



**EUROPARC**  
F E D E R A T I O N

## EUROPARC Council Election 2017

### Election candidate information

*Name:* **Paulo Castro**

*Nationality/Citizenship:* **Portuguese**

*Member organisation:* **individual member category**

*Position to be elected for (council member, treasurer, president):*  
**council member**

*Nominated by:* **Principado de Asturias**

*Current Position:* **owner and manager of Ponto Natura a consultancy on sustainable development and nature and in what concerns EUROPARC I am an elected council member and treasurer**



**Please introduce yourself in a few sentences, your background, interests and experience.**

My name is Paulo Castro. I am Portuguese, 59 years old, agronomist. For the last 30 years I have mainly worked in mountain rural areas with participatory methodologies trying to put sustainable development into the agenda of the other stakeholders.

In the last 20 years, I have been professionally involved in environment and nature conservation. For me Nature Conservation is a broader issue where you can involve almost all stakeholders you can remind of. Nature is a bottom line issue that involves everyone and where everyone wants to have an opinion.

I love to work in teams and in partnership.

I believe we have a common heritage as Europeans in terms of a nature conservation mainly based in a cultural landscape made by men since we inhabit Europe. Our diversity is our strength!

Presently I am an elected Council member and also the Treasurer of the Federation as well as in charge of the theme of Sustainable Tourism in particular the European Charter.

**Experience relevant to the EUROPARC Federation.**

I start working in 1982 with drainage and soil erosion in a UNDP project in South Portugal learning about sustainable farming techniques in wheat land.

Then I moved to mountain areas in North Portugal and started working with sustainable development rural projects in 1987. I have a long experience of working with participatory schemes involving stakeholders of local communities.

I have developed also a long experience in training and supervising Regional R&D teams being able to involve also the educational and research approach to development.

20 years ago I was park director of Peneda Gerês National Park in Portugal from 1996-2000. In those times I had the chance of being also the President of a Local Development NGO for the Park area. There was an important experience from both sides, public and private, when dealing with sustainability, development and nature conservation.

I have then started the European Charter process there. Also relevant was the work developed between the park and Baixa Limia and Sierra de Xures NP (Es) with whom we have established a protocol for a transboundary Geres-Xures Park and a common action plan. They are now Transboundary Man and Biosphere Reserve from UNESCO.

From that time I started a close collaboration with EUROPARC facilitating, chairing or being a key note speaker in several workshops promoted by EUROPARC namely in our Annual Conferences, Charter Network meetings at European, Spanish-Portuguese and Italy level.

In the last 16 years my main cooperation with EUROPARC is with the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism as a verifier and active member of several Working Groups. I know directly a large number of EUROPARC members as Charter Parks from UK, to Spain, France and Italy and I have a quite good overview of their problems. EUROPARC experience has provided me a better understanding of the variety and complexity of the problems that affect the majority of our members, but at the same of the similarity of some solutions to all of us when networking.

My 30 years of professional life have given me a good experience in participatory methodologies, working in group and in project development, e.g. concept and management with EU and non EU funds (Interreg, Life, Equal, EEAG, ESF, RDEF, etc.) many of them involving directly nature conservation. I had several positions of Director both in public and private organizations allowing me to have a good experience in managing organizations and staff.

In the past 10 years I have been owning and managing a small consultancy business dedicated to sustainable development and nature and lately I have decided to start a new experience, since 2016, with a partner, co-owning and managing a small travel agency dedicated to ecotourism, community based tourism and genealogic tourism.

Finally, I am currently the Treasurer of the Federation since 2012 and this position gave me a better understanding of the complexity and specificity of running the Federation and its relation to our members in what concerns funding and expectations from members' services. I am also in charge of the theme of Sustainable Tourism in particular the European Charter in the Council.

#### **Languages spoken and level of fluency (basic, moderate, good)**

Portuguese, Spanish, French, Italian and English. All at a good level in speaking, reading and writing.

*The EUROPARC Federation needs a group of strong leaders in the Council who are willing to invest time in taking the organisation forward and raising its profile and who will represent it at national and European level.*

#### **What is your relationship to the EUROPARC Federation and what is your motivation for becoming a member of the EUROPARC Council / EUROPARC President / EUROPARC Treasurer?**

My relation with EUROPARC started in 1997, after I was nominated Director of the Peneda Geres National Park in Portugal. Since then, I have attended or been invited to Annual Assemblies, Seminars and Charter network meetings at European and section level. I have facilitated or chaired several workshops and participated in several working groups in particular those related with the ECST. I am also a verifier of the ECST since the beginning in 2001.

I am currently the Treasurer of the Federation since 2012 and elected EUROPARC Council member for the area of the Sustainable Tourism/European Charter since 2014.

My motivation to become an elected Council Member is the same that made me being actively involved with EUROPARC since the beginning. No matter the status I had (representing an institution or just

representing myself), I believe in the organization, its mission and the way it develops the networking. I believe that my expertise can help the Council to deliver a better job and improve the networking.

**What do you think you can offer the EUROPARC Federation and its members?**

First of all, I truly believe I can bring my commitment to the Council. I like to work in group and build up common solutions.

My communication skills can help me establish good communication with members and start build up (or strengthen) a trust relation, facilitating the gathering and the enlargement of the networking that EUROPARC needs.

My large personal knowledge of members and Sections I have been meeting during these 20 years and my expertise as a manager and as an expert can help EUROPARC Council to deliver some important points of its agenda in particular in the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism. My experience as Treasurer of the Federation also helped me to better understand the reality of the Federation and the needs from the members and my past experience as an elected council Member has given me full experience of what I can give to the Federation. I have also been a member of the working group that has proposed the Strategy for the Federation as well as Chair of the Membership Commission that has reviewed and proposed the new categories, fees and voting rights which enables me of a large understand of the Federation complexity and specificity.

*The Federation was founded for its members. It works hard to be the voice of these members on various levels and to facilitate their work on the ground.*

**How do you see the role of the members in the Federation and how would you stimulate and encourage their contribution?**

There is a golden rule in networking. You cannot expect to take out of a network more than what you have putted in. Therefore my claim to members is: come and participate, share your experiences, fears, defeats and successes with us! In a network we feel less lonely when we are alone and having a bad moment, but we also feel stronger when we feel threatened. Inputting positive attitudes, values and practical experience pays back!

Members should be encouraged at three levels:

1º Participating at the Section level, when there is one, or promoting new Sections, especially at large geographical regions;

2º Engaging in networks of specific interests (like Charter Network) and develop specific work inside of it, working groups, thinks thanks, annual meetings, etc.;

3º To increase Partnership Exchange Programs for staff and local stakeholders promoting a better mutual knowledge of EUROPARC members.

**How would you develop the internal communication and cooperation within the Federation?**

I am a stronger believer in the role of the Sections as a key tool for better communication between EUROPARC members.

We should encourage the creation of new Sections at large European Regions scale in order to have a stronger coordinated work lobbying Nature Conservation and promoting cooperation between countries.

Sections should be encouraged to further develop the agreements they have already set out during our last conference.

Council members should have a more active role in the networking at the several levels, EU, Sections and members' level.

Each Council member should have a mandate (representative role) for a specific theme that is strategic to EUROPARC and act accordingly to it in its tasks of representing EUROPARC.

*EUROPARC is an organisation that is constantly developing and that needs to stay on top of the political agenda whilst thinking about the needs of its members.*

**What should the principle functions of the EUROPARC Federation be in the coming years?**

EUROPARC is becoming stronger every year with more members in a wider space.

Lobbying is key and a major concern for EUROPARC at EU and international level. We should be able to deliver our message and our values to that political decision level. Parks and other protected areas are the closest and best fitted organizations to demonstrate a new society paradigm to live in harmony with Nature, with a development based in a sustainable use of nature providing a fair economical and a more equitable society.

Networking should be the second most important concern for EUROPARC. In years of crisis like the present and coming years, EUROPARC has a key role in developing networking and cooperation between members. New solutions are needed and EUROPARC should lead this network by: i) facilitating the network itself; ii) providing expertise in helping building up new projects; iii) being available to be project leader or partner of projects promoted by members.

**In what areas, e.g. lobbying, funding, does EUROPARC need to maximise its external relationships and with whom?**

Key partners of EUROPARC are the EU Commission and EU Parliament at policy level in what concerns Natura 2000 Network since this is the most relevant nature conservation policy EU has.

We must lobby that we are the best positioned organization to deal with this matters at management level.

International organizations (IUCN, WCPA, WWF, etc.) are also relevant to create a common lobbying strategy for Nature Conservation and the role of Protected Areas for an effective management.

Also the effort done with the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism has made possible the international recognition of the Charter as the oldest (2001), largest (157 Charter Areas) and widest (19 countries) and efforts are done to establish a new International Charter pilot project in Brazil and a common platform with other similar award schemes of sustainable tourism based in and around protected areas.