

Lassi Karivalo's Speech of Thanks

Given on October 2nd 2010, at the Alfred Toepfer Medal prize giving ceremony during the EUROPARC Conference 2010 gala dinner in Pescasseroli, Italy.

Standing now here on the podium with the Alfred Toepfer Medal in my hand leads me to the question, why me?, because there are so many highly distinguished people in the field of nature conservation here, in this hall. Well, we just heard the arguments of the Council of the EUROPARC Federation for its decision and one of them were my activities in transboundary cooperation.

It is very true that I have done quite a lot in that field. Transboundary cooperation has been one of the key issues in my work both in Metsähallitus and in the EUROPARC Federation. In Metsähallitus I have promoted and developed transboundary cooperation across the Finnish-Russian, Finnish-Norwegian and Finnish-Swedish borders. That was perhaps a reason I was invited by EUROPARC to join the process of the EUROPARC Federation to prepare criteria and indicators for well-managed transboundary cooperation, and later, to create a certification system for well-managed transboundary cooperation. My role in the process was to represent the North European dimension. Later I was invited to join EUROPARC's Transboundary Steering and Evaluation Committee (STEC) that manages the certification process in the Federation.

I am very proud of the results we have reached in the EUROPARC Federation in the field of transboundary cooperation. The criteria and indicators we made form a good base for transboundary development and EUROPARC's Certificate "Transboundary Parks – Following Natures Design", a system that is unique in the world, will guarantee the quality of well-managed transboundary cooperation. I am also very proud of that my vision on a solid network of certified transboundary parks came true. This network, called the TransParcNet, includes now already 15 transboundary parks.

But besides transboundary cooperation, I would personally like to put emphasis on another issue I have done lot for to benefit the EUROPARC Federation. I and my boss Rauno Väisänen had a vision at the end of 1990's on a new EUROPARC Section covering all Nordic and Baltic countries. Finally in January 2002, the EUROPARC Nordic-Baltic Section was established. This section has been a success story. The section has brought benefits for EUROPARC members in the Nordic and Baltic countries, but also for the EUROPARC Federation itself. In my opinion, active, strong and influential EUROPARC sections are an essential base for the further development of the EUROPARC Federation.

Finally, I would like to go back to my first contact with the EUROPARC Federation. Before Metsähallitus I worked at WWF Finland as Conservation Director. In that capacity I attended the EUROPARC1992 Conference at Korpilampi, Finland. I thought then that the EUROPARC Federation seems to be an interesting organization and it might be very interesting to work for it. I joined later Metsähallitus and started to work with the EUROPARC Federation. The rest is history.