



espacios
naturales de
ANDALUCÍA



20th anniversary of the protected areas in Andalusia
10th anniversary of the Sierra Nevada National Park

Vth European Charter Network Meeting
2-5 June 2009, Capileira (Granada)



From the 2nd to the 5th of June, the Sierra Nevada National and Nature Park hosted the European Charter Network Meeting in Capileira, which already boasts 58 Charter Areas in seven European countries (France, Finland, Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and UK) – 21 of which are Spanish - and is continuously growing. The Network Meeting brings together protected area managers and officers, as well as private and public entities linked to the tourism sector with the aim to facilitate the communication between these stakeholders and develop joint activities.

More than 140 people from all the countries participating in the Charter Network or interested in participation took up the invitation (list of participants enclosed in Annex I).

The working methodology was developed by means of working groups, plenary sessions for opening, concluding and closing.

Five working groups were put up, four of which related to the candidacy and implementation of the ECST (Part I: Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas and Part II: Working with tourism businesses) and the fifth related to future opportunities for the development of third part of the Charter, the cooperation with tour operators.

During the opening session the following issues were highlighted:

- Presentation from the Spanish Tourism Ministry on the “Club de Producto”, formed by the Charter Areas and the tourism products of those tourism businesses that work within the Charter Area and are certified as Charter Partner Businesses
- Presentation from the Foundation of Formation and Employment in Andalusia of the constitution of the Innovative Group of Entrepreneurs working with the Charter, (This sounds a little strange but I am not sure how to amend it!) consisting of a combination of Charter Areas and Charter Partner Businesses involved in cooperation activities.
- Presentation from Mike Brauner, representative from the department for sustainable development of TUI AG, the biggest European tourism consortium which plays a significant role in the environmental management of the tourism.

The conclusions from the working group were presented in a plenary session

WG I: Orientation for the implementation of the ECST (Part I), Charter Candidates: examples, methodologies, funding:

- The main benefits of the Charter for the protected areas are:
 - The coordination, cooperation and commitment of the local stakeholders (entrepreneurs, protected areas, administrations etc)
 - The socio-economic development of the local population within the Charter Area
 - The opportunity to promote sustainable tourism in the area and differentiate from any other form of tourism
 - Designing strategies
 - The opportunity to potentiate the knowledge and the promotion of the protected area.
- The principle difficulties of the Charter for the protected areas are:

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- Achieving a real participatory process adapting to the local characteristics/realities
- Find
- Finding potential funding opportunities
- Achieving the internal diffusion and communication of the Charter highlighting that it is a complex, long and cost intensive process.

WG II: Charter Areas: Communication



In this working group various issues related to the internal communication were discussed:

- The main target groups for the internal communication are: 1. The local tourism businesses, 2. Other stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Action Plan (particularly the tourism administrations) and 3. Other local stakeholders, local population and visitors.
- Support an active and permanently working Tourism Forum taking advantage of the channels already created in the area to promote and communicate the Charter
- Suggestions and good practices for a good internal communication:
 - Develop an internal communication plan for the Charter as one activity for the Action Plan
 - Communication to all participating stakeholders about development and evaluation of all Charter activities
 - Add the Charter logo to all communications from the Action Plan
 - Create technical and thematic committees composed of the key stakeholders

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- Use the local means of communication (radio, TV, press) or other traditional forms of communication in the area
- Vary the location for the meetings of the Charter Tourism Forum, working groups, etc
- Carry out study visits to the territory for the local tourism businesses
- Carry out study visits to other Charter Areas
- Strengthen the communication through newsletters (paper or digital) and the website giving a special focus to the local tourism businesses
- Annual follow-up/evaluation of the Action Plan, highlighting the experiences and activities of the tourism businesses
- Promote events as for example the Festival Forest of Bowland as an instrument to strengthen local identity of the Charter Area

WG III: Charter Areas: re-evaluation process: preparation of the application, auto evaluation, documentation and necessary reports:

- In the beginning the most important problems identified were:
 - The disposition of a financial frame for the five-year period of the Action Plan
 - The lack of staff
 - Lack of regular follow-up/evaluation
 - Weak indicators for evaluation
 - Lack of definition of the tasks, composition and aims of the Forum
- It was suggested that
 - EUROPARC develops a methodology to be followed by the protected areas, with case studies and examples
 - an annual production of an evaluation of the Action Plan
 - EUROPARC eliminates repetitions in the re-evaluation report and simplifies the report

WG IV: Working with tourism businesses – Charter Part II: experiences, good practice examples, methodologies:

This group was split into two subgroups: Charter Areas already implementing Part II and Charter Areas wishing to start with the implementation

Charter Areas wishing to start implementation with Part II

- Primarily, the opportunities of implementing Charter Part II were discussed:

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- The opportunity for tourism business to work together and not as individuals
 - Offer of a global image where the projects of each initiative can be presented
 - The Charter as a good communication tool between the local stakeholders
 - The increased visitor flow in the protected areas
 - The improvement of coordination and communication between the protected area and the and the tourism businesses
 - Create working possibilities to keep young people in the area
 - Financial and economic benefits for the tourism businesses
 - Give visibility to the protected area and the tourism business
 - Enable protected areas to work with businesses compromised to sustainability
- In a second step the main difficulties with the implementation were discussed:
 - Scepticism and mistrust from the tourism businesses. The following solutions were mentioned:
 - Invite a tourism business from another park to share experiences, exchange and information
 - Slow down the process and let the process of the Charter be settled in the area before starting to work with Part II
 - Give quick and tangible solutions
 - Lack of staff members in the protected area to implement and rimplement the follow-up of the actions the tourism business has planted.??? This does not sound English but I am not sure what it should say The following solutions were mentioned:
 - Cooperation and integration with other institutions
 - Elaborate a follow-up plan
 - The person responsible for the Charter within the protected area needs to be a full-time staff member

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- Lack of commitment from certain organisations and other stakeholders (tourism organisations, communities, local development groups...). The following solutions were mentioned:
 - Commitment of the managers of the protected area and the responsible person from the environment directorate
 - That the forum demands this commitment
- Further difficulties were:
 - High expectations from the tourism businesses to gain money quickly and easily
 - Lack of necessary computer knowledge of the tourism businesses
 - Tight schedules / deadlines for the implementation of certain actions
 - Increasing workload for the protected area staff
 - Increasing workload for the tourism businesses
 - Fear of the tourism businesses that their effort could be taken advantage of by others



Charter Areas already implementing Charter Part II

Primarily, the benefits for the socio-economic improvement of implementing the Part II have been listed:

- A better knowledge and communication of the network of tourism businesses working in the Charter Area have been gained

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- A better cooperation and dialogue to solve problems with the area of public use has been achieved
- The tourism businesses have been recognized as valuable intermediates for the visitors.
- A higher confidence in the authority managing the area has been achieved
- The local tourism businesses have gained better knowledge and information about the natural and cultural values of the protected area as well as about the management activities in the area

Secondly, the difficulties have been listed that were encountered during the implementation of Charter Part II:

- Lack of commitment from other organisations that work in the area: Tourism, local administrations as well as other departments of the environmental entity managing the area, that are not related to protected areas
Solution: integrate those stakeholders in the Forum and the Action Plan of the Charter with concrete activities and financial contributions
- Lack of time for the certification process
Solution: Enlarge the time for technical assistance (in Spain). The new assistance should last one year
- The certification process includes a lot of meetings for the tourism businesses which deprive them of time to take care of their business.
Solution: adapt the certification process optimizing the time of collective and individual training during the meetings
- Tools of the certification system (Check-list)
Solution: revise the tools to improve them and make them easier to use
- Publish the Charter in different means of communication on regional and national level.
Solution: communication campaigns on the Charter on European level (Ministry of Tourism) and autonomous level.

The group was also asked to which opportunities the implementation of the Part II could bring in the future for the Charter area and the Charter Partner Business. The following opportunities were identified:

- Create information network of sustainable tourism linked to protected areas
- Disseminate the commitment of the tourism business on a wider level and obtain through this a higher social recognition
- Create a “club of products” for the Charter Areas and the Charter Partner Businesses
- The Charter Areas can count on a group of tourism businesses that collaborate in the project and that are sustainable, give updated, verified and high-quality information about the protected area

WG V: Opportunities for the development of the Part III of the Charter: Discussion of possible criteria for products, common products that can be offered on a European scale

- It is essential to organize the promotion/commercialization of tourism products on a local or regional level to demonstrate cooperation and joint activities towards the tour operators. This coordination could be initiated by an association of tourism businesses or a local travel agent who is supporting the strategy of the protected area and that acts as an intermediate between the different tourism businesses implicated in the Charter (accommodation, guides, restaurants, visitor centres etc.) and the tour operator.
- Identify well-known protected areas that can help promoting other not so well-known protected areas. The Charter Areas should work in a network in order to diversify the tourism product and distribute the benefits.
- Complete the natural values offered by the protected areas with other products, as for example the ethnography, the gastronomy etc
- Consider the local population, besides the visitors, as a valuable target group for the tourism products

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- Give special attention to the local, regional and/or national tourism as the basis for the socio-economic sustainability of the protected area



- It is necessary to coordinate the different entities implied in the development of tourism products (Tourism, Environment, Culture etc)
- The role of the nature/tourism guide is very important. The areas should invest in local guides with good formation and language skills.
- Knowledge of the market and the target group adapting to the different segments of marketing, identifying concrete products and products “à la carte”.
- Creation of a European network of tourism businesses that fulfill the global criteria for sustainable development. These criteria are recognized as global standard for the establishment of tourism supply chains based on sustainability. The part III of the Charter should be based on these criteria.
- Associate various Charter Areas with unique elements and similar values, e.g.: those standing out because of fauna or flora for the creation of tourism packages
- Select local and family-run tourism businesses, integrated in the territory and multipliers of the local economy.

Once all conclusions were presented, the Norwegian protected area Dovrefjell-Sundalsfjella presented its experience that could serve as an example of how to combine Part II and Part III of the Charter. They have established a marketing platform integrating at the moment by eight communities with the aim of

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connecting the tourism businesses of the protected area by creating an eco label. It is a unique tool with which they try to achieve a strategic approach coordinating an action plan as well as operating successfully starting with a small budget. This ecologic label has already put into practice and presented at tourism fairs in the Netherlands and Germany.



Based on this presentation the plenary raised various questions whether the Part II and Part III of the Charter should be linked or not. On one side this was affirmed and on the other side a difference was seen between Charter Part II operating on a local level and Charter Part II where tour operators bring in a more global view. The plenary agreed that there is the need to continue to implement the Part II of the Charter and start developing the Charter Part III, working on the official Charter text. It was suggested that EUROPARC forms a working group elaborating the official text, guidelines and regulations for the implementation of Charter Part III.