

The EU ENPI CBC MED – “MEET” PROJECT

(MEDITERRANEAN EXPERIENCE OF ECO TOURISM)

The experience of Monte Rufeno Nature Reserve Lazio region (Italy)

***Europarc Charters Award Ceremony
Brussels – 7 December 2015***

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What is MEET? / 1

- ▶ It's an “**ENPI CBC Med**” cooperation project supported by the EU with a budget of about **5,000,000 euros** (including 10% of individual co-funding)
- ▶ **9 project partners** distributed in 5 Mediterranean countries:
 - **2 in Italy:** Federparchi, leading partner, and the **Lazio Region**
 - **2 in France:** Parcs Nationaux de France and MedPan
 - **2 in Spain:** **Catalonia Region** and IUCN- Med (Malaga)
 - **1 in Lebanon:** Al Shouf Cedar Society
 - **2 in Jordan:** Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature and IUCN ROWA (Regional Office for West Asia)
- ▶ Activities and benefits distributed in **8 Med countries:** Italy, France, Spain, Greece, Tunisia, Malta, Lebanon, Jordan

What is MEET? / 2

- ▶ First goal is to create an innovative Mediterranean model of eco-tourism development based on Protected Areas, able to support a better seasonal distribution of flows and the creation of a network among the PAs involved
- ▶ Collateral but not less important goal is to provide additional funding for PAs environmental and biodiversity conservation activities
- ▶ Main expected result is the design, test and world wide promotion of a catalogue of eco-tourist packages based in at least 2 protected areas of each of the 8 Mediterranean countries involved

Each MEET project partner, under his responsibility, has selected a set of 1 to 4 protected areas in each of which an eco tourist package has been designed and tested through a “pilot action” totally funded by the project with an amount ranging from 30,000 to 40,000 €

Each eco tourist package:

- ▶ has been **built through participation** and the involvement of local actors (*Forum*) following the ECST approach
- ▶ is consistent with **sustainability criteria**, standards and recommendations suggested by the project
- ▶ is specifically designed for **low season** and small groups (4 to 16 participants)
- ▶ includes a procedure for the **financial support to PA conservation programs** and/or activities
- ▶ has been tested at least 3 times by skilled experts and international outbound TOs and **assessed with a “customer satisfaction” approach**

Monte Rufeno Nature Reserve

- **3,000 hectares extremely rich in biodiversity** (18% of Italy's species of plants, **7 Natura 2000 sites**), mostly covered with woods, **at the very northern edge of the Lazio region**, close to the border with Tuscany and Umbria
- **A diversified territory**, away from mass tourism routes, rich of history, arts, traditions and local genuine food where the volcanic plateaus of the Tuscia fade into the clayish hilly landscape of the Siena province
- PA awarded with **ECST in 2012 (n. 100 in Europe**, the first and, at the moment, **the only one in Lazio)**. Flexible Strategy and Action Plan including **22 actors** involved (5 public bodies and 17 private stakeholders) and **50 actions** operating at the moment.

Monte Rufeno NR and the MEET

- **Opportunity obtained thanks to the ECST “label”** and the participation of Lazio Region as a MEET project partner
- In May 2014 **Monte Rufeno NR hosted for 3 days a first capacity building event** of the project dedicated to PAs selected for pilot actions (**35 participants** representing **18 PAs**)
- Ecotourist package built through participatory methodologies: **4 different meetings**, facilitation activities, **8 ECST stakeholders involved**



The participatory planning process

Major challenges:

- Working together with a **collaborative attitude** in an area traditionally full of “solo artists”
- The effort for the construction of a **shared vision**
- The **management of conflicts** among the various stakeholders (going “beyond” ECST)

Major achievements:

- Full commitment of the **local inbound TO** (ECST actor)
- The “seeding” among the local network of an **embryonic sense of belonging** to Nature Reserve, ecotourism and the MEET values
- The **development of a USP**

Monte Rufeno NR MEET eco-tourist package

- **“Central Italy’s undiscovered beauty”** package, 5 days/ 4 night, has been **tested by 20 experts** with remarkable results in terms of appreciation. On a scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (totally), **95% average of 4 and 5 notes**
- Collateral benefit: in the last days, within the project, a **Lebanese group of 13 service providers** decided to organize a **6 days study tour** in Monte Rufeno (our “model” seems to be interesting)
- **When the package will be operating**, managed by a local inbound TO and sold through international TOs, **4% of its income will be dedicated to PA’s conservation activities** (package cost = 1,000 €, considering an expected average yearly flow of 120 customers this could mean almost **5,000 € for PA conservation programs!!**)





The future of MEET

Project ends **December 2015**... The need to go **beyond the EU funded activities**

2 MAIN FIELDS OF DEVELOPMENT..

- **MEET NETWORK** – Establishment of a **DMO** (PA managers / agencies, inbound TOs, experts and partners).

Main tasks: **network communication and training, partner engagement, funding, website improvement, brand development, brand values**

- **MEET CATALOGUE** – The DMO operating branch will be a **DMC** whose activities will involve outbound TOs, bloggers and buyers (US, AUS, Canada, UK markets mainly).

Main tasks: **package commercialization, trade focused website, social media strategy, content development**



Many thanks for your kind attention

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