

EUROPARC Federation

Report to Council; 9th May 2013

Title: European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.
Strategic Management

Summary: Following the decision of the Council to accept the recommendation of the ad hoc working group that the Directorate manage the Charter process and sub-contract the verification process to EUROPARC Consulting, the Council asked for a further report on the management of the charter. The Treasurer and Director have prepared this draft strategic management plan to advise Council on the future management of the Charter. Further development of this plan needs to happen during 2013 with the direct involvement of parties involved in the management of the charter

Recommendations:

- **To note the report**
- **To mandate Directorate to present an Action Plan 2014 to the Council**

Context

The EUROPARC Council in January 2013 agreed that:

Directorate should be responsible for the totality of the Charter, with appropriate elements of delivery sub-contracted to Consulting for an appropriate fee including Consulting's management cost.

To require the Directorate to develop and present a charter management structure that can be in function from 2014

Directorate report in May on development

The agreement was done subject to a charter management plan produced for the next council meeting in May. To be produced in consultation with the EP President and Treasurer.

This decision was taken following the submission of a comprehensive report by the ad hoc working group of Lasse Loven and Norbert Hoekemes, whose report recommended

"We propose that Council decides to develop the Charter management on the bases of Option C. Option C being that Charter management is divided between the Directorate and Consulting".

Taking into consideration, but not exclusively, the initial factors identified by the ad hoc working group, and with an understanding of the objections raised by EUROPARC Consulting, the Treasurer and Director have prepared the following Strategic Management report. It is intended to discuss this strategy further on aspect of details with concerned parties following, in order to produce an annual action plan, which would be reported to the Council annually thereafter.

European Charter for Sustainable Tourism

Strategic Management Plan

A - Foreword

B - Strategic Goals for the next three years

- 1) Enlarge the Charter Network with more members and new countries
- 2) Guarantee the Charter Network with higher % of re-evaluations and on time
- 3) Consolidate the Charter Network at Charter Partners level with more Charter Partners and new Charter Parks with Chart Part II
- 4) Implement the Charter Network at Charter Part III level
- 5) Prepare ECST methodology for Internationalisation
- 6) Integrate procedures with TransBoundary Parc award
- 7) Improve quality of procedures and actors

C – ECST Management Structure

- 8) The Directorate Federation role
- 9) The Sections role
- 10) The EUROPARC Consulting role
- 11) The Evaluation Committee role
- 12) The Council role
- 13) The Sustainable Tourism Working Group role

D – Management of Resources available for the Charter

- 14) Human Resources
- 15) Financial Resources
- 16) In kind contributions

E – Risk Management analysis

A - Foreword

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (ECST) has come a long way. It started with the vision from the first working group on sustainable tourism in protected areas in 1991 culminating in the publication of the seminal report "loving them to death" (1993). This was followed by the LIFE Project led by the French Federation of Natural Regional Parks with 10 pilot parks (1995). The early years of the Charter (2001) saw the setup of all external verification procedures with EUROPARC Consulting, verifiers training, European Charter network meetings, and Charter Partners involvement (2008). Laterally Projects financed by BfN generated the "magic numbers" and the setting up in 2010 of the Sustainable Tourism Working Group. Overall we have more than 20 years working for the sustainability of tourism in protected areas.

Now in 2012, we have a Charter network of 107 protected areas in 13 countries and can claim we are the oldest, widest and largest network of Sustainable Tourism Destinations (STD) based in Protected Areas in Europe.

The "magic numbers" speak for themselves showing the relevance of our network. Other STD awarding systems are now recognizing the ECST as a relevant network worthy of being actively involved in their own discussions about sustainability, namely the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, the EU DG Enterprise, the European Ecotourism Network.

We have 20 years of working and learning together, and have been able to guarantee with the ECST:

Empowerment, thanks to the participatory planning that has allowed such rich and vast participation in each Forum of the Charter;

Transparency, thanks to the management structure set up with independent verifiers and independent Evaluation Committee;

Adaptability, allowing that different protected areas from all over Europe with their own tourism experiences could join the methodology no matter how developed was their tourism;

Quality, of sustainable tourism strategies and action plans presented by each Forum/Charter/Charter Partners.

The ECST is now clearly a flagship of EUROPARC and we need to develop at the same time:

- a) a more relevant role of EUROPARC at International, European and EU level in what concerns STD based in Protected Areas;
- b) enlarge and consolidate the Charter Network developing all parts I, II and III of the Charter methodology;
- c) update and improve the quality of the ECST methodology and standards (text, templates, criteria, procedures, etc.).

The relevant work done by the Sustainable Tourism Working Group, the conclusions of the BfN Project, the STEPPA conclusions, the recent development of Charter Part II in Spain concerning promotion of Charter Partners, the pilot project for the Charter Part III from the French Section, the active suggestions of most actors from the Charter Network and finally the clear proposals from the Ad Hoc Working Group made clear the urgency and need to start this new phase of the ECST.

The present document seeks to establish the goals for the next three years (2014-2016) and in particular the work to be done in 2013 in order to prepare the coming years. Years that also represent the

transition between EU funding periods and are a clear opportunity to be prepared as a Network of Parks and Charter partners for the new coming period.

Therefore the highlight we want to give to policy aspects of the Charter and to all the lobbying work that needs to be developed requires a proposal of the Charter management Structure based in the original proposal of the STWG that need to be reviewed with the new goals defined in this document and with a more active involvement of the Sections, namely in the Part II and Part III of the Charter.

We are closing a period of the life of the Charter with the strong conviction that the next years we can provide more services to Charter Parks and Charter Partners and become more relevant as a Network for their work as Park administrations and as Tourism businesses.

B - Strategy Goals for the next three years

As stated before, the coming next three years are crucial to the Charter visibility and viability mainly because:

- a) we are in a transition period between EU funding periods and need to have a strategy in order the Charter Network and its members (Parks, Protected Areas and Tourism Businesses) become a stronger Network with a clear strategy towards sustainability of the tourism we award at our destinations and can benefit from it in terms of EU funding support;
- b) we are in a period where everyone wants to have their own sustainability criteria recognized by the other players and at a global process of reviewing and stating the ultimate criteria for Sustainable Tourism Destination Criteria where the ESCT can have a relevant role claiming we are the oldest, largest and widest network of the kind and we can lead other awarding schemes to a common understanding and mutual recognition that will make us stronger and bigger as a network;
- c) we have 20 years' experience and need simply to update our procedures and improve our quality of services provided as well as to accomplish the full methodology of the Charter, widening the Charter Part II involvement of Tourism business to all the Charter Network and opening finally the Charter Part III and start to involve the tour operators that want to work with us Sustainable Tourism Principles.

As such, therefore the time has come for a restructuring of Charter Management in order to bring the principal operations wholly within the management of the Federation. This means work on the Charter would be led by the Directorate, responsible to the EUROPARC Council principally with support for the Sustainable Tourism Working Group and Sections. EUROPARC Consulting would be contracted to undertake aspects of the work on behalf of the Directorate with the role of the Evaluation Committee remaining that of assessors and advisors. This create a "charter "team with the knowledge and skill set advanced across the network, with the added potential bringing in new people with new ideas and processes to add to the foundation of experience already contained within the system. With monies coming directly into the Federation, the small potential surplus should allow investment in aspects of Charter operation that until now have been somewhat fallow. This we believe is a positive and constructive and future looking change. Any change is however not without its disruption and with willingness of all partners we can embed new systems and lines of communication to advance the work of sustainable tourism in protected areas

We have defined 7 strategic goals that we believe can accomplish these concerns and be able to deliver the relevant outputs and procedures that answer our concerns during the next three years:

- 1^o to have the new management structure ready in order applications for Charter Part I presented by the end of 2013 will be already dealt in the new terms;
- 2^o to have our criteria, official texts, procedures (updated accordingly with the major trends from STD Indicators awarding systems) ready by 2014 and ready to be used by new applicants in 2015 applications to Charter Part I;
- 3^o to have the Charter Part III ready and applied by 2014;
- 4^o to have a wider acceptance of the Charter Part II in the network by 2014;
- 5^o to have a common platform for mutual recognition between awarding systems for STD based in protected and classified areas by 2014.

The 7 strategic goals are the following:

- 1) Enlarge the Charter Network with more members and new countries**
 - 1.1. Establish with the Sections a strategy to raise awareness of the ECST at members' level about Charter new and recent developments;
 - 1.2. Designate focal points for the ECST in countries not covered by Sections and establish with them a strategy to disseminate the Charter next to EUROPARC members;
 - 1.3. Set up the procedures for the new applications to be presented by December 2013.
- 2) Guarantee the Charter Network with higher % of re-evaluations and on time**
 - 2.1. Establish with the Sections and Charter Network a strategy to raise awareness of the ECST at National and Regional level next to key partners from Administration (Tourism, Agriculture and Rural Development, etc.) and from Private Sector (NGO and associations from local development, tourism businesses, food and crafts, etc.) about the relevance of the Charter and its impact in local development;
 - 2.2. Establish alternative procedures for re-evaluations adapting to new circumstances, domestic rules of planning and budget limitations;
 - 2.3. Set up the procedures for the applications from re-evaluations to be presented by December 2013.
- 3) Consolidate the Charter Network at Charter Partners level with more Charter Partners and new Charter Parks with Chart Part II**
 - 3.1. Prepare and establish a management structure for Charter Part II at Section level and EUROPARC Federation levels;
 - 3.2. Disseminate the Charter Part II methodology next to the Charter Network;
 - 3.3. Provide training of Sections and Charter Parks on developing the Charter Part II methodology;
 - 3.4. Increase visibility at European level of the Charter Partners at sites and portals that promote Sustainable Tourism Destinations.
- 4) Implement the Charter Network at Charter Part III level**
 - 4.1. Discuss and approve a Charter Part III methodology text based on the French section proposal;
 - 4.2. Prepare and establish a management structure for Charter Part III at Section level and EUROPARC Federation levels;

- 4.3. Disseminate the Charter Part III methodology next to the Charter Network;
- 4.4. Provide training of Sections and Charter Parks on developing the Charter Part III methodology;
- 4.5. Discuss and approve a promotion strategy of Charter Partners based on the Spanish example of Ecotourism Products' Club.

5) Prepare ECST methodology for Internationalisation

- 5.1. Become a GSTC member and participate in the final discussion for Sustainable Tourism Destinations Indicators (STDI) led by them and evaluate the matching level of their criteria with our own ECST criteria;
- 5.2. Develop a new comparative analysis of the ECST with the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS) led by EU DG Enterprise and Industry, test it in new Charter applications and participate in the follow up and monitoring of results;
- 5.3. Develop a systematic approach with ECOLNET Project from Ecotrans and their European Ecotourism Labelling Standard (EELS) project for a mutual recognition of criteria;
- 5.4. Establish formal contacts with the several awarding/certification schemes for Sustainable Tourism Destinations (STD) based in Protected Areas or other type of classified areas with similar goals and methodologies for sustainability (like Pan Parks, EcoRomania, Geoparks, Man and Biosphere Reserves, World Heritage Landscapes, etc.) in order to develop a common platform for these kind of STD with mutual recognition;
- 5.5. Follow up the developments of the IUCN Green list of Protected Areas and define possible strategy to reinforce the recognition of the ECST.

6) Integrate procedures with TransBoundaryParc award

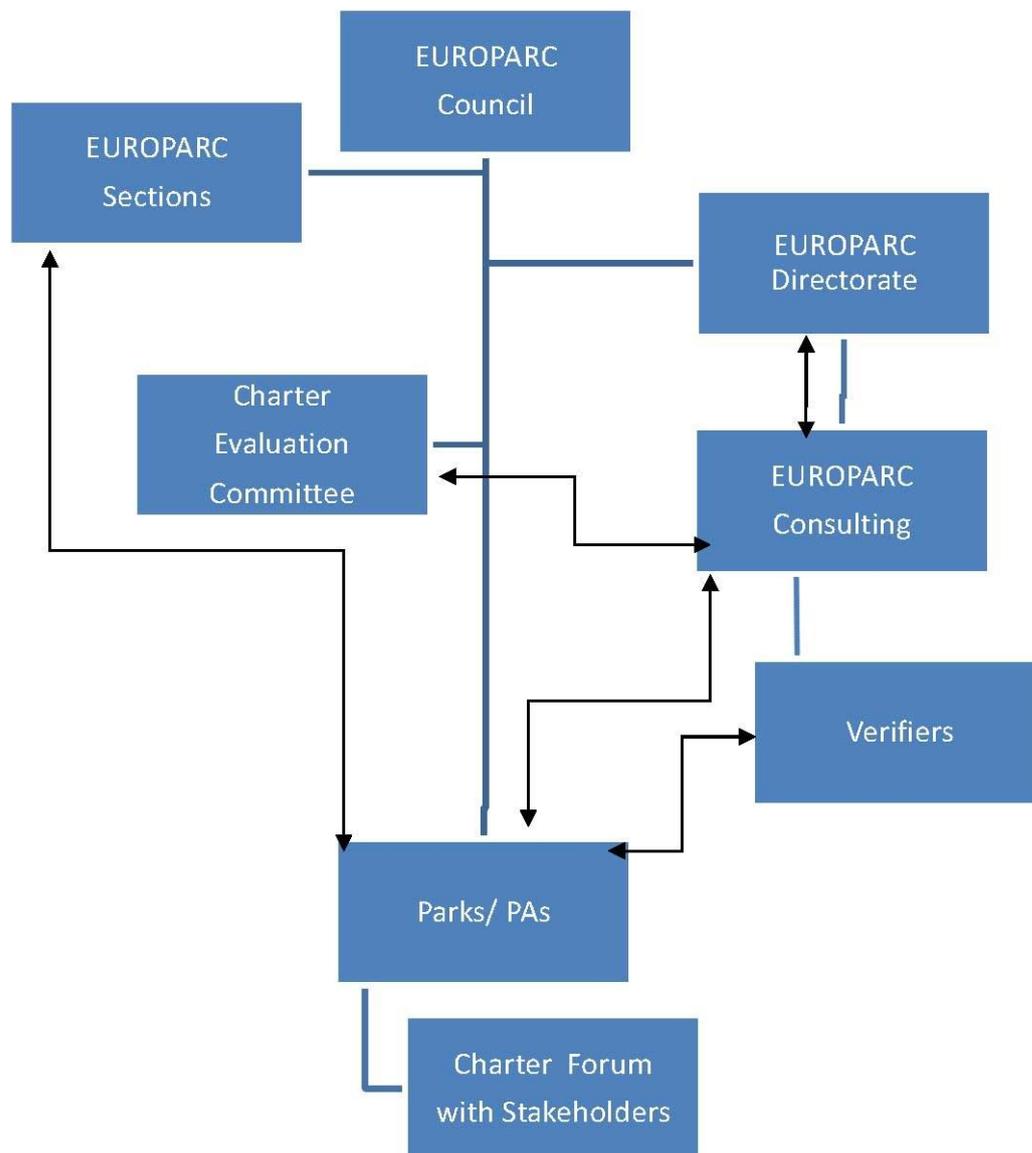
- 6.1. Establish at internal level of EUROPARC a comparative analysis of procedures and establish an improvement plan and a special procedure for applications of existing Charter Parks or TransBoundary Parks that want to integrate the other network;
- 6.2. Disseminate the TransBoundary Parc award next to Charter Parks network and vice versa.

7) Improve quality of procedures and actors

- 7.1. Review and update official text of the Charter taking into consideration the results from the project **European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in protected areas (Charter): The value of the "Charter" in identifying sustainable tourism destinations** funded by BfN, the STEPPA project results and all the work of comparison referred in 5. with other awarding schemes and with the STD Indicators that are being produced at International (GSTC), European (EELS) and EU (ETIS) levels;
- 7.2. Review and upgrade all templates;
- 7.3. Establish the procedures for regular recollection of "magic numbers", minimum standards and other STD Indicators that can illustrate the development and evolution of the Charter Network;
- 7.4. Review procedures accordingly with the new management structure for Charter Part I, II and III;
- 7.5. Establish a regular meeting between verifiers and the Evaluation Committee;
- 7.6. Establish a programme of training for new verifiers;
- 7.7. Establish a programme of training for developing Charter applications (CPI, II and III);
- 7.8. Implement the Sustainable Tourism Working Group with an action plan accordingly with the new goals and management structure of the ECST.

C – ECST Management Structure Summary

Considering the outcomes and proposals of the STWG, the recommendations from the Ad Hoc Working Group and the new goals defined in the present strategy, we present a summarized version of the ECST management Structure that highlights the main competences from each partner of the ECST Network. Nevertheless, there is a need for a more detailed role's description that should be defined in the next Charter meeting involving those involved in Charter management.



EUROPARC Federation Council

- Represents the owner (EUROPARC Federation) of the Charter Method and the Brand
- Approves the Charter policy, strategy and action plan
- Makes final awards based on recommendations received by evaluation committee
- Cancels the right to use the Charter if there is a misuse
- Makes final decision on methodologies, procedures, texts and templates concerning Charter Part I, II and III
- Appoints the Charter Evaluation committee and its composition and membership tenure
- Appoints and provides STWG with mandate

EUROPARC Federation – Directorate role

- Have overall administration management of the Charter on behalf of the Council
 - a. Provides a more relevant role of EUROPARC at International, European and EU level in what concerns STD based in Protected Areas;
 - b. consolidates the Charter Network developing all parts I, II and III of the Charter methodology;
 - c. oversees and coordinates the Charter Team across the Federation, with inputs from Council, Sections and Evaluation Committee.
- updates and improve the quality of the ECST
- Promotes and communicates the Charter
- Subcontracts EUROPARC Consulting the verification and re-evaluation processes of Charter parks.
- Administer all financial transactions associated with the Charter.
- Reports on the Charter management to the Council
- Produces information, communication and dissemination on Charter including international web marketing and linking
- Organises the Charter Network including meetings for awarded and candidate parks/PAs and Charter Partners stakeholders
- Oversees verifier and charter training
- Organises the database, “magic numbers” and monitoring of the Charter parks/PAs progress and performance on annual bases
- Proposes to Council about new members of Charter evaluation committee
- Coordinates work of Section in part II and part III
- Evaluates the need to make revisions on official text, instructions, templates, etc. for approval of to Council

The EUROPARC Sections role

- Promotes and communicates the Charter in Section news, Section home pages and events
- Supports the parks/PAs in application process like training, technical assistance in all aspects of the Charter
- Coordinates Charter Network within Section through Focal Point coordinators
- Advice, design , agree and implement Charter II and III

EUROPARC Consulting role

- Contracted to undertake the verification process and reports to EUROPARC Directorate
- Contracts verifiers and organizes verification visits to Charter Park candidates
- Provides secretariat and organizes the Evaluation Committee meetings

- Develops and offers services and toolkits according to the needs of Charter part I, II and III candidates

The Evaluation Committee role

- Reports to the Council on Award recommendations
- Analyses the Charter Part I application with the assistance of expert verifier reports
- Gives feedback to EUROPARC Consulting and the verifier about the evaluation result
- Proposes the cancellation of Charter certification to EUROPARC Council where misuse is identified
- Gives guidance to verifiers harmonising the verifiers report content

The Sustainable Tourism Working Group role

- A technical charter task force need to be formed to manage the internal update and quality improvement of the documentation that supports the ECST (texts, procedures, templates, criteria and other outputs) of the charter
- The wider working group would act as a forum for policy analysis and international relations and standards

D – Management of Resources available for the Charter

The main concern at the moment is to guarantee the feasibility of the transference of the competences and procedures from EConsulting to the Federation in 2013 in such a way that new candidates deliver their applications by the end of 2013 already in the new management structure.

The work done by the Ad Hoc working Group has showed the need to not underestimate the costs of a full working Charter with Charter Part I, II and III. In the sustainability equation we need also to consider that the costs from the staff at the headquarters are already ensured by the membership fees. Those provided are a useful analysis for project applications to advance the work of the Charter.

Human Resources

Given current resources and workload with the EUROPARC Directorate having one staff member fully dedicated to Charter is currently not possible. No such post has existed with the staff compliment of the Federation, expect where project funding has been available. Yet it is foreseen a solution built in the basis of a "Charter Team" will be increase the hours of staff dedicated to the Charter. This will be approximately 0.5FTE. This additional cost could be covered by charter income.

Current staff dedicated to administration will guarantee the administrative procedures with the Charter candidates (issuing of invoices, etc.) communications work will be co-ordinated by one staff member, and shared between staff with language skills so that these can be undertaken in first languages. The overall system will be managed by the Director.

The Charter Team should also be understood in a wider scope when involving the Council member, the Sections and all the other partners in the Charter Network.

Financial Resources

Using the figures from the ad hoc working group, ie an averaging of 12 charter awards per annum we have indicated the following costs estimations. These costs shown are there to indicate a “typical” year. A full analysis of potential income from Charter registrations and re-evaluations will be undertaken in due course and in advance of each year and included in future Directorate budget estimates.

Average Income estimation

€62,500 per annum

After tax at 12% €55,000 per annum

Based on an average of **12 charter awards per annum**, this accounts for 12x5000 Euros. We can also assume an average of 5 registrations per year accounts for 2500.

Exact figure should be known for the year ahead based on received application and re-evaluation submitted and a budget for that year prepared.

Costs estimation

- Directorate staff costs, approx €18,450 across the team, although this cost is covered from membership fees and therefore not affecting the income estimation.
- Tax €7500
- The additional hours of the administration assistant could be covered by charter fees = **€5,200**
- Office Overheads @7% **€1,291**
- Verification contract to Consulting, to be negotiated , we estimate **€38,556**
- Charter certificates and awards **€1000***
- Translations of documents /website and charter material **€ 5000***
- SWTG/Sections/meeting - **€7000 ***

*Example of work that could be undertaken. Programme yet to be agreed.

In kind contributions

The work of the Charter is predicated by a substantial effort by many individuals, too numerous to mention. Their commitment over many years is recognised. This in-kind contribution underpins the work of the Charter and therefore the advancement and development of the Charter work must be considered in that context. The availability of people to operate on charter business outside of their own work requires certain vulnerability in ambition and a realistic assessment of what can be achieved.

This in kind work is attributed right across the Charter Management process, from the Council’s time, through to the Evaluation Committee. The Sustainable Tourism Working Group, members within Sections, and additional hours by staff from Directorate and Consulting. No agreed system of calculating that resources in currently in place, but for the purpose of the NGO grant we use a calculation of 20€ per hour and with a brief estimate of 1000 hours across the network given to the charter, that is AT LEAST 20,000 Euros of benefit in kind.

E – Risk Management analysis

A risk analysis has been undertaken by Directorate staff.

Based on the assessment, the areas that need attention are:

- clear written procedures and computer systems to enable staff to pick up quickly, sufficient knowledge remains in network. We must be realistic and operate system within resources available.
- clear charter strategy and plan, agreed by all actors.
- capacity and capability of all staff, Directorate, Consulting, Council , Sections and Working Group need to be assessed
- implement recommendations as far as possible. Meet with all actors to explain and agree procedures.
- budget to be prepared and adhered to.
- additional projects and funding needs to be continued to be sought
- strong lobbying within Charter Network needed to explain benefits. Communications and networking need to be improved to show real benefits

It is proposed that much of these matters can be addressed through:

A) a meeting of STWG and other actors involved in the Charter at Siggen in September to work on the procedural details of this work. The result of which can be reported to council at a later date if required.

B) a meeting of charter communications to develop a communication plan for the charter

Threats		Estimated Risk/Probability %	Impact	Priority 1-5	Comments	Contingency
		H= 60-100 M=30-59 L=0-29				
Human	staff changes	High - 90	medium	1	Staff changes are usually predictable, more than one staff member needs to be trained in systems. opportunity for new skills to match needs	Clear written procedures and computer systems to enable staff to pick up quickly, sufficient knowledge remains in network. We must be realistic and operate system within resources available. Capacity within the directorate office has been assessed and changes made
	unwillingness to cooperate by some partners	Low- 29	medium	3	Recognition of human feelings and failings and mature and professional perspective needed	Clarity of purpose and business needs to depersonalise this
	differing expectations	Medium-50	high	1	Too many people have been involved with their own personal views	Clear charter strategy and plan, agreed by all actors.
	knowledge transfer and continuity of information	Medium-55	high	1	Danger of too much of teamwork being contained within few individuals	Capacity and capability of all staff, directorate, consulting, council , sections and working group need to be assessed
Operational	unclear systems	Medium-40	high	1	Clarity and structure proposed by task force and STWG	Implement recommendations as far as possible. Meet with all actors to explain and agree procedures.
	contractual disputes	Low-20	medium	3	Support for charter overall remains high would hope all disputes could be dealt with amicably	Ensure dispute resolution is in all contracts
Reputational	standards of charter compromised due to lack of clarity and control	Medium-40	high	1	If we don't stop arguing internally we miss bigger picture of keeping charter relevant	Strong management control, better communications with all actors, but CLEAR unambiguous decisions. Clear strategy for charter future to be produced
	Europarc not respected	Low-10	high	1	If we lose reputation for quality and standards in	Control over quality throughout charter needs to be maintained. Again need for management control

					charter, then charter itself is lost	
procedural	systems not complied with by all actors	Medium-50	medium	3	Clarity of procedures needed. Use of multiple languages also needed to avoid any misunderstanding	Agreement in advance, strong decision making. Ability to remove responsibility if non compliance becomes an issue. Strategic decision by Council, then operational responsibility by directorate who then solely report to council.
	over interference from some actors	Medium-40	medium	3	Charter may suffer from a "too many cooks" syndrome.	clarity of purpose and responsibility needed
	over control by some actors	Medium-40	medium	4	As above	
technical	computer failures	Low-10	low	3	Current data retained in more than one location.	Backups in place and new server/cloud system to be investigated
	loss of data	Low-20	medium	3	As above	
financial	unattributed costs	Medium-55	high	1	Lack of clarity of current cost not yet resolved. Cannot wait. Tax issues need to be explained.	Budget to be prepared and adhered to. Additional projects and funding needs to be continued to be sought
	insufficient income	High-80	high	1	Charter re -evaluations may not be submitted or delayed.	Strong lobbying within charter network needed to explain benefits. Communications and networking need to be improved to show real benefits
	over expenditure	Medium-60	high	1	Accurate figures need to be obtained.	Budget needs to be adhered to.
Political	sustainable tourism becomes less favourable	Medium-40	medium	2	As economic factors affect political decisions	Case for economic, social and environmental benefits must be made strongly at all levels communications and press need to be in place
	members don't see it as relevant	Low-10	medium	2	Clear communications Needed. Meeting of communications actors in charter planned.	Better database of contacts across whole charter network needed. Comms plan needed.
	Merger issues	High-90	medium	2	These affect all aspects of federation.	Clear decisions needed. However cannot pause charter work in the meantime. This will adapt as changes become apparent. but no expectation of anything happening soon

