

Workshop 8 Good for Business, Good for Biodiversity

13 participants from 11 countries

1. Main successes and Challenges raised by the participants during the workshop

Successes

- The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected areas is a good tool to enhance sustainable tourism and it has a higher influence in business performance through the Charter Parts II and III.
- There are already 157 charter parks in 19 countries working with the local stakeholders towards sustainable tourism and 7 new ones to be awarded in 2017. (Charter Part I)
- There are more than 600 hundred businesses in 3 countries awarded with the Charter and therefore, implementing actions to contribute to conservation and local development. (Charter Part II)
- There are already 17 travel agencies awarded with the Charter in two countries. (Charter Part III).
- A survey developed by EUROPARC-Spain about the impact of the Charter Part II shows that:
 - o Businesses think that the Charter helped them to enhance closer relations with the Protected Area and other committed businesses.
 - o The Charter Partner Businesses have implemented a huge amount of environmental management actions with relevant impact in energy saving, water saving, conservation, etc. When measured, the impact can be shown.
- The efforts to become sustainable tourism businesses can increase considerably the initial costs of tourism businesses but finally these efforts generate high costs saving and higher quality of their services.

Challenges:

- The main challenge for committed businesses – and destinations - is to reach the responsible markets that are supposed to be there and growing. To turn the efforts in added value and more profitable businesses.
- The main challenge for Charter Parks is to have enough available human and economic resources to support these businesses and their networks (meetings, training activities, information materials, promotional activities, etc.).
- The biggest challenge to achieve a real political commitment with sustainability at all levels (national, regional, local...) that permits the institutions to provide proper support to sustainable destinations and sustainable tourism businesses.
- It is essential also to educate and raise awareness of local community, tourists and society in general.

2. What new voices, new visions are needed to be brought in and heard on this topic?

The Charter already takes into account all local stakeholders to develop a participatory sustainable tourism strategy and action plan. However, the most difficult issue when implemented is to achieve a real involvement of **local community** in tourism planning and tourism activities. The involvement of local community is essential to ensure that tourism does contribute to improve their quality of life and to provide unique experiences linked to local activities and traditions.

3. How can EUROPARC enable this “new voices” to be included?

EUROPARC can identify best practices involving local communities: methodologies, results, benefits. Make special efforts to engage new protected areas by explaining them the Charter and its benefits.