Healthy Parks
Healthy People
EUROPE

Programme

Nature is Good for your Health.

Study after study has indicated significant and sustained increases in people's health and happiness, when connected to nature. Yet **we are experiencing tangible biodiversity loss associated with removal of places for nature** being replaced by buildings, industry, roads and other infrastructure, not to mention the challenges of climate change.

Across many European countries, there are common health challenges and it has been estimated that more than one in four people 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. The Covid-19 pandemic of 2020, highlighted, more than ever, **the urgent need for greenspaces, Parks and Protected Areas, not just for the health of nature, but for the well-being of people too**.

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 both the European and national levels. Unlike other parts of the world, millions of people live in or close to these places, many of which are living, working landscapes.

Our Parks and Protected Areas, are well placed to support health outcomes for people.

Together, we must reverse the loss of biodiversity, not only as a moral imperative, to ensure spaces for nature, but also to **value, support and invest in Europe's Parks and Protected Areas as THE Natural Health Centres**, that can significantly contribute to improving the health and happiness of people.

Hossa National Park (FI) © Marjo Kämäräinen

Syöte National Park (FI) © Maarit Vaahteranoksa

Healthy Parks
Healthy People
EUROPE

Healthy Parks Healthy People
EUROPE

is a Europe-wide programme developed by the EUROPARC Federation to support Parks and Protected Areas at the national, regional and local level to deliver better outcomes for the health of people and nature.

We want to maximise the contribution of Europe's Parks and Protected Areas to key policy priorities on:

- Improving public health and well-being for all and reducing health inequalities
- Protecting, restoring and investing in biodiversity
- Responding to the climate emergency

To achieve the potential of a Healthy Parks Healthy People Europe, we want to see

More of Europe's Parks and Protected Areas providing well managed, accessible facilities and engaging target groups of those in most need, in health-promoting activities.

More policy, practice and partnership working to maximise the potential of Europe's Parks and Protected Areas as key assets for improving public health and well-being as well as reducing health inequalities.

More people from all backgrounds enjoying the health benefits of connecting with nature and supporting the case for better protection, restoration and further investment in Europe's Parks and Protected Areas.

Investment in Parks and Protected Areas is vital to deliver these important benefits and therefore should be an essential part of the green recovery from Covid-19.

Loch Leven (UK) © Lorne Gill/SNH

Good for Nature, Good for People

Healthy Parks Healthy People Europe (HPHPe), born out of tried and tested experience from across Europe, has been developed as a tool to enable health sector and Parks partnerships to be built.

Based on **4 pillars, 4 Objective and 8 Actions** that provide a strategic framework within which to work. A **toolkit and case studies** built on real time real life experience will give ideas and practical solutions that will enable park and health sectors looking to embark on a partnership, to gain the most health benefits for their community whilst ensuring resilient spaces for nature to thrive.

Healthy Parks Healthy People Europe will also offer ideas and good practice to learn from and build programmes at the local level. These will build the body of evidence to ensure places are managed sustainably for people and nature.

europarc.org/healthy-parks-healthy-people

Branching Out project Scotland (UK) © Lorne Gill/SNH

Healthy Parks Healthy People EUROPE

Making the case

To increase awareness and understanding of nature-based health interventions in Parks and Protected Areas through the development of key messages, information and case studies.

Champion HPHPe in national and European policy and practice.

Encourage the majority of EUROPARC Federation members to adopt the HPHPe programme.

Building partnerships

To establish broad based platforms at the European, national and regional level that bring together health, environmental and other sectors to discuss, develop and champion nature-based solutions in policy and practice.

Establish a HPHPe platform of health and Protected Areas experts.

Support partnerships developed by EUROPARC at the national and regional level across Europe.

Happier and healthier people more connected to nature-rich Parks and Protected Areas

Developing capacity and practice

To promote best practice, build capacity and develop the evidence base on nature-based health interventions in Parks and Protected Areas.

Publish and promote a HPHPe toolkit and case studies for Parks and Protected Area staff.

Deliver HPHPe workshops, online seminars and study visits to build knowledge and capacity.

Connecting people and nature

To improve well-being and grow stronger pro-nature attitudes and behaviors in more people through the use of Parks and Protected Areas for improving public health.

Promote a “nature for all” approach to help attract new audiences to Parks and Protected Areas and help reduce health inequalities.

Establish a HPHPe project to develop and share good practice in the use of **“5 Ways to Well-being”** in Parks and Protected Areas.

Naturally Healthy

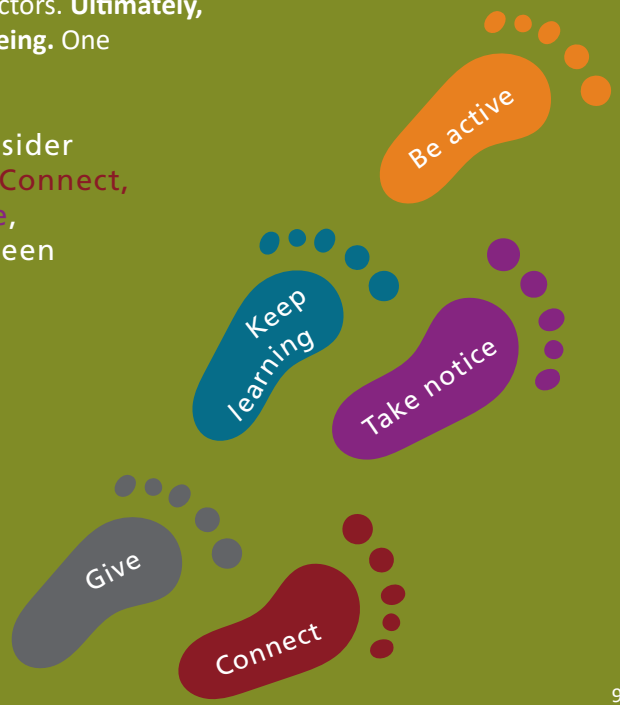
Healthy Parks Healthy People EUROPE

The Five Ways to Well-being through nature.

The **Healthy Parks Healthy People Europe** programme seek to ensure healthy, nature-rich parks, that have safe and accessible infrastructure and collaborative and mutually beneficial relationships between the Park and health sectors. **Ultimately, we want to reconnect people to nature and to their own well-being.** One consideration of how to do this, is the 5 Ways to Well-Being.

By designing programmes or inviting people to consider actions around the themes of social relationships - Connect, physical activity - Be active, awareness - Take notice, learning - Keep learning, and giving - Give, it has been shown to increase their health outcomes.

Doing this in a nature setting can also help generate stronger connections with nature and commitment to caring for it. Providing opportunities for people to use Parks and Protected Areas as a setting in which to be active, connect, take notice, give and keep learning offers a better chance for people to be healthier and happier.



Adapted from: Five Ways to Well Being, Jody Aked, Nic Marks, Corrina Cordon, Sam Thompson centre for well-being, nef (the new economics foundation), 2008

Healthy Parks Healthy People EUROPE

The case for investment as part of the green recovery from Covid-19.

Positive contact with nature is important for human health and well-being. There is a range of compelling evidence on its contribution to addressing physical and mental health conditions, preventing public health problems and promoting an active lifestyle across all life stages. Such insights are opening up common ground between the health and environmental sectors.

The urgent action needed to protect and enhance biodiversity and address the climate change emergency can be integrated with ways to secure the health and well-being of current and future generations.

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, many people live and work in these places.

(photo top) Regionaal Landschap Kempen en Maasland (BE) © Rudi Van Beek
(photo bottom) Accessible trail in Liminganlahti (FI) © Saša Dolinšek

Healthy Parks
Healthy People
EUROPE

It is estimated that the **EUROPARC network of Sustainable Tourism Destinations** alone have nearly 60 million people who either live in or within one hour of them (over 10% of Europe's population of 508 million people) while a further **74 million people visit them each year**.

Europe's Parks and Protected Areas are well placed to support health outcomes for people.

For many, the delivery of health objectives by Parks and Protected Areas is a natural extension of their traditional role in providing for public understanding, enjoyment and sustainable use of nature by everyone. 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***.

(photo top) Scarpe escaut Nature Regional Park (FR) © Samuel Dhote
(photo bottom) Urho Kekkonen National Park (FI) © Metsähallitus / Pertti Turunen

Europe's Parks and Protected Areas are on the door step.

There are particular opportunities to contribute to health outcomes and reduce health inequalities 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.

Realising the potential of Europe's 'natural health centres'. The delivery of health outcomes from Parks and Protected Areas and other "green infrastructure" goes hand in hand with the need for the better protection and restoration of biodiversity in Europe. Further it is crucial to raise societal awareness about the importance of conserving nature in tackling the climate emergency.

Scarpe escaut Nature Regional Park (FR) © Samuel Dhote

Partnership working, political commitment and sustained funding are all crucial to success.

Making Europe Healthier and Happier

What you can do!

To make the Healthy Parks Healthy People Europe programme a success will take the active commitment of EUROPARC Federation members and the development of partnerships with a range of other organisations and networks in health and other sectors. Join this exciting new European programme and together we can make Europe a healthier and happier place by:

- **Championing HPHPe** in regional, national and European policy and practice
- Promoting a “nature for all” approach to help **attract new audiences** to Parks and Protected Areas and help reduce health inequalities
- Investing in programmes and projects in Parks and Protected Areas that **support public health outcomes**
- **Staying in touch** and working together

Lemmenjoki National Park (FI) © Harri Tarvainen

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

Implementation of the Healthy Parks, Healthy People Europe programme will enable EUROPARC and its participating members to contribute to the implementation of the **EU Action Plan for Nature, People and the Economy**, the **EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030** "Bringing nature back into our lives" and the **UN Sustainable Development Goals** - Good Health and well-being - as well as the IUCN **"Nature for all"** programme.

Sign up and join the HPHPe programme as a commitment to ensure our Parks and Protected Areas are THE Natural Health Centres for Europe.

Policy: the development of policy frameworks at national, regional and local level, that establish the connection between the natural environment and health benefits, whilst encouraging management practices and resources to deliver them.

Partnerships: the establishment of new cross-sector partnerships and community engagement in implementation to help tackle health inequalities and provide wider benefits for people and nature.

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.

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.

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.

Healthy Parks
Healthy People
EUROPE

europarc.org/healthy-parks-healthy-people

europarc@europarc.org

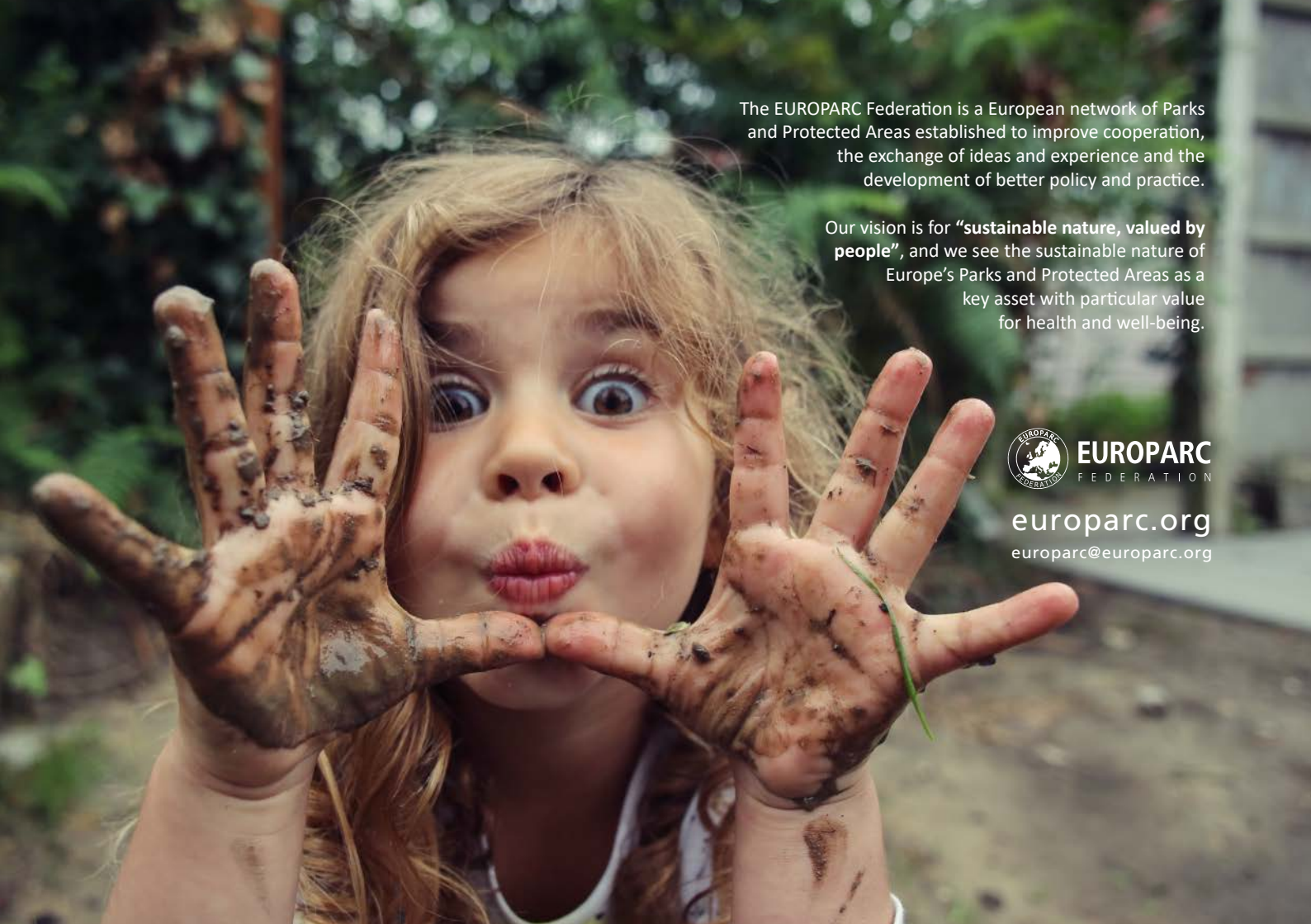
Publisher:
EUROPARC Federation 2020, Waffnergasse 6, Regensburg (DE)

Authors: EUROPARC Directorate and members of the Health and Protected Areas Commission
Editors: EUROPARC Federation Directorate
Graphic Design: Bárbara Pais

front cover photo: Scarpe escaut Nature Regional Park (FR) © Samuel Dhote
back cover photo: Regionaal Landschap Haspengouw en Voeren (BE) © Frederik Santermans

Co-funded by the European Commission

The production of this publication has been supported financially in the framework of the European Commission's (Directorates-General Environment and Climate Action) LIFE + funding programme of operating grants for European Environmental NGOs. The content of this publication does not reflect the official opinion of the European Union. Responsibility for the information and views expressed in the publication lies entirely with the authors.



The EUROPARC Federation is a European network of Parks and Protected Areas established to improve cooperation, the exchange of ideas and experience and the development of better policy and practice.

Our vision is for **“sustainable nature, valued by people”**, and we see the sustainable nature of Europe’s Parks and Protected Areas as a key asset with particular value for health and well-being.

EUROPARC
FEDERATION

europarc.org

europarc@europarc.org