

EUROPARC

Activities' Report - Year 2021

*Gianfranco Tamburelli**

1. Introduction

EUROPARC is the Federation of natural and national protected areas (PAs) of Europe, which works to improve the management of PAs through international cooperation, and the exchange of ideas and experiences. The Federation' members represent hundreds of PAs, various public institutions (some universities and research centres included), and environmental NGOs from 37 countries (v. <http://www.europarc.org/>).

In 2021, the Federation carried out numerous activities, before and after its general assembly and annual conference, focusing in particular on the current role of PAs in European economic and social systems; on the transboundary cooperation between PAs in the light of the guiding principles on environment and sustainable development affirmed at the EU level, and on the strategy to pursue biodiversity conservation objectives.

In particular, before the Conference, the TransParcNet meeting took place on the 10th of June 2021.¹ The theme was: *The Transboundary Protected Areas and the EU Green Deal*. More than 70 participants from 24 countries and from the EU institutions attended the event.

The Assembly took place online due to the ongoing pandemic. Amongst other things, a new Council was elected, and members voted for the approval of the new Europarc Strategy (5th of October).

On the 6th and 7th of October, around 170 experts from over 30 countries got together for the Conference on: *Parks in the Spotlight - Powered by People; Inspired by Nature*. In many global and European countries, PAs have in fact been identified as having an increasingly important role. As such, they are in the spotlight. The aim of the Conference was to indicate what is needed to enable them to fulfil their potential and meet the challenges of our time.

* Senior Researcher of ISGI - Institute of International Legal Studies of the CNR, on temporary assignment at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Department for the planning and coordination of economic policy (DIPE).

¹ The Annual TransParcNet meeting is usually hosted by one of the members of the areas certified by Europarc in the framework of the Transboundary Parks Programme "Following Natures Design".

2. Main activities carried out by Europarc during 2021 relevant for Italy and for CNR

The main 2021 Europarc activities were - in addition to the constant monitoring of transboundary cooperation² and the promotion of sustainable tourism in PAs³ - the definition of the new Biodiversity Strategy to 2030, the election of the new President and the new Council of the Federation, the analysis and evaluation of various issues, which took place mainly in the context of the annual conference, its workshops and its 'market place'.

It is worth noting that the new Europarc Biodiversity Strategy affirms four strategic goals: 1. Strengthen and grow our network to deliver our vision. 2. Strengthen the status of PAs for a stronger, more sustainable nature. 3. Enhance the status of nature on land and sea and people's connection to it. 4. Promote sustainable development tools and approaches for people and nature.

With regard to the governing bodies of the Federation, the Assembly elected Michael Hošek (Czech Republic) as the new President, the new members of the Council are: Leelo Kukk (Estonia), Dominique Lévêque (France), Marta Múgica (Spain), Hendrik Oosterveld (Netherlands), Pete Rawcliffe (UK), and Stefano Santi (Italy).⁴

Michael Hošek himself opened the Conference underlining its aim to look at the practical management that turns political and societal topics - such as climate change, biodiversity restoration, health, tourism and economy, capacity building, technology, role of youth and agriculture - into reality.

Ten different online participatory workshops enabled participants to discuss and deliver new ideas. The focus was on: 1. Climate change; 2. Ecosystem Restoration; 3. Has Covid-19 put park's health work in the spotlight? 4. Natural (& unnatural?) Alliances; 5. Technology to protect nature and our landscapes; 6. Sustainable agriculture; 7. Visitor Management; 8. Spotlight on Youth; 9. New Times, New Tourism experiences; 10. Periurban parks.

In particular, the workshop on sustainable agriculture, moderated by Stefania Petrosillo and Joao Melo, moved from the following questions: *How to implement a nature inclusive agriculture*

² The Europarc Programme *Transboundary Parks - Following Nature's Design* aims to promote and facilitate transboundary cooperation between European PAs. Since the *Basic Standards Evaluation System* was launched in 2003, a number of European PAs have been successfully certified as Transboundary Parks under the Programme.

³ The *European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in PAs* is a methodology; by implementing this methodology, PAs become an active player in the development of their region, promoting a strong participatory process with their local community and authorities, aimed to the definition of a sustainable tourism strategy and a 5 years action plan.

⁴ Stefano Santi is also the current co-chair of the Europarc Transboundary Cooperation Task Force. He was actively involved in this programme during his time as coordinator and director of the Prealpi Giulie / Julian Prealps Nature Park. He was dedicated to improving the cooperation between the park in Italy and the Triglav National Park in Slovenia, which resulted in them becoming a Europarc Transboundary Park in 2009.

that can benefit farmers, consumers and landscapes? What contributions can we expect from, and we can offer to the new Common Agriculture Policy, the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy? The EU Green Deal underlines in fact the importance to build a new green economy. Sustainable food production, and the role of farmers as key actors to guarantee and maintain healthy ecosystems. To achieve these aims, agriculture and PA managers can, and should be allied, together with consumers.

At the Speakers' Corner, Conference delegates might use a 5-minute slot to present their project or activity. During one hour, 9 different speakers presented their work; of particular interest was the report on: *Supporting the implementation of SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) in Protected Areas - the SDG.imp learning platform*,⁵ by Christoph Mathias (Researcher - Institute for Rural Development Research).⁶

3. Activities carried on by Gianfranco Tamburelli within the Federation during 2021, and impact on the Italian scientific community

During 2021, Gianfranco Tamburelli developed various research and high education activities in the fields of environmental law, and natural ecosystem management. In particular, he developed some research on: ▪ *the impact of the pandemic emergency due to Covid 19 on the pursuing of the Agenda 2030 SDGs*, ▪ *the principle of resilience in environmental law*, ▪ *the relation between the concept of ecological transition and that of sustainable development*.⁷

With regard to the main themes of the Europarc activities, Tamburelli worked on some planning and financial issues concerning sustainable agriculture and sustainable tourism in PAs, and on the increasing importance of periurban parks. He also analysed the results of the workshop on: "Ecosystem Restoration - How do we move from planning to implementation and what is the role of PAs?", which took place during the abovementioned annual Conference, moderated by Federico Minozzi.⁸ As the workshop highlighted, protecting the nature will not be enough to reverse

⁵ EUROPARC had a consulting role in the Erasmus+ Project on *Decision-making support system for implementing the goals for sustainable development in PAs*, aimed to illustrate the SDGs and show approaches how to implement them in PAs. For this purpose, a learning platform and supplementary materials were developed (2018 - 2021).

⁶ The Institute for Rural Development Research (IfLS) is an independent research institute at the Goethe University in Frankfurt am Main, supported by a non-profit association.

⁷ Tamburelli is also an individual member World Commission on Environmental Law (WCEL) of the World Conservation Union (IUCN), and, in Italy, Coordinator of the Working Group on: "Biodiversity and Natural Ecosystems" established in the framework of the Inter-ministerial Committee for Ecological Transition (CITE).

⁸ The Workshop addressed mainly the following questions: *How restoration is being planned, prioritised and implemented at the national level? What role PAs should play and how to overcome*

biodiversity loss: a complementary ambitious effort is needed on nature restoration. The EU, in the framework of the Green Deal and Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, has in fact started the process for the development of a dedicated legislation for restoration.

The impact of the CNR participation in Europarc, and of the research carried out by Tamburelli on the Italian scientific community, are related to the priority character of the themes chosen by Europarc. These range from climate change and biodiversity conservation, to the definition of models and guidelines for the development of sustainable tourism, to the advancement of knowledge in various scientific fields related to the need of a sound and sustainable management of natural ecosystems. Thus, the participation in Europarc has been, and is important for the development of research projects and high education activities that place CNR, ISGI and Tamburelli in a position of excellence first of all in the fields of ▪ international and EU environmental law, ▪ international and European designations of PAs, and ▪ legal systems for the sustainable management of national parks.

4. Evaluation of the participation in terms of benefits and membership cost

Since more than 20 years, the participation of the CNR in the activities of Europarc has been continuous, original, proactive. The CNR, always present at the annual meetings and conferences, is one of the few research institutions members of the European Federation. Of such specificity, the Federation has been able to make use on several occasions, in particular in addressing legal - institutional issues concerning international and EU designations of PAs, and cross border cooperation between PAs.

With regard to the cost deriving from the CNR involvement in Europarc, we can observe that the annual registration fee is € 660, and it is required the attendance by one representative to the annual general assembly and conference⁹, which usually last four / five days and which take place in a European PA. The cost of the CNR's participation in the Federation therefore, is rather limited.

The benefits - already highlighted - are significant. Participation in Europarc is in fact one of the tools that allow CNR to remain at the forefront of knowledge and research on: *a) trends and issues concerning international and EU designations of PAs; b) EU and national regulations concerning the development of economic activities in PAs (also in the context of the Green Deal); c) the new social and legal needs related to the governance of PAs.*

current barriers to effective restoration? What opportunities and benefits restoration can bring, and what is the role of communities and local actors to achieve success?

⁹ Other experts / researchers may be admitted, but they have to pay individual registration fees and do not have the right to vote.

Participation in the Europarc activities also allows the maintaining and strengthening of a broad network of foreign partners, with which new issues and new challenges are continuously monitored and explored.

5. How to improve interest and involvement in Europarc activities

To improve the participation and involvement of CNR and the Italian scientific community in Europarc, it would be opportune to develop regular exchanges of views with the representatives of CNR in some other international organizations. In this regard, we would like to underline the usefulness of meetings in particular with representatives and experts active in the International Union for Conservation of Nature - IUCN.

The definition of a memorandum of understanding with Federparchi would also be useful. This MoU could provide a framework for promoting together the development of research activities, higher education, institutional consultancy at the European level.

As underlined in the previous reports, among the first initiatives to be launched, there should be the setting of guidelines, and the elaboration of a strategy to develop coordinated scientific research at the European level on the role of PAs in modern European societies, characterized by the acceleration of the dynamics of environmental, economic and social change.

6. Italian experts with important roles within the Federation

Italian representatives and experts have important roles in the Federation. Stefano Santi is one of the six elected members of the new EUROPARC Council. Federico Minozzi, who is working for the European Federation since a long time, is the managing director of the Federation; Stefania Petrosillo is one of the most experienced members of the staff.

The President of the Italian 'Federparchi', Giampiero Sammuri - who in the past was a member of the Council and has participated in many conferences and assemblies - is an influential member of the European Federation. In addition, it must be highlighted the successful involvement of numerous Italian parks and stakeholders in the Europarc activities, as testified by the numerous PAs which have been awarded under the Europarc Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

7. Conclusion

Europarc is engaged, as highlighted above, in numerous activities aimed at the conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity, as well as improving the health, culture and quality of life of the communities living in the territories of the PAs and in the surrounding areas. In this regard, it seems appropriate to note that in Italy some proposals to amend the Framework Law on PAs (L. 394/1991)

derive from the recognition of the need to provide PA management bodies with a more efficient organizational and governance model.

ISGI - CNR will therefore continue to analyse and evaluate issues concerning good governance and new legal systems for the sustainable management, and for the promotion of sustainable agriculture and tourism in PAs.

It is worth to note that in 2022 the Federation des Reserves Naturelles Catalanes will organize a special Conference in Argelès-sur-Mer (4-7 October), which will be focussed on Climate Change, as part of the Life Natur'Adapt Project.¹⁰ The main aim will be to discover how we can create resilient Parks. Various workshops will offer excellent opportunities for an in-depth analysis of some priority issues. Among these workshops, it seems of particular interest that on how parks and PAs can realize their potential to contribute to health and well-being in our cities.

Roma, 15th May 2022

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gianfrancesco Tamburini', written in a cursive style.

ISGI - CNR Research Project

Environment and Sustainable Development Cooperation in International and EU Law

¹⁰ Réserves Naturelles de France, Europarc and eight partners have come together in this LIFE Climate Action project, which aims at triggering a transition towards the adaptive management of PAs while laying the foundations of a dynamic collective learning process.