



To:

President of the European Commission - Mrs Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Parliament - Mr David Sassoli
Executive Vice-President - Mr Frans Timmermans
Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries - Mr Virginijus Sinkevičius

Regensburg, 28.04.20

Regarding: EUROPARC'S support to the EU Green Deal

Dear President von der Leyen, President Sassoli, Vice-President Timmermans, Commissioner Sinkevičius,

The EUROPARC Federation is the largest network of European Protected Areas, and its members across 40 countries manage thousands of Natura 2000 sites, national and regional parks, marine protected areas and nature reserves. Protected Areas are actively engaged to promote sustainable development in close partnership with multiple sectors, including farming, fishing, tourism, health and community engagement.

The health, the restoration and the protection of our natural ecosystems are existential for all aspects of the European community. Millions of people visit our protected areas across Europe on a daily basis. Besides the beauty and the intrinsic value of wildlife, there is a huge and positive impact on the regional economy and jobs. In these difficult Corona-times, millions of people rediscover the healing powers of our natural ecosystems: not only for our personal health, but also for tackling climate change.

EUROPARC welcomes the new priorities set in 2019 by the European Commission and the European Parliament in the EU Green Deal. EUROPARC Federation is strongly convinced that the vision expressed in the Green Deal is our life-line to a sustainable future. If we want clean air and drinkable water for everyone. If we want a biodiverse and climate-neutral society. If we believe in justice and solidarity and if we would like to give a perspective to the future generations, for these reasons **we give our full support to the EU's Green Deal.**



Today, well aware of the impacts of the current Covid-19 crisis in Europe, **we would like to express our firm support to the EU Green Deal and reiterate its importance.** We are living difficult times, but **the Green Deal agenda should not be delayed,** as the priorities foreseen are crucial to overcome the challenges ahead of us.

The Green Deal contributes to elaborate innovative solutions for a greener society, able to protect biodiversity and natural resources, promoting sustainable economic activities, human well-being and planet's health. Europe's Protected Areas have a long established practise and experience in delivering these multiple benefits and we stand ready to contribute. We would wish to join the Green Alliance in a proactive measure to support the implementation of the Green deal, with our membership, at all political levels.

In this framework, **EUROPARC firmly expresses the urgency for the approval of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030,** a crucial pillar of the EU Green Deal. The increase of European surface protected, the promotion of specific initiatives for the restoration of habitats and ecosystems, together with targets for effective management of Natura 2000 sites and Protected Areas are all essential. EUROPARC will be ready to collaborate with the European Institutions, offering expertise and experience, to support the implementation of the Strategy and to provide inputs for the development of the dedicated Action Plan.

EUROPARC further welcomes also the development of the **EU Farm to Fork Strategy.** This is **another fundamental component of the EU Green Deal.** The strategic vision and the power to integrate multiple policies, is a strong asset of the Green Deal. The priorities foreseen in the Farm to Fork Strategy, together with the upcoming Common Agriculture Policy – CAP, will have an impact on human and ecosystems' health. A reshaping of the food value chain must be part of the solution to the current crisis, enhancing rural development, ensuring healthy and safe food for European citizens, while promoting biodiversity.

As most Protected Areas in Europe are living laboratories for the development of sustainable farming practices, EUROPARC has highlighted that Protected Areas and Natura 2000 can be compatible with sustainable food production and nature conservation, and that needs to be recognized and valued in the CAP and in the Farm to Fork Strategy.

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Moreover, we support that **Climate Policies remain high on the EU priority list**. EUROPARC highlights the importance of ensuring the integration of nature conservation and the role of Natura 2000 and Protected Areas in particular, in the upcoming EU Climate strategies and targets.

The EU Green Deal has an enormous potential to transform our Europe. In order to fulfil its ambitions, it cannot remain a commitment on paper, but it should be applied concretely at European, national and local levels. EUROPARC and its wide network of Protected Areas are ready and willing to play their role to contribute implementing effectively the EU Green Deal strategies.

Finally, we, the EUROPARC Federation and its members, desire to **thank you** for your engagement towards a greener Europe, and we wish to confirm our commitment to collaborate with you in achieving this great ambition.

As the largest natural heritage network in Europe we are ready to discuss, help and integrate the new EU Green Deal and we would like to be invited for an open and constructive conversation to make Europe great again!

Best regards,

EUROPARC President
Ignace Schops

EUROPARC Executive Director
Carol Ritchie