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Ciências Sociais e Humanas

**A Marketing Strategy & Communications
Action Plan for the *European Charter for
Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas***

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Bárbara Sofia do Espírito Santo Vasques Pais

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Orientador: Prof. Doutor Paulo Duarte

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Resumo alargado

Nas últimas décadas a indústria do turismo cresceu a um ritmo sem precedentes em todo o mundo, com as áreas protegidas entre os destinos turísticos mais visitados. Há uma necessidade crescente em abordar o turismo a partir de uma perspetiva sustentável, capaz de gerar riqueza e bem-estar social para as comunidades locais sem comprometer a proteção dos valores naturais e culturais que são, muitas vezes, a razão da chegada de visitantes. Simultaneamente, a Comissão Europeia reconhece o valor do turismo enquanto atividade económica geradora de múltiplos benefícios para as comunidades rurais, e está a implementar medidas que permitam a exploração do turismo de forma sustentada, especialmente aumentando o seu potencial para a criação de empregos verdes (Comissão Europeia, 2017, p 14).

Para apoiar as áreas protegidas europeias a terem um papel ativo no desenvolvimento sustentável do seu território, a Federação EUROPARC, a maior organização não-governamental a trabalhar com as áreas protegidas europeias, criou em 2001 a *Carta Europeia do Turismo Sustentável em Áreas Protegidas* (ECSTPA). Trata-se de uma metodologia que apoia as áreas protegidas a tornarem-se destinos sustentáveis, baseada num conjunto de normas e indicadores de performance. As áreas protegidas são assim estimuladas a iniciar um processo participativo com as autoridades locais, com os empresários afetos ao turismo e a comunidade, no sentido de definir uma visão territorial conjunta para o desenvolvimento turístico do território, e um plano de ação a cinco anos para a sua implementação.

Apesar de ter sido aplicada em 164 destinos em 20 países europeus, a metodologia carece de visibilidade e reconhecimento entre o setor de turismo e a comunidade em geral. Uma vez que foi concebida para ser uma ferramenta interna para os gestores de áreas protegidas, durante os últimos 17 anos, poucos esforços e recursos foram alocados à promoção da ECSTPA. No entanto, o recente crescimento da rede, com o envolvimento de centenas de empresas na indústria do turismo que trabalham com as áreas protegidas certificadas, trouxe uma mudança de expectativas: parceiros e áreas protegidas começaram a exigir uma maior visibilidade e reconhecimento da metodologia.

Este projeto, requerido pela Federação EUROPARC, tem como objetivo analisar as necessidades e expectativas da rede de destinos e parceiros sustentáveis a seguir a metodologia, de forma a criar o primeiro plano estratégico de marketing e plano de ação da ECSTPA. A metodologia de trabalho incluiu uma extensa revisão de literatura que enquadrou o valor das áreas protegidas e o potencial da ECSTPA para a implementação dos “Objetivos de Desenvolvimento Sustentável”, e permitiu situar a metodologia entre os seus principais concorrentes. Seguidamente, foi iniciado um longo processo participativo que incluiu entrevistas pessoais, um estudo qualitativo das expectativas e necessidades das áreas protegidas que implementam a ECSTPA, que culminou na criação de uma análise SWOT para três dimensões da ECSTPA: a perceção do custo da ECSTPA, o produto, e a comunicação.

A análise interna revelou a necessidade de criar uma ligação mais forte entre os membros da rede de áreas que seguem a metodologia, de forma a capitalizar o conhecimento existente e alavancar os benefícios da ECSTPA. Notória foi também a necessidade de melhorar a visibilidade da ECSTPA através da criação de uma identidade gráfica mais atraente e definição de um posicionamento coerente. Desta forma, o desenvolvimento da estratégia de marketing inclui a proposta de um *rebranding* (ou de reformulação da marca) da ECSTPA, com a criação de uma nova identidade gráfica e valores da marca.

De forma a garantir um processo participativo aberto aos membros da rede da ECSTPA, foi estabelecida uma comissão de comunicação composta por representantes das áreas protegidas que seguem a metodologia e especialistas em comunicação e turismo sustentável. Através de quatro workshops, num total de oito dias de trabalho, os resultados de cada sessão serviram de base para as sessões seguintes, garantindo uma continuidade do processo e máximo envolvimento de diversos membros da rede e da comissão de comunicação.

O processo participativo implementado revelou o grande interesse da rede em participar nas atividades promocionais da ECSTPA. Desta forma, tornou-se evidente que ações que potenciem o fortalecimento da rede de destinos e parceiros sustentáveis é um passo fundamental para o sucesso da implementação da estratégia de marketing e do plano de ação proposto. Nos próximos quatro anos, a implementação da estratégia e do plano de ação exigirá a ativação da rede interna; a capacitação dos membros da rede através de instrumentos de aprendizagem online e sessões de formação em comunicação; a criação de novas ferramentas de comunicação para aumentar o reconhecimento da marca; e o desenvolvimento de alianças estratégicas com o setor de turismo.

Palavras-chave

Estratégia de marketing, turismo sustentável, processos participativos, marketing para organizações sem fins lucrativos, comunicação e marketing, áreas protegidas, desenvolvimento sustentável, turismo em parques nacionais

Abstract

Over the past decades, the tourism industry has grown at an unprecedented rate worldwide, with protected areas among the most visited destinations. The European Union is calling for the “sustainable use of sites, that benefits local communities and economies, **particularly by exploiting the potential for sustainable tourism** and green jobs” (European Commission, 2017, p 14). To support European Protected Areas having an active role in the promotion of sustainable development based on tourism, the EUROPARC Federation, the largest pan-European non-governmental organisation working with protected areas, created the *European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (ECSTPA)* in 2001, a methodology that guides Protected Areas towards becoming sustainable destinations. Despite implemented in 164 destinations across 20 European countries, the methodology lacks visibility and recognition among the tourism sector and wider community.

This project aimed to analyse the needs and expectations of the internal network of sustainable destinations and the external positioning of the ECSTPA among its competitors, in order to propose a marketing strategy and a rebranding of the methodology. After the literature review that framed the value and opportunities of the ECSTPA, an extensive participatory process was initiated, which included personal interviews, a qualitative survey to the members of the network, the creation of an expert commission and several workshops. Through the internal and external analysis, the need to create a stronger network who is able to capitalise the existing knowledge and to leverage the benefits of being awarded the ECSTPA became evident. In addition, the lack of and attractive graphic identity and coherent positioning called for a full rebranding of the methodology, which is proposed with the project.

The results of the participatory process revealed the high interest of the network in taking part in the promotional activities of the ECSTPA. Empowering the network of sustainable destinations and partners awarded is thus a fundamental step for the successful implementation of the marketing strategy and the action plan proposed. Over the next four years, the implementation of the strategy and action plan will require a higher engagement of the internal network through capacity building tools and trainings; the delivery of new communication tools; and the development of strategic alliances with the tourism sector.

Keywords

Marketing strategy, sustainable tourism, participatory processes, marketing for non-profit organisations, communications and marketing, protected areas, sustainable development, tourism in national parks

List of Acronyms

BfN	Bundesamt für Naturschutz
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	United Nations Conference of Parties
DG	Directorate-General
ECSTPA	European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas
EAP	Environment Action Programme
EEA	European Environment Agency
EF	EUROPARC Federation
EU	European Union
EC	European Commission
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GSTC	Global Sustainable Tourism Council
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MaB	Man and Biosphere Programme
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals Sustainable Development Goals
VDN	Verband Deutscher Naturparke e.V.
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNEP-WCMC	United Nations World Conservation Monitoring Centre
WDPA	World Database on Protected Areas

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Protected Areas in Europe play a fundamental role in safeguarding biological diversity, protecting endangered habitats, species and cultural landscapes while providing a wealth of ecosystem services from which European citizens highly benefit. These spaces, legally protected, are visited by thousands of people on a daily basis with reasons ranging from simple nature enjoyment to outdoor sports and recreational activities. However, if not managed properly, visitor pressure can threaten the fragile ecosystems that are meant to be protected. With tourist flows reaching unprecedented values worldwide, and with Protected Areas among the most visited nature destinations, there is an urgent need to address tourism from a sustainable perspective.

When in 1993, the EUROPARC Federation launched the brochure *“Loving them to death? Sustainable Tourism in Europe’s Nature and National Parks”* (EUROPARC, 2001) it was clear that tourism could have negative impacts on nature, people and the local communities. On the other hand, if properly managed with the wide engagement of local actors, tourism can bring a new opportunity for socio-economic development whilst maintaining biodiversity values and increasing awareness for nature conservation. In fact, over the recent decades, tourism became “an economic activity capable of generating growth and employment in the EU, while contributing to development and economic and social integration.” (European Commission, 2010, p 4).

To support European Protected Areas having an active role in the promotion of sustainable development based on tourism, the EUROPARC Federation created the *European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (ECSTPA)*, a **methodology that guides protected areas towards implementing a sustainable tourism approach to the territory, leveraging social and economic benefits for local communities, creating new nature-based opportunities, whilst safeguarding the environment.**

1.1. Relevance of the project

During centuries, European landscapes were shaped by man with intensive human occupation, and activities such as farming, industry, transporting, forestry and housing highly contributed to the decrease of biological diversity and the living conditions of those in and around urban centres. Contrasting with the untamed national parks of North America and Australia, Europe is predominantly constituted by cultural landscapes (EUROPARC, 2009), where human presence is inevitable and, in several cases, potentiated. In many countries, protected areas were established not only to protect biodiversity but as an urge to incorporate better air, water and

living conditions to citizens, and provide them a recreational space - it was against this background that the first **nature and regional parks were created** (VDN, 2017).

Nowadays, European protected areas are not only seen as natural repositories of biodiversity but are expected to **bolster economic development** at the local, regional and national level, contributing for the creation of **new job opportunities** and to support the development of a **green economy**¹ (European Commission, 2017). The ECSTPA is contributing for the transition towards sustainable development and to the creation of social cohesion in rural territories.

Despite designed as an internal tool for protected area administrations, the paradigm has shifted greatly over the last decade. Thanks to the successful application of the ECSTPA in hundreds of protected areas across 20 countries, and the expansion of the methodology to the private sector, network members started asking for a better recognition of the methodology and urged for a more active network.

1.2 Purpose and objectives

The purpose of the project was to conduct a throughout analysis of the existing network of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, in order to propose a marketing strategy and action plan capable to answer to the needs and expectations of the network. With over seventeen years of implementation, this is the first strategy that the ECSTPA has ever seen, and it aims at increasing its international recognition and reputation. The strategy proposes a **renewed graphic identity** for the ECSTPA; **defines a new brand positioning and story**; establishes strategic objectives for the next four years; determines activities to be implemented by the network and assigns responsibilities.

It is necessary to mention that the EUROPARC Federation, as a non-governmental organisation funded by its members, lacks the financial and human capacity to compete for visibility with other largely funded organisations. Therefore, the marketing strategy and action plan seek more creative approaches to deliver results, based on people involvement and partnerships. In fact, *bringing people together* and *promoting international cooperation* is at the core of the Federation's work. Therefore, the marketing strategy also aims at **strengthening the network of areas awarded, and to empower its members to become active advocates for the ECSTPA**. The strategy **identifies key target audiences and strategic objectives**, while the

¹ Green economy refers to “different economic models where health can be created without harming the environment” http://ec.europa.eu/environment/basics/green-economy/index_en.htm

communications plan discloses the roles and responsibilities assigned to each member of the internal network.

Finally, the strategy also aims at increasing the connection between the network members, especially providing opportunities for sustainable destinations awarded to exchange good practice and ideas; and for sustainable partners and tours operators to start having access to areas awarded in other regions and countries.

The new brand of the ECSTPA was already publicly presented² (in October 2017) and is being used by the network since then. In addition, the ECSTPA Marketing Strategy and Communications Action Plan has been approved by the Directorate and Council of the EUROPARC Federation and its implementation is about to start.

1.3 Methodology

Participatory processes are on the basis of the ECSTPA. The methodology requires the creation of a permanent stakeholders' forum to draft the strategy for the territory. Inspired by the ECSTPA methodology, the EUROPARC directorate initiated an open participatory process to define the strategy and action plan, and define the basis for the rebranding.

The process lasted three years, engaged over 50 individuals both belonging to the network and external communication experts, used several tools to collect information, and accounted a total of 8 days of participatory planning, divided into four working sessions.

The process kick-started during the *IX Charter Network Meeting*, in 2015, that took place in Portugal. The *Charter Network Meeting* is organised every two years and is host by one of the protected areas awarded the ECSTPA. It is the biggest event for the network, as participants have the opportunity to come together, exchange experience and inspiration, and further develop technical aspects of the methodology.

a) Charter Network Meeting 2015

In 2015, the first technical two-days workshop focused on the communications and rebranding of the ECSTPA took place. There, the core values of the ECSTPA brand were discussed and the participants (mainly protected area professionals working in the implementation of the ECSTPA in their territories) have helped to **identify the values of the ECSTPA; to find the positioning**

² News article about the launch of the new brand of the ECSTPA
<https://www.europarc.org/news/2017/11/new-logo-charter/>

of the ECSTPA brand; and discussed about potential colours and visuals to be used in the new graphic identity. The workshop was led and organised by EUROPARC Director, whilst the author, Bárbara Pais joined as a participant.

b) Personal interviews with the Evaluation Committee

In August 2015, four members of the Evaluation committee were interviewed. The Evaluation Committee is responsible for analysing annually the applications and decide on the areas awarded. The objective of the interviews was to analyse, with this group of experts who were involved in the development of methodology since 2001, where they would like to see the ECSTPA in the next ten years. With an informal approach and a series of open questions, the author analysed their views and expectations regarding a new graphic identity and a marketing plan. It was clear that there was a common wish to leverage the ECSTPA's recognition, showing it as an outstanding process for parks but also for visitors. The interviews provided also input on the main aspects of the graphic identity that should be kept, e.g the colour scheme, to provide some continuity with the previous logotype, and that could be skipped, such as the complete name of methodology.

c) Communications Commission - 1st meeting

Later in 2016, a **Communications and Marketing commission³** was set up, this time with the direct management of the author, Bárbara Pais, who led the process from that moment on. In total, 10 professionals were invited, representing:

- Three staff members of the EUROPARC Directorate team (Director and Communications Team)
- One representative of a regional agency working with the ECSTPA
- Two park technicians working with the ECSTPA
- One representative from a municipality with expertise in sustainable tourism
- three external experts in communications and marketing, with experience in protected areas, communication in NGOs and sustainability

The members of the commission were also chosen to represent the widest range of nationalities where the ECSTPA is implemented. During a two days meeting, that took place in Edinburgh in October 2016, the members of the Commission looked at the outputs of the workshop in

³ The description and terms of reference of the commission are available at <https://www.europarc.org/communications-and-marketing-commission/>

Portugal; analysed the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities of the ECSTPA. Finally, summing up the inputs of the first workshop and the interviews, a briefing for the designers for the new graphic identity was drafted.

d) Charter Network Meeting 2017

Throughout 2016 and early 2017, the author followed up the design process, bridging the expectations of the network, the council and the EUROPARC Directorate, with the outsourced design company. The new graphic identity was launched at the *X Charter Network Meeting*⁴, that took place in Italy in October 2017.

Another communications workshop took place, but this time to lay the foundations of the marketing plan. The 4 participants, that came from protected areas following the methodology, focused on the key targets of the marketing plan, and analysed their specific needs. The group looked also potential activities and responsible within the network to implement it.

e) Survey to protected areas awarded

After the network meeting in 2017, the author prepared a survey with 10 open questions, to analyse their expectations towards the new marketing plan and their needs in terms of tools and communications activities (Annex 1).

f) Communications Commission second meeting

In February 2018, the members of the communications commission, and some newly invited members representing partners and tour operators working with the ECSTPA gathered for a final two-days workshop. The fifteen participants built on the outputs from the Charter Network meeting 2017 and took into consideration the comments coming from the survey to the network. During the workshop, three working groups were formed based on the participants' experience, and a comprehensive analysis to tools and activities for each key target group were drafted.

The results of the final workshop were compiled, and the drafted strategy was shared online with all the participants, that commented and gave further input to the final version of the proposed marketing strategy.

⁴ News article about the X Charter Network Meeting:

<https://www.europarc.org/news/2017/11/charter-network-meeting-2017/>

1.4 Structure of the Project

Chapter 1 introduces the context for the creation of a marketing plan for the ECSTPA and identifies the purpose and the objectives of this project. It further details the methodology used, describing summarily the several participatory processes that took place between 2015 and 2018, and provides an overview of the structure of the project.

Chapter 2 presents a bibliography review framing the evolution of the concept of sustainable development towards the creation of the current sustainable development goals. It is followed by a deep analysis of the creation of protected areas in Europe, ranging from the first instruments for nature protection, to the typology of protected areas and their potential for hosting tourism activities. From nature conservation to sustainable tourism, the challenges and opportunities for protected areas are explained, introducing the context in which the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas was created. Finally, an overview of the history of the ECSTPA and its creation is presented.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 encompass the practical dimension of the project. In Chapter 3, a thorough analysis to the Charter both at internal and external level is presented, culminating with a SWOT analysis that serves as the basis for the development of the strategy. In Chapter 4, the strategic objectives and target audiences are presented, as well as the new brand and positioning proposal for the ECSTPA. Chapter 5 - the Communications Action Plan, sets up communications priorities for each marketing-mix dimension; identifies roles and responsibilities within the internal ECSTPA network and finalises with a detailed action plan and timeline. The Strategy and Action Plan are valid for a period of 4 years (2018-2022).

Chapter 6 presents the final considerations of the process.

Chapter 2 - Theoretical Framework

2.1 The origins of Sustainable Development

When in 1987 the “Our Common Future” report (also known as the “Brundtland Report”) was published, the *United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development*⁵ (UNWCED) called for “a global agenda for change” and introduced, for the first time, the concept of Sustainable Development: “a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UNWCED, 1987, pp. 43). The report drew worldwide attention to the connection between economic growth and its impact on the physical environment, unravelling how “society may, in many ways, compromise its ability to meet the essential needs of its people in the future - by overexploiting resources” (UNWCED, 1987, pp. 43).

Addressing the challenges of poverty, inequality, food, energy, over-consumption, pollution, biodiversity loss, industry and human welfare, the report defined principles to reshape business and technology towards incorporating environmental considerations in decision making, to build up a new era of economic growth where social needs are met and the environment safeguarded.

2.1.1 Agenda 21, the first global action plan towards Sustainability

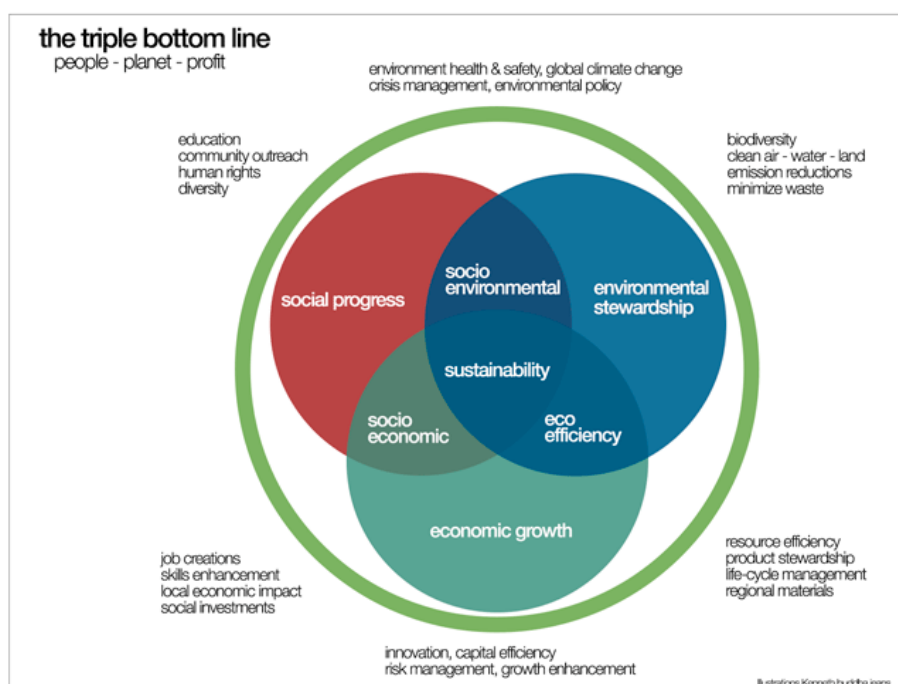
Five years later, in 1992, the United Nations “Conference on Environment and Development - Earth Summit” that took place in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), was highly influenced by the Brundtland Report. For the first time, nations across the globe came to a consensus: the environment could no longer be seen separately from the humanity’s social and economic well-being. Over 178 Governments, representing 98% of the population adopted the Agenda 21 and signed the Convention on Biological Diversity, a comprehensive plan of action that covers all areas in which human activities impact the environment (see 2.2.3).

The Agenda 21 was the first framework for governments to operate at regional and national level towards a sustainable development, but it did not take long until private organisations

⁵ The World Commission on Environment and Development was convened in 1983 by the United Nations with the purpose of conducting a research and extensive external dialogue for the production of the Report. The commission was chaired by Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway, and the report was named after him.

started implementing sustainability measures. Indeed, only two years later, in 1994, a British consultant called John Elkington, introduced the **triple-bottom-line** term based on the triad of sustainability: profit, planet, people. Elkington and its consultancy created a scorecard to measure an organisation's performance beyond the traditional measure of profit: responsible organisations would be those with a balanced scorecard in the financial, social and environmental dimensions.

Figure 1 - The Triple bottom line



Source: <http://www.foresightguide.com/spreckley-triple-bottom-line/>

2.1.2 Social and environmental crisis: from fighting poverty to climate change

At the turn of the millennium, world leaders came together to set time-bound targets to eradicate poverty, improve livelihoods in developing countries (in terms of health, education, food, water, and sanitation), while ensuring environmental protection. The *United Nations*

*Millennium Declaration*⁶ called for “**a shared responsibility to manage worldwide economic and social development**” and “**prudence in the management of all living species and natural resources**” (UN, 2000, p 2). The eight *Millennium Development Goals*⁷ remained the overarching world framework between 2000 and 2015, having helped over one billion people lift out of poverty (Ki-Moon in United Nations, 2015).

However, deep social challenges remain unsolved and the effects of climate change have aggravated the situation worldwide, especially in the most vulnerable regions. According to the *Millennium Development Goals Report* (United Nations, 2015), not only the global emissions of carbon dioxide increased by over 50% since 1990, but also the total carbon stock held in forest biomass dropped abruptly with the intense deforestation and unsustainable forest management seen over the past decades. By inhibiting forests to perform their natural role of carbon sinks and air purifiers, and with the growing concentrations of greenhouse gases, the global temperature is increasing abruptly. The faster and the more intense our interference in the climate system tends to be, the more abrupt and unexpected responses - and thus more serious the impacts - will be seen (Santos, 2012). The establishment of natural areas legally protected is one of the key steps to halt the destruction of habitats.

Simultaneously, population growth and the consequent increased demand for food and other materials is leading to an **overexploitation of resources and accelerating biological diversity loss at an unprecedented scale**. Agriculture, for instance, is simultaneously culprit and victim, contributing to the environmental crisis with intensive and unsustainable farming practices, but also severely threatened - as land, the very basis of human existence is a scarce, limited and fragile resource (Santos in *Environment at the Crossroads*, 2010). These conditions may create long-lasting changes in the climate system with severe and irreversible consequences for people and ecosystems (UN, 2015), that “**could drag human civilisation, as a whole, for the first time in history, into an ontological abyss**” (Soromenho-Marques in *Environment at the Crossroads*, 2010).

⁶ The *United Nations Millennium Declaration* was endorsed by the world leaders at the Millennium Summit, a 3-day gathering that took place in New York, between the 6-8 September 2000. The Declaration set the values, principles and objectives that would be the key drivers of the international agenda until 2015. <http://www.un.org/en/development/devagenda/millennium.shtml>

⁷ <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>

2.1.3 The Sustainable Development Goals

If in 2000 the driver of the United Nations was to create a fair, free and livable world for mankind, in 2015 the aim changed towards reaching a **universal climate agreement**. After decades of negotiation since the *Earth Summit in 1992* and several attempts (such as the *Our Common Future Declaration* in 2012 or the *Kyoto Protocol*), the Paris Agreement⁸ was finally endorsed at the *United Nations Conference of Parties (COP 21)* in France. It aims to be a global response to the threat of climate change, by keeping the global temperature rise below the 2 degrees Celsius and by strengthening the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change (Paris Agreement, UN, 2015). The *Paris Agreement* thus requires all Parties to perform their best efforts towards implementing the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (General Assembly UN, 2015). A new set of goals was created, this time not especially addressing developing countries as the *Millennium Goals* were, but as a **worldwide framework to work towards a sustainable, liveable and healthy planet**. The seventeen *Sustainable Development Goals*⁹ are aimed to be followed and incorporated by Nations and regional governments, but also by privates, non-governmental organisations and the wider civil society over the next 15 years. The contribution of the ECSTPA to the Sustainable Development Goals is further explored in Chapter 3, item 3.1.1 *Macro Perspective*.

Figure 2 - The Sustainable Development Goals



Source: www.un.org/sustainable-development-goals

⁸ The Paris Agreement entered into force on 4 November 2016, despite the drop off of some countries.
<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>

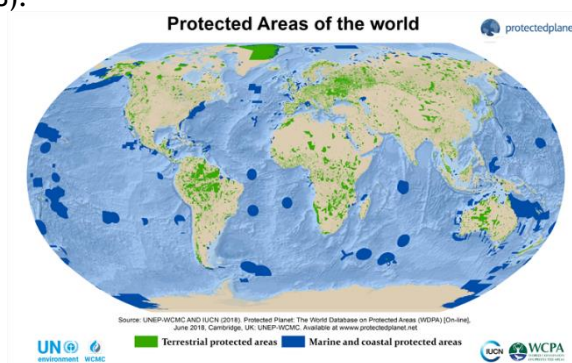
⁹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

2.2 The role of Protected Areas for Sustainable Development

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)¹⁰ describes a protected area as a “clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values” (IUCN, 2008, p.8). Protected areas thus vary widely in size, governance type and management objectives (UNEP-WCMC and IUCN, 2014), but also in the designation. These include national, regional, nature and periurban parks, protected landscapes, nature reserves, wilderness areas, Natura 2000 sites, marine protected areas, anthropological reserves, Biosphere reserves, World Heritage (natural) Sites, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, among other possible national designations (IUCN, 1994; UNEP-WCMC and IUCN, 2008).

According to the *World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA)*¹¹ in June 2018, there are 234,793 Protected Areas across 245 countries and territories, covering over 14,7% of the world’s terrestrial area. Despite the legal status, a recent study (Jones *et al*, 2018) has shown that 32,8% of the protected land (corresponding to 6 million square kilometers) is **under intense human pressure** and more than half (57%) **contain only** land under intense human pressure - specially in Western Europe, southern Asia and Africa. Only 10% of the analysed areas are completely free of intense human pressure, occurring mainly in the remotest areas of Russia and Canada. In the light of these recent results, it is crucial that protected areas take “robust measures of human pressure and ecological condition” and “combine better management practices in the land beyond protected areas, to ensure nature conservation goals are fully achieved in the long term” (Jones *et al*, 2018).

Figure 3 - World Database on Protected Areas



Source: www.protectedplanet.net, June 2018

¹⁰ IUCN, known before as the World Conservation Union, was founded in 1948 and is the world’s largest and most diverse environmental network. <https://www.iucn.org>

¹¹ The WDPA is the most comprehensive global special database, developed by UNEP-WCMC and IUCN. <https://www.protectedplanet.net/>

2.2.1 The creation of Protected Areas in Europe

Long before the discussion about sustainable development started, scientists and nature conservationists have been warning about the impact of human activities on biological diversity and urging for the protection of fragile species and habitats. In fact, the first National Park of the United States of America (and possibly the first in the world) was created in 1872 to protect its unique natural values from human exploitation and private development¹². In Europe, the first National Parks were established in Sweden in 1909, followed by Switzerland in 1914, and after the First World War also in Spain, Poland and Italy (EUROPARC, 2009). These first parks were established in places of **astonishing natural beauty and difficult human access**, following the model of American National Parks, but were often isolated initiatives within the countries, covering small areas of land and lacking connectivity to other areas. All social and economic initiatives were then considered incompatible with the national park purpose of safeguarding biological diversity and were seen as threats for its conservation and landscape protection objectives (EEA, 2012).

The number of national parks following this model continued to expand in the early 20th century and was only after its second half that the biggest growth of protected areas occurred. New types were designated, such as nature reserves (EEA, 2012) and nature, regional and landscape parks (VDN, 2017), reflecting a turning point in the history of European Protected Areas. Possibly influenced by the first international legal instruments for nature protection and sustainable development (see 2.2.3 *Legal Instruments for Environmental Protection*), society started perceiving **protected areas' importance beyond biodiversity protection**, acknowledging them as critical components of a life support system that **provides goods and ecosystem services** to its local communities (EEA, 2012).

In addition, with the perspective that “protected areas would only be successful if well integrated into national life” (IUCN, 1994, p 8), **management models shifted from exclusive biological conservation towards satisfying the needs of local communities**, often involving social scientists, local communities and other stakeholders in its planning and management - and highly contrasting the previous technocratic and government-run approach (EEA, 2012). Protected areas were then expected to be **accessible for fruition and recreation** and became places for **environmental education and nature awareness**. In addition to the environmental and societal values, protected areas were expected to **bolster economic development** at the local, regional and national level, contributing to **create new job opportunities** and support

¹² The Yellowstone National Park is considered the worlds' first National Park <https://www.nps.gov/yell/learn/historyculture/yellowstoneestablishment.htm>

the development of a **green economy**¹³ (European Commission, 2017), especially in rural communities. Table 1 reflects the change of perceptions towards the use and benefits of protected areas.

Table 1 - Changing perceptions about protected areas

Dimensions	Beginning of 20 th Century	Currently
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set aside for nature conservation - Spectacular wildlife and scenic protection - About protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Run with socio-economic objectives - Often set up for cultural, economic and scientific reasons - Also about restoration and rehabilitation
Governance	- Run by the central government	- Run by many partners
Financing	- Paid by taxpayer	- Paid for from many sources
Wider context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Developed separately - Viewed as “islands” of biodiversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planned as part of a regional, national and international systems - Developed as networks, buffered and connected through green corridors
Perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A national asset of natural beauty - To stay as it is 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A community asset for sustainable development - “Experimental laboratories”¹⁴ for new models of urbanisation
Management perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reactive, within a short time-scale - Technocratic management - Managed by scientists and experts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adaptative management, with long-scale perspective - Management with political consideration - Managed by multi-skilled individuals
<i>Contribution to Sustainable Development</i>		
People - Social development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planned and managed against local people - Disregarding local opinions - Restricted access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Manage to meet the needs of local people - Need to earn a “licence to operate” by the community - Spaces for recreation and education

¹³ Green economy refers to “different economic models where health can be created without harming the environment” http://ec.europa.eu/environment/basics/green-economy/index_en.htm

¹⁴ The shift from a “defensive” (nature conservation) to a “pro-active” model of protected areas in the context of urban territories is explored by Emma Salizzoni (OEKOM, 2016, pp 47-58)

Profit - Economic development	- Economic activities are seen as an impediment of conservation objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generating revenue to sustain their own operation - Boosting local and national economies through tourism and (minor) supply of forest products, fish or other resources
Planet - Environmental development	- Safeguarding species and landscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing environmental resilience against the impacts of climate change - Delivering ecosystem services - Ensuring biological diversity

Adapted from Philips, 2003 (in EEA, 2012).

In addition to the establishment of protected areas throughout the 20th century, in 1994 the European Commission, based on the *European Nature Directives*¹⁵, asked member States to identify sites according to precise scientific criteria, to ensure a favourable conservation status of specific fragile species and habitats¹⁶. The Natura 2000 is the network of these selected sites across the twenty-eight member states, covering 18% of the EU's land area and almost 6% of its marine territory¹⁷ and in many cases overlapping the pre-existing national designations.

2.2.2 Types of Protected Areas and the potential for tourism activities

In 1994, IUCN defined six management categories for protected areas based on their primary management objectives, which were reviewed and updated in 2008. The categories have been widely used by world governments for the purpose of planning and reporting, although its adoption is self-declared and not verifiable by IUCN. Table 2 describes the six categories in terms of its management priorities and potential for tourism and recreation activities.

¹⁵ Referring to the *Birds Directive* (1979) and the *Habitats Directive* (1992), created to ensure the protection of migratory bird species and fragile habitats among European Member States. The financial instruments of the European Union for nature conservation are exclusively applicable to the Natura 2000 network. http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm

¹⁶ The Natura 2000 sites encompass Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) in compliance with the *Habitats Directive*, art.3 and 4; and Special Bird Areas (SPAs) complying with the *Birds Directive*, art. 4.

¹⁷ The network of the Natura 2000 sites can be seen at <http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/>

Table 2 - The IUCN Management Categories for Protected Areas and the potential for tourism activities

IUCN Category	Management priorities	Potential for Tourism Activities
Category I Strict Nature Reserve (Ia) or Wilderness area (Ib)	Managed mainly for science or wilderness protection	Limited human access, apart from the indigenous communities (Ia) or local communities (Ib).
Category II National Park	Ecosystem protection and recreation	Visitors' access might have limitations. It has a high demand in the market, as "National Park" is a worldwide known brand.
Category III Natural Monument	Conservation of natural features	Normally of very small dimension. Plans encourage visitors, and in many cases in large numbers.
Category IV Habitats/ Species management area	Conservation through active management	Relatively small areas and certainly not completely functioning ecosystems. In terms of visitation, the focus is to educate and raise awareness on the species aimed to be protected, and provide urban dwellers a regular contact with nature.
Category V Protected Landscape/ Seascape	Landscape/ seascape conservation and recreation	Comprises cultural landscapes and usually contains sizable settled communities, thus human pressure is comparatively greater, both in terms of potential illegal use and visitor pressure
Category VI Managed Resource Protected Area	Sustainable use of natural resources	Might include internal zoning and management regimes to support sustainable use, but focused on providing opportunities for enjoyment, well-being and socio-economic activity through recreation and tourism.

Adapted from IUCN, 1994 and IUCN, 2008

Except for IUCN category I, all other categories are, with or without limitations, open for visitation. Jones *et al* (2018) showed that IUCN categories I and II with stricter human use have a lower proportion of area under intense human pressure, against those permitting a wider range of human activities. It is worth to notice that in some cases recreation and tourism are considered main objectives for the protected area, both for educational purposes and for its potential to boost socio-economic development - an approach very much aligned with the change of perceptions that happened by the end of the 20th century in Europe. Which were the legal instruments of environmental protection that shaped and supported this socio-economic approach? What is the role of tourism in the quest for sustainable development in and around protected areas in Europe?

2.2.3 Legal instruments of Environmental Protection in Europe: from nature conservation to sustainable tourism

By the end of the 1970's, when almost all European countries had defined their first protected areas (EUROPARC, 2009), one of the first international treaties to protect species and habitats was adopted by the Council of Europe. The *Bern Convention*, or the *Council of Europe's Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats*¹⁸ is a legal instrument for biodiversity protection covering the natural heritage of the European Continent and extended to some African countries.

Back to the Earth Summit in Rio, 1992, the Convention on Biological Diversity¹⁹ (CBD) was adopted, a practical tool to apply the principles of Agenda 21 towards "Sustaining Life on Earth". Based on an holistic view of mankind as **interdepending of the natural environment**, the Convention calls for the adoption of national legislation to protect endangered species and for the establishment of protected areas that can "rehabilitate degraded ecosystems and promote environmentally sound and sustainable development in areas adjacent to protected areas" (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2000, pp. 9-10; Agenda 21, pp 151).

In 1979, the European Commission created the *Birds Directive*²⁰, a legal framework focused on the protection of migratory birds across member States, that was followed by the creation of the *Habitats Directive* in 1992 with a focus on the preservation of fragile natural environments. These form the *European Nature Directives*, which are the basis of the creation of the Natura 2000 network (see 2.2.1 *The creation of protected areas in Europe*) and the stepping stones of the *EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020*²¹ in 2011. In addition, the *7th Environment Action Programme* adopted in 2014 aimed to guide environmental policy action by the EU institutions and member states until 2020, towards achieving the long-term vision:

¹⁸ The Bern Convention was adopted in 1979 and it is still a guiding framework for the protection of nature in European countries and <https://www.coe.int/en/web/bern-convention>

¹⁹ <https://www.cbd.int/convention/>

²⁰ Information about the Birds and Habitats Directive is available on the European Commission website http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/index_en.htm

²¹ "Our life insurance, our natural capital: an EU Biodiversity strategy to 2020" was adopted in 2011 with the aim of halting biodiversity and ecosystem services loss in Europe http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/strategy/index_en.htm

“In 2050, we live well, within the planet’s ecological limits. Our prosperity and healthy environment stem from an innovative, circular economy where nothing is wasted and where natural resources are managed sustainably, and biodiversity is protected, valued and restored in ways that enhance our society’s resilience. Our low-carbon growth has long been decoupled from resource use, setting the pace for a safe and sustainable global society.” (7th EAP, European Commission, 2014)

Despite the several European instruments for environmental protection, biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU have continued to grow at an alarming scale. In 2015, the European Environment Agency²² reported that “60% of species assessments and 77% of habitat assessments continue to be in unfavourable conservation status” compromising the achievement of the EU target “on halting biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystems”, as it was highlighted by the European Commission in the *mid-term review*²³ of the *EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020* (European Commission, 2015). The *mid-term review report*²⁴ underlined that the “2020 biodiversity targets can only be achieved if implementation and enforcement efforts become considerably bolder and more ambitious”.

To support the coherent implementation of the socio-economic objectives of the *EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020*, the Directorate-General for the Environment launched in 2017 the *Action Plan for Nature, People and the Economy*²⁵. Contrary to the *EU Biodiversity Strategy* where tourism development is seldom referred, the *Action Plan* not only acknowledges that “natural environment underpins various sectors of our economy, such as tourism” (European Commission, 2017, p 8), it explicitly calls for a “sustainable use of sites in the Network that benefits local communities and economies, particularly by exploiting the potential for sustainable tourism and green jobs” (European Commission, 2017, p 14). Table 3 discloses an overview of the main legal frameworks for environmental protection and the perspective towards touristic activities.

²² <https://www.eea.europa.eu/soer-2015/europe/biodiversity>

²³ The mid-term review, also denominated Fitness Check, was a long process that involved the auscultation of several stakeholders.

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness_check/index_en.htm

²⁴ The final report was published in 2016 and was followed by the *2017 Action Plan for Nature, People and the Economy*.

²⁵ “The Action Plan focuses on four priority areas and comprises 15 actions to be carried out between 2017 and 2019”

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness_check/action_plan/index_en.htm

Table 3 - The perspective of tourism development in legal instruments for environmental protection

Legal document	The perspective of tourism development
Convention on Biological Diversity (Secretariat of the CBD, 2000)	Tourism as an activity affected by biodiversity loss: Biological resources are the basis of all human societies, and “the loss of biodiversity threatens food supplies, opportunities for recreation and tourism , as well as sources of wood, medicines, and energy” (p 3)
AGENDA 21 (United Nations Sustainable Development 1992)	Eco and sustainable tourism viewed as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a management activity for improved rural income and employment, ensuring economic and social benefits without harmful ecological impacts (p 99) to be promoted and supported; - a tool for the promotion of a more comprehensive use and economic contribution of forest areas (pp 98); and for an integrated watershed development as an income-generating activity (p 122); - an activity to support the development of coastal and marine areas (p 168); - and activity to increase public awareness (p 325).
7 th Environment Action Programme to 2020 (European Commission, 2014)	Tourism as a key for the development of a green economy: “The transformation into an inclusive green economy requires the integration of environment issues into other policies, such as energy, transport, agriculture, fisheries, trade, economy and industry, research and innovation, employment, development, foreign affairs, security, education and training, as well as social and tourism policy , so as to create a coherent, joined-up approach.” (p 21)
Eu Biodiversity Strategy 2020 (European Commission, 2011)	Tourism is referred regarding the protection of marine ecosystems: “adapting fishing activities and promoting the involvement of the sector in alternative activities, such as eco-tourism , monitoring and managing marine biodiversity, and combating marine litter” (p 16) and for the pursuit of partnerships with businesses in Europe with a tourism commission operating within the EU Business and Biodiversity platform (p 9).
Action Plan for Nature, People, and the Economy (European Commission, 2017)	Tourism as a key sector for the sustainable development of Natura 2000 sites: “Examining the potential synergies and opportunities for tapping into natural and cultural heritage in Natura 2000 areas to generate economic benefits, employment opportunities and to support key sectors such as sustainable tourism ” (p 36)

Own elaboration

On the perspective of the European Union, tourism is seen as a major economic activity, contributing to (green) economic growth, employment, and social development. This perspective is also followed by the Directorate-General Growth, the European Commission's department responsible for tourism. As stated in the communication "*Europe, the world's No.1 tourist destination - a new framework for tourism in Europe*" (2010), a framework that aims at "making European tourism a competitive, modern, sustainable and responsible industry", the integration of "natural heritage sites" is encouraged. In addition, the document refers that the "sector's competitiveness is closely linked to its sustainability, as the quality of tourist destinations is strongly influenced by their natural and cultural environment and their integration into a local community" (European Commission, 2010, p 10). The European Union perspective is thus to respond to social concerns, stimulate territorial cohesion, and protect and capitalise Europe's natural and cultural heritage.

2.2.4 Sustainable Tourism: beyond profit

**"The Tourism industries employ 12 million people in the
European Union (9%) and generates 10% of GDP."**

UNWTO, European Union Tourism Trends, 2018, p 55

Tourism is a growing trend worldwide. According to the latest publication of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2018) EU destinations reported 500 million international visitor arrivals in 2016. It is estimated that a total of 417 million arrivals (83%) came from Europe, of which 361 million (72%) from EU source markets and 56 million (11%) from European source markets outside the EU. The tourism industry employs almost 12 million people in the EU, from which nearly 7 million are working in the food and beverage industry, 2,4 million in the accommodation sector, 1,9 million in transport, in nearly half million in travel agencies (UNWTO, 2018, p 58).

Regarding destinations, countries in the Southern and Mediterranean Europe are the most visited in the European Union (UNWTO, 2018, p 18), having registered up to 193 million arrivals in 2016. France, Spain, and Italy are simultaneously placed in the list of the top ten worldwide touristic destinations, occupying the first, third and fifth positions, respectively. These numbers, however, reflect the global tourism industry, and visits to Protected Areas are not accounted for individually. In fact, monitoring visitors in protected areas is a serious challenge for many administrative bodies themselves, and therefore a comprehensive view of the total number of visits to European protected areas remains unavailable. Nonetheless, a study published in 2015 drew an estimation of **8 billion annual visits to protected areas**, of which more than 80% are located in Europe and North America, further concluding that these visits

generate approximately US \$600 billion/year in direct in-country expenditure and the US \$250 billion/year in consumer surplus (Balmford *et al.*, 2015).

While the tourism industry might highly contribute to the national GDP, providing jobs and business opportunities to millions of EU citizens, it also brings several challenges at environmental and societal levels. According to the UNWTO (2013), the tourism industry has a significant impact to climate change, accounting for around 5% of the global CO₂ emissions, mainly related to the transport sector and tourism facilities using non-renewable energy sources. The industry leads to unsustainable resource consumption affecting the availability of resources for local communities and is also largely responsible for land and water pollution at the local level, arising from poor solid and liquid waste treatment by the tourism businesses. According to the EUROPARC Federation (EUROPARC, 2001), visitor pressure might largely affect sensitive habitats and endanger species and landscapes, if tourist flows are not managed sustainably and visiting infrastructures are not correctly implemented. Tourism might also affect the local communities, by bringing disturbance and damage to local and social structures; and might lead to an increase in the living costs.

Including sustainable principles in the national tourism strategies, and demanding environmental and social standards to be met by the business sector are crucial. For over two decades, tourism has been referred as a potential tool for sustainable development (see table 3), but it will only be achieved if it *“takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities”* (UNWTO, 2013, p 10). Protecting the cultural and natural resources that make a destination attractive, while ensuring the well-being of the living communities and a healthy environment, should be mandatory requirements for the tourism industry. Following the definition of Sustainable Tourism, the UNWTO in cooperation with UNEP, identified 12 aims for sustainable development in the tourism industry, as presented in table 4.

Table 4 - Aims of Sustainable Tourism

1 ECONOMIC VIABILITY: To ensure the viability and competitiveness of tourism destinations and enterprises, so that they are able to continue to prosper and deliver benefits in the long term.
2 LOCAL PROSPERITY: To maximise the contribution of tourism to the prosperity of the host destination, including the proportion of visitor spending that is retained locally.
3 EMPLOYMENT QUALITY: To strengthen the number and quality of local jobs created and supported by tourism, including the level of pay, conditions of service and availability to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability or in other ways.
4 SOCIAL EQUITY: To seek a widespread distribution of economic and social benefits from tourism throughout the recipient community, including improving opportunities, income and services available to the poor.
5 VISITOR FULFILMENT: To provide a safe, satisfying and fulfilling experience for visitors, available to all without discrimination by gender, race, disability or in other ways.
6 LOCAL CONTROL: To engage and empower local communities in planning and decision making about the management and future development of tourism in their area, in consultation with other stakeholders.
7 COMMUNITY WELL-BEING: To maintain and strengthen the quality of life in local communities, including social structures and access to resources, amenities and life support systems, avoiding any form of social degradation or exploitation.
8 CULTURAL RICHNESS: To respect and enhance the historic heritage, authentic culture, traditions and distinctiveness of host communities.
9 PHYSICAL INTEGRITY: To maintain and enhance the quality of landscapes, both urban and rural, and avoid the physical and visual degradation of the environment
10 BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY: To support the conservation of natural areas, habitats and wildlife, and minimize damage to them.
11 RESOURCE EFFICIENCY: To minimise the use of scarce and non-renewable resources in the development and operation of tourism facilities and services.
12 ENVIRONMENTAL PURITY: To minimise the pollution of air, water and land and the generation of waste by tourism enterprises and visitors.

Extracted from UNWTO, 2013, p 18.

These aims inspired several international organisations throughout the past decades in the development of standards and management tools to support the implementation of sustainability measures within the tourism industry. For instance, the Global Sustainable

Tourism Council²⁶ (GSTC), based in four objectives, has defined two criteria with several performance indicators for both the industry and the touristic destinations. The European Commission launched the *European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS) for Sustainable Tourism Management*²⁷, which is both a management tool to support destinations measuring their performance towards sustainability and an information toolkit for policy makers at regional, national and international level. The EUROPARC Federation developed in the early 2000s the *European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas*, the first management tool specifically designed to support protected areas in leading the change in their territories, through a joint work with the local communities, towards becoming **sustainable tourism destinations**.

2.3 The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (ECSTPA) is a management tool that provides guidance and standards on how to achieve sustainable development through a collaborative work between protected areas, legal authorities, community and local businesses.

Based in five *Sustainability Principles*, the core element of the Charter is to work 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, businesses and visitors' experience (EUROPARC, 2015).

Illustration 1 - The sustainability principles of the ECSTPA



Own elaboration, source: EUROPARC, 2015

²⁶ The GSTC criteria can be found at <https://www.gstcouncil.org/gstc-criteria/>

²⁷ The ETIS criteria can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/sustainable/indicators_en

2.3.1 The EUROPARC Federation

The EUROPARC Federation is the network for Europe’s natural and cultural heritage and the largest organisation representing protected areas in Europe with over 400 members in 39 countries. Dedicated to practical nature conservation and sustainable development, it aims “to improve the management of Protected Areas in Europe through international cooperation, exchange of ideas and experience, and by influencing policy”²⁸.

Figure 4 - Logotype of the EUROPARC Federation



The Federation was created in 1973 with the objective of increasing the conservation status of Europe’s protected areas through international cooperation (EUROPARC, 2014). It is based in Germany and has two other official delegations, one in Brussels working in close collaboration with the European Institutions and other international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and another in Barcelona, working in project development. In addition, throughout the years, eight national and regional sections have been created, supporting the work of EUROPARC members at the national level and highly contributing for the implementation of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. The Sections are the main point of contact for members and support in the implementation and management of the methodology.

With the strategic objective of *Promoting Sustainability*, sustainable tourism became a priority area of work of the Federation. EUROPARC believes that protected areas, facing challenges and pressure from visitation on the land they manage, have the opportunity and potential to “**act as catalysts for sustainability and lifestyle changes** at a local and regional and indeed national level” (EUROPARC, 2015, p 2). The ECSTPA methodology was then created to support Parks drawing a common vision and a detailed action plan for their territory, with the co-involvement of their local actors.

“The ECSTPA represents an opportunity to forge alliances with the territory and develop a common tourism development project.”

(answer from Monviso Park to the questionnaire addressed to Sustainable Destinations)

²⁸ The EUROPARC Federation was created in 1973 and is the largest network of Protected Area professionals in Europe (<https://www.europarc.org/our-history/>)

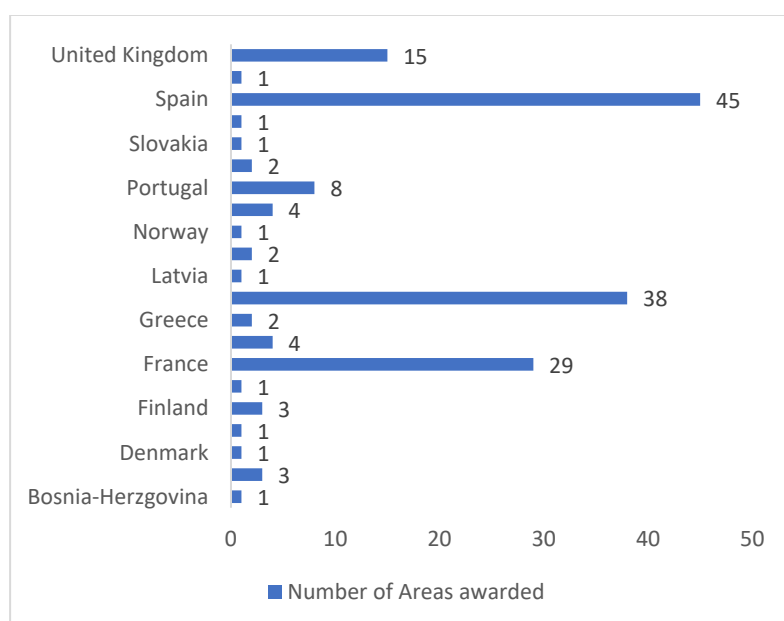
2.3.2 The creation of the ECSTPA

In 1991, EUROPARC set up a working group to study sustainable tourism in protected areas, which was responsible for the publication, two years later, of the report “*Loving them to death? Sustainable Tourism in Europe’s Nature and National Parks*”. It highlighted the fact that **sustainable tourism in and around protected areas had never been done in a sustainable way**, with very few policies specifically addressing tourism management in protected areas and thus threatening their natural and cultural features (EUROPARC, 2001). The report set the first guidelines for developing sustainable tourism in and around protected areas, with a special set of recommendations for international organisations, national governments, and the tourism sector.

Based on the principles and recommendations, in 1995 EUROPARC started a pilot project for the development of a “European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas”. The methodology reflected the world and Europe’s priorities expressed in the Agenda 21 and the 6th Environmental Action Programme of the European Union, and was one of the priorities of the IUCN’s Action programme for protected areas in Europe in 1994 (Parks & Benefits, 2011).

After several years of development, the methodology was complete, with the first seven protected areas being awarded in 2001, followed by six more in 2002 and four in 2003 (BfN, 2004). Over the last two decades, the methodology was implemented by 164 Protected Areas in 20 European countries and continuously improved. Spain, Italy, and France are the countries with the highest number of destinations awarded the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

Figure 5 - Protected Areas awarded the ECSTPA



Source: www.europarc.org/charter-network (June 2018).

2.3.3 Working with businesses

Throughout the years, further management tools were created to support business partners and tour operators, working within or nearby the protected area, in the implementation of sustainability measures. Local partners are invited to apply the standards of **Charter Part 2 - Sustainable Business Partners** and **Charter Part 3 - Sustainable Tour Operators**, being awarded at national level for their commitment to sustainability. Partners receive an award valid for a period of three years after which it can be renewed.

The methodology for **Sustainable Business Partners** is directly managed by the protected areas with the support of the EUROPARC Sections, contrasting with the implementation of the main methodology for Parks which is managed by the EUROPARC Federation. Therefore, the approach slightly differs from country to country, and its implementation is currently restricted to Spain, France, and Italy. Currently, there are over 500 enterprises engaged with **Charter Part 2** in Spain, approximately 100 in France, and in Italy, the implementation of the methodology is just starting.

Regarding the methodology for **Sustainable Tour Operators**, it was launched in 2015 by the EUROPARC French Section and 15 local operators have been awarded there. Spain and Italy are now starting the implementation of the third phase. The methodology will be common for all three countries, with the objective to enhance international cooperation amongst Tour Operators and protected areas awarded: in a near future, any enterprise awarded will have access to other protected areas awarded with the ECSTPA in other regions or countries.

2.3.4 The ECSTPA brand

“Through awarding the ECSTPA, 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.”

(The mission of the ECSTPA, EUROPARC, 2015)

In 2015, the EUROPARC Federation conducted a reformulation of the ECSTPA methodology: its core values were adapted, and its mission and vision established. The mission directly reflects the work of the EUROPARC Federation, giving focus to the aim of safeguarding Europe’s natural and cultural heritage through international cooperation, whilst the vision emphasises the aim of the Federation in promoting sustainable development: **“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.” (EUROPARC, 2015, p 6)

The first graphic identity of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas dates from the early 2000’s. It was established during a project dedicated to the creation of the methodology at a technical level, and therefore the focus of the working group was rather on defining standards and indicators than on developing the ECSTPA as a brand. The logotype created by then was poor in meaning and had little added value.

Figure 6 - Previous logotype of the ECSTPA



In that early stage of the ECSTPA, the methodology was intended to be an internal tool for protected areas and therefore the intention of the logotype was merely the identification of the programme, while ensuring a visual connection to the EUROPARC Federation.

It was only after a decade of its successful implementation across Europe that the potential of the ECSTPA as a promotional tool became evident. The need to have a visually appealing logotype and an increased reputation of the ECSTPA emerged from the network of protected areas awarded. With a renowned methodology implemented in several nations, the ECSTPA represents nowadays more than an internal methodology - **it is seen as an international quality brand to promote the work of protected areas towards sustainability.**

With the methodology reformulation started in 2015, a participatory process for the redesign of the graphic identity was also established. After defining the vision and mission of the ECSTPA, the core communication values and the baseline story of the ECSTPA were set. The rebranding of the ECSTPA is one of the key elements of this proposed Marketing Strategy.

Chapter 3 -External and Internal Analysis

3.1 External Analysis

3.1.1 Macro Perspective

Sustainable Development is, finally, in the worldwide political agenda. When in 2015 the United Nations announced the *17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* to “transform our World” and built the 2030 Agenda (see 2.1.2 *Social and environmental crisis: from fighting poverty to climate change*), it was clear that not only Governmental and regional authorities but also international organisations, the private sector, and the global community were called to act.

The ECSTPA actively supports the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, by **empowering protected areas better protecting their natural assets** (*goal 15: Life on Land and 16: Life Below Water*) and thus better performing their role for the **mitigation and adaption to climate change impacts** (*goal 13: Climate Action*).

With the implementation of the methodology, protected areas have the opportunity to establish a dialogue with their local community, engaging them towards the development of the region, based on a sustainable approach to tourism management by **engaging with business partners** (*goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals*). These joint efforts contribute to *goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production* and *goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being for people*.

With the methodology for businesses and tour operators, the ECSTPA further supports the private **sector implementing energy-saving measures** (*goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy*), **reducing water and resources consumption**, and **supporting community development** (*goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities*).

Figure 7 - The ECSTPA contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals



3.1.2 Sectorial Analysis

In 2017, the United Nations *International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development*, the challenges arising from the uncontrolled growth of visitors were visible in many places of the globe. Protected areas are not an exception and in fact, within the network of EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations, there are examples of how tourism management is a critical aspect for biodiversity conservation. Protected areas are adopting measures to control and reduce tourism flows, working together under the framework of the ECSTPA (EUROPARC, 2017, pp.21-25).

Several international organisations, including the European Union, have set standards to promote an effective management of tourism, in terms of bringing social and economic values to communities, whilst protecting the natural and cultural features that attract the tourists. This is the case of the European Tourism Indicators System for sustainable destination management (ETIS), which the ECSTPA is in accordance with; of the Global Council for Sustainable Tourism; and of the standards established by the International Ecotourism Society.

3.1.3 Competitors

Directly in the field of protected areas and nature conservation, to support the preservation of natural features, UNESCO has created two methodologies internationally recognised - the *Man and Biosphere Programme* (MaB) and the *Global Geopark Network*. **Both are the main competitors of the ECSTPA methodology**, with several EUROPARC Destinations being also labelled with one of the UNESCO's programmes. In fact, both the MaB and the Geopark standards might be seen as complementary methodologies by some protected areas authorities, and not directly obliterating the possibility of the ECSTPA to be implemented, thus not entirely seen as "competitors".

The differencing point between the UNESCO and the ECSTPA participatory processes is that the latter requires the establishment of a **Permanent Stakeholders Forum that will be engaged in the development and implementation of the action plan** through the 5 years period. The concept of co-participation of local actors in all phases of the process is, indeed, the main added value of the ECSTPA methodology.

However, the institutional UNESCO brand backing the methodologies is highly recognised worldwide and thus stronger, when compared to the ECSTPA. In terms of recognition, also the *Green Destinations certification & Sustainable Destination Awards* is growing. In this case, their focus is not on the process, but rather on the labelling and promotional aspects. Hence, it is not a strong competitor in terms of methodology but in regards to the terminology used, as it might be a threaten to the identification of the wording "**Sustainable Destinations**" that EUROPARC is using to describe the network of areas awarded with the ECSTPA.

Table 5 - Competitors of the ECSTPA

<i>Direct competitors</i>	UNESCO Man and Biosphere Programme	UNESCO Global Geopark	Green Destinations
<i>Type</i>	Label	Methodology	Awards & Certification
<i>Definition</i>	Each biosphere reserve promotes solutions reconciling the conservation of biodiversity with its sustainable use, towards sustainable development at the regional scale.	Based on geological features, promotes innovative approaches to economic development that are socially and culturally appropriate and environmentally sustainable	Designed for destinations, to assess sustainability performance, with the Awards recognising excellence in the primary aspects connected to the destination's quality offer to travellers.
<i>Size</i>	669 (over 150 in Europe) biosphere reserves in 120 countries, including 20 transboundary	140 in 36 countries (68 in Europe) including 4 transboundary	Launches every year the 100 top destinations. Full network not visible.
<i>In comparison with the ECSTPA</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar focus and objectives: nature protection and community development • Higher visibility than the ECSTPA due to the UNESCO brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A similar process of evaluation with verification visits, and a re-evaluation every 4 years • Lower focus on community development • Low involvement of local stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher effort in external promotion • Standards in compliance with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council • No verification <i>in situ</i> • Applicable to all types of destinations, either or not with natural features

Own elaboration.

Regarding the competitors of Part 2 and Part 3, there is a wide range of Green Certifications designed for businesses, accommodations, and tour operators, that promote their commitment to sustainability. However, none works both as a “license to operate” in a protected area, which would be the main added value of Part 2 and Part 3. In fact, there is a wish among the network to differentiate from those, and to be clear to the market that the ECSTPA is more than a “green washing” label.

3.2 Internal Analysis

3.2.1 Micro-economic perspective

Protected areas in Europe are increasingly facing financial problems, which threatens their possibility of applying to the ECSTPA methodology. To revert the tendency of losing funds, protected areas have to show their community and political bodies that they can bring social and economic benefits beyond the ecosystem services they already provide (which are extremely difficult to assess).

The ECSTPA methodology gives protected areas the opportunity to establish a dialogue with their local actors, and to work in close collaboration for a joint vision of the territory. However, if numbers cannot reveal the benefits of working together under the ECSTPA methodology, political support tends to drop and protected areas, facing the current financial difficulties, have no chance to keep engaged with the methodology.

3.2.2 Human resources

The ECSTPA methodology was developed thanks to the commitment and involvement of several members of the EUROPARC network, who were, themselves, facing tourism management challenges in their Parks. There was a great level of expertise gathered to develop the ECSTPA methodology (Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3) and the implementation in over 20 countries grew widely thanks to the collaborative work between the Federation and its National and Regional Sections²⁹.

The members of the ECSTPA Evaluation Committee, that gather annually to analyse the applications and decide the areas that will be awarded, is composed by experienced professionals in the field of sustainable tourism, that input in the strategy and direction of the ECSTPA methodology, and support in delivering the training of EUROPARC verifiers.

Despite the work of the EUROPARC Sections and the members of the evaluation committee, which is voluntarily based, the network growth might compromise the limited capacity of the Federation to manage the network, not in terms of administrative processes, but rather in terms of network activation and external visibility. In addition, the EUROPARC lacks financial capacity to hire more technicians responsible for the promotion of the ECSTPA, as the NGO has several priorities to attend to.

²⁹ EUROPARC Sections: www.europarc.org/europarc-sections

3.2.3 Experience

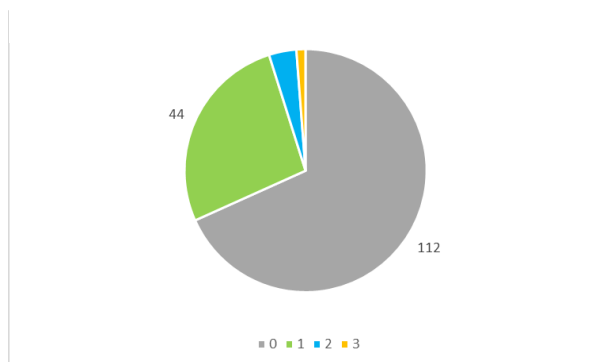
EUROPARC has been mainly in charge of managing the administrative aspects of the process, with external promotion and networking not being the main focus. Over the two decades of the ECSTPA, the know-how gathered around the methodology was focused on the technical level, and few efforts were put into the communication and promotion activities. Since 2015, however, there is capacity within the Directorate team to deliver strategic communications. In addition, with the creation of the Communications Commission to help in the development of the marketing plan, the EUROPARC identified within the network new volunteers committed to work together for the promotion of the ECSTPA.

There is also a strong will within the Directorate to establish partnerships with organisations that have the market experience that the Federation is lacking.

3.3 The Network of Sustainable Destinations

In June 2018, the network counted with 164 Destinations in 20 countries, that have implemented the methodology and were awarded at least once. The number, however, may not reflect with accuracy the active members committed to the methodology, as some areas have not renewed after the first or the second five years' award period. Graphic 3 reveals the

Figure 8 - Number of renewals



number of Parks that have not renewed their commitment: 112.

While some might have not reached the renewal period, in other cases the interest to renew might have been lost to keep engaged. It is especially visible in protected areas in the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and the Baltic countries, probably due to the lack of activity of their

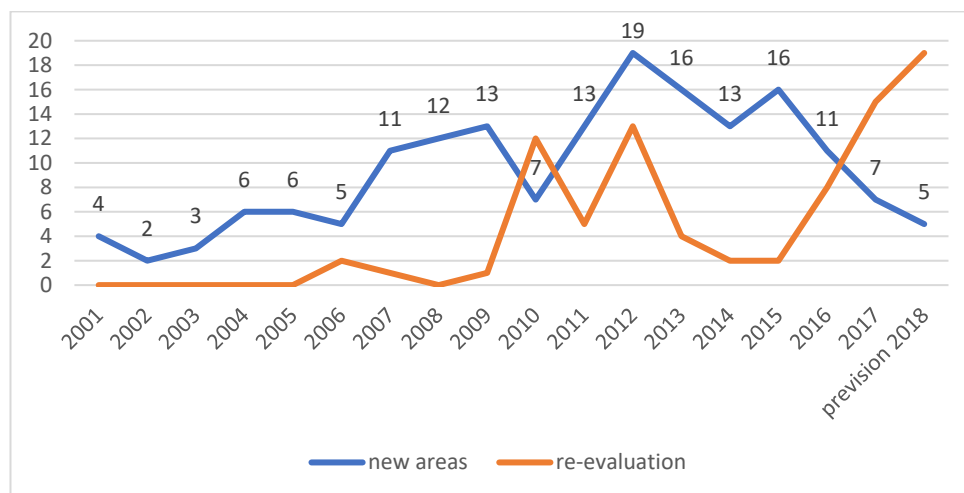
respective regional sections. The lack of funding might also be a cause for the non-renewals in those countries, and it is also affecting parks in Spain who wish to renew but have no budget capacity to do so.

The number of protected areas renewing their commitment is, nonetheless, growing. The trend since 2015 is notoriously positive, and in 2017 for the first time more areas renewed their commitment than new comers were awarded. In 2018 the scenario will be similar.

This tendency is aligned with the Federation's wish of having better quality areas, highly committed and renewing, rather than a high number of new comers that loose interest and have never the chance to implement change during the first awarding period. After all,

sustainability is a long-term commitment. Graphic 4 shows the evolution of new areas awarded and renewals since 2001, and draws the prevision of 2018, based on the number of applications received by June 2018.

Figure 9 - Evolution of areas awarded



Own elaboration, source: www.europarc.org/charter-network in June 2018 and internal documents of the EUROPARC Federation

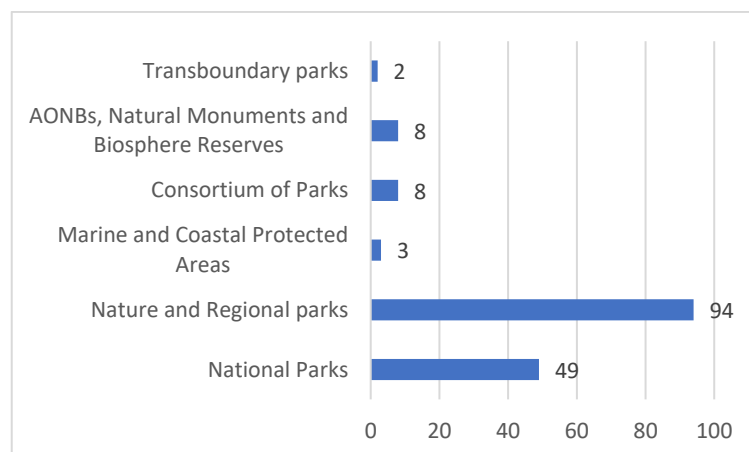
3.3.2 Types of Areas Awarded

The majority of protected areas awarded fall in the category of regional and nature parks, normally considered IUCN category management V. In this category, protected areas are highly focused in delivering socio-economic benefits, and there are normally low restrictions in terms of access and usability, as these parks tend to encompass several villages and communities either within or in their close surroundings.

National parks are the second biggest category of protected areas awarded (IUCN category management II), and in Europe this means they are normally open for recreation. National parks, though, have different needs from nature parks. Often, conflicts tend to arise due to intense visitors flow, both in terms of environmental impact and a potential clash with the tourism industry's intentions.

To notice also that in the past two years, two transboundary parks sharing natural borders, applied to the Charter. This means that the action plan includes activities in both countries, overlapping language and cultural barriers.

Figure 10 - Types of Protected Areas awarded



Own elaboration, source: www.europarc.org/charter-network in June 2018

3.3.3 Analysis of the needs of the internal network

The internal network of the ECSTPA is composed by the EUROPARC Federation and its Sections, and by the Sustainable Destinations and businesses awarded, including the Protected Areas, Sustainable Partners, and Sustainable Tour Operators.

Through the questionnaires addressed to the members of the network, and with the input of the members of the Communications and Marketing Commission, the needs of the internal network were identified and analysed. This enables the creation of an action plan (see chapter 5) that meets the needs and expectations of the internal stakeholders, thus, increasing the effective implementation of the strategic objectives (see chapter 4).

a) Protected Areas Awarded

Description: The ECSTPA process is normally led by a “Park administration authority”. In the case of centralised protected area management systems, as it happens at a regional level in Spain and at national level in Portugal, governmental administrations are also involved in development and implementation of the methodology.

Challenges: Protected Areas are facing severe budget reductions leading to financial difficulties and loss of human resources. In many cases, there is also a lack of trained professionals in the area of communications. Protected areas can be defined in 4 main groups:

- Parks already members of the Network (0-5 years)
- Re-evaluating Parks (5-15 years)
- Founder Parks (+15 years)
- Non-awarded Parks

Table 6 - Needs of Protect Areas

Internal needs	External needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools and capacity building - on visitor management, communications and promotion • Resources and inspiration from the other destinations, to better implement their plans • Transparency in ECSTPA management process • Evidence (numbers and case studies) to showcase the socio-economic benefits they bring to the local community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • License to operate by the local community • Political support: recognition from their local, regional and national authorities about the added benefits of the ECSTPA implementation • Visibility among the international tourism sector • Recognition by environmental conscious travellers • Visibility and influence at a higher level (international & funding institutions)

Own elaboration.

b) Sustainable Partners

Description: Potentially, every business located in and around the protected area can become a certified partner. Dividing by scope of influence, two main categories can be designated:

Directly involved *Those directly related to the tourism sector*

- **Activity providers** Outdoor sports, agencies, guides, cultural/historical tour providers
- **Accommodation providers** From large hotels to Yurts, Camping areas, Air BnB accommodations, farm houses
- **Transportation** national and regional transport companies, local shuttles and taxis
- **Local tourism bodies** Tourism offices, interpretation centres, environmental education centres
- **Food providers** Restaurants, bakeries, coffee shops

Indirectly involved *Those who do not have an activity directly related to tourism, but benefit with the income of tourists in the region*

- Local shops
- Local producers and artisans
- Farmers
- Building industry

Table 7 - Needs of Sustainable Partners

Personal needs	Professional needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspiration to be involved in sustainable actions and how to implement real actions • Saving time and money • To develop partnerships locally, and trust to work together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to be understood by the Park administration • Knowledge of the contribution they are making to Sustainability (for external recognition and higher motivation) • Tools and training to help undertake the actions • Visibility in the international market • Communications toolkit (content, tools and training) to help them communicate their commitment to sustainability and nature conservation; support on promoting what distinguishes them from the others.

Own elaboration.

c) Sustainable Tour Operators

The methodology was recently developed and has been mainly implemented in France. Tour Operators certified tend to be local/ regional agencies and individual guides, the majority already motivated to work for sustainability. Often, protected areas are not working directly with national and international agencies, but rather with the local guides/agencies that income international tourists.

However, the ambition of the plan is to reach out to a wider range of Tour Operators:

- **Regional / Local level** Interpretation and guided tours agencies; individual guides/ interpreters; specialised operators (birdwatching, whale watching, scuba divers, trekkers, etc); outdoor activities, outdoor sports operators
- **National Level agencies** working in the field of outdoor experiences, ecotourism
- **International level agencies** working in the field of outdoor experiences, ecotourism

Table 8 - Needs of Sustainable Tour Operators

Information about natural and cultural features <i>(by protected areas)</i>	Connection with the other Tour Operators in the network
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contents, training and tools provided by the protected area about biodiversity, landscape, history, etc 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership cooperation between different regions and countries awarded • Exchanging costumers (access to foreign markets) • Ability to organise tours in other parks or finding guides in other destinations, to develop joint packages
Visibility	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communications toolkit to promote their commitment to sustainability • Commercial presentation about the ECSTPA Part 3 • Global promotion in the international markets 	

Own elaboration.

3.4 SWOT Analysis

The analysis focused on three priority aspects of the ECSTPA, the perception of the costs, the product analyses and the communications activities.

SWOT	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Perception of cost-benefit	<p>High-value for the money invested, although might not be totally recognised</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Price is not adjusted to the Park size - low budget parks cannot afford - benefits are not tangible - the value perceived might be low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Look for external funds - social benefits: need to be expanded, communicated, demonstrated - ability to pay: possibility of creating a “fairer system” with different fee levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - loss of parks re-evaluating - financial problems in parks - viability of the EF to manage the ECST - seen as a luxury
Product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Charter network provides Destinations opportunities to share experiences and learn with each other - Destinations benefit with stakeholders involvement at local level - recognised as a global standard - Strong methodology - long term - developed by experienced people 	<p>The process is seen as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Red table/complicated/ bureaucratic - Demanding / lot of work - Need specific staff allocated to develop - Long procedure - Lack of support from the EF <p>- Niche, special club</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - involve current charter technicians - listen carefully, collect inputs and get the members to network - collect data, compile case studies and share - make links beyond the boundaries (organisations and geography) - Understand tourism market share and tourist behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - loss of destinations - treat of losing the core of the ECST by only focusing on the process and methodology, rather than in the place/local needs - Governance of the charter - national level interests (specially on politics) can have a higher role than the European dimension - loss of (visible) credibility

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EUROPARC has data to prove the efficiency/outcomes of the ECSTPA - EUROPARC has a direct access to the Market - The brand brings benefits: Credibility, recognition from the peers, access to EU funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it's restricted to Europe, so does not provide a global recognition - lack of animation of the network - Hard to work with partners at local level - EUROPARC does not have contact at local/national level; the ECSTPA is unknown by enterprises; companies are abandoning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - share success with partners and universities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not working as a brand- parks and enterprises abandonment - conflicts on regards to part III - Tour operators at local level can be unsatisfied with the possibility of TOs from other countries being able to work in different charter areas/countries and "stealing" the market of the local TOs
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EUROPARC has the baseline of information: success stories; achievements - Protected Areas are already a special place, the charter benefits from this "uniqueness" of PAs - EF has access to the network and a direct access to the key targets - New graphic identity and variation for the different targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor communication tools (website, publications, social media) - lack of brand enforcement - lack of visibility among technicians, consumers, visitors and locals - Sustainable partners engaged with part II expect a recognition and a higher visibility - lack of link with the tourism industry - message is complex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - "Show it works", celebrate success - proving the value for the price - ticks political needs - using members to develop the further developments of the ECSTPA - higher awareness of climate change and the role of protected areas (works as a context factor) - Expand the charter: co-operating with other organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parks do not see the value of re-evaluating, once they have learned and implemented the methodology - institutional and rather bureaucratic approach to the charter

Chapter 4 - Proposed Marketing Strategy

After the extensive internal and external analysis to the European Charter and the consultation made to the network members, the need to establish a common language and strategy to communicate the ECSTPA in a concerted way was clear. This implies not only having a solid and coherent brand, but also creating a stronger network who becomes the main advocate of the brand itself. **Enhancing the feeling of belonging, whilst empowering and giving responsibilities is as crucial.** Therefore, the proposed strategy falls in three main areas:

a) Visibility and recognition of the ECSTPA

Destinations awarded have been asking for a greater visibility and recognition of the ECSTPA, that can help them leverage their commitment to sustainability and their effort in working together for community development. Simultaneously, with the growth of Businesses and Tour Operators awarded, there is a high expectation of increased external visibility and opportunities to work within the European market.

b) Strengthen the network of Sustainable Destinations

Recognition was not the only demand of the Destinations awarded with the ECSTPA. Protected areas want to be part of a **strong network** where they have access to other members across Europe, in a **quest for shared resources, inspiration, and new ideas**. In the case of Partners and Tour Operators, they also envision a wide European network that can provide them access to **new markets, products, and customers**. An essential objective of the strategy is, thus, to strengthen the network and establish open communication channels for partners, destinations and tour operators to easily contact each other. This implies also a constant flow of resources and best practices from the network, and organisation of opportunities for the network to come together and share experience.

c) Identifying responsibilities and tasks within the internal network

It is important to understand that **the success of the ECSTPA visibility and promotion relies on the concerted effort of all its internal actors**, being the Federation and its Sections, but also the Destinations, Partners and Tour Operators awarded. The strategy aims, therefore, to establish a common ground for communicating the value of the ECSTPA, and assigns responsibilities and activities that should be delivered by each member of the internal network.

4.1 Strategic Objectives and expected outcomes

The strategic objectives are the guiding principles of the Action Plan (Chapter 5). Following the consultation with the Sustainable Destinations and the work of the Communications and Marketing Commission, **three main objectives were identified.**

The first relates to the activation of the international network of Sustainable Destinations and Partners, the second focus on promoting the socio, economic and environmental impacts of the methodology, while the third is about increasing the visibility of the brand and the network of Sustainable Destinations.

Under each strategic objective, specific expected outcomes and targets were defined. The detailed activities are further detailed in Chapter 5 - Action Plan.

Information structure

- **Strategic objectives**
 - **Expected Outcomes**
 - Targets by 2022
 - **Market Segmentation**
 - **Action Plan**
 - Activities & Timing
 - Responsible

Table 9 - Overview of the Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective 1



Build a **strong network** of excellent quality Touristic Destinations

Strategic Objective 2



Ensure EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations are living models for **sustainable development**

Strategic Objective 3



Increase the **recognition** of the EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations as a quality brand

Own elaboration.

Table 10 - Strategic Objective 1: Build a strong network of excellent quality Touristic Destinations

Expected outcomes	Qualitative / Quantitative baseline in 2018	Targets by 2022
1.1. A highly motivated and cooperative international network of Sustainable Destinations, with experienced destinations sharing their expertise, tools and best practice with new comers	<i>No regular share of information among members.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The network works by itself, with direct contacts and regular share of information.
1.2 Sustainable Destinations recognise the benefits of the network and renew commitment after the 5 years of the Award	<i>34% of non-renewal</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the renewal rate
1.3 Sustainable Tour operators awarded start working with business partners and tour operators from other awarded Sustainable Destinations, both at national and international level	<i>Tour operators awarded can operate in other Sustainable Destinations but are not yet connected</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least 5 Tour operators cooperating with businesses and tour operators awarded in other countries

Own elaboration.

Table 11 - Strategic Objective 2: Ensure EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations are living models for sustainable tourism

Expected outcomes	Qualitative / Quantitative baseline in 2018	Targets by 2022
2.1. Higher engagement of certified Sustainable Partners and Sustainable Tour Operators working in each EUROPARC Sustainable Destination	<i>The database of Sustainable Partners awarded by Parks is not currently fully known by EUROPARC, as the process is led by each individual Park.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of Parks following methodology II and III Increase the number of partners and tour operators awarded by the Parks; increase the number of renewals of partners and tour operators The list of partners awarded by Parks is known and regularly updated.
2.2 The environmental, social and economic impacts of the EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations are highly promoted	<i>Charter Magic Numbers survey is realised every 5 years, response rate around 50%.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase Charter Magic Numbers response rate to 75%
2.3 The contribution of the ECSTPA to the Sustainable Development Goals is visible and celebrated	<i>Some data from Partners is collected by Parks, but not communicated to EUROPARC</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data about the ecological performance of partners and tour operators is collected by the Parks and Communicated to EUROPARC Award system to recognise partners' work for sustainability

Own elaboration.

Table 12 - Strategic Objective 3: Increase the recognition of the EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations as a quality brand

Expected outcomes	Qualitative / Quantitative baseline in 2018	Targets by 2022
3.1 EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations, the awarded partners and tour operators become the key ambassadors of the EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations Brand	<i>Parks and partners display the logos but there is no concerted/common message being disseminated</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks and Partners effectively communicate how they are working together for sustainability
3.2 The ECSTPA is a recognised methodology by organisations working for Sustainable Development at the international, national and regional level	<i>The ECSTPA was recognised by UNESCO and by European Institutions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher recognition by tourism organisations
3.3 EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations are valued by tourists and tour operators	<i>Destinations are not recognised</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations are valued by the professional sector • Higher recognition of the brand among tourists

Own elaboration.

4.2 Market Segmentation

After defining the strategic objectives, it is necessary to identify to whom the Federation is delivering each outcome. With the market segmentation, key target groups with common needs and characteristics are identified. The target groups of this strategy can be divided into two overarching groups:

- **the internal network**, composed by the EUROPARC Federation; EUROPARC Sections; Sustainable Destinations, Partners and Tour Operators awarded;
- **the external stakeholders**, encompassing
 - o Institutions at International and European level working for sustainable development;
 - o Authorities at national and regional level engaged in the management of tourism and protected areas;
 - o Local communities: encompassing local authorities, NGOs, schools, and citizens;
 - o The professional tourism sector, both at the international, national and regional level;
 - o Visitors, both *in situ* and potential.

The outcomes of the **first strategic objective** address mainly the **internal network**, whilst the outcomes of the **second objective** focus on **institutions** (at international, European, regional and local level) and finally the outcomes of the **third strategic objective** are meant to reach out to the **professional tourism sector, visitors and potential new destinations**.

Table 13 will then **cross reference each target group with the expected outcomes of the strategy**, giving a visual reference of the main and secondary target groups of the actions, and also of its indirect beneficiaries. The activities under each strategic objective will be detailed in Chapter 5 - Action Plan.

Table 13 - Expected outcomes per target groups

	<i>Main target groups of the actions</i>	<i>Secondary target groups of the actions</i>	<i>Indirect beneficiaries of the actions</i>					
Target groups	Parks awarded	Partners Awarded	EU & International Institutions	National & Regional authorities	Local authorities, community	Professional Tourism sector	Visitors	Potential new Destinations
Expected Outcomes								
1.1. A highly motivated and cooperative international network of Sustainable Destinations								
1.2 Sustainable Destinations recognise the benefits of the network and renew commitment								
1.3 Sustainable Tour operators awarded start working with business partners and tour operators								
2.1. Higher engagement of certified Sustainable Partners and Sustainable Tour Operators								
2.2 The environmental, social and economic impacts are highly promoted								
2.3 The contribution of the ECSTPA to the Sustainable Development Goals is visible and celebrated								
3.1 EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations, the awarded partners become the key ambassadors of the ECSTPA								
3.2 The ECSTPA is a recognised methodology working for Sustainable Development								
3.3 EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations are valued by tourists and tour operators								

Own elaboration.

4.2.1 Reaching out to each target group

Working together is fundamental for the achievement of the strategic objectives. The achievement of the strategic objectives and the implementation of activities foreseen in the Action Plan will require the full engagement of all members of the internal network - the activities will not only be delivered by the Federation, but by each component of the internal network. To increase the recognition of the ECSTPA among visitors, Destinations and Partners are in the front line to provide information and tell the story of the ECSTPA. In this case, the role of the Federation is to support Destinations and Partners finding the right messages to share and provide them with the necessary tools to do it effectively.

Table 14 highlights the main responsibilities of the internal networks and the **Graphic 6 displays the flow of information with the different target groups** and identifies the type of action that is expected by each member of the internal network. The activities under each strategic objective will be detailed in the next chapter - Action Plan.

Table 14 - The Responsibilities of the internal network

	Internal network	External network
EUROPARC Federation	Responsible for liaising with EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations	Responsible for the international representation of the ECSTPA with institutions and the professional tourism sector; communicating with EUROPARC members who can be potential new sustainable destinations
EUROPARC Sections	Supporting EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations at the national level, promoting network and exchange of experience; overseeing the process with Partners and Tour Operators	Main contact for the ECSTPA at the national and regional level, both with authorities responsible for Protected Area management and tourism; identifying and engaging potential new sustainable destinations.
Sustainable Destinations / Protected Areas	Responsible for engaging (and awarding) partners and tour operators with the ECSTPA methodology	The main contact with authorities, community, organisations and other stakeholders at the local level. Responsible also for engaging with potential tour operators (incoming agencies and local guides) and main promoter of the ECSTPA with visitors.
Partners and Tour Operators	Providing information to Protected Areas and EUROPARC Sections	The main contact with visitors, potential and <i>in situ</i> . Tour operators and tourism partners also contribute to the connection with other national and international tourism agencies.

Own elaboration.

4.3.1 The brand identity and elements

The brand purpose: Quality Sustainable Tourism is good for Parks and good for People.

<p>The brand core values: Union & Connection Care & Respect Dynamism Sustainability</p>	<p>The brand story: The Charter is about bringing people together, provide them a framework to work collaboratively, towards becoming a sustainable destination. Sustainability is a continuous process of enhancing quality with all local actors.</p>
<p>The Slogan: will match the brand purpose “<i>Quality Sustainable Tourism is good for Parks and good for People</i>”</p>	<p>The name: European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas continues to be the official name of the programme. However, the logo was simplified and reflects only EUROPARC Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.</p>
<p>Name of the network:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For internal audiences in the transition phase: Charter Network • For external audiences: EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations 	<p>Hashtags:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #EUROPARCSustainableDestination • #EUROPARCSustainableTourism (methodology) • #SustainableTourism • <i>The use of #ECST #ECSTPA #CETS #CETD will remain during the transition period</i>

Logotype: The redesigned logotype of the ECSTPA introduces the core values of the brand while ensuring a continuity with the previous logotype (achieved in terms of colour palette) and reinforcing the connection to the EUROPARC Federation.

Figure 11 - The new graphic identity of the ECSTPA

Composition: Bringing people around the table



Own elaboration.

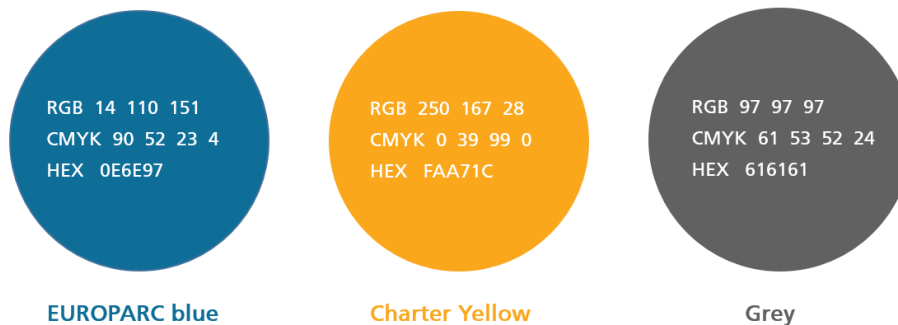
The EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations are built up locally hence different translated versions of the logotype were created, to ensure a common understanding among stakeholders at the national level, and increase their connection to the brand. The logo is currently available in 7 languages - English, French, Italian, Spanish, Catalan, German and Latvian, but others can be created upon members' request.

To enhance the use of the logo by the Sustainable Partners and Sustainable Tour Operators certified with Charter Part 2 and Charter Part 3 respectively, two logo variations were designed. These are only meant to be used by certified partners.

Figure 12 - ECSTPA logotype for Partners and Tour Operators



Colour scheme: To ensure connection to the EUROPARC Federation logotype, the same shade of blue was chosen for the ECSTPA logotype. The Charter yellow/orange is an attempt to maintain some continuity with the previous ECSTPA logotype.



Consistency, coherence, and frequency are fundamental to build up a strong and resonating brand. To support protected areas and partners ensuring consistency, EUROPARC created the **Graphic Guidelines of the ECSTPA** (see annex 2).

4.4 Positioning and Key messages

Where does the ECSTPA stand in relation to other similar methodologies for Protected Areas? The positioning and key messages help distinguish the ECSTPA from its competitors and reinforce its added value: a **renowned methodology designed to support European Protected Areas achieving Sustainable Tourism.**

Leading the way in Sustainable Tourism for Europe's Protected Areas.

It is important to refer that the positioning addresses the **main internal network of the ECSTPA**, those being Protected Area administrative bodies or governmental organisations responsible for the management of Protected Areas. It also implies that by supporting Protected Areas becoming Sustainable Touristic Destinations with the implementation of the methodology, EUROPARC is contributing to sustainable development.

Key messages

With the Marketing Strategy and Action Plan of the ECSTPA, EUROPARC wants a stronger network that is highly recognised by peers, partners, and visitors across Europe. With the complexity of stakeholders involved in the Charter process and the multiple target audiences of the communication activities, different key messages were drawn. These are the main headlines for the ECSTPA communications but are not static and can be adapted to different contexts and needs.

- 1) The Charter means working together with all local stakeholders towards one direction, making sustainable tourism a sign of identity of the territory.**

Main targets: local stakeholders, business partners, and local tour operators

- 2) The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is an internationally recognised methodology for sustainable tourism management.**

Main targets: tourism sector, international organisations, sponsors, partners, potential Sustainable Destinations

- 3) EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations provide authentic and high-quality touristic experiences, protecting the environment whilst bringing social and economic benefits to the local communities.**

Main targets: local communities, visitors

Chapter 5 - Communications Action Plan

5.1 From Marketing to communications and brand activation

The marketing mix of a Marketing Plan includes, at least, four main dimensions: the product, price, place or distribution channels, and promotion or communication. The Marketing-mix of the ECSTPA can be considered as follows:

Product - the three Methodologies	In the specific case of the ECSTPA, the product consists of the three existing methodologies - for Protected Areas, for Business Partners, and for Tour Operators. These products have been developed and improved continuously over time and there is no need for considerable changes nor wish for the creation of new products until 2022.
Price	The price of each product was established long ago and the Federation has no plans to review it , for none of the methodologies.
Place or distribution channels	The distribution channels are well established and functional , with clear roles and responsibilities between the EUROPARC Directorate, who ensures the implementation and verification of the methodology for Protected Areas, and between the EUROPARC Sections, who are responsible for the implementation of the methodology for partners and tour operators at national level.
Promotion or Communication	Having the other three dimensions well established, the main focus of this action plan rather lies in the promotional aspects , with the objectives of enhancing the value and recognition of these tree products (strategic objective 3) while building up the network (strategic objective 1) and showcasing EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations as living models for Sustainable Development (strategic objective 2).

With the three first dimensions well established, the focus of the Action plan lays on the promotion of the ECSTPA. The approach was then to develop strategic communication objectives for each marketing-mix dimension. Table 14 identifies the communications objectives (in grey) of each marketing-mix dimension. The communication objectives are linked with the strategic objectives (see Chapter 4). In the next pages, a detailed action plan is presented.

5.1.1 Communication objectives of the Marketing-mix dimensions

Table 15 - The communications objectives of each marketing-mix dimension

Product The ECSTPA phases	Price	Distribution	Promotion
Charter for Sustainable Destinations	Keep prices	EUROPARC directorate manages the process. EUROPARC Sections promote in their countries/ regions and support Protected Areas in the application process (in Italy and Spain).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECSTPA section on EUROPARC website • Social media internal network • Institutional brochure, flyers and guidelines • Promotion of case studies & best practice • Magic Numbers • Mentoring programme • Merchandise • Training and capacity building programmes • Communications toolkit
Increase reputation of the ECSTPA methodology	Increase transparency and value for the money	Empower Sections for a stronger promotion and support to Destinations in their regions/countries.	Increase brand awareness of the Charter Establish a stronger internal network
Charter for Sustainable Partners	Varies within each country	Process agreed by the Federation, managed by Sections. Partners are directly awarded by Protected Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECSTPA section- EUROPARC website • Communications toolkit • Inspiration for Parks to better support their partners (toolkit energy saving, best practice)
Increase retention of Partners committed	Account the benefits implementing the standards (value for the effort)	Empower Protected Areas to better support the implementation of the methodology	Provide tools for Partners to communicate their commitment to sustainability. Increase visibility.
Charter for Sustainable Tour Operators	Varies within each country	Process agreed by the Federation, managed by Sections. In France, a national committee manages the process of application and certification, but are the Protected Areas who engage with Tour Operators and promote the	Exchanging programme for Tour Operators across the different Destinations
Increase interest of Tour operators working with the ECTPA	Increase benefits for joining the network	Empower Protected Areas and National Committees to better support the implementation of the methodology	Increase cooperation within the network of certified Tour Operators

Own elaboration.

5.2 Implementing the Action Plan: roles and responsibilities

With a great part of the plan being delivered by different constituents of the ECSTPA internal network, it is necessary to establish clear roles and responsibilities of the Sustainable Destinations awarded, the EUROPARC Directorate and the EUROPARC Sections. The activities mentioned below should be taken into consideration by Sustainable Destinations when writing their five years Action Plan, and by the EUROPARC Federation and EUROPARC Sections when defining their annual work plans.

a) **EUROPARC Directorate**

Generally provides:

- Owns the copyright to all charter methodology and branding
- **Permission (and withdrawal of permission)** to use all branding material and any official Charter documentation
- **Guidelines on how to use the brand and communicate** the ECSTPA
- **Assessment and evaluation** of Charter applications
- **Training of Verifiers**
- Undertakes all **administration and financial management** of the Charter
- Awarding of Charter
- The high-profile **Charter Award ceremony**
- Development of projects that bring development, tools, and benefits to the Charter network.
- Liaison with sections and all other interested parties on the **development of Charter methodologies**
- **Authorisation of methodologies** for charter II - Partners and Charter III - tour operators
- **Official information about the ECSTPA** (website, quarterly newsletter and institutional communication)
- **Advise and information** about the charter to all external inquiries
- **Represent the charter network** globally
- Ensures international visibility
- **Sets up and manages internal commission** to develop the work of the Charter and the wider sustainable tourism issues.
- Maintain the **master contact list** of all Charter awarded areas

EUROPARC Directorate gives to Sustainable Destinations

- Platform for **experience exchange** (Facebook, case studies form)
- **Training** (on communications & capacity building - with life Edu)
- **Networking events** (Charter network meeting and Webinars)
- **Guidelines and toolkit** to better implement the different phases of the ECSTPA (for sustainable destinations, divided into 5 areas following the application form; to support them supporting partners)
- **Comms Toolkit** for Destinations “**How to tell the Story of My Destination?**”
- Regular information on a quarterly newsletter
- Qualitative mid-term review for every 5 years’ period

EUROPARC Directorate gives to Sections

- numbers of the Charter
- Support in the development of Communication Tools
- Agreement with the definition of the Charter Methodologies part 2 and part 3
- Acknowledges the responsibilities for the national management of the network of Sustainable Destinations, Partners and Tour Operators awarded

EUROPARC Directorate gives to Partners & Tour Operators

- List of benefits of belonging to the network and access to the international network
- Networking events (Charter network meeting and Webinars)
- Comms Toolkit for partners “**What makes me different?**”
- Award system based on environmental performance
- Inspiration and examples from other businesses

b) EUROPARC Sections

Generally provide:

- The connection between the Directorate and the Sustainable Destinations and Partners awarded
- Represents de Charter at the National level, within Protected Area management and tourism Authorities
- Engages with regional and local administrations for the promotion and expansion of the Charter Network
- Developments and updates on the implementation of methodologies Part 2 and Part 3
- Follows the Sustainable Tourism agenda at the national level and assures the recognition of the Charter methodology

EUROPARC Sections give to EUROPARC Directorate:

- The updates from the country/region
- Number and list of partners and tour operators awarded
- Suggestions of case studies and good practices from the network
- The needs of the network at the national level
- Translation of the official communications materials and guidelines in the native language

EUROPARC Sections give Sustainable Destinations:

- Updated information about the ECSTPA in the native language
- Support the technical implementation of the methodology Part 1 by parks
- Overview of the technical implementation of the methodology for partners and tour operators
- The annual meeting for the network at the national level

EUROPARC Sections give to Partners & Tour Operators

- Overview of the technical implementation of the methodology for partners and tour operators
- Support to Parks implementing Part 2 and Part 3

c) Sustainable Destinations

Generally provide:

- Connection at the local level with the managing authorities
- Ensures the continuous involvement of the Stakeholders forum
- Seeks to engage Partners and Tour Operators for the implementation of methodology Part 2 and Part 3
- Actively shares good practices with the Network of Sustainable Destination, both at local, national and international level
- Widely promotes the European Charter methodology and the outcomes of its implementation
- Displays the charter logo in merchandising and all online and offline products

Sustainable Destinations give to EUROPARC Federation and Sections:

- Information about best practices/ examples;

- List of needs for both training and tools;
- List of topics that would like to have covered in webinars (national language and international);
- Suggestions for tour operators at international/national level
- The contact for regional tourism agencies for joint promotion of the charter

Sustainable Destinations give to Partners:

- Information about the Protected area natural & cultural values
- Description of clear benefits of belonging to the network
- Seduces partners to join/sign cooperation agreement
- Gives tips on how to make a more efficient use of resources (energy, etc)

Sustainable Destinations give to tour operators certified:

- Training about the park and natural features;
- Description of clear benefits of belonging to the network
- Information and guidance on how to communicate the ECSTPA (in terms of logo usage and key messages to get across)

Sustainable Destinations give to visitors

- Information about the Park
- Inspire for nature protection and preservation of natural & cultural heritage
- Shares the ECSTPA story and how they are working together with partners for Sustainable Development

5.3 Detailed Action Plan

The action plan **reflects the work that will be delivered by the EUROPARC Directorate and the Sections**. However, some activities that will be partly delivered by the Sustainable Destinations are also mentioned in the tables in the following pages. The main work delivered by each Sustainable Destination awarded should be included in their respective Action Plan (especially regarding the involvement of partners, tour operators, local community, authorities, and visitors).

Strategic Objective 1 Build a strong network of excellent quality Touristic Destinations



Expected outcomes	Activities	Subsegments	Responsible	Timing	Indicators	Budget (when applicable)
<i>1.1. A highly motivated and cooperative international network of Sustainable Destinations, with experienced destinations sharing their expertise and best practice with new comers</i>	Develop and activate internal networking tool - regular update of the Facebook Group	Destinations awarded and Partners/ TO	EUROPARC Directorate to stimulate but requires the participation of all group members	Bi-weekly posts on EUROPARC Social media Monthly posts on EUROPARC Sections	Number of posts, the rate of engagement, number of participants	Staff time
	Promoting best practices from the network, as news articles, and with EUROPARC case studies template	Destinations awarded and Partners/ TO	EUROPARC Federation's Case studies template EUROPARC Sections help identifying best practices Active participants of PAs and Partners submitting	At least 6 best practice per year	Number of posts, the rate of engagement	Staff time
	Trimestral newsletters in English with network updates, events, and global trends (in English)	All members of the network	EUROPARC Directorate	quarterly	Number of newsletters, rate of engagement	Cost covered by EF mailing system
	Online webinars with ECSTPA Destinations and Partners presenting (to be organised in their own language)	PAs and Partners; Potential new Destinations	EUROPARC Directorate and EUROPARC Sections, with case studies from Sustainable Destinations	1 per year per country (in native language) 1 annually in English for wider audiences	Number of registrants and participants Social media shares and visibility	Cost covered by EF webinar system
	EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations Network Meeting	All network and external participants interested in Sust. Tourism	EUROPARC Directorate to overview, member of the network to host and manage	2019, 2021	Participants Evaluation forms	To be defined by hosting organisation
	Bronze, Silver, Gold a recognition of the most successful examples or longstanding members. To be invited to the Network Meeting 2019	Destinations	EUROPARC Directorate	Kick off in the Charter Network Meeting' 19		Can travel costs be covered?

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	Mentoring Programme - from experiences to less experienced destinations - based on Bronze, Silver, Gold	PAs technicians	EUROPARC Directorate to match Parks.	Kick off in the Charter Network Meeting' 19	Successful partnerships created	Look for possible funds for experience exchange programme
1.2 Sustainable Destinations recognise the benefits of the network and renew commitment after the 5 years of the Award	The network (Destinations, Partners and TOs) is visible on website and up-to-date	All network	Partners and Sections to collect information on Partners & TOs. EUROPARC Directorate publishes on website	By the end of 2018		Staff time
	Set up a qualitative mid-term follow up for each Destination's action plan (phone call or email)	Destinations	EUROPARC Directorate	Start by end 2018	Destinations contacted	Staff time
1.3 Sustainable Tour operators awarded start working with business partners and tour operators from other awarded Sustainable Destinations	Define clear benefits of belonging to the network	Tour Operators at the local level	EUROPARC Directorate and Sections → Destinations to disseminate	By mid-2019		Staff time
	Create detailed guidance on how to implement the methodology - for locals and national agencies (outgoing)	Tour Operators	EUROPARC Directorate coordinates with Sections → Sections to disseminate to nationals → Destinations to disseminate to locals	By mid-2019		Staff time
	Create an exchange programme with activities (online) and mailing list exclusively for businesses and TOs certified	Tour Operators and Partners	Possible working group or French National Commission	Start by mid-2019	Meetings of the working group; outcomes; the number of exchanges	Possible to include in NGO grant application



Strategic Objective 2 Ensure EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations as living models for Sustainable Development

Expected outcome	Activities	Targets	Responsible	Timing	Indicators	Budget (when applicable)
<i>2.1 Higher engagement of certified Sustainable Partners and Sustainable Tour Operators in each EUROPARC Sustainable Destination</i>	Collect information about partners certified	Partners	Destinations → report to Sections → report to EUROPARC Directorate	By the end of 2018		Staff time
	Create new layout for Partners' certificates for all countries (in different languages)	Partners and Tour Operators	EUROPARC Directorate Designs → Sections translate → Destinations give the certificate	Tools developed by end 2018	New certificates	Staff time
	Define new promotional tools for partners to display their commitment	Partners and Tour Operators	EUROPARC Directorate produces → Destinations distribute to Partners	Brainstorm by June 2018, tools designed by end 2018 and delivered by 2019		To be defined
	Publish Partners' information on the website	Partners	EUROPARC Directorate	With new website launch		Staff time
	Create practical toolkit to support the implementation of the ECSTPA for Destinations, partners and Tour Operators	Destinations, Partners, and TOs (existing and potential)	EUROPARC Directorate coordinates (with CEETO project) EUROPARC Sections translate	By mid-2020	1 practical toolkit	Based on CEETO outcomes
	Webinar for Partners for experience exchange	Partners	EUROPARC Directorate	1 webinar per year, starting in 2019	Registrations, visibility and participants	
<i>2.2 The environmental, social and economic impacts of the EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations are highly promoted</i>	Disseminate the results of Magic Numbers 2017-2018	All audiences Network, National Authorities, Professional Tourism Sector, Potential new Destinations, EU Institutions	EUROPARC Directorate	Launch on World Tourism Day 2018 (27.09)	Visibility	Staff time
	Create digital infographics (static and short gifs) with the results				1 plan implemented	Staff time
	Short communications plan for the Magic numbers dissemination, with key messages, digital content and press activities			September 2018-2019	Outreach on media and social media	Staff time
	Prepare presentation with sections and provide to Destinations			By November 2018	Conferences / Events where they are presented	Staff time

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	Make a new study		EUROPARC Directorate; Sections to distribute	By 2022		Staff time? Or subcontracted?
<i>2.3 The contribution of the ECSTPA to the Sustainable Development Goals is visible and celebrated</i>	Create infographic - the Value creation of the ECSTPA	All audiences	EUROPARC Directorate	Launch in Charter Award Ceremony 2018	Social media visibility Page analytics	Staff time
	Share best practices from French Parks about low-cost ideas and resources to support their partners following the standards	Partners and TOs	EUROPARC Directorate provides tools and ideas to Protected Areas → Sections translate	By the end of 2019	1 practical toolkit ready to use in different languages	Destinations to find local sponsors
	Support partners and tours operators implementing low-consumption resources	Partners and tour operators	Protected Areas implement and contact Partners			
	Update Good for Parks, Good for People with Sustainable Development Goals in several languages	All audiences	EUROPARC Directorate	Launch in Charter Award Ceremony 2018	4 brochures produced	Prints: maybe TUI supports? 2000€
	Develop an Award System to collect their eco-environmental and social performance	All audiences	Working group	First partners awarded in Charter Award Ceremony 2019	Application of the methodology, results	NGO grant



Strategic Objective 3 Establish EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations as an internationally renowned quality brand

Expected outcome	Activities	Targets	Responsible	Timing	Indicators	Budget (when applicable)
3.1 EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations, the awarded partners and tour operators become the key ambassadors of the EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations Brand	Create a short version + presentation of the Marketing Strategy to share	Internal Network	EUROPARC Directorate	By June 2018	1 presentation, 1 graphic resume	Staff time
	Create communications toolkit for Destinations “ How to tell the Story of My Destination? ”	Destinations	EUROPARC Directorate creates → Section translate if needed	Brainstorm and Draft in June 2018 The final version by November 2019	1 toolkit in place	Staff time
	Train tour operators/guides at the local level with the ECSTPA story	Tour operators and visitors	Sustainable Destinations			
	Training on communications and storytelling for Destinations (with tools)	Destinations	EUROPARC Directorate → Section to deliver in mother language?	The first test in June 2018 At least one per country by end 2019 Workshop in Network meeting 2019	Number of training Media visibility Meltwater Presentations	Travel costs
	Create communications toolkit for Partners “ What makes me different? ”	Partners and TOs	EUROPARC Directorate → Sections translate if needed	By mid-2019	1 toolkit in place	Staff time
	Review brand guidelines with specification on the use by partners	Internal network	EUROPARC Directorate	By June 2018	Brand Guidelines reviewed	Staff time
	Review agreement contracts with Partners and Tour Operators in all countries - ensure the correct brand use	Internal Network	Sections and EUROPARC Directorate	By June 2018 (Spain) by end 2018 (other countries)	Contract agreements reviewed	Staff time
3.2 The ECSTPA is a recognised methodology by	Promotional film about the ECSTPA	All audiences	EUROPARC Directorate	Charter Award Ceremony 2019	1 promotional film in place	covered
	Explore the possibility of getting recognition of the ECSTPA by the GSTC	All audiences	EUROPARC /Council members	By end 2020	Partnership agreement	Staff time

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<i>organisations working for Sustainable Development at international, national and regional level</i>	Explore the possibility of becoming an official partner of UNESCO Become a member/partner of the UNWTO YFP programme	All audiences	EUROPARC /Council members	By end 2020	Partnership agreement	Staff time
	Grow interest of the ECSTPA methodology in 1 country outside of Europe	All audiences	EUROPARC Council support	By end 2020	Partnership agreement	Travel costs
3.3 EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations are valued by tourists and tour operators	Engage with regional and national tourism authorities for promotion of the Sustainable Destinations explore possibility for National level promotional campaigns with charm actions for Tour Operators or communications campaign for external markets	Professional tourism sector	Destinations to suggest → Contact by EUROPARC Sections → Follow up by EUROPARC Directorate	Start contacts by mid-2019		Staff time
	Explore the possibility of partnership with a well established tour / experiences digital provider to produce packages with EUROPARC Sustainable Destinations & Partners	Digital tour operators / experience providers	EUROPARC Directorate	Start contacts by 2019		Staff time
	Explore the possibility to develop a partnership with TUI Experiences	Internal network	EUROPARC Directorate	Start contacts by 2019		Staff time
	Develop opportunities (possible digitally) for EUROPARC certified Tour Operators to get in touch with international agencies	International professionals/ agencies and Tour operators certified	EUROPARC Directorate	Start contacts by 2019	Webinars	Staff time
	Develop a short annual digital content strategy	All audiences	EUROPARC Directorate and EUROPARC Sections	By 2019	Content strategy Annual reports and comparison over the years	Staff time
	Explore joint participation in Tourism Fairs for partnerships	Internal Network	Destinations, Sections and EUROPARC Directorate	By 2020		Tbd - travel costs and entrance fee
	Create merchandising for Destinations	Destinations	EUROPARC Directorate	Brainstorm by June 2018 Deliver by 2019		tbd

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	Design customisable flyer/ poster/ placard about the ECSTPA for Destinations to display	Destinations	EUROPARC Directorate → Sections translate	Brainstorm by June 2018 Deliver by 2019		tbd
	Partner Universities to analyse brand recognition among visitors (following previous project)	Internal Network	EUROPARC Directorate	Implementation in 2021		tbd

5.4 Proposed Timeline

	2018				2019				2020				2021				2022			
STRATEGY																				
Write strategy 2018-2022	■	■																		
Create short version + presentation			■																	
Mid-term review									■	■										
Analyse network expectations																	■	■	■	
Develop new strategy 2023-2028																			■	■
MEETINGS																				
Charter Awards*				■			■				■				■					■
Network Meeting **					■	■							■	■						
Seminario CETS in Spain			■		■	■				■				■	■				■	
Meeting in Italy			■		■	■				■				■	■				■	
COMMUNICATION TOOLS																				
Review brand guidelines			■																	
Review agreement contracts			■	■																
Design Certificates II and III			■	■																
Update brochure Good for Parks			■	*																
Promotional Film				*																
Annual digital strategy						■			■					■					■	
Promotional tools for Parks			■	■	■	■														
Promotional tools for Partners			■	■	■	■														
Customisable flyer for Destinations			■	■	■	■														

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Facebook group activation																				
Promoting best practices and regular info																				
Newsletters																				
Bronze, silver, gold Destinations						**														
TRAINING AND TOOLS																				
Communications Toolkit for Parks																				
Communications training for Parks (TBD)																				
Communications Toolkit for Partners																				
Toolkit (Parks) implementation part II & III																				
Webinar Destinations (1 in English, lang. tbd)																				
Webinar for Tour Operators (tbd)																				
Webinar Partners																				
Best practices on eco-friendly measures																				
Mentoring Programme																				
Visitor management tool + quality control																				
PARTNERSHIPS																				
GSTC																				
UNESCO																				
UNWTO YFP																				
TUI Experiences																				
Engage regional & national tourism agencies																				

Chapter 6 - Final Considerations

Humanity is facing enormous challenges with poverty, social inequalities, depletion of natural resources, all of these extremed by the effects of climate change. An overpopulated world, driven in many countries by unsustainable consumption patterns, is impacting all ecosystems on earth and threatening ecological balance.

Simultaneously, the access to low-cost transportation and an overall improvement of the living conditions of the medium class contributes to an unprecedented growth of the tourism industry. While it is a synonym of prosperity and economic wealth by many governments and the tourism industry, several European destinations are facing unsustainable flows of visitors, affecting social structures and impacting on biodiversity.

Moderated consumption patterns, new travel habits, but also new solutions from society and the private sector, are absolutely necessary if we are to halt the rate of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation. The Sustainable Development Goals were precisely created to emphasize the need of mobilising all sectors of society towards achieving a sustainable, liveable world within the limits that nature can stand. However, despite several legal instruments for nature protection, biodiversity loss continues to occur at an alarming rate, inclusive within protected areas.

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism is, therefore, a useful methodology to support protected areas in leading a change towards a healthy environment, prosperous and with social benefits for the local communities. By bringing people together around the table, many protected areas have been able to establish a common dialogue with the main actors in the territory, working directly to improve the visitors' quality experience whilst safeguarding natural values. Moreover, by working side by side with local entrepreneurs, protected areas are a source of inspiration for businesses to embed sustainability at the core of their activities, especially with those successfully implementing the part 2 and part 3 of the ECSTPA. The award system for businesses and tours operators working with the ECSTPA, proposed under objective 2.3, will better recognise their eco-environmental and social performance, increasing their responsibility while celebrating their commitment to sustainability.

6.1 Increasing recognition

The value of the ECSTPA is unquestionable, but over the past decades, the EUROPARC Federation has not been able to capitalise the socio-economic benefits of the methodology, and thus its visibility is yet restricted to a niche of professionals working in the field of protected areas.

The high-level award ceremony, that takes place annually at the European Parliament with the direct involvement of Members of the European Parliament and representatives from different Directorate-General from the European Commission, contributes to the recognition of the methodology and its value for society. However, to reach out to new audiences, specially the professional sector, the proposed actions under objective 3.3 are of crucial importance. By reaching recognised tour operators, EUROPARC will capitalise the visibility of the ECSTPA among visitors. For that, EUROPARC needs to work at two levels: the sections need to directly engage with regional and national tourism authorities who have the means to promote the destinations awarded in international tourism fairs and exhibitions, and the funds to organise fam and press trips on a regular basis; simultaneously, the directorate must forge strategic alliances with well established tour operators and online experiences providers, to capitalise the market value of the ECSTPA.

6.2 The participatory process

The participatory process enabled the establishment of a direct dialogue with many representatives of the ECSTPA network, which certainly contributed to the definition of a strategy and action plan aligned to their needs. In addition, by opening participation to all protected areas awarded through the online forms, it was created a feeling of co-creation among the network members. Although only fifteen feedbacks were received, professionals felt they had the chance to contribute, to be engaged in the process and that their opinions were valued by the EUROPARC Federation.

Opening participation, hearing the diverse opinions and needs from the members was, since the beginning, one of the pre-requisites for the development of the strategy. However, despite the outcomes achieved and the positive feedbacks received, the process took much longer than initially predicted, which might have contributed to a certain lack of interest, especially among those who were involved in the very first workshop, in 2015. In balance, the participatory process was positive, but stricter deadlines should have been met.

6.3 A feeling of belonging

The rebranding received a positive feedback from the majority of the network members. It touched hearts and minds, and the feeling of proudness of the network in displaying the logotype has visibly increased - several protected areas' staff have already included the logotype in their official field costumes, websites and communication materials.

In fact, increasing the positive feeling towards the ECSTPA brand among the local protected area technicians and businesses working in partnership is the fundamental step of this strategy. With a very low budget available for communications and public relations activities from the EUROPARC Federation, is it essential to empower the protected areas and partners in

communicating the ECSTPA to their local communities and visitors. They have a much higher potential to reach the society than the Federation itself. The success of the Marketing strategy implementation highly depends on the level of engagement that the EUROPARC Federation and Sections can boost at regional and national level.

The activities predicted under objective 3.1 will help to capitalise the connection to the ECSTPA and provide partners and destinations the right tools to communicate. This includes the creation of two toolkits - one for protected areas “how to tell the story of my destination?” and one for partners “what makes me different?”, with resources and key messages that they can use in their communication channels. The creation of these toolkits will be based on participatory processes themselves, as it will be defined by the members of the network during the Charter network meetings. The toolkits will be freely accessible online, and if funds are available, will also be translated in different languages. The creation and launch of the toolkits will be supported by capacity building sessions in communications, with a special focus on digital tools and interpretation techniques, that will be delivered by the Federation. Often, protected areas lack human resources with expertise in communications, hence, providing them informal learning opportunities is of extreme importance.

Another important aspect of the proposed strategy is **to capitalise the knowledge existing within the network**, and better recognise those who have a long term commitment to the ECSTPA methodology. To praise their experience and give them the chance to engage with younger members of the network, a gold-silver-bronze award system is proposed, based on which gold (or long-term members) will be invited to mentor recent members of the network, (activities predicted under objective 1.1). These will not only praise their commitment, but also contribute to the empowerment of the network and thus, the feeling of belonging. The option to create a facebook group instead of a promotional page, aims also to establish a direct connection among professionals involved with the ECSTPA, giving them a place to share their achievements and stories, but also to look for solutions and inspiration.

Finally, as language is still a barrier for many professionals, webinars and communication tools are proposed to be developed in the national languages, with the direct involvement of the EUROPARC Sections.

6.4 The implementation

The real challenge starts now: the implementation phase. The comprehensive action plan will be translated to protected area professionals awarded, and the EUROPARC will strive to establish a stronger and direct connection with each protected area awarded. The network will also be reviewed during the next months by the Evaluation Committee, and the parks that have not renewed their commitment for more than three years will be excluded. This means a

reduction of the number of areas within the network, but it will simultaneously contribute to the creation of a stronger and deeply engaged network of sustainable destinations.

Building up a strategy for such an international programme, highly complex both in terms of needs and expectations from a widespread network and in terms of communication, was a great challenge. It was the first time in the history of the ECSTPA that the EUROPARC Federation decided to take a pro-active approach for the promotion of the ECSTPA, and assigned the responsibility to someone with the background to deliver it.

At a personal level, developing the strategy, leading the participatory processes, collecting and analysing, but especially mediating the workshops was a tremendous experience. The fundamental lesson learned: it is all about understanding people. It is all about how we connect them, how to lead them beyond the points of disparity and cultural discrepancies, focusing in the similarities and in the common challenges they face. Each member of the network has so much in common with professionals from other countries that having the possibility to bring them together to exchange experience is a great privilege.

Lastly, the implementation of the ECSTPA plan is about reaching out to the individuals directly: protected area professionals are busy creatures (the lack of funding and human resources affects us all) and the only way we can have them joining in and inputting into the network is to establish a one-to-one dialogue and empower them to be an advocate for sustainable tourism.

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Annex 1 - Survey to Sustainable Destinations

Form to be filled by Parks awarded with the Charter

This document aims at **collecting thoughts and ideas from the network of Charter Parks**. Please take 5 minutes to fill it in. All contributions are very welcomed, but don't worry if you cannot answer all the questions. **You can fill it in your native language**, if it helps.

Filling in this form is not mandatory, but gives you the chance to contribute to the future of the Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.

Once you have completed it, please send it to b.pais@europarc.org.

Thank you very much.

Park name:

Contact person name:

Contact person email:

In one sentence please tell us what the charter means to you and your park:

What would you expected from the implementation of a Marketing plan for the Charter?

If you are developing Charter Part II and Charter Part III, please let us know:

Business Partners and tour operators

What are your business partners (awarded) looking for when they apply to the Charter part II and Charter part III?	What do you need to better engage with your business partners?
What benefits can EUROPARC Federation and Sections give them? (please give us examples of tools and activities)	
<i>Feel free to add any other thoughts or suggestions</i>	

Thank you very much!

Annex 2 - Graphic guidelines of the ECSTPA



EUROPARC
Sustainable Tourism
in Protected Areas

Graphic guidelines

for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas
ECSTPA

1

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introducing

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corporate identity

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2

About EUROPARC

The home of the ECSTPA



EUROPARC
F E D E R A T I O N

EUROPARC Federation was founded in 1973 with the aim of supporting protected areas to fulfill their role as preservers of Europe's natural beauty and landscapes.

It is a non-profit organisation based in Germany, with offices in Brussels and Barcelona and is the oldest and largest Network of European Protected areas.

Quality tourism will be
Good for Parks, Good for People

Since 1993, with the publication of the seminal report "Loving them to Death", the EUROPARC Federation has supported parks, through improving their tourism strategy and actions utilising a **multi-stakeholder approach**.

Now, with over 20 years of application, the methodology has been updated, widely approved, and implemented across a **network of hundreds of Parks and local partners**.

3

Why a new logo?

Coherence, consistency, resonance



The first graphic identity of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas dates from the early 2000's.

It was created under a project, supported by BfN (DE), that further supported the implementation and development of the Charter methodology. That was a time when the focus was on consolidating the methodology, so less attention was given to communications.

Leading the way
in Sustainable Tourism for
Europe's Protected Areas

Today, we want a stronger network that is highly recognised by peers and partners across Europe. For that, we need to **maintain coherence** across the multiple channels and entities that use the logo. **Consistency is essential** to enhance the benefits of Parks and Partners.

A **resonating brand depends on the discipline of all who are permitted to use the logo**.

These Guidelines establish a **common ground and a story line** for this phase in the life of the ECSTPA.

4



How have we arrived here?

A bottom-up approach

Charter Network Meeting 2015

Who are we? What are our core values?

During the Charter Network Meeting 2015, in Portugal, a group of park representatives, tour operators and businesses working with the Charter, elaborated these questions, during an intensive workshop examining communications and branding.

Outcomes: Formulating the brand value of the ECSTPA – its personality, core values and communication needs.

Communications Commission 2016-17

How should we be recognised? By whom?

A communications and marketing commission, populated by members experienced in communications and in the Charter, was created by EUROPARC Federation.

Outcomes: The institutional dimension: Drafting the EUROPARC Communication Strategy. Synthesizing the contributions from the Charter Network Meeting and defining the brief for designers to create visuals.

5



Where are we heading?

A glimpse ahead to the next steps

Designing 2017

Transcribing emotions in images

The TUI Group, long time partner of EUROPARC and active in the Evaluation Committee of the Charter sponsored the design process

Outcomes: A new logo for the ECSTPA !

Charter Network Meeting 2017

How to activate the new visuals and promote the Charter?

The ECSTPA has now a new graphic image, but needs the creation of a communication plan to promote, involve, and strengthen the identity of the Charter. The outcomes will be further developed by EUROPARC's Communications and Marketing Commission.

Outcomes: Developing new communications
What are the needs of our target audience?
What activities can be done and by whom?
How will we promote the Charter, with which content, to whom and when?

6



About the European Charter Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas



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 ECSTPA, 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**.



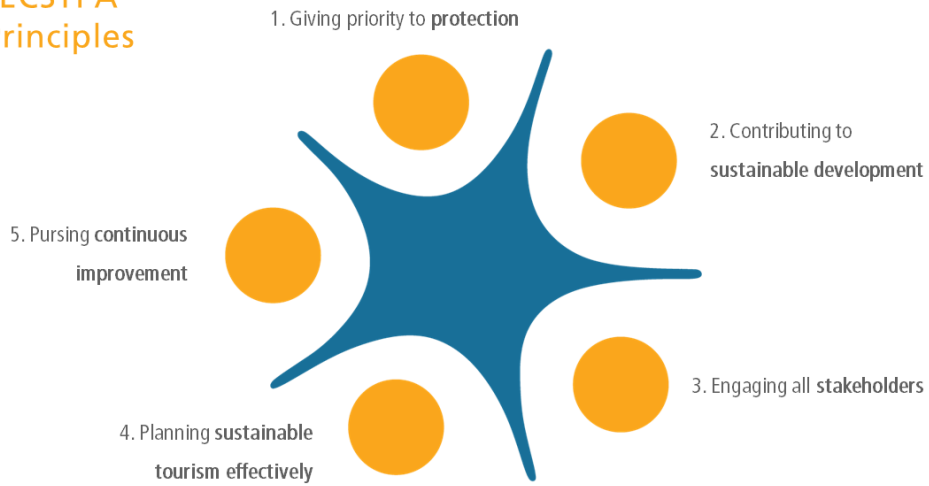
the ECSTPA is...



A **practical management tool** that enables Protected Areas to develop tourism sustainably, based on 5 Principles.



ECSTPA Principles



11



EUROPARC
Sustainable Tourism
in Protected Areas

Corporate identity elements

Logo, colours, scheme

12

Logotype Rebranding

concept



Core values

Union & Connection
Care & Respect
Dynamism
Sustainability

The story

The Charter is about **bringing people together**, provide them a framework to **work collaboratively**, towards becoming a **sustainable destination**. Sustainability is a **continuous process** of enhancing quality with all local actors.

13

Logotype Rebranding

visual references



Achieve better visual connection with EUROPARC Federation's logotype



Assure some continuity with the previous Charter logo

14

Logotype Rebranding elements



Composition: Bringing people around the table



15


Logotype Rebranding dimensions



X = Margins = 11 mm

16

Logotype Rebranding colours



RGB 14 110 151
CMYK 90 52 23 4
HEX 0E6E97

EUROPARC blue



RGB 250 167 28
CMYK 0 39 99 0
HEX FAA71C

Charter Yellow



RGB 97 97 97
CMYK 61 53 52 24
HEX 616161

Grey

Logotype Rebranding colours



Correct uses

Coloured version: use over white or over light grey (20%), keeping the 11 mm margin



White Version

Use always the white version over coloured backgrounds



Typography

font family: Frutiger



EUROPARC
Sustainable Tourism
in Protected Areas

Titles: Frutiger 55 Roman

body: Frutiger 57 condensed

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Different Versions

language



To be used by Parks awarded with the ECSTPA



EUROPARC is keen to create different logo versions, if you would like to have a version in your language please contact us at: office@europarc.org

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Different Versions

Partners and Tour Operators



To be used exclusively by **Sustainable Businesses** working in partnership with Parks – [Charter Part II](#)

To be used exclusively by **Sustainable Tour Operators** working in partnership with Parks – [Charter Part III](#)



The logos for Partners and Tour Operators are also available in the different languages

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Misuses of the logo

What not to do



Consistency is fundamental. Please follow these guidelines and do not misuse the ECSTPA logo in your publications, promotional materials or website.

The ECSTPA logotype is registered and legally protected.



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Use it wisely



The reputation and recognition of the ECSTPA depend on us all.

If you need further help to apply the logo in your merchandising
or other communications material
please contact us at office@europarc.org.



EUROPARC
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