



European Network of Heads of Nature Conservation Agencies (ENCA). ENCA is an informal network which fosters exchange of information and collaboration amongst its partners, identifies future challenges and offers information and advice to decision-makers in the field of nature conservation and landscape protection.

ENCA brings together scientific evidence and knowledge of practical application together with experiences in administration and policy advice in the context of biodiversity and ecosystem goods and services. More details can be found under [www.encanetwork.eu](http://www.encanetwork.eu).

Statements are positions approved on by ENCAs active participants for communication to a wider public.

## **ENCA Position Statement 5/2009 on –**

### **ENCA Position on Protected Areas –**

#### **From vision to reality: Vision for 2050 and 2020**

##### **Summary**

- Protected Areas are the backbone of nature conservation on land and at sea.
- Protected Areas have historically been selected as individual sites important for nature conservation, for recreation or for tourism – and often for a combination of these.
- In addition, they play roles in research, education and awareness-raising, the preservation and support of cultural traditions and in safeguarding wilderness areas.
- Protected Areas have also been considered to be an appropriate mechanism for the protection of our rarest and most threatened flora and fauna.
- However, in the face of current environmental challenges – particularly climate change and habitat fragmentation – Protected Areas have an essential role to perform in providing nodal points of connectivity in the landscape for biodiversity.
- Protected Areas are already sympathetically managed for the benefit of biodiversity and other natural features. As nodal points in a connected landscape, they are central to the formation of coherent networks that will enable species to move and thrive in response to current and future environmental challenges.
- Coherent networks of Protected Areas can thus provide resilience to a wide range of environmental challenges, a resilience that is essential to safeguard the ecosystems that represent mankind's life support system.
- Protected Areas are therefore key tools for limiting the impacts of environmental challenges, especially climate change, on biodiversity and on ecosystem services. Creating and expanding Protected Areas networks within Europe and globally is an essential component of adapting to climate change and halting the loss of biodiversity.

##### **Objectives of the statement**

- To create a common understanding of the importance of Protected Areas in the context of their present and future contribution to mankind's health and well-being;

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- To inform policy makers in the different European countries about the importance of Protected Areas;
- To influence decision making processes in relation to Protected Areas.

### ***Addressees (target group)***

Policy makers of European countries, politicians

Institutions responsible for establishing and managing Protected Areas

**This statement approved during the 6<sup>th</sup> ENCA plenary meeting held in Urdaibai on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2010 by the following agencies:**

Agency for Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection (Czech Republic)  
IHOBE S.A. Public-owned Company of environmental management of the Basque country (Spain - Basque Country)  
Countryside Council for Wales (UK - Wales)  
Directorate for nature management (Norway)  
Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (Germany)  
Federal Office for the Environment FOEN (Switzerland)  
Environment Agency (Austria)  
Environmental Board (Estonia)  
European Environment Agency EEA (Europe)  
Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation (Slovenia)  
Institute for Environmental Protection and Research, ISPRA (Italy)  
Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia  
Joint Nature Conservation Committee (UK)  
Metsähallitus Natural Heritage Services (Finland)  
Natural England (UK - England)  
Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (Netherlands)  
Scottish Natural Heritage (UK - Scotland)  
Staatsbosbeheer (Netherlands)  
State Institute for Nature Protection (Croatia)  
State Service of Protected Areas under the Ministry (Lithuania)

## ENCA Position on Protected Areas – Vision for 2020 and 2050

### Introduction

Protected Areas build the backbone of nature conservation. They also serve as places for scientific research, wilderness protection, the safeguarding of specific natural and cultural features, the sustainable use of natural resources, for recreation activities and for awareness rising.

Protected Areas conserve not only landscapes and seascapes, ecosystems, species and genetic diversity, but also provide substantial ecosystem services, including the support of cultural and spiritual values as well as opportunities for recreation.

European countries are at different stages in the establishment and management of Protected Areas. Traditional approaches, together with legal and territorial planning systems, are also differencing. Some countries have well-developed systems of Protected Areas, others are creating Protected Areas networks or systems, but all European countries have Protected Areas.

In many EU member countries, Protected Areas have been created for the protection of threatened species or habitat types, often many years ago. In other countries, landscape or seascape protection has a priority and often a very long, rich history.

The NATURA 2000 network, established with the aim of protecting the most seriously threatened habitats and species across Europe, plays a crucial role as an existing approach towards creating a European network of Protected Areas. ENCA encourages the full implementation of this network at national and European levels so that the widest range of benefits can be secured for present and future generations.

### Importance of Protected Areas

As already stated, terrestrial and marine Protected Areas are important not only for the protection of species and habitats. They play a very important role in securing and providing the wide range of ecosystem goods and services that together represent mankind's life support system. Protected Areas are important for the:

- Protection of natural features, including species, habitats and landscapes;
- Restoration of damaged species, habitats, landscapes and ecosystems;
- Maintenance of ecological stability, through reducing the stresses on ecosystems;
- Adaptation of biodiversity, through enabling individual species and whole ecosystems to respond, to environmental pressures;
- Control and elimination of alien invasive species;
- Opportunity for scientific research;
- Raising of environmental awareness and for education;
- Promotion and demonstration of the sustainable use of natural resources.

Thus, in addition to being of such high importance for nature conservation, Protected Areas provide through ecosystem goods and services significant and sustainable economic, social, cultural and spiritual benefits. In 2001, the EU set a target to halt biodiversity loss by 2010. In 2002, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted a global target of significantly reducing biodiversity loss worldwide by 2010. The 10<sup>th</sup> session of the COP will be agreeing new biodiversity targets for the post-2010 period. The IUCN - the world's largest conservation network - with the support of nature con-

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servation organisations recognises that a new vision for biodiversity conservation should be framed as a long term target for 2050. With respect to this issue, ENCA encourages the achievement as soon as possible of the 2010 target for halting biodiversity loss and recognises the importance of Protected Areas as a vital tool for promoting and protecting biodiversity. ENCA believes that firm actions and measures to establish or extend Protected Areas systems in all European countries are essential towards ensuring that we achieve a fully-functioning network, aimed at preventing further biodiversity loss by no later than 2020 and fully-integrated into a more sustainable world by 2050.

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**2050 vision: Protected Areas are an integral part of society, recognised as key components of coherent networks in a spatially-planned environment where the benefits arising from ecosystems are fully understood and are secured and managed for the long-term.**

**2020 milestone: all European nations have established Protected Areas as the nodal points of coherent ecological networks that are linked on an European basis; the loss of biodiversity has been halted.**

### **What needs to have happened by 2020 to achieve this milestone**

The importance of Protected Areas is understood by policy makers. Protected Areas have become nodal points in ecological networks, coherent in the landscape and seascape, providing connectivity for biodiversity.

Protected Areas are enclosed within buffer zones where economic interventions are used to underpin sustainable land and sea use management practices that support ecosystems for the goods and services that they provide.

Protected Areas are central to the provision and maintenance of ecosystem goods and services.

Coherent ecological networks are designed to respond effectively to the major environmental challenges – to climate change, to habitat fragmentation, to over-exploitation and persecution, to natural disasters – whilst minimising the risk of disease transmission and of facilitating the spread of invasive alien species.

Protected Areas and ecological networks are spatially integrated into the planning system on land and at sea.

Protected Areas are cherished by local communities, who are actively engaged in their establishment and management.

The pan-European Natura2000 Network has been fully established; policy interventions and management practices have ensured that the Protected Areas at its core are in good ecological condition. This Network provides an exemplar both within and beyond Europe for the design, implementation and management of further networks that address national and international needs.

### **What in addition must happen for the 2050 vision to then be realised**

Society understands and values ecosystems as mankind's life support system. Governments and international organisations cooperate in the establishment and management of globally-coherent ecological networks, in which Protected Areas are central to the maintenance of biodiversity.

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New indices of societal health and well-being have been drawn up; they are used globally in place of indices of purely economic activity as measures of the progress of human civilisation.

Sustainable lifestyles have been adopted; natural capital is accrued rather than being eroded and ecosystem goods and services are secured for the long-term benefit of mankind.

Urban, rural and coastal communities hold Protected Areas in high esteem for their central role at the heart of viable and healthy ecosystems.

The fundamental importance of biodiversity to healthy ecosystems is fully understood and protected.

### Conclusion

Protected Areas are fundamental to the achievement of two inter-related and essential goals:

- Maintaining biological diversity at all three recognised levels – the genetic diversity of individuals; at the population and species level; and at the level of communities, ecosystems and landscapes.
- Restoring and maintaining the life supporting processes of ecosystems and the benefits to mankind that flow from them.

This statement has outlined how, through the establishment and integrated management of coherent ecological networks in which Protected Areas are central, these goals can be achieved. It is ENCA's view that these goals are non-negotiable, that they are key to becoming a sustainable planet.