



## Youth Declaration 1<sup>st</sup> EUROPARC Youth Conference

### Summary

**The Young People at the conference asked for three main things:**

**1: Greater youth representation.** This includes representation on National Park boards and Youth Parliaments; more Junior Ranger opportunities; and the opportunity for an annual youth conference.

**2: A network of Parks, (the) Public and Investors.** It was felt that there needed to be greater communication between different parks, and between parks and those outside – ie the public and investors. This would have benefits for Parks, the public and investors.

**3: Green Education.** Delegates have asked that Parks and Protected Areas talk to their Governments to introduce green education into schools. The young people could then act as the representatives and assistants in implementing this.

**They finished by saying: "If you do your bit, we'll do ours!"**

The text which follows is from the delegates and gives more information about each item.

#### 1: Youth Representation

We want Young people to be represented on National Park boards. This could be done in a number of ways. For example, having a Young board member or consulting with junior rangers on important issues. This will allow for new ideas to be raised and hopefully bring improvements for all people living in the park.

Every National Park should have a Junior Ranger programme. This is crucial for inspiring the next generation of conservationists and 'green' minded people. The benefits brought from having an active Junior Ranger programme are huge, from getting help with hands on volunteering to greater engagement with the public. The most important benefit of the programme though will not be seen immediately. The type of person the programme helps shape is hugely important. It will be these conscientious and passionate people that go on to be rangers, run National Parks and make a positive impact on the World. A Junior Ranger Programme is an investment in the future.

We want older Junior Ranger's to have a position on national youth parliaments throughout Europe. This position would be similar to the IUCN at the United Nations. These 'Young Nature Ambassadors' would raise the voice of nature and conservation and make future world leaders aware of the importance of ecosystem services and conservation.

Smaller Junior Ranger Camps should be organised between neighbouring countries more often, directly in the nature. This would allow Junior and Senior Rangers to openly discuss different issues affecting their parks and give Junior Rangers an opportunity to share their enthusiasm and vision of the future. The things discussed should be brought to the "big" EUROPARC Youth Conference which should be held every year, where representatives from all European Junior Ranger programmes should meet to shape the future.

We want to be involved because it's our turn to make a change and raise our voices!

(Cameron Cosgrove)

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## 2: We want a network of Parks, Public and Investors!

Communication is very important. The problem is that a lot of people are talking, but nobody is actually listening. We need that to change!

First of all, we need National Parks to work together. To listen to each other, and help other parks out when they need it. They can't just act on their own, that would be a lost battle to begin with. Note that them working together doesn't take away their identity, it would just give them a solid backbone, around that they can do whatever they want. Together they can set up a plan to campaign for more nature-awareness. That plan would be a global outline, and again every park could fill in the blanks according to their environment, to get the best possible results.

What we also need to do is to listen to the Junior Rangers, they want to be outside, and for people to realise how important nature is for us.

How can we achieve for our voice to be heard? We could join forces with celebrities. They have far more attention than any nature conservation organisation right now has. A celebrity could mention the importance of nature and national parks every once in a while. They could post tweets or facebook status-updates about it once a week for example. That sure would get attention.

And then, how to get investors involved? Would they be interested at first? No, why would they? We have to make them see what benefits there are for them.

Because we, as National Parks, we do need them. They have a lot of influence and, not unimportant, money. In times like these, a National Park working all on its own is just not going to cut it. We have to make one whole network throughout all the different sectors.

The point of this kind of sponsorships is partly gaining money, but also to gain consciousness. Local or even national, companies and businessmen have an enormous network of professional contacts, why shouldn't we use that? What we could offer them on the other hand is to wear their logos on our shirts and websites, and, probably the most important, it will be a way for them to clean their image. I know there are lots of companies who are really looking for ways to "greenify" their image, and this could be just the way. We could promote their green image. This way there is a benefit for both sides, they will sell more products because of their cleaned image, and we get a lot more attention, money and support from the business world.

So, once again, what we want is a network of parks, public and investors.  
(Ingeborg Swart)

## 3: Green Education

We do not want young people uninterested in nature. What therefore needs to be done is, to introduce Green Education in schools and to introduce days where these pupils can go out into nature with rangers in order to experience what they have learnt in their classrooms. By doing so, this pupils get to know what nature really is and learn to love it. People only protect things they love, if they know nature young people are more inclined to protect nature.

**We want you to talk with the governments in order to introduce Green Education!**

And then we can function as your representatives and as assistants in order to implement Green Education at schools. (Kristin Biebl)

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