



Seville declaration

The European periurban park managers meeting from 5 to 7 May 2010 under the auspices of FEDENATUR in Seville, the capital of Andalusia, a pioneering region in Europe for the protection of periurban and metropolitan natural areas, state:

In Europe, over 80% of people live in urban areas. This demographic concentration and the resulting urban expansion have been carried out at the expense of the environment, nature, farming and the richness of landscapes, flora and fauna, causing serious loss of biodiversity. These losses are often irreversible but more sustainable town planning could slow or even halt the erosion of biodiversity.

Aware that the fight against biodiversity loss and the consequences of climate change will be decided in urban areas, in recent years several European cities and local governments have undertaken to develop active policies for the preservation, restoration and improvement of extensive natural areas located on their immediate outskirts.

Furthermore, some European regions have made significant progress. The Regional Government of Andalusia has driven an unprecedented and fruitful strategic planning partnership between its Ministry of the Environment and Ministry of Public Works and Housing in order to develop a network of natural spaces near cities.

The European Federation of Metropolitan and Periurban Natural and Rural Spaces (FEDENATUR) brings together organizations managing periurban natural areas run by local or regional authorities.

Our association promotes technical exchanges between experts to foster the protection of natural and rural areas close to large cities, driving their ecological connection and improving their management in response to the pressure exerted by the public in search of areas for recreation.

The degree of knowledge built up since 1997, the year when our association was founded, results in the publication of numerous reports and participation in European projects whose aim is to encourage the transfer of knowledge between European regions. FEDENATUR is currently involved in the PERIURBAN project in the INTERREG IV C programme whose goal is to extend these exchanges to periurban natural areas in Eastern Europe.

On the basis of this experience, we believe that periurban nature parks, going beyond their legitimate vocation to be leisure spaces for the public, should be recognized as essential components of a green infrastructure in the form of an ecological network which is indispensable for the establishment of sustainable town planning that is committed to the fight against climate change and to preserving biodiversity.

So far periurban nature parks have not been sufficiently valued or adequately recognized by European environmental policies. The battle for the preservation of biodiversity will also be won at the gates of towns and large cities.

It is for this reason that in 2008 FEDENATUR submitted a motion demanding recognition for periurban natural areas to the IUCN World Congress in Barcelona, which was passed.

By means of the Seville Declaration, FEDENATUR is now addressing the Spanish and Belgian authorities who will hold the Presidency of the European Union in 2010.

FEDENATUR believes that an ambitious European policy must take steps to:

1. Accelerate the protection of natural and rural spaces located near cities.
2. Promote an integrated approach to spatial planning in metropolitan areas in which periurban natural and rural areas are valued and appreciated as essential for biodiversity and the quality of urban life.
3. View periurban nature parks as places with great ecological, social and cultural challenges and include these spaces in public spatial planning policy as a means of containing urban sprawl.
4. Promote the creation of a green infrastructure, consisting of a network of interconnected physical spaces that nurture the welfare of the public and biodiversity, and view these spaces as essential facilities on a par with educational, health, cultural, transport and communication facilities.
5. Encourage the maintenance and diversification of sustainable local agriculture, seen as an important facet of the management of periurban spaces.
6. Promote the means for the preservation of the biodiversity of ecosystems and associated landscapes.

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