



**EUROPARC**  
F E D E R A T I O N

# European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas: Renewal and Retraining

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International Academy for Nature Conservation  
Isle of Vilm, Germany  
April 1st- April 4th

This report fulfils the objective(s):

***Area 3 Sustainable development in protected areas contributes to a resource-efficient, green and competitive low-carbon economy***

**3a) Involve protected areas and businesses associated in implementing EU policy to deliver a resource efficient Europe**

of the NGO operating grant 2014 under the Financial Instrument for the Environment (Life+) (operating grant agreement N°2014/680767/SUF/E4-EUROPARC) awarded to the **EUROPARC Federation**



*Funded by the European Union.*

*The production of this publication has been supported financially in the framework of the European Commission's (Directorates General Environment and Climate Action)*

*LIFE + funding programme of operating grants for European Environmental NGOs.*

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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 Charters 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 131 signatories of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas from 16 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.

## **European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas:**

### **Renewal and Retraining**

From the 31st of March until the 04th of April, Sustainable Tourism was on the European Agenda at the International Academy for Nature Conservation on the Isle of Vilm, Germany. EUROPARC together with the BfN (the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation) was involved in a 3-day seminar bringing together tourism experts and Protected Areas managers to discuss improving the management of Protected Areas in Europe and preparing the ECST methodology for internationalization.

Among many other actions; forms and principles were reviewed and adapted to the needs of the Charter Network. The workshop was split into two sections. One for EUROPARC and the working group to prepare and produce materials and to examine relationships with other international evaluation systems and days set aside for verifiers training.

The first day after an introductory session kindly held by a representative of the BfN, the group proceeded with the organization of the work for the next days. Three working groups were established divided per area of interest and expertise in order to achieve the best results in the shortest time. The groups were divided as follows:

- WG/A: working on Section A Overview, evaluation, monitoring, magic numbers indicators.

Participants: Carol Ritchie, Matti Tapannien, Gilles Clemente, Stefania Petrosillo

- WG/B: working on the Section B of the application and re-evaluation form for the principles 1 and 2.  
Participants: Paulo Castro, Lasse Lovén, Brigida Napolitano, Josep Maria Pratz

- WG/C: working on the section C of the forms starting from principle 3. Revising the principles/key topics of the “Building blocks”. Participants: Richard Denman, Julie Steiner, Javier Gomez Limon, Giacomo Benelli, Bettina Kreisel, Amanda Guzman, Marja van Loef

The day continued with the consultation of the documents submitted from Paulo Castro and Carol Ritchie, the so called Building Blocks. Based on the BfN report of the 31.12.2012 on the Charter development, the document focused on the concept, components and principles of the new charter strategy. Together with the contribution of all the participants, it was possible to define, in the end of the three days training, a mutual draft of what we think the Charter for Sustainable Tourism should represent and which direction it should follow.

The second day the discussion continued on the suggestions of the day before and together we reviewed the results achieved. In the afternoon the discussion moved on the Charter process, tasks and procedure with particular attention at:

- relationship between Directorate and Consulting: It is still an ongoing process that must be defined.
- training of verifiers
- information given to the verifiers: The verifiers express their need of having more detailed information concerning contents and source of it. A better system of communication between verifiers, directorate, members and consulting should be adopted in order to allow the exchange of information to go smoothly.
- Information cycle: What, when, to whom?

The last day the participants were involved into a workshop held from Carol Ritchie about communication and how to communicate the Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas analysing its communication strength and gaps:

- How we communicate the Charter?
- What we want to communicate?
- To whom we want to communicate?
- What channels we want to use?
- Who is the audience of the Charter?

At the same time some side meeting took place about the development of Charter Part III in France: explanation of the structure of the model which involves and certificate actively a large amount of tour operators into the Charter process in France. Gilles Clemente and Julie Steiner presented their work on the development of the Charter Part III and their involvement in developing this interesting part of the Charter Project.

Following the Communication Workshop of the morning, the afternoon was dedicated to a session about Internationalization of the Charter held from Paulo Castro. The comparison with other STD schemes was taken into consideration and the need to set up a common platform to communicate the network with an awarding scheme (ECST+Geopark+Ecoromania etc.). It was expressed the need of going out of Europe franchising or exporting membership but this is still an ongoing decision to be taken from the Council).

During the day, some space was given also to the interesting work that the STWG is doing to support the development of the Charter Project. The representative of the STWG, Lasse Lovèn presented the work and work plan of the STWG in terms of strategy, funding, internationalization, Charter method and action plan.

#### **Background information:**

- BfN report 31.12.2012 on the Charter development
- Building Blocks drafted from Paulo and Carol

- Charter forms Application and re-evaluation
- Verifiers report form

### **Work on Charter Part I official text**

- Drafting new Charter Vision and Mission (wording will come later)
  - i) Vision: “Tourism in European Protected Areas will provide a meaningful quality experience, safeguards natural and cultural values, supports local livelihoods and economically viable”
  - ii) Mission: “The Charter provides an effective model to deliver sustainable tourism in European Protected Areas, increases awareness of natural and cultural heritage and sustainability, improves management of tourism and supports local partnerships and international cooperation”
- Drafting new Charter Principles on which the new set of key topics will be based and developed:
  - i) Protection
  - ii) Participation and Partnership
  - iii) Progress: “Charter parks and partners will commit to continuous improvement and development to deliver quality Sustainable Tourism contribute to the economic visibility of businesses and stakeholders”
  - iv) Planning
- Ongoing work on the further definition of the mentioned principles
- Drafting of the Charter components:
  - i) Forum
  - ii) Strategy and Action Plan

### **Work on Charter Part I official application and re-evaluation templates**

- Suggestions given about changes to occur in the “general section”: give a little explanation to each question, split each question per topic
- The questions of the Section A have been reduced from 14 to 10
- Need to include information about magic numbers, Natura 2000 and monitoring
- The Section B has been simplified trying to identify the kind of indicators useful for the verifiers and in line with the key topics for the application.
- Mutual understanding on the need to analyse the Charter process and develop transparent minimum standards for the key criteria while developing the templates
- Proposal for introducing an annual evaluation of the action plan
- Drafting of the “Key topics” for the Part I of the Charter, they have been reduced from 12 to 10 according to the suggestion made into the BfN report of 2012. Their definition needs to be finalized.
- Need to strengthen the wording to do with more input coming from concrete cases, focus on the economic benefits for the local communities, include new questions about dissemination

### **Work on Charter guidelines**

- The participants express their need to create new guidelines for the applicants including clear explanation of the roles, information about what, when and who, information about how the visit of the verifiers will be structured.

- Mutual understanding about the actual structure of the information cycle shared between Directorate, Parks, Consulting and Verifiers
- Suggestions about creating a shared platform to capture all the information coming from the different actors
- Need to confirm that what is on the checklist of the documents to be sent for the application is really necessary or needs to be integrated
- Mutual understanding about the need of involving more clearly the verifiers into the post visit process: establish verifications criteria, feedback from evaluation committee about their work, feedback from the parks about verification.

#### **Work on communicating the Charter**

- Mutual understanding about the need of:
  - i) A better networking system
  - ii) activation of the weak areas of communication by different levels in EUROPARC organisation
  - iii) communicate the Charter Part I and II is crucial
  - iv) organise trainings held from Sustainable Tourism experts
  - v) externalize our way of communicating
  - vi) common messages, platforms and campaign
- Communicate the Charter is necessary to:
  - i) Increase the Charter network
  - ii) Make it work effectively
  - iii) Strengthen the Charter identity
  - iv) Create awareness within actors and beneficiary of the Charter
  - v) Commitment to sustainable tourism
- To make the communication work effectively need to fill the gaps into:
  - i) Admin and policy makers
  - ii) Medias
  - iii) Visitors
  - iv) Other NGO`s
- The planning on Charter communication continues in the Directorate

#### **Brief evaluation**

Work on the Charter programme is ongoing and adjustments are in place. This occasion served as a big step forward, combining the efforts of all of the actors of the Charter programme in drafting a common principles and actions to create a new and more modern strategy of the entire programme.

#### ***Annexes and further information:***

- *Programme*
- *List of participants*

## **Annex I**

### **Programme:**

#### ***European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas:***

#### ***Renewal and Retraining***

*International Academy for Nature Conservation*

*Isle of Vilm, Germany*

*April 1st- April 4<sup>th</sup>*

*Following the BfN funded project, European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in protected areas (Charter): The value of the "Charter" in identifying sustainable tourism destinations, a series of recommendations arising from that report need to be taken forward, in particular the re-evaluation system of the Charter. This training workshop on the Island of Vilm will bring together EUROPARC, the Sustainable Tourism working group (STWG) and verifiers to agree amendments to the necessary documents and to elaborate training for verifiers to utilise the new system.*

*As such, the workshop will be split into two sections. One for EUROPARC and the working group to prepare and produce materials and to examine relationships with other international valuation systems and days set aside for verifiers training.*

*The aim of the workshop is to ensure that the new principles and process of the charter as defined in the previous BfN Charter project are adequately explained and elaborated with verifiers. This will be a more interactive workshop with inputs from all active players in the charter, including EUROPARC, STWG, charter parks, verifiers and possibly business representative (charter 2). We expect at the end of the workshop to have drafts of all new documentation ready for design and preparation by EUROPARC. Guidelines for parks, business and verifiers will also be produced which will be distributed through the Charter network. A comparison of charter with other international systems will also be discussed during the workshop*

#### ***Timeframe***

*There will be three full workshop days. One for final amendments of documents for the STWG and EUROPARC with 2 days for verifier training on the new system and processes for the charter process and in particular for re-evaluation.*

*Training will be provided by EUROPARC staff. An excursion will not be required. Time will be allocated within the timetable for people to relax, explore, and learn about the island.*



## Objectives

- *discussion of new principles and building blocks of the charter*
- *review of processes and paperwork for evaluation and re-evaluation*

*Other procedures that need to be realigned and considered include*

- *procedures for "breaks" in Charter plans for re-evaluations*
- *fees and verifications costs*
- *minimum standards for revaluations*
- *annual self-evaluations of the actions plans and possible reporting systems*

## Outcomes

- *Understanding of updated principles and procedures for the charter 1*
- *Revision of all associated Charter documents*
- *Agreements of internal procedures associated with re-evaluations*
- *Understanding of charter 2 and 3 processes*
- *Appreciation of the Charter in a broader internal context and agreement on a way forward into the new EUROPARC strategy*

## Timetable

	<b>MORNING</b>	<b>LUNCH</b>	<b>AFTERNOON</b>	<b>DINNER</b>	<b>EVENING</b>
<b>Monday 31st</b>			<i>Arrival of Carol, Paulo, Matti and Richard</i>		<i>Preparation of workshop. early arrival of 1/2 participants</i>
<b>Tuesday 1st</b>	<i>Arrival of participants  preparations</i>		<i>Arrival of participants</i>		<i>Introductions and opening of workshop (this may be at 3-4pm depending in arrival of participants)</i>
<b>Wednesday 2nd</b>	<i>Introductions of principles of Charter  The role of all Charter actors, including the verifier.  Review of the paperwork</i>		<i>Charter evaluation and re-evaluation forms. Verifier forms and reports. Small group work  Group discussion. Charter priorities and delivery systems.</i>		<i>Charter 2 and Charter part 3 update</i>

<b>Thursday 3rd</b>	Charter Communications, where do we go from here?  Branding and communications strategy.		Internationalisation of the charter. Updates and forward plans.  Charter plan and priorities into the new strategy.		Review of materials.  What is needed and when...
<b>Friday 4th</b>	Departures				

### **Preparatory work**

- Sections procedures for charter 2/3 in terms of the sections role. Please discuss in advance and come with a proposal.
- Verifiers please identify concerns and issues in the application forms and verifiers report that need changed
- Evaluation committee, please identify what changes or improvements you would wish for the verifiers reports

Further documentation and papers will be sent just before your departure.

### **International aspects FYI**

#### **Recommendations to EUROPARC Council**

- a) The membership of ECOLNET Network is not valid for EUROPARC Federation. The network membership is more useful for Charter managers in Directorate, Sections and parks, Charter verifiers and private park tourism development experts. The continuity of ECOLNET network and a home page support is not clear enough.
- b) The membership in ECOTRANS Network with the DestiNet platform internet services is valid for EUROPARC Federation. The membership fee is 250 € per year. It can create positive visibility for the Charter methodology and Charter Parks.
- c) The Council may consider mandating the Directorate to organise a comparative analyses of the EETLS and ETIS standards, Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria and standards of European Charter for sustainable tourism on protected areas on criteria, indicators and methods on monitoring the system performance.
- d) The Council may consider to initiate a negotiation process about Memorandum of Understanding between different legal bodies, who are active in the sustainable tourism management for protected are destinations, like EUROPARC Federation, PanParks Foundation ([www.panparks.org/](http://www.panparks.org/)), European Geoparks Network ([www.europeangeoparks.org](http://www.europeangeoparks.org)) and the European Biosphere Reserve Network ([www.unesco.org/mabdb/bios1-23.htm](http://www.unesco.org/mabdb/bios1-23.htm)).



## Annexe II

Name/ Surname of the Participant	Protected Area/Organisation	Country	e-mail address
Lasse Lovén	STWG/European Ecotourism Network	Finland	lasse.loven@gmail.com
Giacomo Benelli	Free lance consultant/Charter Verifier	Italy	benelli.g@gmail.com
Stefania Petrosillo	Federparchi EUROPARC Italia	Italy	coopint.federparchi@parks.it
Josep-Maria Prats	STWG/Charter Verifier	Spain	josepmprats@yahoo.es
Paulo Castro	EUROPARC Council/Charter Verifier	Portugal	pvcastro.natura@gmail.com
Gilles Clemente	Free lance consultant	France	gilles-clemente@wanadoo.fr
Julia Steiner		France	julia.steiner@parcs-massif-central.com
Matti Tappaninen		Finland	'matti.tapaninen@metsa.fi'
Bettina Kreisel	Free lance consultant Aixplan/Charter verifier	Germany	bettina.kreisel@aixplan.de
Amanda Guzman	Ecotono/charter Verifier	Spain	<a href="mailto:aguzman@ecotono.es">aguzman@ecotono.es</a>
Maria Van Loef	Free lance consultant/Charter verifier	UK	<a href="mailto:marjavanloef@yahoo.co.uk">marjavanloef@yahoo.co.uk</a>
Richard Denman		UK	rdenman@thetourismcompany.com
Javier Gomez Limon	EUROPARC Spain	Spain	javier.gomezlimon@redeuroparc.org

Carol Ritchie	EUROPARC Federation /Director	UK	c.ritchie@europarc.org
Brigida Napolitano	EUROPARC Federation	Italy	b.napolitano@europarc.org