



**EUROPARC Federation
Report to Council
25th October 2015**

Title:
Directorate's Report 2015

Recommendations:
For information

Directorate Report to EUROPARC Council

October 2015 Update

Finances

Further to the report of the Treasurer, the current financial cash flow of the Federation remains within predicted levels. Some reduction in income from projects was as a result of activities being changed by the commission. Membership income is still outstanding. If all invoiced fees were to be collected there will be no need to extract from the reserves to meet our year end costs. However a debit from the reserves remains likely. Half the amount taken last year, was returned to the reserves, but there still is a continual slow reduction year on year.

Extensive time has been devoted to planning and managing the 2015 conference. With almost 140 delegates, the conference is due to break even financially.

6 project applications were submitted during the year, including the substantial NGO grant for 2 years. Two were unsuccessful, one has reached the second stage, with the majority results known in November. This makes concrete planning for the coming year somewhat delayed.

Staffing

Various staff changes have taken place due to 3 maternities and one relocation. Only one position remains unfilled at present. Thankfully previous employee and those familiar with EUROPARC have been able to return making the transitions easier.

We had 5 expressions of interest for the secondment on offer. 3 people remain interested and we are pursuing discussion with the relevant employers. This position is dependent on the award of the NGO grant.

Communications

A huge effort from the Directorate team saw the launch of the new EUROPARC website, completely redesigned and rewritten and with further new features planned once content and funds become available.

The EUROPARC Federation, was a partner of the conference, Little Sydney: Protecting Nature in Europe'. The event took place in Hainburg/Donau-Auen National Park (AT) had participated on the directorate supported the preparation of the programme and during the conference hosted or co-hosted some of the workshops presenting our conclusions from the World Park Congress in Sydney.

The new charter documents were created entirely in house.

Lobbying and Advocacy

The lobbying and advocacy work undertaken by the Federation covers a wide range of topics that impact the work of protected areas. These include agriculture, sustainable tourism, large carnivores and human interaction platform and N2000 where we are on the Commissions expert working group. A lot of attention was devoted to the Fitness Check of EU Nature Directives. Following brief consultation with members, a position paper was agreed and submitted. The Directorate continues to monitor, report and input into this process.

EUROPARC and Protected Areas at EU Commission Green Week 2015; Biodiversity, Natura 2000, health, regional identity, agriculture and Protected Areas have been some of the key words at the

Green Week 2015 in Brussels. Directorate supported, President Ignace Shops intervention, in one of the high level sessions, where he presented our working group's excellent good practices on Health and Protected Areas.

Our presence at European institutions continues with EUROPARC having full observer status in the Council of Europe. The Directorate represented EUROPARC at the international workshop in the Regional Park of Migliarino, San Rossore Massaciuccoli IT , organised by the Council of Europe to celebrate 50 years of the European Diploma and in the Group of Experts on Protected Areas and Ecological Network meeting in Strasbourg FR.

EUROPARC Events

With the priority given in the members consultation and strategy to defining better the role sections play in the work of the Federation, much focus was given to that aspect of work, which culminated in a workshop and meeting in Siggen.

The International Junior Ranger camp entitled 'Junior Rangers: In Action for Nature' was hosted by Nuuksio National Park (FI). 24 junior rangers attended from 14 Protected Areas in 10 different countries . Directorate supported the planning of the camp and attended the camp contributing to the leadership of the activities.

A highly committed group of youth declared to be the voice of nature from and to young people. The Aigüestortes Declaration, prepared by the 23 participants from 10 European countries, was made in Aigüestortes and Estany de Sant Maurici National Park, Catalonia, Spain. On the 1st EUROPARC International Youth+ Camp (2nd conference) , new skills on Communication, Advocacy and Leadership were developed and put to good use in a series of activities and workshops.

During the camp participants shared experiences and presented to the group their respective Protected Areas . They were supported by expert rangers from Cairngorms National Park (UK), Weerribben Wieden NP (NL) and Bayerischer Wald NP (DE) and mentors from the EUROPARC Federation. Useful discussions took place concerning accessibility in Protected Areas for people with disabilities, and how youth can play a role on supporting environmental education activities in parks. The Camp was a huge success showing the true potential young people have in being advocates for nature and ambassadors for protected areas across Europe. The Directorate were much involved in the design, planning and delivery of the camp supported by input from members, Bayerischer Wald (DE) , Werridden webben(NL) and Cairngorms NP (UK) . The young people who participated, developed a declaration which will be delivered to the representative of Europe's parks at the EUROPARC conference.

Another excellent Transparcnet meeting took place in Sumava (CZ) and Bayerischer Wald (DE) National parks took place in České Žleby. EUROPARC and the hosts welcomed 45 participants from 12 European countries. Learning about socio-economic monitoring in Parks as well as visiting restoration projects and natural forest succession sites after bark beetle infestation was very much welcomed by the participants. Three re-evaluation missions took place this spring in the Transboundary Parks Programme. The Directorate are very grateful to the STEC for all their dedication and hard work behind the scenes.

Siggen Seminar: N2000 - From Designation to Implementation took place again thanks to the generosity of the Alfred Toepfer Stiftung. The seminar heard of excellent case studies from Spain, Hungary and the Danube delta on the effectiveness of reporting and monitoring of N2000 Habitats

An excellent 9th charter network event took place Vila Nova de Cerveira (PT). Working With Vice President and Treasurer Paulo Castro and the team in Portugal. The directorate helped put together the programme and hosted the workshops at the event. The meeting saw 80 participants from all over Europe.

Charter work continued apace with the re-evaluation system revised and new templates and material prepared. In France a new methodology for recognising travel agencies as charter partners was piloted with the first 7 partners awarded with Spain also developing a new system. Directorate have been fully involved in these discussions. The Directorate was also delighted to host the Charter evaluation committee at the headquarters. Plans are advanced for the Charter Awards in Brussels at the beginning of December.

Project Updates 2015

The work of the EME Life communication for N2000 managers has resulted two workshops involving the EUROPARC directorate and design and production of the communications manual and toolkit and collection of communication case studies. The award for the best case study will be given at the EUROPARC conference 2015.

To improve the management of Habitats and Species across Europe, transregional and transnational cooperation are crucial. EUROPARC with together with ECNC, ELO, Eurosite and CEEweb, is contributing to support the European Commission strengthening the effectiveness of the Natura 2000 network across Europe in the biogeographical seminars. Directorate staff are heavily involved in coordinating EUROPARC input into this.

Capacity Building in Europe, Professionalising protected area management, is a project of Proparks (RO) funded by BfN (DE) supported by EUROPARC through directorate participation in the advisory group. ProParks has developed an excellent toolkit to help Protected Areas gain more confidence in assessing the skills needed for their staff. The materials produced will be hosted on the EUROPARC website.

The DBU(DE) funded project 'Increasing education opportunities on sustainable development for protected area managers in Romania', EUROPARC is in partnership with ProPark (RO).The newly developed training programme for protected area professionals, a mix of online and face-to-face sessions, saw its first participants. Directorate is supporting the excellent work undertaken by ProParks. At the end of the project in 2016, the training material will be made available to the wider EUROPARC membership on our website.

Working with our member, VDN; (Association of German Nature Parks) EUROPARC is involved in BfN (DE) project to collect and analyse up-to date information from European Nature, Regional and Landscape Parks This will examine and develop governance structures, as well as understand and promote their work and management . Directorate has been working closely with VdN, drawing on the wider European network, to develop the questionnaire and survey , advising on study tours and content of publications.

The BioEuParks project whose aim is to develop an efficient and sustainable biomass supply chain in 5 European Nature Parks and to promote short chains and small-scale installations sees EUROPARC as the “communications” partner. The project joined the European Day of Parks, coordinated by the directorate and whose theme “ Nature is Our Business” was perfectly suited to the objectives of the project.

For this occasion, the project partners took the opportunity to promote the benefits of the project in organizing a wide range of activities. A conference in Brussels is being planning by EUROPARC for next March

Carol Ritchie

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October 2015