

## Vision of a development of worldwide ranger cooperation

Summary of the strategy paper for the development of an international networking and cooperation of the German Ranger Association

### 1. Background

In October 2013 a meeting of Sean Willmore (IRF) as well as representatives of the German Ranger Association, Swiss Ranger Association, Czech Ranger Association and the European representative of the IRF Florin Halastauan took place in the Bavarian Forest National Park.

It was an important concern for the president of the IRF to represent his view regarding the nature preserves and their most important attendants in the area, the rangers. During a common workshop and detailed discussions central crucial points of a "**vision of future, worldwide cooperation**" were worked out.

Key initiatives could be identified and their putting into action is seen as condition for a positive further development.

#### The most essential targets were among others:

- Mutual support worldwide:
  - personnel exchange
  - common projects
  - partnerships between associations
  - support for apprenticeship and further education
  - financial support for rangers in need and their families
- Image campaigns for nature preserves and rangers
- Strong establishment of the association:
  - membership campaign
  - organizations that work effectively
  - sovereign and coordinated appearance

It was a special concern of Sean Willmore to advance the networking and cooperation in Europe. The number of participants and the engagement during conferences, such as the nationwide Annual Ranger Conference of the German Ranger Association or at the 3rd IRF European Ranger Conference in 2014 in Croatia reflect the great interest of the rangers in these topics.

All these initiatives, visions, wishes and thoughts were motivation for members of the "German Ranger Association" to found a workshop together in order to plumb the possibilities of an improved cooperation at a European level. Therefore, the working group "International Networking" was founded by the German Ranger Association.

## 2. Present establishment of the European Rangers under the IRF

The structures existing at present within Europe are marked by different associations of single countries with differently strong activities in an international context.

With Florin Halastauan Europe cooperates within the IRF with a very active European Ranger representative. However, Florin is the representative of the EU section for the third time and therefore cannot run for this office in 2016 anymore.

## 3. Fundamental thoughts about the "right to exist" of an European Ranger Association under the umbrella of the IRF

The participants of the working group "International Networking" agreed that the targets described above cannot be reached within Europe on national or federal level uncoupled from the international level of the IRF. A basic prerequisite for the attainment of the goals set for Europe is the creation or reinforcement of **structural links** for a sensible exchange and a concrete active cooperation at European level.

Therefore, the establishment of a superior structure - a European IRF representation as "Europe section" - would be the consistent next step. This European section could be positioned as **IRF European Ranger Association (ERA)** to increase the possibilities of obtaining subsidies. The working group's work has already identified important points of view. This is why an own European Ranger section would make more sense than one organized by organizations that already exist (such as EUROPARC).

The essential reasons for the foundation of an ERA are:

- The enabling of an independently organized and independent association at European level with concentration on specialized cooperation and networking unlike a politically marked positioning within existing organizations
- The appearance as a strong partner for EUROPARC FEDERATION at different projects as well as at the subsidy acquisition
- The European Ranger section can show stronger presence due to the networking at European or at a global level (image campaign)
- There is a high need within nature protection circles to refer to the professionalism of Rangers, who are the faces of the reserves. This can be organized better by a European section:
  - Bundling of knowledge and initiatives (e.g. the Junior Ranger Project)
  - Rangers are professionals in the field of nature protection. They have much practical experience in comparison with other administrative representatives or representatives of the NGO (example: WWF/Greenpeace) from the area.

- Provision of the extensive treasure of experience in dealing with people of different target groups, particularly with regard to the communication of complex topics and the solution process in conflict situations.
- Previous ways of thinking with hierarchies between the different categories of reserves or countries can be overcome and changed into mutual support by a common target:
  - Rangers of all reserve categories profit from mutual knowledge and the respective focus of work in open dialogue and exchange.
  - Participation of professionals from all reserve categories with every focus of work

The creation and simultaneous stabilization of national Ranger Associations is another important aim. The soon beginning of the cooperation between the national Ranger Associations within Europe has priority due to the next World Ranger Congress 2016 in the USA.

#### **4. Establishment of an IRF European Ranger Association ERA**

The working group "International Networking" has worked out two different levels of work for the establishment of an ERA:

- (1) Level 1 - **the structural level** - concerns the construction and the organization of an operating ERA, inclusive possible levels of communication and forms of organization.
- (2) Level 2 - **the practical level** - covers the specific project preparation, including the suggestion and the definition of first aims of an ERA and the introduction of first steps (contents, tasks and strategy) to position the structures fixed in the first level and to motivate for the cooperation within an ERA

##### **4.1. The structural level - theoretical construction and organization of an ERA**

Florin Halastauan is the representative of the IRF EU section for the third time and therefore cannot run for this office in 2016 anymore. However, the elections of a new European representative will take place in 2016 at the World Ranger Congress (WRC), in accordance with the rules of the IRF.

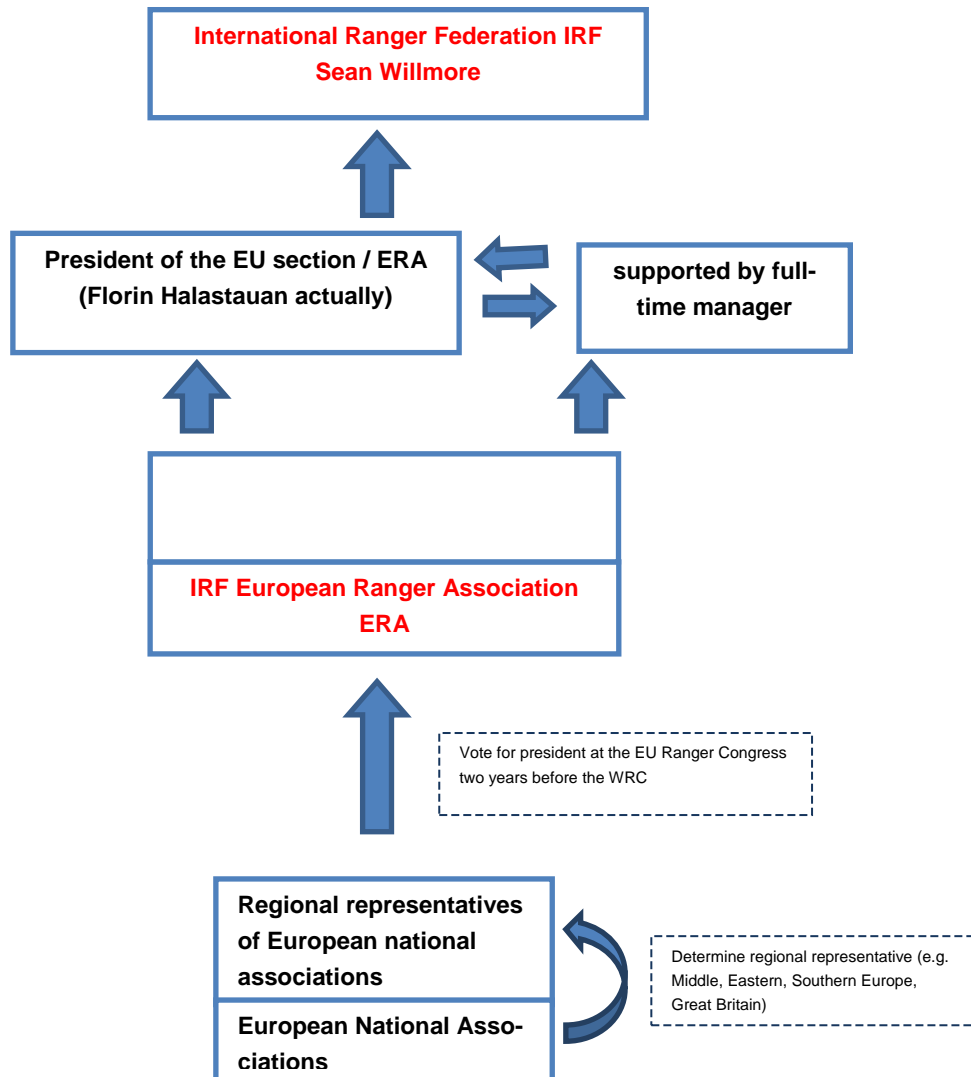
The function of the future president of the ERA will be still the same as it is at present – the European representative of the IRF. The ERA should work with full-time equivalents from the very beginning to grant really successful work. In view of the envisaged aims, it is not possible to distribute the upcoming tasks exclusively on volunteers.

ERA'S president should therefore be supported by a full-time managing director for the attainment of the aims. The modalities about how the details have to be cleared have to be fixed not later than for the turn of the year 2015/2016.

The president of the ERA would be the IRF European representative of all consolidated associations of Europe voted for democratically.

The following organization chart represents the possible organizational form of an ERA:

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If necessary, the national associations can organize themselves - also for the support of a technical exchange – according to greater regions or geographical analogy and in a kind of **Cluster system** (e.g. Mediterranean, alpine, coast ...) integrating into a network. Together they decide on the main topics of their cooperation, such as:

- image campaign for rangers and their main tasks in greater regions,
- networking of the national organizations,
- creation of structures for an effective cooperation,
- construction and support of national organizations, where they are still missing
- construction of godparenthoods (e.g. for associations in Africa, Russia etc.),

- common apprenticeship and further education,
- personnel exchange,
- programs for the worldwide protection of rangers etc.

#### 4.2. The practical level - first steps towards the establishment of a strengthened European Ranger Association

Specific, motivating initiatives have to be planned to give impetus to the project. This can only be successful if some national organizations or dedicated members set a good example. The first measure, principally to strengthen the possible new organizational forms and practical actions of the European rangers, is the implementation of a **meeting of the IRF EU-section with participation of Florin Halastauan and Sean Willmore**. This takes place in the Black Forest National Park in cooperation with the German Ranger Association. **Please note the agenda paper in the invitation.**

Next to the presentation of the project-idea in autumn, further initiatives are planned **for the year 2015**. These are thought to motivate other national Ranger Associations and members and to send them positive signals.

The following activities are scheduled:

- **Setup** and further scheduling the **European Ranger Association** and **preparation of a presentation about the ERA on the WRC 2016** in the USA
- **Specific excursions** to other protected areas (common visits of rangers from one protected area to another protected area) for an exchange on specific topics.
- **Start of the campaign "Coach the coach"** (to the "wolf" topic in cooperation with the Ranger Organization Brandenburg and to the "capercaillie" topic with the Black Forest National Park) in cooperation with the German Ranger Association.
- The German and Europe-wide cooperation to this year's **"World Ranger-Day"** (information campaign for public relations and fundraising for "The thin green line foundation") → initiation of the action by the German Ranger Association assisted by the Black Forest National Park.
- Construction of a worldwide **communication-platform for rangers** (ranger-team-speak; chatroom).
- Construction of **international partnerships** in the Junior Ranger program (e.g. international wintercamp in the Black Forest National Park, perhaps together with the EUROPARC Federation).