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European Charter event: Linking tourism and biodiversity

Over 60 participants followed the invitation from the EUROPARC Federation to an Information Seminar on the European Charter on the 9th of December in the representation of the Euro region Alpes Méditerranée in Brussels.

58 protected areas from seven countries across Europe are committed to sustainable tourism - is what the EUROPARC Federation reported to an audience of representatives from the EU Commission, regions of Europe and other organisations. The occasion: The promotion of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Brussels as a model and instrument to sustain rural areas through these changing and challenging times.

The seminar took place in the framework of the EUROPARC project European CharterNet which is supported by the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) with funds from the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety. Many of the regions of Europe from Zeeland in the Netherlands to Thessaloniki in Greece enjoyed the hospitality of the Euro region Alpes Méditerranée (itself a strong advocate of the Charter for protected areas in its regions). In addition, the Charter areas of Luberon (F), Harz (D), Volcanic Zone of La Garrotxa (E) and Alpi Marittime (I) presented their positive experiences connected to the adoption of the Charter principles together with their local communities.

Tried and tested over 10 years, the "Charter" has been adopted by protected areas in many Western European countries as a mechanism to bring together the tourism industry, previously sceptical of the benefits of protected areas and sustainable tourism, and environmentalists. In total 61 Million visits are made to "Charter awarded" protected areas and many more parks are currently seeking Charter status. These sustainable investments have injected approximately 55 Million Euros into participating rural economies over the course of 3 years. Charter areas cover 4,6 Mio ha, 50% of which are Natura2000 sites. In these areas the Charter helps to make the link between tourism and the conservation of the regions natural and cultural heritage.

The successful European Charter for Sustainable Tourism information day ended with many expressions of interest as well as commitment to ensure that the ecology and economics in protected areas are closely connected and planned in close cooperation with one another.

You can download the presentations from the seminar and more pictures at: www.european-charter.org/news_neu.html.

Please contact Petra Dippold, project coordinator, at p.dippold@europarc.org for more information.



Participants of the European Charter Information day



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Regional produce from the attending Charter Parks.