

# europa's NATURE REGIONAL LANDSCAPE PARKS



## Regional Nature Parks – Working for Europe

### European Regional Nature Parks Declaration



## Europe needs Regional Nature Parks: Strong parks – strong rural areas

Europe's rural areas provide the life support system of our continent. They are the locus of the management of our natural resources, in terms of agriculture and forestry, water management and nature conservation. It is clear that the long-term viability of rural areas needs an integrated, visionary approach. Europe's Regional Nature Parks make a significant contribution to the sustainable development of rural areas. Having strong parks means having strong rural areas.

Regional Nature Parks exist in many European countries. In total, there are almost 900 Regional Nature Parks in Europe\*, covering a total area of over 370,000 km<sup>2</sup> or 8% of the total surface area of the EU-28, Switzerland and Norway. Regional Nature Parks contribute to nature conservation, sustainable agriculture and rural development, and they promote sustainable tourism and environmental education. While preserving the beauty, biological diversity and cultural heritage of rural areas, they also provide spaces for recreation for all segments of society, as well as promoting public health.

## Regional Nature Parks are model regions for integrative nature conservation and sustainable agriculture

Regional Nature Parks combine the protection of natural landscapes with their use according to the principles of sustainable development. They are a vital component in restoring and preserving ecosystems, and include many sites that fall under the European Union's Natura 2000 network of protected areas. Regional Nature Parks are closely tied to local authorities

and regional stakeholders, and they contribute to the acceptance and implementation of Natura 2000 on the ground. By advising farmers, they foster sustainable agriculture and reduce species loss on agricultural land.

## Regional Nature Parks – a driving force behind regional development

Regional Nature parks stimulate tourism, economic diversification, job creation and sustainable food production, strengthening rural communities. Working with farmers, parks promote local markets and short marketing chains. In Regional Nature Parks, region-level solutions are being developed for global challenges, such as climate change and demographic change in rural areas. Regional Nature Parks coordinate their development objectives in the region with a wide range of stakeholders, providing a structure that facilitates a commitment to the future-oriented development of the region from multiple interests.

## Regional Nature Parks support Education for Sustainable Development

Regional Nature Parks provide many educational offers and raise the awareness of citizens, especially of young people, about nature conservation and the sustainable development of their region. They promote the involvement of citizens through volunteer work, and they support European youth exchange programmes. They are strong partners for schools and other public educational institutions in implementing Education for Sustainable Development programmes.

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## Regional Nature Parks connect the European Union to its citizens

Regional Nature Parks act as partners to governments in developing rural areas across Europe, as they attempt to reconcile efforts in the conservation of biological diversity with efforts in sustainable land use, spatial planning and job creation. Regional Nature Parks cooperate closely with regional stakeholders and municipalities, and are widely accepted by the population. They are therefore able to implement measures in a particularly effective way, and are perfectly suited to connect the European Union to stakeholders in rural areas and to citizens in general.

## Regional Nature Parks support the goals and strategies of the European Union

Regional Nature Parks already support a number of goals and strategies of the European Union and its Member States, most notably in the areas of

- ▶ Sustainable development of rural areas and sustainable agriculture
- ▶ Nature conservation and landscape protection
- ▶ Education for Sustainable Development and connecting citizens to their region

Regional Nature Parks are important partners for the European Union and its Member States and a benefit to their region: they serve as models for sustainable rural areas, integrating sustainability's natural, economic and social aspects, and thus fostering the region's development and quality of life.

## Regional Nature Parks call upon the European Union and its Member States

In order to fully utilise the opportunities of Regional Nature Parks in implementing an integrated, far-sighted approach for a sustainable rural Europe, we call on the European Union and its Member States:

- ▶ to develop and invest in Regional Nature Parks, following examples of success to create added value and benefits
- ▶ to make use of Regional Nature Parks to better implement EU nature conservation directives (the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive) on the ground, to implement the Water Framework Directive, and to achieve the goals outlined in the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the Green Infrastructure Strategy.
- ▶ to make use of Regional Nature Parks as model regions for the innovative and sustainable development of rural areas and also as partners for sustainable agriculture and sustainable tourism and for Local Action Groups in future LEADER programmes. Regional Nature Parks should also be more closely included in future rural development programmes.
- ▶ to foster cooperation between educational institutions, particularly primary and secondary schools and kindergartens, and Regional Nature Parks in the field of the Education for Sustainable Development. Regional Nature Parks should be more closely included in future programmes for education, volunteering commitments and cross-border knowledge exchange.

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\*The expression "Regional Nature Parks" refers to the following categories of protected areas in the Member States of the EU-28, Switzerland and Norway. **Austria:** Naturparke; **Belgium:** Parcs naturels (Wallonia) and Regionale landschappen (Flanders); **Bulgaria:** природен парк; **Croatia:** Parkovi prirode and Regionalni parkovi; **Czech Republic:** Chráněná krajinná oblast; **Denmark:** Danske Naturparker; **France:** Parcs naturels régionaux; **Germany:** Naturparke; **Hungary:** Natúrparkok; **Italy:** Parchi regionali; **Latvia:** Dabas parki and Aizsargi jomā ainavu apvidi; **Lithuania:** Regioniniai parkai; **Luxembourg:** Naturparke/ Parcs naturels; **Norway:** Regionale parker; **Poland:** Parki Krajobrazowe; **Portugal:** Parques naturais; **Romania:** Parcuri naturale; **Slovakia:** Chránené krajinné oblasti; **Slovenia:** Krajinski parki and Regijski parki; **Spain:** Parques naturales, Parques regionales and Parques rurales; **Switzerland:** Regionale Naturpärke/ Parcs naturels régionaux/ Parchi naturali regionali; **United Kingdom:** Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (England, Wales, Northern Ireland) and Regional Parks (Scotland).