

EUROPARC Conference

Guidelines for aspiring hosts



EUROPARC
F E D E R A T I O N

The EUROPARC Conference

An event for nature & people

The EUROPARC Federation connects nature and people. The EUROPARC Conference is one of the principal physical manifestations of this aim. The event is a unique moment for Protected Area professionals in Europe to get together and exchange on their work, learn from each other, discuss key Protected Areas topics and create connections that can last a lifetime.

Furthermore, the EUROPARC Conference provides a privileged opportunity for the host organisation to showcase their country, conservation achievements, Protected Areas, and culture to an audience of experts coming from across Europe and beyond.

This document outlines the steps, considerations and processes to be followed for interested parties applying to host the next EUROPARC Conference in 2027.



Cultural event during the EUROPARC Conference in Lithuania, 2025, by Vaidas Garla

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Fieldtrip, EUROPARC Conference in the Netherlands, 2023

Steps to make a bid

Important considerations & dates

Generally, a Conference is initiated through the following steps:

- 1 A country and organisation(s) is called on, or offers to serve as a Conference host. The host organisation(s) should be, or be connected to, a EUROPARC member.
- 2 A Conference planning committee is appointed, which also includes EUROPARC Directorate staff.
- 3 A letter of agreement is signed between the host organisation and EUROPARC, detailing the roles and responsibilities of each.

Those wishing to host a EUROPARC Conference should, when bids are open, submit the following information to the EUROPARC Directorate:

- A letter signed by the responsible person(s) from the host organisation, indicating the willingness to host a EUROPARC Conference. The following information should be included:
 - Reasons and purpose for hosting.
 - Possible themes to explore.
 - Location of the Conference.
 - Commitment to raise the necessary funds.
 - Information on how the bid meets all the elements of guidance contained in this document.
- Any additional information on prospective venue and location, like its capacity, as well as the different travel options available to reach the venue.

The EUROPARC Council is responsible for deciding the host, in consultation with the Directorate involved in the Conference planning. In the event of multiple bids being received, the Council will compare and evaluate each bid to reach their decision.

For the EUROPARC Conference 2027: Bids should be received by February 27th 2026 and a decision will be announced by the end of March. Successful hosts should be available to announce the Conference by September 2026 (details to be agreed).

Please digitally send your bids to europarc@europarc.org.

Preparing your bid

Important considerations & dates

EUROPARC Conferences attract a range of Protected Area professionals. Although landscapes and ecosystems may differ, challenges within them are often similar across Europe. The EUROPARC Conference provides a unique context to exchange on these matters and find new solutions together — in a fun and engaging way. To make sure the Conference is as relevant as possible, we encourage hosts to consider the following points:

- **Establish a clear purpose and theme.** Decide on a topic of interest to a European audience, that also has relevance to the local or national host's situation. Furthermore, the theme should be in line with the EUROPARC Strategy. It can be beneficial to consider a guiding question that the Conference aims to answer.
- **Know what others are doing.** Gather information in advance of finalising the theme, and discover what else is happening around that topic in terms of training and education in that year. It will save duplication, and demand for the same group of speakers, trainers, and attendees.
- **Don't forget the needs of your target audience.** Think carefully of the level, depth and scope of the information to be presented. This will be useful in providing speakers and workshop leaders with a clear briefing.

In general, EUROPARC is a strong believer of the following principle: **whilst we might not hold all the answers, together we know more than we ever could alone.** Through the theme, the Conference programme should provide a space for this knowledge to be shared and exchanged.



EUROPARC Conference participants in Austria, 2023, by Sebastian Freiler

Preparing the Conference

Planning Committee

The Conference Planning Committee is a valuable asset in guiding and advising the host on establishing the purpose, the theme, and the structure of the Conference. It should be formed by representatives of the host organisation(s), including one main contact person (the coordinator) and EUROPARC Directorate staff. Furthermore, it is highly advisable to appoint professional event planners to support in the on-site organisation of the event. In general, a committee of around six to eight people works well, with tasks being delegated through a wider group of people, probably in total about 10-15, depending on the complexity of the Conference.

A suggested composition and delegation of task which a planning committee may wish to consider is as follows, with some of these tasks potentially requiring more than one person:

- **Programme - shared task**
 - See page 10.
- **Communications - shared task:**
 - The EUROPARC Federation will lead in the active promotion of the event within its network and members through newsletters, other events, and social media. The host should ensure the event is sufficiently promoted within the host country and region.
 - The host should provide a website with all information on the programme, as well as registration. EUROPARC also hosts a website, it can be discussed if this is used instead.
 - On-site: press and decoration of the venue are the host's responsibility.
- **Logistics - primarily led by host:**
 - Liaison with hotel/Conference venue, meeting rooms, speakers requirements.
 - Transportation for picks ups from travel hubs if public transport is insufficient, as well as for field trips.
 - Catering.
- **Field Trips - led by hosts:**
 - All coordination of the field trips.
 - A description of each field trip for the Conference website.
- **On site technical requirements - led by hosts:**
 - Co-ordination of all AV, sound, lights, presentations. It is of course advised to have professional technicians on site.
- **Volunteers - led by hosts:**
 - Coordinator and training of all volunteers supporting the Conference.
- **Registration - primarily led by hosts:**
 - Creation of the registration form together with EUROPARC Directorate staff.
 - Hosts are responsible for the bookings, collecting of fees, issuing of confirmations and invoices.
- **Misc - shared task:**
 - The Conference is like a collection of 'mini-events'. Ensure these events all have an appropriate contact person and there is enough capacity in the team.
 - Side events for EUROPARC participatory groups will be coordinated by the Directorate staff.

Key information

Audience, costs and logistics

The aspiring host organisation should consider the following information when preparing the bid:

Target audience

EUROPARC members are the predominant audience for the event. However, non-members are of course welcome, and encouraged, to attend. A discounted member price is provided to EUROPARC members. Furthermore, it should be considered how to attract youth and young professionals. The EUROPARC Federation places high importance on encouraging youth and young professionals to attend the Conference. This can be done through special rates and discounts being offered to attendees below 30, as well as making special 'youth-led' or 'youth-focussed' sessions part of the overall programme.

Conference budget

A Conference budget should be prepared through a detailed process involving the host, EUROPARC Directorate, the planning committee, and the coordinator. The host and EUROPARC Directorate should be included in the process because they are usually responsible for paying some Conference expenses.

The financial resources available to spend on the Conference will directly affect the programme and may also affect the number of invited participants. Danger points include: not anticipating all possible costs, setting the delegate fee too low, that insufficient income is received to cover costs, setting the delegate fee too high, which results in low bookings and therefore insufficient income is received to cover costs.

Please note that the EUROPARC Federation will not be able to underwrite a Conference. The host must secure enough funds, from its own resources, from sponsorship and from Conference fees to cover the costs of the Conference. The EUROPARC Federation will ordinarily cover all Directorate staff and Council costs, except the Conference fee, which should not be levied. The host will cover costs of speakers and any other VIPs.

The Conference coordinator should control the budget. All budget items should be initiated by or developed in conjunction with the coordinator. The coordinator should be the person who approves payment of budget expenses.

The budget is a planning document and a management control document. It is a listing of all anticipated Conference expenses followed by a listing of all Conference funding sources and projected Conference revenue.

It is difficult to provide a precise budget for a EUROPARC Conference as there are so many variables, e.g. local costs, amount of attendees. Among the budget development considerations are registration fees, timing of early bid rates, sponsorship of members, costs of housing and supporting staff and volunteers, differential fees for members, non-members, and youth delegates, as well as free or discounted participation for keynote speakers and workshop leaders. These costs need to be considered, along with the costs of the accommodation, food and transportation, in order to determine the actual fee for delegates.

EUROPARC can assist with an analysis of expected fees from past Conference experience.

Conference venue and hotels

Generally, the EUROPARC Conference has around 300–350 attendees (excluding Conference staff and volunteers). The Conference venue, including the plenary room, workshop rooms (25 - 30 pax.) and meeting rooms, should be chosen accordingly. Ideally, the location should be easily accessible through public transport. Furthermore, sufficient hotel accommodation needs to be available in proximity to the main Conference venue.

Conference dates

Select and suggest dates that do not conflict with other events in the conservation sector. Also consider (public) holidays, religious observances, and weather conditions.

When reviewing Conference dates, consider that all hotels and meeting facilities have peak periods of high demand, “value” periods of low demand, and “shoulder” periods of variable demand. These are three fundamental elements involved in site selection, location, dates, and price. The EUROPARC Conference is traditionally in October, but this could vary if local circumstances, or special conditions apply. Indeed, consideration should be given to a later October Conference as prices fall for both travel and hotels.

Conference fees

Date and location are the most critical elements; alongside price. EUROPARC Conferences should be as economical as possible to ensure the widest possible involvement by the membership. Conference sponsorship should be sought at an early stage in order to be able to offer support to countries and Protected Areas who really do not have funding for such events.

Registrations

Registrations and bookings should be managed by the Conference hosts. PayPal, bank transfers and credit card payments should be offered.



Timetable

Conference planners should consider a timetable of 12 -18 months to organise a Conference. It is critical that for the announcement, a Conference logo and website is available, with information on the theme, dates, location, and travel.

Conference committee meetings should be regular, recommended monthly, online, and possibly increase in frequency the closer to the Conference. Up to three face-to-face meeting can be anticipated, to which the EUROPARC Directorate designated person(s) can attend on site. These should be scheduled prior to the announcement of the venue, as this enables EUROPARC to advise the host on venue suitability. A second meeting to finalise the programme in the first quarter of the year of the Conference can be considered, as well as a possible third one prior to the Conference itself. EUROPARC will fund attendance of its staff member(s) at these meetings. The host can of course plan as many face to face meeting as needed.

A sample schedule for an October 2027 conference would look as follows. Adjust for different times of year.

- **Spring/summer 2026:** visit and agree venues. First face to face meeting with EUROPARC Directorate staff.
- **Summer 2026:** prepare announcement materials (theme, location, logo, website).
- **September 2026:** Announce 2027 Conference.
- **March 2027:** Finalisation of programme (speakers, workshops, field trips, block timetable). Second face to face meeting with EUROPARC Directorate staff.
- **End April/Early May 2027:** open for registration.
- **Early July 2027:** end early bird.
- **Summer 2027:** low registration months.
- **September 2027:** final push for registrations.
- **October 2027:** Conference.
- **Within three months after the Conference:** Report produced by hosts - in agreement with EUROPARC Directorate.



EUROPARC Directorate staff visit the 2025 hosts in Lithuania.

Programme development

Different elements to be considered

The programme should be agreed with the EUROPARC Federation, who can assist with suggestions for speakers and trainers. This is an international Conference and this should be reflected in the programme. Clear roles and responsibilities for the creation of the programme should be determined in the letter of agreement and respected through the planning process. A structure for the Conference should be agreed early, as well as briefings for speakers and workshop leaders. A near to final version of the programme should be available for members and potential participants four months before the Conference.

EUROPARC Federation invites the host to interpret the agreed theme and offer a Conference to members that presents the Federation professionally and meet its aims in whatever innovative ways the host choose to do so. The Conference should aim to present a good mix of plenary sessions, learning, and networking opportunities, with time for socialising, meetings, and information exchange. Networking and interaction are the principal reasons for attending.

There is also the expectation that the host's culture, in food, music dance, art, will be highlighted and presented to the delegates. Local participation can be stimulated through the use of volunteers, community contacts and local projects.

The official opening of the Conference is preceded by the EUROPARC General Assembly. This is a requirement and organisation of this is the responsibility of the EUROPARC Directorate. The plenary room in the main Conference venue should be available for this event.

We welcome new and innovative ways of delivering the Conference. This should be discussed with the EUROPARC Directorate at the early planning stages. There are some elements that are features of a EUROPARC Conference such as:

- Council meetings (coordinated by EUROPARC Directorate & Council).
- A selection of side meetings in the evening (coordinated by EUROPARC Directorate).
- Field Trips, including visits to local Protected Area(s).
- Workshops and other participatory elements to the programme.
- Gala Dinner, award ceremony (coordinated by EUROPARC Directorate) and party on the final evening.
- EUROPARC Marketplace.
- Inspiration sessions - an open mic format.

It is essential to consider how members and participants can 'make the programme their own', by contributing as presenters, case studies, or in other ways.

Sustainability requirements

Leading by example

The EUROPARC Federation is an environmental organisation with a strong ethos of stewardship and sustainability. This should be reflected in its most public event.

It is an inevitable feature for EUROPARC Conferences that individuals need to travel to attend. Considerations should be given to carbon-offsetting, repaying the carbon used in travelling, preferably in local projects in the host country, such as tree planting, use of green energy sources at the venue, or reducing transportation costs for servicing the Conference with use of local foods. Furthermore, the location of the venue should ideally be easily reached with public transport.



Field trip at the EUROPARC Conference 2019, Latvia by Rofis Venis.

A largely vegetarian menu should be considered, as well as efforts to minimise food waste. Where possible, local food and produce should be used.

Expert advice should be sought about a carbon-neutral Conference in order to calculate carbon footprints of attendees and provide energy saving and carbon offsetting examples to follow.

Additionally, the Conference's contribution to the local economy cannot be underestimated. Where EUROPARC supported programmes, such as ECST and TransParcNet members, Junior Rangers, etc. are present, they should be utilised. Local services and goods should be used as far as practically possible. The hosts should undertake an analysis of the use of local services to run the Conference and provide a cost benefit.

No single-use plastic should be used, and printed material should be kept to a minimal.

Announcement

Let's build the anticipation!

Once the host is agreed and the letter of agreements is signed, the Conference should be announced one year in advance. This means that the dates, location, theme, and if possible, logos and artwork agreed between the hosts and the EUROPARC Federation are ready in advance. The host team should prepare an online and (where appropriate) live announcement of the following Conference.



Market place at the EUROPARC Conference 2023 in the Netherlands, by pdf-grafie.

The EUROPARC Federation thanks all that are interested in hosting this monumental event, the importance of which cannot be underestimated for our network. Dedicated EUROPARC staff will continuously be available to support and guide the hosts in the delivery of the event.

For any further guidance or questions, don't hesitate to reach out to europarc@europarc.org, and we will be sure to help you further.

We look forward to receiving your bids!



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ANNEX

Conference checklist

PRE-CONFERENCE		
Task	Decision & responsibility	Budgeted by
Signing of Conference Agreement	Jointly between EUROPARC & host [template available]	-
Conference theme	Jointly between EUROPARC & host	-
Design of Conference logo	Jointly between EUROPARC & host	Host
Promotional material for announcement of Conference	Host	Host
Attendance at previous EUROPARC Conference (ideally)	Host	-
Dedicated website	Host [EUROPARC hosted website is available upon discussion]	Host
PREPERATIONS & PLANNING		
Planning meetings (primarily online)	Jointly between EUROPARC & host	EUROPARC will cover costs of Directorate staff attending on site meetings.
Registrations	Host	Host
Venue hire	Host (EUROPARC can advice)	Host

ANNEX

Conference checklist

PROGRAMME		
Task	Decision & responsibility	Budgeted by
Workshops	EUROPARC, together with host	Host, potential support of EUROPARC possible
Fieldtrips	Host	Host
Keynote speakers	Jointly between EUROPARC & host	Host [consider potential travel and accommodation costs]
Marketplace	Jointly between EUROPARC & host	Host
Participatory elements	Jointly between EUROPARC & host	Host
Side meetings	EUROPARC	Hosts [room hire]
ONSITE		
Audio visuals	Host	Host
Staging	Host	Host
Photographer/videographer	Host	Host

ANNEX

Conference checklist

ONSITE		
Task	Decision & responsibility	Budgeted by
Catering	Host - considering sustainability aspects	Host
Transportation [to and from venue, as well as fieldtrips]	Host	Host
Gifts [for delegates, keynote speakers etc.]	At discretion of the host	Host
Badges	Host	Host
App / WhatsApp group	Host	Host
Cultural element	Hosts	Host
COMMUNICATIONS		
Social media, newsletters, at other events, on EUROPARC website	EUROPARC	
Pictures of the location / Protected Areas	Host	
Conference report	Host	Host