

# SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN

# PROTECTED AREAS

*good for Parks, good for People*



Carlton Marshes (UK)

# INTRODUCTION

**People love Parks!**

*Our iconic landscapes are often one of the most cited reasons for tourist visits to Europe.*

**Tourism is booming business and is one of the main economic drivers of Europe's rural economies. Sustainable Tourism however includes the concept of visiting a place as a tourist and trying to make only a positive impact on the environment, society and economy.**

The **EUROPARC Federation** is the network for Europe's natural and cultural heritage, dedicated to practical nature conservation and sustainable development, improving the management of Protected Areas in Europe through international cooperation, exchange of ideas and experience, and by influencing policy.

EUROPARC has long recognised the need to take care of both the land and the people who live and work there. We understand that not only are parks themselves facing challenges and pressure from visitation on the land they manage, but have the opportunity and potential to act as catalysts for sustainability and life style changes at a local and regional and indeed national level.

The wider need for sustainable development was highlighted by the creation of the Agenda 21 programme at the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development at Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

In 1993 EUROPARC published the ground breaking report "Loving them to death", which called for sustainable tourism in Europe's Protected Areas. Further in 1995, **EUROPARC** took the initiative to set up the *European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas*.

*The **European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas** is a practical management tool that enables Protected Areas to develop tourism sustainably.*

The core element of the Charter is working in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to develop a common sustainable tourism strategy and an action plan on the basis of a thorough situation analysis. The aim of all Charter projects and activities is the protection of the natural and cultural heritage and the continuous improvement of tourism in the Protected Area in terms of the environment, local population and businesses as well as visitors.

The Charter includes a set of principles, which defines and recognises good practice in the development and management of sustainable tourism in Europe's most treasured landscapes. Parks who complete the Charter process ensure that effective planning and management structures and processes are in place to ensure people can continue to enjoy Parks!

# BENEFITS OF THE EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS

## For Protected Areas

The **European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas** is awarded by the EUROPARC Federation through an independent verification process.

The award recognises not just a commitment to sustainable tourism but also the implementation of practical sustainable actions by public and private partners. Such actions;

- bring measureable economic, social and environmental benefits from well-managed sustainable tourism,
- strengthen relations with local tourism stakeholders and the wider tourism industry,
- provide access and membership of an extensive and dynamic European network.

The Charter provides a model of governance that delivers Protected Areas as sustainable tourism destinations. Further, all actors through the application of sustainable tourism practice in their region ensure the natural habitat and landscapes upon which they all depend are conserved for future generations.

**The process of pursuing and achieving the award enables all involved to receive expert advice, maintain motivation and incentive, and obtain international recognition.**

Engaging in the Charter process is highly successful as a guide and a stimulant for more sustainable tourism in protected areas. It has provided an incentive and a framework for protected area authorities to work with tourism businesses and other stakeholders to agree on future plans and support a whole range of creative actions.

## For Businesses

Businesses who are Charter partners have shown that **sustainability and business performance are related and they both have a positive impact on each other.**

Many businesses pursue actions that support sustainability for altruistic reasons as part of lifestyle choices, but often sustainability is seen as a business asset or a vehicle for **competitive advantage**.

Socially, sustainable businesses support the **wellbeing of local communities**.

A wide range of actions by businesses can affect environmental impact, including:

- using environmentally friendly products
- encouraging customers to respect the environment in their actions on the property and in nature
- engaging in energy and water saving activities
- reducing, recycling and managing waste.

With almost 20 years experience, EUROPARC can show that protected areas working together with tourism entrepreneurs and local communities can ensure that gaining the “Charter Award”, built on partnership, is **good for biodiversity and business**.



# YOUR JOURNEY TO A SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is recognised internationally as a model for sustainable tourism management.

It is in line with the international Guidelines on *Biodiversity and Tourism Development*<sup>1</sup> the *Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria* for destinations, and the *European Commission's tourism policy*<sup>2</sup> and its priority "to promote the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism".

Embedded in the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas are these important concepts:

- protection of the natural and cultural heritage,
- participation by all stakeholders,
- effective partnership working,
- planning to prepare and implement a sustainable tourism strategy, to realise the environmental, social and economic benefits of everyone working more sustainably.

**The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is in three parts:**

- The **first and main part is for sustainable destinations** – primarily around a Protected Area. This is awarded to the protected area authority and covers a specifically defined Charter Area which may be wider than the legally designated protected area.
- The **second one is for sustainable local tourism businesses** within the Charter Area
- The **third part is for sustainable tour operators** bringing visitors to protected areas.

<sup>1</sup> Convention on Biological Diversity, 2004

<sup>2</sup> Europe, the world's No 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe, 2010



Jakub Kaspar, Krkonoše NP // *Your journey starts here*

## In this Document:

- 1 The vision, mission and principles of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas
- 2 Components of the Charter
- 3 Key Topics and Actions of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas
- 4 Join the Charter journey towards becoming a sustainable destination
- 5 Sustainable partners in Charter areas
- 6 Sustainable tour operators in Charter areas
- 7 Terms and Conditions of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas



# 1 THE VISION, MISSION AND PRINCIPLES OF THE EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS

*Belovezhskaya Pushcha National Park (BO) // Keen eyes looking to the future*

*Quality Sustainable Tourism will be  
good for Parks and good for People*

## Vision

Sustainable Tourism in European protected areas provides a meaningful quality experience, safeguards natural and cultural values, supports local livelihoods and quality of life and is economically viable.

## Mission

Through awarding the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, EUROPARC seeks to safeguard cultural and natural values by stimulating quality sustainable tourism, engendering partnerships to support local livelihoods, increase awareness of the need for sustainability, and promote international cooperation.





Avesnois National Park (FR) // *Riding our principles*

## Principles

The following principles should govern how tourism is developed and managed in Protected Areas:

### 1. Giving priority to protection

A fundamental priority for the development and management of sustainable tourism should be to protect the area's natural and cultural heritage and to enhance awareness, understanding and appreciation of it.

### 2. Contributing to sustainable development

Sustainable Tourism should follow the principles of sustainable development which means addressing all aspects of its environmental, social and economic impact in the short and long term.

### 3. Engaging all stakeholders

All those affected by sustainable tourism should be able to participate in decisions about its development and management, and partnership working should be encouraged.

### 4. Planning sustainable tourism effectively

Sustainable Tourism development and management should be guided by a well researched plan that sets out agreed objectives and actions.

### 5. Pursuing continuous improvement

Tourism development and management should deliver ongoing improvement in sustainable environmental impacts, visitor satisfaction, economic performance, local prosperity and quality of life, requiring regular monitoring and reporting of progress and results.



Author: Dr. Gábor Kovacs, Hortobágy National Park (HU) // *Working together so the fruits of our labour can flower*

The components of the Charter involve **working in partnership, preparing and implementing a strategy and addressing the key topics**. The Charter requires that all Protected Areas have each of the components in place, which are described in more detail below.

## Sustainable Tourism Forum

A permanent Sustainable Tourism (Charter) Forum, or equivalent arrangement, should be established between the protected area authority, local municipalities, conservation and community organizations and representatives of the tourism businesses.

The constitution and numbers involved in the Forum and any associated Executive Committees or other structures,

and the regularity of their meetings, should be sufficient to **enable effective discourse and decision making**.

Links with regional and national bodies should be developed and maintained. The Forum should also engage with other Forums in the Charter Network.



# Strategy and Action Plan

A **Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism** should be prepared, which:

- has **three main elements**: an assessment of the current situation; a strategic direction; and a practical action plan;
- is based on **inclusive and effective consultation** and is **approved and understood by local stakeholders**;
- covers a **five year period** (with some flexibility to allow for different planning cycles); and
- is a separate, self-contained document.

The **Strategy and Action Plan** should contain:

- 1 A definition of the area (Charter Area) to be influenced by the strategy, which may extend outside the protected area;
- 2 An **assessment** of:
  - The area's natural, historic and cultural heritage;
  - The area's tourism and recreation infrastructure;
  - Current visitors and potential future markets;
  - Impacts of tourism on the environment, economy and local communities and
  - Issues of capacity, need and opportunity associated with the above.
- 3 A set of **strategic objectives** for the development and management of tourism, covering:
  - conservation and enhancement of the environment and heritage;
  - economic and social development;
  - preservation and improvement of the quality of life of local residents and
  - visitor management and enhancement of the quality of tourism offered.
- 4 An **action plan** to meet these objectives, which must address the key topics and actions set out later in Section 3. The action plan must contain a description of each action and an identification of those responsible for it;
- 5 An estimation of resources and indication of partners to implement the action plan;
- 6 Proposals for monitoring results.

## Assessment of the current situation

Natural, historic and cultural heritage;  
Tourism and recreation infrastructures;  
Current visitors and potential future markets;  
Impacts of tourism



## Strategic direction

Defining clear strategic objectives concerning nature conservation, economic and social development, improving quality of life of locals and quality of tourism.



## Action Plan

Description of each action:  
timing, resources,  
partners for implementing,  
monitoring proposal

## Evaluation

All protected areas seeking award of the Charter must engage in and facilitate the evaluation process.

This involves:

- **Submission of a completed application form**, the **Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan**, and any other supporting material, which will be checked by an appointed verifier who is an expert in sustainable tourism and protected areas.
- **A visit to the area by the verifier**, which will include a programme of meetings and discussion with relevant stakeholders.
- **Preparation of a report by the verifier**. A version of this is subsequently made available to the protected area.
- **Assessment of the application and the verifier's report by the Charter Evaluation Committee**, which makes a recommendation to the EUROPARC Council on whether to award the Charter, including any conditions or comments to pass on to the protected area.
- Subsequent attention to any matters raised by the verifier, evaluation committee and Council.

The evaluation process, including engagement with the verifier and receipt of their report, provides the protected area with valuable feedback and views on their sustainable tourism activity.

## Partnership and Communication

Protected Areas that have been awarded the Charter join the family of protected areas as partners in the [Charter Network](#).

They are required to publicise and make visible their award. They are also encouraged to engage in networking and communication events and processes.

At a local level, Protected Areas are encouraged to follow a partnership approach in developing and managing sustainable tourism.

## Monitoring and Review

Monitoring actions and impacts of sustainable tourism should be built into the process from the beginning, leading to review and adaptation.

The Strategy and Action Plan should contain indicators and monitoring actions which cover:

- [Progress with the implementation of actions;](#)
- [Results and changes in tourism performance and impacts.](#)

Key data from the monitoring should be submitted to EUROPARC as part of an overall benchmarking and assessment of the Charter process as a whole.

**The Charter is normally awarded for a period of five years.**



*Hohe Tauern National Park (AU)*

The Charter process itself makes provision for the development and recognition of partnerships between protected area authorities and tourism businesses through the award of Charter Partner status to tourism businesses that meet agreed criteria under **Part II of the Charter** (for local tourism businesses) and **Part III of the Charter** (for tour operators).

***Engagement of protected areas with Part II or Part III of the Charter is optional.***



# 3 KEY TOPICS AND ACTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN PROTECTED AREAS



Author: M. Speziari, Parco dell'Adamello (IT) // *Breaking a trail with key topics and actions*



The principles govern how tourism is developed and managed in a Protected Area. The principles over-arch the key topics and the associated actions that are the core of the European Charter for Sustainable tourism in Protected Areas.

PRINCIPLES

KEY TOPICS

KEY ACTIONS

1. Giving priority to protection
2. Contributing to sustainable development
3. Engaging all stakeholders
4. Planning sustainable tourism effectively
5. Pursing continuous improvement

The **Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan** should be based on local circumstances and priorities as assessed and agreed through the consultation process.

However, to comply with the requirements of the Charter it must demonstrate coverage of the following key topics and associated actions in the Action Plan.

| KEY TOPICS                                                                                                            | KEY ACTIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1) Protecting valuable landscapes, biodiversity and cultural heritage                                                 | 1) Influencing land use planning and the control of potentially damaging developments;<br>2) Influencing the location, type and design of tourism developments;<br>3) Managing visitor flows, activities and behavior in sensitive areas and sites.                                                                                                                                                              |
| 2) Supporting conservation through tourism                                                                            | 1) Encouraging visitors and tourism businesses to support conservation, through donations, volunteering and other activity;<br>2) Using revenues obtained from tourism-related activity to support conservation;<br>3) Establishing, supporting and promoting tourism-related investments, projects and activities that help to conserve the natural and cultural heritage.                                      |
| 3) Reducing carbon footprint, pollution and wasteful resource use                                                     | 1) Working with tourism businesses to improve environmental management, including use of energy and water, waste management, and noise and light pollution;<br>2) Promoting the use of public transport and other alternatives to cars.                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 4) Providing safe access, quality facilities and special experiences of the protected area, available to all visitors | 1) Providing a wide range of access opportunities, with attention to safety and risk management;<br>2) Improving the quality of visitor facilities and services;<br>3) Providing visitors with specific tourism offers which involve discovery, interpretation and appreciation of the area's special natural and cultural heritage;<br>4) Providing facilities and information for visitors with special needs. |



Avesnois National Park (FR) // Promoting local products

| KEY TOPICS                                                     | KEY ACTIONS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>5)</b> Effectively communicating the area to visitors       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Ensuring that marketing materials and activities promote the area effectively and responsibly;</li> <li>2) Providing good quality and effective visitor information and interpretation;</li> <li>3) Ensuring that tourism businesses and other local stakeholders are well informed about the area and provide relevant and accurate information to visitors;</li> <li>4) Providing specific information and interpretation for young people, schools and student groups.</li> </ol> |
| <b>6)</b> Ensuring social cohesion                             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Anticipating, monitoring and minimising any existing and potential conflicts with local residents;</li> <li>2) Maintaining good communication and engagement between local residents, businesses, visitors and the protected area authority;</li> <li>3) Encouraging and developing appropriate partnership activity with and between stakeholders.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                       |
| <b>7)</b> Strengthening prosperity in the local community      | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Promoting the provision and identity of local produce and services and their purchase and use by visitors and tourism businesses;</li> <li>2) Supporting the economic viability and performance of local tourism businesses and the provision of local employment in tourism.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>8)</b> Providing training and capacity building             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Providing relevant training for staff of the protected area authority in sustainable tourism development and management;</li> <li>2) Providing and encouraging relevant training and capacity building for tourism businesses and other stakeholders in sustainable tourism.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>9)</b> Monitoring tourism performance and impacts           | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Monitoring of visitors – volumes, patterns, spending and satisfaction;</li> <li>2) Monitoring of tourism businesses – performance and needs;</li> <li>3) Monitoring of tourism impacts – on the environment, economy and community;</li> <li>4) Monitoring progress in implementing the action plan.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>10)</b> Communicating actions and engaging with the Charter | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Communicating sustainable tourism actions and results to local stakeholders and more widely at a local, regional and national level;</li> <li>2) Promoting and making visible the award of the Charter;</li> <li>3) Engaging with EUROPARC and the Charter Network, including participating in related events and activities;</li> <li>4) Taking steps for re-application and renewal of the Charter.</li> </ol>                                                                     |



# 4 JOIN THE CHARTER JOURNEY TOWARDS BECOMING A SUSTAINABLE DESTINATION



Loch Lomond, The Trossachs National Park, Scotland (UK) // **Sailing towards sustainability**

## Sustainable destinations

There are many benefits and opportunities for Protected Areas that join the journey to eventual award of the Charter.

These include:

- **stronger relationships** with tourism businesses and other local stakeholders;
- a **higher profile** in the European arena as an area devoted to sustainable tourism;
- **public-relations** and **awareness-raising** opportunities with visitors and local and national media;
- an opportunity to work with and **learn from other European Charter areas** in a network;
- helpful **internal and external assessment**, leading to new ideas and improvements;
- **greater credibility** amongst potential funding partners.

The process of joining the journey involves 12 steps:

### 1 Decision to proceed

Protected Area authorities that are considering applying for the Charter should consult with tourism stakeholders from the very beginning and involve them at all stages in the process. They should look carefully at the principles and requirements set out in this document and decide whether they are able to commit to them.

### 2 Registration as a candidate for the Charter

Protected Area authorities should contact **EUROPARC Federation** to register their intention to apply for the Charter. They will then be sent further details on the process. **All Charter protected areas are required to be members of the EUROPARC Federation.** Protected areas which are not already EUROPARC members will be requested to join the Federation upon registering as candidate protected areas. An outline timetable should be agreed with EUROPARC.

### 3 Establishment of the Sustainable Tourism Forum and preparation of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan

These fundamental components must be in place and completed before the formal application is made. They should comply with the requirements set out in Sections 2 and 3 of this document.

## CHECK LIST

✓ Sign and date the key topics to signify your acceptance of them, and return with your application

✓ Register as a candidate sustainable Protected Area by sending to **EUROPARC** the proper registration form electronically.

✓ Proceed with your application with these fundamental criteria in mind





Author: Ennio Billi, Artist: Sasso Simone, Simoncello Park (IT) // **Fostering employment in local communities**

Ideally, the **strategy and action plan should be presented in English, French, German, Spanish or Italian**. If this is not possible, it may also be presented in another language, provided that the application report gives good summary responses to each question and clear cross-references to the precise location of details in the strategy and action plan.

## CHECK LIST

### 4 Completion of the Application Report

A detailed Application Report is provided by **EUROPARC**. This should be completed in full by the protected area authority. The application report is a key document, and will be used as the main reference point for assessing the application. It serves as an overview or summary of activities for both the verifier and Evaluation Committee. Furthermore, it represents an important record of the work in the protected area, which will be referred to again later, for example during re-evaluation after five years.

The report should be submitted in English, French, German, Spanish or Italian. Each question in the application report must be answered with:

- a short written response, that can be clearly understood on its own.
- a cross-reference to the Strategy and Action Plan, giving the name and page/paragraph number of the relevant action. Where there is no relevant action, reasons for this should be explained.

✓ Complete, sign and date the application report. Submit in electronic format on the form provided.

### 5 Submission of documents to EUROPARC

One electronic copy of the following documents should be submitted to **EUROPARC**:

- ☐ A signed commitment to the Charter Vision, Mission and Principles
- ☐ A completed Application Report
- ☐ The Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan (which also includes the assessment)
- ☐ A map (1/100,000 scale if possible) showing the boundary of the designated protected area(s) and the overall Charter area.
- ☐ The overall management plan for the protected area (or equivalent) if available
- ☐ A small selection of visitor communication/information material
- ☐ Other relevant documents providing evidence on tourism and management in the area

✓ Prepare the complete set of the application documents. **Send electronically to EUROPARC Federation;** keep copy for dispatch directly to the expert verifier appointed for your protected area, and for your own records



European Parliament, Brussels // **Charter Award Ceremony 2014**

To begin the verification process, the completed application (one set of documents) should be sent to **EUOPARC Federation** (**only electronically, by e-mails, we Transfer or similar tools**). The date of the current deadline should be checked with [info@european-charter.org](mailto:info@european-charter.org). Applications arriving after the official date cannot be considered until a later round of verifications.

On receiving the application, the **EUOPARC Federation** will check it for completeness and appoint an expert in sustainable tourism in protected areas as the verifier for the protected area. Applicants will be notified of the verifier's address and requested to send the second set of application documents directly to him or her.

## 6 Payment of the application fee

A flat rate application fee is charged. The income from this enables **EUOPARC** to meet the costs of administering the Charter programme, including the work of an appointed verifier and the evaluation process. **An agreement can be drawn up between EUOPARC and the protected area authority for this purpose.**

Upon receipt of the full application, **EUOPARC Federation** will send an agreement for the verification process. This should be signed and returned. The total instalment of the verification fee needs to be transferred to **EUOPARC Federation's** bank account before the start of the verification visit.

## 7 Checking documentation and setting up the verification

**EUOPARC** will undertake an initial check of the submitted documentation. The verifier will then work through the documentation in detail and visit the area, in order to assess the compliance with all aspects of the Charter requirements. The verification visit will usually take around two days.

## CHECK LIST

✓ Make budget for the process and pay application fee within the agreed deadline.

✓ Plan verification visit





Fanny Husson, Loges de vigne - Parc Naturel Régional de la Montagne de Reims (FR) // Sustainability in Protected Areas is an ensemble

The verifier will conduct interviews with personnel of the protected area responsible for tourism. Arrangements should also be made for him/her to meet a selection of other stakeholders involved in tourism in the area, including representatives of tourism enterprises.

The verifier will be asked to pay particular attention to the processes that have been adopted in the protected area, including liaison and consultation with stakeholders, the analysis undertaken, the balance and consistency of the strategy and action programme, how it relates to the Charter key topics and actions, and the resources applied to ensure that proposed action is achievable.

The dates, timing and programme for the visit will be agreed with the protected area in advance. It will usually take place in March or April of the year following the submission of the application dossier.

The protected area authority will make all the arrangements for this visit (in liaison **EUROPARC** and the verifier) and will meet the verifier's travel and subsistence expenses by paying directly to the **EUROPARC Federation** a fixed amount. The amount of the verifier's expenses is calculated on the average of the previous year's expenses upon completion of his/her visit. The verifier will pay for the necessary costs and subsequently submit to **EUROPARC** all original receipts for expenses arising from their visit, which are to be reimbursed as soon as possible. It is recommended that verifiers stay in accommodation with a protected-area connection.

## 8 Verifier's report

The verifier will prepare a detailed report, containing the assessment, a recommendation on whether to award the Charter, and a summary of strengths and weaknesses and possible opportunities for improvement. A version of this report will be made available to the protected area authority.

## CHECK LIST

✓ Receive and share decision; plan any identified changes needed



Charter Award Certificate // ***Be proud of your achievement and commit to continual progress with re-evaluations***

## 9 Assessment by the Evaluation Committee

The independent Charter Evaluation Committee will judge the application, informed by the verifier's report. The Committee will make a recommendation to EUOPARC Council, which will inform the protected area authority of its decision, which will be either:

- a) to award the Charter,
- b) to defer the award, subject to specific changes being made. In this case, evidence must be provided that sufficient steps have been taken to rectify problems identified by an agreed time,
- c) to reject the application.

In case of (b) and (c), reasons will be given. In the case of (b), you will be asked to provide evidence that sufficient steps have been taken to rectify the problems identified, by a time to be agreed with you.

## 10 Receipt of the Charter award

Protected areas that are awarded the Charter will be identified publically and arrangements will be made with them for an official signing of the Charter certificate. They will be allowed to use the Charter logo and encouraged to promote the principles and obtain as much media coverage of their success as possible.

## 11 Renewal of the Charter

The Charter is awarded for five years. At the end of this period there needs to be a re evaluation. EUOPARC will contact the protected area two years before the re-evaluation is due. At this point, it will be important to make the necessary budgetary provisions for the re-evaluation process and check that the action plan is on target to be implemented.

## 12 Participate in and benefit from the network

In signing the Charter certificate, protected areas commit themselves to implementing their strategy and action plan together with their partners over the coming five years. At the same time, it is expected that they will also participate in the Charter network. Contributions by all Charter areas to networking activities – contributing their own experience, sharing ideas or problems, attending networking meetings, etc. – are essential to make the network lively and useful, and to bring real added-value for all Charter areas.

**At the same time, the network is a basic tool for EUOPARC and Charter areas to maintain contact during the five years following the award. The commitment to participate in the network is included on the certificate signed by all new Charter protected areas.**





# 5 SUSTAINABLE PARTNERS IN CHARTER AREAS

*Parc National du Mercantour (FR) // Working with partners is an adventure*

The engagement of local businesses is vital to the effective development and management of sustainable tourism. They must be represented on the sustainable tourism forum and be involved in the preparation and implementation of the sustainable tourism strategy and action plan.

While the above situation must pertain in all Charter Areas, a recommended development of the Charter, is to enable certain tourism businesses working in partnership with the protected area authority to receive individual recognition under the Part II of the Charter.

Businesses recognised and assessed for their sustainability practices receive the following benefits:

- Closer engagement with protected area authorities;
- Right to use the Charter logo;
- Visibility on Charter websites;
- Engagement with training and marketing opportunities as may be developed;
- Networking with other businesses recognised by the Charter;
- Possible engagement with projects and funding.

**Part II is only available to businesses in areas that have been awarded the Charter under Part I.**

Recognising sustainable partners under the Charter for Sustainable Tourism is only available to businesses in areas that are in an awarded Charter Area, which has in place agreed certification process.

It is up to the protected area authority to decide whether to implement Part II and offer it as an option to its businesses.

**The overall requirements of EUROPARC for Part II are that recognised tourism businesses should:**

- Commit to the vision, mission and principles of the Charter;
- Relate to the local sustainable tourism forum and support the implementation of the sustainable tourism strategy and action plan;
- Demonstrate compliance with relevant quality and sustainability criteria or certifications;
- Have their own sustainability management plan for their business that is agreed with the protected area authority;
- Maintain close relationships with the protected area authority and other businesses and stakeholders engaged with the Charter.

These requirements are further interpreted and developed by different countries to suit their local circumstances.

Protected area authorities that wish to pursue Part II of the Charter should contact EUROPARC to clarify the situation pertaining in their country and what may be required.

**Individual businesses with a potential interest in the Charter should contact their protected area authority.**



# 6 SUSTAINABLE TOUR OPERATORS IN CHARTER AREAS

Having created sustainable destinations with public, business and communities working together, agreeing sustainable practices with tour operators who bring visitors to the protected areas, completes the sustainable tourism charter cycle .

This part of the charter process provides an opportunity for operators that organise tours to and within protected areas to be recognised under the Charter. This **requires tour operators to commit to the Charter vision, mission and principles and to demonstrate significant adherence to sustainability criteria in their own operations and management.** They should also be engaged in partnership working with protected area authorities, communities and local businesses.

The **French** and **Spanish EUROPARC sections** have led the way in promoting and implementing the methodology to certify sustainable practices of tour operators working in protected areas.

Tour operators working under this framework will agree to work in partnership with the authority responsible for the strategy in the protected area and the local tourist-service providers. This will involve analysing the compatibility of its products with the objectives of the area. The visitor flow they attract to an area must respect and not damage the heritage resources that the tourists come to see.

Working with the Charter full brings a range of benefits to tour operators. These are;

- be recognised at European level,
- develop new business opportunities,
- strengthen the quality of its products,
- increase visitor satisfaction.



Parc national des Ecrins





European Parliament, Brussels // **Charter Award Ceremony 2013 - Recognition at the highest level**

## 1 Register and pay the fee

## 2 Ensure you are a member of the EUROPARC Federation

All Charter areas are required to be members of the EUROPARC Federation. Protected areas which are not already EUROPARC members will be requested to join the Federation upon registering as candidate protected areas.

## 3 Submit a full application dossier within the set deadline

## 4 Pay the required verification fees

The process of running and co-ordinating the Charter carries considerable costs, to which participating protected areas contribute. The costs for participating protected areas are summarised as follows:

### Protected area Charter candidate

- Registration fee (for registration as a candidate protected area): **€500**
- Costs of travel, accommodation and board for the visiting verifier: **will be calculated according to the expenses range of the previous years<sup>1</sup>**
- Verification fee (for administration of the application and verification process): **€5000 + VAT<sup>2</sup>** (as applicable)

<sup>1</sup>; <sup>4</sup> the process of reimbursement of the verifier has to be agreed with the EUROPARC Federation in advance

### Re-evaluation of charter area

(following successful verification)

- Re-evaluation, i.e. evaluation for renewal of Charter membership (after 5 years): **€5000 + VAT<sup>3</sup>**
- Costs of travel, accommodation and board for the visiting verifier: will be calculated according to the expenses range of the previous years<sup>4</sup>

## 5 Verification visit takes place

## 6 Evaluation Committee meets and assess

## 7 Get your award

by participating to the Award Ceremony of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

## 8 Fully participate in the network

## 9 Plan for re-evaluation

by making the necessary budgetary provisions for the re-evaluation process and checking that the action plan is on target to be implemented.

<sup>3</sup>; <sup>3</sup> Process administered by EUROPARC Federation, VAT subject to clarification on where this is due in each individual case.

# OUTLINE

The core element of the Charter is working in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to develop a common sustainable tourism strategy and an action plan on the basis of a thorough situation analysis. The aim of all Charter projects and activities is the protection of the natural and cultural heritage and the continuous improvement of tourism in the Protected Area in terms of the environment, local population and businesses as well as visitors.

73 M people visit European Charter protected areas annually. A great audience to see how sustainable tourism can work in practice, 7 M ha of N2000 site protected under European law are managed by parks with the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism, 700 local products are supported by parks and businesses operating under sustainable tourism principles, 1.4 M young people learn yearly about how protected areas manage these places sustainably with an average of 28 648 educational visits / area .



*Magic Numbers. 2014, EUROPARC Federation*

These numbers show how with 20 years experience, the "Charter" has been shown to be a useful and important tool that delivers social, environmental and economic benefits and indeed can be described as

a model of governance that delivers Protected Areas as sustainable tourism destinations.



# FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

**Please contact**

**EUROPARC Federation**

[info@european-charter.org](mailto:info@european-charter.org)

or [office@europarc.org](mailto:office@europarc.org)

Tel: +49 941 59935980

For further details on the Charter see also

**[www.europarc.org](http://www.europarc.org)**

**[www.european-charter.org](http://www.european-charter.org)**



**EUROPARC Federation**

Waffnergasse 6, 93047 Regensburg  
Germany