



Eurosites

Connecting Competence in Conservation

REACH RELEVANCE RESILIENCE RECOGNITION

the Eurosites Strategy
2021-2025



**“When we see land as a
community to which we belong,
we may begin to use it with
love and respect.”**

Aldo Leopold,
A Sand County Almanac

Dear reader,

Eurosite is a unique organisation. We provide networking, capacity building, training, information, advocacy, and awareness raising services for conservation practitioners all over Europe. Our members and partners are organisations and individuals working on and caring for land and nature conservation in governmental and civic society organisations, within and outside the EU. They work across a broad range of topics and geographic levels, but always with a keen interest in practical aspects of day-to-day natural site management, restoration and conservation as well as the implementation of nature conservation policies, both inside and outside protected areas.

Our work is firmly grounded in the realities of our members. We are guided by the question: **How can we help land and nature conservation practitioners become more effective and successful at what they do? We are always there to help and support our members – and they can hold us accountable to respond to their interests and needs.**

This strategy describes Eurosite's priorities for the next five years. It lays out the four central objectives for the development of our network – **REACH, RELEVANCE, RESILIENCE and RECOGNITION** – and identifies, for each of these objectives, the activities necessary for their implementation. It also provides measurable indicators for the input, output, outcome and impact of these activities, enabling you – and us – to assess how successful we have been in implementing this strategy.

At the time of writing, our lives have been disrupted by the global Covid-19 pandemic. The health crisis has brought sudden and fundamental changes upon us, but its long-term economic, political and social consequences are still unclear. We hope that, despite these challenging dynamics, the new strategy will help us not to lose sight of our goals and hold the course in turbulent waters, while still keeping us agile and flexible. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown that we are able to adapt and change our behaviour quickly when needed, for the greater good. This gives cause for optimism as we have all the prerequisites to help tackle our great twin crises of climate breakdown and of biodiversity loss with the urgency they deserve.

The Eurosite 2021-2025 Strategy is meant as a living document, offering guidance to our members, funders, and partners about the course Eurosite is planning to take and providing Eurosite's board, council and secretariat with a clear sense of direction and a sound basis for operational decisions.

We hope that this strategy will help us in our efforts to successfully implement European nature and climate policies; to improve the conservation and management of our natural resources and heritage; to restore our ecosystems, and to deepen the regard for nature in Europe. We know that we will only be successful if we work together with you – our members, partners, and allies. We hope that this strategy inspires you to join us! We are Eurosite – the European Land Conservation Network.



Dr. Tilmann Disselhoff
President of Eurosite

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Tilmann Disselhoff'.



Vision

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

Mission

To develop a strong and effective community of European land conservation practitioners by helping them to network, connect and exchange experience on the protection, restoration and stewardship of diverse, healthy and resilient ecosystems and natural spaces, both terrestrial and marine, across Europe.

Our Value Proposition

For individuals and organisations working to conserve Europe's nature, who want to increase the relevance, impact, magnitude and quality of their work, **membership of Eurosite provides** the opportunity to become part of a European network of land conservation practitioners who share their experience, knowledge, contacts and influence, thereby receiving return on the time and money invested, and support to their continuing professional development.

We do this by providing guidance, convening meetings of the European land conservation community, organising workshops and training, facilitating thematic working groups, disseminating information, representing our members at European level meetings, and raising awareness for the issues of our members.

Eurosite is unique because while we work with both governmental and non-governmental organisations and individuals across a broad range of topics and geographic levels from all parts of Europe, we always do so with a focus on the practical aspects of day-to-day site management and land conservation. We actively involve our members in our networking activities: the more involvement, the greater the reward!



A word from Nicole Nowicki-Caupin and Peter Nowicki — Eurosite co-founders

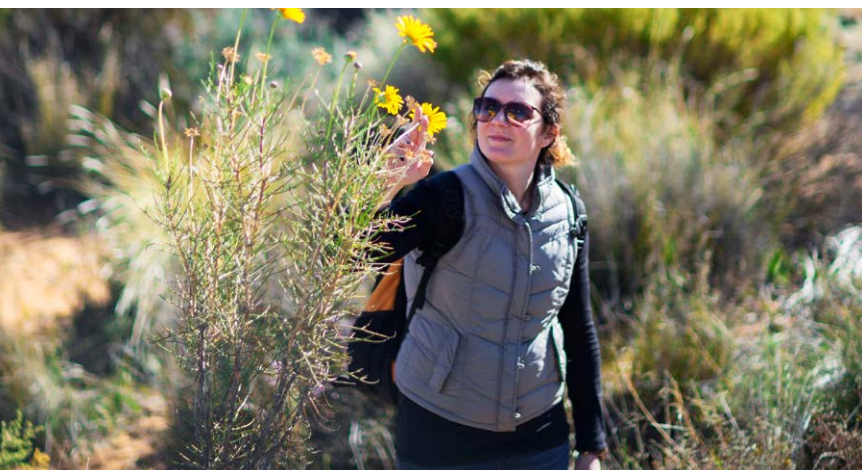
Eurosite exists thanks to the resolve of nature lovers across Europe to meet with like-minded colleagues in other countries to share their experiences of natural site management. It began in France on the initiative of Christophe Lefebvre from the Conservatoire du Littoral and spread to many people with the same desire in similar organisations all over Europe. Together they succeeded in motivating their decision makers at all levels – local, national and European – to create this network of site management organisations and to bring it to life.

At the time of the creation of Eurosite in 1989, European nature conservation policy was still at an early stage of development. Although it was widely understood that nature has no boundaries, concrete implementation of policy was another matter. For example, in many countries, the European Commission's Birds Directive was poorly transposed at the local level. Indeed, thirty years ago, Europe was a very different place. The borders of central Europe were just beginning to open and the European

Commission's Habitats Directive, like the euro, did not yet exist.

It all began in June 1987 during the European Year of the Environment. With the support of the European Commission, a great exercise of cooperation and communication commenced: the European Natural Sites Twinning Programme aimed to bring together European natural sites designated under the Birds Directive. From the outset, this programme, funded on an equal footing between the EU and the participating organisations, was based on the pragmatism of landowners and managers of natural areas, their love of nature, and their interest in the European dimension of their work.

Simone Veil, President of the European Parliament and Laurens Brinkhorst, European Commissioner for the Environment, came to Rochefort (France) to launch the programme at the Corderie Royale. Our motto: Qui se ressemble se rassemble. Birds of a feather flock together. This was the perfect expression of our shared desire.





© James Park / unsplash.com

Two years later, the partners of the twinning programme decided to form an association under French law, which led to the formal birth of Eurosite. Afterwards the Faro General Assembly in Portugal elected Albert Klinkenbergh from the Netherlands as our first President. During this meeting, the basic principles of the life of the network were confirmed: professionalism, the importance of field visits, cooperation and conviviality.

Professionalism: The working groups on management planning and others on managing particular types of natural habitat were created at this first meeting and 30 years later, the Eurosite Management Planning Expert Group (EMPEG) launched an online management planning portal, showing that the subject is still relevant!

Field visits were at the centre of the programme from the start! This was, and still is, the raison d'être of the network: results on the ground. Nature speaks to us. It brings us together and transcends our diverse cultures. It makes us feel good. It reassures us and has something vital that we want to share. Nature has always been there at our rendez-vous' to amaze us with its beauty, and to unite us!

Cooperation is of course fundamental to Eurosite and is about the exchange of ideas and experiences. Whether it be strategies, techniques or know-how, everyone can contribute. However, cooperation also exists in a very practical way through exchange of staff, material, livestock, and through gifts of money, computers and many others, too numerous to mention.

Above all else, from the beginning, Eurosite has offered a convivial space where managers can meet like-minded people, share their questions and their difficulties, and support each other, knowing that they are not alone and that they can rely on others. You can go back to your own country stronger than when you arrived!

The strength of this European network rises above its administrative, legal and virtual framework; its success is essentially based on human relationships and shared passion.

Eurosite has given us a lot and we want to thank all the people who are involved at the moment and are fighting against the extinction of biodiversity and the climate emergency.

Leynes, France, 22 July 2020

Significant events

1987	●	Start of the European Natural Sites Twinning Programme
1988	●	Conference on Twinning as part of European Year of Environment
1989	●	Establishment of Eurosite as an association under French law (Rochefort-sur-Mer, France)
1994	●	Relocation of Eurosite office to Tilburg in the Netherlands
1999	●	Publication of the Eurosite Management Planning Toolkit
2004	●	Eurosite becomes an employer with its own payroll
2007	●	Establishment of Eurosite as association under Dutch law and relocation of legal seat to Tilburg
2008	●	Dissolution of the Eurosite association under French law
2014	●	Eurosite members agree on the new individual membership category
2014	●	Eurosite members agree to develop 'Friends of Eurosite' agreements
2019	●	Eurosite members agree to change the association's name to Eurosite – the European Land Conservation Network



Eurosite's values and principles

Our shared values are:

① to work for Europe's nature

A common commitment of our members is to improve the state of nature in Europe. The restoration, protection and stewardship of our natural environment is essential to our wellbeing and survival. We need a strong and widespread land and nature conservation ethic, sufficient political will, adequate funding, and a vibrant community of skilled conservationists if we want to succeed. Eurosite aims to be an ally and supporter of all individuals and organisations who commit to the protection, restoration and stewardship of ecosystems and natural spaces across Europe. We invite the active engagement in our network of all organisations concerned with the conservation of land and nature.

② to promote and continuously improve good practice in land and nature conservation

Our members share between them a wealth of practical experience and expertise on the best methods, approaches, and strategies for land and nature conservation. Collectively, they have state-of-the-art knowledge of how to restore, protect, manage, steward, and govern our natural heritage. This includes not only biological and ecological knowledge but also expertise on communication, stakeholder engagement and organisational governance. We commit to a culture of curiosity and life-long learning in order to continuously improve our

conservation practices. To that effect, we will facilitate the acquisition and exchange of this knowledge within our network.

③ to be inclusive, respecting the full spectrum of nature conservation traditions and diverse needs

An important principle of Eurosite is the proactive engagement of our members in all networking activities. We know that ultimately, our success will also be measured against the level of engagement of our members, partners, and the general public. As a pan-European organisation, we are fully aware that the European land and nature conservation community is diverse and has various traditions, histories, social settings, and cultures. We see this diversity as a strength and embrace it in our work and networking activities. We focus on common interests, encourage cooperation, and adhere to a respectful, fair and equal dialogue among all network members.

④ to work for common objectives, which add value to and augment the work of its members

We consider Eurosite first and foremost as a service provider to its members. We aim to be as responsive as possible to the needs and requests of our members – helping them to increase the relevance, impact, magnitude and quality of their work.

⑤ to build collective knowledge and expertise

As a network of land and nature conservation practitioners, Eurosite has a vital role to play in gathering, sorting, verifying and disseminating the most relevant and up-to-date information and advice about best practices in site-based conservation, restoration of ecosystems, and land and natural resource management practices (such as land stewardship and adaptive, collaborative conservation planning). We will continue to offer a 'gold standard' of information for evidence-based conservation, making full use of modern information and communication technologies and actively engaging with relevant research institutions.

⑥ to respect the rights and to recognise the social and environmental responsibilities of land ownership

Land ownership – be it by public bodies, civic sector organisations, commercial enterprises or individuals – lies at the heart of the restoration, protection and stewardship of our natural environment. Landowners are the custodians of our collective natural heritage. We fully acknowledge that private land ownership is an important foundation of a democratic society and a deep source of personal identity, purpose, and values. On the other hand, nature is interconnected and transboundary. Individual decisions and personal behaviour often have repercussions for society at large. We therefore welcome a continuous public debate about the scope and limits of property rights as a social construct.

⑦ to recognise the need for ambitious environmental regulation and strong public institutions as well as the benefits of voluntary conservation actions that go beyond what is legally required

We need generally binding rules rooted in the precautionary and 'polluter pays' principles to define minimum environmental standards for land use. This is particularly true for publicly funded activities. Consequently, an effective implementation and enforcement of conservation policies and funding programmes depends on functioning public authorities with sufficiently skilled and motivated staff. On the other hand, regulation will hardly ever entice individuals or organisations to voluntarily do more for conservation than what is legally required. We also need other tools to cultivate and channel the goodwill and a sense of responsibility of landowners, land users and others to conserve nature on their properties or within their operations. Our aim is to help them put their motivations to practice. Voluntary land and nature conservation requires other skillsets and partnerships than regulation. We commit to a collaborative, trusting and supportive relationship with landowners and land users in order to help them protect their resources and natural heritage.

Objectives and principal activities

Objective 1

Expanding the network's REACH for Europe's nature – Eurosite is recognised as a vital, active, and growing networking organisation with adequate geographic, thematic, disciplinary and institutional coverage.

Objective 2

Increasing the network's RELEVANCE – Eurosite is recognised as a leading facilitator of access to all relevant resources related to practical site management and land conservation.

Objective 3

Strengthening the network's RESILIENCE – Eurosite is a healthy organisation with the human and financial resources necessary to deliver this strategy and fulfil the expectations of its members.

Objective 4

Raising public RECOGNITION of land and nature conservation – Eurosite advocates for political support for land and nature conservation at the European level and raises awareness for the importance of practical site-based conservation.



Objective 1

Expanding the network's REACH for Europe's nature – Eurosite is recognised as a vital, active, and growing networking organisation with adequate geographic, thematic, disciplinary and institutional coverage.

Our members network because it generates opportunities and benefits for their own work and - most importantly – because networking helps and enhances Europe's nature. We believe that we are most effective if our network reaches all relevant members of the European land and nature conservation community. While Eurosite is already among the largest European nature conservation networks, it is fair to say that it has not yet developed its full potential. Our aim is therefore to expand the network's reach in geographic, thematic, institutional and disciplinary terms over the next five years.

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Kazimierz Rabski, Society for The Coast (EUCC-Poland):



Birds migrate in flocks because it gives them the certainty of reaching their goal. This is how Eurosite has helped me for over 20 years: my participation in this extraordinary community allows me to find and achieve much more and be more confident in my nature conservation activities.

REACH

To expand our REACH, we will carry out the following activities:

- **Geographic:** Eurosite currently has 60 members from 22 countries. We aim to expand membership to 80 members from 25 countries.
- **Thematic:** Over the last years, our members have added new issues to their work portfolios – such as nature-based climate solutions, remote sensing, genetic biodiversity, cooperative site management planning, wildfire management, and others – and it is clear that new themes will emerge in the future. For example, the creation of synergies between nature and climate policies has informed the activities of the Wetlands and Climate Change Working Group as well as the Peatland Restoration and Management Working Group. We strive to offer our services and be actively involved in new thematic fields linked to practical nature conservation. We will continue our recently established working groups and

establish at least two new one to give these issues continuous institutional attention and support in our network.

- **Institutional:** Eurosite changed its name to Eurosite – the European Land Conservation Network (ELCN) and expanded its mission to include the conservation and management of all types of land, regardless of its protection and ownership status. We aim to expand this broadened scope by establishing new partnerships and contacts with relevant stakeholders, interest groups, decision makers, funders, and other (networking) organisations on multiple levels (also abroad).
- **Disciplinary:** We will link our work more closely to that of the science community and will base our work on scientific evidence and methodological rigour. We will cooperate with scientific institutions and organisations in at least two new projects aimed at providing knowledge/support for practical restoration and management of natural areas.

What	Who	Input	Output	Outcome	Impact
membership	secretariat board council	Recruitment of 20 new members in five countries	80 members from 25 countries	Larger reach of the network	Improved conservation of Europe's nature
working groups	Secretariat	Establish two new working groups	7 active working groups		
partnerships	Secretariat board	Sign partnerships with two stakeholder groups	9 functioning partnerships		
research projects	secretariat	Apply for research grants	2 new research projects		

Objective 2

Increasing the network's RELEVANCE
– Eurosite is recognised as a leading facilitator of access to all relevant resources related to practical site management and land conservation.

Eurosite members use the network as a data hub, meeting place, amplifier, training ground, and gateway to funders and partners. The quality of these networking services defines Eurosite's relevance. We help our members gain access to information, helpful contacts, like-minded peers, and funding – this is the added value we deliver to them. We also help our members develop and upscale innovative, flexible, and adaptable tools for various forms and degrees of land and nature conservation. We provide guidance and operational standards on best practices in land and nature conservation.

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Patrick Nuvelstijn, Natuurmonumenten:



Natuurmonumenten has been a proud member of Eurosite from the very beginning. In this network, we meet colleagues from all over Europe and exchange valuable knowledge and experience on the management of natural sites, the role of professionals and volunteers and relevant government policies. This interaction makes us better site managers. We may come from different backgrounds, but we share our love for nature and the passion to preserve it for future generations. It is great to be part of this unique network!

RELEVANCE

- We commit to maintaining and increasing Eurosite's RELEVANCE by carrying out the following activities:
- Information: We will continue to identify challenges and opportunities in the management of natural areas and actively share expertise and practical experience through adequate communication, dissemination and training formats.
- Funding: We will help our members access private and public funding for the conservation and management of natural resources by providing guidance on relevant funding sources, facilitating participation in project consortia, and acting as a catalyser and incubator of project ideas.
- Helpful contacts: We will connect network members with one another and with relevant external stakeholders, decision makers, and supporters through proactive outreach and involvement.
- Similar-minded peers: We will continue to build a sense of community and belonging in our network by organising interesting, inspiring and nourishing network meetings.
- Partnerships: We will continue to facilitate twinning and other partnerships between our members.

What	Who	Input	Output	Outcome	Impact
workshops study tours/visits webinars	secretariat working groups	Organisation of regular training events	No. of participants and their feedback	Increased relevance of the network	Improved conservation of Europe's nature
eNewsletter website social media	secretariat	Publication of newsletter, maintenance of website and social media channels	No. of recipients and followers		
funding	secretariat	Guidance on funding opportunities, connection of potential project partners	No. of facilitated project partnerships		
conventions assemblies network meetings	secretariat working groups partnerships members	Organisation of events	No. of participants and their feedback		

Objective 3

Strengthening the network's RESILIENCE – Eurosite is a healthy organisation with the human and financial resources necessary to deliver this strategy and fulfil the expectations of its members.

In turbulent times, it is imperative to remain financially resilient and operationally agile. A key objective for the next years will thus be to further diversify and broaden income streams in order to ensure that ongoing activities can continue and new initiatives can start. This means that we will strive to cover core running costs of the secretariat from membership fees and other non-earmarked revenue. Project grants and other external funding will be treated, as much as possible, as opportunities to implement complementary and additional networking activities. Eurosite will continue to seek additional funding from external sources to carry out projects in line with the strategic objectives of the network.

As the delivery of all objectives depends first and foremost on the secretariat's ability to support their implementation, we will ensure that its staff has the necessary capacity, skillset, resources, incentives, flexibility, long-term perspectives, and security to continue and expand their excellent performance.

Secondly, the network's resilience is determined by the functionality of its governance structures and the engagement of its members. We will actively engage Eurosite's board, council and members (e.g. through thematic working groups and other initiatives) in the implementation of this strategy, making sure that they are both staffed with highly motivated, knowledgeable, creative and communicative people.



Naïk Faucon, Agence Française de Biodiversité:



Le réseau Eurosite fut pionnier en misant sur l'Europe et sur l'échange concret de solutions inspirantes, sans oublier la convivialité entre différents types de gestionnaires d'espaces protégés.

RESILIENCE

We will strengthen Eurosite's RESILIENCE by carrying out the following activities:

- **Financial rigour:** We will create a Financial Task and Finish Group charged with the development of a multi-annual fundraising plan, the cultivation of donor relationships and the development of funding applications for non-earmarked grants.
- **People development and smart working:** We will strive to offer all secretariat staff a long-term perspective and competitive contracts. We will ensure a continuous close dialogue between the board and the secretariat and make sure that all staff members are always informed about and involved in strategic and operational decisions of the board and council.
- **Board development:** We will continuously make sure that the board is of sufficient size to conduct its work effectively and composed

of committed members with diverse skills, backgrounds, experiences and contacts. To facilitate the recruitment of new board members, we will establish a Board Development Task and Finish Group charged with identifying, vetting and proposing potential new board members to the council. We will assess the board's needs for training and offer appropriate learning opportunities (e.g. in fundraising, donor relations, outreach and communication etc.) in order to improve the board's performance.

- **Improve communication with members:** We will repeatedly seek the feedback of our members and assess their satisfaction with the activities of the secretariat, board and council. We will actively engage our members in the implementation of this strategy (through thematic working groups and other initiatives) and make sure that they remain informed about the progress of the annual work plans.

What	Who	Input	Output	Outcome	Impact
Financial rigour	secretariat board council Revenue Task Force	Fundraising Plan Donor Database Non-earmarked multi-annual grants	Core running costs of secretariat incl. staff costs of 2.5 FTE covered by non-earmarked revenue		
People Development	board	Offer permanent contracts / other long-term solutions to secretariat staff			
Smart working	board	Offer competitive salaries, benefits and professional development opportunities	Involved, committed and motivated staff		
	board council	Ensure regular dialogue and feedback with staff			
Board development	council	Establish Board Development Task Force and recruit new board members	New board members recruited	Capable and motivated board	
	board	Assess need for training and organise training curriculum	Board members have completed training		
Membership involvement	secretariat board	Assess members' satisfaction with activities of secretariat, board and council / inform members about progress of annual work plans	Clear picture of members' satisfaction with implementation of work plans	Well informed and satisfied network members	Vibrant community of European land and nature conservation practitioners

Objective 4

Elevating public RECOGNITION for land and nature conservation – Eurosite advocates for political support for land and nature conservation at the European level and raises awareness for the importance of practical site-based conservation.

We need the support of the public and of decision makers if we want to ensure a proper implementation of nature conservation legislation and policy from supranational to local level. It is therefore essential that Eurosite dedicates time and resources to advocating for more and better land and nature conservation in Europe, particularly in relation to the following:

- the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030;
- an improved implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives;
- the restoration of Europe's ecosystems as a contribution to the United Nations' Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030;
- monitoring and remote sensing of nature and biodiversity;
- a nature-friendly recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and the consideration of biodiversity aspects in the prevention of future pandemics;
- an ecologically ambitious implementation of the EU's European Green Deal;
- a just transition to sustainable and regenerative land uses;
- synergies between nature and climate policies, in particular nature-based solutions for climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- working together with non-EU organisations to promote practical site management;
- the promotion of and involvement in coordinated actions mitigating biodiversity loss under the umbrella of the EU's Global Coalition for Biodiversity.

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Phil Eckersley, Natural England:



Getting involved in the Eurosite Management Planning Expert Group (EMPEG) was a fantastic development opportunity for one of our senior reserve managers and has helped refine our own reporting system.

RECOGNITION

There is a strong case to be made that such challenges can only be truly addressed by acting on a Pan-European scale. Eurosite has a unique and powerful role to play as its members have a vast and extensive experience in the matters listed above. We bring practical experience to the table and can give valuable advice on how to improve the implementation of existing and new conservation policies, e.g. how to manage Natura 2000 as a coherent network rather than a series of isolated sites or how to leave sufficient space for nature on agricultural and forest properties.

We also have the experience of engaging with other groups and communities to make our work and its relevance for Europe's nature better known to the wider public. We will amplify the messages and visibility of our members, thereby providing them with a platform to communicate about their issues more widely.

To improve public RECOGNITION for site-based land and nature conservation, we will carry out the following activities:

- provide a communications toolkit for members to show their contributions towards the implementation of nature conservation legislation and policy;
- participate in supranational stakeholder meetings, platforms and consultation processes (e.g. the European Habitats Forum, the Biogeographic processes, the Global Peatland Initiative etc.);
- advocate for land and nature conservation at meetings in Brussels and elsewhere; and
- prepare and publish case studies evidencing the success of practical site-based land and nature conservation.

What	Who	Input	Output	Outcome	Impact
Provide tools for members to showcase their work	secretariat	Development of a communication toolkit for Eurosite members	Increased public visibility of benefits of site-based conservation efforts	Increased public recognition of the importance of site-based conservation	Increased care and regard for Europe's nature
Collect evidence for benefits of site-based management utilising members' expertise	secretariat board members	Develop and publish case studies			
Active presence at meetings in Brussels and elsewhere	secretariat board	Take part in conferences and other meetings	Advocate for practical site-based land and nature conservation in relevant processes		
Participate in supranational stakeholder meetings, platforms and consultations	secretariat board	Communicate and engage in stakeholder processes			

Performance monitoring and Annual Work Plan

Based on the 2021-2025 Eurosite Strategy, the board will present yearly work plans at the general assembly, highlighting thematic priorities for the next year. After their adoption, the secretariat will be charged with coordinating the work plans, with monitoring their implementation (making use of the IOOI indicators presented under the four objectives) and with reporting the results to the board. Each year, the work plans and the monitoring reports will be assessed by the board as a basis for the submission of the work plan for the next year.





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**For enquiries about membership,
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Connecting Competence in Conservation

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