



**The European Diploma for Protected Areas celebrates
the European Day of Parks 2020, and its theme
#ParksForHealth**



Strasbourg, 24th May 2020: The 21st edition of the EUROPARC Federation's European Day of Parks will also be the first online version - and the theme "Healthy Parks, Healthy People" is particularly relevant in today's situation.

The European Diploma for Protected Areas (EDPA), created by the Council of Europe in 1965 to reward parks and protected areas across Europe which demonstrate *exemplary management of outstanding European natural heritage*, is proud to celebrate the European Day of Parks and its theme. The EDPA, which marks its 55th birthday in 2020, has been awarded to 73 areas in 29 countries. A new Vision which is currently under development will take the Diploma forward in the next decade, making it a crucial tool for environmental protection and promotion.

"[The EDPA is awarded to] areas or sites which are of pan-European importance from the point of view of nature conservation and at the same time they provide a magnificent example of well or perfectly managed sites."

Jan Plesnik, Chair of the EDPA Group of Specialists

From the Caucasus Mountains to the Atlantic Coast, Nordic forests to Mediterranean beaches and all that comes in between, the 73 parks and reserves include all manner of habitat and wildlife species, and provide a vital getaway for European citizens from the often hectic and urban lifestyle of the 21st Century. The diversity and beauty of

these protected areas can be seen in the 20 panels which were presented during last year's Standing Committee meeting of the Bern Convention (see below link).

Indeed, the link between nature and human health is a topic that has been gaining momentum in recent years, and has come firmly to the forefront of the mind and media during the current pandemic, for both positive and negative reasons. Contact with nature and an active lifestyle are essential for human well-being, but the mismanagement of nature such as diminishing park space in urban areas, exploitation of wild animals, natural and semi-natural habitat fragmentation, degradation and loss and largescale deployment of intensive bioenergy plantations including monocultures which replace natural forests and subsistence farmlands, will lead to negative impacts on biodiversity and can threaten food and water security as well as local livelihoods and other serious health and environmental consequences.

The European Diploma for Protected Areas contributes to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and in turn to the full enjoyment of human rights, highlighting the participatory approach. It also helps to mitigate the impact that sectoral policies may have on natural heritage and recognises the intrinsic value of wild flora and fauna and their habitats, which needs to be preserved and passed to future generations and which is essential for sustaining ecosystem services indispensable for human life.

So today, although many of us are unable to enjoy our local parks at this moment, let us cherish their beauty, appreciate their critical function in keeping ecosystems healthy and well-functioning, and take positive actions to protect and promote our local, national and regional parks in the coming years.



Map of EDPA holding areas

Further information:

- [EDPA Website](#)
- [20 EDPA site panels](#)
- [Explanatory video of the EDPA](#)
- [Video of the 50th anniversary of the EDPA](#)
- [EUROPARC website](#)
- [Contact the Bern Convention](#)