



European  
Ecotourism  
Network

EEN/ECOLNET

Newsletter

Issue 1

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EEN AND ECOLNET

## EETLS, the first standard to be recognized by the GSTC

by Gordon Sillence

This November, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC Council) announced its process for recognizing and rewarding genuine practitioners of sustainable tourism. Defined in three stages: GSTC-Recognized, GSTC-Approved and GSTC-Accredited, the Global Sustainable Tourism accreditation process sets worldwide minimum requirements for tourism businesses of all size to approach sustainability.

In stage one, sustainable tourism standards apply to become GSTC-Recognized. Once recognized, these standards are considered equivalent to the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria.

The European Eco-Tourism Labelling Standard was the first standard to be recognized by the GSTC. As such the standard offers ecotourism stakeholders the guarantee that even though it is a specialist standard, the EETLS conforms to a globally recognized overall tourism standard designed to counter green washing in the sector. European users can therefore have the confidence that their choice of the EETLS as a system to improve the quality of ecotourism products and services will conform to a global expectations.

Gordon Sillence, a sustainable tourism consultant and trainer working in the

ECOLNET project, relates an example from Portugal:

‘An NGO in one of our protected areas wants to improve the way local businesses contribute to the protected area. It is considering using the EETLS to set a standard for local businesses to adopt, possibly in the form of making a regional or national certificate based on the EETLS for such businesses, but certainly using the EETLS as guidance to train and monitor the businesses active in the protected area. They will now also receive the support of the GSTC process.’

To ensure the development of the GSTC and the EETLS avoids duplication and promotes global- European synergy, Herbert Hamele, part of the ECOLNET team, President of Ecotrans and lead administrator on the DestiNet Portals certification knowledge network, works closely with Amos Bien, technical director of the GSTC.

For further technical information on the GSTC-EETLS link contact Herbert Hamele at [herbert.hamele@ecotrans.de](mailto:herbert.hamele@ecotrans.de)

### READ THE EETLS

The current EETLS draft can be downloaded from the EEN website at:

[www.ecotourism-network.eu](http://www.ecotourism-network.eu)



## About the EEN and the ECOLNET Project

The ECOLNET project is a 3-year European project, running from 2009 to 2012, co-funded by the E.C from the Lifelong Learning Programme. It is implemented in 10 EU countries and involves 11 organisations.

The European Ecotourism Network (EEN) is a network of organisations that aims to ensure that ecotourism offerings in Europe are part of a genuine conservation and sustainability effort. EEN supports the development and implementation of the European Ecotourism Labelling Standard (EETLS), a product of the ECOLNET project.

For more information on the ECOLNET and on becoming member of the EEN visit: [www.ecotourism-network.eu](http://www.ecotourism-network.eu)

For more information on the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme visit: <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/>



Education and Culture DG

Lifelong Learning Programme

## ECOLNET Workshop in Italy

by Micaela Solinas

16th November 2011, Rome, Italy

The first workshop of the ECOLNET project out of a series of nine, was held in Italy, Rome 16th of November 2011 at Palazzetto Mattei, Villa Celimontana, via della Navicella 12, from 9:30 am to 5:00 pm.

The event was organised by the ECOLNET partner CTS (Centro Turistico Studentesco) aiming to promote networking of Italian ecotourism stakeholders and disseminate project activities.

Public and private institutions, companies and professionals of sustainable tourism and ecotourism in Italy, as well as representatives of the ECOLNET partner organizations attended the workshop.



The meeting was an opportunity to discuss the EETLS standard, certification in quality and CSR schemes as means to improve the environmental quality of tourist enterprises, but also to focus on what stands in the way of spreading the use of these schemes in tourism companies and destinations.

The workshop was also attended by Mrs. Caterina Cittadino, Head of the Tourism Department to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. In her welcoming speech Mrs. Cittadino highlighted the great attention paid by the Italian Government towards quality and ethical issues in tourism, hence the high interest in the ECOLNET project.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

The programme of the event and the ppts of the presentations can be downloaded from [www.ecotourism-network.eu](http://www.ecotourism-network.eu)

## Training for EETLS

by Vasilis Tsipidis

ECOLNET is producing a range of resources to help the certification of ecotourism. An important resource is the online training packages that are being developed and will be available in the next few months; the online packages will target tourism businesses and evaluators of the EETLS, aiming to assist the implementation of EETLS by labelling agencies that wish to comply with EETLS. Such agencies may use the training packages to train their staff and the applicant businesses on the EETLS content and requirements. The training package for evaluators will provide the necessary knowledge and skills for independent evaluators too, who might wish to add EETLS in their certification repertory.

Each training unit is complemented by exercises and further reading material, including case studies stored in the ECOLNET database. Since the EETLS covers literally all aspects of running an ecotourism business, the training packages would be also useful to students or entrepreneurs who wish to be involved in ecotourism. Below we give an example of the topics covered by the training packages addressing ecotourism entrepreneurs:

- Establishing and Managing your Business
- How to write a business plan
- Documenting your business
- Managing Staff
- Marketing your Business
- The role of Certification and awards in your business
- Community Payback – getting involved with your local community
- Supporting Biodiversity
- Guiding and Interpreting
- Managing a sustainable business
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Socio Economic Impact Assessment (SIA)
- Servicing your business

These and other topics have been included in a number of training units and will be uploaded online and delivered through an e-learning platform. The training packages will be piloted among a small group of business and certification evaluators, and will be refined on the basis of the piloting results. Then, the training packages will become available for wider use.

If you wish to take part in the piloting you may register at [www.ecotourism-network.eu](http://www.ecotourism-network.eu)

## Turespaña Supports Ecotourism

by Amanda Guzmán

Turespaña, a body of the Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism, makes a clear commitment to ecotourism in Spain, having supported the sector in its consolidation and promotion. The major efforts began in 2004 with the Strategic Plan to Promote Nature Tourism in Spain, which is being implemented to date. The aim is that the ecotourism product is set by a selection of protected areas and tourism business differentiated both by implementing voluntary accreditation systems for sustainable tourism. Thereby, it is guaranteed a reliable ecotourism supply in order to attract sensitive tourists, especially those ones interested in contributing with their holidays to sustainable tourism development in the protected areas they visit.



**Ecotourism in Spain**  
Guide to sustainable destinations

Protected areas and companies awarded the European Charter of Sustainable Tourism



To achieve differentiation of tourism businesses, Turespaña designed two systems:

- The Adhesion System of Tourism Businesses to the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism (ECST) in cooperation with Europarc-Spain.
- The Adhesion System of tourism businesses to the Spanish Biosphere Reserves Product Club in cooperation with national and regional relevant entities.

Both systems are working and achieving a commitment to sustainability on the part of entrepreneurs. In the same way, Turespaña will work with the Geoparks declared by UNESCO and the Natura 2000 areas, through systems homologous to the aforementioned. Thanks to these efforts, Spain currently has the following network of ecotourism destinations:

- 36 ECST areas and more than 275 tourism businesses adhered in 20 of those areas.

- 8 Biosphere Reserves belongs the RBE Product Club, where probably over 200 tourism businesses will adhere this year
- 7 Geoparks, having begun in one of them the implementation of Geotourism Product Club.
- Several Natura 2000 areas where tools are being applied to set up ornithological tourism product (such as Birding Navarra Club with 43 businesses accredited, Birding Euskadi Club, Reto Red Natura 2000 project in several regions, TRINO Project in Castilla y León with 43 businesses accredited and trained in

ornithological tourism).

Considering this great supply, Turesspaña has begun to work in the promotion of ecotourism in Spain, highlighting the edition of the guide "Ecotourism in Spain, guide to sustainable destinations. Protected areas and companies awarded with the European Charter of Sustainable Tourism" (available in Spanish and English).

For more information contact:  
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## ECOTOURISM IN SPAIN, GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE DESTINATIONS

The guide focuses on the first seven Spanish protected areas to be awarded with European Charter of Sustainable Tourism (ECST). For each area there is an introduction with a description of natural and cultural assets and with information on certified tourism businesses.

DOWNLOAD THE GUIDE

IN ENGLISH:

<http://www.mediafire.com/?nmtmwonmywh>

IN SPANISH:

[http://www.redeuroparc.org/carta\\_turismo\\_europea\\_sostenible/guiaecoturismo.pdf](http://www.redeuroparc.org/carta_turismo_europea_sostenible/guiaecoturismo.pdf)

#AGENDA #INFO #EVENTS



### Run for wilderness!

Take part in a unique three-day running adventure between 7-9 September 2012 that will take you right through the fabulous nature of Majella National Park in Italy! You will not only be enjoying running in breathtakingly beautiful surroundings but with your participation in the Wolf Mountain Run you'll also contribute to the wilderness protection activities of PAN Parks Foundation!

For more information on the event go to:  
<http://wolfmountainrun.nl/index.php>



### 11<sup>th</sup> Summer Academy

The 11th Summer Academy, is organised by the Euracademy Association in cooperation with the Estonian University of Life Sciences, on the theme "Rural Tourism Revisited" in Tartu, Estonia and will take place on 24th June–1st July 2012.

Registrations are now open and a limited number of scholarships are available.

For more information visit:  
<http://www.euracademy.org>

## European Ecotourism Knowledge Network in LinkedIn



The ECOLNET partnership has created a group in LinkedIn with active news, posts and information on ecotourism around Europe. Find the group *European Ecotourism Knowledge Network* and join us!

### EEN @ Destinet

The European Ecotourism Network has set up its online community space in Destinet, the knowledge and networking portal for sustainable & responsible tourism.

In the EEN community space, members can discuss in the forum, find useful resources and case studies on ecotourism and read all latest activities of the Network. EEN members are welcome to provide feedback to EEN plans and actions as well as receive support on networking actions.



DestiNet is an independent portal which brings together the global community of people and organisations working for making tourism more sustainable.

Visit Destinet at [www.destinet.eu](http://www.destinet.eu)

## Award for promoting outdoor recreation

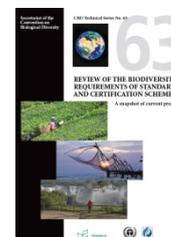
Metsähallitus, the managing body of Finnish natural areas, was granted a special award at the annual Finnish Sports Gala for designing facilities that encourage people to enjoy outdoor activities in nature all across Finland. Metsähallitus provides and maintains free facilities such as visitor centres, websites and trails totaling 6,738 km – almost six times the length of Finland.

Metsähallitus also runs two special websites designed to encourage and help users to plan

trips and outdoor activities: [www.outdoors.fi](http://www.outdoors.fi) and [www.excursionmap.fi](http://www.excursionmap.fi)

## Review of the biodiversity requirements of standards and certification schemes

A report from CBD and UNEP-WCMC has just been published, that aims to identify the biodiversity requirements that the various standards contain, and how standards address the various issues surrounding biodiversity protection.



This work will help the researchers identify what needs to be strengthened in the various standards, and this will perhaps help companies determine which standard(s) are best suited to their

needs. The EETLS has been included in this assessment, which has benefited the revision of the standard.

The full report can be downloaded from the CBD website:

<http://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/cbd-ts-63-en.pdf>

Vasilis Tshipidis a member of the ECOLNET team participated at the Biodiversity in Standards Workshop that was held in Cambridge U.K, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011, organized by CBD and UNEP-WCMC.

## SEND US YOUR NEWS

We will be glad to distribute your news to our 300+ members and contacts across Europe.

Get your news in the next newsletter or in the EEN online community by sending an email to: [v.tsipidis@prismanet.gr](mailto:v.tsipidis@prismanet.gr)

## What do Accommodation Providers and Tourists think of Eco-labelling Schemes?

by Kathy Velander

One hundred tourists completed a questionnaire concerning the role of eco-labelling schemes in the Cairngorm National Park, Scotland, between June and July 2011. Ten accommodation providers were also interviewed about the European Ecotourism Labelling Standard, EETLS and labelling schemes in general. The results are given below. Note that due to the difference in the sample size, these results should be considered as trends, but further research is being undertaken over the winter of 2012.

### The following questions produced these results:

**1) Visitors would be willing to pay more for accredited accommodation** – 57% of visitors agreed or strongly agreed with this question compared to only 10% of accommodation providers. However, 80% of accommodation providers disagreed or strongly disagreed with it compared to only 35% of visitors. The remainder did not know.



57%

*Of visitors would pay more for accredited accommodation*

**2) Accommodation providers that have achieved the standards will offer a higher quality of service than those that have not met the standards** - 75% of visitors agreed or strongly agreed with this while only 30% of accommodation providers chose this response. However, 70% of accommodation providers disagreed or strongly disagreed with it compared to only 8% of visitors. The remainder did not know.



75%

*Of visitors believe that certified accommodations offer higher quality of services.*

**3) It is important that organisations (including accommodation providers) try**

**to achieve environmental standards** - 95% of visitors agreed or strongly agreed with this question compared to 70% of accommodation providers. However, 20% of accommodation providers disagreed or strongly disagreed with it compared to only 2% of visitors. The remainder did not know.



95%

*Of visitors believe that it is important for organisations to try to achieve environmental standards.*

**4) There should be a minimum standard that all eco-labels must achieve** – 98% of visitors agreed or strongly agreed with this question while 80% of accommodation providers indicated this response. However, 10% of accommodation providers disagreed or strongly disagreed with it compared to only 2% of visitors. The remainder did not know.

In addition 63% of visitors said they took note of eco-labels and 83% said that a minimum standard would increase trust in eco-labels. However, when given eight logos common to tourism to identify, 64% failed to identify more than three.



83%

*Of visitors believe that a common minimum quality standard among eco-labels would increase trust.*

**The results suggest that visitors do take note of eco-labels in general, but there is still an issue with market identity of specific labels.**

*The data was collected by Steffanie Stewart as part of her MSc Ecotourism final Masters project.*

### EETLS CONSULTATION CAMPAIGN

To finalise the revision of the European Ecotourism Labelling Standard – EETLS, the ECOLNET partnership has launched a consultation campaign, asking well-known quality certification schemes their opinion on the EETLS criteria and indicators.

FIND OUT MORE AT:

<http://www.ecotourism-network.eu>

### PUBLICATION

# EEN/ ECOLNET

## Newsletter

### Issue 1

[www.ecotourism-network.eu](http://www.ecotourism-network.eu)

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