



## Press Release Sigüenza, 23 July 2014

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### EUROPARC-Spain and Castilla-La Mancha win the Natura 2000 Award organized by the European Commission

#### The Award celebrates EUROPARC-Spain's networking approach to Natura 2000 management plans, illustrated by the *Rebollar de Navalpotro* case

EUROPARC-Spain, the leading professional forum for Spanish protected natural areas, and the Autonomous Government of Castilla-La Mancha have won the Natura 2000 Award in the 'Networking and cross-border cooperation' category for their project 'Quality standard for Natura 2000 sites, the management plan of *Rebollar de Navalpotro*'. The Award, organised for the first time by the European Commission, recognises good practices in nature conservation and promotes the Natura 2000 network and its objectives, raising awareness of the importance of protecting biodiversity across Europe.

Of the five Award categories in 2014, this one explicitly recognises the importance of networking. As a matter of fact, Spain has the largest Natura 2000 coverage in Europe, with over 27% of its territory set aside as protected sites.

EUROPARC-Spain and Castilla-La Mancha organised a guided tour around the *Rebollar de Navalpotro* Site of Community Importance, where the technicians in charge of the management plan presented to the press, local authorities and Commission representatives the management plan designed for this Natura 2000 site.

The group was accompanied by María Paz Pérez Laina, Mayor of Torremocha del Campo, Carol Ritchie, Director of the EUROPARC Federation, and Rafael Hidalgo, representing the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment. During the field trip, they also visited the Natural Park *Rio Dulce*, another protected area in the network.

Later, the local presentation of the Natura 2000 Award took place at the *Parador de Sigüenza*, during which the following speakers presented: Carles Castell Puig, President of EUROPARC-Spain, Stefan Leiner from the European Commission's DG Environment, and María Luisa Soriano Martín, Minister for Agriculture of Castilla-La Mancha.

Carles Castell said in his speech that the Natura 2000 Award recognises the important role of EUROPARC-Spain as a leading professional forum for protected natural areas in the Spanish state: "In nature conservation and protected areas, coordinated work between institutions is essential, as well as technical cooperation, and in both dimensions EUROPARC-Spain is a leader."



He also highlighted the contribution of environmental authorities like Castilla- La Mancha in the creation of standards and agreed methodologies – as recognised by the Natura 2000 Award for the management plan developed for *Rebollar de Navalpotro*.

#### Recognition of collaborative work among government authorities

The winning project synthesises EUROPARC-Spain's collaboration with all Spanish administrations in developing tools to manage protected areas more effectively. The results, co-funded by the Biodiversity Foundation, cover the creation of a network for professional exchanges, seminars and training activities, and the development of protocols to establish standards for conservation actions and management plans for the Natura 2000 network.

The methodologies put forward were illustrated by the work carried out in one of the Natura 2000 sites, managed by Castilla-La Mancha, called *El Rebollar de Navalpotro*, in the province of Guadalajara, where the tools have been applied.

#### EUROPARC-Spain

EUROPARC-Spain is the Spanish section of the EUROPARC Federation, a pan-European organisation created in 1973 which brings together institutions dedicated to the management of protected areas in 38 countries. For more than 20 years, it has been the leading professional forum for protected areas in Spain, involving authorities responsible for environmental planning and natural area management. Members of the organisation include environmental authorities from national regional and local levels,

EUROPARC-Spain also promotes the Strategic Programme 2020: Society and Protected Areas, which supports public-private partnerships and calls for collaborative action to strengthen the system of protected areas in Spain.

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