

Sustainability criteria for tourism in protected areas

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Sustainability programs (Germany / Europe)

1. Europarc Federation: **European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas**
2. Association of German Nature Parks (VDN): **Quality Initiative**
3. National Natural Landscapes: **Partner programmes** (Cooperation with private sector)
4. DB/BUND/VCD/NABU: Fahrtziel Natur – **Destination Nature** (sustainable mobility in PAs)

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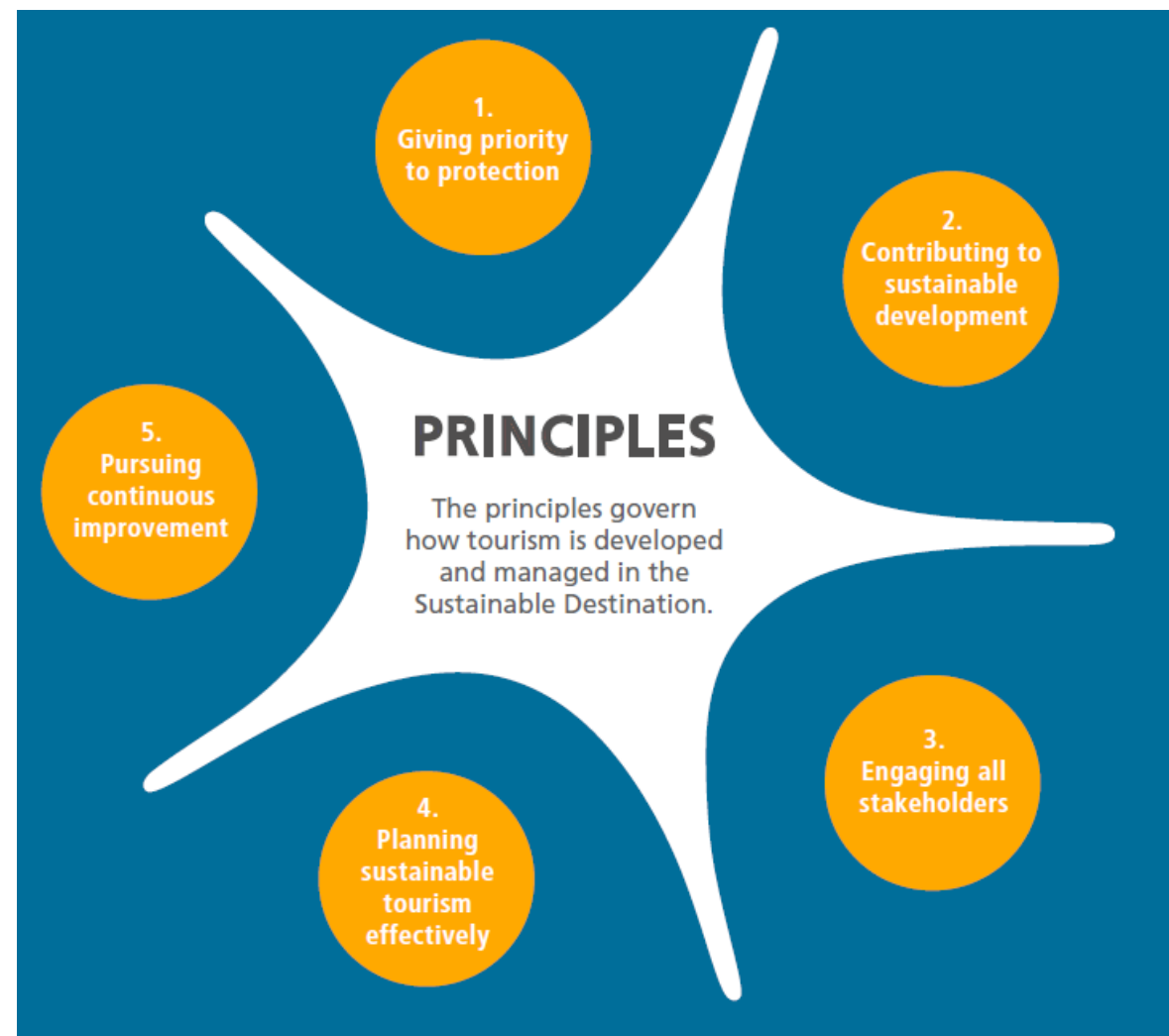
European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas



- Reaction to “Loving them to Death” (1993)
- Charter establ. in 1995
- First certified parks in 2001
- 87 PAs/destinations in 12 countries (most in Italy& Spain)

European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

It is in line with the international Guidelines on *Biodiversity and Tourism Development*, the *Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria for destinations*, the *European Commission's tourism policy* and its priority "to promote the development of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism", and contributes to the achievement of several *Sustainable Development Goals*.



Components of the European Charter

PART I SUSTAINABLE DESTINATIONS

The **first and main part** is for sustainable **destinations**, primarily the area around a **Protected Area**. This is awarded to the Protected Area authority and covers a specifically defined *Charter Area* which may be wider than the legally designated Protected Area.

PART II SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PARTNERS

Addressed to sustainable local tourism businesses within the Sustainable Destination.

PART III SUSTAINABLE TOUR OPERATORS

Addressed to tour operators and tourism agencies bringing visitors to Protected Areas and willing to contribute to the sustainable development of the Destination.

Structure & process of the European Charter



The Charter requires that all Protected Areas have all the components in place.

Structure & process of the European Charter



Key topics of the European Charter

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

Key topics of the European Charter

| | |
|--|---|
| 5) Effectively communicating the area to visitors | <ul style="list-style-type: none">1) Ensuring that marketing materials and activities promote the area effectively and responsibly;2) Providing good quality and effective visitor information and interpretation;3) Ensuring that tourism businesses and other local stakeholders are well informed about the area and provide relevant and accurate information to visitors;4) Providing specific information and interpretation for young people, schools and student groups. |
| 6) Ensuring social cohesion | <ul style="list-style-type: none">1) Anticipating, monitoring and minimising any existing and potential conflicts with local residents;2) Maintaining good communication and engagement between local residents, businesses, visitors and the Protected Area authority;3) Encouraging and developing appropriate Partnership activity with and between stakeholders. |
| 7) Strengthening prosperity in the local community | <ul style="list-style-type: none">1) Promoting the provision and identity of local produce and services and their purchase and use by visitors and tourism businesses;2) Supporting the economic viability and performance of local tourism businesses and the provision of local employment in tourism. |

Key topics of the European Charter

| | |
|---|---|
| 8) Providing training and capacity building | <ul style="list-style-type: none">1) Providing relevant training for staff of the Protected Area authority in sustainable tourism development and management;2) Providing and encouraging relevant training and capacity building for tourism businesses and other stakeholders in sustainable tourism. |
| 9) Monitoring tourism performance and impacts | <ul style="list-style-type: none">1) Monitoring of visitors – volumes, patterns, spending and satisfaction;2) Monitoring of tourism businesses – performance and needs;3) Monitoring of tourism impacts – on the environment, economy and community;4) Monitoring progress in implementing the action plan. |
| 10) Communicating actions and engaging with the Charter | <ul style="list-style-type: none">1) Communicating sustainable tourism actions and results to local stakeholders and more widely at a local, regional and national level;2) Promoting and making visible the award of the Charter;3) Engaging with EUROPARC and the Charter Network, including participating in related events and activities;4) Taking steps for re-application and renewal of the Charter. |

Certified local businesses - requirements

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

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Nature Parks Quality Initiative

Fields of action

- Management & organisation
- Nature & landscape conservation
- Recreation & sustainable tourism
- Environmental education & ESD (BNE)
- Sustainable regional development

Procedure

- Set of 92 questions, 500 points max.
- min. 60% compliance; continuous improvement required
- On-site assessment by trained “quality scouts“



So far, 89 out 104
nature parks have
been certified.

Nature Parks Quality Initiative

Tourism criteria

- Is the nature park prominently visible in local tourism marketing?
- Which tourist informations provide information about the nature park?
- Which nature-based activities or experiences do you or your partners offer to tourists?
- Is there a concept for barrier-free access to (parts of) the park?
- Which nature-based sports or activities are being offered?
- Which particular projects in sustainable tourism have you carried out recently (possibly in cooperation with partners)?
- Which partners do you regularly cooperate within tourism?



Partner Program

- Applies to any company within the nature park
- Prominently informs customers about the nature park
- Environmental management (preferably certified)
- Hotel: offers nature-based tourism activities
- Gastronomy: sustainable (local, organic) food
- Outdoor tour company: ensures environmental compatibility
- Voluntary engagement for landscape conservation, sustainable regional development, etc.
- Active network member



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Partners of National Natural Landscapes



Objectives of the NNL partner program

- **Public relations** for the PA idea and nature conservation through the partners
- Increasing the **acceptance** and better **protection** of the PA
- Expansion and **strengthening the cooperation** between nature conservation and local (tourism) businesses
- **Positive effects** (especially **demand** effects) for the partner companies and the local area (**economic multiplier effects**)
- **Quality assurance** and a seal of approval for tourism that is compatible with the PA



Minimum criteria of the NNL partner program

1. **Identification** with conservation goals
2. **Sustainable / environmental management** (incl. mobility, local supplies)
3. **Quality services** & guest communication



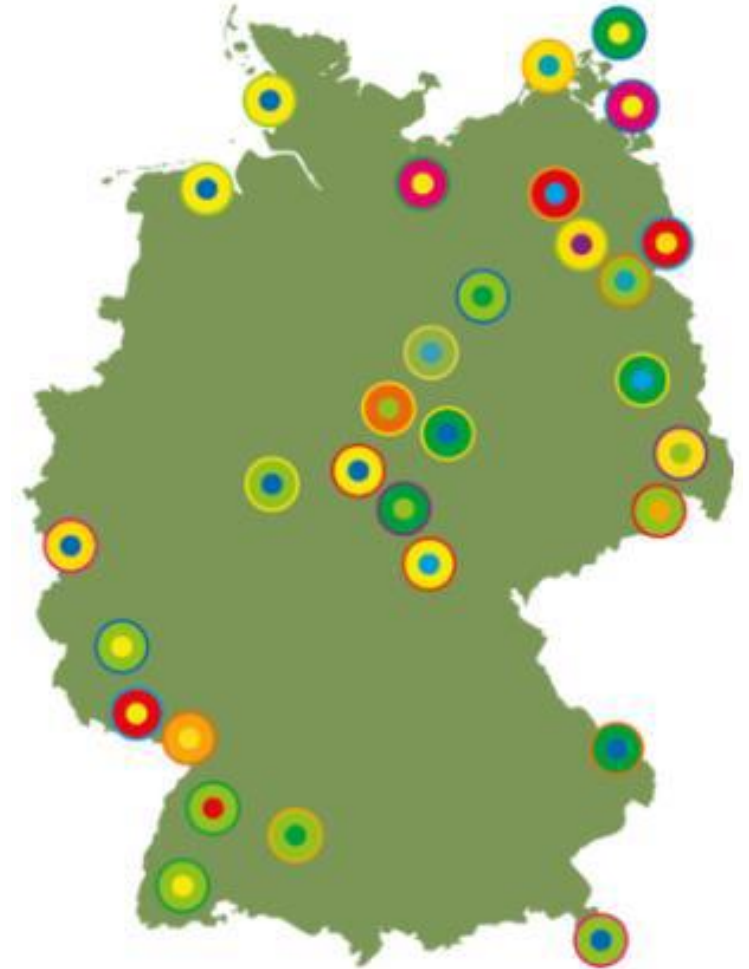
Certification process

- Interested companies submit application to the PA
- The fulfillment of the criteria is checked using a **questionnaire**
- PA administration gives a **vote**, which serves as a **recommendation for the awarding council**
- Awarding Council invites applicants to a **personal introduction** so that they can present their company and its motivation
- Awarding Council **takes decision**
- If the decision is positive, the national park and the partner company **conclude an agreement** (e.g. to use the logo, etc.)



Progress

- **National minimum standard + local standards**
- over **1,400 partners**, mostly directly or indirectly from the **tourism sector** – accommodation, gastronomy, local nature tours, local transport, local products (food, crafts) –in **30 local partner initiatives**
- *but:* **Criteria** and **verification** are rather lax



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Destination Nature – focus sustainable mobility

Overall goal: Modal shift from automobile to public transport

- Regional cooperation of transport providers
- Free guest cards for public transport
- Intermodal connections (train+ bus, train+ bicycle)
- Flexible services (on demand)
- Special busses for hiking, skiing
- Attractive train stations, bus stops
- Guest communication & incentives

