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PARKS & BENEFITS is a 1st round project of the “Baltic Sea Region Programme” which operated between February 2009 and January 2012 with a specific aim to strengthen sustainable nature tourism in eight protected areas across the Baltic Sea Region.

Through international co-operation and learning from others experiences across the wider EUROPARC network of over 400 members in 36 countries, the PARKS & BENEFITS project has focussed on the economic, social and environmental benefits that sustainable tourism can bring. How these benefits can add value to local and regional economies is set out in the Guide to Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, published in October 2011. It explains how the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (the Charter) is used as a practical management tool to help create a strategic alliance, or partnership, between diverse stakeholder groups in the tourism and conservation sectors of the eight protected areas in six countries around the Baltic Sea.

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas was developed by the EUROPARC Federation working with a Europe-wide group representing protected areas, the tourism industry and other key partners. It has been in use for over 15 years and its aims are to increase awareness of, and support for, Europe’s protected areas as a fundamental part of our heritage to be preserved for and enjoyed by current and future generations. Also it is particularly useful tool for improving the sustainable development and management of tourism in protected areas, by taking account of the needs of the environment, local residents, local businesses and visitors. The Charter is in two parts: Part I for the protected area and Part II for local tourism businesses.

Mutual benefits for business and protected areas is central to the objectives of the Charter and this publication introduces some ideas, through information, advice, case studies and other examples how public-private partnerships have been used to deliver sustainable tourism products and services in protected areas.

It also provides guidance for those who have responsibilities for managing sustainable tourism on how to establish or improve partnership working between small and medium sized businesses and between regional authorities or non-governmental organisations.
The technical description of a public-private partnership (PPP) is a simple one – ‘an arrangement for joint working between the public and private sectors’. However when you look closer at many PPP arrangements that describe a state service or private business venture which is funded and operated through a partnership of national, regional or local government and between one or more private sector companies, you can see they can become very complex.

In its broadest sense, a PPP can cover all types of collaboration between the public and private sectors to deliver policies, services and infrastructure projects. These schemes are sometimes referred to, internationally, as PPP or P3 and can cover everything from design and planning, financing and construction to operating services. They are a way of bringing in private sector expertise, business efficiency and money to deliver improvements to public services often at a time when government money and resources were being reduced. In recent years PPP projects, in many countries, have been used to provide large-scale infrastructure schemes – roads, hospitals, schools, power stations and railways.

In protected areas the approach to PPP is on a much smaller scale yet it can be used to very good effect and applied in any part of protected area management. When developing sustainable tourism projects or activities you should consider whether a PPP can add value – popular areas to consider are: the provision of information; publishing and ranger services; or the provision and staffing of information centres; building ownership and maintenance.

PPP is different in a number of ways from just using a private contractor through a normal contract. It is about providing services or products which otherwise would not have been done or may have cost more public money to deliver. The example ‘Improving Conservation’ below shows how a PPP can really help link or align the mutual objectives of a protected area organisation with private sector business interests, creating a lasting and valuable partnership.
What are public-private partnerships?

This is a spectacular financial achievement, even compared with conservation agencies in industrial countries. The commercialisation strategy has vastly improved SANParks’ standing in the eyes of stakeholders, reduced unemployment in neighbouring communities and created economic opportunities for previously disadvantaged ethnic groups. As a result of this success, the national government increasingly views national parks as a tool for economic development and has stepped up its annual financial commitment to SANParks. Thanks to this increase in public funds plus the additional revenue from its PPP activities, SANParks has been able to expand the land under its protection by five percent in the past ten years.

Source: Researched from the South African National Parks web pages on Commercialisation through Public Private Partnerships - www.sanparks.org.za

South African National Parks (SANParks), created in 1998 from the transformation of the National Parks Board, became a successful autonomous, semi-public entity. It was a leader in the development of the ecotourism industry with high research standards, yet despite managing some of the world’s most spectacular natural assets, SANParks was failing to deliver tourism products efficiently. Service standards were often mediocre, products were poorly differentiated, and prices were not determined by the market.

In 1999, following a benchmarking exercise against similar private operations, SANParks realised that it lacked the skills, incentives and access to capital that it needed to make the most of tourism opportunities. Deciding that it would not run commercial ventures, but instead focus on its core function of biodiversity management, SANParks developed the concept of “commercialisation as a conservation strategy”. Part of this strategy was the concession of exclusive rights to commercial use of lodge sites together with the surrounding parkland. Since starting to implement the strategy, SANParks has concessioned 12 lodges, 19 shops, 17 restaurants, and 4 picnic sites to private partners. The 20-year concession contracts for lodges (with no right of renewal or first refusal on expiration) include environmental and social obligations and penalties for noncompliance.

The concessionaires pay SANParks an annual fee calculated as a percentage of the turnover bid during the tender process. In 2004 lodges, shops and restaurants generated concession fees of US$ 13.5 million, and lodges attracted private investment of US$ 42.5 million.

SANParks is now independent from government transfers for more than 75 percent of its operating revenue.

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Source: Researched from the South African National Parks web pages on Commercialisation through Public Private Partnerships - www.sanparks.org.za
Most protected areas have governance and management arrangements or structures which set out what is special about an area, how it can be conserved and how it can be enjoyed. This is often explained in the management plan. Additionally, some organisations set out through their business or financial plans how services to the public within the protected area will be delivered, for example: visitor information and centres; guiding and rangers; conservation; trail building or repair; equipment hire; etc. Each protected area will have its own philosophical and political approach to how these and other services are delivered.

However, it is important to consider that by working in partnership with others in the public, non-government or private sectors there can be added value, reduced costs and improved understanding and trust. An example of this can be seen in 'Visitor Information' where a simple, yet longstanding, PPP arrangement has fulfilled mutual objectives and provided millions of visitors with information on tourism products and services as well as easy to read conservation messages.

A successful PPP is all about the quality of the partnership and the attention paid to building trusting relationships, particularly at the start of a relationship. Many differences of culture and ethos exist between the public and private sectors particularly in international projects, for example: differences in risk; attitude; innovation and approach; etc. can mean there is plenty of scope for lack of trust and mixed messages. Matters around business culture and ideology as well as issues of politics and profits must be understood and openly addressed.

The first step to making PPPs work is around aligning of goals. Both sides must talk openly about their respective goals and objectives which, through positive dialogue, will lead to a richer understanding of the range of objectives each partner is trying to balance, and an acceptance that these are legitimate and that it’s OK for different sides to have different objectives. Sometimes neutral moderation might be a good way of managing this process.

Entering into a PPP should not be a knee-jerk or quick process and like any lasting personal or business relationship, it requires good and on-going communication. Keeping on talking about what each side is trying to achieve in the future and not getting bogged down in the day-to-day operations is important, as is regularly reviewing the arrangement so that each side does not rely on the “contract” as the way to hold partners to their respective commitments. If partners rely on the detail in the contract it is most likely that the PPP will have failed.

So at an early stage in exploring the possibility of creating a PPP, to avoid later confusion and potential contractual conflict, it is very important to follow these five steps:

**STEP 1**
Set out and agree (through internal discussions with colleagues and team members) which services the protected area organisation is comfortable about entering into a partnership for service or project delivery.

**STEP 2**
Identify and listen to your potential private sector, NGO or other partners and understand what they want to get out of a partnership with you.

**STEP 3**
Identify those areas where public and private objectives overlap.

**STEP 4**
Write down and agree (yours and your partners’) goals, objectives and purpose. This will make the basis of the PPP agreement.

**STEP 5**
Trust your private partners to take the lead but give them plenty of your time and support.
Creating Public-Private Partnerships

The newspaper consists of 40 pages with 50% being the editorial copy provided by the national park and the newspaper sells advertising for the remaining 50%. Through this PPP the park gets its information to visitors free of charge and the newspaper company makes a profit – an excellent win-win situation.

Source: Clare O’Connor, Exmoor National Park
> www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk

Providing information for visitors when they arrive into a protected area such as biosphere reserve, national, regional or nature parks is essential. One method can be through a “visitor newspaper” which can be made widely available and distributed at information centres or attraction and accommodation providers. Information on where to stay, what to do and the best places to see can be combined with conservation messages and educational material in a conversational way for people on holiday. Exmoor National Park in the UK has a PPP with a local newspaper company to print 120,000 copies of a visitor newspaper every year at no production cost to the national park. This arrangement has been working well for both parties for over 25 years.

VISITOR INFORMATION, EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK, UK

The newspaper consists of 40 pages with 50% being the editorial copy provided by the national park and the newspaper sells advertising for the remaining 50%. Through this PPP the park gets its information to visitors free of charge and the newspaper company makes a profit – an excellent win-win situation.

Source: Clare O’Connor, Exmoor National Park
> www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk
Creating and maintaining long-term, trusting relationships between protected area managers and their partners, particularly those within the business community in and around the protected area is the key to PPP success. In the example ‘National Parks of New York Harbor’ a complex series of arrangements were put in place, over many years, to manage numerous protected areas through a PPP with multiple private and public partners.

However, throughout the Baltic Sea Region, developing small and uncomplicated PPP arrangements is an obvious starting point. There is real potential to work in partnership to develop sustainable tourism products and services which satisfy the needs of visitors, support local communities yet do not damage the environment.

To help protected areas and their partners achieve mutual benefits below are some simple ideas which may be useful in avoiding problems. These ideas are the basis of any successful partnership and are set out as a checklist with questions to consider.

1. **Aligned objectives**
   Does each party really understand the objectives of the other? Do they believe they can achieve their own objectives without bringing them in to conflict with their partners?

2. **Effective communications**
   Are meetings and communications focused on the right issues and is the information believable? Is it just about telling good news and then complaining behind the scenes?

3. **Clear decision-making**
   Is the process of decision-making across the partnership clear to all? Are the right people involved at the right time?

4. **Clear accountabilities**
   Do partners understand who is accountable for what? Is there duplication of effort across the partnership?

5. **Right skills in the right place**
   Are all partners getting people with the right skills in the right place to manage the partnership? Are skill gaps being ignored?

6. **Adaptive ways of working**
   Are partners willing to adapt their ways of working to resolve issues and meet the needs of others? Do they say just do it my way?
In 2001, the US National Park Service placed an ‘umbrella’ over all 22 of its parklands in the New York metropolitan area, including the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, designating the new entity as the National Parks of New York Harbor (NPNH). With nearly 27,000 acres, the National Park Service (NPS) is the largest caretaker, public or private, on the waterfront. Lower Manhattan is the centre of the network of harbour parks, historic sites and recreation areas that arc across three other boroughs of the city – Queens, Brooklyn and Staten Island and across to New Jersey.

In 2002, by invitation of the NPS, a new non-profit organisation was established by Marian Sulzberger Heiskell, David Rockefeller Jr. and Marie Salerno through the National Park Foundation. They founded the National Parks of New York Harbor Conservancy in December 2005 with an ambitious set of initiatives. The Harbor Conservancy is the primary private partner of the NPNH, sanctioned under a U.S. Department of the Interior General Agreement. The Harbor Conservancy is charged with providing both philanthropic and earned revenue support to meet the future stewardship needs of NPNH.

In 2006, The New York Community Trust funded a Harbor Conservancy Earned Revenue/Feasibility and Business Plan of how the partnership could bring additional funding to park sites. In 2009, NPNH awarded to the Harbor Conservancy the authority to secure revenue streams for the park under a U.S. Department of Interior Co operating Association Agreement. Under that agreement, in partnership with Eastern National, a non-profit national park partner, they established retail stores on Ellis Island, Liberty Island and at the African Burial Ground.

This is a large and complex PPP with staffing and resources provided by both partners to achieve a shared portfolio of projects; however, the principles of partnership working remain.

Source: Researched from the National Parks of New York Harbor webpage on Public Private Partnerships
> www.nyharborparks.org/conservancy/whatwedo.html
As discussed earlier, the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is an award to protected areas that have demonstrated partnership working, developed and implemented a tourism strategy based on the area’s special qualities, as well as following a resourced work plan to address sustainability issues. It will be important for partners in any potential PPP to be compatible with and committed to the principles of sustainable tourism.

Below are three different case studies which go into some detail of how PPPs were developed in three different protected areas but each has in common the experience of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism.

The case studies are:
+ Tourism Business Support – Forest of Bowland AONB
+ National Park Gateways – Eifel National Park
+ Ski Trail Management – Harz National Park

Each case study is set out in the same way. After describing where and what it is, it then outlines the issue to be addressed, when it took place and who were the parties/partners. Each case study briefly says how it was done and, importantly for learning from this experience, lists the key principles for the PPP. Contact and additional information details are also included.

PPP CASE STUDY: TOURISM BUSINESS SUPPORT FOREST OF BOWLAND AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (UK)

What?
Creating a PPP company to encourage tourism businesses, visitors, local communities and groups to benefit each other by working together and by working with the protected area team.

Where?
Situated in the North West of England, the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers 730 sq. km. of rural Lancashire and North Yorkshire and includes the famous landmark Pendle Hill with an elevation of 557 m. It is internationally important for its heather moorland, blanket bog and rare birds. Its moorland, fringe farmland, woodland and open river and reservoir landscapes are managed by a partnership of landowners, farmers, voluntary organisations, wildlife groups, recreation groups, local councils and government agencies.

What was the issue?
The purpose of the PPP was to achieve a support mechanism which encouraged and helped private-sector tourism operators to benefit from operating in the Forest of Bowland protected area. A trading company, Bowland Experience Limited (BEx), was set up to enable collaborative marketing and promotional activity to provide easily accessible funds for small local projects, which will benefit both visitors and the local environment.

When?
From January 2007 and is on-going.

Who were the parties?
The Forest of Bowland AONB, the Sustainable Tourism Network/Bowland Experience Ltd. Bowland Experience Ltd (BEx) now has 57 members, the majority of which already participate in the Forest of Bowland Sustainable Tourism Network. BEx was created to provide a long-term mechanism to support and promote tourism businesses of the Forest of Bowland AONB area. The company’s three directors are local tourism operators.
How it was done?

Phase 1
The Forest of Bowland (FoB) was awarded the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (The Charter) in 2005. An additional member of staff was appointed in 2006 – with target outputs for a 2-year programme including:

1. Ensure the creation and updating of a database of tourism businesses located within the AONB.
2. Deliver a green tourism campaign within the Forest of Bowland, encouraging tourism enterprises to improve the environmental management of their business.
3. Lead the organisation of an annual tourism association and business event for the AONB.

To achieve these outputs, a Sustainable Tourism Network (STN) was launched in January 2007. The STN membership criteria were based on the principles of Part II of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism. In return, the FoB provided a support service of advice and information for both new and existing tourism operators. Jointly, the FoB and STN worked to promote the area and its tourism businesses by marketing and visitor information.

The STN was a pool for recruiting participants in promotional campaigns (e.g. “Birding in Bowland” and “Fishing in Bowland”) which provided visitor information linked with the businesses supplying the services. It was also the basis for introducing the “Green Tourism Business Scheme” in 2007 through which operators are awarded an eco-label and become Charter Partners.

Phase 2
By the end of 2008, it was apparent that STN needed to develop into a self-sustaining organisation. In August 2009, a new social enterprise company was formed – Bowland Experience Limited (BEx). This is a company owned by the tourism operator members and managed by a board of directors elected from the membership. It is independent of the FoB but works in close partnership to continue the work of the STN.

As well as continuing the development of promotional campaigns, BEx has organised business training courses and established a project to operate an all-terrain electric invalid carriage to offer access to the countryside to people with limited mobility. It continues to provide the general advice, information and networking
of STN. By September 2011, 76 tourism businesses had joined BEx. Of these, 42% have set up in tourism since 2006 and 26% are or were farming enterprises.

The costs for this enterprise are approximately £20,000 per year (€24,000) and consisted mostly of staff time and travel costs. Projects, such as the promotional literature and training courses, were self-funding.

BEx is constituted as the “trading subsidiary” of the Bowland Tourism Environment Fund (BTEF) which has a controlling vote in the company. This is a charity formed in July 2009 and managed by a board of trustees who are members of the FoB tourism network.

BTEF seeks to raise funds from “visitor pay-back” and other donations. Its funds are distributed by the Trustees as grants to community projects which work towards these aims. BTEF is recognised as a “charitable company” by the tax authorities which means it is exempt from business taxes. Any profits made by BEx are donated to BTEF to minimise tax liability.

**Key Principles**

It was very important that the Tourism Business Support mechanism must:

1. Engage with tourism businesses located and operating in the Protected Area to work within its Sustainable Tourism objectives
2. Support the local economy and inter-trading with other members,
3. Working with the protected area in conservation and environmental protection,
4. Implementing and collaborating with the protected area’s marketing and visitor information activities.

Tourism operators will achieve and maintain good management and quality standards in their respective professional fields.

The protected area will provide a source of business development information (for example, training opportunities, marketing and communications, renewable energy options, waste management, sourcing local products and services, etc.).

**PPP Case Studies**

**Forest of Bowland AONB**

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PPP CASE STUDY: NATIONAL PARK GATEWAYS
EIFEL NATIONAL PARK (DE)

What?
National Park Gateways – creating joint national park visitor centres (NPVCs) and tourist information centres (TICs) in the Eifel National Park, Germany.

Where?
The Eifel National Park is located 65 km south-west of Cologne, on the western edge of Germany’s North Rhine-Westphalia. The Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg are in close proximity with the Belgian town of Eupen approximately 30 km and Maastricht in the Netherlands about 75 km. Established in 2004 its approximate area of 108 km² is predominantly forest with an elevation of 600 m.

What was the issue?
The main objective of the PPP was to create five “combined” national park visitor centres and tourist information centres which served as major gateways for both the tourism sector and the National Park Authority. By combining National Park exhibitions with local tourism information (such as accommodation, where to visit, etc.) a long-term and mutually beneficial partnership between the national park and the local districts could be developed.

When?
Between 2005 and 2009.

Who were the parties?
The national park visitor centres were developed through a shared approach with the local districts in which they are located. They were selected on the grounds of a consultation and application process based on set quality criteria which involved a questionnaire. The Eifel National Park Authority worked with five local districts: Simmerath, Monschau, Heimbach, Schleiden and Nideggen.

How it was done?
A first step was the development of a tourism strategy for the whole of the national park region with consultation of the stakeholders. Creating visitor centres as gateways to the park was one of the key actions defined in the strategy.

As a next step, quality criteria were further developed in order to produce questionnaires to be filled in by potential local districts intending to apply for funding of a visitor centre. During this process the potential applicants reduced in number because they became aware that the visitor centre was not given as a “present” but that there was also an obligation, over the long-term, to make them run successfully. Finally, five locations in five districts were chosen to develop the visitor centres.

The development of the infrastructure and the exhibition and information technology was funded by the Ministry of Environment, which is also the financing body for the national park.

Using a corporate identity in design, equipment and quality standards the aim was also to improve the quality of TICs by creating examples of good practice. Standards for information and publications were defined and information furniture was developed to emphasise the corporate identity. The national park launched a competition to select a professional concept for a small exhibition in each of the centres. A working group consisting of various stakeholders assisted the process.

Every centre had its own theme related to its surroundings in order to make it interesting for visitors to visit more than one of them and to make them complementary. As a standard, each centre was equipped with a modern video projection presenting short films about the park and a 3-D model of the park on which different themes can be projected. Due to a separate ISDN connection to all the standard elements of the five exhibitions, the Park Service is able to put current information to the guests via the internet.
Situation in an existing focal point for tourism which already receives many visitors

Access by public transport

Access for all including people with limited mobility

Location at the entrance of the park as to major roads coming from the surrounding big cities

Integration of a tourist information centre (TIC) in the same facility

Sufficient space and integration of a national park exhibition, video projection, internet terminal, 3-D model of national park

Facilities to rest, sit, read, sufficient space for larger groups (45 people)

Toilets

Facilities outside: Signage and information panels, parking for cars, buses, bicycles, playground for children, facilities to rest

Key Principles

1. Raising quality and efficiency in visitor information
   - Creating attractive tourism facilities
   - Creating a corporate identity of design and quality standards
   - Combining visitor facilities of park and district
   - Creating benefits for both partners
   - Quality criteria and partnership fixed by questionnaire and cooperation contract

2. Criteria to choose a location and for the development to become a visitor centre:
   - Walking distance to the national park and its visitor attractions

Park and districts have signed a co-operation contract which clearly defines the tasks each partner has to fulfil. Now all five visitor centres work as successful national park “gateways”. Staffing is provided by the local districts. The centres are now far more successful and more interesting for visitors as they are in tourism spots and have strong links with the national park. For the park it means it does not have to provide extra information staff in the centres. The park authority is responsible for the maintenance of the exhibition and technical equipment, provides guided tours and uses the gateways as the main starting point for visitor activities.

Set-up costs for the building, the furniture and equipment for the tourist information were funded by the Ministry of Economy which is in charge of tourism. The national park exhibitions were set up by the Eifel National Park Service with money from the Ministry of Environment. It is also the task of Eifel National Park Service to maintain the exhibitions. Everything to do with maintenance of the building and tourist information is the task of the local district.

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Information on all five national park gateways:
www.nationalpark-eifel.de
PPP CASE STUDY: SKI TRAIL MANAGEMENT
HARZ NATIONAL PARK (DE)

What?
Ski trail management – creating a joint venture for the ongoing and sustainable management and maintenance of a network of trails, in the Harz National Park, Germany.

Where?
The Harz National Park is the only trans-federal state national park in Germany, located in the Harz mountain range in the northern plains. The area is mainly covered with mountain spruce, deciduous and beech woods. It was established in 1990/2006 and covers an area of 247 km² with an elevation of 1142 m above sea level.

What was the issue?
The purpose of the PPP/joint venture was to achieve a network of carefully maintained ski trails and visitor management by providing machines, fuel (gas) and staff.

With the Harz National Park administration facing dwindling budgets, the question arose: how would they be able to continue to maintain the network of winter ski trails which was a vital part of the tourism economy?

When?
2004 to present and on-going.

Who were the parties?
The Harz National Park administration (financed and supervised by the two ministries for nature conservation in the Federal States of Lower Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt) entered into negotiations with the local communities of Altenau, Braunlage, Herzberg and Sankt Andreasberg, together with several support organisations or “Clubs of Friends” of ski sports.

Through negotiations it was decided that the objective of the PPP was to cover the purchase and future running costs of six new tracked vehicles (four “Pistenbullys” and two snowmobiles) which were needed for ski trail maintenance and visitor management.

How it was done?
First, the Ministries of Economic Affairs in both Federal States agreed to support the procurement of the tracked machines with a share of 50% from EU regional funds, provided the regional partners would finance the remaining 50%. Secondly, the Harz National Park agreed to use its own staff to operate the track machines.

During the several rounds of negotiations a great deal of trust was built up between all interested organisations and it quickly showed positive results resulting in the manager of the Harz Tourism Board saying, “We have made a quantum leap in the financing of future ski tracking in the national park area and we can now be confident that we can offer next winter a high-quality and well maintained trail system”.

Numerous press releases and letters to the newspapers demonstrated the success of this partnership since and this success continues.
Key Principles

The “Clubs of Friends” (skiing support associations) and the various municipalities entered into a contract with the park administration to maintain the trail network within the national park during the winter seasons (including erecting signs and information panels, maintaining tracks, etc.).

1. The national park provided and employed suitable ranger staff to drive the machines and to provide instruction and training. The drivers are required to keep a logbook and present them to the municipalities at the end of each month. Ranger hours are approximately 100 person-days per year (based on an 8-hour day). The municipalities also each appoint at least one suitable driver who will take over when needed (illness, vacation, long-lasting snow, etc.).

2. The skiing support associations own maintain and insure the machinery and also provide the national park with all claims (including third parties) of any damage resulting from the use of equipment. The operating costs (gas/fuel) are borne by the municipalities. Other commercial use of the machines is not permitted. For emergency rescue purposes the fire department or the mountain rescue service are charged the cost of fuel only.

3. There is an agreement between all parties about which trails are maintained and their frequency. All parties meet annually to evaluate the agreement and working procedures and update if necessary.

MORE INFORMATION

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> www.europarc.org
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