



# Guidance for EUROPARC Members' Participation Groups

Final version Feb 2022

## INTRODUCTION

Member Participation Working Groups (hereinafter Groups) include a range of groups that contribute to the vision and mission of the EUROPARC (commissions, working groups, task forces, online forum, standing committees etc.)

This version is based on previous documents produced and approved in 2016, 2011 and 2010.

## PURPOSE AND FUNCTIONS

EUROPARC should endeavour to create differing types of groups, suited to the needs and task required by the Federation, but ensure we maximise the positive opportunities indicated.

Groups working together with a common purpose are beneficial for people in that they can provide members with important social interaction, support and enriched opportunities for learning.

- 1) Groups should respond to specific well defined topics, based on the current Strategy.
- 2) Groups should have clear objectives and expected results in an specific period of time
- 3) Groups need "catalyzers", not only among their members but very important from the Directorate and/or Council to ensure periodic communication and close relationship with the Strategy

[http://www.euoparc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/EN\\_EUROPARC-Strategy-to-2030.pdf](http://www.euoparc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/EN_EUROPARC-Strategy-to-2030.pdf)

A well-functioning group can be:

- Good at finding problems;
- Promoting innovation;
- Can make better decisions than individuals on some kinds of tasks;
- Can be good tools for implementation, in that group decisions to which members are committed will be carried out willingly;
- Can also help fend off the negative consequences of large organisational size, by keeping communication lines short and hierarchies relatively flat.

As well as the group dynamics needed for a group to be effective, the functions of the working groups would also need to meet some or all of the following:

- To address a given theme of interest to Protected Areas of Europe and relevant to the current strategy,
- To provide analysis of a theme or topic,
- To propose and develop policy,
- To develop projects that deliver outputs of relevance to protected areas,
- To investigate and develop funding streams to resource projects.
  
- To give support input and advice to a particular area of work

To establish a well-working structure of groups requires consideration and decision- making by the Council and Directorate to set the constructive framework with which members can participate and provide positive outcomes for EUROPARC and for themselves.

**OUTLINE OF BENEFITS : for a member participating in EUROPARC working groups**

As a member association, it is really important for the organisation to provide opportunities for its members to participate. Working on the common goals agreed as an association, that are intended to provide benefits to the membership as a whole, individuals offering their time, expertise and ideas to specific working groups could benefit in the following ways

- Improved personal competencies- better communications skills, improved language ability (in a second language). Better collaboration skills working with others from differing backgrounds, and cultures
- Sense of common achievement, pride and satisfaction and celebration of their role and success.
- Being part of a working group team with people with different skills and abilities, being exposed to different ways of working will develop skills in each individual, adding those skills into the member's organisation
- Learning from others.- bringing together experience from across Europe will enable members to gain detailed intelligence about the area of work which will also benefit the member’s own organisation.
- Increasing collaboration, working on a common project in getting more ideas on the development of the topic and builds capacity in the individual as well as EUROPARC and their own organisation
- Building a social and professional network that the member can connect with both on the topic of interest but across wider Protected Area work

Members will always get as much out of participation as they put in.

**What Kind of Group do we need?**

To match a relevant structure(s) for different kinds of member groups, to the topic and tasks, it may be pertinent therefore to consider the following aspects.

QUESTION	WHAT IS NEEDED	RESULT
<p><b>What are the topics and tasks required? And how do we determine these?</b></p>	<p>This requires an analysis of the EUROPARC strategy by Council. Bear in mind the strategy is an 8 year document so not all topics may be addressed at this point in time. The main outcomes</p>	<p>Once the themes and topics are identified, then the management and outputs of the groups are operational issues.</p>

	anticipated are addressed in the strategy.	
<b>Are these tasks or topics best facilitated by group work or other mechanisms: consultants, individuals etc. ?</b>	This is a matter of experienced judgement as to the form this should take. Setting up a members group raises certain expectation and so should not be undertaken if that commitment cannot be supported.	These are decisions for Directorate following input and discussion with Council. Some topics and tasks are undertaken through EUROPARC's involvement with other organisations.
<b>What are the group's parameters in decision making and other functions?</b>	This should be agreed in the workplan for each group, but reporting of work should take place directly with the Directorate to be gathered in the reports on the strategy. Off course opportunities to report at GA for example can also be identified, to highlight the work of the group.	This will be agreed between directorate and group participants.
<b>The expectation of the Council, Directorate and group members in terms of what are achievable outputs.</b>	That should be agreed in the initial workplan between the Directorate and those interested or proposed to be a part of the group.	Outputs will be agreed between Directorate and group participants.
<b>How and by whom are they "supervised" or report to?</b>	All groups communicate and report to Directorate through which they are reported to Council. Where group chairs are also council member then they report directly.	It is the function of the Directorate to report on all aspect of the strategy to council. Therefore it is more efficient and effective to shorten the reporting and communication lines.
<b>When and to what extent should working groups speak on behalf of the Federation or represent it?</b>	This can be encouraged, guidance will need to be drafted and support materials produced	Separate guide will be developed for that purpose.

Additional aspects to be considered and clarified:

- Group logistics – size, number and type of meetings, etc.; we would suggest on average 7 members are sufficient, with a minimum of 5 and maximum of 10. F2F meeting where necessary will have limited budgets and therefore numbers attending will need to be considered. If all meetings are online numbers can be more relaxed, but limited to ensure efficiency. Any groups formed however can always call more open online meetings for a greater pool of people, including sections to input, even if person attending such open meetings are not in and of themselves members of the group driving the topic and agenda.

- The skills and responsibilities of the group members;
- How members are recruited;
- How they can be supported by the Directorate;
- The role of sections
- How they report to the Federation;

Those questions may elicit different responses, such as “one size need not fit all”. Therefore, different types of structures can be created to fulfil the needs of the group. In each case, these matters would be addressed by the remit and workplan of each group, as described in each group’s terms of reference.

Clarity of the functions of any roles for members will need to be carefully drawn up, both to manage expectations and to ensure the type of participation is adequately supported and managed to achieve the goals needed. There is a challenge to delegate sufficient responsibility to enable some of the benefits to be realised by both the participant and the federation, without compromising either the quality-of-service EUROPARC seeks to deliver, and indeed the reputational integrity of the Federation.

### TYPES OF GROUPS NEEDED TO IMPLEMENT THE EUROPARC STRATEGY 2030

In order to deliver more membership participation and gain technical and advisory expertise for the work of EUROPARC, the following structures could be envisaged:

Types of Member Participation Groups of the EUROPARC Federation		Priorities for 2022	Future needs?	
EUROPARC Programme Implementation Groups	Technical standing Committees	To evaluate and recommend on specific aspects of EUROPARC work, particularly existing programmes such as Charter and TB	EUROPARC maintains two verification groups. These “standing committees” currently assess the Transboundary and Charter for Sustainable Tourism verifications. They have an ongoing remit but with guidelines to ensure the development of the committees themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transboundary Parks Program (in place)</li> <li>• Charter for Sustainable Tourism (in place)</li> </ul>
	other types of programme	current TB task force. this is a semi permanent group made up of TB members and was created at	this exists to develop and support the ongoing work of the TB programme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transboundary Parks Program TF (in place)</li> <li>• HPHPe</li> <li>• Youth</li> </ul>

	<b>members groups</b>	their request , but has proven to be a really helpful and useful platform to keep TB members engaged and working on the programme. t is more focused than then TPN		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Sustainable Tourism (in place)</li> <li>● Nature Regional Landscape Parks (New - being set in 2022)</li> </ul>	
	<b>Networks</b>	To support wider engagement of members in those aligned with the programme or project implementation	Charter Net- a more informal “gathering” of those aligned with the ECSTPA/		
	<b>Networks</b>	To support wider engagement of members in programme or project implementation	Transparc net. TPN		
	<b>Networks</b>	To support wider engagement of members in programme or project implementation	JR and Youth +		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● JR and Youth+</li> </ul>
<b>Strategy development groups</b>	<b>Commissions</b>	To undertake a piece of developmental work on a given topic or theme that will have a tangible future application.	Usually given a 3 year mandate and report to Council through a Council led chair. Periruban is an current ongoing commitment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Periurban Parks (in place)</li> <li>● Sustainable Agriculture (in place)</li> <li>● HPHP (in place)</li> <li>● Management Effectiveness (new - set in 2022)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Management Effectiveness</li> <li>● Environmental Education and PAs</li> <li>● Realising the contribution of parks to a well-being economy</li> </ul>
	<b>Forum</b>	Predominately e-forum to explore area of works, stimulate discussion.	These can easily be held online and be brought together for one or several meeting to provide analysis, e.g.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bern convention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Nature for all</li> <li>● Visitor management</li> </ul>

			post-Covid, Bern convention, etc.		
	<b>Advisory panels</b>	To give an overview or audit the work of the Federation on a given topic or in general.	These tend to be inside projects, but not exclusively. So far, the EUROPARC has not used that type as a whole, but with continuous growing of topics the Federation is involved, this type of group seems to be relevant.	Usually convened by Directorate for specific inputs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• communications (set to support strategy development-2022)</li> <li>• Policy and advocacy (set to support strategy development - 2022)</li> </ul> <p>we will convene a comms and a lobbying group to work with us on the development of these plans until June 2022</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equalities</li> <li>• Volunteering and citizen science</li> </ul>
	<b>Short Life Working Group</b> <b>SLWGs</b>	To undertake a specific piece of work or theme and prepare a report with recommendations for EUROPARC in limited short-term timetable.	Related to a EUROPARC programmes or activities inc. those needed for further development of the Federation (e.g. Charter, TB, HPHPe, Junior Rangers, Youth, Fundraising strategy, etc.).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management effectiveness</li> </ul> <p>was set up early 2022 to elaborate a plan of what is needed before a formal ME commission was mandated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marine</li> </ul>
<b>Project Working Groups</b>		To support project implementation and in addition to the project steering groups which Directorate attend as part of the project management		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natur Adapt: Climate change task force</li> <li>• LIFE Enable expert groups-Forest and Marine Expert Groups (FEG and MEG)</li> </ul>	

<p><b>External groups</b></p>	<p>Federation is asked to join group established by someone else. The EUROPARC can establish it, too.</p>	<p>Current groups and platforms are listed (add on website) define our role and desired outcomes for our input in such groups before we join them is inevitable.</p>		
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