



**EUROPARC Federation  
Report to Council  
25<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

**Title:**

Note Bilan CETD Volet 3

**Recommendations:**

For information

# ECST Part 3 review

## 1. Review of the background

From 2012 to 2014, IPAMAC (Massif central Natural Parks association) have worked under the supervision of the Europarc French section and in the context of a call for proposals from the environment ministry and the DATAR. This work was about the elaboration of the Part 3 methodology of the European Charter of Sustainable Tourism (ECST) in protected areas, with the help of the consultant, Gilles Clement.

This project was build with:

- a. Diagnosis of stakeholders expectations and needs – natural Parks and travel agencies – through surveys and discussions on a national and regional scale. About fifteen Parks (Central Massif, North, PACA) and thirty travel agencies took part in this diagnosis.
- b. Elaboration of a methodology beta version and tools for implementation
- c. Methodology testing through 5 Park/travel agencies teams
- a. Testing phase appraisal and adjustment of methodology and tools.

## 2. Methodology

The methodology follows a bottom-up approach, from local to national level, and is organized in 3 stages:.

### - **First stage : travel agency identification**

A natural Park and a travel agency want to work together. The Park create an identification file for the travel agency, using the annex 2.3 (identity sheet) and 2.5 (diagnosis checklist).

### - **Second stage : travel agency certification**

Using the Europarc methodology the Europarc french section reviews the application. A joint commission of French State representatives, travel agencies, natural Parks and consumers auditions the travel agency and the Park. The travel agency is then certified by the Europarc french section.

### - **Third stage : travel agency collaboration**

Once certified, the travel agency and the Natural Park are able to collaborate to set up touristic stays. The travel agency can also collaborate (if agreed on) with all the certified Parks engaged in the ECST to create touristic stays. The travel agency advertises on its ECST certification and can, with the Park agreement, use the Park logo for co-created stays.

## 3 Stages of consultation with Europarc

The beta methodology was adopted by the Europarc french section on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2013. It was also introduced to the Europarc technical services on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2013 and then adopted at the Europarc annual conference in september 2013.

Europarc agreed that:

- Identification file is done at local level,
- the opinion of a joint commission on the travel agencies applications is very valuable. It brings added value by crossing insights and involving protected area stakeholders, as stated in the ECST.
- Certification is given by the national level, in this case by the Europarc french section,

- Certified travel agencies can use the logo of the ECST.

Once the methodology implemented and tested, a review meeting was set up on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January 2015. About 15 participants from travel agencies and Natural parks took part in this meeting and worked together on the following points:

- ❖ Get feedback on the value for the travel agencies of the Part 3 of the ECST:
  - Recognition of travel agencies involvement in sustainable tourism
  - Increasing knowledge on protected areas
  - Tourism offer qualification
  - Ease contact with others protected areas in France and Europe
  - European and national network integration
  - Sharing of experience and networking with the Natural parks and travel agencies
- ❖ adapt methodology and tools for better efficiency:
  - Annex 2.5 simplification (assessment documentation about the European Charter of Sustainable Tourism principles)
  - Implementation of a dropbox dedicated to the Part 3 of the ECST in order to share tools and contacts

#### **4. Obtained results**

The realisation of the Part 3 of the ECST is working now. There are actually 12 travel agencies involved into the ECST and about 60 trips were built with the Parks and/or validated by the parks.

Strong relations are built between Parks and travel agencies, these latter are now more visible on the territory or in closer relation with the tourism project manager. These relations are going beyond this relationship: the tour-operators make contact with the others parks involved in the ECST to work again the stays with them.

The travel agencies push forward their habits. They rely more on relevant contacts from the Parks. They spread the Parks documentation to their customers.

Some natural Parks have opened formations for professionals involved in the stage 2 of the ECST to the travel agencies.

The travel agencies are the prescribers of the natural Parks. For exemple, Chamina voyage agency awarnesses people with which it works to commit themselves to a Park approach, which could be the ESCT or « La Marque », in way that these trips promote a natural Park image.

The idea of natural Park destination is growing through travel agencies websites which are creating specific space to the Park offer (Sud Randos agency for exemple). Promotion films have also been produced by Escapeo, for instance, and Sud France.fr..... For its part, Chamina Voyages asked also a blogging community to generate the buzz in its new project « Cantal trail » built with the Regional Park of Auvergne Volcanoes.

Quantitative review engaged for 2015 (according to the answers of 4 travel agencies involved in the ESCT):

- 1825 customers
- 588.660€ of turnover on the trips agreed or created with the Parks.

On 7 travel agencies:

- 6 brought forward « ESCT » communication elements on their website
- 6 brought forward communication elements on their promotion writing papers
- 3 got customers feedback of the set up partnership (curiosity, precisions on the partnership, choice of providers, request for detail of holiday extension...).

## **5. Expectations and Perspectives**

Make more visible the travel agencies network from the Part 3 of the ESCT by diffusing the approach into the professional network and developing a communication policy with the Parks.

At the European level, it's necessary that the methodology will be spread and adopted by each country and section (with some differences according to the context).

The European dimension of the Part 3 of the ESCT is crucial if we want that the travel agencies involve themselves.

The Spanish section is today working on the methodology adaptation and the Italian section is also interested.

Europarc must be a platform to emphasise travel agencies involved in the ESCT and their trips, and to form link between travel agencies from different countries in order to develop partnerships.

Once the number of natural Parks trips will be huge, it could be interesting to develop agreements with commercialization platforms and to target travel agencies important and visible on the national and international market.