European Ecotourism Network

EEN / ECOLNET

Newsletter

Issue 2

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EEN AND ECOLNET

Training packages for ecotourism businesses and ecotourism labels now online!

by Kathy Velander

You know about ECOLNET and the EEN, but did you know that we have also developed 3 training packages specifically to support business and other individuals interested in the EETLS?

Example: 2.3: Service and your Client - The role of Customer Feedback
Feedback lets you know what customers think about your business. You can use it to highlight good practice and consider how to improve any aspects that are less good.

Introduction and background information	Contents Introduction and background information	Links
Feedback can be as immediate as a few words from a parting client or guest, some short sentences on a comments notepad or can involve a more detailed questionnaire.	1) Why is it important ? 2) How do I acquire it? 3) How frequent, how often? 4) How do I address any issues? 5) How do I build upon my strengths?	References Exercises 1) **Design a feedback strategy for your business** 2) **How to write a questionnaire** • Example 1: Green tourism Business Survey questionnaire • Example 2: Accommodation provider questionnaire
Case Studies 1) **Huntinghall** 2) **Others from the EETLS Best practice list**		
Individual Learning Portfolio		7) Indicators –

They include: Establishing and Managing your Business (12 Learning Units), Service and your Clients (6 Learning Units) and Sustainable Business Practice (including social and environmental impacts of Ecotourism) (6 Learning Units) and are available online via MOODLE platform

Each learning unit is laid out in easily navigable sections which include: a title, an overview of the unit, a table of contents, an introduction giving more detail about the topic followed by case studies, links to other units and external links, further reading, exercises and a list of indicators (e.g. what you should know, have on record

or be able to do once you have worked through the package).

There is even a section for your own learning portfolio. The exercises include quizzes, short answer questions, templates and examples of information you should have or be able to access. You can work through them as a whole or pick and choose depending on your previous knowledge/experience or immediate needs.

The training packages will be pilot tested during this summer. Priority will be given to ecotourism businesses, nature park authorities and ecotourism quality labels. Contact us to discuss how you can take part in the piloting phase or enrol for the full run of the courses in the beginning of next year. Placements will be limited!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

In the project website you can find out more about the training packages and the other training activities of ECOLNET. Visit: http://www.ecotourism-network.eu/en-ecotourism-training/en-een-training-offerings

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

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

Library of best practice examples

by Vasilis Tsipidis

The ECOLNET partners aiming to illustrate each criterion of the EETLS, have prepared more than 60 best practice examples on ecotourism practices from Europe and abroad. Each example illustrates one or more of the 40 EETLS criteria, showing the practical implementation and the benefits to the business, the environment and the local communities. The best practices are available online through an easy to navigate database.

But the use of the case studies doesn't stop here. These will be also linked with the online evaluations tools, thus assisting businesses during their self-evaluation process for the EETLS, to understand how they comply or what they need to do to comply with the standard. Furthermore the case studies are used as educational material in the training packages of ECOLNET as described in the front page of this newsletter.
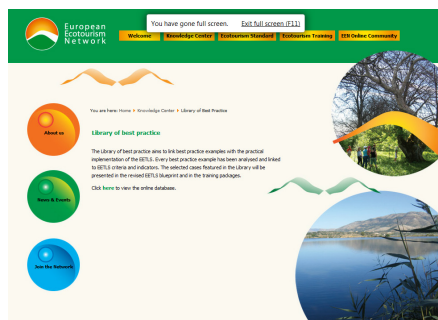
The ECOLNET team will continue to contribute best practices throughout the duration of the project with the support of the EEN. As an EEN member you are welcome to contribute a best practice of your business or organisation and share your sustainability efforts with your colleagues.
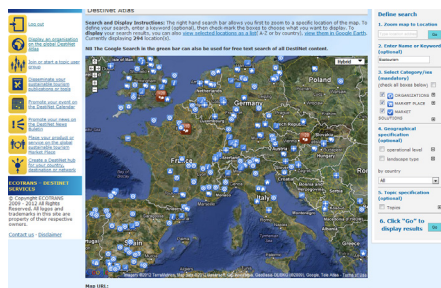
EEN Community in the Atlas

Good news for the EEN community, as now all 300+ EEN members are presented in the Destinet Atlas!

The Atlas is convenient way to present the spatial coverage of the members in Europe and a dynamic way to provide information on the profile and activities of each member. The Destinet Atlas is a B2B tool that allows organisations to search and contact interested parties and a good platform for identifying business opportunities and promoting synergies. Visit the EEN Community Atlas now and find out who is out there!

The EETLS evaluation tools are here!

We have been very busy in the past few months as most core products of ECOLNET were scheduled for delivery. So is the case of the 3 online evaluation tools for the EETLS, which are now in their premier version. This version will be pilot tested and revised accordingly based on the results of the piloting phase which is due this summer.

The three online evaluations tools have been developed in order to assist the EETLS implementation and increase the benefits for adoption by ecotourism labels, as with the use of these tools the certification process becomes simpler and cheaper as large parts of the evaluation will now occur online. It is important to mention that since these tools are web-based they can be used in any platform that has access to the web, including mobile platforms.

Let's have a closer look at what has been developed:

1. Online evaluation tool for ecotourism labels

This tool aims to assist ecotourism labels to assess their compliance with the EETLS. The tool has the form of an online questionnaire that includes a comparative rating system that based on the responses from the label it provides a compliance mark. The tool will be supported by an online helpdesk. By using this tool a label will have a clear view on compliance issues with the EETLS and an overview of needed changes to achieve compliance, if any.

2. Online evaluation tool for ecotourism businesses

This tool will be part of the self-assessment of an ecotourism business to evaluate itself with an EETLS complied quality label. The tool will have the same structure as the previous one but will specifically ask questions and give practical examples for compliance (based on the best practice examples mentioned earlier in this issue). By going through this process a business owner will be able to assess any changes that will have to be made by the business to comply with an EETLS complied label and should the business wishes to pursue certification, it will provide a solid basis for the actual evaluation phase. Combined with the training packages, this e-tool offers also a learning resource that covers all aspects of sustainability within an ecotourism business.
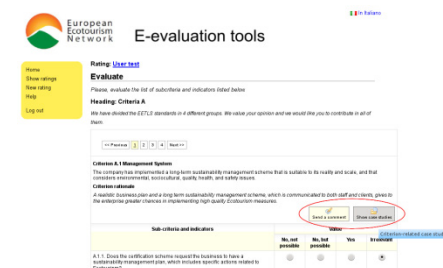
3. Integrated online tool for evaluators

This tool has more functionalities that the other two as it serves as the main tool used in the evaluation process of a business by an evaluator of an EETLS complied label. It is composed of several parts and it features an upload function to a cloud server so that a business owner can upload evidence of compliance to the evaluator in the form of pictures, videos, scanned documents etc. The tool also features a function to receive visitors' opinions as quality feedback, thus helping the evaluator to have a clear picture of the assessed business.

The benefits of this approach are several but the most tangible from a business perspective is the reduction of evaluation costs for the labels, as both related staff hours and travel (to mainly remote areas) are severely reduced by the online approach, resulting also to lower evaluation fees charged to the business, thus making certification more accessible.

As mentioned the tools will be pilot tested during the summer of 2012 and revised accordingly based on the piloting results. If you represent a quality label or you are an ecotourism business owner and you are interested in participating in the pilots contact us.

Practical, profitable, protected - A starter guide to developing sustainable tourism in protected areas

by Hugo de Jong

This book is a practical manual on how to develop and manage tourism in protected areas for all those responsible for the management of protected areas as tourism destinations. It focuses on protected areas that are in an early stage of their tourism development and wish to do this in a well-planned and sustainable manner. Examples of such areas are the more than 26,000 Natura 2000 sites which have recently been recognized by 27 European countries.

The manual with more than 30 case studies was published in February 2012 and demonstrates how visitors, conservation and host communities can all be winners. The practical ideas, case studies, guidelines and tools featured in the manual aim to give confidence and support to start a sustainable tourism "journey". The reader will find ideas and examples of working proactively, effectively and inexpensively with visitors as well as tourism entrepreneurs.

Chapter one discusses some background issues and the links between tourism and sustainable development, as well initiatives to support sustainable tourism.

The following chapters are made up of practical solutions and all feature key principles, ideas and tools which protected-area managers and staff can use to ensure

that tourism works for their area and their local communities - for example by developing a tourism strategy (chapter 2), working in partnership with others (chapter 3), offering the right attractions for visitors (chapter 4), communicating clearly (chapter 5) and making the most of income generating opportunities (chapter 6).

Developing tourism in protected areas benefits the local economies and society as a whole by making beautiful places accessible. It also creates additional opportunities for protected-area managers to benefit more from the economic value of their areas by generating income from entrance fees, permits, merchandise sales and other resources.

Chapter six discusses the options how protected-area managers can generate income from tourism related activities. Protected-area managers have different tools at their disposal to generate additional income from tourism. Entrance fee systems are the most straightforward but can be difficult to implement for practical or socio-cultural reasons. More accepted are user fees that visitors pay for tourist services or attractions in the area. Concessions and leases can generate significant income if the operators manage to create successful tourism businesses. In some cases, it may be better to operate these commercial activities directly. Finally, voluntourism may be an interesting way to reduce cost, for example of staff, by letting visitors do the work – for free.

This manual brings together state-of-the-art knowledge and experiences from different parts of Europe and can serve as a basic reference document. Produced by a team of Europe's leading experts, this manual combines expertise from EUROPARC Consulting, bringing in more than 30 years of experience in developing tourism in Europe's leading protected areas; the European Centre for Eco and Agro Tourism (ECEAT), adding the perspective of the tourism sector and entrepreneurs; and the Latvian Country Tourism Association (Lauku Ceļotājs) contributing the specific lessons learned in the frame of the EU LIFE+ part financed POLPROP-NATURA project.

Not every detail will be found in this manual. It aims to provide a practical and workable framework for the relevant topics. Each chapter ends with an overview of background documents that will provide you with more detail about the discussed topics.

The manual and its library of background documents are available online. ECEAT is a partner in the ECOLNET project.

Open Consultation on the European Tourism Label for Quality Systems Initiative

The European Commission has a call for an open consultation until the 13th of July 2012, regarding the European Tourism Label for Quality Systems Initiative. This is a very interesting initiative that includes many of the issues addressed by the ECOLNET project and the EETLS. In particular, the ECOLNET partnership was setup to work on issues as those expressed in the official website of the Commission:

Currently there is a wide variety of public and private initiatives that aim at defining the principles and criteria to be used by European tourism stakeholders for ensuring the development and provision of quality tourism within the EU.

However, these quality systems often show little consistency and coordination as they usually focus on individual sectoral or territorial objectives without following a European integrated approach.

This fragmentation is a possible obstacle to achieving a EU level playing field for providing high-quality tourism service throughout Europe, which is likely to cause detriment to the competitiveness of the European tourism sector.

According to the Commission the objective of this public consultation is to obtain the views of a wide circle of public and private stakeholders and individuals on a possible

EU action in this field. As one of the possible actions, the Commission foresees the proposal for a European Tourism Label for Quality Systems, with a potential to bring greater transparency and consistency into quality evaluation at EU level. The European label would recognise those existing and future tourism quality systems that comply with the common European criteria.

The ECOLNET partnership is following this process and will contribute in this dialogue and inform EEN members on any new developments. To take part in the open consultation and for more information visit: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/public-consultation-etq/index_en.htm

#AGENDA #INFO #EVENTS

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!

Become an EEN member!

We have simplified further the registration process for memberships to the European Ecotourism Network. You now follow a simple link available at http://www.ecotourism-network.eu/en-join-network/en-how-to-register which directs you to the EEN community at Destinet. You are then asked to fill-in a simple registration form and soon a confirmation email arrives. Don't forget that membership to EEN is free.

EMAS Easy Move-It project

The EMAS Easy MOVE-it! project applies the EU Eco-Management and Auditing Scheme (EMAS) cluster certification to regional tourist products or services. The project clusters small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) of a region, which are all part of a value chain of tourism. The value chain and thus the cluster forms a competitive tourism service package, linking cultural, economical, ecological and social aspects with their respective added value.

Vasilis Tsipidis of the ECOLNET partnership participated at the project conference on 22 May 2012 in Brussels, representing the EEN network and the ECOLNET project. During the conference several synergies were identified and particularly the EMAS Easy approach to environmental indicators and evaluation tools. For more information on EMAS Easy visit: http://move-it.eu/en

Women Entrepreneurs in Rural Tourism-WERT

The 'Women Entrepreneurs in Rural Tourism' project, or WERT for short, is a collaborative partnership between eight training institutions and networks from six countries across Europe. The project is supported by the European Union through the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The project aims to meet the needs and build the skills of women entrepreneurs involved in rural tourism and crafts and to improve the quality of training provided by the vocational education sector.

In the many activities of the WERT project training courses have been delivered to women entrepreneurs and an online community has been created to support further networking. Check the stories of these women and their news by visiting http://destinet.eu/who-who/civil-society-ngos/wert/ . For more information on WERT visit http://www.wertedu.eu/

FAST-LAIN project

Further Action on Sustainable Tourism – Learning Area Innovation Networks (FAST-LAIN) is a project co-financed by Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) and aims to establish a European Sustainable Tourism Observatory and develop regional sustainable tourism innovation clusters. For more information on the project visit: http://destinet.eu/topics/training-education/fastlain/

ECOTRANS, project partner of ECOLNET and promoter of FAST-LAIN project, invited Vasilis Tsipidis from the ECOLNET project to the FAST-LAIN workshop in Paris 24-25 May 2012. Vasilis Tsipidis presented the online EEN community and discussed the planned activities for the piloting of the e-learning courses and the e-evaluation tools.

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