



**EUROPARC Federation
Report to Council
25th October 2015**

Title:

Proposal Rewarding System of the ECST

Recommendations:

For information



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Re-Evaluation of Charter SYSTEM OF THE ECST

Information for Council

Prepared by Carol Ritchie, Paulo Castro Brigida Napolitano following consultation within the Charter network.

The ECST have been awarded since 2001, having already a long experience of 15 years.

The need to do a review/refresh/update of its fundamental concepts, main official text and application templates was claimed by the network and clearly needed in order to prepare the field for a new successful period for the Charter in a moment when it already represents a network of 145 sustainable tourism destination in 17 European countries and when non-European countries are interested in becoming part of this network. Further following recommendation undertaken by EUROPARC and other it was important to ensure the Charter for updated and fit for purpose.

This effort has been accomplished during 2014/2015 thanks to the volunteer effort of the several people from the network, verifiers, Evaluation Committee members, HQ staff, etc.

The renewal of procedures for new candidates to be presented December 2016 will not affect new members but this not the case of the existing ECST Protected Areas who are due for reevaluation.

The change needed in the re-evaluation methodology has to be established in order to guarantee a regular flow of re-awarded ECST PA's without any delay in their re-evaluation period in order to prevent future delays as those that happened in the past. At the same time we need to find out specific and flexible solutions for those Protected Areas that have already a delay in re-awarding the Charter. In addition it is pertinent that EUROPARC can predict confidently re evaluations in order to plan, manage and the process including the anticipated budget. There were concerns as to the ongoing costs and the benefits of parks re-evaluating after 10, 15 years.

To be taken into consideration is the fact that in 2014 the Spanish Section asked for a moratorium so their ECST Protected Areas could have a solution for the delay in re-evaluation. EUROPARC recognized the need for a solution that has simultaneously the consensus amongst Sections and keeps the quality of the awarding methodology.

The result of the present proposal has been possible once more thanks to the voluntary work of several representatives of the network in particular the Spanish, French and Italian Sections especially thanks to the chance to meet at the IX European Charter Network Meeting in May 2015 in VN Cerveira (PT).

Main contents of the proposal

This document aims to establish the rules for the re-evaluation of all Charter according to their present situation and regarding the year when re-evaluation is/was expected to happen.

1. The five year term is counted with the following rule:

Year # 1 of the Action Plan is equivalent to the awarding year (corresponding to the year when the candidate was first verified);

Year # 5 of the Action Plan corresponds to the year the ECST member must submit the re-evaluation application by December the latest;

Year # 6 corresponds to the re-awarding year and first year of the new term.

2. Special period for the re-awarding of the ECST of existing members:

In order to establish a prompt mechanism that can standardize all ECST members with similar methodologies and avoid further delays in re-awarding the ECST, it will be established an extraordinary period of two years (2016-2017) to regularize all special cases that will be defined in the next points.

All ECST members that have any kind of delay (all members awarded before 2012) will have to formalize to the EUROPARC Federation (during the 1st trimester of 2016) their intention about the use of the special period to regularize their situation.

All members that have not stated their intention for regularization about taking advantage of this special period will be proposed to be removed from the existing list of Charter Network (as well as their ECST Partners (tourism businesses).

After the special period 2016-2017 all ECST members will follow the regular conditions established as follows.

3. The new re-awarding system will be established as a regular mechanism for all ECST awarded in 2016 and following years.

Re-evaluation in regular conditions (applications awarded in 2016 and following years).

The ECST member will have to:

In the year #5:

- a) **Present a complete report on the previous action plan, containing all the information about each action, how the indicators have worked, budget, self-evaluation and reasons for any actions scheduled and not implemented** and possible actions integrated to the previous action plan;
- b) **Present a new Action Plan** for the new term of 5 years;
- c) **Update the Sustainable Tourism Strategy** for the new term of 5 years;

Option A: it applies to those members who are at their 2nd or 3rd re-evaluation. **Only in this case**, the member **can opt for the simplified evaluation system** that does not include a verification visit. The verifier will only conduct desk verification on the application dossier submitted. This is an optional decision. The ECST member can always opt for the regular evaluation with the visit of a verifier.

Option B: regular re-evaluation system with verification on site. **This is mandatory for those at a first re-evaluation**

Costs of the verification process will relate to the option chosen (type A or B) and will always involve:

- A % of the verifier's work (compensation of the verifier);
- With or without the visit costs;
- General management costs (administrative + Evaluation Committee).

If an ECST member does not justify its absence during two consecutive years, the member will be removed from the Charter network list, together with its Charter Partners. .

4. Special cases for the re-awarding of the ECST of existing members

During the special period there will be the following cases to be considered:

- a) **ECST awarded between the years 2012 and 2015.** They have no delay in the re-evaluation and can benefit of option A (proposed in this document) as long as they are at their 2nd or 3rd re-evaluation. If at their first re-evaluation the only option is the B.
- b) **ECST awarded before 2012.** They will have at least one year delay in presenting their re-evaluation. During the special period 2016-2017 they can benefit of the option A (proposed in this document) as long as they present a valid application dossier as described in this document. In alternative they can always opt for a new evaluation with a new Strategy and a New Action Plan. In this case they can only opt for the verification with visit. If at first re-evaluation the only option is the B.

5. Final considerations

When considering the re-awarding of the existing ECST members the EUROPARC should also take in consideration the following procedures at individual level:

- a) It should be confirmed the term of the Action Plan since in some cases the 5 year term has been interpreted differently or it has been proposed a smaller period in order to maintain a 5 year renovation interval. The rule should be, whenever possible, to establish a 5 year term counted as in point 1;



- b) Special reference to the French ECST members that need to match the ECST term with their own 6 year term of Charter of Park. Being already recognized by the Council, French members should then match their legal need with the present re-awarding mechanism the best way possible.