

WORKING TOGETHER FOR IMPACT FOR LAND & SEA:

Vision document

***for joint strategic operation of EUCC, ECNC and the Mediterranean Centre,
and associated structures***

Tilburg, Leiden, Barcelona, 2015



This paper describes the history of the integration process between ECNC, EUCC and the MedCentre and also the framework for joint strategic operation.

1. Introduction

The world is changing fast. The global economic and financial crisis is impacting significantly on many parts of society: citizens, governments, business, scientific institutions and NGOs. Governments are withdrawing more and more from society; decentralizing or slimming down their tasks; cutting down on subsidies for sustainability in a major way; and putting more emphasis on the role of businesses and civil society.

NGOs, especially those working in the field of nature, coastal and marine management, and biodiversity, are increasingly being 'left on their own'. The demands on NGOs are still high and sometimes may even be increasing due to slimmed-down government structures, but the possibilities for maintaining their ongoing operations with traditional resources are becoming more and more problematic.

EUCC, ECNC and the MedCentre, presently cooperating in the form of the ECNC Land & Sea Group, are all facing similar financial challenges.

As long as 10 years ago, ECNC-European Centre for Nature Conservation (ECNC), the Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC) and Centro Mediterráneo EUCC (the MedCentre) agreed on institutional integration, after an exploration process of number of years. In 2008, they set out their intentions in relation to integration in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), titled: 'Integration for Impact'.

The governing councils of ECNC, EUCC and the MedCentre decided in their meetings in November 2012 to speed up the integration process. It was also decided, in principle, to welcome the establishment a Revenue Unit, which would generate income to be available as donations to the whole Group, to be linked to the non-profit organization in a way which was to be further examined.

In 2014 it was decided to focus on positive opportunities the cooperation process brings. Within this focus, there is a need to focus on what "joint strategic operation" means in practice. Top-priority should be with innovation, networks and widening the horizons and funding opportunities for the members of the ECNC Land & Sea Group and its EEIG.

In its meeting of 26 November 2014, the Board of the ECNC Land & Sea Group decided on the vision and focus of the ECNC Land & Sea Group and also further clarified and decided on the governing structure. It also decided to establish a European Land & Sea Stakeholder Forum.

2. Envisaged benefits and revenues

The overall benefit of joint strategic operation between the three organisations and their associated structures is **to combine efforts in order to maximize the synergies available through an enhanced platform of skills and experience, networks, partnerships and funding opportunities.**

Through the process of joint strategic operation the involved organizations have better and more opportunities to implement their own mission and work on the wider mission of the Group, while at the same time serving better their own specific mission and network.

The overall benefits and revenues which the joint strategic operation process seeks to achieve can be:

- Broader, more resilient combined pool of staff and stronger governing structure and more flexibility in staffing. Increased career opportunities for staff and/or increased opportunities of new working fields.
- Identification of 'blue', 'green' or 'land'-sea' cross-cutting themes from one coherent perspective and vision.
- More and wider services to clients and potential clients.
- Less dependence on grants and other governmental funds.
- Significantly increased potential for large-scale projects.
- Creating a network of networks from all the partners and networks the three organization, resulting in higher visibility, outreach and impact.
- More potential to facilitate the voice of local partners and people.

3. Cooperation and integration

3.1 Aims and objectives

The Strategic View towards the future is that the ECNC Land & Sea Group:

1. is valued and known as one of the most renowned and influential Pan-European and international expertise groupings for land & sea, with a focus on biodiversity, integrated coastal zone management, marine issues, and blue and green ecosystem services;
2. is a powerful 'Network of Networks' in the field of 'blue' and 'green', providing: both added value to the expertise of associated NGOs and expertise centres; and also empowering their combined voice, also in civic society;
3. is one of the leading certifying bodies in the field of biodiversity and coastal and destination qualities;
4. is not only sustained by 'traditional sources', such as subsidies and grants anymore, but also increasingly via the revenues from market-based activities (land and sea restoration, commercial training) and by Internet-based income (crowd-funding).

3.2 Organizational structures

3.2.1 Non-profit entity

For the non-profit entity the joint strategic operation will focus on the ECNC Land & Sea Group and its EEIG, but the three individual organizations will retain their separate legal status and structures.

The reasons to retain the separate legal entities include:

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- All three organisations have their own constituency, specific networks, passion, and drive.
 - Potential for mobilizing niche markets (as part of a larger alliance or EEIG). The current ECNC, EUCC and MedCentre brands are very strong in their niche markets.
 - Risks in connection to the EU NGO Grant for EUCC and ECNC, which currently amounts around almost 0.5 m euro all together.

3.2.2 Mission and Vision

Mission: The ECNC Land & Sea Group promotes sustainable, integrated policy approaches to land, sea and coast and actively stimulates interaction, communication and bridges between science, society and policy.

Vision: The ECNC Land & Sea Group is the European Expertise Centre for Biodiversity and Sustainability, dedicated to a 'Beautiful Europe' for present and future generations, based on rich biodiversity, healthy ecosystems and strong linkages between nature and society.

The longer version of our vision is: 'The ECNC Group is dedicated to a sustainable and beautiful Europe for present and future generations, based on rich biodiversity, healthy ecosystems and strong linkages between nature and society. It promotes sustainable, integrated policy approaches to land, sea and coast and actively stimulates interaction, communication and bridges between science, society and policy.'

The ECNC Group aims to implement its mission and vision while balancing the three elements of sustainable development: people, planet and profit.

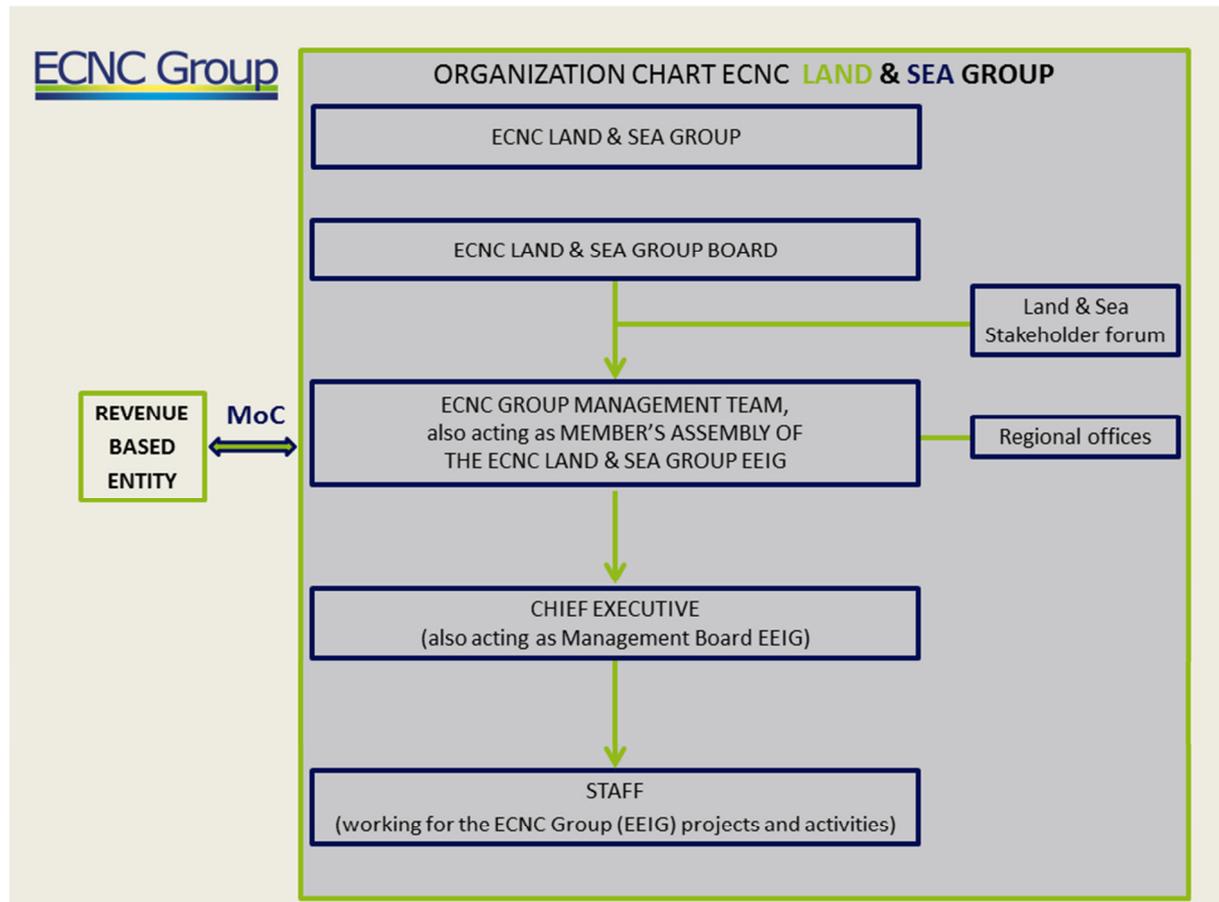
The ECNC Land & Sea Group will be one of the leading European expertise clustering for land- and sea-based biodiversity and sustainable development. It will operate as a bridge-builder and network of networks on 'green' and 'blue'.

The ECNC Group's geographical focus is on Europe, adjacent and related overseas territories and on global approaches for issues which require cross-continental cooperation. The ECNC Group definition of Europe follows the UN-ECE (which includes Caucasus and Central Asia) and also includes the entire Mediterranean and Black Sea region.

3.2.3 Organizational objectives and governance

The ECNC Group itself will continue to consist of a mission-driven not-for-profit part, but this part may be complemented in due time, outside the structure of the Group itself, with a cooperation agreement with a revenue based unit, which will focus on issues such as land & sea restoration activities and commercial training. Depending on interest, the members of the ECNC Group will decide whether or not to participate in a possible revenue-based entity, either on a structural or on an ad hoc basis.

The formal umbrella of the non-profit part (ECNC Group) is the EEIG (European Economic Interest Grouping) as decided by the ECNC Group Board and the governance structures of EUCC, ECNC and MedCentre. The structure of the organization is depicted in the figure below.



If revenue based entity will be created, it will have a separate legal structure. Whilst it will aim to implement (part of) the overall mission of the Group via market-based instruments, the revenue unit will not be part of the governing structure of the ECNC Group. However, the ECNC Group and the revenue entity will be linked via a formal agreement (memorandum of cooperation, MoC, specifying the links). It should be avoided that NGO and commercial activities will be mixed, for reasons of transparent governance and also for tax related reasons. Via the cooperation agreement and the statutes of the Revenue Based Entity itself it will be ensured that the largest part of the profit made in the revenue unit will be donated to the ECNC Group Land & Sea (c.q. to the members participating in revenue-based activities).

Governance

The management of the ECNC Land & Sea Group EEIG

According to its statutes, the ECNC Land & Sea Group EEIG has two management layers:

- the EEIG's Member's Assembly, the highest policy and decision-making organ, consisting of representatives from the MedCentre (having one vote), from the ECNC (having two votes), and from the EUCC (having two votes), and
- the EEIG's Management Board, appointed by the Member's Assembly, that can consist of one or two persons).

These two bodies will be fully responsible for any formal and legal issue regarding the EEIG, including approving work plans, financial reporting and outlooks, etc.

It is agreed to have a Member's Assembly, recognising that:

- this Assembly acts as Management Team of the Group;
- members are: representatives of the EUCC Management Team (two votes), of the ECNC Management Team (two votes), and of the MedCentre Management Team (one vote), preferably permanent representatives;
- Members are recommended to participate live during two or three meetings each year, but they can participate through telephone or Internet.

In 2013 the Member's Assembly has appointed Rob Wolters as Chief Executive and in October 2014 Albert Salman as Deputy Chief Executive, to form the EEIG's Management Board.

A Joint Board

The common ambitions of the EUCC, ECNC and MedCentre go beyond those of the EEIG. In their commitment to joint strategic cooperation, the EUCC, ECNC and MedCentre would like to ensure coherence between the policies and operations of the Group and its legal entities, including associated structures.

Therefore, EUCC, ECNC and MedCentre agreed to allow for a broadening of governance through a Strategic Board for any cooperation issues beyond the EEIG, according to the following principles:

The Strategic Joint Board will convene annually, in combination with the EEIG Member's Assembly, but without statutory responsibilities for the EEIG. In a way it is an extended EEIG Member's Assembly, adopting responsibility for issues wider than the EEIG itself, oversees the operations of the Group. The Board adopts the same governance principles as the EEIG Member's Assembly (e.g. voting rights), and it can adopt the name "**ECNC Land & Sea Group Board**".

- **Composition**

The Board consist of an independent president (not linked to one legal unit only, elected by the Board for periods of 3 years) and as vice presidents the president of the member organisations, currently ECNC, EUCC and MedCentre. The Board assigned at least two other functions to the vice-presidents: Treasurer and Secretary.
- **Responsibilities of the Board**
 - Supervise the implementation of the Group vision and work programme, providing strategic leadership and advice.
 - Enhance and promote the geographic and thematic development of the Group.
 - Represent the vision and mission of the Group at different levels.

The Chief Executive of the ECNC Group is responsible for assisting the Board in the preparations of its meetings and the implementation of decisions.

Members and network partners

Active involvement of members and network partners of the 3 founding organisations of the ECNC Land & Sea Group is vital for the success of the operations. While some of the members may wish to only focus on the specific niche of one of the three organisations, others may wish to explore potentials and innovations that the combination of sea and land related networks bring.

As said, the ECNC Land & Sea Group aims to function as a network of networks, while fully appreciating the strength that the network brings.

Involvement of members and network partners in the operations of the Group could take in several ways:

- Via involvement in projects, or lead of projects;
- Via seminars or other meetings related to the Group;
- Via their role in the establishment and functioning of regional offices;
- Via advise and expertise for land or sea based challenges;
- Via involvement in the European Land & Sea Stakeholder Forum
- Via all other ways that contribute to the functioning of the Group.

Secretariat Staff

The MTs of EUCC, ECNC and MedCentre are responsible for their own staff. The ECNC Group MT will mobilize synergies between the staff of the members of the ECNC Group as regards issues of cross-cutting Group nature. In case of vacancies or expected contract terminations, the organisations will first check options and solutions together. A specific pool of expertise will be created for support staff, thus allowing mobilizing the support staff, in particular as regards to human, financial and communication management, for the benefit of the entire ECNC Group and the separate organisations.

Legal structure

The ECNC Group EEIG is registered in 2011 in Barcelona, Spain, at the MedCentre of the ECNC Group. Its formal (registered) name is ECNC Group Land & Sea EEIG. The legal umbrella/structure of the ECN Group is the EEIG. The EEIG will be utilized as much as possible as the legal framework which allows human and financial resources to be combined under one legal ECNC Group roof.

4. European Land & Sea Stakeholder Forum

The current ECNC Group Scientific Council has been discontinued, since it has served its specific purpose. As part of the strategic vision of the ECNC Group to become a Network of Networks and to assist in the empowerment of civil society and the interested public and to giving these people a voice, the ECNC SC will be replaced by an **European Land & Sea Stakeholder Forum**, coordinated by the ECNC Land & Sea Group. This Forum will have representatives from the scientific community, but also from economic sectors, various levels of government, and other NGOs. Its main purpose and role will be to advise the ECNC Group Board and its management in issues related to 1) bridging interests; 2) establishing cross-cutting networks; and 3) assist in building up the ECNC Group's Network and civic society role. It will have an alternating chair, who will be invited to the ECNC

Group Board meetings as an Advisor (formally observer, without voting rights). The Stakeholder Forum may create working groups, focusing on specific stakeholders of challenges, including the Science-Policy Interface. The whole structure will be “light weight” in institutional terms, and focussed on interaction, exchange and inspiration rather than on traditional meetings.

5. Regional Offices

The MedCentre traditionally serves the interests of EUCC in the Mediterranean. In the ECNC Group Board in Brussels in 2014 it was decided that the MedCentre will also act as the Group’s Regional Office for the Mediterranean. The MedCentre will also aim to serve ECNC’s interests in the Mediterranean. Those three roles will be balanced, anchored in the governing structure of the MedCentre and also reflected in communication means, such as websites.

The ECNC Group is open to explore associations with other (future) regional offices of EUCC or ECNC.

The conditions of realization of desirable regional offices depend on:

1. Active interest from the region involved (such as interest for the network, governments, scientific institutions, or combination of stakeholders).
2. Available external resources for office and staffing. The establishment of new regional offices should be budget neutral in terms of overhead.

When new regional offices will be set up, maximum cooperation and synergy will be aimed for as regards the existing networks, members and partners of EUCC, ECNC and MedCentre (and other potential Group and/or EEIG partners).

6. Programme structure integrated organization

Programme structure and focus – cross-cutting themes, the programme structure and focus will, as has already been stated, be innovative and reflect current trends in relation to the external agenda of governments, scientific community, businesses, land & sea users and other relevant stakeholders. This will be helpful in terms of maximizing the potential for non-profit based funding and can make a useful link to commercial activities that may be carried out by the revenue generating unit. One of the considerations in arriving at these themes is the success or otherwise of current themes within the three constituent organizations.

Key programme themes are:

1. Sustainable Growth, a combination of:

- Green Growth, which includes: sustainable agricultural and rural development, sustainable touristic quality destinations in terrestrial areas, business & biodiversity synergies, and greening economies of regions and sub-regions, including land-sea interactions.
- Blue Growth, which includes: coastal & maritime tourism, Maritime Spatial Planning including ICM / land-sea interactions; sustainable fisheries and mariculture;
- Combining green and blue growth: cleaning seas from litter while recycling litter into consumer products and greening businesses in the “production chain”, greening ports, promoting alternatives for mining of natural resources in seas, including deep seas, promoting

businesses that utilize sea(based) resources without depleting them, sustainable financial investments, etc.;

- Development and implementation of business standards or award and innovation programmes for sustainable development for both land and seas;
- Science-policy-society interface addressing sustainability for land & sea, including process management and development of synchronized indicators and reporting systems.

2. **Blue and green infrastructure**, a vital theme in national and EU policies, integrating not only protected areas as part of those concepts, but also links to physical planning and wider land and sea use. This theme also relates to nature based solutions for coastal cities and towns, EU Natura 2000 promotion and integration into sectors, nature based solutions for sea-defence systems in combination with nature restoration, sustainable tourism, balancing road and rail infrastructure, and management of buffer zones of terrestrial and marine protected areas and national parks.

3. **Land and Sea use**: This programme of the Group addresses the sustainable use of land, coastal areas and marine areas and their spatial implications. The programme highlights the interactions between land and sea uses and nature, including the negative and positive environmental impacts of land and sea uses on nature and sustainable development, the ecosystem services nature and biodiversity provides to society and the carrying capacity of terrestrial and marine ecosystems. The programme will focus in particular on human uses related to tourism, agriculture, coastal zone management, and waste management, while keeping in mind the impact on land and sea use of climate change. It promotes innovative perspectives on the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services as the basis for developing adaptive and flexible approaches to policy and management for seas and land.

For each theme or subtheme, the Group's MT appointed programme and project leaders, and decide the way these programmes or themes will be announced on the website.

7. Resource planning

There are four priorities to sustain the operations of the ECNC Group and the member organisation:

- 1) subsidies and grants;
- 2) profit-based income – related to the Revenue-based entity.
- 3) Internet-based income (crowd sourcing); and
- 4) working with enterprises/economic sectors.

The ECNC Group developed a strategic resource planning approach, based on the above elements.

8. Communication and marketing

Internal and external communication and information about the transfer process and required activities (information, launch, new communication materials and means, including website(s))

The following communication issues will have priority:

- Organizational chart of all organizations;

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- Business cards for all staff of ECNC, EUCC and MedCentre that are operationally involved in the ECNC Land & Sea Group activities
 - Email account for ECNC Land & Sea Group
 - Internal simplified branding chart for inspiring people of the member organisation of the ECNC Group, with mission and vision on what we are doing
 - External chart for the external world as a branding plan.
 - A digital strategy will be developed. Social media should be used to activate the ECNC Group related networks from one coherent vision. All this is of major importance and added value.

The ECNC Group communication plan will be updated and elaborated and developed into a communication and marketing plan. A digital strategy will be developed, in tune with the communication and marketing plan.