



2 June 2020

Seminar-Dialogue
with DG Environment

organised by:



*Partnerships for Biodiversity
Biodiversity, Climate and Protected Areas towards 2030*

Seminar-dialogue 2020

*Organized by EUROPARC Federation in cooperation with
the European Commission DG ENV with the participation of DG CLIMA*

*Tuesday, 02.06.2020
Online meeting*

Report by EUROPARC

Following the successful experiences in [2017](#), [2018](#), and [2019](#), The EUROPARC Federation and the Nature Unit of the DG Environment organised the “Seminar-Dialogue 2020 - Partnerships for Biodiversity” on the 2nd of June 2020, titled ‘*Biodiversity, climate and Protected Areas towards 2030*’.

By bringing together representatives of the Commission and Protected Areas professionals on an annual basis, The EUROPARC Federation aims to **highlight the contribution of Protected Areas in implementing key European policies**, raise awareness of managers about EU policy developments and provide the European Commission with clear insights about the challenges faced by professionals in the field.

This year, 40 participants met online for an interesting debate about **the role of Protected Areas and Natura 2000** in the new **EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030** and **EU climate policies**, in the framework of the **EU Green Deal**.

EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and Protected Areas

Several of the most relevant targets for Protected Areas, as set out in the Biodiversity strategy, were presented by the EC – these include:

- **Legally protect a minimum of 30% of EU land and sea.** It is foreseen that the surface protected will be distributed across the EU, applied at the level of biogeographical regions. Therefore, each EU country will be able to contribute to reaching the 30% target.
- **Strictly protect at least 10% of the EU Protected Areas.** In such areas, limited human activities will be allowed.
- **Effectively manage all Protected Areas,** defining clear conservation objectives and measures, and monitoring them appropriately.
- Develop a **specific EU Nature restoration plan.** The EC is working on new legislation for 2021, with legally binding targets to restore degraded ecosystems. The objective is very ambitious and will require Member States to ensure no deterioration in conservation trends and status.
- **Bring nature back to agricultural land,** by promoting eco-schemes and result-based payment schemes, reducing by 50% the overall use chemical pesticides, bringing back at least 10% of agricultural area under high-diversity landscape features and targeting at least 25% of the EU's agricultural land to be organically farmed by 2030.
- Increase the quantity of forests and improving their health and resilience with a dedicated **EU Forest Strategy** in 2021, with specific attention to primary and old growth forest.
- Restore and properly protect **marine ecosystems.**
- Greening urban and **PeriUrban** areas.
- Ensure the **full implementation and enforcement of EU environmental legislation**

The EUROPARC Federation shared its perspective, welcoming the Green Deal and the strong ambition of the European Commission, seeing in the Biodiversity Strategy the integration of priorities to address also human health, agriculture, food and water quality, climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The EUROPARC Federation emphasised in particular the following points:

- The **recognition of the role of Protected Areas** designated at national and regional level is a very strong element. Protected Areas are key players, contributing to achieving the wide biodiversity targets. Protected Areas are essential governing bodies for nature conservation and for integrated landscape management. They are laboratories of innovation and active promoters of sustainable development practices. Those are crucial to complement the Natura 2000 network. Therefore, we welcome the vision for a transnational, coherent and integrated EU network of Protected Areas.

- The **endorsement of the Strategy by MSs** and local authorities will be crucial for the success of this strategy.
- The **implementation and enforcement of the current EU Nature legislation** should be maintained as a top priority.
- In order to **ensure improvements in the effectiveness of PA management**, innovative learning practices should be developed and opportunities to further develop competencies of managers ensured. The EUROPARC Federation is committed to capacity building through a variety of different media and instruments (including the LIFE e-Natura 2000.edu project) and is keen to continue to support the EC in this vital regard.
- **Innovative governance models** for Protected Areas should be explored, ensuring the active involvement of youth and communities, promoting the implementation of partnership processes to involve relevant sectors: farming, fishing, tourism in particular. The EUROPARC Federation and its members have been working in this direction for many years and the practical experience gained is directly relevant to the implementation of the new strategic priorities.
- The new terminology being used (strict protection, effective areas based conservation...) has to be clarified also to **ensure coherence and balance between the impact of strict protection and the objective of conserving biodiversity**. Therefore zoning in Protected Areas, different management practices (including non-intervention), wilderness and other approaches need to be carefully considered.
- An **increase in extension or number of Protected Areas should be adequately supported financially**. In some countries resources are already limited for the existing Protected Areas and there may be resistance towards the development of new areas.
- The EUROPARC Federation also welcomes the importance given in the Strategy to **Periurban** areas and to **cross-border cooperation** among Transboundary Areas. These can be important players to contribute reaching nature conservation targets, but adequate funding will be necessary.

EU climate Policies and Protected Areas

The links between climate change and Biodiversity seems obvious to many people. Yet it is recognised that in reality there is a disconnect between climate change and nature conservation policies. The IPCC report shows that there is an emergency, and the United Nations agree that we need to have a transformative change.

For the **new European Commission's approach**, EU priorities for climate and Biodiversity are interconnected. The Paris Agreement has the objective to limit global warming to 1.5°, but in reality, the EU will go beyond that target. There is a convergence of EU policies and initiatives. In particular, the habitat restoration agenda will contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Scientific studies show that conservation can help mitigation. A wide range ecosystems (e.g. forest, wetland, peatland, marine etc.) can help the storage and sequestration of CO₂. Among the habitats, many of them are carbon rich and hold enormous potential: equally, nature based solutions are increasingly important in relation to the climate and restoration agendas. Protected Areas are even more valuable in the face of climate change and have an important role to play in the implementation of those policies.

To support the strategic objectives, €20 billion a year should be unlocked for spending on Natura 2000 and green infrastructure, coming from the CAP, private/public funds, Cohesion policy fund, Horizon Europe: 25% of the EU budget dedicated to climate action will be invested in biodiversity and nature-based solutions.

From the EUROPARC Federation's perspective, the Natura 2000 network and Protected Areas should be the foundation for the development of “climate-friendly” sustainable societies.

However, nature and Protected Areas also need to adapt to climate change and there are many reasons restricting adaptation:

- Protected Areas are often small and disconnected and nature outside Protected Areas is often degraded due to anthropic activities.
- The mandate of Protected Areas is limited to actions within their boundaries while the problems are global.
- There is a lack of dedicated resources, and policy are not (well) integrated.

Consequently, EU and Member States need to act cohesively to support a better implementation of Natura 2000, improve and strengthen legislation to enable climate change adaptation, and allocate dedicated funding lines to finance adaptation in and around Protected Areas.

This sums up the Seminar Dialogue 2020. Despite the difficulties and challenges at present, this has been another successful exchange. We would like to thank again the DG ENV – Nature Unit and DG CLIMA for this opportunity.

The dialogue continues!