

Project Title:**Discover Eco-Romania, a tool for nature conservation, local development and education**

ECOTRANS is providing technical support to [AER, Romania](#), with financial support from the German Environment Foundation.

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| Start: | 01-05-2014 |
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| Budget Ecotrans: | 28.400,00 € |

Summary

This project aims to bring additional values for nature conservation integrating it into a modern concept of ecotourism destination, where protected area administrations together with local municipalities and tourism businesses are in partnership. The main reason for the partnership will be to guide the whole micro-region towards sustainable development and to better use the protected areas for education and communication about the natural and cultural values of the destination for visitors.

The project has two main goals:

- **At the national level (project goal 1):** the network of at least 9 ecotourism destinations is recognised on the national and European level based on local responsible tourism products and sustainable and nature conservation practices that are part of the development process.
- **At the local pilot area (project goal 2):** Tara Dornelor – Calimani National Park becomes one of the leading ecotourism destinations in the Carpathians, where the protected area and its conservation policy acquire a social and economic value in the micro-regional development.

The main steps to reach the goals are framed into four work packages:

- **Work package 1:** Develop the network of nine ecotourism destinations in order to become the leading product of the Romanian tourism, by developing guidelines, training programmes for the National Tourism Authority staff, organising national ecotourism conference and media events.
- **Work package 2:** Increase the capacity within each destination for “green” operational and marketing performances, focussing on future destination managers, local businesses for improving their “green” performances and enlarging the access to effective green marketing.
- **Work package 3:** Develop the Calimani Visitor Centre integrating the indoor and outdoor components, based on a coherent concept, setting up the nature interpretation infrastructure and increasing the capacity of Park staff for communication and interpretation.
- **Work Package 4:** Set up tools for a functional partnership among the network of responsible local tourism businesses, the Tourism Information Centre and the Park Visitor Centre to become the driving force of the ecotourism destination. The activities from WP4 are enforcing the green management practices of the local tourism businesses and provide tools for cooperation, workshops for guesthouses, local tour operators, managers of Tourism Information Centre and Park Visitor Centres.

As a follow up, AER will continue working both at a national level with decision-making institutions and at a local level with our partners from each destination in order to improve the status and the effectiveness of ecotourism destinations. AER is already working on solutions to establish funding programmes for Destination Management Organizations (DMO) in each ecotourism destination. This will ensure long term development of these regions. Moreover, AER has a network of 55 members (most of them small-scale tour-operators or guesthouses) that are working all over Romania and especially in the nine micro-regions that are part of this proposal. Therefore, our efforts to develop ecotourism destinations in Romania is a long term process that will not finish with the ending of this project.

Regarding Tara Dornelor – Calimani ecotourism destination, our efforts to develop the area will continue by working with our partners and the NTA in establishing a Destination Management Organization (DMO). At the same time, the Calimani National Park Administration will use the interpretation infrastructure produced in this project in its efforts of communication with visitors and locals regarding the natural and cultural heritage of the area.

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