARC TransParcNet Meeting 6 - 8 May, 2009

## Venue

Hotel Lepadina, Kabli, H  demeeste municipality, 86002 P  numaa, Estonia



## Programme

<b>Wednesday, May 6</b>	
1500	<b>Bus transfer from Riga Airport to Lepadina Hotel</b>
1630-1700	<b>Registration at Lepadina Hotel</b>
1730	<b>EUROPARC TransParcNet Meeting, Marcus Hall</b>
	Welcome of participants and brief introduction to the TransParcNet meeting, Arnold Boer
	Tour de table (2 to 3 minutes each)
	EUROPARC's view on transboundary development, Richard Blackman
	First three short presentations by certified TBPAs, focus on benefits and weaknesses (10 minutes each plus 5 minutes for questions and discussion)
2000	<b>Welcome dinner</b>
<b>Thursday, May 7</b>	
	<b>Breakfast at Lepadina Hotel</b>
0830	<b>EUROPARC TransParcNet Meeting, Marcus Hall</b>
	The remaining three short presentations by certified TBPAs, focus on benefits and weaknesses (10 minutes each plus 5 minutes for questions and discussion)
	Discussion on the development of the TransParcNet, Arnold Boer
	- needs and expectations towards networking
	- identification of common priorities for cooperation within the future Network
	- how to organise the work of the TransParcNet
	- the theme for the expected next meeting of the Network
1300	<b>Lunch</b>
	Discussion on the development of the TransParcNet continued (if necessary)
	Presentation of the proposed Transboundary Protected Area Network project TRANSPARCNET (a potential joint application for Interreg IVC funding), Richard Blackman
	- gathering feedback on the project from participants
	- views of each participant on the possible involvement in the project
	How to develop the TransParcNet? Martin Solar
	- without the project and which priorities should we set
	- with the project and which priorities should we set
2000	<b>Dinner</b>
<b>Friday, May 8</b>	
	<b>Breakfast at Lepadina Hotel</b>

0830-0930	<b>EUROPARC TransParcNet Meeting, Marcus Hall</b>
	Conclusion of the meeting, Arnold Boer - decisions - next steps
	Check-out at the hotel
1000	Departure for an excursion to Nigula Nature Reserve and Vizeme Biosphere Reserve (lunch included)
1700 at the latest	Arrival at Riga Airport