

European Tourism and Biodiversity Charter

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Biodiversity in Europe: challenges and actions

Biological diversity, better known for short as biodiversity, is the variety of life on Earth (microorganisms, plants, fungi and animals) and the natural patterns it forms. Three different and interrelated levels of biodiversity are commonly defined: genetic diversity (i.e. the range of genes in all individuals as well as between individuals), species diversity (i.e. the range of species within and between populations) and ecosystems (i.e. the range of habitats, communities, and ecological processes, including intra-ecosystem variations). Although this is not easy to quantify, all levels are important to ensure evolution and the adaptation of individuals to a changing environment.

Definition of biological diversity

The variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.

Source: Article 2, CBD (1992)

Biodiversity certainly has intrinsic value. It is also essential to human life and wellbeing in the sense that humans have always depended on natural resources. More specifically, biodiversity ensures the quality, quantity and stability of ecosystems' goods and services, i.e. the series of material, cultural and spiritual benefits humans draw from the natural functions played by ecosystems (MEA, 2005). Biodiversity provides raw materials for food, health and shelter (e.g. agricultural products, fish, wood, medicine, wool, etc.) and in doing so, it becomes the basic resource for many economic activities; it regulates and recycles the air, soil and water conditions necessary for our survival; it forms the basis for cultural and recreational activities (such as ecotourism), scientific and educational programmes, as well as spirituality, religion, ethics and emotions.

Biodiversity is the result of both natural processes and human practices. It has, however, been increasingly negatively affected by the latter. In Europe, like elsewhere in the world, although less rapidly than in other regions and continents, biodiversity is deteriorating. 25 % of marine mammals, 15 % of terrestrial mammals and 12 % of birds are threatened with extinction (EEA, 2010). Moreover, 62 % of European habitats and 52 % of European protected species included in the "Habitat" Directive have an unfavourable conservation status (EEA-ETC/BD, 2009).

Among key pressures, rapid shifts in land use have been acknowledged as a major threat (IUCN, 2007, 2009, 2010). Extensive farming land has declined by 2.6% between 1990 and 2006 across Europe¹. So have natural grassland areas. Over the same period, built-up, industrial and artificial areas have gone up by 7.9%. Subsequent threats of pollution and overexploitation come next. Cropland, forests and pastures cover almost 80% of the total European land area (EU-25 plus Norway and Switzerland (EEA, 2007)). Unsurprisingly, pressure from the twin trends of the intensification of agricultural and forestry practices, together with land abandonment, plays a great role. Furthermore, invading exotic species spread out, especially in aquatic ecosystems and in the context of a changing climate: more than 10,000 non-native species have been observed in Europe, more than 10% of them having adverse economic or ecological impacts².

¹ Figures related to land cover (agriculture, natural grassland, industrial areas) come from last available statistics from CORINE, a European Environment Agency programme dedicated to coordinating information on the environment and accessible at <http://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/COR0-landcover>

² See the European Invasive Alien Species Gateway from DAISIE (Delivering Alien Invasive Species Inventories for Europe), accessible at <http://www.europe-aliens.org>

The legal and regulatory framework for biodiversity conservation at European level

Reversing biodiversity loss is a major challenge at global, regional and local levels. The European Union, among other bodies, has actively committed its member states to biodiversity conservation for a number of years. Specific legislation, strategies and plans have been set up to create a framework for policy action aimed at providing long-term protection and conservation of nature. They all emanate from legally binding conventions at global level. A selection of the most relevant official literature is provided in the box below (source documents are listed in the Appendix).

Along with international treaties, many policies including directives, regulations, strategies and action plans, have been adopted at European level. The two central legal instruments are the Directive on the protection of wild birds (known as the **Birds Directive**, 2009/147/EC, a codified version of Directive 79/409/EEC as amended) that was enacted in 1979, and the Directive on the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora in 1992 (the **Habitats Directive**, 92/43/EC). The Birds Directive was the first major EU law to address the issue of nature conservation at European level. The Habitats Directive provided a more inclusive framework for other endangered habitats and species of interest, and tackled the integration of nature protection requirements into other EU policies such as agriculture, regional development and transport. The main EC funding tool supporting the implementation of both Directives is the LIFE-Nature fund. As at today, over 1000 animals and plant species and over 200 habitat types that are important to Europe are protected under the Directives³.

Created under the Habitats Directive, Natura 2000 is the main tool of EU nature & biodiversity policy, and is the transposition of EC commitments under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity. It is a European ecological network of natural protection areas for the most valuable and endangered species and habitats. Applying to bird sites, habitat sites and marine areas, it includes Special Areas of Conservation (under the Habitat Directive) and Special Protection Areas (under the Bird Directive). While the network does not systematically ban human activities nor nationalize land, requirements consist of sustainable management. Provided that some conservation measures are fulfilled, the EU, through the LIFE-Nature fund, may assist member states with co-financing the network.

Several other European directives are indirectly concerned with biodiversity conservation. The Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC⁴) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (2008/56/EC⁵) have established a framework for Community action against the fragmentation of European water policy. They require all inland and coastal waters to reach 'good ecological status' by 2015 and by 2020 for marine ecosystems. Other directives relate to pollution prevention, such as the Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC), the Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC), and the Urban waste water (91/271/EEC) Directive.

Contrary to many other environmental media, soil receives no legal protection although it is a major reservoir of biodiversity. To bridge this gap, the Commission of the European Communities drafted a directive proposal in 2006 to establish a common strategy for the protection and sustainable use of soil (by integrating soil concerns into other policies), preserving soil function, preventing threats to soil and mitigation of their effects, as well as restoring degraded soils to a level of functionality at least consistent with their current and approved future use (CEC, 2006).

³ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/habitatsdirective/index_en.htm

⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2000:327:0001:0072:EN:PDF>

⁵ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32008L0056:EN:PDF>

Reference international conventions framing biodiversity protection in Europe

The United Nations' **Convention of Biological Diversity** (CBD) is a legal instrument dated 1993 that all EU members states have signed along with other European countries. Its objectives are i) the conservation of biodiversity, ii) the sustainable use of its components and iii) the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources. Among a number of requirements, contracting Parties have to develop national strategies and integrate the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into relevant sector or cross-sector plans, programmes and policies. Held in Nagoya in 2010, the tenth Conference of the Parties (CoP10) of the CBD led to the adoption of the EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy, a global Strategic Plan for biodiversity over the 2011-2020 period.

The **Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat** (the Ramsar Convention), which was adopted in 1971 and came into force in 1975, provides a framework for international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands. Parties are to designate suitable wetlands for inclusion in the List of Wetlands of International Importance, to formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of wetlands included in the List and the wise use of all wetlands in their territory. For a comprehensive approach to the national implementation of the Convention, many countries have developed National Wetland Policies. In its 1994 work programme for the implementation of the 5th Environmental Action Programme, the European Commission included the Communication on the Wise Use and Conservation of Wetlands (1995), providing the strategic basis for a wetland policy, spelling out the issues that negatively affect wetlands and providing an outline of the actions that need to be taken. It was later replaced by the Water Framework Directive.

The **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora** (CITES), signed in 1973 and implemented in the EU 9 years later, aims to ensure that international trade in species of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival. It affords varying degrees of protection to more than 30,000 species of animals and plants. CITES works by making international trade in specimens of selected species subject to certain controls. These controls require that the import, export, re-export and introduction from the sea of species covered by the Convention are authorized through a licensing system. The species covered by CITES are divided into three categories, according to the degree of protection they need.

Adopted in 1979 and taking effect in 1982, the **Bern Convention** is the first comprehensive legal instrument for pan-European nature conservation (it also extends to some States of Africa). A keystone treaty for biodiversity within the framework of the Council of Europe, it aims to conserve wild European flora and fauna and their natural habitats (especially endangered habitats and vulnerable species). The elaboration of the Birds Directive and of the Habitats Directives later on is a direct result of the implementation of this Convention.

Since 1979, the **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals**, also known as the Bonn Convention, has aimed to conserve migratory species and their habitats by providing strict protection for endangered migratory species, by concluding multilateral Agreements for the conservation and management of migratory species that require or would benefit from international cooperation, and by undertaking cooperative research activities.

Sources: see Appendix to access the source documents

Alongside existing legislation, the EU has issued a series of successive strategies and plans that outline binding actions for the member states in the coming years (e.g. the 1995 Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy). The latest EU Biodiversity Action Plan, dated 2006

(**2006 Biodiversity Action Plan**⁶), draws from an EC communication dedicated to "Halting Biodiversity Loss by 2010 – and Beyond: Sustaining ecosystem services for human well-being". In May 2011, ascertaining the failure of the 2010 target, the EC adopted the new **EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020**. Several targets have been set to address both the 2020 headline target (see box) and the global commitments agreed by the EU and its member states. They pursue three key orientations: protecting and restoring biodiversity and associated ecosystem services, enhancing the positive contribution of agriculture and forestry and reducing key pressures on EU biodiversity and stepping up the EU's contribution to global biodiversity.

EU 2020 biodiversity strategy

The vision: By 2050, European Union biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides — its natural capital — are protected, valued and appropriately restored for biodiversity's intrinsic value and for their essential contribution to human well-being and economic prosperity, and so that catastrophic changes caused by the loss of biodiversity are avoided.

2020 headline target: Halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

Source: EC, 2011.

The Reverse project

Whereas biodiversity conservation certainly requires a legal framework and policy action, it cannot be effective without relying on sustainable economic activity. In other words, biodiversity conservation and economic development must go hand in hand. Experience shows that this is possible and replicable. Building on successful initiatives from a number of European regions, this is the ambition of Reverse; a European project to protect biodiversity. Across three areas closely linked to biodiversity - agriculture/food production, land planning and tourism - the project identifies local actions that should be easy to transpose and offers policy recommendations to improve biodiversity conservation.

Reverse in figures

Type of project: European interregional cooperation project – INTERREG IVC Programme

Number of partners: 14 partners involved in the development of biodiversity

Number of countries: 7 European countries (Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Slovakia and Spain)

Biodiversity-linked economic areas: 3 (agriculture/food production, tourism and land planning)

Duration: 3 years (January 2010 to December 2012)

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/info/pubs/docs/brochures/bio_brochure_en.pdf

The present charter is one of the key outputs of the Reverse project. It forms, with two other identically structured charters, a set of sector policy recommendations aimed at policy-makers at European level, to improve the effectiveness of regional policies in conserving biodiversity while promoting economic development. The three charters focus on agriculture, tourism and land planning respectively.

I. Tourism and Biodiversity: a story of impact, dependency and benefits

Together, the 27 European member states are the world's leading tourist destination, with 42% of tourists worldwide. They attracted around 380 million international tourists (tourists from another country, including another EU country) in 2007- and 700 million national tourists (tourism within the country of residence) (ECORYS, 2009)⁷. Tourism is therefore a **key sector** of the European economy with respect to GDP and employment. For instance, in 2006, there were 34,000 firms working in the hotel, travel and tour operator sectors, employing 2.8 million people (1.2% of total employment in the EU 27) and generating a turnover of about €290 billion (ECORYS, 2009).

Tourism refers to the activity of visitors taking a trip to a main destination outside their usual environment, for less than a year, for any main purpose, including business, leisure or other personal reasons, other than to be employed by a resident entity in the place visited.

Source: EUROSTAT 2010.

Tourism is also a **highly dynamic sector**. The EU records one million additional tourists every year and projected figures from the United Nation World Tourism Organisation reveal a fast-growing trend that may double the number of international tourists in Europe between 2000 and 2020. Unsurprisingly, the job creation rate in tourism is above average compared to other sectors.

The tourism sector is mainly dominated by a myriad of small and medium enterprises: 90% of EU 27 companies operating in tourism have less than 10 employees. Moreover, the traditional suppliers of this sector are very diverse: travel agencies, entertainment venues, hospitality businesses, caterers, transportation companies, etc. This makes the tourism industry a very complex and fragmented sector.

The rapid development of tourism places **significant pressure on biodiversity** through the uncontrolled expansion of infrastructures, polluting activities (transportation, construction, waste water and sewage, etc.), high visitor density (trampling of plants and noise pollution) and on-site consumption or use of natural resources (fishing, hunting, souvenir shops). Indirect consequences such as invasive species and the contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions further threaten biodiversity. As a result, tourism may lead to the fragmentation and reduction of natural habitats, harm to local flora and fauna, and the elimination of endangered or emblematic species.

Paradoxically, tourism is a **major beneficiary of biodiversity**, which provides it with a great variety of landscapes for many types of recreational activities, the cultural identity of territories and rich natural areas that are attractive for tourists. Moreover, healthy ecosystems project a positive image of a tourist destination. The tourism sector, and the broader economic activity, are highly dependent on biodiversity conservation and have an interest in its conservation to secure its future activity. Moreover, biodiversity may allow players in the tourism industry **to differentiate** themselves: it may

⁷ Based on most recent available data at the time of writing
ECORYS SCS Group, 2009. Study on the Competitiveness of the EU tourism industry
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/documents/studies/index_en.htm#h2-4

create a responsible reputation and positive brand image, as well as diversified nature-related destinations and attractions: so many selling points that are appealing to new clients.

These contradictory interactions between tourism and biodiversity, including both potential for economic opportunities and risks of adverse ecological effects, logically lead to a **preference for sustainable tourism practices**, from environmentally friendly infrastructure design to recreational activities that respect nature.

Furthermore, some practices in tourism may even have a positive effect on the protection and enhancement of biodiversity. Initiatives such as green tourism in protected areas, eco-labelling of facilities or agri-tourism target both the development of tourism and the conservation of biodiversity. Moreover, there are many positive effects correlated with biodiversity-based tourism. **Biodiversity awareness and education** are facilitated through environmentally friendly accommodation infrastructures and communication to the public. Biodiversity-oriented tourism provides innovative sources of **financing for biodiversity** conservation action. And finally, green tourism such as agri-tourism has strong positive social spill-over among stakeholders who are the local keepers of biodiversity, in particular the rural communities that benefit from tourism through the preservation of traditional and cultural activities, jobs for people in rural areas and alternative sources of revenue.

Environmental awareness is quite recent in the tourism industry, compared to more obviously polluting sectors such as the chemical industry, mining or farming. But the rapid growth of tourism and increased targeting of remaining unspoiled natural areas (often with great and vulnerable biodiversity, as in coastal ecosystems, mountains, protected areas, etc.) make it impossible to ignore. This is why a more sustainable kind of tourism is being developed all over the world and in particular in Europe. Challenges include promoting measures that support the development of sustainable tourism that takes into account and even promotes biodiversity conservation.

II. Towards sustainable tourism

The links between biodiversity and tourism are not strongly regulated but depend on cross-industry measures. Due to its complexity, the tourism sector is influenced by regulations in different fields: land and town planning, transportation infrastructures, overseas development policies, etc. And these regulations are related to competencies from various national and regional administrations. The coordination of public and private initiatives in tourism is mostly done at local level.

At European level, the Commission has conducted initiatives to improve competitiveness and job creation, as well as sustainability in the tourism sector as described in its communication “Europe, the world’s No.1 tourist destination - a new political framework for tourism in Europe” - COM(2010) 352/final. One of these actions is the creation of the Business@Biodiversity platform⁸, which enables tourism companies to share their best practices and to develop sector-wide guidance documents.

As a matter of fact, as environmental awareness is rising in the tourism sector, various private and public-driven initiatives increasingly develop **voluntary projects** promoting sustainable tourism, with positive side-effects on biodiversity.

For instance, a number of **labels** certify the sustainable attitude of the tourism activity to consumers. Even if biodiversity is not necessarily the focal point of criteria, the labels’ requirements aim to reduce the impact of leisure organizations on the local environment. Local biodiversity, therefore, benefits from these eco-labels. Four of the most used and relevant tourism eco-labels are presented here:

- *EarthCheck*⁹: It is the world’s largest certifier of sustainable travel and tourism operators with more than 1300 clients in over 84 countries. Its environmental management programme involves the implementation of a policy of sustainable development and commitment with local communities. It also deals with the use and management of water, energy, paper, waste, and the use of pesticides and cleaning and hygiene products.
- *Green Globe*¹⁰: The Green Globe Certification is a global certification for sustainability that rewards different businesses in the tourism sector; from hotels and conference centres, to attractions, or transportation and travel companies. The environmental criteria for this international label are wide and include the conservation of biodiversity, ecosystems and landscapes.
- *Green Key*¹¹: This is a worldwide eco-label for tourism facilities, which is awarded to hotels, campsites and attractions. It is notably based on education for sustainable development, raising environmental awareness among the owners, staff and clients of leisure establishments and environmental preservation by reducing the establishment’s impact on the environment. Each country develops national criteria consisting of all the international baseline criteria plus 20% of specific national criteria.
- *European Ecolabel on Touristic Accommodation*¹²: It is part of the voluntary European eco-label scheme, established in 1992 to encourage businesses to market products and services that

⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/biodiversity/business/sectors/tourism/how-to-integrate-into-your-business_en.html

⁹ <http://www.earthcheck.org>

¹⁰ <http://greenglobe.com>

¹¹ <http://www.green-key.org>

¹² <http://www.ecolabel.eu>

are kinder to the environment. Tourist accommodation displaying this award limits energy and water consumption, reduces waste production, prefers the use of renewable resources and substances that are less hazardous to the environment, and promotes environmental education and communication. The physical structure must respect all relevant laws existing in their region, including those related to biodiversity.

In addition, many **sustainable tourism networks** have been created at national, European and international level since 2000 to promote sustainable practices. For instance, the *Global Sustainable Tourism Council* (GSTC¹³) is a global initiative dedicated to promoting sustainable tourism practices around the world. It includes a diverse global membership (UN agencies, leading travel companies, hotels, national tourist boards and tour operators) and its Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria are a reference in the tourism sector for being the minimum requirements to reach in order to claim a sustainable tourism activity. At European level, *ECOTRANS*¹⁴ is a leading sustainable tourism multi-stakeholder network of experts who are seeking to promote and disseminate best practices. As for *NECSTouR*¹⁵, it is an open network of European regions, whose aim is to develop and strengthen a coherent framework for the coordination of regional development programmes and research on sustainable and competitive tourism.

The *European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas*¹⁶ of the EUROPARC federation is a good example of a **practical tool** for the development of sustainable tourism in European protected areas. This charter aims to increase awareness of, and support for, Europe's protected areas and improve the sustainable development and management of tourism in protected areas, taking into account the needs of the environment, local residents, local businesses and visitors. Based on a five-year commitment from members, its principles involve working in partnership, preparing and implementing a strategy, and addressing key issues. It is neither a conventional quality label, nor a traditional partnership agreement, but combines elements of both.

To conclude, there is already a wide range of initiatives aiming to help willing tourism stakeholders to have a more sustainable activity with positive effects on biodiversity. However these initiatives need to be coordinated at global level to make their aims and results more understandable at tourists' level.

¹³ <http://new.gstcouncil.org>

¹⁴ <http://destinet.eu/whos-who/destinet-knowledge-networks/ecotrans/about>

¹⁵ <http://www.necstour.eu>

¹⁶ <http://www.european-charter.org/home/>

III. General Recommendations and Action Plans on Tourism and Biodiversity

1st RECOMMENDATION

Strengthening the under construction European strategy for tourism by taking into account biodiversity conservation

The European Union should enforce the development of tourism activities that do not degrade biodiversity. In particular, there is a 2010 Commission Communication (COM (2010)352/Final)¹⁷ about tourism that does not sufficiently take biodiversity issues into consideration. With this communication, the European Commission intends to encourage a coordinated approach for initiatives linked to tourism and define a new framework for action to increase its competitiveness and its capacity for sustainable growth. It therefore proposes a number of European or multinational initiatives aimed at achieving these objectives, drawing fully on the Union's competence in the field of tourism as introduced by the Lisbon Treaty.

Also, the European Commission has adopted an ambitious new strategy to halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the EU by 2020 (COM(2011)244/Final)¹⁸. This strategy aims to reverse biodiversity loss and speed up the EU's transition towards a resource-efficient and green economy. It is an integral part of the Europe 2020 Strategy, in particular the resource-efficient Europe flagship initiative, but does not refer enough to the impact of tourism in its main targets and actions.

Action plan related to the 1st recommendation

- Inclusion of measures and actions regarding the protection and promotion of biodiversity in the European Tourism Strategy e.g. the Commission and member states should integrate quantified biodiversity targets into tourism development strategies and programmes, tailoring action to regional and local needs.
- Inclusion of biodiversity experts in the networking of the tourism sector e.g. the existing European Tourism Forum - which normally brings together leading representatives from the tourism industry, civil society, European Institutions, national and regional authorities dealing with tourism, and international organisations to discuss the challenges of the sector - should also emphasize biodiversity or environmental aspects by inviting scientists specialising in biodiversity to participate.

¹⁷ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/files/communications/communication2010_en.pdf

¹⁸ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/comm2006/pdf/2020/1_EN_ACT_part1_v7%5b1%5d.pdf

2nd RECOMMENDATION

Upgrading eco-label standards for sustainable tourism taking into account biodiversity conservation

The EU eco-label scheme is part of the Community's sustainable consumption and production policy, which aims to reduce the negative impact of consumption and production on the environment, health, climate and natural resources. Today, the EU eco-label covers a wide range of products and services, including cleaning products, appliances, paper products, textile and home and garden products, lubricants and services such as tourist accommodation. Regulation (EC) No. 66/2010 of the European Parliament and of the Council intend the EU eco-label's criteria to take into account the most significant environmental impacts, in particular the impact on climate change, the impact on nature and biodiversity, energy and resource consumption, generation of waste, emissions to all environmental media, pollution through physical effects, and the use and release of hazardous substances¹⁹.

Within this framework, the criteria of the EU eco-label should be upgraded to take into account biodiversity protection. Moreover, the EU should establish a recognizable symbol (common within the EU) for sustainable tourism activities that take into account biodiversity conservation, because generally eco-labels are very important and their implementation has a significant environmental impact.

Action plan related to the 2nd recommendation

- Develop and include common indicators on biodiversity within the EU in any existing or future European Eco-labelling system for sustainable tourism.
- The creation and promotion of a common label in touristic areas regarding biodiversity conservation, e.g. a green flag. This label should be developed based on the regulation of the organic farming and PDO labelling systems.
- The creation of a prize (e.g. a medal, free advertising) among EU tourist companies regarding the actions they undertake for biodiversity conservation, e.g. enhancement of the existing 'prize', EDEN (European Destinations of Excellence), which promotes social, cultural and environmental sustainability in tourism sectors by upgrading the value of 'biodiversity' criteria (such as giving higher 'scores' to destinations where the tourism practices and organization directly respect biodiversity). Moreover, biodiversity conservation should be taken into account by the procedure that has already been started by the European Commission (consultation document ENTR. F1 D(2011) about European Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism).
- Training courses and seminars on biodiversity conservation for operators in the tourist industry.

¹⁹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:027:0001:0019:EN:PDF>

3rd RECOMMENDATION

Informing and raising awareness among tourism stakeholders (sector professionals, elected representatives, tourists, local communities) on biodiversity preservation

Tourists and professionals should improve their behaviour with respect to biodiversity conservation. Actions that inform and raise awareness among tourism stakeholders would help that improvement.

Action plan related to the 3rd recommendation

- Examine consumers' attitude towards eco-tourism and interest in agro-tourism at European level by looking for existing actual and accurate surveys, and if there are none, prepare a new one.
- Organise awareness campaigns (e.g. Nature Days, Eco-festivals, European Tourism and Biodiversity Week) to make tourists understand the importance of conserving biodiversity in order to inform them how to be more respectful of European biodiversity.
- Support training of tourism stakeholders on how to be biodiversity-friendly by highlighting the benefits of biodiversity to the tourism sector (e.g. using endemic species in green surroundings of the tourism facilities).
- Emphasize that the implementation of biodiversity-friendly techniques in the tourist business will help to keep the sector profitable in the medium-term.
- Enrich the existing website www.visiteurope.com with examples of biodiversity-friendly destinations (e.g. green European map) and education of tourists on biodiversity-friendly behaviour.
- European citizens contribute to sustainable and responsible tourism development as investors, operators and travellers in particular in emerging and developing ones.

4th RECOMMENDATION

Development and improvement of tourism management systems and tools

At EU level, the Commission has introduced a number of tools to facilitate sound environmental management for businesses, such as the EU eco-label²⁰ or the Community eco-management and audit scheme (EMAS)²¹. However, the response to these tools, from tourism businesses across Europe, has varied greatly. The Commission has also provided member states with documents facilitating the implementation of European environmental legislation, both in terms of individual projects and strategic planning.

²⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/about_ecolabel/what_is_ecolabel_en.htm

²¹ http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/index_en.htm

Action plan related to the 4th recommendation

- Promote the implementation of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST) within protected areas.
- Include biodiversity experts in the networking of the tourism sector.
- Create a European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in unprotected areas.
- Carry out environmental impact assessments.
- Create and promote guidelines in order to develop management tools to regulate the flow of tourists in major touristic areas, in order to respect local biodiversity.

5th RECOMMENDATION

Promotion of tourism activities that contribute to biodiversity conservation

Biodiversity is a vital asset to the tourism industry. Tourists often take advantage of natural landscapes, including national parks, coastal environments and mountainous regions – all of which harbour significant biodiversity. A clean environment is every tourist's expectation and many tourists will not return to polluted or spoiled destinations. As tourism consists of a crucial pillar for the local economy, it is important to achieve a balance between the benefits that could be derived from the development of tourism and biodiversity protection. Therefore, tourism activities that have the least negative impact on biodiversity conservation, as well as activities that contribute positively to biodiversity, should be promoted within the EU. Moreover, the European Charter for Sustainable and Responsible Tourism should contribute to reinforcing the ethic values of the European citizenship.

Action plan related to the 5th recommendation

- Support the types of agro-tourism that contribute to the development of biodiversity in agro-ecosystems (e.g. farms with landraces and local breeds, beekeeping tours, etc.).
- Develop well managed wild-life watching tours and eco-tourist activities (e.g. deer-watching), that enable the general public to increase their awareness of biodiversity.
- Ensure that a percentage of income originating from tourism activities will finance biodiversity protection.
- Tourism should contribute to income generation for protected areas and other attractions, through entry fees, permits, concessions, etc., which can be invested in capacity building programmes for local communities to manage protected areas and protect biodiversity. This way, the direct income derived from visitor spending will be transformed into tangible economic value that tourism brings to natural and cultural resources.

- Reinforce the image perception of E.U. as a set of high quality and sustainable destinations and promote responsible attitudes from European citizens travelling within E.U. and abroad