



EUROPARC Federation
Report to Council
8th June 2015

Title:

EUROPARC Sections Workshop – 2015, April 19-20

Summary:

Siggen meeting outcomes

Recommendations:

To consider the conclusions of the meeting

EUROPARC Sections Workshop – 2015, April 19-20

Conclusions and comments from Sections

Preamble

At the last EUROPARC conference in Killarney, the General Assembly (GA) approved the new strategy. At the same GA the council agreed and promised to “open up” with the Sections and to make the role of the sections a key working point in 2015.

At the first Council meeting in Regensburg (January 2015) we decided to ask the Sections for candidates to be co-opted within the Council – besides the Sections representative (Olaf Holm) - and we started planning a Sections workshop to be held in Siggen in April.

The following are the conclusions of the EUROPARC Sections workshop that took place in Siggen on the 19th and 20th April 2015. Feedbacks that were received from the Sections after the meeting are summarised on the second half of the document.

The EUROPARC Sections representatives, after a two days joint workshop with the President, some of the Council Members and the Directorate, have agreed the following:

The Sections express their willingness to be more directly and actively part of the structure of the organisation and to jointly contribute to the implementation of its strategy. In order to achieve this process, Sections are aiming to harmonize their respective work plans and are proposing to the Council to consider the following initiatives and actions:

1. Membership:

- Modify the Statutes of the Federation to allow Sections to have also “Associated”. A mechanism to ensure good balance between Section members and associated should be introduced.
- Work on specific communication to ensure a better understanding and dissemination of the benefits and the values deriving from the EUROPARC membership.

2. Joint agreements between Federation and Sections:

- Subscribe agreements to better define the roles of the Sections for the joint implementation of the EUROPARC Strategy. Agreements should include:
 - ⇒ ***A general description*** – equal for all sections – with common minimum standard roles of the Sections, including, among others: the distribution of information from the Federation to the members and vice versa; the policy and advocacy role at national/regional level; the commitment to contribute to the implementation of the Federation work-plan; the role in sharing expertise among Sections.
 - ⇒ ***A more specific part***, which would state the concrete actions and activities that each Section will deliver. This part of the agreement can take the form of a proper contract, with the possibility to include payments or other incentives.

3. Sections leading working groups:

- Sections can take the lead of EUROPARC working groups or the management of specific European thematic areas on behalf of the Federation. If so, this can be included in the joint agreement (see 2).

4. Council – Sections meetings

- Organise annual meetings between the EUROPARC Council and the Section Presidents, preferably at the General Assembly.
- Organise meetings among Sections staff and the Directorate on a more regular and structured way.

5. Networking:

- Develop a joint project to support the implementation of networking activities and regular meetings among Sections and with the Directorate;
- Possibility to consider the Section offices as effectively part of the Federation;
- Organise staff exchanges.

6. List of working areas:

- Collect from each Section the list of EUROPARC working areas in which they are interested to take a role, with specification of actions and timeframe.

7. Structure for events:

- Organize ***annually a thematic/technical seminar*** in Brussels, lead by the Directorate with the support of the Sections. Those events should be an opportunity to present good practices from within the network and to value the “products” of the Federation. TED talks and online webinar options should be considered.
- Directorate, with the support of Sections, to organize **annually the General Assembly**, and include technical workshops and dedicated operational meetings for members and Sections;
- **EUROPARC Conference (+GA) to be organised every 2 years.**

8. Study tours:

- One Section per year can organize study tours in PA for experts.

9. Project development Strategy:

- Prepare a list of relevant funding opportunities (EU + National level);
- Organise annually technical meetings for project development;
- Create connections with Universities and Foundations.

10. EU Policy and advocacy for Pa’s & relevant themes

- Sections consider the EU policy and advocacy work as a crucial and overarching priority to be primarily delivered by the Federation, with the support of the Sections. The dissemination of information and achievements concerning EU policy and advocacy work can be increased.

The following timetable was agreed

- Draft minutes sent to the Sections by the 24th April
- Comments from the Sections by the 15th of May
- Council discussion in June
- Report back to the Sections
- Report and changes in the GA in October

Feedbacks and Comments from Sections for Council Consideration

All Sections expressed their general support and appreciation for the conclusions of the meeting. Some Sections added specific comments:

EUROPARC France

The proposed areas of work are really in line with most of our priorities, with a main focus for us on lobbying.

Nevertheless, please note that the involvement of the French Section will mainly depend on the resources (human and financial) that will be found or made available together with the Directorate and Council (mainly referring to the possibility to take responsibility for the management of working groups, organization of study tours...) At the moment there are very limited resources that the French Section can invest.

Federparchi – EUROPARC Italy

- the general comment about the proposals is positive, Federparchi-Europarc Italia agrees to the initiatives and actions emerged during the meeting and supports the decision to propose them to the Council;

- About *Membership* (point 1): indeed this topic needs a deeper analysis. Certainly it is possible to find a most correct legal status for different sort of members/non members, but the point is to find the best way to enlarge the knowledge of and the consensus towards the Federation among the parks and the interest of them to become members of EUROPARC;

- About *Joint agreements between Federation and Sections* (point 2): Federparchi agrees that it could be a good way to manage the differences among the sections and coordinate common efforts and objectives;

- About *Sections leading working groups* (point 3): in the recent ECST Network Meeting (Portugal, 4-7 May 2015), representatives from Italy, Spain and France assumed that it could be important to re-start the Sustainable Tourism Working Group, and suggested that Federparchi could lead it with the support of the others sections. Federparchi confirms here this interest, even if this proposal needs, of course, to be discussed more deeply, especially regarding the necessary financial resources;

- Finally, Federparchi considers the *lobby activity toward EU* one of the main added value that EUROPARC could offer to parks and thanks Ignace Schops and the staff for their efforts in that direction.

EUROPARC Germany (Their feedbacks are summarized here, but are available in detailed version in a separate document).

- Need to clarify the legal situation: with German law it is not possible to oblige members to be members of other associations. Therefore article 8 of the Statutes should be checked.
- Need to clarify what is meant by good balance between Section members and associated, and how to make this point legal.
- Council should check the possibility to combine Sections and Federation invoices for members that are part of both organisations.
- Propose to change the statutes to allow sections to take proxy votes of their members.
- Sections representative in the Council should be full council member with voting right.
- The incentives for the Section to collaborate with the Federation headquarters should be elaborated.
- Priority should be given to the elaboration of the list of working areas of the Sections (point 6) and to the policy and advocacy work.
- If Sections take a lead the Federation should support this work with funds or staff or other incentives.

- Networking activities, Joint projects, new conference format and study tours should become key tools to improve cooperation within the Federation and build mutual trust.

Annex 1

The following summary of the EUROPARC Policy and Advocacy work was provided to the participants as an annex to the conclusions.

The work of Protected Areas across Europe makes a valuable contribution across several European Union policy areas, notably on nature and biodiversity through the management of much of the Natura 2000 network, as well as through sustainable and rural development.

There are also many linkages to other areas of work that affect Protected Areas, such as agriculture, regional development and education. Through its Brussels office, EUROPARC ensures direct connection with European Institutions, including the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.

We represent members' interests at European level and actively contribute to the development of EU relevant policies, providing expertise, facilitating the exchange of experiences and driving the flow of information from and to our members.

EUROPARC Federation is operating at several levels in the EU: political at EU Commission level, in EU working groups, in EU expert meetings, in EU projects, ... besides this, the Federation is often asked for expertise, to give keynotes at high level conferences, etc. On the other hand some high-level staff of the EU are present at the annual conferences of EUROPARC Federation.

Below you can find an overview of the work the Federation is doing currently at EU level.

European Commission:

- High level meetings between EUROPARC President and EC officials;
- Close links and regular meetings with officials in DG Environment: Nature unit, Biodiversity unit, LIFE unit, Agriculture unit;

European Commission – Expert groups

- EF member of the Natura 2000 expert group: Michael Hosek and Federico Minozzi;
- EF member of the Green Infrastructure working group: Federico Minozzi;
- EF member of the Large Carnivores platform: Kaja Lotmann and Federico Minozzi;
- Participation at the EC Coordination Group for Biodiversity and Nature;
- Managing together with ECNC, Eurosite and CEEWeb a contract with the EC for EU Biogeographic Natura 2000 Seminars;
- Close connections and regular meetings with DG Enterprise and Industries: Sustainable Tourism Unit;
- EF among the experts on Sustainable Tourism of DG Enterprise (ETIS indicators and European Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism);
- Direct inputs and contribution in the Green Week 2015: key note speech from Ignace Shops + interventions from Parks of France;

European Parliament:

- Connections established with some MEP;
- Cooperation established with the Intergroup on Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development;

- Regular participation and contribution to relevant event and conferences in the EU Parliament: Ignace Shops and Federico Minozzi;
- Annual Charter Awards in the EU Parliament in Brussels;

Committee of the Regions:

- Close cooperation established with the Commission on environment: regular meetings, participation to events, presentations and contribution with good practices from PAs;
- Dominique Leveque (EF Council) substitute member in the Committee of the Regions;
- Organisation of events within the CoR;
- Cooperation and exchanges with EU regions on relevant Pas themes;

Cooperation with other International Organisations:

- EF obtained official status as International NGO of the Council of Europe;
- EF member of the expert group on Protected Areas and Ecological Networks: annual meeting in Strasbourg;
- EF among the Speakers at the European Conference for the 50 years of the Protected Areas Diploma

Cooperation with other partner Institutions, networks and NGOs:

- Memorandum of Understanding with: National Parks Service, International Ranger Federation, Redparques, Slow Food, IUCN WCPA, Lake Baykal Biosphere Reserve;
- EF member of the European Habitats Forum grouping 20 different NGOs involved working on Nature and Biodiversity at EU level: regular meetings in Brussels and meetings with the EC;
- EF member of the CAP NGO platform, an informal network of NGOs actively involved in Common Agriculture Policy;
- EF Brussels office based within the IUCN EU representative office: regular meetings and coordination on policy development and relevant initiatives;
- EF among the key note speakers at 2014 IUCN World Park Congress and contribution in several workshops;
- EF among the organisers of the Little Sidney Conference: key note speaker and workshop coordination;
- EF among the leader of the Wild Europe platform: for wilderness in Europe;
- Cooperation with IEEP on Health and Protected Areas study for the EC.

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