

Healthy Parks, Healthy People Europe



Kemeri National Park, Latvia



EUROPARC
CONFERENCE
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Kemeri National Park
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The Jūrmala Communiqué 2019

Our parks and Protected Areas are a **health promoting asset**. They have a crucial role in nurturing healthy ecosystems which sustain our societies. In providing opportunities for people to experience and enjoy nature, parks and Protected Areas also support the, mental, physical, social and spiritual health and well-being of people and communities across Europe.

We consider that the **Healthy Parks, Healthy People** approach offers **great potential** to:

- deliver **better health** outcomes for people and to make parks and Protected Areas more relevant to an increasingly urbanised Europe;
- support the case for **further investment and a strategic approach** to Parks and Protected Areas. The associated green infrastructure they deliver will provide better outcomes which can deliver better outcomes for both people and nature.

Developing a European approach

Healthy Parks, Healthy People (HPPH) Europe is an initiative of EUROPARC, created in response to the need for parks and Protected Areas to become active actors in delivering health and well-being for Europe's citizens.

This work will enable parks and Protected Areas to make a clearer and more valued contribution to the delivery of good national and European health outcomes. Importantly, it will also enable them to seek greater resources to fulfil this vital role.

At the heart of HPPH Europe will be an exciting new platform for the exchange of ideas and good practice between the health, environment and other sectors.

Through a range of advocacy, communications and events, the HPPH will seek a shift in policy toward the recognition of the value of nature-rich parks and Protected Areas as resources not just for healthy biodiversity but also as the source of future medicines, treatments and well-being.

The HPHP programme will support EUROPARC members to develop **policy, practice and partnerships** in order to build stronger relations with the health sector.



Action required

Implementation of a European approach to HPHP requires action by the EUROPARC Federation, its members, Sections, the Directorate and a range of partners in the following areas:

- 1 Policy:** the development of policy frameworks at national, regional and local level, that establishes the connection between the natural environment and health benefits, whilst encouraging management practices and resources to deliver them.
- 2 Partnerships:** the establishment of new cross-sector partnerships and community engagement in implementation to reflect joined-up working and provide wider benefits for people and nature.
- 3 Practice:** the application of the key messages, principles and advice on delivery methods set out in the EUROPARC Federation Health & Protected Areas toolkit in ways which are relevant to local needs and circumstances.
- 4 Support:** the creation of a strong evidence-base and many examples of good practice, with innovative projects being shared throughout the parks & Protected Areas network,
- 5 Leadership:** to make the case for global and EU strategies on biodiversity, climate change, green infrastructure and youth to make more direct reference to health benefits and encourage the investment required to deliver them.

Across Europe's parks and Protected Areas, there is a range of activity underway in each of these areas that provides a solid foundation on which to build.

Taking the **GREEN PRESCRIPTIONS** developed at the EUROPARC Conference in Latvia 2019, EUROPARC will now develop an action plan and communications to take forward a new and exciting HPHP Europe programme.

We encourage members to show their support for this work by committing to action this communique.



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Implementation of the Healthy Parks, Healthy People (HPHP) programme will enable EUROPARC and its participating members to contribute to the implementation of the *EU Action Plan for Nature People and the Economy* and the *UN Sustainable Development Goals - Good Health and well-being* - as well as the IUCN "Nature for all" programme.

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ANNEXE

The Jūrmala Communiqué 2019

1

Green prescriptions for politics, business, art, place making and health

Politics: We need political support to restore nature and tackle the climate emergency and deliver the step change for people and nature now required.

Business: We need to emphasise the need for sustainability in both agriculture and tourism businesses, to be adaptive to climate change and being good for business and nature.

Music and Arts:
We need to change our mindset and open a dialogue with the arts community, to create experiences that connect people with nature.

EUROPARC calls upon members to **take action to ensure these prescriptions are delivered.** Sign up and join the HPHP Europe programme as a commitment to ensure our park and Protected Areas are the **Natural Health Service for Europe.**

Place making for people and nature: We need to co-create shared spaces that ensure a resilient landscape for people, nature and will adapt to a changing climate.

Health: We need recognition by governments and the public of the value of nature for health, well-being and the resources for Protected Areas to realise that potential.

2

Context of an HPHP approach for Europe

There are a growing number of common health challenges across many European countries including coronary heart disease and stroke, type 2 diabetes, obesity and dementia. It has been estimated that more than one in four people in some European countries will also suffer from poor mental health during their life.

Increasingly sedentary, urbanised lifestyles, social isolation and an aging population all contribute to these health problems. Despite the sustained investment in health care, health inequalities between different socio economic groups in many European countries are significant and growing. Many young people suffer from what has been termed “nature deficit disorder”. The same is true of many adults.

Europe has a well-developed and diverse system of parks and Protected Areas and a range of progressive policies for biodiversity and green infrastructure at the European and national level. Unlike other parts of the world, millions of people live and work in these places.



Europe’s parks and other Protected Areas are well placed to support health outcomes for people. For many, the delivery of health objectives is a natural extension of their traditional role in providing for public understanding, enjoyment and sustainable use of nature. This contribution is increasingly being recognised in health policy and practice in several European countries. Calls for “biodiversity in all policies” are increasingly mirrored and complemented by calls for “health in all policies”.

There are particular opportunities to contribute to health outcomes for many of the parks and Protected Areas that are found in or close to towns and cities.

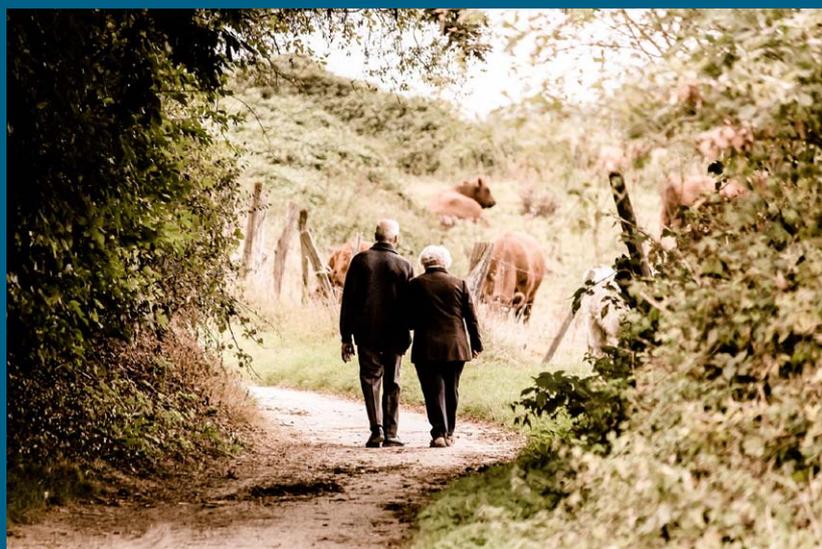
Equally, this proximity to some of the most densely populated areas in the world brings a unique set of management challenges which need to be addressed. There is a range of good practice to draw on in many European countries which shows how this can be done effectively. Political commitment and sustained funding is crucial to success.

In addition, health outcomes supported by public use of Protected Areas and green infrastructure can be an essential and convincing argument to increase resources for their appropriate management to halt the worrying loss of biodiversity in Europe, and to raise social awareness about the importance of conserving nature.

These fundamental connections between human health and environmental health have inspired the development of the “Healthy Parks Healthy People” programme – a global movement that aims “to unlock the power of nature and parks for their preventative and restorative health and well-being benefits while conserving and restoring biodiversity”. Common elements of the approach are:

- increasing recognition and priority in relevant policy frameworks of the role that outdoor recreation, play, learning and volunteering activity which promotes positive contact with nature can play in supporting physical, mental and social health;
- enhancing existing or establishing new programmes for promoting healthy lifestyles and delivering health outcomes through contact with nature in parks and Protected Areas;
- investing in visitor infrastructure to allow for increased use alongside nature protection and enhancement;
- ensuring that local communities, and people and groups of all ages and backgrounds, can access parks and Protected Areas and can use and enjoy them responsibly;
- developing new partnership with local and national health partners and other sectors to maximise health and environmental benefits; and
- promoting the contribution that parks and Protected Areas can make to improving health and supporting local and regional economies.

The concept was developed by Parks Victoria which organised the 1st HPHP conference in Melbourne in April 2010. It was then quickly taken up by other nations, including the US and Canadian, Finnish and Korean Park Services which have developed nation-wide programmes to deliver it. EUROPARC Federation signed up to the Melbourne Communiqué and has promoted this agenda through the work of its Health and Protected Areas Commission, including most notably the toolkit and a series of well attended webinars and seminars. EUROPARC members from Scotland and Finland are also on the current Health and Well-being specialist group established by IUCN to take forward this work on health-related nature-based solutions as part of its broader “Nature for all” programme.



The EUROPARC Federation vision is for “**sustainable nature, valued by people**” across Europe. We believe that the development and implementation of a common European approach to HPHP will help make the case for further investment and a strategic approach to parks, Protected Areas and associated green infrastructure which can deliver better outcomes for both people and nature.



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References:

[A Guide to the Healthy Parks Healthy People Approach and Current Practices](#) - Proceedings from the Improving Health and Well-being: Healthy Parks Healthy People stream of the IUCN World Parks Congress 2014

[EUROPARC Toolkit: Health & Well-being benefits from Parks & Protected Areas](#)

[IUCN WCPA Prospectus for the Health and Well-being specialist group](#)

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