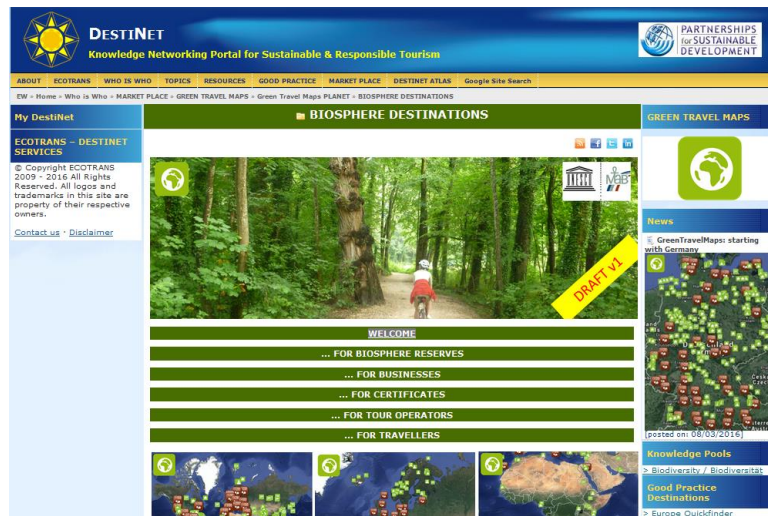


To: UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe, Venice (Italy)

From: Herbert Hamele, Ecotrans e.V., Saarbrücken/Germany

Date: June 09th, 2016

Subject: “Biosphere Destinations” Initiative



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (1/2 page): summary of the findings of the report, the conclusions and the recommendations.

The idea for the “Biosphere Destinations” (BD) Initiative has been a side result of the ST+20 conference end November 2015 in Vitoria Gasteiz/Basque Country (Spain). Representatives of UNESCO Biosphere, La Palma BR, Institute for Responsible Tourism and Ecotrans agreed to form a partnership on helping Biosphere Reserves worldwide to become “**Biosphere Destinations**” (potential brand name).

Herbert Hamele (ECOTRANS) was invited to the 4 WCBR to present the BD initiative to the audience, to build contacts and to exchange with representatives of BRs, to give input, to exchange ideas and to get familiar with the Lima Action Plan. Herbert Hamele presented a Green Travel Maps system for Biosphere Destinations world wide with demo versions online for 2 BR in Europe as pilot destinations: Bliesgau BR (Germany) and La Palma BR (Spain).

The feedback on the presentation was very positive. Extra meetings could be arranged with representatives of different BRs (e.g. Philippines, Germany, Peru). Based on the tourism workshop contribution on sustainable tourism around UNESCO WHS the WHS representative Peter Debrine and Herbert Hamele stated that the Green Travel Maps and Biosphere Destinations approach could also be very helpful to support sustainable tourism development in the destinations with WHSs.

Herbert Hamele put together a draft set of next steps and milestones. A follow up meeting should take place soon in Paris at the UNESCO MAP office to develop a roadmap based on the Lima results for the further development and implementation of “Biosphere Destinations”.

REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION (1/2 page): background information and context.

The idea for the “Biosphere Destinations” (BD) Initiative has been a side result of the ST+20 conference end November 2015 in Vitoria Gasteiz/Basque Country (Spain). Representatives of UNESCO Biosphere, La Palma BR, Institute for Responsible Tourism and Ecotrans agreed to form a partnership on helping Biosphere Reserves worldwide to become “**Biosphere Destinations**” (potential brand name).

“The partnership shall

- 1. Develop and agree on a common concept (objectives, partners roles, work programme, milestones, timetable, finance)*
- 2. Realise the global BD concept in following phases*
 - a. 2016: 10 pilot BR in Europe (ES, DE, FR, IT, ?)*
 - b. 2017: more in Europe (ongoing), 10 in other global regions*
 - c. 2018 - 2020: more worldwide (ongoing)*
- 3. Identify the pilot destinations in collaboration with the national MAB agencies*
- 4. Identify the green proofs in the countries and invite them to support/join the partnership*
- 5. identify the users of the Green Travel Maps (local to national marketing organisations, tour operators, booking services, and invite them to support/join the partnership*
- 6. monitor and periodically report the results to the BR and national agencies and involve them in the reflection and improvement of the approach.”*

(See Annex 1)

Based on that idea ECOTRANS started to draft a “Biosphere Destinations” mapping system on DestiNet.eu, collecting and mapping the data from the La Palma BR (Canary Islands/Spain) as second pilot BR from Europe. This draft mapping system should be presented at the 4 WCBR tourism work shop in Lima.

2. OBJECTIVES (1/2 page): overall goals of the events/meetings, purpose of the participation, specific objectives of the involvement, other expectations.

The tourism workshop at the 4WCBR in Lima should support the exchange of new initiatives and good practice examples for sustainable tourism development in BRs in different parts of the world and show their (potential) contribution to the development goals in the BRs. The participation of Herbert Hamele (ECOTRANS) as international expert for sustainable tourism and co-initiator of the BD initiative should introduce him into the “world of BRs” and allow to build contacts and to exchange with representatives of BRs, to give input, to exchange ideas and to get familiar with the Lima Action Plan.

The presentation of the BD initiative shall raise the “Awareness” at participants for the topic and create “Interest” in joining. The feedback and discussions shall be used for the follow up of the BD initiative after the 4WCBR. The follow up then shall lead to a roadmap with the ambition to expand the “Attention” and “Interest” at BRs worldwide, to stimulate their “Decision” to join the BD initiative and in consequence to engage them for “Action” (A.I.D.A.). With other words: to update, specify and realise the idea for the BD initiative of December 2015 (Annex 1).

3. **FINDINGS** (2.5 - 3 pages): including also your inputs provided to the Plenary and/or selected Workshops/Side Events and contributions to the specific discussions.

Based on the BD background and workshop objectives Herbert Hamele had exchanged with La Palma BR/Spain (director Antonio San Blas) and Bliesgau BR (chair of BR Association Dr. Theophil Gallo) and agreed to present both BRs as “starters” of the BD Initiative in Europe. Both representatives participated at the tourism workshop in Lima. Herbert Hamele presented the BD initiative and the Green Travel Maps approach in the global context (see ppt in Annex 2):

a)Introduction

The common vision and mission of BRs and tourism can be summarized as „In future our main concern will no longer be whether we can travel to every place on earth. Our main interest will be whether it is worthwhile arriving there.“ (German poet Hermann Löns, 1908). Since 1993 ECOTRANS as European network for sustainable tourism development has developed a range of tools along the main topics for sustainable tourism development from research to market place and supports the global knowledge networking through its independent DestiNet.eu online platform. The “Green Travel Maps” on DestiNet have been designed to help destinations in managing and continuously raising the green market share of their tourism.

b) Green Travel Maps: A global market place for responsible and sustainable tourism

Travelers want greener travel, destinations are responding by offering more sustainable visitor experiences, and more than 100 certificates and labels can help you choose between what's green and what's green-washed... The *Green Travel Maps* on DestiNet bring destinations and certificates together, mapping eco-certified businesses and destinations, providing transparency on their green proofs, and supporting destinations in managing, monitoring and marketing their green offer.

c)Pilot Country Germany

Germany Travel and regional and local destination management organisations are using the Travel Green Germany map as a planning tool and source for the development and expansion of green travel experiences. Their starting map has been pre-filled by partnering certificates and labels, all businesses are linked to the profile of their green proof. Destinations inform their businesses about green certificates and labels along the tourism supply chain. They can add local and regional certificates to the list of choices and map their underlying responsible businesses and services.

d) A partnership for sustainable development

Green Travel Maps is a DestiNet.eu partnership contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals 2030, i.e. Goal 12: Ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns. Ecotrans as not-for-profit NGO manages the DestiNet platform as UN registered "Partnership for Sustainable Development".

e)Green Travel Maps as central tool for “Biosphere Destinations”

Green Travel Maps help Biosphere Reserves as destinations in mapping, monitoring and marketing their sustainable tourism offer. In concrete the maps bring the destination managers, the businesses and services in the destinations, the green certification programmes and their certified tourism together, they provide transparency & easy access to local, regional, national and international green certificates and awards available to tourism in each destination, they give visibility and support market access of the green offer as “the better choice” to business partners (e.g. tour operators, travel agents, booking services, and finally to the travelers. And: they provide all stakeholders in the territories of the biosphere reserves the necessary information to see what there already is and what progress is made in making tourism more sustainable and a strong partner in achieving the BR development objectives.

f) Example Bliesgau BR

The example of the Bliesgau BR was presented by Dr. Gallo as political administrator of the region and as chair of the Bliesgau BR association:

The Bliesgau BR is characterized by its rich biodiversity & industrial heritage. It is the only BR with a city in its territory due to the strong and over centuries long lasting city & countryside relation

Following recent steps for making tourism in the Bliesgau destination more sustainable form part of the overall development goals in the Bliesgau BR: tourism is a thematic priority to support sustainable regional development

- The biosphere bus is the longest bus route of Saarland with about 54 km. It connects the villages in the rural region of the Bliesgau with the cities Homburg and Blieskastel and ensures therefore an eco-friendly mobility. The biosphere bus connects numerous leisure experiences, shopping experiences and natural experiences seven days a week, from morning to night. In three stops it is connected with the railway line.
- The "raft of sustainability" is a 2-day offer with an edutainment character which is offered since 2013 several times a year. The project makes the abstraction of the sustainability for guests experienceable: Adults and children (in the family circle or circle of friends) learn together the handling with the wood, build a raft by one's own hand, go on "big journey" and plant young trees as a compensation for the timber harvesting.
- The trained nature and landscape guides show the guests the specifics of the biosphere reserve Bliesgau. They offer tours with different subjects: nature, culture, art, agriculture, geology or relaxation.
- The partner initiative is a cooperation between the biosphere association, enterprises, service providers and private individuals. The aim is to push together a sustainable touristic development and to enable an additional benefit for guests and customers. Our biosphere reserve partners present themselves as an ambassador of the biosphere reserve, high-class suppliers, especially eco-friendly and sustainable, local involved and motivated. They are distinguished with the official partner logo, are integrated into a partner network and are included actively in the nationwide communication of the network of the partner initiatives in Germany. There are partners in the following categories: nature and landscape guides, agricultural producers and food-processing companies, touristic service providers, gastronomy and hotel industry, holiday flats and guesthouses and education and experience.

g) First pilot "Biosphere Destinations" on DestiNet

Herbert Hamele presented online a draft internal demo version of the [Green Travel Maps of "Biosphere Destinations"](#) landing page and the La Palma BR as European pilot example.

h) Biosphere Destination La PalmaBR

The island of La Palma in Spain is an excellent case to demonstrate how sustainable tourism can be developed, monitored and brought to the market.

- Since many years the BR administration (director: Antonio San Blas) has implemented and is running an integrated "sustainable development observatory" including indicators for tourism

- The LaPalma BR administration is operating the „Club de Producto Turístico Reservas de Biosfera Españolas – Reserva Mundial de la Biosfera La Palma” which is in line with the National standard for tourism businesses and services in BRs in Spain and which reflects the importance of tourism on La Palma: "Tourism in La Palma is one of the most important resources, and that's why La Palma Biosphere Reserve has been fostering different alternatives to promote a sustainable and responsible tourism with the island's environment. Moreover, all institutions in cooperation with the reserve philosophy through the Touristic Product Club of Spanish Reserves have been aimed to be promoted and recognized."
- More than 250 accommodations, restaurants, attractions, shopping, information intermediaries are members of the „Club“ and shown on the Green Travel Map La Palma. Beside the “club” other international certification programmes (a.a. ITR “Hoteles Biosferas”) have certified businesses or the whole island as a green destination.

See: [Green Travel Map La Palma BR](#)

i) Future of “Biosphere Destinations”

It is expected that almost all BRs in the world can demonstrate with 100s of cases that and how tourism can be integrated with sustainable regional development. The Green Travel Maps as tool for Biosphere Destinations can help substantially all BRs in realising the Lima Action Plan 2025 and in contributing effectively to the SDG 2030.

4. **CONCLUSIONS** (1.5 - 2 pages): including also observations from the Congress and relevant workshop(s), including further utilization of gained information and knowledge considering different levels/perspectives – i.e. local/national/transboundary.

Feedback on presentation of the BD initiative

Herbert Hamele and Dr. Gallo (Bliesgau BR) disseminated more than 100 information papers to the participants at the workshop and during the congress to interested attendants. (Annex 3 and 4)

The feedback on the presentation was very positive. Extra meetings could be arranged with representative of different BRs (e.g. Philippines, Germany, Peru). Based on the tourism workshop contribution on sustainable tourism around UNESCO WHS the WHS representative Peter Debrine and Herbert Hamele stated that the Green Travel Maps and Biosphere Destinations approach could also be very helpful to support sustainable tourism development in the destinations with WHSs. A follow up meeting should take place soon in Paris to further discuss this idea.

BD Initiative supporting the Lima Action Plan

The BD initiative can contribute to many actions. The following list has been compiled as a initial draft, it is not exhaustive and shall be further developed and specified as part of a BD roadmap:

- A.1. BD as models to contribute to SDG
- A.1.5. Promote green initiatives inside BRs
- A.4. Research, practical learning, training
- A.4.4. Good practices
- C.4. Recognition as key partner by private sector
- C.4.2. Opportunities for collaboration
- C.6. Entrepreneurs contribute to BR activities
- C.6.1. Guidance and training
- C.8. Enhanced synergies between BRs
- C.8.1. Encourage joint promotion and marketing
- E.4. Effective functioning on ...thematic networks
- E.4.1. Plan: objectives, performance mechanism, timeframe
- E.4.2. Annual report

5. **RECOMMENDATIONS** (1-1.5 pages): including also a draft of the follow-up strategy for consequent actions in your country and respective BRs in the framework of the adopted new Action Plan for Biosphere Reserves 2016-2025. Furthermore, this draft shall contain (details shall be included in ANNEX):

- (i) involvement plan of key stakeholders,
- (ii) opportunities to create private/public partnerships,
- (iii) communication plan, *and*
- (iv) proposals of specific *in-situ* actions in transboundary and/or regional context.

Based on the positive feedback and the opportunities with the BD initiative the following recommendations are given:

Until June 2016 a roadmap shall be discussed and agreed and shall include a draft workplan, milestones, timeframe, cost and finance.

The road map shall also address the

- (i) involvement plan of key stakeholders,
- (ii) opportunities to create private/public partnerships,
- (iii) communication plan, *and*
- (iv) proposals of specific *in-situ* actions in transboundary and/or regional context.

Following steps and milestones are recommended as parts of the roadmap:

a) Mapping of BRs, starting communication

In 2016 the BD site on DestiNet shall be designed and implemented, all BRs shall be mapped, informed and invited to join the BD initiative.

b) DestiNet system adaption to WNBR needs, design, app, ...

In 2016 a group of BRs in Europe from different countries shall participate as pilot partners, language versions shall be developed in English, Spanish, French, German, perhaps Italian, from 2018 onwards other languages shall be available

In 2016 the GTM for BDs shall be established to serve B2B needs, in 2018 a B2C site/app shall follow

c) Establish a decision help for BR and tourism managers on green certificates per global regions (countries)

A “green proofs” decision help online shall be established in 2016 for all European countries with 50+ international and national green certification programmes for tourism businesses, services and destinations. In 2018 for all countries world wide and 100+ certificates.

d) Expand BDs with Green Travel Maps

In 2016 about 30 BRs shall be online with Green Travel Maps, 100 in 2018, 300 in 2020, 600+ /all BR in 2025.

e) Green tourism offer in BDs: businesses, services, producers

Until end 2016 the map of green tourism in BD shall show 2000 locations, in 2018 8000, in 2020 about 30.000 and in 2025 about 60.000 locations certified “green”.

The co-ordinator of the Tourism Workshop Philippe Pypaert (UNESCO MAB) and Herbert Hamele (ECOTRANS) agreed to meet soon at UNESCO MAB in Paris to outline the roadmap for “Biosphere Destinations”.

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Meeting note 27 Nov 2016: initial idea for “Biosphere Destinations”

Annex 2: Powerpoint presentation H.Hamele and Dr.T.Gallo at 4WCBD in Lima

Annex 3: Information sheet Green Travel Maps for “Biosphere Destinations”