



October 2023, Leeuwarden, the Netherlands

Statement EUROPARC Conference 2023

Our conference theme is "**Tribute to our landscape, where nature and people meet in harmony**". Celebrating 50 years of the EUROPARC Federation in 2023, the Leeuwarden Conference is a highlight. We invite participants to learn from our past and prepare for the future.

We see nature's decline, biodiversity loss, climate change, food concerns, and other worries about our planet. The conference makes a clear statement of intent and action to bring harmony between nature and people.

1. Past - Present - Future

Understanding our past and present helps us to work towards the future: the future we need and want. The connection between nature and culture manifests in diverse landscapes that change over time, whilst respecting our natural heritage and all life. Preserving landscapes' core values for the future reconfirms and conserves our link to previous generations.

2. Harmony with Nature

Living in harmony with nature, a stable climate and no pollution, requires a change in human attitudes and actions. We recognise the impact of humans on the landscape and nature and current dis-harmony that exists between people and non-human nature in many places in Europe. Many people and cultures have forgotten or lost their place within global ecosystems. Climate and biodiversity cannot wait any longer: we stress that nature is the foundation of our existence.

3. Contact and interconnectedness with nature

Go out there and spend time in nature. We have different experiences and backgrounds. However, appreciating nature and all its diversity is crucial to recognise its value to human society. Storytelling can inspire a growing understanding of nature's importance for our health, food, water and air. Share beautiful and connecting stories.

4. Knowledge

Even if humans know about nature, they tend not to act accordingly. Scientific knowledge and practical experience often stay in closed circles, instead of reaching out to people, beyond a "green bubble". There is a need to reach consumers, business owners or other stakeholders. Behaviour change is necessary.

5. Be Amazed, Protect and Educate

Continue to marvel at nature and landscape beauty. Protected Areas have an essential educational role in reconnecting society with nature. You want to protect what you know and love. We need comprehensive approaches and cooperation to foster continuous environmental protection and nature education at European, national and regional levels. We need to work with the education sector to learn together - to share more between those knowledgeable in nature, heritage interpretation, environment and other areas.

6. Everywhere and all of the time

Nature exists everywhere: in natural areas, cultural landscapes, cities and towns - they are all connected. We should seek better links between such areas, by collaborating with managers, users, residents and other organisations. New technology can help, but it should be supportive rather than controlling.

7. Start and act now

We know that our landscapes face many challenges: overexploitation, intensification of uses, pollution, biodiversity loss, effects of climate change and loss of cultural heritage. Protected landscapes need to be pilot areas for integrated solutions. Let's take the action needed now to move from fear towards hope. Creating a better, more natural world together must begin now. Not only should we focus on our current perspectives, we need intergenerational interaction where young and old learn together, share achievements and improvements, for a common future. A roadmap for change is needed, with everyone playing a role, individually and collaboratively.

50 years of EUROPARC have passed.

May the next 50 years of EUROPARC bring us towards a more mature relationship in harmony with nature. For present and future generations. For all life.