

Mediterranean Experience of Eco-Tourism

MEETING THE IDEAL:

A survey of eco-tourism best practices in the world



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MEDITERRANEAN EXPERIENCE OF ECOTOURISM

A survey of ecotourism best practices in the world

ENPI-CBC MED Project “Mediterranean Experience of Eco-Tourism”
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	6
I. INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES IN ECO-TOURISM	10
1. The study approach	12
1.1 <i>“Best Practices description” sheet</i>	14
1.2 <i>BPs data collection</i>	14
1.3 <i>Filemaker DB implementation</i>	15
1.4 <i>Quantitative-qualitative analysis</i>	16
2. The results	18
2.1 <i>Some quantitative data</i>	19
2.2 <i>Descriptive analysis</i>	29
A. Management	30
B. Facilities, services and infrastructures	36
C. Conservation	40
D. Local communities	46
E. Cultural heritage	52
F. Monitoring	56
G. Marketing	60
3. The lessons learned	64
II. MEET project partners	72
Federparchi Europarc Italy	75
Lazio Region - Italy	77
National Parks of France (PNF)	79
MedPAN Network of Marine Protected Area Managers in the Mediterranean	81
Cataluña region Spain	82
IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN-Med)	83
Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) Jordan	87
Al-Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve Lebanon	89
IUCN ROWA (Regional Office for West Asia)	91

ABBREVIATIONS & DEFINITIONS

BP	Best Practices
CBC	Cross Border Cooperation
CBM	Community Based Monitoring
CBT	Community Based Tourism
CPA	Communal Property Association
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DB	Data Base
ECOLNET	European Ecotourism Knowledge Network
ECOSS	Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim
ECST	European Charter for Sustainable Tourism
EETLS	European Ecotourism Labeling Standard
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
ENPI	European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument
EU	European Union
GDA	Group for Agricultural Development
GPS	Global Positioning System
IAC	International Advisory Committee
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
MEET	Mediterranean Experience of Eco-Tourism
MMV	Monitoring and Management of Visitors in Recreational and Protected Areas
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MWG	MEET Working Group
NGO	Non-governmental organization
PA	Protected Area
PPGIS	Public Participatory Geography Information System
RSCN	Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature
SBR	Shouf Biosphere Reserve
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
WP	Work Package

INTRODUCTION





“Mediterranean Experience of Eco-Tourism” (MEET) is a project funded by the European Programme ENPI-CBC “Mediterranean Basin” 2007-2013 and implemented by a partnership of nine Mediterranean bodies, headed by Federparchi – Europarc Italy.

The project started in January 2013 and will end in December 2015.

08

This Report is one of the outputs foreseen within the Work Package #4 “Methods and Tools”, Activity 4.1 “Survey of ecotourism state-of-the-art”.

The goal of the activity is to learn some lessons from the best international experiences on eco-tourism, in order to support the realization of the Pilot Actions (Project WorkPackage #5) in eight Mediterranean countries (France, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Spain and Tunisia).

The international best practice analysis was realized to help to define the ideal characteristics that Pilot Actions should contain, in order to allow effective and innovative experiences in the field of eco-tourism.

This goal has been carried out through the setting up of a database collecting the most significant (for the MEET project purposes) eco-tourism-related international best practices.

The database (<http://194.243.199.35/fmi/webd#meet>) of ecotourism Best Practices has been designed by Federparchi – Europarc Italy on the basis of the “Best Practice description sheet” developed by the MEET project partnership.

This Report contains the main results of such activities and proposes a whole analysis of 60 BPs in order to give valuable inputs to the other activities of Work Package #4, and it is structured as follows:

1. The study approach: it explains the methodology used for the collection of best practices and for their analysis, the creation of the data collection form (the “Best Practices description”), the operational phase of identifying the best practices and collecting all the required data, the implementation of the database in order to develop the analytical work and at last the interpretative approach used for the evaluation.

2. The results: it presents the quantitative results, obtained by a comparative analysis of the quantifiable data of the “Best Practices description” sheet such as the geographical location, the typology, the environmental, economic and social criteria satisfied; and the qualitative results obtained from these best practices through an evaluation of the models, approaches, tools, etc. that can be taken as point of reference for the MEET project aims.

3. The lessons learned: it identifies some success determining factors encountered during the BP analysis, suggesting some tips for a successful ecotourism activity or product.



Bicycle mobility in the Sinis Peninsula MPA - Italy
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I.INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES IN ECO-TOURISM

1. The Study Approach

The best practices analysis is made up of the following 4 steps:

A. “Best Practices description” sheet

The MEET project partnership has developed a BP description sheet, for the collection of the BPs-related information, composed of 3 sections:

- General data, with a total of 13 open and multiple choice questions, to capture the main characteristics;
- Eligibility criteria, composed of four sub-blocks to verify the fulfillment of general, environmental, economic and social criteria;
- Relevance assessment, composed of two sub-blocks to evaluate, through the attribution of scores, the added value of each BP (or a specific part of it) in relation with the MEET project goals.

B. BPs data collection

The first step for the collection of the best practices has been the identification of the information sources. Indeed in addition to relying on the knowledge and experience of the MEET project partnership, a web-based research has been undertaken to intercept some already existing databases of eco-tourism best practices (ECOLNET, MMV, etc., see below). A pre-selection list consisting of a very large number of cases - about 300 - has been created, but only the most MEET-goals related ones have been included in the database.

C. Filemaker DB implementation

All the information available in the “Best Practices description” sheets has been integrated in a specific database tool, developed in the Filemaker environment, in order to store all the sheets and to allow different search methods.

D. Quantitative-qualitative analysis

A quantitative-qualitative analysis has been performed on the general data, on the recurrence of the eligibility criteria, on the scores achieved in the relevance assessment section and on the specific elements that led to the success stories.

1.1 “Best Practices description” sheet

The “Best Practices description” sheet is a form developed by the MEET project partnership as an easy-to-use tool to collect and summarize the most significant success stories around the world.

The description sheet has been structured in 3 sections:

- General data: the choice of having just a table for describing goals, activities and results of a BP is motivated by the need to have only the core description of it, and to have the possibility to go deeper through the web, e-mail contacts and other available documents. Moreover each BP has been classified as an “activity” (i.e. project, plan) or a “product” (i.e. tourism service, package promoted and offered in the tourism market), the latter having a commercial “core”. Finally the territorial scale has been considered another way of classification, in order to better understand the quantitative dimension of the affected area.
- Eligibility criteria: criteria (general and topic-related) have been selected based on the MEET project goals; many other criteria could have been used, but the

aim of the description sheet is to have useful hints for the WP4 activities, namely the definition of expected Pilot Actions features and the drafting of Pilot Actions selection criteria.

- Relevance assessment: MEET project partnership agreed on criteria but didn’t develop a specific and detailed system of scoring (with questions, sub-scores, balancing systems, etc.). This is because the assessment is not on the BP as a whole, but on one or more interesting components that have been developed within the BP itself and that can be seen by the MEET partnership as a point of reference for MEET Pilot Actions design. Therefore there is no a “global” (average of indicated scores) score of the BP, and the indicated scores are under the sole responsibility of the MEET Project Partner experts who filled in the sheet. Of course the specific skills, on ecotourism, of each of them is a guarantee of the reliability of such scores, but it is also worth mentioning that the aim of any BP description sheet was the level of relevance of the whole or partial success story for the MEET project aims.

1.2 BPs data collection

The BPs collection step was approached using and integrating different sources but always starting from the expertise already existing within the project partnership and made available by each MEET partner (e.g. the members of the WP4 Experts Group). Also, following a cost-effective ratio, most of the selected BPs were taken out from existing international BP and

projects databases. Below are the main sources being used:

- **ECOLNET:** a database of eco-tourism case studies developed under the European Ecotourism Knowledge Network (ECOLNET), a 3-year project (2010-2013) co-financed by the European Commission, Lifelong Learning Programme, Transversal Programmes, Key Activity 3 – ICT Networks. The Library of Best Practices, created as an online database with searching tools, contains 72 eco-tourism cases (http://data.prismanet.gr/ecolnet-case-studies/search_form.php) explained by descriptions, detailed contact information and classification of the sustainable practices according to the European Ecotourism Labeling Standard (EETLS) criteria (defined within the same project).
- **MMV:** proceedings database of the International Conference «Monitoring and Management of Visitors (MMV) in Recreational and Protected Areas», (<http://mmv.boku.ac.at/refbase>). The MMV organizes, every 2 years since 2002, a forum for presentations and other exchanges of ideas and experiences related to the monitoring and management of visitors in recreation and protected areas. The conference emphasizes existing policies, actual problems, ongoing practices and innovative solutions, and is therefore of great interest both for managers and researchers. The first MMV conference was held in Vienna, Austria (2002) and following meetings have been in Rovaniemi, Finland (2004), Rapperswil, Switzerland (2006), Montecatini Terme, Italy (2008), Wageningen,

Netherlands (2010) and Stockholm, and Sweden (2012); next meeting will be in Tallinn, Estonia (2014). The most recent conference counted about 140 proceedings.

- **LIFE projects database – European Commission:** LIFE is the EU's financial instrument supporting environmental and nature conservation projects throughout the EU. Since 1992, LIFE has co-financed around 4.000 projects, a lot of them being related to the ecotourism and/or similar topics (nature-based tourism, etc.). From its database (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects>) a number of 77 cases has been selected.
- Finally a broad internet search and a scientific literature review have been conducted to complete the scope. With a pre-selection list of almost 300 cases, the MEET project partnership has chosen, for the following evaluation step, 60 best practices, trying to obtain a wide range of cases that should be different in type, size and characteristics.

1.3 Filemaker DB implementation

All the information available in the “Best Practices description” sheets that have been filled in by the MEET project partnership have been integrated in a specific tool developed as a database – in order to store all the sheets in a unique archive which can allow different ways of searching – in the Filemaker environment. The main purpose is to have a shareable and accessible tool that would allow:

- 1- storage of information in a structured way
- 2- conduct simple searches or complex queries useful in the analysis phase of the project activity.

1.4 Quantitative-qualitative analysis

A basic BPs analysis has been developed considering the entire aggregate sample, in order to highlight the frequency of some quantifiable fields included in the “Best Practices description” and to identify if the success stories have common factors that contribute to their performance. Therefore, in the par. 2.2.1 Some quantitative data, an analysis on the general data (geographical distribution,

territorial scale, typologies), frequency of the eligibility criteria, and the scores achieved in the “relevance assessment” section, have been performed.

The par. 1.2.2. Descriptive analysis is based on a basic assumption, i.e. on the need to have a structure which can include all the main elements of an ecotourism initiative. In fact in order to better understand how the selected (and included in the MEET database) BPs could be considered really «useful» (innovative, impactful, creative, etc.) for the MEET project, the partnership, according to the scientific literature, has identified the main components that should describe an eco-tourism product or activity in a protected area.



*Viewpoint from the Montgrí, Illes Medes & Baix Ter natural park - Spain
© Richard Martin*

A brief description of these components is provided below.

Component		Description
A.	Management	Plans and programs that affect natural areas or parts of them, as well as specific standards and regulations.
B.	Facilities, services and infrastructures	All the services and the infrastructures available for tourists that facilitate their enjoyment, such as transport infrastructure and mobility services, information services, guide services, and services related to catering and accommodation. This component is directly connected with the economic criteria that are included in the «eligibility criteria» section of the description sheet.
C.	Conservation	Activities that bring benefits in terms of nature conservation such as environmental education or volunteer programs. This component is directly connected with the environmental criteria that are included in the «eligibility criteria» section of the description sheet.
D.	Local communities	Both as "participants in" and "beneficiaries of" the BP-related activities. This component is directly connected with the social criteria that are included in the "eligibility criteria" section of the description sheet.
E.	Cultural heritage	Preservation and the promotion of tangible and intangible cultural heritage.
F.	Monitoring	Monitoring of tourism, of the tourists profile and of the impact of tourist visits on natural areas.
G.	Marketing	Commercialization, promotion and sale of eco-tourism activities and products to different targets.

Table 1 – Components that describe an eco-tourism product or activity in protected natural areas.

2. The results

An aerial photograph of a coastal village in Cinque Terre National Park, Italy. The village is built on a rocky peninsula, with colorful buildings and a small harbor. The surrounding hills are covered in green vegetation and terraced fields. The sea is a deep blue, and the sky is clear.

2.1

Some quantitative data

The MEET project partnership has selected a total of 60 eco-tourism related BPs spread all over the world, giving more attention to the successful cases in Europe

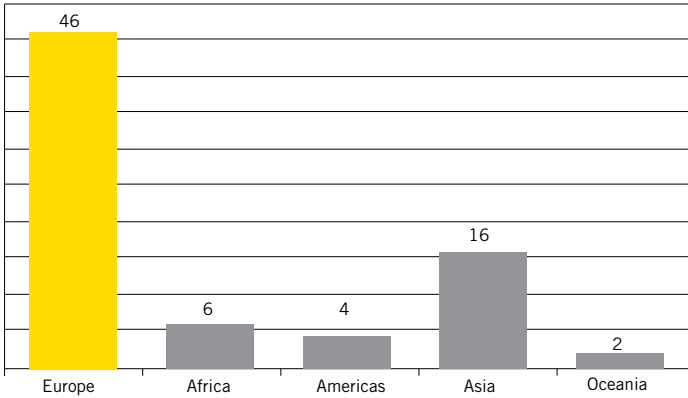


Figure 1 - No. of BP per macro geographical (continental) region¹.

¹ According to the UN classification of world regions places (<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/m49/m49regin.htm#asia>).

The countries of the BPs are specified in the table below.

Macro geographical region	No. of BP	Country
Africa	6	Kenia (1), Morocco (1), South Africa (1), Tunisia (2), Zimbabwe (1).
Americas	4	Bolivia (1), Dominica (1), Dominican Republic (1), Mexico (1).
Asia	16	Laos (1), Cambodia (1), China - Republic of Taiwan (1), Cyprus (1), Georgia (1), India (1), Indonesia (3), Jordan (2), Lebanon (2), Malaysia (1), Thailand (1), Turkey (1).
Europe	46	Albania (2), Austria (3), Belgium (1), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1), Croatia (1), Greece (3), Italy (11), Spain (9), France (6), Germany (1), Switzerland (1), Malta (2), Portugal (2), Romania (1), Ukraine (1), United Kingdom (1).
Oceania	2	Australia (1), Vanuatu (1).

Table 2 – Location countries of the collected BPs.

The following chart shows the breakdown of the selected BPs on the basis of their typology.

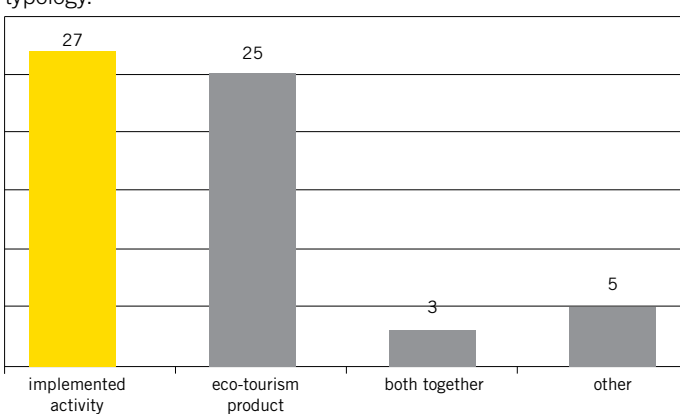


Figure 2 – Typology breakdown of the BPs.

There is a balanced number of case studies responding to the two typologies identified in the planning phase of the study: “implemented activity” and “eco-tourism product”.

Among the «other» some cases regarding management plans and programs and re-use projects which, because of their nature and/or complexity, could not be catalogued as “activity” or “product”. That is the case, for example, of:

- *5 Lochs Visitor Management Plan* (BP # 05 in the DB) a British initiative, in a protected area, which provides a framework of actions, developed through stakeholders involvement, to reduce the

impact of visitor physical pressure and of their anti-social behavior, while improving the visitor experience potential;

- *Bed & Bunker* (BP # 09 in the DB) an interesting research project for the conversion of former military bunkers in Albania in facilities for tourists with a special view towards conservation and sustainability;

- *Wild Jordan* (BP# 52 in the DB), a new operational department of the Royal Society for Conservation of Nature (RSCN), devoted to the development and promotion of eco-tourism and nature-based business in Jordan’s protected areas.

Below is a figure which illustrates the frequency of cases in relation to the number of eligibility criteria being fulfilled simultaneously for each of the typologies.

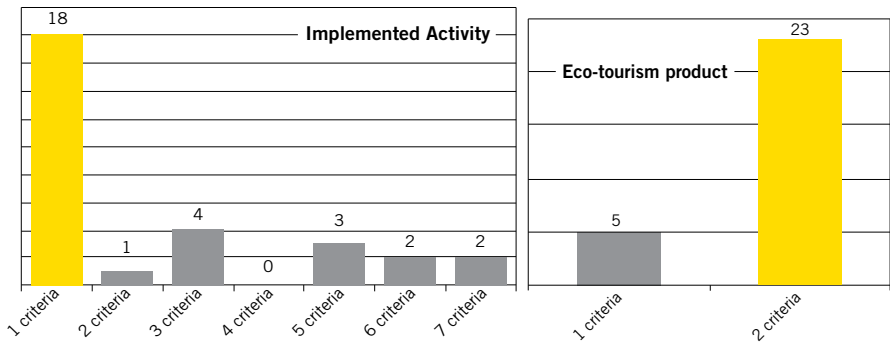


Figure 3 – Number of eligibility general criteria simultaneously fulfilled.

Among the “implemented activities” the majority of cases fulfill just one general eligibility criteria among those listed in the description sheet, while among the “ecotourism products” almost all the cases satisfy both the criteria of the “Best Practices” description sheet.

Below are some cases covering all the criteria:

- Services for disabled persons at Shouf Biosphere Reserve (SBR). Handicap trail and infrastructure for the handicapped at local guesthouses (BP anticipate in the DB #54), meets 7 criteria for the activity

typology and 2 for the product typology because of the important results achieved thanks to the cooperation between the public and private sector.

- Community Based trail Monitoring (CBM) as a mechanism for capacity and partnership building in Shihpan Trail in Lin-mei (BP #59 in the DB) meets 7 criteria because it’s a monitoring activity with a good degree of repeatability finalized in 2009, with a strong involvement and participation of public and private sector both during the planning phase and in the realization phase.

The two figures below show the distribution of the most selected criteria for the ecotourism activities and products.

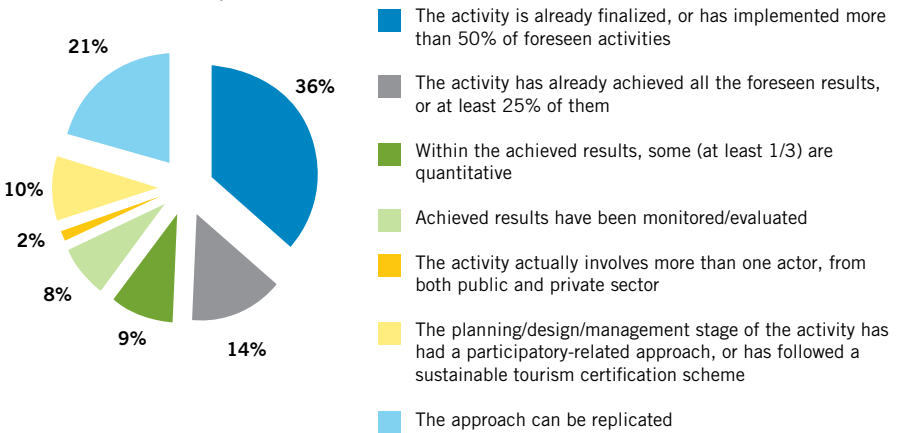


Figure 4 – Eligibility criteria ticked for the “Implemented activities”.

Observing the graph, half of the sample implemented more than 50% of the foreseen activities, achieving at least 25% of the expected results; in 21% of the

cases the BPs have a repeatable model; for 10% of the cases the planning/design/management stage of the activity has had a participatory-related approach.

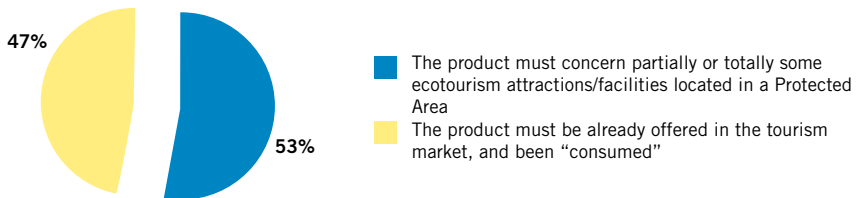


Figure 5 – Eligibility criteria ticked for the eco-tourism products.

About the territorial scale, most of the BPs concern protected areas: 55% of cases. This probably because most of the MEET partners are involved in protected area management, but also because eco-tourism is most suited to protected areas, as a result of their shared concern for conservation of their environment. Among the “other” we can mention transnational projects with a smaller territorial focus; that is the case of:

- Alpine Pearls - Alpine Umbrella Brand for Soft Mobility in Tourism (BP #08 in the DB) developed thanks to the INTERREG

Programme “Alpine Space” and focused on small municipalities along the Alps of Germany, France, Italy, Austria and Switzerland;

- ECOSAL Atlantis – Ecotourism in the Atlantic salt-marshes (BP #17 in the DB) focused on some salt marshes sites located in Spain, France and Portugal;
- Integrating Business Skills in Ecotourism Operations (BP #35 in the DB) which involve regional conservation organizations of Cambodia, Kenya, Laos and Spain in a capacity building process.

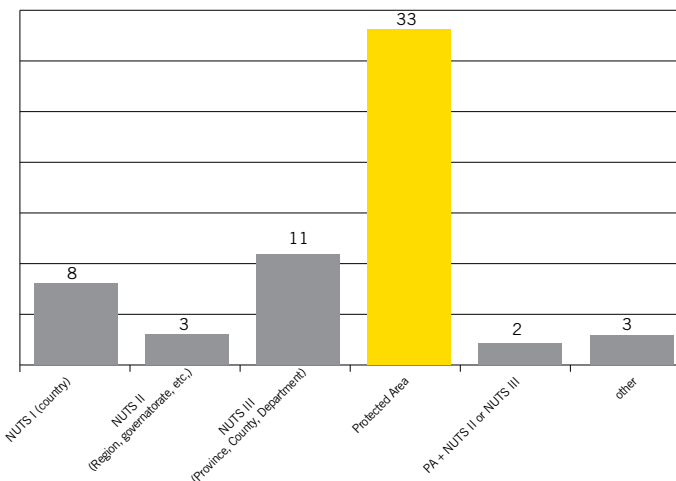


Figure 6 – Territorial scale of the BPs.

With regards to the environmental sustainability criteria, almost 70% of the cases satisfy less than 5 criteria together, although the frequency of the selected criteria is very varied as can be seen in Figure 7.

Almost 70% of the cases involve “local communities and/or local economic

actors in the process”, while 60% foresee “environmental impact raising awareness actions”, and around 50% both for “biodiversity and/or species conservation/restoration” and “capacity building”. These figures demonstrate that eco-tourism related BPs very often are centered on local development or at least on local communities empowerment.

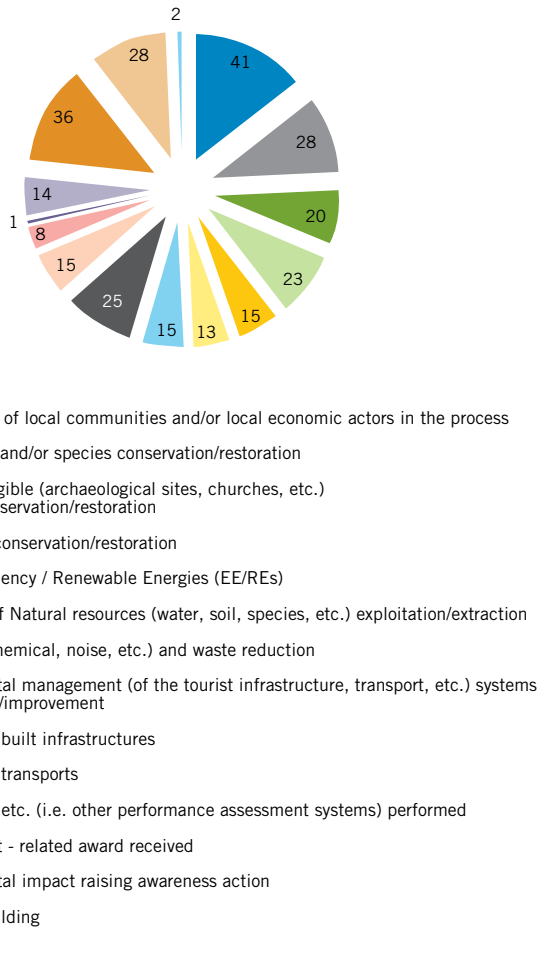


Figure 7 – Number of times that the environmental sustainability criteria have been met

About the frequency of economic sustainability criteria, almost 70% of the cases regard the “creation/promotion of local employment” and about 60% are related to the “creation/development of a market niche for (new) sustainable service/goods” and to the “support/development of other related economic sectors (handicraft, etc.), confirming

what was already underlined on the potential benefits of eco-tourism for local development. The “Mechanisms (e.g. share of the ticket price) for financing sustainable activities (local development, CO2 cut-off, etc.)” and the use of innovative technologies were rarely used. This most probably demonstrates the need of an innovative approach in ecotourism.

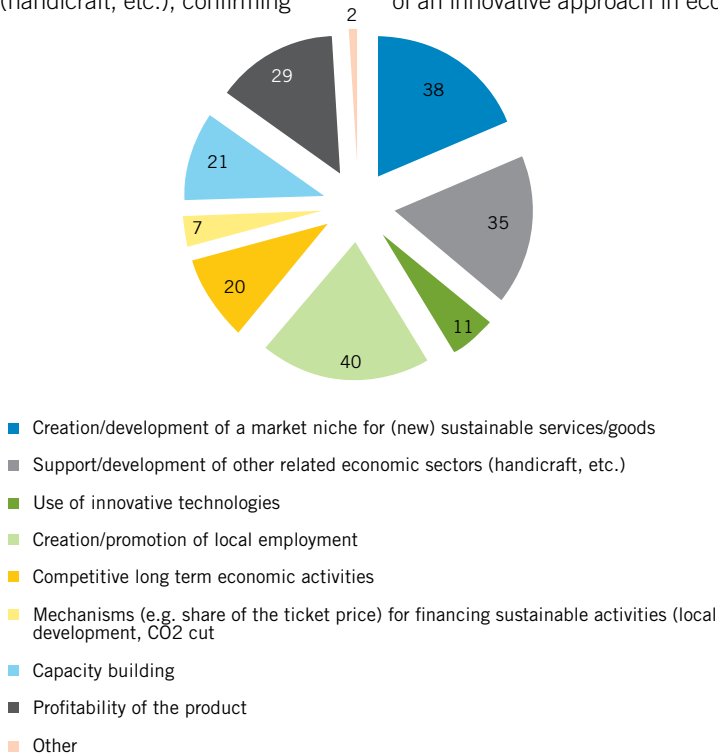


Figure 8 – Number of times that the economic sustainability criteria have been met.

Finally in relation to the social sustainability criteria, almost 80% of the BPs shows an “increase of public awareness towards sustainability”, 70% an “involvement of local communities and/or local economic actors in the process”

and an “increase of local community awareness towards own territory/identity/ etc.”: all these numbers confirm the need of local inhabitants engagement in any eco-tourism development process.

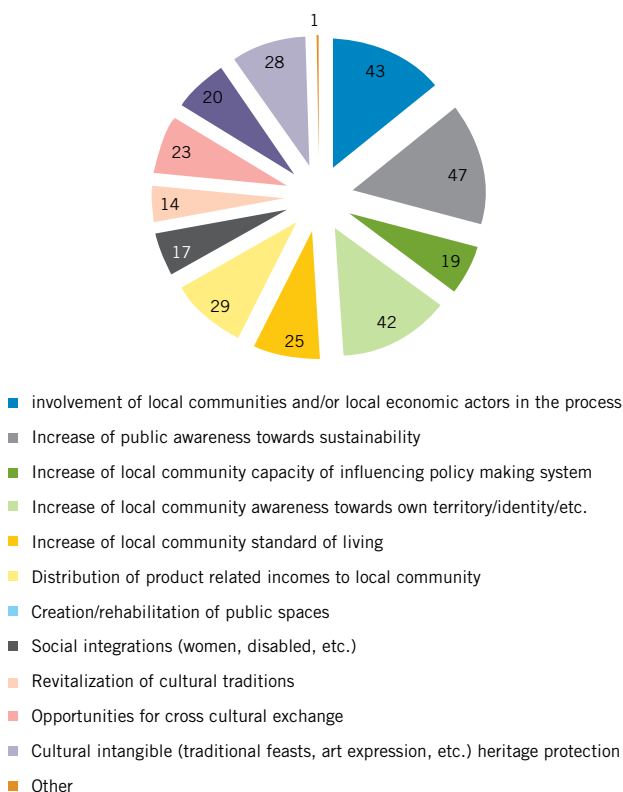


Figure 9 – Number of times that the social sustainability criteria have been met.

Looking at the total sample the most of the cases meet the social sustainability criteria (53%), followed by the economical ones (25%) and the environmental ones (22%). This result shows that the involvement of local communities as promoters as well as beneficiaries of local tourism is one of the most crucial factors for the success of an ecotourism product/activity.

The next figure shows the scores achieved by each BP in the relevance assessment section – general criteria of the “Best Practices description” sheet.

The graph should be read bearing in mind that for each of the 8 criteria to be evaluated (listed under the “General Criteria” heading of the “Best Practices description” sheet), the compiler could attribute four types of scores: “1” for high performances, “2” for medium performances, “3” for low performances and “0” if the criteria is not met.

The underlined cases are those that meet both the following points: a) satisfying all the criteria with b) high scores (preferably “1”, or at least “2”).

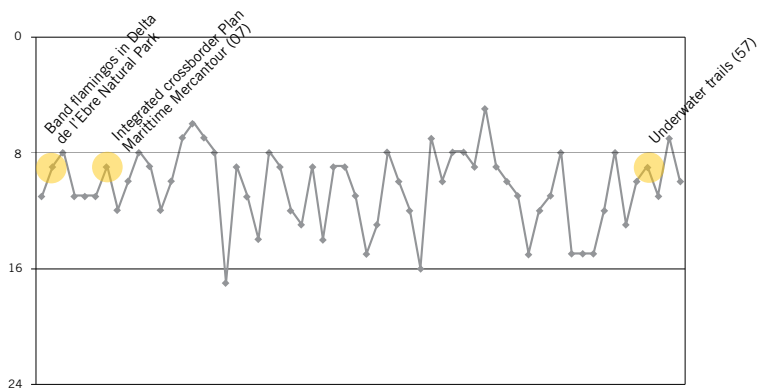


Figure 10 – General criteria scores for each BP in the “quality assessment” section showing the best achieved scores.

The BPs matching these criteria, according to the evaluations of the MEET partnership, are:

- Band flamingos in Delta de l'Ebre Natural Park (BP #02 in the DB), a conservation scheme developed by the natural park administration to protect the Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus*, an emblematic species in the Ebro delta since 1993, with a colony size increased from 250 to 1,900 pairs. The scheme consists of four programs: 1) monitoring (banding), 2) public environmental awareness, 3) mitigation of damage to rice fields, and 4) survey and control in the salt works. Involvement, cooperation, education and monitoring are the key words².
- Integrated Crossborder Plan “Cross-border space Maritime Mercantour: natural and cultural diversity at the heart of sustainable and integrated

development” (BP #07 in the DB) a comprehensive plan, funded through the Interreg ALCOTRA Programme 2007-2013 and developed thanks to the years of collaboration between two protected areas lying in different countries: Italy and France. The main objective, under the Tourism Project of the Integrate Crossborder Plan, was to create a transnational eco-touristic destination – the Grand Tour Maritime Mercantour – promoting tourism that respects the natural and cultural heritage in accordance with the principles of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism and improving the visitors hospitality (paths, bilingual signs in the border hills, communication products for hiking, etc.). Moreover, in the wake of this project (in 2012) another Interreg – ALCOTRA Project started: “The Parks of the Southern Alps undertake for ecotourism”, aimed at going deeper into the same objective.

² Extract from “Conservation and management of the Greater Flamingo *Phoenicopterus roseus* at the Ebro delta” by Antoni Curcó, Francesc Vidal & Julia Piccardo, in «Flamingo Bulletin of the IUCN-SSC/Wetlands International FLAMINGO SPECIALIST GROUP» Special Publication 1. Proceedings of the IV International Workshop on the Greater Flamingo in the Mediterranean region and northwest Africa, 56- November, 2007, Antequera, Spain.

• Underwater trails (BP #57 in the DB) are activities created under the “Medpan North” project (funded by the ETC “MED” Programme) for scuba and snorkeler divers within the Maltese Marine Protected Area (MPA) between Rđum Majjiesa and Ras ir-Raheb. Diving activities have been directed away from particularly sensitive areas to other more resilient areas which still offer an interesting experience. This has been done to minimize impacts on sensitive benthic habitats. This is the first underwater trail in the Maltese Islands and thus would hold a high potential to increase visitors to the MPA as well as attract tourists to Malta and, if viewed

as a pilot project could be eventually implemented in other local MPAs³.

The relevance assessment section - ecotourism related criteria - of the “Best Practices description” sheet consist of 11 criteria to be evaluated, again with the possibility to attribute: “1” for high performances, “2” for medium performances, “3” for low performances and “0” if the parameter is not met.

The most interesting cases are those that meet both the following points: a) satisfying all the criteria with b) high scores (preferably “1”, or at least “2”).

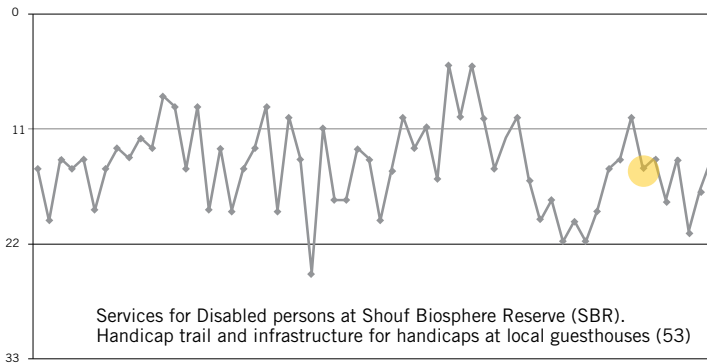


Figure 11 – Ecotourism-related criteria scores for each BP in the “quality assessment” section showing the best achieved scores.

The best case, according to the evaluations of the MEET partnership, is:

• Services for Disabled persons at Shouf Biosphere Reserve (SBR). Handicap trail and infrastructure for handicapped at local guesthouses (BP #54 in the DB),

consisting of handicapped and blind trails in the SBR, guestrooms equipped for disabled people at two nearby villages in order to allow every person to discover, learn about, enjoy and participate in the conservation of the biodiversity of the SBR.

³ www.mepa.org.mt/file.aspx?f=7202

2.2 Descriptive analysis

The 60 BPs have been clustered according to 7 components as explained in the par. 2.1.4, and this subdivision is summarized in the following figure.

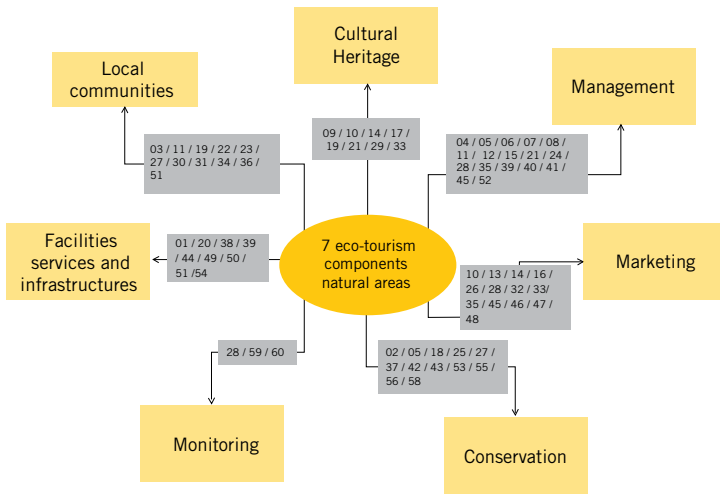


Figure 12 – Classification of the BPs based on the 7 components.

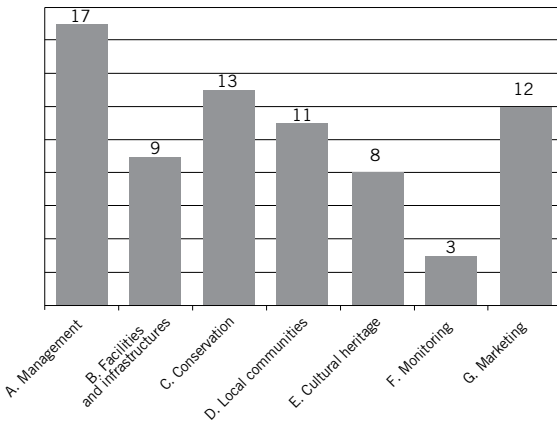


Figure 13 – BPs number breakdown for each component.

A. Management



Title	Geographical location	# in the Database
Kayak and snorkel activities to discover Natural Park	Spain	04
5 Lochs Visitor Management Plan	United Kingdom	05
PANforAMaR - Protected Areas Network for Adriatic Macro Region	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy	06
Integrated Crossborder Plan "Cross-border space Marittime Mercantour: natural and cultural diversity at the heart of sustainable and integrated development"	Italy, France	07
Alpine Pearls - Alpine Umbrella Brand for Soft Mobility in Tourism	Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Switzerland	08
CAMPFIRE - Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources	Zimbabwe	11
Carpathian National Nature Park	Ukraine	12
Municipal Reserve "Curichi Cuajo"	Bolivia	15
Lis Aganis Ecomuseo delle Dolomiti Friulane, Ecomuseum	Italy	21
Ecotourism and the Noosa Biosphere	Australia	24
Vanuatu: Island Bungalows Private-Public Partnership (Vanuatu Safaris Air Pass)	Vanuatu	28
Integrating Business Skills in Ecotourism Operations	Cambodia, Kenya, Laos, Spain	35
Proyecto: "iCairn" señalización virtual e interpretación del paisaje mediante realidad aumentada y geolocalización	Spain	39
Tourism Development Supporting Biodiversity Conservation in Pangandaran	Indonesia	40
Development of an Ecotourism Strategic Plan – a pilot experience	Tunisia	41
Creating a network of operators involved in ecotourism	France	45
'Wild Jordan'	Jordan	52

Table 3 – BPs under the Component A. Management ⁴.

⁴ The BPs in grey are listed also under another component where they are described; if not detailed, because their characteristics are similar to other BPs already illustrated.

The 15 cases classified under this component refer to different levels of management: destination management, site management and product or activity management.

In the past years the sustainable tourism-related community shared the need to improve the management of eco-tourism using trans-boundary and integrated approaches, as:

- developing appropriate tools both for the natural areas and visitors management;

- involving and empowering local communities to make equitable processes through co-management and joint-ventures;
- promoting the involvement of local authorities and their cooperation with the tourism industry, protected areas and citizens through agreements;
- defining clear roles for each of the involved stakeholders.

32

The following boxes summarize how the selected BPs (on the right the respective number in the Database) have addressed these needs in an innovative way.

Kayak and snorkel activities to discover Natural Parks	04
<p>This BP involves 4 different natural parks in Catalunya: Cap de Creus Natural Park, Aiguamolls de l'Empordà Natural Park, Delta de l'Ebre Natural Park and Montgrí, les Illes Medes i el Baix Ter Natural Park. It refers to kayak and snorkeling activities, offered as a way to enjoy natural areas while discovering some inaccessible spots along the coast; the visits are also aimed at learning – through thematic guided tours accompanied by guides from the Natural Parks – for instance the geology, the local wildlife or the marine biology. At the management level, the element to be underlined is a replicable coordination between different protected areas which, thanks to an active collaboration, are developing a unique product including joint actions for the fruition of the sites and for the product promotion (this also reduces costs arising from a fragmented promotion).</p>	

5 Lochs Visitor Management Plan	05
<p>What makes this case special as a visitor management plan for the Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park in UK, is that its main objective, at the time of its implementation in 2012, was to counteract the bad effects resulting from an excessive tourist pressure, suggesting specific visitor management strategies. The plan was built thanks to the involvement of many stakeholders of public sector at different levels and provides a coordinated approach by way of a framework of actions through three key tools: infrastructure and service improvements; education outreach and volunteering enforcement.</p>	

⁵ World Ecotourism Summit Quebec City, Canada, 1922- May 2002, Final Report.

PANforAMaR - Protected Areas Network for Adriatic Macro Region	06
<p>This BP shows several factors of success: the trans-boundary coordination and effective cooperation between protected areas of different nations achieved through the formalization of a network; the common objective to create an integrated tourist destination through knowledge exchange, joint implementation and co-financing. The development of the “Adriatic-Ionian” Basin product (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia) has involved almost 30 public and private bodies.</p>	

Integrated Cross border Plan "Cross-border space Maritime Mercantour: natural and cultural diversity at the heart of sustainable and integrated development"	07
<p>In this case the joint actions towards the development of a cross-border eco-tourism product have been promoted as part of an integrated plan that comes from a twenty-year collaboration of the two trans-boundary protected areas Maritime (Italy) and Mercantour (France) which, with great foresight and perseverance, try to make the protection, the management and the enhancement of their territories more consistent with the geographical boundaries instead of the administrative ones. That’s why in 2012 the two parks set up an EGTC - European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation and jointly renewed the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism.</p>	

Alpine Pearls - Alpine Umbrella Brand for Soft Mobility in Tourism	08
<p>This BP focuses on the mobility and transport system of some villages, the "pearls", located along the Alps. Indeed, BP regards the creation of tourism packages, of sustainable mobility solutions, joint marketing activities, mutual media relations, production of joint advertising media, co-operation with partners, events and public relations. The realization of all these activities was possible through the creation of an association for supporting the joint effort between the various partners in achieving common goals. Notably, the ability of the project promoters to access EU funds.</p>	

Vanuatu: Island Bungalows Private-Public Partnership (Vanuatu Safaris Air Pass)	28
<p>To generate tourist interest in more remote islands of the Vanuatu archipelago (Oceania), a public-private partnership (Vanuatu’s regional airline, island bungalow managers, travel agents and wholesales, local tour operators, international funding agencies) has set up the new product of island bungalows system and a coupon air-pass “Vanuatu Safaris Air Pass” whereby foreign tourists, saving 50% on domestic air travels, can travel to at least two of Vanuatu’s 18 islands. The Vanuatu Island Bungalow Association (VIBA), established in 1996, plays a key role in overseeing the development of this rural tourism development program by coordinating bookings and providing continued support to bungalow owners. The coordinated marketing and promotion program, with Island Safaris of Vanuatu and Vanair, has led to an increase in the number of bungalows registered with VIBA and has sold, till now, about 50 passes per month.</p>	

Integrating Business Skills in Ecotourism Operations	35
<p>This BP is about an IUCN capacity building initiative aimed to develop the ability of conservation organizations in Cambodia, Kenya, Laos and Spain, and to effectively manage eco-tourism related businesses through business skill knowledge and experience sharing. Thus, since 2008, IUCN has organized training workshops, targeted at conservation organizations that are developing eco-tourism businesses with limited experience, in order to make eco-tourism development market-viable while contributing to biodiversity conservation.</p>	

Development of an Ecotourism Strategic Plan – a pilot experience	41
<p>This BP is about the development of a participatory strategy and an action plan for eco-tourism in Maghreb natural protected areas, and the creation of guidelines for its implementation in two pilot areas: the Talassemtane National Park in Morocco, and Jebel Zaghouan National Park in Tunisia. The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism has been selected as a planning reference tool for sustainable tourism in the two protected areas. As a policy result, the Ministry of Environment in Tunisia applied this same methodology to a new eco-tourism project funded by the World Bank.</p>	

Wild Jordan	52
<p>This BP regards a new branded operational department of the Royal Society for Conservation of Nature, devoted to the development and promotion of eco-tourism and nature-based businesses in Jordan's protected areas. For this case the innovation is in the opportunity to facilitate local economic development through an organizational business-oriented approach within the institutional framework in order to achieve a more effective management of tourism facilities and programs. Therefore, some of Wild Jordan activities are: eco-tourism planning, fund raising and capital investments, infrastructure development (eco-lodges, campsites, trails, visitor centers, etc.), operational management of eco-tourism facilities in PAs, product development, marketing and promotion, and public-private partnerships in tourism operations.</p>	



The Cistus creticus flower in Ajloun - Jordan
© Royal Society for Conservation of Nature

B. Facilities, services and infrastructures



Title	Geographical location	# in the Database
Tawlet Aammiq Eco-restaurant	Lebanon	01
Greenway Liguria	Italy	20
Information Point Network of the Natural Park of La Garrotxa Volcanic Zone	Spain	38
Proyecto: "iCairn" señalización virtual e interpretación del paisaje mediante realidad aumentada y geolocalizació	Spain	39
House of "Aigoual"	France	44
E-WHITE	Italy	49
Agriturismo Le Mole sul Farfa	Italy	50
Development of the Feynan Eco-lodge	Jordan	51
Services for Disabled persons at Shouf Biosphere Reserve (SBR). Handicap trail and infrastructure for handicaps at local guesthouses	Lebanon	54

Table 4 – BPs under the Component B. Facilities, services and infrastructures⁶.

⁶ The BPs in grey are listed also under another component where they are described; if not detailed, because their characteristics are similar to other BPs already illustrated.

Facilities, services and infrastructures are the physical skeleton of a tourist destination. If this skeleton is in good health then the destination can have an efficient tourism organization. The same is true, of course, with regard to the eco-tourism for which the inescapable requirement is that each

"bone" should incorporate in itself the principles of sustainability. Therefore, in a non-exhaustive list, the main needs for ecotourism facilities, services and infrastructures are⁷ :

- design and management sensitively to ensure compatibility with the natural and cultural values of the national park and

also to maximize sustainability;

- offer unique or innovative visitor experiences;
- promotion of labeling and certification systems in order to improve sustainability performance and quality and provide

consumers with reliable expectations and advice before booking;

- consistency of the location with respect to the conservation zoning;
- improving information and interpretation with the adoption of ICT solutions.

The following boxes summarize how the selected BPs (on the right the respective number in the Database) have addressed these needs in an innovative way.

Tawlet Aammiq Eco-restaurant	01
<p>This BP is about the building of the country's first eco-restaurant with high environmental performances in Lebanon (the building reduces energy consumption by about 80% compared to similar buildings; reduces greenhouse gas emissions by about 85%, recycles over 60% of solid waste) which provides, at the same time, benefits to people in the Bekaa Valley thanks to the creation of job opportunities, especially for women. Besides its function as an eco-restaurant, the building also offers a meeting room for workshops and conferences on sustainable development and for increasing the awareness of visitors to the environment, natural resource conservation and biological diversity in the region. Moreover, thanks to a partnership between A Rocha Lebanon, the Shouf Cedar Reserve and the Skaff Estate, part of the profits from this new eco-restaurant will help to fund the management of the Aammiq Wetland and the Cedar Reserve, which are both nearby.</p>	

Greenway Liguria	20
<p>The BP consists of a cycle track, a greenway⁸, of 350 km along the coast of Liguria region in the north of Italy. One of the most interesting aspects of its implementation concerns the recovery of disused railways, reconverted into routes for slow trekking. The former stations have also been rethought, in the project, as hotels and hostels, free sports facilities, gardens and parking in stretches of the coast that were previously inaccessible to tourists due to the presence of the railroad. One of the main objectives of the project was to redirect the traditional mass tourism aimed at the sea, towards new options which combine the coast with the inland attractions (gastronomic goods, small historic villages, etc.). One of the achieved results was an actual redistribution of tourists flows.</p>	

⁷ Taking inspiration inter alia from some of the six overarching principles, guiding the consideration of ecotourism facilities in national parks, as set by the Austrian government (see: <http://www.npsr.qld.gov.au/tourism/pdf/ecofacilities-framework.pdf>).

⁸ The European Greenways Association defines them as «communication routes reserved exclusively for non-motorized journeys, developed in an integrated manner which enhances both the environment and quality of life of the surrounding area. These routes should meet satisfactory standards of width, gradient and surface condition to ensure that they are both user-friendly and low-risk for users of all abilities.» (Lille Declaration, European Greenways Association, 12 September 2000).

Information Point Network of the Natural Park of La Garrotxa Volcanic Zone	38
<p>This ongoing initiative aims to improve the training of staff, responsible for the customer service in tourism throughout the region of La Garrotxa, on matters related to local tourism, establishing an integrated information network of high quality. Basically it is an accreditation system in which on one hand the companies are committed to attend regular training activities and to provide accurate information to its customers, and on the other, Turisme Garrotxa (an association of organizations and entities related to the tourism in the Garrotxa region) and the Natural Park are committed to providing such training, information materials and a proper distinction for the accredited companies. The ultimate result is that customers or users can have complete, accurate, consistent and high quality tourist information in accommodation, restaurants and tourism offices.</p>	

Project: "iCairn" señalización virtual e interpretación del paisaje mediante realidad aumentada y geolocalizació	39
<p>The BP is about an application for mobile devices (IOS, Android – downloadable on the respective stores), based on the integration of “augmented reality” technology and geo-location, which allows travelers to identify routes, services and places of interest and also to interpret natural environment and products (or services) of companies located in natural areas. Such ICT tool allows to: a) reduce the visual impact of physical signaling and the cost for their installation and maintenance, b) encourage a direct interaction between visitors and the PA, c) help to meet the principles of the ECST and of IUCN sustainable tourism criteria. In July 2012 the iCairn application offered information about over 350 routes and touristic guides for 20 Natural Areas.</p>	

House of “Aigoual”	44
<p>The BP consists in the coexistence, in the same eco-building located in the Aigoual mount in the French Cevennes National Park, of three different activities related to the Park: PA head office, tourism office, local farmer products store. The House becomes a meeting point for the tourists, a symbol of the commitment in the conservation by the PA, and a point of contact between tourists and the local community with its traditions and its typical products.</p>	

E-WHITE	49
<p>This BP refers to a project just started and aimed to improve the quality of the visit to the Appia Antica Regional Park in Italy for blind people, by using new and low cost technologies: a 2 km sensory trail and an experimented application for Smartphone and tablets for guidance and orientation which could be used in any kind of open air or indoor context. The innovation lies in facilitating the accessibility and the enjoyment of disadvantaged people with the support of ICT solutions.</p>	

Development of the Feynan Eco-lodge	51
<p>The BP refers to the realization of a fully operational Eco-lodge generating alternative livelihoods for the local poor community and revenue for the Dana Biosphere Reserve (southern Jordan), helping to offset the threat of copper mining in the area. The Eco-lodge performs highly successful branding and marketing, such that in 2012 it was ranked in the top 4 hotels in Jordan by Trip Advisor and, in 2013, as one of the best 20 eco-lodges in the world by National Geographic. The facility directly provides jobs and income for 62 local people and their families; it has hosted 23,000 overnight visitors per year and has generated \$528,000 for supporting the conservation of the Biosphere Reserve (2012). The BP generates a positive impact for the lodge, the local people and the Reserve (it can be referred also to the Component D. Local Community).</p>	

C. Conservation

Title	Geographical location	N. in the Database
Band flamingos in Delta de l'Ebre Natural Park	Spain	02
5 Lochs Visitor Management Plan	United Kingdom	05
Fattorie del Panda, Network of holiday farms	Italy	18
LAGOON - Preserving the Marine Environment of Oludeniz Lagoon	Turkey	25
Homestay Experiences in Sikkim	India	27
Marine safe-keeping and biodiversity	Spain	37
Ecotourism Payback Experience	Spain	42
Sustainable Tourism through Energy Efficiency with Adaptation and Mitigation Measures (STREAM)	Indonesia	43
Cyprus waterbike trips	Cyprus	53
Guides of National Parks and Recreation Areas	Greece	55
Conservation sailing holiday	Greece	56
Underwater trails	Malta	57
PANACEA - environmental education centre dedicated to marine biodiversity	Malta	58

Table 5 – BPs under the Component C. Conservation⁹.

⁹ The BPs in grey are listed also under another component where they are described; if not detailed, because their characteristics are similar to other BPs already illustrated.

Eco-tourism-related principles can be summarized in safeguarding the integrity of the ecosystem and at the same time producing economic benefits for local communities that can encourage conservation. In a non-exhaustive list, some needs for conservation are:

- revenues derived from eco-tourism activities can help to finance the protection

and the management of natural areas;

- local communities, understanding the benefits arising from eco-tourism activities, are often motivated to protect resources and adopt conservationist attitudes;

- tourists and local residents can benefit from the environmental education that eco-tourism activities can provide.

The following boxes summarize how the selected BPs (on the right the respective number in the Database) have addressed these needs in an innovative way.

Band flamingos in Delta de l'Ebre Natural Park	02
<p>This BP consists in a conservation scheme, developed by the natural park administration, to protect one species: the Greater Flamingo (<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>). Conservation has been achieved through four programs: 1) monitoring (bi-monthly censuses, breeding colony survey, and banding and band re-sighting), 2) public environmental awareness (public information and participation in flamingoes banding, flamingo support scheme and re-sighting campaigns), 3) mitigation of damage to rice fields, and 4) survey and control in the salt works (wardens, control of saltpan water levels and control of the salt works' activity).</p>	

Fattorie del Panda, Network of holiday farms	18
<p>The “Fattorie del Panda” in Italy are multifunctional farms, preferably located within areas of high nature value. The farms are centers of testimony, knowledge and dissemination of the natural and cultural context in which they are based and, more specifically, of its environment, history, gastronomy, culture and traditions. The main aim of the initiative is to involve farmers and educate farm tourists about biodiversity conservation under a network which, in exchange, promotes the adhering farms, providing them with promotional tools, giving them the opportunity to participate in fairs, to be on the website and in newsletters, and to participate in events and initiatives or training activities. Today about 200 farms are part of the network.</p>	

LAGOON - Preserving the Marine Environment of Oludeniz Lagoon	25
<p>Oludeniz Lagoon is a very popular tourist area on the Mediterranean coast in Turkey. It is one of the few areas along the Turkish coast that has still a “clean” marine environment and several endemic species living there. To avoid the deterioration of the marine environment, the Turkish Marine Research Foundation (NGO) has set up, under a LIFE Project, environmental awareness building activities among local fishermen, tourism operators and other important stakeholders through the promotion of workshops, campaigns (e.g. beach garbage collection, water quality monitoring, etc.), blue schools, and contests (e.g. underwater photography).</p>	

Marine safe-keeping and biodiversity	37
<p>This BP refers to the creation – by the Fundación Global Nature y Xaloc in Spain – of biodiversity-friendly tourism products through the development of several targeted trainings and of a specific and innovative application for mobile devices, which allows tourists and entrepreneurs to collaborate on cataloguing the species. This application (available for free in the Apple store and Google Play) allows users to take pictures, set the geographical coordinates and open a form to fill out interesting facts about the sighting conducted (author, date and description). The photo data are sent to a remote data server that stores the information for approval and upload in an official database (in the case of this pilot project this is the Banc de Dades de Biodiversitat of the Generalitat Valenciana). This application can be customized to identify and catalog in the same way species of interest (protected, endangered species, invasive species, etc.) in other protected areas, involving both tourism enterprises and tourists in an experiential and direct contribution to the conservation, in a participatory and playful way (“gamification”).</p>	

Ecotourism Payback Experience	42
<p>This BP is not yet completed but it is an interesting example of a pay-back mechanism for sustainability. It is about the designing and implementing of an innovative and attractive system for the responsible tourist, in order to enjoy a unique and exclusive experience, giving the opportunity of visiting and getting to know emblematic biodiversity conservation actions. Both tourist and private companies contribute financially to support the activities. For example the system of financial contribution to the project of recuperation of the Bearded Vulture in Picos de Europa area works with local private companies that pay an annual quote to an ONG involved in the conservations action (Fundación para la conservación del Quebrantahuesos); in turn the NGO offers to the private companies free entrance to the installments, the label of “collaborative company” and advertisement.</p>	

Guides of National Parks and Recreation Areas	55
<p>In Greece the “Guides of National Parks and Recreation Areas”, known as “Ecoguides”, are certified licensed environmental guides who organize excursions and help promoting environmental awareness, in areas with special ecological value. The Ecoguides have the expertise required for the understanding of protection, management and education in order to “translate” for the general public the scientific data in a simple and understandable way. The Ecoguides inform visitors regarding flora, fauna and geomorphology, the problems and the threats of the habitats, promoting thematic visits on “Forest Botany”, “Biology- Ecology of Wildlife and Birds”, “Forestry - Forest Ecology”, “Forest pests diseases-pests”, “National Parks – Management”, “Protected Natural Areas”, “Introduction to Ecology”, “Forest Protection”, “Ecoguide Training in National Parks”, “Wetlands and National Forests”, “Quarry management”, etc.</p>	

Conservation sailing holiday

56

In the Ionian sea, **a team of sailors, divers, biologists and environmentalists get together thanks to their love of the sea and nature, with the aim of protecting the marine ecosystem and raising public awareness on environmental issues. They developed a series of eco activities** involving sailing, diving and discovering unique species in order to financially support their work for the rest of the year. When sailing boats are not chartered, the team sails around to clean beaches, recycle wastes or give a hand to researchers and organizations in their study activities.

PANACEA - environmental education centre dedicated to marine biodiversity

58

This BP regards the institution in Italy and Malta of **Environmental Educational Centers** in several Protected Areas - the PANACEA (Promotion of Marine Protected Areas through Environmental Education) Centers - that are to be considered as **portals of "edutainment."** These centers offer to the visitors a didactic experience through a kaleidoscopic overview of the marine life and habitats found in the six Marine Protected Areas included in the PANACEA project (Dwejra and Rdum Majjiesa in Malta, and Capo Gallo, Isole Pelagie, Plemmirio and Ustica in Sicily). These centers **explain marine scientific issues adopting the so called "Layman's system", so that even visitors and students with little or no scientific background can comprehend** the complexity of marine environments, their links with terrestrial ecosystems and the role of protected areas. The PANACEA environmental education centre at Dwejra, Gozo is the first centre dedicated exclusively to marine biodiversity on the island.



D. Local communities



Title	Geographical location	N. in the Database
Fishing tourism	Spain	03
CAMPFIRE - Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources	Zimbabwe	11
La Ruta del Jengibre - The Ginger Trail	Dominican Republic	19
Makuleke Ecotourism Project – Pafuri Camp in Kruger National Park	South Africa	22
Miso Walai Homestay Program as Part of Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Tourism Corridor	Malaysia	23
Homestay Experiences in Sikkim	India	27
The Waitukubuli National Trail - "Discover Nature for Heritage Development"	Dominica	30
Collaborative Reef Conservation Program – Wakatobi Protected Area	Indonesia	31
GDA Sidi Amor "Eco-Village of Arts and Crafts"	Tunisia	34
Chaouen Rural: Découvrez le Monde Jebli	Morocco	36
Development of the Feynan Eco-lodge	Jordan	51

Table 6 – BPs under the Component D. Local communities¹⁰.

¹⁰ The BPs in grey are listed also under another component where they are described; if not detailed, because their characteristics are similar to other BPs already illustrated.

Local communities are perhaps the most important component in ecotourism since they allow the fulfillment of all the requirements of sustainability, not just the social criteria. In this context the involvement and empowerment of local communities and indigenous people are strategic for:

- improving the ecotourism development process;
- making effective the management and the monitoring of ecotourism activities;
- assuring the sharing at local level of benefits resulting from the ecotourism.

The following boxes summarize how the selected BPs (on the right the respective number in the Database) have addressed these needs in an innovative way.

Fishing tourism	03
<p>This BP consists in encouraging the tourists to discover the natural values of the Cataluña coastline, the sea and the traditional fishing activity promoting local fishermen as guides of their territory and bearers of local traditions. The local community of fishermen benefits from their usual activity with an extra money income and the tourists improve their visit appreciation in an experiential way.</p>	

CAMPFIRE - Communal Areas Management Program for Indigenous Resources	11
<p>CAMPFIRE is a several decade long program that aims to help rural communities in Zimbabwe to manage their resources, especially wildlife, for their own local development. The program's central goal is to alleviate rural poverty by giving rural communities a full autonomy over resource management. This is an archetypal community-based natural resource management programme that has been widely emulated in southern and eastern Africa. CAMPFIRE generates funds through: trophy hunting, nature tourism, harvesting natural product, live animal sales, meat cropping. Some local people are employed directly as guides or run local facilities for tourists. The Mahenye community has also formed a partnership with Zimbabwe Sun Ltd (a Zimbabwe based hospitality management company established in 1968) to develop photographic safaris in the area, the result being the creation of Mahenye and Chilo Gorge Safari lodges, which were built and are staffed by community members. This BP is also representative of an innovative way of management (refer to the Component A. Management).</p>	

La Ruta del Jengibre - The Ginger Trail	19
<p>La Ruta del Jengibre is an ecological and agricultural community tourism initiative based on the visit of the organic cultivations of ginger, the Zingiber officinale, which involves 120 families spread over several villages of the Samaná Province in the Dominican Republic. Tourists can come and see how ginger is cultivated and walk along special scenic trails, accompanied by local trained guides enjoining also near natural and cultural attractions (caves, geological attractions, peasant villages, waterfalls, lagoons, endemic birds, etc.). Visitors get the chance to spend time with local people across the trail experiencing how they live and work (and also the local food). Furthermore visitors have the opportunity for homestays with Dominican families where they can learn about life on the farm and can enjoy home-cooked meals.</p>	

Makuleke Ecotourism Project – Pafuri Camp in Kruger National Park	22
<p>Pafuri Camp is a community-led ecotourism initiative in the northern part of the Kruger National Park (South Africa). The main objective of the Pafuri Camp is to protect the unique ecosystems and the wildlife of the region and to sustain a competitive eco-tourism enterprise that provides the community with alternative livelihood opportunities. Activities are designed not only to generate income for the local community, but also to raise awareness among the local population on the value of protecting biodiversity in the region. Organizationally Pafuri Camp is a three-way partnership between community landowners (the Makuleke community through the Makuleke Communal Property Association - CPA), a private enterprise (Wilderness Safaris), and the state (South Africa National Parks - Kruger National Park). For its efficiency Pafuri Camp, in 2010, won the Equator Prize which is awarded biennially to recognize outstanding community efforts to reduce poverty through the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.</p>	

Homestay Experiences in Sikkim	27
<p>It is a community-based ecotourism BP in India. To develop the homestay destinations, Ecotourism and Conservation Society of Sikkim (ECOSS) has worked closely with the villagers in building their skills and capacities. Each village has a tourism management committee, which overlooks the operations and management of the tourism activities (village walks, day hikes to pilgrimage sites and nature trails through various waterfalls & cane bridges, learning meditation, visits to 150 year old traditional houses, cultural shows, basket weaving, ploughing the field, planting rice, milking cows, cardamom weeding & harvesting, traditional games & sports, folktales & story telling sessions, volunteer to teach in a school, etc.). Payment for homestay services goes directly to the family and tangible results are easily visible. A portion of income may also go to a community fund which might be used to pay for trail improvements, schools or monasteries renewal, etc.</p>	

The Waitukubuli National Trail - "Discover Nature for Heritage Development"	30
<p>The Waitukubuli National Trail is a long distance hiking trail (about 180 km) running from the north to the south of Dominica Island (Caribbean) through rural communities that are marginalized both economically and geographically. This pro-poor project stems from the need to counteract, with an economic alternative, the decline in the island's agricultural economy, based notably on banana production. The trail is managed by the nearby communities to ensure that the hikes proposed to eco-tourists can end at an accommodation facility run by the community.</p>	

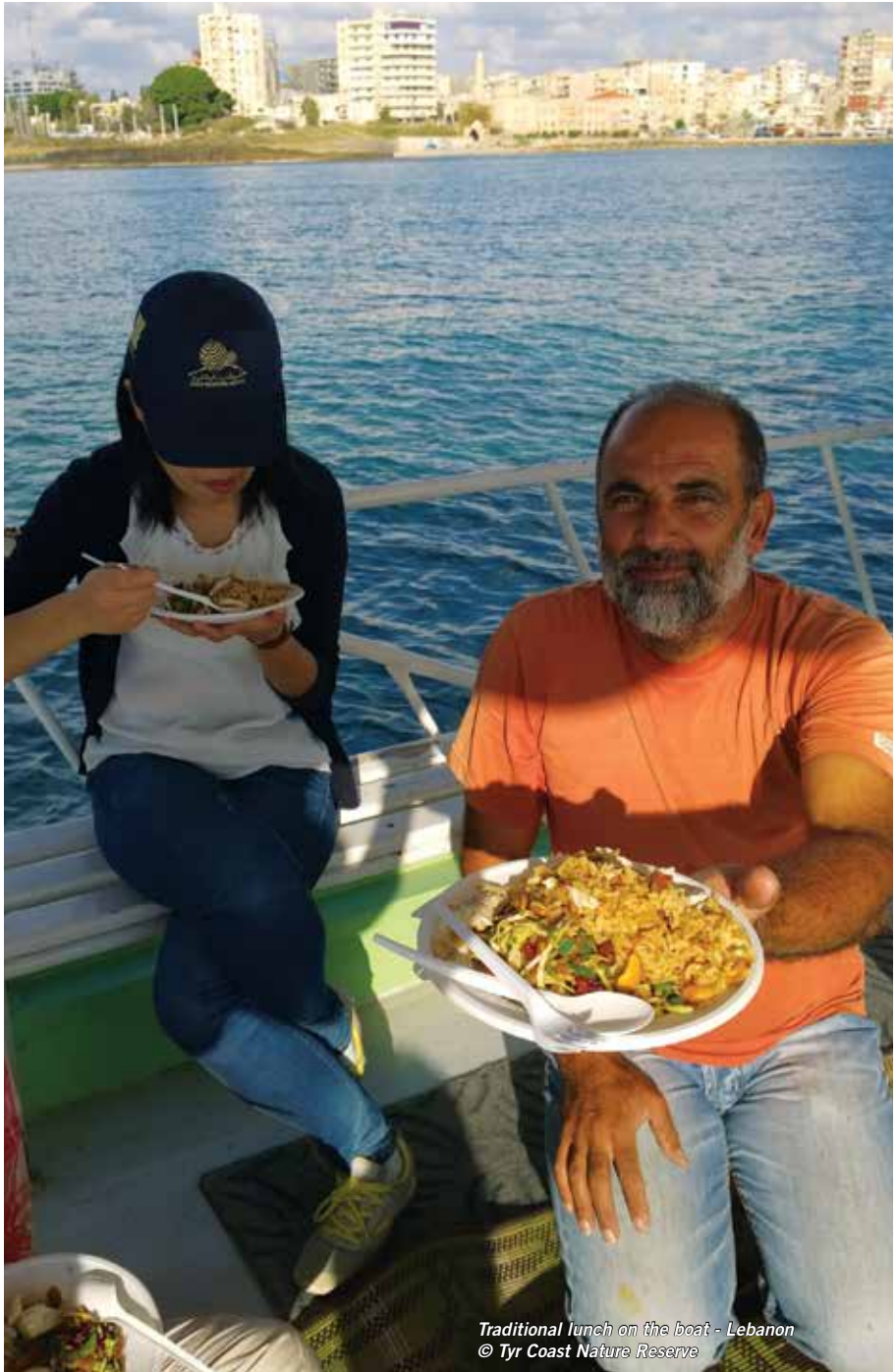
The BP, promoted by the Wakatobi Dive Resort (Indonesia), refers to **one of the world's largest privately-funded marine protected areas**. It is committed to the protection, education, and sustainability **demonstrating to local people that, besides fishing on the reefs, it is possible to generate income from tourists who are just looking at fishes and corals**. This Program counteracts destructive trends (with continuous monitoring and cleanings operated by local people); contributes back to the local communities (helping local communities and villages with employment and sponsoring infrastructural improvements) and builds a lasting cooperative conservation program.

The project is aimed to **empower people on sustainable development at the local scale** by providing job opportunities, training and improving capacity building and by **the creation of an Eco-Hamlet designed as "Village of Arts and Crafts" for promotion of green tourism and cultural heritage**. The "eco-village for art and crafts", located just 12 km from the centre of the capital Tunis, offers facilities for the different crafts in that area and is going to be the heart of the sustainable eco-tourism development in the area. Its aspiration is **to bring together all the sustainable activities in an integrated program of vocational training for the young people of the area**.



Gastronomy at a traditional guesthouse - Lebanon

© Mickael Yablokov



*Traditional lunch on the boat - Lebanon
© Tyr Coast Nature Reserve*

E. Cultural heritage



Title	Geographical location	N. in the Database
Bed & Bunker	Albania	09
Bregenzerwald Cheese Route	Austria	10
Culinarium Österreich	Austria	14
ECOSAL Atlantis – Ecotourism in the Atlantic salt-marshes	Spain, France, Portugal	17
La Ruta del Jengibre - The Ginger Trail	Dominican Republic	19
Lis Aganis Ecomuseo delle Dolomiti Friulane, Ecomuseum	Italy	21
Viscri – Saxon Village in Transylvania	Romania	29
Wine Tourism in Georgia	Georgia	33

Table 7 – BPs under the Component E. Cultural heritage ¹¹.

Cultural heritage is secured as an important part of ecotourism, the key challenges for this component are:

- conservation and restoration of tangible cultural heritage;
- protection and valorization of intangible cultural heritage;

- appropriate recognition and interpretation;
- creation of stronger links between cultural heritage, local communities and nature.

¹¹ The BPs in grey are listed also under another component where they are described; if not detailed, because their characteristics are similar to other BPs already illustrated.

The following boxes summarize how the selected BPs (on the right the respective number in the Database) have addressed these needs in an innovative way.

Bed & Bunker	09
<p>It is a research project between German and Albanian students which is aimed to convert some of the former military Albanian bunkers, about 750.000 placed all over the country, into facilities for tourists. The innovation consists in the desire of exploiting positively the presence of the former military buildings, evidence of a recent historical period, re-using and reconverting them with a view to conservation and sustainability.</p>	

Culinarium Österreich	14
<p>The BP offers an example of trans-sector cooperation between tourism, commerce and agriculture sectors in order to promote Austrian rural areas, where a common supply and marketing cooperative group of each region leads to a unique culinary and tourist offer. Agriculture, tourism, industrial and commercial enterprises were able to create a shared culinary heritage-tourism experience. Culinary Austria includes high quality products and services of the Austrian regions. This BP is also representative of an effective market strategy (refer to the Component G. Marketing).</p>	

ECOSAL Atlantis – Ecotourism in the Atlantic salt-marshes	17
<p>The main goal of this BP is the development of joint and sustainable tourism based on the cultural and natural heritage of traditional Atlantic salt working sites, a heritage which has played an important role in the maritime history of Atlantic Europe. Operatively it consists in the creation of a route that integrates and enhances the value of Atlantic salt working sites.</p>	

Lis Aganis Ecomuseo delle Dolomiti Friulane, Ecomuseum	21
<p>This BP represents a brilliant Italian case (among several ones) of an eco-museum, i.e. a museum focused on the identity of a place, largely based on local participation and aiming to enhance the welfare and development of local communities. There are presently about 300 operating eco-museums in the world, mainly in Europe. The European Network of Eco-museums definition says that: «An Eco-museum is a dynamic way in which communities preserve, interpret and manage their heritage for a sustainable development. An Ecomuseum is based on a community agreement». 48 partners are part of the Lis Aganis Ecomuseo delle Dolomiti Friulane association (Province of Pordenone, 20 Municipalities, Mountain municipalities Association of Western Friuli, Livenza Water basin Authority, two consortia of associations for local development, 21 Cultural Associations, etc.).</p>	



*Niha fortress - Lebanon
© Shouf Biosphere Reserve*

F. Monitoring



Title	Geographical location	N. in the Database
Vanuatu: Island Bungalows Private-Public Partnership (Vanuatu Safaris Air Pass)	Vanuatu	28
Community Based trail Monitoring (CBM) as a mechanism for capacity and partnership building in Shih-pan Trail in Lin-mei	China, Republic of Taiwan	59
Using automatic counters and GPS technology for recreation monitoring: case of Sonian Forest	Belgium	60

Table 8 – BPs under the Component F. Monitoring ¹².

Monitoring of tourism demand reflects the need to understand tourist behavior and profiles in order to give to the managers the tools to develop visitor management strategies:

- to enhance visitor experience;
- for the preservation of natural, cultural

and landscape value;

- for the improvement of economic impact;
- for the reduction of potential socio-cultural conflicts between residents and tourists;

¹² The BPs in grey are listed also under another component where they are described; if not detailed, because their characteristics are similar to other BPs already illustrated.

The following boxes summarize how the selected BPs (on the right the respective number in the Database) have addressed these needs in an innovative way.

Community Based trail Monitoring (CBM) as a mechanism for capacity and partnership building in Shih-pan Trail in Lin-mei	59
<p>This is a really interesting case of tourism flow monitoring in a highly popular Japanese tourist attraction, developed through the involvement of local communities. In order to have a more informed and effective management of the trail, the basic idea was to move the monitoring task from the government agencies, perennially challenged by inadequate funding and staffing, to the local community.</p> <p>The main activities of the BP refer to the monitoring of the items relevant to tourism and visitor safety, such as tourism facilities and carrying capacity control, using a Public Participatory Geography Information System (PPGIS) and, additionally, spatial information provided by Google Earth and Global Positioning System (GPS), to identify monitoring locations and items, and communicate results with both the local people and the forestry agency.</p>	

58

Using automatic counters and GPS technology for recreation monitoring: case of Sonian Forest	60
<p>This BP refers to a pilot case of monitoring of the visitor number, behavior and profile in the Sonian Forest (Belgium) with a model which integrates different methods for the collection of data, in relation to the needed information. Monitoring of tourist passes is performed at the main entrances of the Forest with some counters and field surveys, to understand visitor behavior and profile; another activity is to track logs through the distribution of GPS devices to visitors, and face to face questionnaires.</p>	





Common bottlenose dolphin at Catalano rock, Sinis peninsula MPA - Italy
© Giovanni Bearzi

G. Marketing



Title	Geographical location	N. in the Database
Bregenzerwald Cheese Route	Austria	10
Corporate Social responsibility and Marketing Access Partnership (CSR-MAP) for Thai Sustainable Tourism Supply Chains Thailand	Thailand	13
Culinarium Österreich	Austria	14
Alqueva Dark Sky® Reserve	Portugal	16
Fattorie del Panda, Network of holiday farms	Italy	18
The Pollino People Experience	Italy	26
Vanuatu: Island Bungalows Private-Public Partnership (Vanuatu Safaris Air Pass)	Vanuatu	28
Whale Shark Festival	Mexico	32
Wine Tourism in Georgia	Georgia	33
Integrating Business Skills in Ecotourism Operations	Cambodia, Kenya, Laos, Spain	35
Creating a network of operators involved in ecotourism	France	45
Nature festival	France	46
“Buy a gadget and you will donate the park to everyone”	Italy	47
"Cose Mai Viste"/ "Unbelievable things" A program of activities and initiatives for visitors and citizens	Italy	48

Table 9 – BPs under the Component G. Marketing ¹³.

¹³ The BPs in grey are listed also under another component where they are described; if not detailed, because their characteristics are similar to other BPs already illustrated..

In terms of marketing and promotion of eco-tourism, some of the most well-known challenges are:

- multi-stakeholder public-private, private-private cooperation for product development, especially in protected areas and biosphere reserves;
- branding and quality schemes;
- market research for market-oriented products;

- co-operative marketing and/or strategic alliances for small ecotourism operations to reduce costs, thereby increasing customer value, market share and/or market extension;
- experiential tourism promotion;
- capacity building;
- IT-based innovation in distribution and marketing.

The following boxes summarize how the selected BPs (on the right the respective number in the Database) have addressed these needs in an innovative way.

Bregenzerwald Cheese Route	10
<p>This BP shows an example of a marketing pool in which farmers, dairy farmers, innkeepers, craftspeople and merchants have joined to cultivate and preserve the small-scale landscape and the diversity of local produce. The Cheese Route through the Bregenzerwald in Vorarlberg (Austria) offers a different way to explore the region and its close ties with cheese-making. Cheese-making looks back on a long history in the Bregenzerwald and has left its mark on the region's culture and traditions. The Cheese Route is also an opportunity to enjoy the beauties of a lovingly tended rural landscape as well as the produce of the region's dairy farms. That's why this BP is also related to the E component on Cultural heritage. The route is not a single road but a local network ideally linking the various aspects of cheese production (refer also to the Component G. Marketing).</p>	

Corporate Social Responsibility and Marketing Access Partnership (CSR-MAP) for Thai Sustainable Tourism Supply Chains Thailand	13
<p>This is a case of a national marketing strategy aimed to contribute to the sustainable tourism development and management in Thailand, through the introduction, in the Thai tourism sector, of standards for the social and environmental sustainability, to be applied in 3 core product areas (Hotel industry, Ecotourism, Community Based Tourism) with the support of EU tour operators experience. Starting from a market analysis, sustainable standards have been created for Thai tour operators, eco-guides, green restaurants, hotels and local communities through a participatory process. After that, training for Thai SME suppliers and 21 new green routes packages have been developed.</p>	

Alqueva Dark Sky® Reserve	16
<p>This is a very interesting and innovative case because it concerns the creation and promotion of a new product based on the observation of the sky during the night. Innovation lies in having taken advantage of one of the strengths of the area: the low light pollution while contributing to diversify the regional tourism offer. The project is being developed in cooperation with different stakeholders, public and private organizations linked with tourism, other organizations and with the scientific community. The Alqueva Dark Sky Route has been prepared to receive the astro-tourists with services adapted to their specific needs, like e.g. late night meals and meals to go for stargazers.</p> <p>Alqueva has been the first site in the world to receive the “Starlight Tourism Destination” certification (December 2011). This certification, awarded by the Starlight Foundation, is supported by UNESCO, UNWTO and IAC. Starlight destinations are places characterized by excellent quality for the contemplation of starry skies, and by the practice of tourist activities based on this resource.</p>	
The Pollino People Experience	26
<p>This BP consists in the promotion of this Italian Protected Area as a tourist attraction through the quality stories and the descriptions of the places by the people who live there, work there and who love it. Quality has been identified as the real key to promote the landscape and the tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The value of the Park is not transmitted TO the local community; it is transmitted BY the local community, as a “lively” place by 100 quality stories, 32 testimonials, an Italian and English website showing the testimonials through an interactive map which localizes them and an app for Smartphone and tablets.</p>	
Nature festival	46
<p>The Nature Festival is a cultural program that gathers more than 500 free activities in the Cevennes National Park (France) such as: naturalist hiking with rangers, excursions with scientists (botanic, wild life, architecture, landscapes, astronomy), artistic excursions (painting, photography, music in nature), conferences, shows, workshops (e.g. on how to build a wall with stones), concerts and exhibitions. The goal is to raise public awareness of natural and cultural heritage of the National Park. About 30,000 people per year and 250 people/ organizations are involved in the Festival which is has been repeated with success since 1992.</p>	
“Buy a gadget and you will donate the park to everyone”	47
<p>This interesting BP is aimed to facilitate “green” mobility and free-of-charge tours within the Appia Antica Regional Park (Italy) for senior citizens (over 65) and/or people with motor disabilities, through electric vehicles purchased and maintained with the income generated by the selling to the visitors of gadgets and souvenirs. The claim used by the Park was “Buy a gadget and you will donate the park to everyone”.</p>	
"Cose Mai Viste"/ "Unbelievable things" A program of activities and initiatives for visitors and citizens	48
<p>"Unbelievable things" is a program of diversified cultural and entertainment activities widespread to the whole Castelli Romani Regional Park territory, targeted to a wide range of beneficiaries, with the direct involvement of local groups and associations in the planning/ design process of initiatives: 300 to 400 events and 7.000 to 10.000 participants every year, economic benefit (between direct and indirect incomes) ranging from 80.000 to 150.000€. The program also performs the function of maintaining a collaborative and close relation with the local community that has been useful for several delicate steps of the participatory construction of park's management plan.</p>	

3

The lessons learned

The main objective of this analysis was to highlight the strengths of some international eco-tourism best practices. To achieve this goal, the MEET project partnership has collected, analyzed and shared quantitative and qualitative information of 60 cases in the world with very diverse context conditions (e.g. small local initiatives and big programs, experiences newly activated and consolidated cases, etc.)

Indeed, although there are some external factors related to the political, cultural and socio-economical environment, which may affect the success of eco-tourism development, there are many others related to the internal organization of the eco-tourism product/activity that may impact positively and that can be deduced from such best practice analysis.

Looking to the external factors for instance, one of the ways to limit the associated risk relies on a careful assessment of the **consistency** and linkage of any initiative **with the local/national policy and legal framework**

(tourism or eco-tourism policies and plans, resource management plans, rural development plans, protected area plans, economic strategies, etc.) **and the market environment**. This approach can ensure the synergy of the initiative with the policy and economic context and at the same time bring a greater political support by local governments.

Regarding the internal factors, there is a wider operating space, but also in this case, the variables of success are so many that it is possible to propose only some suggestions

The **co-management** and **co-operation** for example are among the most common factors of success. The Integrated Crossborder Plan «Cross-border space Maritime Mercantour: natural and cultural diversity at the heart of sustainable and integrated development» (07) is a known success story: it is an integrated plan resulting from a twenty-year cooperation between the two trans-boundary protected areas in Italy and France which resulted, among the others, in the promotion of a

single, shared cross-border eco-tourism product (the Grand Tour Maritime Mercantour). The plan was followed, recently, by the joint subscription of an EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation), the joint (the first case in Europe) renovation of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism and the joint implementation, from 2013, of an ALCOTRA project called “I Parchi naturali delle Alpi meridionali s’impegnano per l’ecoturismo” (The Natural Parks of the Southern Alps undertake for eco-tourism).

Co-management was also the pillar of many community-based tourism practices, such as the Makuleke Ecotourism Project – Parufi Camp in Kruger National Park (22) where Pafuri Camp is a three-way partnership between community landowners (the Makuleke community through the Makuleke Communal Property Association - CPA), a private enterprise (Wilderness Safaris), and the state (South Africa National Parks - Kruger National Park).

Another example is the Collaborative Reef Conservation Program – Wakatobi Protected Area (31), a program developed by the Wakatobi Dive Resort, a private body, located in the marine National Park in the south of Sulawesi island in Indonesia, which was already active in Wakatobi prior to the establishment of the national park in 1996 and which plays an important role in Wakatobi tourism. The private body takes care of conservation activities in line with the principles set down with the establishment of the park.

One of the most crucial aspects of co-management is the sharing of objectives to be achieved, sometimes being also translated into a cost-sharing (that should otherwise depend upon individual bodies), contributing to a general optimization

of the Park governance. In this regard the experience of monitoring in the BP named Community Based trail Monitoring (CBM) as a mechanism for capacity and partnership building in Shih-pan Trail in Lin-mei (59) is an effective example of it.

Some tips for actual implementation!

The co-management, in general, requires coordinated action and direct involvement of all interested stakeholders (municipal governments, local communities, tour operators, accommodations, restaurants, protected areas, conservation organizations, transportation authorities, etc.). The success of a project idea depends on the **commitment of all the stakeholders** and on their capacity to work together in a “working group”, for instance, created and facilitated by the Park managers. Therefore the first step, after the definition of the project idea (based for instance on a review on natural and cultural asset, accessibility and facilities to support the attractions), is to involve key stakeholders identifying their respective roles in the project; a methodological tool to do this is represented by the “**stakeholders analysis**”.

Together with the relevant stakeholders, through a **participatory methodology** made of public meetings, workshops, agreements, individual consultations and the establishment of a supervisory board, the working group can clear up and build a product able to assure future participation and empowerment.

Also the **integration across different sectors** is a relevant element. For example the BP Vanuatu: Island Bungalows Private-Public Partnership (Vanuatu Safaris Air Pass) (28) refers to the development of a new product of island bungalows for Vanuatu’s tourism industry, established thanks to the linkage between

different private commercial sectors: the Vanuatu's regional airline, island bungalow managers, travel agents and wholesalers, local tour operators, and international funding agencies. Without these linkages, the mechanisms to provide bungalow owners with continued support and improvements in product quality, business skills, management and customer service skills training and marketing would not be possible. This best practice teaches how important it is to look to different sectors as elements of a unique tourism system

Some tips for actual implementation!

The integration across different sectors should **be considered at the beginning of the process**, by the relevant stakeholders, who can definitely foster this aspect if tackled in the early stage of the product definition.

Both the BPs Integrating Business Skills in Ecotourism Operations (35) and Guides of National Parks and Recreation Areas (55) show how **capacity building** is able to improve the **quality in tourism**: the first one by increasing the quality in the management of eco-tourism related businesses thanks to the training of conservation organizations; the second one by improving the quality in the eco-tourism interpretation thanks to the establishment of a national register of "Ecoguides" whose skills are certified.

The infrastructure **re-use** issue is not a new idea and is consistent with the eco-tourism principles of conservation and sustainability. It is totally in line with the reduction of energy consumption,

energy savings, etc.. The re-use issue has found at least two interesting examples among this BPs review: Bed & Bunkers (09) and Greenway in Liguria (20). The first BP aims to combine cultural heritage and tourism, reconverting former military Albanians bunkers in facilities for tourists, while the second concerns the creation of greenways for tourists – as the green corridors for the wildlife – with the recovery of disused transport infrastructures (i.e. the railways) in Liguria Region (Italy). Here, former stations have also been interested by the logic of re-use and have been considered for hotels/ hostels, free sports facilities, gardens and parking.

Some tips for actual implementation!

The **adaptive re-use** It is described as a "process by which structurally sound older buildings are developed for economically viable new uses". The re-use is a way to:

- protect historically significant buildings from demolition, if historical buildings are concerned;
- to reduce major costs and wastes (also in terms of land use), if it concerns buildings in general and transport infrastructures.

A cultural and natural asset review should be done together with an inventory of disused building and infrastructure, in order to determine which could be the object of an adaptive reuse project. Ideally, conservative architects should be involved to define the concept and design the plan of the restoration and rehabilitation plans.

About the **innovation** trends it is well recognized that tourism has been and will be one of the most impacted economic sectors by **ICT** innovations, because the latter help to facilitate and improve the visit of tourists, in terms of organization but also under the **experiential aspect**, and at the same time they are a key tool in solving a range of global challenges in the monitoring and management aspects.

Several BPs show the effectiveness of ICT, though for different purposes:

- To give information to the visitors: “iCairn” *señalización virtual e interpretación del paisaje mediante realidad aumentada y geolocalización* (39) where through an App, visitors can identify routes, services and places of interest and can obtain the information for a consistent interpretation.
- To facilitate the accessibility and the enjoyment of disadvantaged people: E-WHITE (49) refers to a 2-km sensory

trail and an experimented application for Smartphone and tablets that works as a guidance and orientation system for blind people.

- To monitor species: Marine safe keeping & biodiversity (37) refers to an App which allows tourists and entrepreneurs to collaborate actively to the conservation action through the cataloguing of species they see during their visit. The application allows taking pictures, picking up the coordinates and a form to fill out interesting facts about the sighting conducted (author, date and description).
- To monitor visitors: the Community-based monitoring in Japan (59), in order to have a more updated and effective management of the trail, to move the monitoring task from the government agencies – perennially challenged by inadequate funding and staffing – to the local community, using a Public Participatory Geography Information System (PPGIS).

Some tips for actual implementation!

Here are some key points for planning interpretive (experiential) tourism, extracted literally from “Nature and Outdoor Tourism Ontario” website¹⁴, considered relevant to this context:

- **Focus on your strengths** - base your product on what natural and cultural resources you have that others don't have.
- **Plan all stages of the project** in detail before commencing, including marketing, product evaluation and redevelopment. Plan for and monitor budgets tightly.
- **Be very clear about what you want to achieve** - profit, local employment, community pride and involvement, and conservation of the resource.
- **Consult and involve the local community.**
- **Take the time to do the project well.** Do not rush the stages of consultation and product development. Innovation does not happen overnight.
- **Know your target audience.** Plan and tailor the product to the consumer's needs and perspectives. Undertake market research.
- **Interpretation should be fun, encourage involvement, stimulate the senses, and pose a challenge.** Plan all activities to reflect a strong theme.
- **Choose methods that involve and engage the senses.** Face to face interpretation is the most effective.
- **Be cautious with technology.** Can you afford it and do you need it?
- **Collaborate with experts.** Expertise may be found within your local community.
- **Train the interpretative team to ensure consistency of product and messages.**

¹⁴ http://noto.ca/info_for_your_business/experiential_tourism

As already mentioned, ICT contributes substantially to the **experiential component of tourism** (the informal learning resulting from exploration, experience, gaming, etc.), now considered to be essential for the active involvement of the tourists. This is the case of The Pollino People Experience (26) which

promotes the Protected Area through **quality stories** and the descriptions (in the web and using an App) of the places by the people who live and work there. It is to emphasize that the quality in this case is conveyed by the **authenticity** of this promotional strategy.

Here some standards for experiential tourism extracted from the quoted website:

1. People create meaning through direct experience.
2. The experience includes the people met, the places visited, the activities participated in and the memories created.
3. The experience includes pre-departure trip planning and post-trip follow-up.
4. Experiential tourism draws people into local nature, culture and history.
5. Experiential tourism is low impact, low volume, and high yield.
6. Experiential tourism is very personal, unique and individual for each visitor.
7. Quality, memorable visitor experiences are a shared outcome between the visitor and the experience provider.
8. Experiential tourism opportunities allow for personal growth and reflect the values and interests of the individual visitor.
9. Experiential tourism provides diverse experiences that match the visitor's interests and provide a sense of personal accomplishment, thereby creating their own unique memories.
10. The desired outcome of experiential tourism is to achieve a complete participatory experience that provides new knowledge and authentic experiences.
11. Experiential tourism opportunities encourage the meeting and coming together of different cultures, their problems and potential.
12. Cultural elements are shared in an atmosphere of traditional ways of life.
13. Experiential tourism shows rather than describes.
14. Experiential tourism opportunities expand personal horizons.
15. Experiential tourism opportunities should provide personal enrichment, enlightenment, stimulation, and engagement as motivators.
16. Experiential tourism attracts people to places.
17. Experiential tourism attracts markets to merchandise.
18. Experiential tourism engages all five senses.
19. Experiential tourism opportunities include learning a new skill or engaging in a new activity.
20. Experiential tourism includes "the story of the place."

Many BPs refer to **natural or cultural routes** that encourage the creation of widespread economic and social benefits for local communities living on the route. Routes offer an opportunity for the dialogue between the stakeholders located on the route (towns, institutions, entrepreneurs, cultural and natural management bodies, etc.), but also a chance of economic and employment development. Routes can relocate tourist flows in mass tourism areas,

advance cultural understanding of local population, increase overall attractiveness of the destinations, raise awareness of a common cultural/natural heritage, etc.

La Ruta del Jengibre - The Ginger Trail (19), Greenway in Liguria (20), The Waitukubuli National Trail - «Discover Nature for Heritage Development» (30), Culinarium Österreich (14), show all the potentialities of a natural and/or cultural itinerary.

Some tips for actual implementation!

The planning process of cultural and natural routes should:

- start **from a strongly territorial theme, representative and from the identification of the context** in which the itinerary stands;
- clearly **identify stakeholders** to involve, especially those that operate on the route;
- follow a **participative process**;
- formalize the partnership with the stakeholders of the route by signing a **specific agreement on the cultural/natural route**;
- **evaluate the marketability** of the route **through** a review of the **tourist offer** that includes a **careful and geo-referenced analysis** of facilities, accommodations, restoration points, transport system, and natural and cultural attractions that could increase the tourism value of the route itself;
- **fill the gaps** encountered in the tourist offer analysis through a specific operative plan (e.g. as regards the road signs);
- **plan a communication and marketing strategy.**

As a conclusion: What are the outcomes of this survey on existing BPs? Which is the added value of this work for the MEET Project? What is the “direction for the future” that the analyzed BPs show us?

The authors deem that such survey on some of the most interesting Best Practices around the world has shown that several decades of experimenting ecotourism within (or close to) Protected Areas confirm few but important things:

1. since ecotourism looks for natural (and connected cultural) assets, an effectively managed Protected Area could be in principle the best hotspot for such economic activity;
2. since tourism (and ecotourism too) can be an “extractive” activity – i.e. can consume/damage the capital constituting the main attraction – the importance of an effective governance of the tourism flows within the destination is crucial;
3. parks are created for conservation, but they cannot avoid that people come and visit the territory: they can “defend” the natural assets from such pressure or they can try to “govern” it in order to reduce as

much as possible its impact and to gain the maximum, both in terms of financial incomes and local community support;

4. eco-tourists can not only financially benefit the Park and the local community, but also contribute to conservation goals (in monitoring, trail restoration, birdlife banding, etc.);
5. ecotourism can become a source of Park “friends”, where the latter bring home not only a good souvenir of the trip, but also a strong commitment in continuing to support the Park’s goals.

Therefore the Pilot Actions developed within the MEET project taken advantage of the strengths of the analyzed Best Practices, implementing partially or totally their innovative elements.

The main assumption – and it is based on a combination of the lessons learned from the BPs analysis – is that there is the need of a new paradigm in the conservation policy, where the protection of biodiversity (habitats, species, traditional culture, etc.) and its capitalization meet in a planned and integrated way.

MEET
project
partners



Murgia di Sant Oronzo, Appennian Lucan National Park - Italy
© Egidio Lofrano

Lead Partner **Federparchi** **Europarc Italy**

The “Italian Federation of Parks and Nature Reserves” joins over 160 bodies managing national and regional parks, marine PAs, regional and State nature reserves. Founded in 1989, it is a member of the IUCN and Secretariat of the Italian IUCN Committee. Since June 2008 Federparchi has also been the Italian representative in the Europarc Federation. Federparchi represents the Italian PAs before the State, Regions, Local Authorities, European Union, and any other public or private body interested in the aims of the association.

Since its foundation, Federparchi has worked hard for the enforcement of the national parks system and pays particular attention to integration and coordination policies – from the largest national park to the smallest local reserve – in the name of a fair collaboration among the various levels of territorial government. The creation of a country-wide ecological network (aimed at integrating PAs in the territorial planning) is one of Federparchi’s main goals, together with a “National Fund for Biodiversity”,

which has recently been established.

Concerning ecotourism, the main field of activity is the dissemination of the “European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas - ECST” (www.european-charter.org), which is a certification process (managed by Europarc Federation) of the tourism management system of a park.

The main aim of the ECST is to improve nature conservation and sustainable development through the management of tourism in PAs, taking into account the needs of the environment, local residents, local businesses and visitors. The approach is based on “participation”, i.e. all the concerned stakeholders are invited to take part in the planning process and to cooperate with the park authority in the action plan implementation, following 10 principles on sustainability, responsibility and accountability. At June 2015, there are more than 130 European parks that earned ECST certification, of which 30 are in Italy.



*In the foreground the Museum of flowers and in the background the Castle of Torre Alfina,
Monterufeno nature reserve - Italy
© Filippo Belisario*

Project partner 1

Lazio Region

Lazio Region is the regional government of Lazio, one of the 20 administrative regions into which Italy is divided. Lazio is located in the centre of Italy and ranks third in the country for number of inhabitants (5.6 million), eighth in terms of overall surface area (17,207 Km²) and second for contribution to the national gross domestic product (170 billion Euros).

Lazio Region plans and coordinates the regional economic development policies and is also responsible for the health care, education and environmental systems. In particular, it plans and implements activities in the field of territory enhancement and tourism promotion and carries out tourism development research, analysis, monitoring and evaluation activities. Lazio region's tourism policy, set out in the "Regional Tourism Plan", is inspired by criteria of environmental, cultural and social sustainability with a particular attention to safeguarding the cultural identities of the local communities. One of the main concerns of Lazio Region is to foster a better redistribution through time and space of the tourism flows, thus avoiding

high season positive peaks and low season negative peaks. This goal is to be achieved mainly through a diversification and addition of new tourism products. The "Regional Tourism Plan" has identified a group of possible touristic branches which have not yet been fully exploited. These include ecological tourism (nature, protected areas etc.) and the so called "widespread hospitality" (ospitalità diffusa or albergo diffuso) which is based on the restoration/revitalization of small and isolated villages with the aim of supporting high quality touristic accommodation and activities.

With regards to MEET, Lazio Region - which over the years has participated in many projects financed by EU Programmes (Interreg IVC, Programme Med, URBACT 2, Life Programme, 7th Framework Programme, ENPI CBC Med) - coordinates the Work Package 3 dedicated to the capitalization of the results of the project and is involved in Work Packages 1 (Management and coordination), 2 (Communication), 4 (Methods & Tools), 5 (Pilot actions), 6 (MEET secretariat and network) and 7 (Marketing).





Project partner 2

National Parks of France (PNF)

The Law of 14 April 2006 led to the establishment of the public sector enterprise « National Parks of France », a national public enterprise of an administrative nature under the supervision of the Minister for the Protection of the Environment.

The purpose of « National Parks of France » is to create a link between the public enterprises of the national parks, reinforce their common culture, contribute to the quality of their management, and promote them on national and international levels. The 10 national parks grouped within « National Parks of France », are part of the cultural identity of the nation just like the most prestigious cultural facilities. They represent a very strong symbolic value to the public. In 2013 there are ten national parks: Vanoise (1963), Port-Cros (1963), Pyrénées (1967), Cévennes (1970), Ecrins (1973), Mercantour (1979), Guadeloupe (1989), Réunion Island (2007), French Guiana (2007), Calanques (2012).

They are internationally recognized as exceptional territories and offer a combination of remarkable terrestrial and maritime areas as well as a method of governance and management that enables

them to conserve their richness.

The national parks cover various terrestrial and maritime domains that represent approximately 9, 5% of the French territory (60,728 km²). Every year they attract more than 8.5 million visitors.

Sustainable tourism strategy:
The network of 10 French National Parks, under the coordination of the public institution National Parks of France organizes its thinking around four operational priorities:

- The implementation of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (ECST)
- Monitoring attendance and flow of visitors to national parks.
- Identification of ecotourism experience through mobilization of various support systems
- Welcoming and allowing public access to nature discovery through the development of infrastructure and tools including adaptation of facilities for disabled individuals.

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Project partner 3

MedPAN Network of Marine Protected Area Managers in the Mediterranean

Since 1990, the MedPAN network has brought together the managers of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and has supported them in their management activities. Since 2008, the MedPAN network aims to promote, through a partnership approach, the sustainability and operation of a network of marine protected areas in the Mediterranean which are ecologically representative, connected, and effectively managed to help reduce the current rate of marine biodiversity loss.

In 2014 the network is composed of 53 members and 29 partners from 18 Mediterranean countries representing more than half of the MPAs existing in the Mediterranean. The MedPAN network exists through the action and involvement of its members and partners including UNEP/MAP/RAC/SPA, WWF, IUCN Med, the Conservatoire du Littoral, ACCOBAMS, the French Marine Protected Areas Agency or the GFCM.

The network has developed its 2013-2017 strategy that revolves around 3 strategic axes:

- Be a network for knowledge, information, anticipation and synthesis,
- Reinforce the vitality of the network, the interactivity between members and build their capacity for an effective management of MPAs with stakeholders,
- Reinforce the MedPAN network's sustainability, prominence, governance and resources.

Activities are implemented by the MedPAN organization or its members and partners in a spirit of cooperation and complementarity. These activities are in line with the scientific strategy, the capacity building strategy and the communication strategy of the network. Key activities include the development of MAPAMED, the database of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas in collaboration with RAC/SPA, the publication every 4 years of the status of MPAs in the Mediterranean, the setup of experience exchange activities, the support of small projects in Mediterranean MPAs, and the organization every 4 years of a Mediterranean MPA forum.

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Project partner 4

Cataluña Region

Cataluña is one of the autonomous communities of Spain located in the northeast of the Iberian Peninsula. It has a population of 7.5 million and an area of 32,000 square kilometers, from the Pyrenees, with altitudes over 3,000m, to the Mediterranean coastline. Barcelona is its principal city and Spanish and Catalan are the official languages.

Sixty percent of the surface area of Cataluña is made up of forests, a large part of which are privately owned. Industry, tourism (with 20 million visitors a year) and services are the main economic sectors in Cataluña.

The Natural Protected Areas Service is responsible for planning and management of protected areas. A team of more than 200 people work together, most of them "in situ", in each protected area, and a few in the central service, in Barcelona. The system of protected areas in Cataluña is based on a network of 165 sites of special ecological value protected under the Plan for Areas of Natural Interest (PEIN).

The PEIN network was established by Law 121985/, and includes a wide variety of habitats, from coastal plains to Euro-Siberian forests, covering an area equal

to 30% of the Catalan territory (the areas forming part of the Nature 2000 Network are integrated into the PEIN).

Within these sites, the so-called natural areas of special protection receive additional protection under the designation of the following categories (the number of each indicated in brackets): national park (1), Natural Park (12), natural site of national interest (7) and nature reserve (60). Most of the nature reserves and some natural sites of national interest are inside a natural park, so that there are parks with different levels of protection for each area.

The natural areas of special protection have management teams and basic services to direct management with the guideline of the central service.

- The basic aim is to make the conservation of natural values compatible with the socio-economic development of the area and we work in three strategic lines: Heritage conservation
- Improvement of socio-economic development
- Planning and management of social-economic activities



Ecotourism in Plitvice National Park - Croatia
© Carla Danelutti



Project partner 5

IUCN

Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN-Med)

The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is the world's oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 1,200 government and NGO members and almost 11,000 volunteer experts in some 160 countries. IUCN's work is supported by over 1,000 staff in 45 offices and hundreds of partners in public, NGO and private sectors around the world.

The mission of the IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation (IUCN-Med) is to influence, encourage and assist Mediterranean societies in achieving both the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, and sustainable development. IUCN has 194 members in the Mediterranean region, and around 1000 members in the six IUCN commissions of experts. IUCN-Med was opened in October 2001 with the core support of the Spanish Ministry of Environment, the regional Government of Junta de Andalucía and the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development (AECID).

IUCN-Med had been involved in different activities on sustainable tourism issues, directed at tour operators and the general public. Significant examples are:

- Workshops on sustainable tourism developed inside the Azahar program;
- Training courses at the Universidad Autónoma de Andalucía about PAs;
- Working groups over Red-list development;
- Agreement with the chamber of Commerce of Malaga on sustainable tourism. For further info click on My hotel in action
- Implementation of an ecotourism plan in Talassemntane protected area in Morocco and in Jbel Zaghouan Protected area in Tunisia.

IUCN Med's role in MEET project is the coordination of the whole work package, which involves 6 activities, mainly related with the promotion and capitalization of project results through the establishment of a Network for ecotourism and protected areas at Mediterranean level, and the coordination of terrestrial ecotourism pilot actions in protected areas of Tunisia, included in Work Package 5, in cooperation with national authorities.

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Chalet in Ajloun Reserve - Jordan
© Royal society for conservation of Nature

Project partner 7

Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN)

RSCN is an independent non-government organization. It was established in 1966 under the patronage of His Majesty the late King Hussein, and given the responsibility by the Jordanian Government to protect the Kingdom's natural heritage. As a result of its pioneering integration of conservation programs with socio-economic development, RSCN has achieved international recognition. RSCN has 7 PAs, covering over 1000 square kilometers. RSCN's Mission:

“RSCN will create, manage and advocate for a national network of protected areas to conserve Jordan's biodiversity and support local community development, while promoting wider public support and action for the protection of the natural environment within Jordan and neighboring countries.” The RSCN accomplishes its roles and objectives in managing Jordan's natural resources and protecting the country's biodiversity by:

- Establishing and managing protected areas to safeguard Jordan's most

important habitats and ecosystems.

- Running captive breeding programs to save endangered species from extinction.
- Conducting research to provide a scientific basis for conservation programs.
- Enforcing governmental laws to protect wildlife and control illegal hunting.
- Raising awareness on environmental issues.
- Supporting the socio-economic development of rural communities.
- Providing training and capacity building for environmental practitioners and other institutions throughout Jordan and the Middle East.
- Encouraging public participation in RSCN's nature activities through membership, events, and activities.
- Promoting public action for environmental protection through advocacy campaigns and activities.



Snowshoeing inside the cedar forest - Lebanon
© Shouf Biosphere Reserve



Project partner 8

Al-Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve

(Shouf Biosphere Reserve)

The largest of Lebanon's nature reserves, Al-Shouf Cedar Nature Reserve stretches from Dahr Al-Baidar in the north to Niha Mountain in the south. It is blanketed with oak forests on its northeastern slopes and juniper and oak forests on its southeastern slopes. However, the reserve's most famous attractions are its three magnificent cedar forests of Maasser Al-Shouf, Barouk and AinZhalta/Bmohary. These Cedar forests account for a quarter of the remaining cedar forest in Lebanon, and some trees are estimated to over 1,000 years old.

The Shouf Cedar Reserve has a vision as a world class Biosphere Reserve where natural and cultural heritage are conserved, resources are treated as wealth, investment receives due care, and development is controlled by citizens, businesses, and the managing authority. It has the following objectives:

- Taking care of the capital
- Empowering the management team
- Supporting the shareholders
- Putting the Shouf Biosphere Reserve on the global map

The Shouf Cedar Reserve organizes and monitors various important programs: research and monitoring, rural development, environmental awareness, capacity building and ecotourism. The link between tourism and protected areas is becoming more important as tourism activities are relying more on natural heritage combined with cultural heritage in supporting conservation initiatives. Ecotourism is a field that is very dependent on effective and efficient planning.

There are a number of walking trails in the Reserve extending over 250km.. Visitors can enjoy short, medium, and long trails, and to insure that every individual will have the opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the Shouf Cedar Reserve a 300 meter trail is developed for people with special needs (handicapped, blind, old, etc...) In the Shouf Biosphere Reserve also offers biking, snowshoeing (in winter), cultural tours in the villages, local festivals, delicious traditional food, exhibitions of rural products, and an overnight stay in any of the guest houses in the villages near the Reserve.

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Wadi Rum protected area - Jordan
© Lubna Qaryouti June 2015



Project partner 9

IUCN ROWA (Regional Office for West Asia)

The IUCN West Asian region comprises of 13 countries including Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and Iran in addition to the Gulf countries including Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. West Asia is part of three eco-regions that incorporate a variety of ecosystems, including Mediterranean forests, deserts, plains, rangelands, savannas, oases, mountains, rivers, lakes, springs, mudflats, swamps, marshes, mangroves and coral reefs. All of which provide a wide array of ecosystem services and ecological corridors for migratory species through the region.

IUCN Regional Office for West Asia aims to be active in all 13 countries in various conservation and sustainable development activities. The critical issues facing the region are:

- Land degradation, aridity and desertification
- Unsustainable water extraction and use
- Biodiversity and habitat loss, and species extinction.
- Threats to sensitive marine ecosystems through pollution, habitat destruction, Invasive Alien Species, and unplanned coastal development.

IUCN ROWA's role is to coordinate activities within four major themes in the overall region; Water & Climate Change, Protected Areas & Biodiversity, Dry lands & Livelihoods, and finally Marine & Coastal Zone Management. Other cross cutting issues that also include gender mainstreaming and natural resource management are also major issues IUCN ROWA works on. This comes as a challenge since environmental priorities are intimately associated with poverty, equity, security and conflict. Therefore, mainstreaming conservation efforts with the development agenda becomes very crucial. IUCN ROWA's mandate is to work supportively and in collaboration with our members and partners in the region that include NGOs and governments, to achieve a new paradigm for sustainable development based on the concept of people centered development.

Its role also is to share critical conservation knowledge with all members and partners and currently focus on providing services which brings added value to the ongoing activities, while also building awareness of the West Asia region and its special strengths. For more information about IUCN ROWA http://www.iucn.org/about/union/secretariat/offices/rowa/rowa_about/

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*Cedar tree planted for the MEET project
© Shouf Biosphere Reserve*



Lead partner



Project partners

