

EUROPARC 8th Charter Network Meeting and Charter Awards 2013

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2.1.3 NATURE AND BIODIVERSITY – Development and implementation of EU policy

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Introduction

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism is a practical management tool which helps protected areas to continuously improve the sustainable development and the management of tourism taking account of the needs of the environment, the local population and the local tourism businesses. This ensures that nature conservation, biodiversity and sustainable development are compatible in the protected area and the wider region.

The Charter is not a typical quality or eco-label but a process-oriented methodology that can be used and applied by all kinds of protected areas. The Charter's focus is on initiating and assisting a process of sustainable tourism planning which will lead to sustainable development step by step. The Charter assists this process by providing a 'strategy development kit' which contains principles, a methodology and check-lists for the protected areas to work with. The implementation of the Charter methodology increases the awareness of and support for European protected areas. It has been recognised a model system by many organisations including the World Tourism Organisation, the Spanish Tourist Board, the German Federal Agency for Nature Protection (BfN) and the EU commission through DG Enterprise and Industry.

There are currently 119 signatories of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas from 13 countries. All of these are members of the EUROPARC Federation. The main core of each Charter area is a protected area, many of whom also manage N2000 sites.

During meetings each year and workshops at the annual EUROPARC conference the Charter sites are actively involved in shaping the future of the Charter programme and in the implementation of its different parts.

8th Charter Network Meeting and Charter Awards 2013



Celebrating 40 years Working for Nature at the heart of the EU institutions, 2013 brought a brighter light to the Charter for Sustainable Tourism Awards. EUROPARC organized on the 6th of November a special event dedicated to Sustainable Tourism and Biodiversity in Protected Areas. The day event included the 8th

European Charter Network Meeting which took place at the Marche Region EU Representation, and the *2013 Charter Award Ceremony* which took place at the European Parliament, kindly hosted by the MEP Gaston Franco – Rapporteur for the 7th Environmental Action Programme of the EU.

The event was mainly addressed to the network of protected areas involved in the implementation of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST), to those already certified and to those getting their award this year, but also to Charter verifiers, tourism experts, Charter partner businesses, to EU officials and NGOs interested. More than 80 participants from 12 different countries attended the event.

The main purpose of the event was to create an opportunity for networking and exchange of good practices, among protected areas managers from all over Europe, on the implementation of the EU biodiversity and of sustainable tourism strategies. With the event EUROPARC wanted to contribute to the integration of biodiversity and tourism priorities at EU level; to present recent updates on the management of the Charter across the EUROPARC network, and to further raise the voice of protected areas at the highest European political level, in order to ensure the inclusion of actions for a sustainable growth into upcoming EU Tourism policies.

The European Parliament and the Marche Region have actively supported this initiative.

The 8th Charter Network Meeting took place in the morning with *three thematic workshops* in the early afternoon. This session focused mainly on the current development of the Charter, its implementation at European and regional level, and its management among the EUROPARC network.

- Thomas Hansson, EUROPARC President, officially opened the morning, welcomed the participants and introduced the day, giving particular relevance to the work that Regions and local authorities deliver for the implementation of European policies both for sustainable development and for nature conservation.
- The Marche Regional Ministry for the environment and agriculture, Maura Malaspina, presented the recently approved regional programme for protected areas, focusing on the actions for the promotion of sustainable tourism and highlighting its contribution towards the implementation of the EU 2020 goals and the EU strategy for biodiversity.
- Federico Minozzi, EUROPARC Policy Officer, then introduced the other speakers, presented the main topics of the day and moderated the rest of the session.
- Cristina Nunez, NECSTouR Coordinator, presented the international network activities, introduced its structure and priorities, and highlighted affinities with the ECST and potential synergies between the two networks to develop joint initiatives for sustainable tourism in Europe.
- Paulo Castro, member of the EUROPARC Council and Charter Verifier, gave an overview of the current implementation of the Charter at European level, presented how the Federation intends to improve the management of the Charter for the future, and highlighted the current priorities and the most recent developments in the implementation of Charter Part I and II across the network. He also anticipated the progress made to develop Charter part III.

- Alfredo Fermanelli, head of the Natura 2000 and Protected Areas unit at Marche Region, presented the multilevel strategy for tourism development established at regional level by the Marche Region. A strategy that contributed and helped all parks of the Region to achieve the Charter.
- Amanda Guzman, from TUREBE, introduced the Spanish experience of establishing a national network of sustainable touristic destinations, built on partnerships among protected areas and local businesses, with the support of the Spanish Ministry for Tourism.
- The Charter Part III was then presented in more details by Gilles Clemente, consultant for IPAMAC, who introduced the methodology that the French Section and IPAMAC have elaborated and tested to establish fruitful cooperation at local and national level with tour operators.

During lunch participants had the opportunity to continue networking, while tasting also some special products kindly offered by the Charter parks of Marche and Portugal.

Three workshops took place in the afternoon giving the opportunity to participants to focus the discussion on specific issues related to the implementation of the Charter:

- *Workshop 1*, led by Dea Mijakovac and Petra Schultheiss, explored how to communicate the values and benefits of sustainable tourism at local and international level, an opportunity to collect feedback from the participants and to brainstorm on the Charter as a brand.
- *Workshop 2*, led by Josep Maria Prats, focused on protected areas and local businesses, and investigated challenges, benefits and methodologies to build successful partnerships.
- *Workshop 3*, led by Paulo Castro, explored the current elaboration of Charter part III, introducing the upcoming methodology to involve tour operators in the process. Good practice examples were shared and procedures to start implementing the process and test it in France agreed.

The workshop leaders reported then back to the plenary the main outcomes of their respective group discussions: a detailed **report** of the three workshops is available in the **annex**.

After a short debate, and some closing remarks, the Charter Network Meeting came to its end, and participants started to move to the European Parliament for the Award Ceremony.

Charter Award Ceremony 2013

The MEP *Gaston Franco* opened the session welcoming all speakers and participants in the European Parliament and congratulating with the parks who were going to receive their awards. He focused his speech on the crucial role played by protected areas in preserving natural habitats and species, while being among the most threatened areas by the impact of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Federico Minozzi presented a brief excursus on the EUROPARC Federation history, resuming the 40 years working for nature in three key words: Parks, People and Passion. He highlighted the positive impact the Charter is having on biodiversity with more effective protected areas – N2000 management, and introduced in more details some data and results of the

implementation of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, a network of people, businesses and tour operators that is currently involving 119 protected areas across 13 countries.

Stefan Leiner, head of the Natura Unit at the DG Environment - European Commission, highlighted the role that parks in Europe play for the implementation of European legislation, being them in charge of the protection and management of a relevant part of the Natura 2000 network, with some of the most fragile and endangered habitats and species of Europe. Mr Leiner congratulated with the awardees for the results achieved on sustainable tourism and thanked EUROPARC for the organisation of the event.

Mr Florent Favier, head of the Communication and Education unit of the Mercantour National Park, presented the experience of managing and developing sustainable tourism strategies in close partnership with the Alpi Marittime Natural Park, on a transboundary protected area context. The perspective of two local businesses integrated his presentation: Sarah Decaqueray from the association Mercantour Ecotourisme and Fabrizio Fenocchio president of the association Ecoturismo in Marittime. Both highlighted their passion and interest in running tourism businesses in protected areas, but also reminded the challenges and sometime the lack of support that they and the protected areas get at local and regional level.



Petra Schultheiss, the EUROPARC Project Development Officer, presented the award ceremony, introducing the parks that were getting the Charter for Sustainable Tourism for the first time.

Thomas Hansson, EUROPARC President, then awarded the certificates to the park representatives.

Parc national des Ecrins awarded by EUROPARC President, Thomas Hansson

The awarded protected areas:

- Montemuro, Arada and Gralheira Mountains and Arouca Geopark (PT)
- Ecrins National Park (FR)
- Perigord-Limousin Regional Park (FR)
- Millevaches Limousin Regional Park (FR)
- Val Grande National Park (IT)
- Alpe Veglia e Alpe Devero Regional Park (IT)
- Sasso Simone e Simoncello Regional Park (IT)
- Conero Regional Park (IT)

- Gola della Rossa e Frasassi Regional Park (IT)
- Monte san Bartolo Regional Park (IT)
- Appenino Lucucano Val D'Agri National Park (IT)
- Zemaitija National Park (LT)
- Pallas-Yllästunturi National Park (FI)

Ilona Lelonek, Policy Officer at Tourism Unit of DG Enterprise and Industry – European Commission, presented the main EU initiatives and policies to enhance sustainable tourism across the EU. Miss Lelonek highlighted that, within the frame of the EU 2020 strategy for a sustainable, inclusive and smart growth, the EC is promoting several initiatives for tourism. Among them: the European Destinations of Excellence – EDEN; the Sustainable Touristic Transnational Thematic Tourism Products; the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) and the European Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism.

Dea Mijakovac, the EUROPARC Communication Officer, introduced then the protected areas that were getting their reevaluation certificates:

- Cabo de Gata-Nijar Natural Park (ES – Junta de Andalucia)
- Estrecho Natural Park (ES – Junta de Andalucia)
- Exmoor National Park (UK)
- Monti Sibillini National Park (IT)
- Sierra Subbeticas Natural Park (ES – Junta de Andalucia)
- Yorkshire Dales National Park/Nidderdale (UK)

To celebrate the EUROPARC 40 years working for nature, 6 special awards have also been given to individuals, associations, networks and organisations who have significantly contributed to the success of the Charter in Europe:

- *Jose Maria Pratz*, for dedication in the promotion, implementation and development of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, over 15 years, on behalf of the Parque Natural de la Zona Volcanica de la Garrotxa and as a member of the European Charter Evaluation Committee.
- *Cevennes Ecotourisme*, for the successful and proactive engagement of local tourism businesses within the Cevennes National Park.
- *Federparchi – EUROPARC Italia*, for their proactive work to support protected areas in Italy in the implementation of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism.
- *Junta de Andalucia*, for their visionary and successful work in the implementation of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism across the protected areas of their region.
- *IPAMAC*, for the successful work in promoting and sharing the values of sustainable tourism within a network of 10 protected areas across six regions in France, and for their great contribution towards the development of the Charter part III.
- *Mourne Heritage Trust*, for encouraging community participation in the promotion of conservation and sustainable development, through the Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

Thomas Hansson made some closing remarks and highlighted how the Charter, building partnerships between local communities, businesses, tour operators and protected areas, is contributing to achieve, at local level, European priorities, both for nature conservation and for

sustainable tourism, in line with the spirit and objectives of the EU 2020 Strategy and with the 7th Environmental Action Programme of the EU. Mr. Hansson thanked Mr Franco for his hospitality, the speakers and all the participants. A nice networking cocktail closed the event.

After the award ceremony most of the participants joined also for dinner in a traditional Brussels brasserie.

Brief evaluation

The event has been very successful considering the high number of participants and countries represented, the active involvement in the debate and workshops, the high profile of the panelists and the very positive feedbacks collected during and after the meeting.

The fact that the event took place in Brussels, and the award ceremony was held at the European Parliament, clearly contributed to raise the profile of the event, and to attract not just protected areas managers and sustainable tourism experts, but also representatives of local communities and associations, local businesses and other partner organisations.

A relevant support to the success of the event was also given by the active involvement and participation of the *Marche Region* together with its regional network of protected areas.

The event got a good visibility on media before and after. EUROPARC made use of various communication channels, such as Social media Accounts (Facebook and Twitter), 4 special apparitions and articles in the eNews editions from September, October, November to December.

Media coverage:

Facts and Figures	
EP website reach throughout 2013	40,970
Social media reach (Interactions)	2970
Press releases	2¹
Coverage from other sources (media partners)	15

Results and Impact:

Among other results, the 8th Charter Network Meeting:

- contributed to further strengthen the network of protected areas, people, businesses and communities actively involved in the implementation of the Charter at local level;
- gave further visibility to the work that protected areas are delivering for nature conservation and sustainable development at the highest European political level, linking EU policy with practice;

¹ <http://www.gaston-franco.eu/Le-tourisme-durable-est-un-moyen.html>
<http://europarc.org/uploaded/documents/1590.pdf>

- contributed to raise the attention of PAs managers on EU priorities for biodiversity, and to identify tools and means to improve PAs and N2000 site management;
- provided the opportunity to discuss recent updates on the management of the Charter: mainly looking at the upcoming new procedures for application, to present a wider process of simplification and revision of documents, and to introduce the new proposed procedures for the implementation of Charter part III;
- has been a chance to create new connections with other networks and organisations working on sustainable tourism in Europe, such as NECSTouR and TUREBE.

Annexe and further information:

- ***Charter Network Meeting programme***
- ***List of participants***
- ***Presentations are available on [EUROPARC Library](#)***
- ***Pictures are available on [Flickr](#)***

Annexes

Programme:

- 9,00 Registrations at **Marche Region representation**.
- 9,30 Welcome and introductions;
Maura Malaspina, Minister for the Environment and Agriculture, Marche Region.
- 9,40 40 Years Working for Nature: tourism and protected areas; Carol
Ritchie, EUROPARC Director.
- 9,50 Sustainable tourism destinations: challenges and responses of European Regions;
Cristina Núñez, NECSTouR Network Coordinator.
- 10,10 Leading the Charter into the future: innovation and strategies;
Paulo Castro, EUROPARC Council.
- 10,30 The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas – A multilevel strategy for
tourism development at regional level: the case of Marche Region;
Alfredo Fermanelli, Head of protected areas and N2000 Unit, Marche Region.
- 10,50 Coffee break
- 11,15 Local businesses and protected areas: successful partnerships;
Amanda Guzman, TUREBE – Agroupacion Empresarial Ecoturismo Responsable en la
Biosfera.
- 11,40 Protected areas and tour operators: a tempting challenge for the future; Gilles
Clemente – IPAMAC.
- 12,00 Lunch break
- 13,00 Thematic Working Groups.
- 15,00 Plenary: feedbacks from the groups and conclusions.
- 17,30 Charter for Sustainable Tourism Award Ceremony 2013 – **European Parliament**:
Welcoming words and introduction;
Gaston Franco, Member of the European Parliament – Rapporteur for the 7th EU Action
Programme for the Environment.
- 17,40 The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas;
Carol Ritchie, EUROPARC Director.
- 17,50 Tourism and biodiversity: benefits for nature, benefits for people;
Stefan Leiner, European Commission, Head of the Nature Unit – Directorate General for the
Environment.
- 18,00 Sustainable tourism for people and landscapes in the parks of Mercantour and Alpi
Marittime; Florent Favier, Mercantour National Park - Head of Education and
Communication Department.
- 18,10 Awards to new Charter Parks.
- 18,40 EU policies and initiatives for sustainable tourism destinations;

Ilona Lelonek, European Commission, Policy Officer, Tourism Policy Development Unit – Directorate General Enterprise and Industry.

18,50 Awards to Charter Parks re-evaluated.

19,10 EUROPARC 40 years Special Tourism Awards.

19,20 Conclusions by Thomas Hansson, EUROPARC President.

EUROPARC and MEP Gaston Franco would be delighted to welcome you for a reception at the end of the Award Ceremony.

Marche Region - Brussels Representation

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European Parliament

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