

"Through sharing experiences and knowledge, enhancing and promoting the management of natural sites throughout Europe, we can make a difference."

Stefan Versweyveld, Eurosite President, Natuurpunt, Belgium

### **About this strategy**

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#### Introduction

Europe's natural heritage is a myriad of habitats and ecosystems, sculpted by nature and shaped by man. On our crowded continent, protected areas, and especially Natura 2000 sites, form natural refuges within a wider landscape and are more valuable than ever as repositories for nature, sanctuaries for human well-being and regional economic drivers: fundamentally, these refuges provide Europe's life support systems. They also provide the focal points for a more joined up, landscape-scale approach to the management of Europe's nature.

Nature knows no boundaries: therefore, in order to manage these natural resources sustainably and effectively, Eurosite believes that the future protection and conservation of nature will be achieved through international co-operation. This works best through personal contact and through personal contact comes mutual understanding, shared experiences, knowledge and innovation. This delivers better support and management of protected areas, which ensure the future protection and conservation of nature in Europe.

We are proud to present Eurosite's Strategy 2015 - 2020 on behalf of our membership.

The Eurosite Board and Secretariat

Our vision:

"A Europe where nature is cared for, protected, restored, and valued by all."

Our mission:
"To provide opportunities
for practitioners to
network and exchange
experience on practical
nature management." 1



1. "Practical nature management" means both direct conservation management and working with people, local communities and visitors.

## **Eurosite's Value Proposition Statement**

The Value Proposition Statement focuses on what our organisation offers to its Members:

**For** individuals and organisations working to conserve Europe's nature, **who want** to achieve and optimise their goals for nature conservation and nature site management, who want to find local solutions to site management problems and landscape-scale conservation based on best practices elsewhere, and who want to meet with other individuals and organisations working in practical nature conservation.

**Membership of Eurosite provides** the opportunity to access a network of experience, knowledge and influence that saves our members time and money, and provides support to their continuing professional development.

We do this by providing guidance documents, holding workshops and training sessions, providing thematic working groups, regular informational bulletins via our eNewsletter, website and social media, representing the members at European level meetings and meeting with EC representatives. We also encourage our members to participate in a proactive manner: the more involvement, the greater the reward.

**Eurosite is unique because** we work with both governmental and non-governmental organisations, including the EC, across a broad range of topics, but always with a focus on day-to-day site management, **as shown by** our work programme and our diverse membership.

## **Objectives and principal activities**

Our common purpose is to improve nature conservation management and practice in, around and between sites. Engaging Members in that process is vital and the sum of all endeavours within the network will be measured against the level of engagement.

The strategic objectives are underpinned by focussing on areas of activity where:

- Eurosite Members have clearly identified competence and expertise;
- There is a pan-European dimension and clear benefit from acting at this level;
- The potential for added-value can be realised from Members networking with each other;
- There is a positive assessment of the potential for Eurosite to make a difference.

Members expect Eurosite to help them deliver their strategic objectives and many organisations justify their membership of the network on this basis. As a minimum, Members are entitled to expect several direct benefits, including, for example:

- Greater scope to improve their site management practices and inform their approaches;
- Increased understanding of EU policies impacting on nature and their work;
- More opportunities to share information and experience in order to learn from each other;
- The saving of time and money through being a member of the network;
- Networking with members leading to financial and environmental gains through co-operative working.

Such benefits can only be realised through pro-active involvement in the work of Eurosite and engagement between Members.

With this background, Eurosite's work can be grouped under four objectives.



Objective 1. Networking for Europe's nature Eurosite is recognised as a vital, relevant and active network organisation with a solid, essential agenda for European nature.

Eurosite Members commit to networking because they believe that the network enables them to generate greater opportunities and benefits for nature as well as enhancing their own work. Collectively, working together, the fundamental shared belief is that networking through Eurosite will optimise benefits for Europe's nature.

The Secretariat works with Members to trigger and identify joint working where there are common interests and benefits for Europe's nature. Facilitated by the Secretariat, Members are able to capitalise on their individual and collective experience by comparing practices and approaches, avoiding duplication of effort, learning from each other and identifying ways to inform and improve delivery of each other's work. Cumulatively, working in this way through Eurosite, benefits accrue for individual Members and Europe's nature.

Networking involves a spectrum of issues and takes a variety of forms adapted according to Members' needs. Networking can be either one-to-one, for example through Twinning, or many-to-many, such as through workshops. Networking works at various levels, from site to EU level, and enables Members to work together according to their priorities.

#### We will:

- Define the common benefits and problems we face in the management of natural areas by actively sharing expertise and practical experience;
- Develop the added value of networking through proactive involvement and implementing the lessons learned;
- Become a hub of expertise of practical site management for nature;
- Be the best European network of site management practitioners;
- Facilitate communication and networking among Members, including in their own countries.

#### Priority 1:

Workshops and field meetings on key issues – recognising the importance of face to face contact.

#### Priority 2:

An online platform to allow Members to request and receive specialist information relevant to their needs.

#### Priority 3:

Working groups on interesting / specific issues.

- Showcase Members' projects, case studies, and best practice examples;
- Utilise a diversity of communication tools (social networking, videos, website, etc.);
- Networking that addresses Members' current work and interests;
- Create opportunities for the Twinning of sites and organisations;
- Create opportunities for work exchanges, internships, and job rotations;
- Provide opportunities to create networks within the network Secretariat sets these up but then leaves it to one Member organisation to lead.





Objective 2. A Gold Standard for information

Eurosite is recognised as the leading source of information about best practice
in nature site management and related European policy matters.

At a time when more information is available than ever before and site managers are short on resources and money, Eurosite has a vital role to play in gathering, sorting, verifying and distributing the most relevant and up-to-date information and advice about site-based conservation, management practices (such as land stewardship and adaptive site management), EU policy, climate change and funding. This information must be gathered both from outwith the network, but also, more importantly, from Eurosite's own Members; thereby facilitating an exchange between Members, the wider nature conservation community and the European Commission.

In order to become a go-to source of information, Eurosite must make full use of modern information and communication technologies, including online communication via social media. Eurosite will also build a database to ensure that the information we gather and distribute, and the training we provide, is relevant to the current needs and contexts of our Members, including their socio-economic and geographical context – east, west, north and south. Such technologies can be used to facilitate dialogue between the Members and allow them to more easily find and contact one another. Eurosite must also ensure that site managers starting their career have the information and training they require to progress. Again, there is a wealth of information available, but Eurosite can offer a 'gold standard' for the most practical and relevant career information and training. Fully utilising the network, Eurosite will also facilitate exchanges between young site managers and more experienced practitioners.

#### We will:

- Identify common problems we face in the management of natural areas and solutions to those problems by actively sharing expertise and practical experience;
- Identify achievements in the management of natural areas;
- Obtain a better understanding on how to work with people, communities and outside influences;
- Find out what Members' priorities are (over the period of the Strategy);
- Use the collective expertise of Members to obtain information relevant for policy makers;
- Make full use of social media to improve inclusivity;
- Support students and colleagues at the start of their careers;

- Consider sites in geographical and socio-economic contexts;
- Provide information about dealing with the challenges of climate change, funding and the development of partnerships;
- "Provide for" but also facilitate "exchange between";
- Develop projects of exchange.

#### Priority 1:

Advice on site management in relation to conservation and development.

#### Priority 2:

Training events - at various levels to suit Members' needs.

#### Priority 3:

Technical information about funding, project management and legislative changes.

- Create a database of Members' expertise, interests and needs to facilitate communication;
- Provide advice and guidance on adaptive site management and facilitating exchange of information;
- Share information on the European re-wilding initiatives;
- Provide advice on engaging with stakeholders, who manage/own/have an interest in land of natural value;
- Provide financial support for Members to attend workshops and/or online access to events;
- Highlight best practice in translating EU policy into site management practice;
- Connect to nature management experts in academia;
- Share relevant case-studies and publications, including Members' publications;
- Advise on engaging with the European Land Stewardship movement;
- Provide exclusive web access for Members.







Objective 3. Advocacy for site-based nature Eurosite provides the advocacy that is required at the EU level to provide political and practical support for site-based nature conservation in Europe.

The need for Eurosite to rally in Brussels on behalf of Members' site management interests is a clear priority for the network. Working with Members and partners, Eurosite will position the network and the collective expertise it represents.

During the lifetime of this Strategy, it is essential that Eurosite dedicates time and resources to European affairs, particularly in relation to the following:

- The review of the Birds and Habitats Directive with a view to create a single, updated nature directive;
- The clear view of the new Commission that economic growth is the most important policy area for Europe
  and the implications this has for environmental policy given that economies are dependent on the natural
  environment.

There is a strong case to be made that such challenges can only be truly addressed by acting on a pan-European scale. Eurosite and its network has a unique and powerful role to play; ensuring that Natura 2000 is managed as a network of sites rather than as a series of discrete natural areas. It is anticipated that leading up to and beyond 2020 the EU policy arena will rapidly evolve. Given this situation, Eurosite will work to ensure that the Nature Directives are enhanced and that practical challenges and issues are factored into any discussion about their future.

Demand for economic growth and changes in climate are amongst the biggest threats to our natural environment. This requires integrated responses and action between people and nature, policy makers and practitioners, nature conservation organisations and others impacting on the environment.

#### We will:

• Fulfil pan-European policy intentions by enabling nature conservation organisations to act optimally (nationally and internationally) through a collective body of expertise, practical experience and knowledge;

- Be the European Commission's advisor on practitioners' experience to help in the implementation of policy;
- Ensure that the Directives are central to and effective in responding to climate change;
- Assert the key role of networking across Europe and the need to serve nature across borders;
- Be a leading advocate for Europe's nature and make the case for specific funding mechanisms to be developed for network-led action;
- Make full use of Eurosite Members' expertise in the delivery of this objective.

#### Priority 1:

Representation for Members at European level to provide a role in policy making.

#### Priority 2:

Timely information to Members about what is happening at EU level.

#### Priority 3:

Effective communication channels with the European Commission, working in both directions, on policy and funding.

- An active presence in Brussels at events and meetings: networking with influencers and practitioners (Secretariat and Board);
- A presence on the European Commission's Expert Group on the Management of Natura 2000 (Board or Council member);
- Seek out opportunities to provide expert evidence to the European Commission on site management for nature and people;
- A presence on the European Habitats Forum and their working groups;
- Advocacy with other, non-EU, organisations working at the European level;
- Advocacy relating to the wider promotion of Eurosite's values.







Objective 4. Building a strong future Eurosite is a resilient organisation with the human and financial resources necessary to deliver the expectations of the members.

To become financially resilient is a key objective of the new Strategy and the delivery of all the other objectives depends on it. The security of both staff and programme resources are necessary for the successful delivery of the Strategy and, therefore, this is a critical element of the Strategy itself.

During the lifetime of this Strategy, Eurosite aims to become self-sufficient in the sense that services provided by Eurosite, its core running costs and network activities are, as far as possible, paid for by membership fees. Project funds will be, as much as possible, complementary to membership fees and will increase opportunities for Members to come together and engage in network activities.

Eurosite will continue to seek additional funds from other sources, especially to pursue and deliver specific projects, which are aligned with the strategic objectives of the network. Eurosite's Memorandum of Understanding with ECNC provides a special opportunity for working together in bidding for mutually relevant projects.

Eurosite will develop its Secretariat to deliver its service to Members. It will be necessary to review Secretariat staffing requirements and skills profiles attached to individual posts in order to increase the flexibility and responsiveness of services and provide a professional development programme for its staff.

#### We will:

- Build an organisation with the financial resources and stability to achieve our objectives;
- Expand Eurosite membership;
- Be resilient and flexible, able to cope with the changing financial landscape;
- Have the Secretariat staff, supportive Members and volunteers to deliver the objectives;
- Have an active Board and Council to guide the organisation;
- Work to retain skills in the organisation.

#### Priority 1:

Work with ECNC and other partners to develop funding and project opportunities.

#### Priority 2:

Secure and develop present funding: membership fees and EU funding.

#### Priority 3:

Create clear financial projections (1-5 years) and build a financial reserve to improve cash flow.

- Engage more organisations and expand membership;
- Diversify our sources of funding, including corporate sponsorship;
- Have an efficient and effective Secretariat with staff who are developing their careers;
- Create a corporate memory.



## **Performance monitoring and Annual Work Plan**

There will be a small set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to help quantify and measure Eurosite's impact and performance and the delivery of this Strategy. A KPI is defined as: an understandable, meaningful and measurable value that demonstrates how effectively an organisation is achieving its key business objectives. They should be set to give a clear sign to Members about the progress of the organisation's work and provide clear measures of how the new Strategy is delivering for them.

The development of the KPIs is a work in progress, so will be refined over time. The current position is as follows:

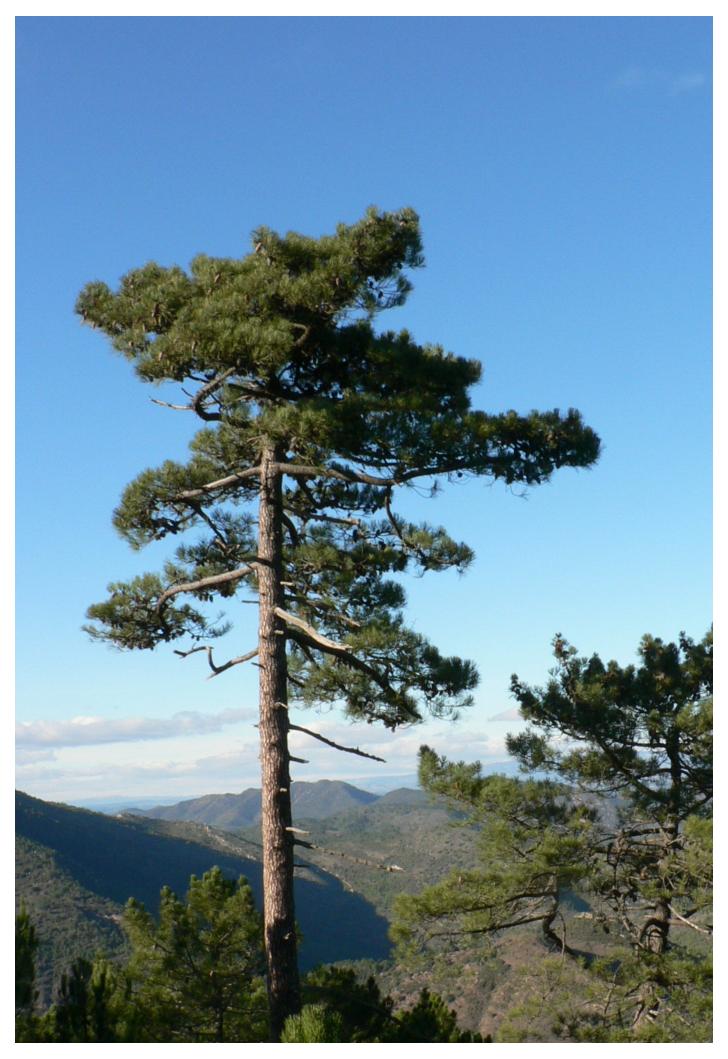
- KPI 1. Number of people taking part in Eurosite network events and activities.
- KPI 2. Quantity of information exchanged; (b) if possible, a measure of its effectiveness.
- KPI 3. Number of contacts with the European Commission.
- KPI 4. Quantity of EU information sent out to members (link with KPI 2).
- KPI 5. Size of the financial reserve built up over the five years of the Strategy.
- KPI 6. (a) Number of Eurosite Members; (b) presence and geographical spread across Europe.

The Secretariat will produce an Annual Work Plan for approval by the Board. It will set out how the activities of the four principal objectives will be delivered during the year and will thereby provide the annual work programme for the Secretariat, Board and Council.

Within the Annual Work Plan targets will be set, the monitoring of which will produce the measurable information required to report on the KPIs. These targets will take account of the following:

- Targets will be SMART, kept simple, measurable, and with no more than three for each objective;
- They will be output-focussed, but some outcome targets will be sought;
- Financial and membership targets will be included;
- Targets can be measured with minimal cost (money or disproportionate staff time);
- An annual survey of Members to provide effective monitoring information.

KPIs will be reported on an annual basis to the Board and Council.





# Eurosite is working to create a Europe where nature is cared for, protected, restored and valued by all

We do this by providing practitioners with opportunities to network and exchange experience on practical nature management. We are a network of site managers, non-governmental and governmental organisations, and individuals and organisations committed to our vision. Our members are based across Europe – from the Atlantic islands to the Black Sea; and from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean.

Nature knows no boundaries: we believe the future protection and conservation of Europe's nature will only be achieved through international cooperation.

Interested in what we do? Take a look at our website to find out more and consider becoming a member.

Together we can make a difference.