Sustainable Tourism in Enterprises, Parks and Protected Areas

PROPOSAL TO HARMONIZE AND ACCREDIT CHARTER PART II (CP2) CERTIFICATION PROGRAMMES AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

Based on the literature review of sustainability practices comparative study of sustainability criteria

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN ENTERPRISES, PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS

This is a publication from the EU project Sustainable Tourism Enterprises in Parks and Protected Areas (STEPPA) which is funded by the European Union's grant programme: Knowledge networks for the competitiveness and sustainability of European Tourism.

STEPPA's main aim is to promote and strengthen the cooperation between the different experiences and certification initiatives for small and micro tourism enterprises working with protected areas. This is done through the sharing, levelling and enhancement of their sustainability practices and criteria, and strengthening their competitiveness through the development of working partnerships between these initiatives and specialized research and support centres for tourism sustainability. The work and research of the project is focused on EUROPARC's European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

The project involves ten partners from seven countries: University of Eastern Finland (Finland), Leeds Metropolitan University (UK), EUROPARC Federation (Germany), Consejeria de Medio Ambiente (Andalucia, Spain), Parco Naturale Alpi Marittime (Italy), Parco Naturale Adamello Brenta (Italy), State Nature Conservancy of Slovak Republic (Slovak Republic), Latvian Country Holidays (Latvia), Nationalparkverwaltung Harz (Germany), and CoaST (UK).

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Introduction

This document has been prepared as a result of the literature review of sustainability practices comparative study of sustainability criteria, to inform Section II of the European Charter (henceforth referred to as **CP2**).

CP2 is a Pan-European certification approach aimed at businesses involved in partnerships with Charter Protected Areas (PAs) within the context of these areas' Sustainable Tourism Strategies (developed and approved under Charter Part I). As an international approach, CP2 needs to cover and take into account a wide range of local, regional and international contexts and specificities. This includes recognition and consideration for already existing business certification approaches aimed at improving businesses' environmental credentials.

The purpose of this report is not to show a comprehensive academic literature review of sustainability practices, comparing these criteria, but to prepare a more practical tool based on that prior analysis.

Current CP2 validation/accreditation process

Currently, the process for validation of a CP2-approved methodology, involves the following main steps (taken from the official Charter documentation):

1. A network of Charter PAs' (of regional, national or EUROPARC section level) develops and submits to EUROPARC a proposal for a CP2 working methodology.
    - Exception: when no network methodology exists for the given territory, an individual Charter PA can:
        - a) present its own methodology for validation;
        - b) propose to use a previously validated methodology from another regional national Charter network; or
        - c) Decide to work with its network (Regional, National or Section Level) in order to prepare a common network methodology to be presented to EUROPARC for validation.
            - (N.B.: EUROPARC encourages the use of methodologies developed and agreed at Section or national network level first, but it realises that this may not always be possible, particularly in the early stages of implementation.)
2. EUROPARC validates the compliance of the proposal with the official text of the Charter Part II and submits it to the Charter Evaluation Committee for formal approval;
3. EUROPARC communicates the decision of the Committee to the PA and/or its network;
4. The Charter PA starts implementing the methodology in its territory. Overseeing of the process can be managed by the Charter PA itself or by the respective network, depending on the circumstances. Whatever the case, the Charter PA takes the responsibility to communicate to the Sections/National and/or Regional Networks and to EUROPARC every semester a list of its new Charter Partners (i.e. certified businesses), with relevant data for information tracking, marketing, networking and communications.

CP2 implementation at PA level

As explained in the previous section, responsibility for implementation at local level falls first and foremost with the Charter PA. However, regional or national networks, or EUROPARC sections, can constitute an overseeing body which is responsible for support, harmonization of approaches and verification of compliance with European requirements on all the Charter Parks under the same approved CP2 methodology.

At a local level, and between the Charter PA and the candidate partner businesses, the CP2 process involves the following steps:

a. Definition of a ***European Charter Partnership Programme***, as a mutual commitment between the protected area authority and individual businesses. This is a flexible partnership approach and negotiated process between both parties defining their cooperation model, requirements from each side, consideration of differing local needs, analysis and agreement of the compatibility of tourism products and services with the PA's objectives, diagnosis by the respective business on all its activity, etc (see Section II full text for more information).

b. Signing of a ***European Charter Partnership Agreement*** between the PA and local business. This identifies both the PA and business commitments as well as setting out actions and monitoring indicators. Both sides should fulfil the requirements set at European level and protected area level:

   - *European level requirements* are listed in Section II official text. Section A of this document contains an assessment tool to verify and evaluate some key European level requirements, including minimum requirements over the quality and organization of the proposed CP2 process (see Section A.1), and on minimum process and performance criteria for certified Charter Partners (see Section A.2.).

   - *Requirements at PA level* will be agreed by each protected area's Sustainable Tourism Forum. These include commitments from the PA to businesses and from businesses to the PA (some examples are provided in Section II official text and in Section B of this document)

   - It is at PA level requirements that the parties establish what is the format, level and type of environmental and social commitments required from business partners. The way for businesses to demonstrate these can be through a quality scheme owned by the PA or Network, or through existing third-party

certification schemes. The requirement for businesses to use a specific third party and independent quality mark or certification scheme should be clearly stated in the regional/national CP2 proposal submitted to EUROPARC for validation.

c. By signing the Partnership Agreement the business becomes a recognized European ***Charter Partner***, and is committed with an individual Action Plan for three years. The business will also receive a ***European Charter Partnership Certificate*** for display in its facilities, listing the key commitments assumed by both the business and PA.

d. The Charter PA communicates to the Sections/National and/or Regional Networks and to EUROPARC every semester its new Charter Partners with relevant data in order to supply the Network with information for marketing and promotion.

CP2 certification institutional layers

As seen from the previous sections, CP2 has then several layers of accreditation and certification, in order to accommodate its Pan-European nature and be able reflect the regional and national diversity of Charter PAs. The key institutional levels regulating the process are:

I. EUROPARC Federation: evaluates and validates CP2 proposed methodologies; stores information of all approved methodologies and certified Charter Partners; owns the IP of the Charter brand.

II. The Charter Evaluation Committee: formally approves CP2 methodologies (*however there are no criteria yet for how these are approved and this document presents a proposal for such).*

III. Charter PAs' Network (regional and/or national networks, or EUROPARC section): creates contextually-relevant CP2 methodology, submits it to EUROPARC, and can oversee its implementation process in the individual PAs. The latter case can happen, for instance, when the governance and management structure of PAs is centralized on a regional body (e.g. as it happens in Portugal and, to some extent, in autonomous regions of Spain); or when PAs opt to have (or create) a wider network body to manage the CP2 process - e.g. a EUROPARC Section, a formal PAs' association (like IPAMAC in France, form instance) or other.

IV. Charter PA: implements CP2 methodology locally, establishes Partnership Programmes and Agreements with local businesses, certifies Charter Partners, and is the responsible overseeing body of the CP2 process in the majority of cases (as seen above, networks can also have complementary overseeing role).

V. Existing quality mark or business certification scheme (BCS): Charter PAs can opt to consider recognized sustainability labels as one of its requirements to local businesses, in order to guarantee independent third-party certification of environmental and social criteria. However, these should follow minimum management capacity, process and performance criteria (see section A.1 for support to assess these), and be included in the CP2 proposal for validation by EUROPARC.

The key principle in the whole process is that of subsidiarity. EUROPARC Federation validates but does not oversee local implementation of CP2 methodologies, which should be done by the Charter PAs and/or Networks. Equally, certification of sustainability criteria of individual businesses should preferably be done by independent third-party certification when existing, in order to maintain the independence of the process. In some cases, no third-party certification exists covering the PA's territory, or the PA (or its regional/national governing body) has already created and invested significantly in its own business certification scheme. *Whatever the case – third-party certification or managed directly by PAs - the relevant authority should demonstrate the compatibility of its scheme with the minimum European Requirements described in this document (covering governance, management, process and performance criteria)*

Typical problems with current sustainability certification programmes for businesses similar to CP2 methodologies

ICRT has a vast experience of accreditation of sustainable tourism business certification schemes in Europe and the following issues represent some of the typical weaknesses of audited programmes. Several of these problems can also be expected to exist in CP2 methodologies, so the examples below include a discussion and suggestions on how current and future schemes should address these shortfalls.

About the management of the certification programme

1. **Periodic review.** Certification programmes need to plan regular improvement periods- the criteria and the processes of certification cannot be left without review for years. It is necessary to set systems in place to conduct periodic reviews to the certification process and criteria, and we recommend these to be between 2 and 5 years, and typically every 3 years. If reviews only occur every 5 years, the changes will be much more substantial and the challenge will be to get previous awarded companies to improve their standards.
2. **Raise Technical assistance.** Most certification programmes should provide better self support materials to allow tourism companies to meet the certification standards without the reliance on external support. Small tourism companies need more applied support- the systems only make sense as a means to an end, which are the environmental performance, support to the Charter tourism strategy, and the PA.
3. **Balance between assistance and certification**. While we raise the issue of increased technical assistance, it is necessary to have separate advice from auditing functions, to ensure impartiality, credibility and conflicts of interest. We observe typically that high levels of support and handholding for applicants are neither desirable nor sustainable. Applicants arguably develop a dependency on the project officer and team that does not allow them to take full ownership of the process. It is necessary to develop appropriate self help materials to allow tourism companies to meet the certification body's standards without the reliance on external support. Advice pre assessment and between assessments should focus on the management systems and the need for monitoring, as well as the range of possible actions- emphasising payback periods and market appeal. The two year reassessment alone is insufficient, and interim processes to encourage companies to take ownership over their improvement plans and report on these are necessary. After the thorough upfront investment in getting companies through the initial stages, the withdrawal of such help after being awarded can lead to stagnation- it is important that new systems are put in place to encourage ownership of the process of reporting results, and of achieving further results. The individual Charter Forums should have a significant role in

these business support functions, and mechanisms to demonstrate how such support will happen should be demonstrated.

4. **Improve marketing.** Certification programmes have a responsibility to provide marketing benefits to the certified companies, as well as to use the certificate more extensively to raise knowledge and debate of conservation (in its broadest environmental and social sense). It is necessary to assess the range of possibilities to encourage customer facing activities and communications that promote sustainable holiday taking - as well as positioning the PAs the certification programme represents in the right markets. For this to effectively take place, several changes need to take place on how the certification program sees itself- from currently a resource based management tool, to a market led tool. The tourist and the PA need to be at the centre of the certification message, with a joint clear purpose: how will the tourist enjoy their holiday better because they consume in a certified business, and how will the PA benefit from it? Without a very clear market led message the appeal of the sustainability certification to businesses is limited and the use in marketing terms will always be under-funded as stakeholders will only see a limited appeal in the system.

About the process and quality of assessment

1. **Staff qualifications and training.** It is necessary to ensure all staff are qualified as environmental or social sustainability auditors, and have qualifications ensuring their capability to conduct environmental audits. The certification body must have qualifications of both staff and subcontracted personnel as part of the credibility and quality assurance of the system. It is also necessary to develop in house expertise in social and economic sustainability and related criteria, standards and auditing processes. This would require training and if feasible the attainment of qualifications on social standards assessment.

2. **Independence**. Greater ownership by applicants of the process of application and monitoring is needed. It is unacceptable that the certification programme's project officer or advisor fills in the application form for the applicant. This undermines the process of independent application and assessment, however much there has been a process of independent decision making by the awards panel. It also creates a reliance on the certification body's team that cannot be supported in the long term. Proposals for outsourcing assessments need to be implemented, with systems to show how decision-making is independently conducted, and monitoring for renewal must help to continuously raise standards. In the joint development of the *European Charter Partnership Programme* (before the certification award), companies should be asked to develop plans of action for each year (even if monitored every two years) and submit results against these plans. In the interim year between monitoring visits this would provide an element of continuity. The monitoring visit should start with the revision results against these action plans. Monitoring files are usually thin on detail, there is little written evidence for the office and

none returned to the award holder. The monitoring process has not necessarily shown to be a driver for continuous improvement to the extent it could be possible.

3. **Assessor training.** In every certification programme reviewed, assessor training is necessary, to raise assessor confidence, knowledge and quality of feedback. The certification programmes expect often either environmental engineers or conservation advisors to be sustainability auditors. Assessors need training to increase their knowledge and confidence in the full range of what is understood as sustainability today. The certification programme therefore needs to collect CVs for all assessors and ask them to specify their knowledge and experience against the full range of criteria for the certification programme, in particular any newly added sustainability criteria. For the assessors who do not have the necessary knowledge, training needs to be provided. It is expected that training will be needed on audit techniques as well as the content of some of the criteria (usually the social and human resource management criteria). This can include a combination of peer reviews/shadowing, mentoring, reading key documents, participating in accredited trainings, engaging with government initiatives, and taking further qualifications on environmental or social auditing.
4. **Fair, consistent scoring.** There is evidence of inconsistent practices in how assessors conduct their job in certification schemes. Every certification programme must make sure that assessor ratings are fair, and not overly generous, particularly for social sustainability aspects, avoiding giving inflated scores. More consistency in the scoring system is necessary, making sure that assessors spot inconsistencies and do not accept the park's explanation at face value. Most businesses to be certified can take many more sustainability actions with very short payback periods, we are not suggesting major investments in the current economic climate. Also there are many missed opportunities to use engaging in certification to create better visitor experiences and raise quality at the businesses, with good return on investments. This does not have to alienate certification applicants.

About the criteria

1. **Update criteria and standard.** It is necessary for all CP2 approved certification programmes to review criteria to make them relevant to the current understanding of sustainability, while keeping the links with conservation and PA's objectives. This should include a number of aspects, including socio economic sustainability and climate change related criteria that should be introduced within the context of the award's aims.
2. **Legislation compliance.** At present compliance with the legislation is assumed and not checked against and there is the assumption that applicants and award holders would be aware of environmental (or human resource management) legislation, or know how to interpret it. It is necessary to prepare a list of relevant environmental legislation that is generic and kept up to date for all businesses, best online, and a quick checklist of typical failures. Training for staff on

what these typical shortcomings are and how they can be spotted through a site visit is also necessary, so eligibility standards can be more proactively managed.

3. **The certification programme's worth and credibility.** For any certification programme to be taken seriously as a label, and to pre-empt further funders' questions on its worth, data should be collected to show significant difference in environmental (and arguably socio-economic) performance between certified and non certified firms. If necessary change the way that data is collected about the firms, or implement benchmarking systems or case study approaches to show how certified firms perform better than average. If case studies are used, these should be representative of the full range of firms certified, not using the highest performing firms as if typical. If businesses that do not fully achieve the standard can still be awarded the certification label, they should have to display for which reasons they got the award, and which are the outstanding elements.
4. **Meaningful improvement plans.** In many cases certification programmes ask companies to make annual or biannual improvement plans as part of their certification criteria. But reviews of these plans show that they need to be more meaningful. Monitoring energy/water/waste as the core part of the plan is not sufficient, there need to be achievable yet substantial impact reduction actions, as well as customer centred actions. If monitoring has already been a minor non compliance, enforce the standards and either make it a major non compliance, or delay the assessment for a short period until monitoring data can be provided. Get companies to take these plans more seriously: request environmental improvement plans are signed off and submitted with monitoring data pre visit, to reinforce the continuous improvement aspect of the standard.
5. **Performance and process.** Adapt the standard to reflect the actual performance, not just the paper trail of legislation compliance and management systems. Reflect performance on the grading of businesses. This will probably lead to a mixed method of environmental management system and environmental performance, with benchmarks both quantitative and qualitative to support.

QUESTION: Are these problems you recognise in the CP2 system you are implementing? Do you think they compromise the ability of CP2 processes and by extension the credibility of CP1?

CP2 Accreditation Assessment Tool

The following sections of this manual will follow the layout illustrated in Fig. 1 below. Section A covers the European Level Requirements that all CP2 methodologies should follow and demonstrate for EUROPARC validation. Respondents should fill copies of sections A1 and A2 and send them to Xavier Font, International Centre for Responsible Tourism, at x.font@leedsmet.ac.uk .

Results will be shared at the next STEPPA meeting in Trento on 29th March 2011, and will be used to inform EUROPARC's CP2 accreditation policy. Future candidate CP2 methodologies (and revisions of current ones) should include an assessment process on the lines of the one presented here (following any eventual updates from the outcomes of the STEPPA project), together with the remaining required documentation listed in the official "Section II" text[1].

Section B focus on requirements at PA level from parties, PA and business (candidate Charter Partner). The actions and suggestions in section B are only illustrative and serve examples of best practices being followed by other PAs already implementing CP2. For each individual PA these should be agreed both at the Charter Forum level (where the format and level of PA support for its Charter Partners should be openly discussed and agreed) and between individual businesses and PAs during the negotiation of the individual European Charter Partnership Programmes and Agreements.

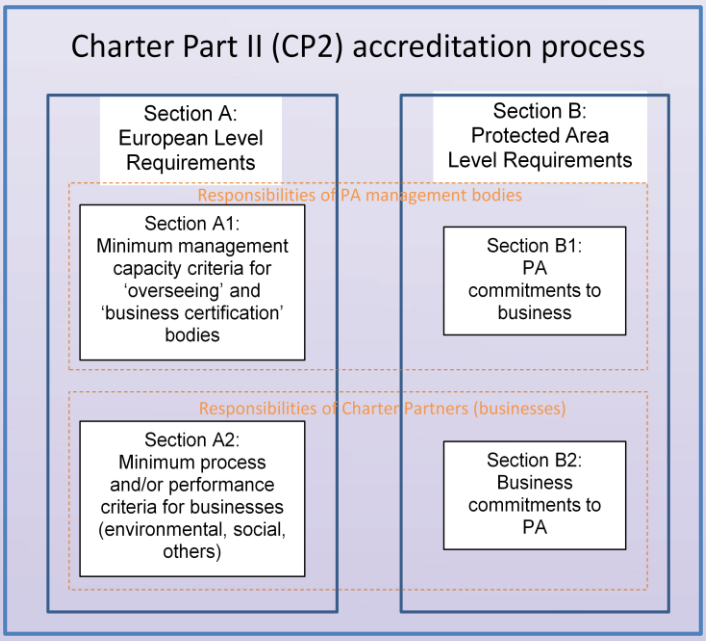

Fig.1: Layout of the sections of the CP2 Accreditation Tool and relations between sections.

[1] See point 8 of Section II. Documentation required include: list of the requirements set at protected area level; list of indicative actions, their monitoring indicators and its application methodology for both protected area and tourism business; a template of the European Charter Partnership Agreement; a European Charter Partnership Certificate template.

Section A: European level requirements

Section A.1: Assessment of management capacity criteria for overseeing bodies (OB) and business certification schemes (BCS).

Objectives:

The objective of this section is to provide assurance and evidence to EUROPARC as validation body (and to the Charter Evaluation Committee as approval body) that the proposed CP2 methodology is backed by appropriate governance and management systems that:

a) Guarantee its long term sustainability and viability;

b) Provide confidence to the parties involved (including future business partners) over the quality and institutional support of the process;

c) Ensures commonality of basic conditions and criteria across all European CP2 initiatives;

d) Protect EUROPARC and the Charter brand from incorrect use and association with certification schemes that do not follow the essential principles of sustainability and quality of the European Charter.

Key concepts and principles:

Overseeing Body (OB)

Since every CP2 methodology includes fulfilment of criteria at European and PA levels, its implementation requires the figure of an overseeing body (OB) that guarantees that such criteria are followed and respected at local level in the individual PAs. In most cases the OB is likely to be the PA itself, as the ultimate body responsible for local implementation of CP2. However, in some cases the OB can be a regional or national governance body with direct responsibilities over all PAs within a certain territory (e.g. PAs in Portugal are managed by regional bodies governing and sharing human resources across several PAs). In other cases the network that submitted the CP2 application can also act as OB (examples of such could be EUROPARC Spain, IPAMAC in France or other).

Whatever the case, every OB should be able to fulfil minimum management capacity criteria that can simultaneously ensure the successful implementation of CP2 at PA level and the delivery of the wider 'objectives' listed above.

(NB: nothing stops networks proposing CP2 methodologies from also including requirements at network level)

The main functions and responsibilities of the OB are:

- Define and support the implementation of the *European Charter Partnership Programme(s) and Agreement(s)* , setting the mutual commitments between the PA authority and individual businesses.
- Guarantee that the minimum requirements at European level set in the Charter Section II official text and this Manual are followed and respected.
- Guarantee that all sides respect and implement agreed requirements at PA level.
- If the CP2 methodology relies on a third-party business certification scheme (BCS) for environmental and/or social criteria, the OB should verify and assure EUROPARC that the BCS follows the minimum requirements presented in this manual (sections A1 and A2), throughout the full implementation period. If the CP2 methodology is based on a BCS developed by the PA or its network, the same conditions apply.
- Ensure that all parties respect the principles of the Charter and protect the name and logo from EUROPARC and the Charter from misuse.
- Communicate every semester to the relevant EUROPARC section and EUROPARC Federation the list of new Charter Partners.

Business Certification Scheme (BCS)

Every CP2 methodology must include a section detailing the minimum requirements for businesses to become Charter Partners. This include specific contextual requirements agreed at local level between the PA and the individual business (through the *European Charter Partnership Programme*) and minimum process and performance sustainability requirements (covering the

business's environmental, social and economic dimensions, in the spirit of the official Charter text). EUROPARC recognizes that since the creation of the Charter's first official text several business certification schemes (BCS) and sustainability standards were created and are in existence in several of the territories with awarded Charter PAs. When such schemes are robust, of recognized quality and rigor, and providing assurance of long-term viability, their selection and adoption by Charter PAs as a business requirement for *European Charter Partnership Programme* can provide an excellent tool to support the delivery of CP2 objectives.

However, EUROPARC also recognizes that: a) existing schemes can have various degrees of quality and viability (several schemes have appeared and disappeared since the first awarded Charter PAs in 2001); b) several European territories with Charter PAs might have no existing business certification schemes, or have only schemes of very low quality and/or low probability of long-term viability; or c) existing schemes can be too onerous, expensive or complex, making them inaccessible for typical SMEs based in Charter areas. In such cases PAs (or networks) might opt to develop their own BCS, alone or in partnership with other relevant stakeholders. There are also cases in which PAs might opt to develop their own BCS as a tool to strengthen cooperation and working partnerships with local businesses (e.g. the Club Qualita Parco in Adamello Brenta).

Currently, several BCS are already being used (or are under development) by Charter PAs, either independently, in the context of existing networks (e.g. 'Partner' scheme in Germany), or under approved CP2 methodologies (e.g. GTBS in the UK or the EUROPARC Spain CP2 methodology). For a harmonization of all CP2 approaches, there is then the need to ensure that BCS across European Charter Parks share some basic standards and commonalities, whilst ensuring a consideration for local specificities and contexts. The following sections cover minimum requirements at management and governance level that bodies implementing BCS should have to be associated with CP2 methodologies. Section A2, in particular, covers minimum requirements at business performance level that candidate BCS should address. The fulfilment of these should ensure that the objectives listed at the beginning of this section are more secure.

The tables in the next pages will be used by EUROPARC during the validation process to determine the eligibility and appropriateness of candidate CP2 approaches, and inform its recommendations to the Charter Evaluation Committee.

PLEASE FILL THIS DOCUMENT IN AS IF YOU WERE APPLYING TO HAVE YOUR CP2 SYSTEM VALIDATED (COMPLETE THE BOXES ON SOURCES OF EVIDENCE ALSO). **IF YOU DO NOT REPRESENT A CP2 SYSTEM, LOOK AT THE QUESTIONS IN TERMS OF HOW REALISTIC THE QUESTIONS ARE AND PLEASE PROVIDE FEEDBACK.**
European Requirements for Section II **of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas:** **Working with tourism businesses in** **and around a Protected Area awarded with the Charter** *(or Charter Part II - CP2 in short)* **Application for CP2 Methodology**
Proposing Body: (e.g. PA network, EUROPARC section, national PA management body, etc)
Name of proposed CP2 methodology: (e.g. EUROPARC Spain CP2 methodology)
Is this a new CP2 methodology or renewal/revision of a previously approved one?
Proposed start date for the implementation of CP2 methodology here presented:
Address and Contacts of Proposing Body:
Overseeing Body of CP2 methodology: (explain if CP2 is managed individually by PAs or alternatively by a centralized regional body, network or other)
Business Certification Scheme (BCS): (for verification of minimum environmental and/or social criteria of business partners. Explain if chosen BCS is independent third-party scheme, or is scheme developed and managed directly by the PA, PAs' network or other).

Section A1. Minimum management capacity requirements of overseeing body (OB) and business certification scheme (BCS).				
Instructions: *Scores: y=yes, m/s= mostly yes, m/n=mostly no, n=no - circle appropriate answer.* *Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps: - please be clear but succinct in your answers.* • Comments – explain existing situation (your answer to the scores above) and comment. • Sources of evidence – if you answer "yes" or "mostly yes" to any of the questions, present sources of evidence. • Next steps - remember the Charter works on the principle of continuous improvement, so please indicate your planned "next steps" to address and improve your situation for each question asked. *Worth repeating: please be clear **but succinct** in your answers.*				
I. **OB management criteria (relevant for overall management of CP2 methodology and where BCS is directly managed by the PA/OB).**				
Planning				
1. Is there a long-term CP2 management plan for the PA network (6+ years)? *(NB: if proposal is being submitted by single PA, answer at PA level)*	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				
2. Have clear objectives been defined for the overall CP2 methodology? *(e.g. with defined outputs, outcomes, etc)*	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				
3. Is the CP2 methodology and objectives consistent with PAs' objectives and do they contribute for their achievement?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				
4. Were environmental and conservation impacts included in the planning process?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				
5. Were socio-economic impacts included in the planning process?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				
6. Were local specificities (e.g. local culture, traditional practices, social systems, etc) included in the planning process?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				

Participation	
7. Has the definition of the CP2 methodology been done with consultation to key stakeholders?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
8. List who are the stakeholders that have participated (or had representation) in the definition of the CP2 methodology.	
9. Does the CP2 process allow adequate opportunity for key stakeholders to influence its future development?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
10. Are there mechanisms for effective communication between all levels of stakeholders (PAs, businesses, BCS, forum, etc), throughout the implementation of CP2?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
Processes	
11. Is there an established schedule and process for periodic review and updating of the CP2 methodology and management plan?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
1. Is the CP2 management system put in place resilient to governance changes at PA/OB level? (e.g. able to maintain independence and businesses' confidence in the process albeit eventual changes at PA authority level)	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
2. Is the use of the Charter brand (logo, communications, etc) by all parties accurately monitored and recorded?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
3. Are there systems in place to deal with breaches of confidence from any of the parties or failure to comply with European and PA level requirements? (e.g. control of compliance, loss of certification, etc)	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
4. Does the OB staff have regular access to recent research and advice on sustainable tourism and certification?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
5. Do Charter Partners have regular access to research and advice on conservation (at least relevant to their PA)?	y m/y m/n n

Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				
Personnel				
6. Does OB has adequate staff numbers to manage the implementation of CP2 process and support businesses?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				
7. Are the positions of staff supporting CP2 secured throughout all the implementation period?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				
8. Is the OB staff supporting the CP2 methodology adequately trained to fulfil its objectives?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				
Budget/financial sustainability				
9. Is there a dedicated budget to manage the CP2 process?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				
10. If so, is the budget sufficient and secure on a multi-year basis?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				
11. On what sources is the budget dependent (e.g. government, fees, NGO, etc) and on what proportions?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				
Communication and awareness raising				
12. Are there are adequate processes to ensure communication between businesses and the OB?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				
13. Does the CP2 methodology include an awareness program at PA level to raise its profile with partners and visitors?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				
14. Does the CP2 programme provides marketing advantages and advice on how businesses can use their sustainability credentials for marketing purposes?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				

15. Is the general PA/OB staff knowledgeable and aware of CP2's objectives and methodology?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
16. Is the general PA/OB staff supportive of CP2's objectives and methodology?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
17. Is there a process in place to ensure communication with other (or amongst) national PA managers for exchange of good practices?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
18. Is there a process in place for the OB to exchange experiences with OBs of other CP2 systems?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	

II.	**BCS management criteria (concerning specifically the business-focused certification system, rather than the overall CP2 methodology)**	
Fill the following questions only if chosen BCS is managed by an independent third-party organization and not by the PA/OB itself.		
1.	Was there an assessment done of existing BCSchemes available for the territory?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:		
2.	Does the BCS have legal status?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:		
3.	Is the chosen BCS of local, regional, national or international remit?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:		
4.	Is the chosen BCS popular or recognized in the region/country?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence (please explain the reason of your choice):		
5.	Has the BCS set a process for control of compliance, breach of contract, suspension, withdrawal and/or loss of certification in case the business fails to comply with its requirements?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:		
6.	Does the BCS have a policy to prevent unauthorized use of its logo and to maintain public confidence in the certification programme and establish appropriate corrective actions?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:		
7.	Is the BCS personnel competent for technical, policy and implementation functions?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:		
8.	Does the BCS have a source of funding that can create conflict of interests with the PA authorities, objectives or overall CP2 methodology?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:		
9.	Is the long-term financial outlook of the BCS stable?	y m/y m/n n

Comments, sources of evidence:	
10. Does the BCS have a marketing or awareness program to raise its profile with businesses and visitors?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
The following questions are to be filled <u>both</u> in the cases of BCS run <u>directly by the P/OB</u> or by <u>third-party organizations</u>.	
11. Do the BCS requirements for businesses go beyond legislation?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
12. Is all documentation related to criteria, procedures and rules for certification made available to the applicant businesses?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
13. Does the BCS have systems in place to ensure impartiality of decision-making and evaluation?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
14. Does the BCS include provisions for a periodic review of its criteria to take into consideration new technological developments, new information and products?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
15. Does BCS have a policy or system in place to give notice of changes to certification requirements to companies previously certified, and verify that these make the necessary adjustments in a reasonable timeframe?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
16. Does the BCS have procedures consistent with legislation to safeguard confidentiality of information obtained?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
17. Does the BCS periodically evaluate certified businesses to confirm they conform to the standards?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:	
18. Does the BCS requires certified firms to keep records of complaints from costumers against compliance with requirements to the standard, make these available to the certification body, take corrective action and document these actions?	y m/y m/n n

Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				
19. Are BCS costs and fees maintained at minimum level to be equitable with all applicants and guarantee accessibility?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				
20. Is the BCS able to provide substantial technical assistance to applicants and awardees, particularly for small firms?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence, and next steps:				

III. **For renewing CP2 methodologies**				
Management Process				
1. Have initial CP2 objectives been addressed/ achieved?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence:				
2. Have mechanisms for stakeholder participation in CP2 decision-making and/or management improved?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence:				
3. Has funding in the past 5 years been adequate to conduct CP2 management activities?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence:				
4. Have the levels of staff in the past 5 years been adequate to conduct CP2 management activities?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence:				
5. Have there been CP2 education/awareness/marketing materials developed and are they generally available?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence:				
Outputs				
6. Is there CP2 information available on official visitor information points?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence:				
7. Are more businesses now cooperating with Charter PAs as a result of CP2?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence:				
8. Have Charter Partners' generally improved in its BCS criteria compared to when CP2 first started?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence:				
9. Have all Charter Partners renewed their Partnership certificate after the end of its 3 years validity?	y	m/y	m/n	n
Comments, sources of evidence:				
10. If not, what was the proportion of businesses which have not renewed, and have you tried to obtain information on the reasons for non-renewal?				

11. What is the proportion of CP2 certified businesses, when compared with the overall (similar) business numbers in the region (Charter area)? (please provide absolute and relative numbers)	
Outcomes	
12. Are stakeholders satisfied with the process and outputs of the CP2 system? (explain which are the stakeholders who are and/or aren't, and the reasons for such)	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
13. Has the environmental awareness of Charter Partners generally improved?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
14. Have business relationships with PAs improved as a result of CP2?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
15. Is the Charter (or its CP2 approach) more visible and recognized by businesses and public?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
16. Is there more inter-business cooperation as a result of CP2?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
17. Is the CP2 system helping to provide economic benefits to local communities in Charter PAs?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
18. Is the CP2 system helping the PAs to achieve their management objectives?	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
19. Could you list and describe what were the most critical difficulties in the implementation of CP2 in the past years since first accreditation (or since last CP2 revision). What were the lessons learned and what steps do you plan to take to address these issues?	
20. Could you list and describe what were the most successful processes and results in the implementation of CP2 in the past years. What were the lessons learned and what suggestions do you have to disseminate these learnings?	

YOUR OPINION PLEASE: Did you find the questions above helpful to reflect on the quality of the CP2 processes you are familiar with? Can you see improvements you could make by using these questions? Which questions did you not find helpful and you would delete? Which ones would you change the wording?
We are planning to develop a How-To document to show best practices on each of these questions, to help current and new CP2 systems. Would you use it? If so, would you like to suggest any best practice examples happening in your PA(s)?

Section A.2: Assessment of process and performance criteria (environmental, social and economic) for Charter Partners

Objectives:

The objective of this section is to provide a common set of standards or performance criteria for certified businesses (Charter Partners) across all validated CP2 methodologies that:

a) Ensure an harmonization of approaches at European level;

b) Provide PAs, business partners and consumers with a degree of confidence that the criteria considered by all CP2 methodologies follow minimum common standards and that these correspond to the latest common international standards for tourism sustainability initiatives;

c) And facilitates international recognition of the CP2 validated labels through the Tourism Sustainability Council, by applying wherever possible the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC, see www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org).

CP2 methodologies shall map out their existing requirements against the GSTC criteria listed below, and in subsequent rounds of redeveloping their criteria will adapt the wording of currently matched criteria to that of the GSTC, or will add new criteria from the GSTC to their current criteria, to the extent that this is feasible.

Section A2. Minimum common requirements from Charter Partners	
A. Demonstrate effective sustainable management.	
A.1. The company has implemented a long-term sustainability management system that is suitable to its reality and scale, and that considers environmental, sociocultural, quality, health, and safety issues.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
A.2. The company is in compliance with all relevant international or local legislation and regulations (including, among others, health, safety, labour, and environmental aspects).	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	

A.3. All personnel receive periodic training regarding their role in the management of environmental, sociocultural, health, and safety practices.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
A.4. Customer satisfaction is measured and corrective action taken where appropriate.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
A.5. Promotional materials are accurate and complete and do not promise more than can be delivered by the business.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
A.6. Design and construction of buildings and infrastructure:	
A.6.1. comply with local zoning and protected or heritage area requirements;	y m/y m/n n
A.6.2. respect the natural or cultural heritage surroundings in sitting, design, impact assessment, and land rights and acquisition;	y m/y m/n n
A.6.3 use locally appropriate principles of sustainable construction;	y m/y m/n n
A.6.4 provide access for persons with special needs.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
A.7. Information about and interpretation of the natural surroundings, local culture, natural and cultural heritage is provided to customers, as well as explaining appropriate behaviour while visiting natural areas, living cultures, and cultural heritage sites.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	

B. Maximize social and economic benefits to the local community and minimize negative impacts.	
B.1. The company actively supports initiatives for social and infrastructure community development including, among others, education, health, and sanitation.	y m/y m/n n

Comments, sources of evidence:	
B.2. Local residents are employed, including in management positions. Training is offered as necessary.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
B.3. Local and fair-trade services and goods are purchased by the business, where available.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
B.4. The company offers the means for local small entrepreneurs to develop and sell sustainable products that are based on the area's nature, history, and culture (including food and drink, crafts, performance arts, agricultural products, etc.).	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
B.5. A code of conduct for activities in indigenous and local communities has been developed, with the consent of and in collaboration with the community.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
B.6. The company has implemented a policy against commercial exploitation, particularly of children and adolescents, including sexual exploitation.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
B.7. The company is equitable in hiring women and local minorities, including in management positions, while restraining child labour.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
B.8. The international or national legal protection of employees is respected, and employees are paid a living wage.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
B.9. The activities of the company do not jeopardize the provision of basic services, such as water, energy, or sanitation, to neighbouring communities.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	

C. Maximize benefits to cultural heritage and minimize negative impacts.	
C.1. The company follows established guidelines or a code of behaviour for visits to culturally or historically sensitive sites, in order to minimize visitor impact and maximize enjoyment.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
C.2. Historical and archaeological artifacts are not sold, traded, or displayed, except as permitted by law.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
C.3. The business contributes to the protection of local historical, archaeological, culturally, and spiritually important properties and sites, and does not impede access to them by local residents.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
C.4 The business uses elements of local art, architecture, or cultural heritage in its operations, design, decoration, food, or shops; while respecting the intellectual property rights of local communities.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	

D. Maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts.	
D.1. Conserving resources D.1.1. Purchasing policy favours environmentally friendly products for building materials, capital goods, food, and consumables. D.1.2. The purchase of disposable and consumable goods is measured, and the business actively seeks ways to reduce their use. D.1.3. Energy consumption should be measured, sources indicated, and measures to decrease overall consumption should be adopted, while encouraging the use of renewable energy. D.1.4. Water consumption should be measured, sources indicated,	y m/y m/n n

and measures to decrease overall consumption should be adopted.	
Comments, sources of evidence:	
D.2. Reducing pollution D.2.1. Greenhouse gas emissions from all sources controlled by the business are measured, and procedures are implemented to reduce and offset them as a way to achieve climate neutrality. D.2.2. Wastewater, including grey water, is treated effectively and reused where possible. D.2.3. A solid waste management plan is implemented, with quantitative goals to minimize waste that is not reused or recycled. D.2.4. The use of harmful substances, including pesticides, paints, swimming pool disinfectants, and cleaning materials, is minimized; substituted, when available, by innocuous products; and all chemical use is properly managed. D.2.5. The business implements practices to reduce pollution from noise, light, runoff, erosion, ozone-depleting compounds, and air and soil contaminants.	y m/y m/n n
Comments, sources of evidence:	
D.3. Conserving biodiversity, ecosystems, and landscapes D.3.1. Wildlife species are only harvested from the wild, consumed, displayed, sold, or internationally traded, as part of a regulated activity that ensures that their utilization is sustainable. D.3.2. No captive wildlife is held, except for properly regulated activities, and living specimens of protected wildlife species are only kept by those authorized and suitably equipped to house and care for them. D.3.3. The business uses native species for landscaping and restoration, and takes measures to avoid the introduction of invasive alien species. D.3.4. The business contributes to the support of biodiversity conservation, including supporting natural protected areas and areas	y m/y m/n n

of high biodiversity value. D.3.5. Interactions with wildlife must not produce adverse effects on the viability of populations in the wild; and any disturbance of natural ecosystems is minimized, rehabilitated, and there is a compensatory contribution to conservation management	
Comments, sources of evidence:	

YOUR OPINION PLEASE: We assume that most criteria in your CP2 system are currently environmental and there is little emphasis on socio-economic, so some of the questions might have surprised you. The list above was created for worldwide use and some of the questions might not apply necessarily in Europe or your particular context. Nevertheless, did you find the questions above helpful to reflect on the quality of the BCS you are using in your PA? Which questions did you not find helpful/applicable and you would delete? Which ones would you change the wording? Are there any questions/criteria you would add or feel that are missing?
We are planning to develop a How-To document to show best practices on each of these questions, to help current and new CP2 systems. Would you use it? If so, would you like to suggest any best practice examples happening in your PA(s)?

Section B: PA Level Requirements

This section focus on requirements at PA level from both parties: PA and individual businesses (candidate Charter Partners). The final agreed requirements and commitments from both sides should be decided at local level, considering the individual contexts and circumstances of the partners. Hence, the actions and commitments presented in the following sections are only illustrative and serve as examples of best practices being followed by other PAs already implementing CP2.

Commitments agreed between both sides are decided during the definition of the *European Charter Partnership Programme* and recorded in the *European Charter Partnership Agreement*. A selection of commitments from both sides will be included in the *European Charter Partnership Certificate* for public display at the business's premises.

It is important that the type of commitments of PAs to their Partners are debated and agreed at Forum level (the Sustainable Tourism Forum created for Charter Part I), and that all Charter Partners are entitled to similar levels of support from their PAs and/or Forum. Likewise, it is important for Charter Partners to understand that in many cases (depending on the country and/or region's political and regulatory context) PAs are prohibited to establish or engage in preferential treatment or develop support actions to individual businesses. It is in these cases that the ST Charter Forum can play an extremely important role as an intermediary body or collaboration platform, where both sides participate equally as members. Many support actions that cannot be implemented by a PA can legitimately be implemented by the Forum, as a normal service to its members. As a Forum member, Charter PAs should then have an active role in the definition of what such support actions should be, and hoe these best contribute to the implementation of its Sustainable Tourism Strategy (approved under Charter I). Examples of Charter ST Fora that have been providing direct support to businesses include the association Turisme Garrotxa, Associazione Ecoturisme InMarittime, or Cevennes Ecotourisme.

This section will cover examples from actions provided both directly by PAs and indirectly by Charter Fora.

Section B.1: PA commitments to businesses (Charter Partners)

YOUR CONTRIBUTION HERE PLEASE: Could you give examples of what you have been doing to provide additional benefits to CP2 businesses. Can you make sure these are genuine CP2 commitments, as in some examples we have come across PAs are suggesting aspects that already form part of CP1. Also make sure that the list of what you are willing to do for the businesses is longer than what you expect from them!

Section B.2: Business commitments to PA

YOUR CONTRIBUTION HERE PLEASE: Could you give examples of what you ask businesses to do for the PA, and how you get evidence that they really do it.

The process of auditing compliance

EUROPARC is currently not applying the same level of rigour to evaluating CP1 and CP2 processes- yet there is more risk of misuse of the Charter brand once an increasing number of private businesses are making use of it. Auditing compliance needs to take place at regular cycles similar to CP1 to ensure it is still fit for purpose and is kept up to date.

The auditing process proposed here is per system, not per park- this reduces the time and cost considerably. Three possibilities for auditing the quality of CP2 systems are proposed here:

Self audit. The Overseeing Body (OB) uses the criteria in this document to evaluate periodically the quality of their CP2 work in all four areas listed: A1, A2, B1, B2. The OB uses the guidance document that has best practice examples and advice to make improvements. The cost to EUROPARC is minimal- to check the self audits and file them.

Second party audit. The Charter evaluation committee uses the criteria set out above, or a modified version, to evaluate the quality of the CP2 systems. Evaluation committee staff would take responsibility for this aspect, with or without travel to the offices of the certification body.

Third party independent audit. A pool of European experts in sustainability certification is appointed to evaluate CP2 systems, in the same way that CP1 is evaluated independently. The current pool for CP1 however arguably does not have the expertise in the management of sustainability certification programmes to undertake both tasks, so training would be needed or the use of additional expertise. More than one expert would be necessary to cover the different languages needed, but it is possible that with three experts most immediate languages would be covered. The number of international experts to audit sustainable tourism certification programmes is growing, as plans for a Tourism Stewardship Council move forward. As an example, the proposed third party process is already taking place in England, Wales and Ireland, with ICRT auditing all sustainable tourism certification programmes that seek national tourist board support, at a cost of 3,000 EUR plus travel/living expenses per certification programme. The certification programme typically absorbs this cost. There would be several alternative models available of third party audit, to fit the needs of Europarc.

Scenario 1: Self audit only (first party audit).
Scenario 2: Self audit (first party), checked by a member of the evaluation committee (second party audit).
Scenario 3: Self audit (first party), checked by an independent auditor.

YOUR COMMENTS: Suggest which scenario you would favour, what would be the advantages and disadvantages of it, and what risks do you think your choice has. Is the risk acceptable? Why and under what conditions? How could it be minimized?

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