

RE-EVALUATION Verifier's Report to the Evaluation Committee

Name of protected area: Montseny Natural Park and Biosphere Reserve

Name of verifier: Patricia Elola Ruiz de la Sierra

Date of submission of re-evaluation application by protected area: May 20th 2021

Date of verification visit: September 28-29th 2021

Date of completion of this report: November 11th 2021

NOTES FOR THE VERIFIER

Where is shown, verifiers are asked to indicate a score, using the following system:

- X Not relevant
- 0 Not happening
- 1 Weak – little action
- 2 Moderate – action happening in this area, sufficient at present
- 3 Good – significant action, totally satisfactory

A star * may be added to a “3” score to indicate an excellent example of best practice (3*).

Verifiers are asked to comment on individual questions to provide further information or explanation, keeping their answers concise. In particular, the reasons for any score under 2 should be briefly explained, highlighting any particular causes for concern.

The reasons for any score of * awarded should also be explained: what makes this an example of best practice? The star should be used sparingly, and only for outstanding initiatives or actions which can serve as models at the European level.

The format for this verifier's report is linked closely to that of the Application Report completed by the protected area. You should have received the Application Report in electronic format. You may copy information from the Application Report into this report to support particular answers where this is helpful.

If you do this, we would ask you to indicate very clearly (e.g. by use of a different typeface, highlighting, etc.) the text which has been copied from the Application Report.

Your own observations relating to the information provided by the protected area and gained on site are, of course, particularly important – the Committee will have the full Application Report available to refer to as necessary.

Please attach a list of any documents received from the protected area or presented during the visit which were not included in the original application.

Programme of visit, key sites and partners visited:
Please attach a full list of people interviewed and job titles as an appendix

PROGRAMA VISITA AUDITORIA CETS MONTSENY

DIA 28	DIA 29	DIA 30
<p>20h – Llegada Hotel Som l’Om, Sant Esteve de Palautordera</p>	<p>9h – <u>Oficina del Parque “Masia Mariona”, Fogars de Montclús –</u> 1ª Reunión con el equipo del parque https://parcs.diba.cat/web/montseny/oficina-del-parc</p> <p>10,30h – <u>Edificio Multifuncional, Montseny -</u> Grupo de Trabajo Explicación del proceso de renovación, cada representante explicará su grado de implicación con el proyecto</p> <p>12h – 13h espacio para entrevistas individuales con los miembros del grupo de trabajo</p> <p>13,30h – <u>Fonda del Montseny, Montseny –</u> Comida https://www.fondamontseny.com/</p> <p>15h – <u>Les Piscines de Montseny, Montseny -</u> Entrevista con alcaldesa Montseny (Núria Masnou) Zona de importante presión de uso público en verano.</p> <p>16,30h – <u>Collformic, Pla de la Calma, El Brull</u> - Entrevista Laia Aguilà, artesana, miembro de la Asociación de mujeres “Arremangades” (Pendiente de confirmación) Zona de pastos de especial interés para la conservación, regulación de acceso motorizado y problemática de uso público con los perros sueltos.</p> <p>18,30h – <u>Centro de Información de Sant Esteve de Palautordera, Sant Esteve de Palautordera –</u> entrevista con miembros de la junta de la Asociación de Empresarios Turísticos del Montseny (AETM)</p> <p>20h – <u>Sant Esteve de Palautordera –</u> Cena restaurante Sant Esteve - Hotel Som l’Om https://www.somlom.com/ca/hotel-benestar-formacio</p>	<p>09,30h – <u>Centro de información de Can Casades – Santa Fe de Montseny</u> Itinerario adaptado Font del Frare, material accesible https://parcs.diba.cat/web/montseny/centres-i-punts-d-informacio</p> <p>11,30h – <u>Espai Montseny, Viladrau</u> Reunión con las empresas acreditadas de educación ambiental del ámbito CETS https://parcs.diba.cat/web/montseny/detall/-/contingut/155678/punt-d-informacio-a-l-espai-montseny</p> <p>13h - <u>Ayuntamiento de Taradell, Taradell</u> Entrevista con alcaldesa (Mercè Cabanes) Nueva incorporación en el ámbito CETS (pendiente de confirmación) 13.45 – 14.30h – reunión final con equipo del parque</p> <p>14,30h <u>Parc de la Font Gran. Taradell –</u> Degustación de productos locales Posible entrevista AAVV que comercializa con la AETM</p> <p>16h – Desplazamiento al aeropuerto del Prat</p>

People interviewed during the visit:

- Elisabet Ros Garriga, public use and environmental education officer of the Montseny Natural Park
- Lluís Velasco Batlle, head of the Public Use and Environmental Education Unit of the Montseny Natural Park
- Lluís Martínez Ujaldón, director of the Montseny Natural Park
- Judit Márquez - Repte Territorial, technical secretary of the ECST
- Eva Freixas - Repte Territorial, technical secretary of the ECST
- Nacho López- representative of the ECST Companies' working group and manager of the accredited environmental education company Educa Viladrau
- Rafel Catafal - representative of the Association of Owners of Montseny
- Sílvia Arau - technician of the Montseny Tourist Business Association
- Sandra Rodà Vey - Tourism Technician of the Vallès Oriental Regional Council
- Maria Barrachina Jiménez - technician of the Biosphere Reserve
- Ferran Teixidó Turner - mayor of Brull
- Albert Duch - technician of the Catalunya Costa Brava Tourist Board (sent a presentation brief)
- Sandra Fumanya - Osona Turisme tourism technique (sent voice notes)
- Xavier Font Urgell - head of the Barcelona Provincial Council's Technical Office for Tourism (online video)
- Núria Masnou Pujol - mayoress of Montseny
- Laia Aguilà - wool artisan "el talleret del Clot" and member of the "Arremangades" Women's Association
- Joana Barber Rosado, head of the Technical Office of Natural Parks
- Carme Clopés Traveria, secretary of the Entrepreneurs Association and manager of the accredited environmental education company ADEMC
- Lluís Pagespetit, president of the Entrepreneurs Association and manager of the accredited environmental education company Viladraueducació.com
- Israel Molinero, manager of the accredited environmental education company Apren Serveis Ambientals
- Sílvia March, manager of the accredited environmental education company Apren Serveis Ambientals
- Arnau Mundet Terricabras, manager of the accredited environmental education company Viladraueducació.com and head of the Espai Montseny information point
- Joan Cano - Councilor for Sustainability, Mobility and Urban Planning of the Taradell City Council
- Esther Solans Rubio - head of the Parc de les Olors

Brief details of the PA and overall impressions

Please indicate very briefly:

- **Location, size, population, IUCN Category (or equivalent), nature of the PA Authority, key features of the PA, level of tourism**
- **Context of the re-application (e.g. any issues relating to the decision to reapply)**
- **Overall impressions of the PA**

Location

Montseny Natural Park is one of the 20 Natural Parks of Catalonia. Its administrative location in two provinces gives it a particularity that does not occur in any other natural park. This peculiarity is reflected in the management of the park that, although it is formed by a single team that covers the entire territory of the park, it is made up of by staff of the Girona and Barcelona Provincial Council.

It is located in three regions –Osona, La Selva and Vallès Oriental-, including a total of 18 municipalities that contribute from 6% (the least) to 100% (the most) of their municipal area to the park. Eleven of the 18 municipalities belong to the Vallès Oriental (province of Barcelona), three to Osona (province of Barcelona) and four to La Selva (province of Girona).

IUCN Category

The Montseny Natural Park has category V from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), corresponding to a protected landscape.

Protection

The creation of the first protection figure in the Montseny area dates back to 15 September 1928, through the approval of the “Royal Decree of creation of the Patronat of la Muntanya del Montseny”. Decades later, and based on the Law of the Land Regime and Urban Planning, the “Special Plan of the Parc del Montseny”, the first legal framework for the special protection of the area, was created. Montseny also enjoys the protection of the own regulations of protected areas in Catalonia as of the approval of “Decree 105/1987, of 20 February, by which it is declared a Natural Park of the Massís del Montseny”.

Management

The special Plan’s dispositions are carried out by the Park management administration (the Barcelona Provincial Council and the Girona Provincial Council) and two Participation bodies: the Coordinating Council, which aims to guarantee the participation and collaboration in the management of the protected area of the different public administrations with specific competences in this territorial area and of professional organizations directly interested in the management of the natural area, and the Advisory Committee, constituted by the representatives of the citizens who, by reason of their economic activity or by the willingness to participate in public affairs, want to have a more active participation in the development of the plan.

Since 1978 the Montseny Natural Park belongs to the international network of Biosphere Reserves promoted by UNESCO’s “Man and Biosphere” Program. The Reserve is now 50,166ha in extension.

Size & Population

The total area of the Natural Park is 30,120.10 ha.

The ECST area is made up initially by the municipalities that contribute territory to the protected area (18) and 8 municipalities in its immediate surroundings. Only 2 municipalities in the ECST area 2016 - 2020 have withdrawn due to non-compliance with the participation criteria, Espinelves and Centelles. On the contrary, the municipality of Sant Antoni de Vilamajor has joined and already participated in the first period 2011-2015.

The population of the ECST area of Montseny (year 2020) is 111,304 inhabitants, distributed in municipalities that present large differences with respect to the number of population. 1,303 reside within the limits of the natural park (year 2018).

In relation to the immediate environment of the ECST area, it is necessary to highlight the proximity of the city of Barcelona, with 1,664,182 inhabitants (year 2020, Idescat).

Main Features

The Montseny is a mount located in the Pre-littoral Catalan mountain range. Three ecosystems coexist in El Montseny: the Atlantic, the Eurosiberian and the Mediterranean. This variety of habitats gives the massif a high ecological value, which allows it to harbor endemisms as notable as the El Montseny triton.

The massif is made up of three large mountain groups: to the south, the crest of El Turó de l'Home (1,706 m) and Les Agudes (1,705 m); to the north, El Matagalls (1,697 m), and, to the west, the plain Pla de la Calma (Mount Puig Drau 1,344 m). Its high altitude and proximity to the sea favors that in El Montseny we find characteristic Mediterranean vegetation in the lowlands (holm oak, cork oak and pine forests); of the rainy mid-mountain (mountainous holm oaks and oak groves); Central European ecosystem above 1,000 m (beech and fir trees) and subalpine environments on the summits (thickets and culminating meadows).

As for the fauna, it is characterized by having species from Mediterranean climates (wild boar, fox, genet, goshawk, etc.) and others more typical of Central European lands (the hare, the dormouse, the red frog or the El Montseny newt, the only vertebrate endemic species of Catalonia).

The first settlements of El Montseny date back to prehistoric times. This is evidenced by the findings of stone axes and knives in Aiguafreda, El Brull, El Montseny and Sant Marçal, the megaliths of the Sierra del Arca and Les Pinedes, or the Estelada stone of the plain Pla de la Calma. Later, during the Iberian period, the hills began to be occupied in a stable way, as evidenced by the Iberian fortification from El Montgròs, the Iberian site of El Puig del Castell de Samalús and the fortified settlements of Montclús. The Romans, on the other hand, settled on the plains. During the Middle Ages, the exploitation of natural resources was intensified and it was then that most of the farmhouses were built.

85% of the park's territory is private property and the agricultural, livestock, forestry and service sector activities are a source of wealth for its inhabitants. Agriculture, in the plains, and forest exploitation and livestock, in the upper parts of the massif, were the basis of El Montseny until well into the s. xx. However, with industrialization, forage crops replaced that of cereals and, on the plains, cattle gained prominence. On the other hand, forestry tasks have always been a complementary source of income and resources: the production of charcoal, wood, firewood, cork, chestnut poles, medicinal, herbs, etc. is significant.

At present, the regression of these activities has contributed to the rise of rural tourism, hotels and restaurants.

Tourism

In terms of tourism inside the Park, from the data given it is concluded that number of visitors over the past 5 years were decreasing (not taking into account the pandemic). But, although data do not reflect it, after the lockdown imposed due to the pandemic, the affluence to this park increased significantly, bringing along access problems, overcrowding, etc.

66.92% of the jobs in the ECST area are located in the service sector, followed by

industry and construction. The primary sector represents 1.7% of jobs in the municipalities that contribute territory to the Montseny Natural Park (third quarter of 2020). Of that 67%, about 8% is formed by hostelry, a bit below Catalonia's average. So tourism does not appear to be a main source of wealth in the area.

Visitors that use information and visitor centres are mainly "groups" and "friends", with ages mostly from 30 to 44 (30%) and 18 to 29 (23%).

Origin is overwhelmingly Catalan (97%) followed by Spanish with a much smaller percentage around 2-4%, and between 1-2% is foreigner. On 2020, exceptional due to mobility restrictions due to COVID-19, the foreign public was practically non-existent. By country, the majority of the foreign public is French, followed by a much smaller proportion of the German and English public. It is also worth highlighting the high proportion of American and Chinese visitors in 2019, much more prominent than in previous years

In relation to the motivation of the visit [...] in order of consultation are: itineraries / hiking, general information, park publications, sporting events, etc.

Average length of visit is 2,3 nights (active months: Feb-Mar and Jun-Dec) compared to 5,4 average of Barcelona province. Occupation rate is about 17%.

Aprox a 1/3 of the accommodation beds belong to Charter members, in all accommodation tipologies.

Context of re-application

The Park and partners seem to have had a good continuance of the use of the forum, working group and development of the Action Plan's actions, so re-application was a natural step from them.

Overall impressions of the Park

With their weaknesses and challenges still to face, this PA is working well with the ECST and many interest groups work together towards a sustainable management of tourism.

Comments on the application from the Charter area and re-evaluation visit: *Please raise any points and issues relating to the process*

Documents submission and visit were handled correctly in time and form. Documents and additional info asked for subsequently were also sent swiftly, so no special comments or concerns here.

Verifier's assessment

Please provide your overall assessment of the management of sustainable tourism and the content and delivery of the strategy and action plan in the protected area, in relation to the European Charter. Please include an overall comment on the progress of the Charter area and its partners over the past five years:

The PA has interiorized the ECST scheme and plans and develops its actions with it in mind.

The work spaces created are maintained and working well, and there is still effort done to add more members and collaborators to these circles.

Some municipalities have lowered their compromise and some have been added to the project recently. The PA keeps working to strengthen its relations with them.

There are currently 20 companies in partnership with the park, and renovation of their commitments is done when necessary.

Documents are well presented, complete in their detail and balanced in their scope.

Many actions are on-going actions from previous plans, which is wise in terms of energy and resources, and it puts in value actions that the different actors develop and that are in concordance with the ECST principles. Some actions are included again because were not successfully achieved in the past, work will be needed to make them work this time.

Main strengths: (relating to the Charter process and sustainable tourism management)

The PA authorities, wider regional bodies and many local stakeholders support, and/or participate actively with the Charter in the area.

They are being able to maintain active all participatory bodies created for the development of the Charter, including two “homegrown” ones: ECST Tourism Businesses Working Group and Communication Working Group. And they have rules of permanency that assure commitment with the groups.

The PA seems to have sufficient autonomy and financial muscle to back the initiatives planned towards a more sustainable tourism management.

The main conflicts are localized in time and place, so are easier to tackle.

The PA is working actively and effectively in improving accessibility, public transport, local producers' capacity, ...:

- Management of tourists flows and creation of sustainable tourism infrastructure and services: Bus Parc, public transport accessible itineraries (including a publication on them), Wikiloc's profile to promote safe and recommended routes
- Impulse to local primary sector producers: *Creation of the Tagamanent workshop and continuity of the VEAMAT project (Vivero de Municipal Food Companies of the Tagamanent City Council) that currently holds a total of 15 producers as users of the infrastructure. Creation of the virtual platform for the commercialization of Montseny products "Mercat Virtual"*
- *At the accessibility level, highlight the work undertaken with the study of accessibility in the facilities of the Montseny Natural Park by a specialized company. The resulting document gives a series of recommendations and actions to be taken to develop quality tourism for all*

Coordination and synergy with RB management structure, and its gender-perspective ECST follow up.

Main weaknesses: (relating to the Charter process and sustainable tourism management)

Some municipalities are still not engaged with the project.

High visitor density, and accesses and parking crowding problems still occur in peak days during high season.

New visitor types and new technologies -that help unexperienced tourists to hike or bike to the park on their own- difficults control of access, education to visitors and management of visitor flows.

Contribution of visitors to conservation is still diffuse and not important.

Not a lot of information is given on training on sustainable tourism for park staff.

The dissemination of knowledge on the Charter and its results by the entities involved is unequally done by the different stakeholders.

Conclusions and recommendations for the Charter area:

Please set out briefly your main conclusions and recommendations that you wish to draw to the attention of the protected area

The PA has interiorized the ECST scheme and plans and develops its actions with it in mind.

The work spaces created are maintained and working well, and there is still effort done to add more members and collaborators to these circles.

The weaknesses and challenges are clear and known by the PA and is on its way to confront them.

Recommendations:

1. Strengthen ties and links or at least improve communication with LABTurisme, Tourism Observatory in Barcelona, Costa Brava-Pirineu de Girona Tourist Board, and or the Catalan Tourism Agency to be able to access and know the studies on future visitor markets, new tourism products, etc.
2. Continue to work with and include in work spaces the Tourism Offices as well as individual informants and personnel of visitor centres.
3. Keep on looking for schemes and options to enhance visitor contribution and tourism revenues-give back to conservation.
4. Create information and participation events, meetings, or programs to disseminate the project, as well as assess reluctances and be able to incorporate more allies to the Charter.
5. Enhance support the economic viability and performance of local tourism and environmental education companies and associations and the provision of local employment.

Recommendation on re-award of the Charter:

You are asked below to give your recommendation on the re-award of the Charter. Please indicate here any clarification or qualification that you may wish to make concerning your recommendation, including any suggested conditions relating to the award.

Please check one box

I recommend that the protected area be re-awarded the Charter.

I do not recommend that the protected area be re-awarded the Charter.

SECTION A – GENERAL INFORMATION

A.1 Has full and clear factual information been supplied by the Charter area in answer to sections A1 – A15 of the Application Report framework? 3

A.2 Additional/amended information not contained in the protected area's application:

The verifier asked for clarification or more information (and has been used for the completion of this report) on:

- Data of submission of re-application report
- Number and evolution of Charter Partners
- Businesses Working Group composition
- Evolution of Forum membership regarding the different action groups
- What progress was finally done on data gathering and management

A.3 Any information not available, and reasons for this:

A.4 Are you satisfied that the information supplied is accurate? 3

A.5 Are there any factual issues that might affect the eligibility of the protected area for re-award of the Charter?

No

SECTION B – Sustainable Tourism FORUM

B.1 Is there a permanent stakeholder structure, with a defined membership, that enables the protected-area authority to work with others on the development and management of tourism, including in taking decisions and implementing and reviewing the strategy?

3*

The Forum, although it hasn't got a formal structure, has concrete rules for membership that ensures an active commitment and participation of the entities included in it.

In order to be admitted as a Charter municipality, these criteria have to be met:

- *Be part of the natural region of Montseny, defined as the topography, geology, climatic, botanic and landscape.*
- *Develop a function of "gateway municipality" to the Park. That is, they have or*

may have the necessary infrastructures to start a visit to the protected area.

- *Maintain a historical-cultural relationship with the Montseny massif, a fact that, in some way or another will have influenced the configuration of its landscape over time.*

In addition to these, the following criteria for the involvement of the ECST municipalities of the surrounding area and consequently their permanence in the ECST are in place:

- *Attendance of 50% and excuse of 50% of the calls of the Permanent Forum*
- *Also, from the beginning of the candidacy, it was established that the municipality should carry out a formal communication of the will to participate in the ECST project. The communication was due to be in writing and accompanied by the appointment of a ECST representative per municipality.*

The rule of attendance to at least 50% of the forum meetings also applies to businesses.

This rule is considered a best practice because it points out the importance of the structure, motivates commitment and ensures effectiveness and quality of the meetings and participation in the ECST in general.

Briefly describe this structure, including size and membership, frequency of meetings, responsibility, functions etc. Please identify, and distinguish between:

- ***Any Executive Committee/Working Group – e.g. responsible for delivery of the action plan***
- ***Any wider structure – e.g. enabling wider stakeholder engagement and communication***

The Forum in this PA is a space for participation open to all people in the territory, where to identify challenges and needs, propose improvements in the territory and maintain active communication that gives way to cooperation between participants.

The Forum is the space for approval, decision-making and monitoring of the implementation of the ECST Montseny Action Program. The specific functions of the Forum are:

- *Review, debate and validate the actions or proposals previously developed by the Working Group*
- *Validate and / or propose improvements to the actions related to the ECST that must be developed by the different entities responsible for its implementation.*
- *Propose changes in the event that the provisions of the Action Program require review or update.*
- *Propose and validate the concretion of the development of some of the planned actions.*

For the development of these functions it is expected to hold the call for two annual meetings, with the possibility of variation according to the needs of the moment.

It is considered to be members of the Forum all people who have attended any of the calls during the 2016-2020 period, including the renewal period until the first quarter of 2021. Based on this definition, the current number of forum members is 96.

The average attendance at the Forums during the period 2016-2020 - including the call for 23.03.2021 has been of 48 representatives of administrations, entities and companies. Since the beginning of the work for the renewal of the ECST Montseny, also the information offices and centres have been summoned to the different sessions of the Forum.

Representation of administrations and public and mixed entities, is generally higher than that of companies and private associations, although these have maintained a more constant participation throughout the different calls. It should be noted that municipal participation continues to be low, a factor that will be addressed again in the ECST 2021-2025 Action Program.

Generally, the Forum meets twice a year, in July and December, in the afternoon. The extension to present the documents for the renewal allowed the holding of three Forums to work the documents in a participatory manner and their subsequent review and approval -15.07.2020, 15.10.2020, 23.03.2021-.

Until 2020, the Forum sessions have been held on an itinerant basis, to facilitate attendance of agents from different ends of the ECST area. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2020 the meeting format was readapted to online in order to continue working on the renewal of the ECST Montseny with the involvement of the territory.

Calls to the Forum are sent to people who have shown interest in attending the sessions, that are included in a database that is periodically reviewed and updated before and after the Forum.

On all occasions, all the people in the Forum's database have been sent the "business of the day", previously worked with the members of the Working Group, as well as the minutes of the meeting, which are also published on the Park's website. In some of the sessions, together with the summons, previous documentation to facilitate the development of the work session has been sent. Depending on the objectives to be addressed, the sessions have been developed in an informative way or as a work session with participation methodologies applied.

There are three smaller participatory structures: The Montseny ECST Working Group, the Businesses Working Group (a specific group attended by companies adhering to the ECST on an individual basis), and the Communication Working Group.

In order to carry out the actions of the plan, other subgroups formed or those already set up in the park took over the responsibility of the actions: Transport and mobility work group, trails WG, Energy efficiency, etc.

The WG is the motor body of the Charter responsible for the follow-up of the Action Plan. The members of the Working Group are, on the one hand, the entities in charge of the development of actions and, on the other hand, the representatives of the different sectors of the territory (technicians of public administrations, local associations, conservationists, municipal representatives of the Coordinating Council, company representatives), all of them linked to the management of the territory and tourism within the ECST area.

The Working Group is a technical and dynamic workspace so that the members can

vary. The functions of the Working Group, which are expected to be maintained during the 2021-2025 period, are:

- Prepare the information and documentation to present to the Forum
- Monitor the actions planned during the year
- Schedule the work plan for the following year
- Propose improvements in the implementation of the ECST, to be validated later in the Forum

How has this forum developed or changed over the past five years (in terms of its work, membership and the stakeholders within it)?

The forum has maintained a more or less constant membership, more so with regards to private companies. Lately members of Information points have been added to the calls.

Participation also appears to be constant, with a peak of participation in the renewal process' meetings.

B.2 Are local tourism enterprises involved?

3*

Local tourism businesses are represented both in the Working Group and in the Permanent Forum of the ECST, as well as in the specific Businesses Working Group.

This specific Tourism Businesses Working Group is made up of the Businesses accredited by the PA with the ECST, currently 20. It is coordinated by the PA, being it the one who summons the participants, and the technical secretary is in charge of dynamizing the meeting, take note of agreements, conclusions and writing the minutes, and the park technicians are summoned and present.

Within the ECST Working Group, companies are represented through the Asociación de Empresaris Turístics del Montseny and by a representative of the Businesses Working Group.

On the Forum the representation of tourism companies is also on an individual basis. In the period 2016-2020, 27 companies have attended these meetings.

55% of the companies that have attended the Forums are companies are members of the ECST Montseny (23), who must attend at least 50% of the Forums and excuse the remaining 50%, a factor that has been fulfilled in the vast majority of cases, except for two companies. It should be noted that 6 companies have attended all the Forums held during the 2016-2020 period.

Please describe how the Charter area has progressed and strengthened relationships with local businesses:

The Charter area has implemented Phase II, which strengthens relationships with local businesses.

In relation to companies that joined for the first time in 2014, they have continued their commitment with their first renovation in 2017. Also new companies joined in 2016 and 2019. In 2020 5 companies that joined for the first time in 2016 renewed their collaboration. Period 2016 - 2020 closed with 22 companies, but now that number has decreased to 20.

Have any schemes been set up to link businesses more closely with the Charter area/Charter implementation?

Such schemes are not obligatory for re-award of the Charter

During the 2016-2020 period, and as contemplated in the Action Program, the specific Working Group for partner companies has been maintained. These meetings are key to:

- *Get to know each other among the companies and establish contact for possible future collaborations.*
- *Maintain contact between companies and managers of the protected natural area.*
- *Directly involve companies in the actions of the Action Program.*
- *Establish guidelines for joint communication.*
- *Develop joint actions for the development of sustainable and responsible tourism.*
- *Identify the challenges and needs of the private tourism sector.*

B.3 Has involvement of the following key groups progressed satisfactorily over the past five years?

B.4 Local government?

2

Local governments by themselves are stated not to be very active participants in the Forum and Working Group. A compromise of taking up mechanisms to enhance their collaboration was included in the past AP and is included in the current one again, to try to tackle this continued issue.

Municipalities are, nevertheless, represented by the three regions' representatives, that seem to be more committed to the Forum and participatory process.

During the renewal process, at the Forum on July 15, 2020, following the criteria for the permanence of municipalities in the ECST Montseny area established during the first year of candidacy, the municipalities of Centelles and Espinelves were informed about their removal from the ECST, due to non-compliance with the criteria of attendance at the Forum.

Taradell and Sant Antoni de Vilamajor, municipalities that, in addition to complying with the established criteria, carried out the formal request to the Natural Park to be part of the ECST Montseny area during the period 2021-2025 were, on the contrary, included.

B.5 The local community? (e.g civil society bodies, interest groups etc.)?

2

Apart from local governments 5 local associations or entities are represented in the Forum. Entities' participation has varied a little since the beginning

B.6 Conservation interests?

2

There are 11 conservation entities in the Forum member list, from which 5 have not attended any of the past 5 years' meetings.

B.7 Wider (regional) bodies responsible for tourism, conservation and regional development?

2

Wider bodies participating in the forum are:

Region (comarca) level: The three regional governments that represent the municipalities in their territory:

- *Consell Comarcal del Vallès Oriental*
- *Consell Comarcal de La Selva*
- *Consell Comarcal d'Osona – Osona Turisme*

Province level:

- *The Technical Office of Tourism of the Provincial Council of Barcelona,*
- *The Management of Serveis d'Espais Naturals of Barcelona Provincial Council*
- *Costa Brava - Pirineu Tourist Board of Girona*

Autonomous region's level (Catalonia)

- *The General Directorate of Tourism of the Generalitat de Catalonia has been informed of the process but is not participating actively in the meetings*

B.8 Any other key groups (please state which), either within or outside the formal partnership structure described above, which have been actively involved? 2

Information Offices and centres have been included recently in the Forum.

SECTION C - SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

PREVIOUS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN - Implementation over the past 5 years

C.1 Overall comment on the progress of the Charter area towards excellence in sustainable tourism, bearing in mind where it started from five years ago

According to the Park, and this information is considered accurate, *Montseny's progress towards sustainable tourism during the 2016-2020 period has a very positive balance.*

For example, if implementation of Action Plan is compared: of the previous one, covering 2011-2015, only 54% was carried out, and the one being examined now, from 2016-2020, was completed up to a 90%.

To progress on the principles of the Charter, work has been done on the implementation and development of the Action Plan that has improved and consolidated a way of working in partnership with the different actors involved in the ECST Montseny. Thus, the constancy in the development of the ECST project and specifically of the working spaces is highlighted (Working Group, Permanent Forum, Working Group of Companies adhering to the ECST Montseny and the Communication Working Group) as fundamental elements for the management and direction of the Action Plan.

In addition, Phase II has been continued and consolidated in Montseny.

Finally, the technical secretariat of the ECST in Montseny has prepared an annual follow-up report of the actions carried out, analysing the results and objectives achieved by the actions and strategy. This work has also led to the information necessary for decision-making and monitoring of work during the 2016-2020 period and for the preparation of the Montseny ECST renewal dossier 2021-2025

C.2 Could all of the planned actions be implemented? If not, how much of the action plan was implemented (estimate)?

Most of the action plan was implemented, having completed 32 actions, 8 initiated and none not initiated at all. According to their ponderation system (1=completed, 0,5=initiated, and 0=not carried out), the percentage of completion is 90,47%.

C.3 Main reason for the Charter area not being able to complete the full programme (if applicable)?

Work has been done on each of the 42 actions initially planned. In fact, it could be said that AP was implemented fully, because the small part of actions “not completed” were simply redirected to respond to the objectives set initially, proceeding and executing the work differently from the description of the Action sheet approved.

C.4 What are the most positive achievements in your view?

In my opinion, the most positive achievements have been:

- Maintain active all participatory bodies created for the development of the Charter, including two “homegrown” ones: ECST Tourism Businesses Working Group and Communication Working Group.
- Keep on working with tourism businesses, renewing and adding more to the project over the years
- Interiorize and spread the way of working and the brand ECST in maps, websites and other entities’ materials, working ways and objectives.

An more specifically:

- Management of tourists flows and creation of sustainable tourism infrastructure and services: Bus Parc, public transport accessible itineraries (including a publication on them), Wikiloc’s profile to promote safe and recommended routes
- Impulse to local primary sector producers: *Creation of the Tagamanent workshop and continuity of the VEAMAT project (Vivero de Municipal Food Companies of the Tagamanent City Council) that currently holds a total of 15 producers as users of the infrastructure. Creation of the virtual platform for the commercialization of Montseny products “Mercat Virtual”*

- Improvement in tourist data gathering and processing, creation of ECST Montseny cluster in TDS - "Tourism Data System"
- *At the accessibility level, highlight the work undertaken with the study of accessibility in the facilities of the Montseny Natural Park by a specialized company. The resulting document gives a series of recommendations and actions to be taken to develop quality tourism for all*
- *Coordination and synergy with RB management structure, and its gender-perspective ECST follow up*

C.5 What are the main challenges still faced?

It is here included some of what the PA states, because these are very interesting intentions:

1. *To improve tourism sustainability results obtained so far, and to incorporate the necessary improvements in the procedure in order to be more effective in its execution.*
2. *To improve the involvement of the different municipalities in the development of the Action Plan.*
3. *In the ECST Montseny member companies Working Group, improve the involvement and development of joint actions as a collective.*
4. *Work on communication with a global vision ECST Montseny in order to achieve the following specific objectives:*
 - *Increase the visibility of the ECST by entities and members of the Working Group and municipalities of the ECST Montseny area*
 - *Have and facilitate a single tourist agenda for the ECST area*
 - *Preparation of a periodic informative material on the management of the ECST area*
 - *Improve the dissemination and training in ethnological heritage in the interested groups of the ECST Montseny: companies, organizations and entities, schools....*
5. *Have a diagnostic sheet on aspects related to accessibility to be able to analyse equipment and companies in the ECST Montseny area.*
6. *Complete the adhesion of Montseny environmental education facilities to the ECST*
7. *according to an agreement taken within the framework of the Environmental Education Strategy in Montseny.*
8. *Work through the Producers' Table to identify Montseny products, as well as its commercialization in order to involve the information centres and the companies adhering to the ECST.*
9. *Improve Montseny Natural Park destination and ECST communication.*
10. *Communicate the tourist information results to the entities providing data and other interested agents (Consells Comarcals, Tourism offices...).*

11. *Improve communication tools and channels to obtain a joint vision of the ECST area in relation to tourist data, frequentation ...*
12. *The implementation of Phase III in Montseny, as a tool at the service of local tourism companies adhered to the ECST (phase II) to which it provides an improvement in the marketing of sustainable tourist packages.*

Also, the following weaknesses are also challenges to face:

13. High visitor density, and accesses and parking crowding problems still occur in peak days during high season.
14. New visitor types and new technologies -that help unexperienced tourists to hike or bike to the park on their own- difficults control of access, education to visitors and management of visitor flows.
15. Contribution of visitors to conservation is still diffuse and not important.
16. Not a lot of information is given on training on sustainable tourism for park staff.

C.6 Has the Charter area monitored the results of its action plan over the past five years? 3

C.7 Have the specific recommendations made by the verifier and Evaluation Committee at original evaluation 5 years ago been addressed?

3

Please list the recommendations and give a score for each:

Verifier indicated weaknesses as well as recommendations:

Weaknesses:

- High visitor pressure: 2

Not clear if prior to the pandemic restrictions any action was taken in this direction.

After the lockdown, a huge increment of visitor numbers took place in protected natural areas in Spain. To cope with it, some accesses were regulated and restricted to prevent collapse of entrances, parking areas and road borders.

Also, a commission was created by the Barcelona Provincial Council, together with the hundred municipalities of the Network of Parks Natural to standardize the protocols of accessibility and restriction of access to natural areas, in situations of high visitor concentration.

In new Strategy, one of the lines of action is: 6. Carry out an active and coordinated management of public use spaces and facilities, with one of its objectives being: Regulate and limit the influx of visitors by applying measures to avoid overcrowding and inappropriate uses that damage the values of the territory.

- Low impact of visitors in local economy: 2

Some action seems to be taken, but it is not clear the actual impact it has had.

- Virtual market of local produce
 - The Producers' Table
 - Work to implement Biosphere Reserve brand for local products
 - Annual recipes contest, with a jury that bases its decisions on a cultural and immaterial heritage study.
- Institutional complexity: 2

Quite good communication and cooperation schemes appear to occur that assure solving problems of management and decision making.

- Lack of knowledge of current and future markets: 2

This is being worked on, with the data collection through destination surveys and analysis of the sector, but there are still no results.

Recommendations:

1. Defining main objectives and their indicators: 3

A set of indicators was created to analyse performance of actions, and are also included in current Action Plan

2. Identification and selection of potential markets to create tourist products: 2

Creation of ecotourism products of the Montseny Tourist Business Association with the programs and proposals for the visit:

- *Montseny is culture*
- *Coneix i tasta*
- *Tourist packages "Escapades al Montseny "*
- *Give Montseny as a present*
- *Creation of ecotourism product "Experiences Parc a taula"*

This last one seems to have been quite successful

3. Contribution of visitors to conservation: 1

Businesses Working group started working on this in 2020, and as a result a mount clean-up day was celebrated.

4. Training on sustainable tourism for park staff: 1

No specific action has taken place, although park staff participate in CESCAT, Europarc and Europarc Federation events

5. Let visitors know about private property and the forestry sector in the park: 2

- "Your dog and the herds of the Montseny "in digital and paper format.
- Campaign "Citizenship in the Parks"

6. Improve the dissemination of knowledge on the Charter and its results by the entities involved: 1 – 3*

1 - It was worked on by action 10 ECST Communication Tools, but there is still much to improve on the matter.

3* An interesting action the PA has included in the new plan is to create a distinction for municipalities with greater involvement, such as a ECST plate to exhibit in their town hall.

C.8 Were the envisaged financial resources available for the implementation, and where they sufficient?

Financial resources were overestimated, and thus only about a third were necessary, but human resources were a bit underestimated.

C.9 Have there been changes in staffing levels, both in the protected area generally and in the staff dealing with tourism issues, over the past five years? Has the level of staffing affected implementation of the action plan?

Some changes have occur but have not affected negatively on the implementation of strategy and action plan.

The ECST has a long history in the Montseny Natural Park and is a well-known and put in value for all the park staff and the respective Barcelona Provincial Councils and Girona as administrations responsible for managing the park.

NEW STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN - Plans for the next five years

Revision of strategy, new action plan

C.10 Has the tourism strategy been revised for the next five years?

2

Yes, a new strategy has been defined.

C.11 Has a new action plan been prepared for the Charter area and its partners?

2

Yes, a new action plan has been defined.

C.12 How are the strategy and new action plan presented (in terms of documents)? Please comment briefly on the strategy/plan documentation (e.g. level of detail etc.)

They are two separate documents, Estrategia 2021-2025 and Plan de Acció 2021-2025. Both of them have been submitted (kindly) in Spanish and Catalan languages.

The strategy defines 7 strategic lines of action, with various general objectives to achieve those lines, relating them to ECST principles as well as UNN Sustainable Development Objectives of the 2030 agenda.

The action plan establishes actions for each strategic line, structured in data cards with the following items:

- Name
- Objective
- Tasks and description
- Results (expected)
- Participant entities: responsible for the action and others to involve
- Resources: Human and financial
- Indicators
- Calendar

C.13 How does the tourism strategy relate to the protected-area management plan?

The ECST tourism strategy is fully compatible with the park management instrument the "Special Plan of the Parc del Montseny", as well as the current plans and programs of Montseny Natural Park.

It is to note that the initiatives and projects of the territory that involve tourist activity or socioeconomic development are elaborated from the ECST perspective.

C.14 Are there any apparent contradictions between tourism and protected-area management objectives and actions?

No. There is always the debate on hunting, for example, which is permitted and regulated by the park. It is used as a population management tool, but doesn't seem to be working, so it is advisable to try to find alternatives for the control of wild boars, mainly.

C.15 What process has been used to review/revise the strategy and develop the new action plan and how have local stakeholders been involved?

Please describe briefly the process, making reference to the role of the stakeholder structures described under Question B.1, as appropriate.

The renovation process was initiated by the Montseny Natural Park itself. In the Permanent Forum on December 2019 the proposal was presented for the renewal process for the year 2020. Initially it was planned to start working with the renovation in April and a Forum was scheduled as of April 1, but due to the pandemic, the process had to be rethought and restarted in July.

The process for the renewal of the ECST Montseny was as follows:

- *At the end of 2019, in the last meeting of the Working Group (11/28/2019) as well as the Permanent Forum (12.17.2019), among the topics to be worked on in 2020, included the renewal of the ECST Montseny for the next period 2021-2025.*
- *On February 10, 2020, the managers of the Montseny Natural Park met with the technical secretary of the ECST Montseny to propose the renewal process and define the schedule.*
- *On March 7, the first participatory session was held with the Park's informants to carry out a first SWOT from the point of view of the visitor service staff.*
- *Due to the pandemic, the format initially proposed had to be rethought to work the ECST Montseny renewal, in addition to requesting an extension from the EUROPARC Federation to present documentation.*
- *After several internal coordination meetings between the people responsible for the ECST in the Montseny Natural Park and the technical secretary of the Charter (04/16/2020, 05/14/2020, 06/25/2020), the initial schedule was reformulated, taking into account the accepted extension, and a Working*

Group was organized on data 8.07.2020 and a Permanent Forum on 07.15.2020 both in virtual format.

The members of the Forum were informed about the extension and the restating of the work plan initially defined, both by e-mail and in the different meetings.

C.16 Was there wider consultation with local tourism enterprises in preparing the revised strategy/action plan?

Local tourism enterprises participated in the Working Group meetings through the representative of the Tourism Businesses association and the representative of the Business Working Group.

In the forum they participate individually.

Also, a questionnaire was sent to all businesses and other stakeholders to make a diagnosis and assess weaknesses, interests, etc for the new period. Charter businesses as well as non partners answered the questionnaire.

C.17 Was there wider consultation with the local community and other interests/stakeholders in preparing the revised strategy/action plan?

All members of the Forum, were local community and other stakeholders are present, received the questionnaire. Also, they were informed and participated as members of the managing boards of the PA.

C.18 Has there been any further assessment of natural and cultural resources, their sensitivities (capacity) and opportunities for tourism? 2

Mainly through the questionnaire and the previous information from the quality scheme and studies conducted previously in the PA.

C.19 Has there been any further assessment of visitor patterns and needs? 2

Mainly through the questionnaire and the previous information from the quality scheme and studies conducted previously in the PA.

C.20 Has there been any further assessment of future visitor markets offering potential? 1

Not specifically, although again, *information is available through collaborating entities (Province of Barcelona in LABTurisme and in the Tourism Observatory in Barcelona: city and region, Girona Province in the Costa Brava Pirineu de Girona Tourist Board, Catalonia Region through the Catalan Tourism Agency.*

This issue is addressed in new action plan: ("14. Improvement and diversification of the supply of sustainable tourism products and activities "and" 31. Data collection and analysis tourism in the ECST Montseny area ") that contemplate, on the one hand, a first analysis on the potential visitors and their interests and on the other hand the collection of information on the typology of tourism and visitor profile, in addition to detecting new potential markets in the Montseny ECST area.

Implementation

C.21 Does the new action plan include an indication of phasing/staging of action over time?

2

Just the year it is planned to be carried out.

C.22 Does the action plan indicate the relevant stakeholders or partners for each action?

2

C.23 What is the approximate size of the budget that the protected-area authority is devoting to the implementation of the new action plan per year, excluding staff costs?

The total estimated cost of execution excluding personnel costs and general expenses is € 907,013.90 for the period 2021-2025

C.24 What is this approximately as a percentage of its total budget?

24,7%

C.25 Have funds been provided (or are they being sought) from other sources?

Yes, all of the main stakeholders will devote some funds for the completion of the action plan (public and private).

C.26 Do you judge the level of funding already secured/applied for to be sufficient to meet the action proposed?

2

C.27 What is the staffing that the protected-area authority is devoting to the implementation of the action plan?

Approximately, the technical staff of the Montseny Natural Park has estimated the following annual dedication:

- Head of unit of the public use area: 20% of the day
- Public use officer: 20% of the day

For the resolution of the Action Plan, the dedication of other team technicians is also taken into account: park management, Reserve technician, conservation program technician and staff administrative.

C.28 Is staffing being provided from other sources?

As in previous periods, the external contracting of technical assistance to the ECST secretariat through a service contract by the Barcelona Provincial Council.

Also, entities that collaborate or conduct actions will devote their personnel to it as it is noted in the action plan.

C.29 Do you believe the action proposed can be implemented with this level of staffing?

In some of the actions the hours estimated to be dedicated only count the specific time of carrying the action out, and maybe should set aside some time for the preparation of it (e.g. training courses).

C.30 Is there a good indication of commitment from partners/stakeholders to implementing the new action plan? 1

Not specifically for the implementation of the action plan. Yes as a general compromise with the ECST (formal letter of municipalities, compromise of attendance to meetings, etc.)

C.31 Does the Charter area have any formal arrangements with partners for implementation of this action plan?

(Same as above)

C.32 Has a process been put in place for monitoring and reporting on progress with the implementation of the Action Plan? 2

Yes, action 36. " Annual and five-year evaluation of the ECST and communication of results ", the preparation of an annual report will be maintained in order to guarantee the monitoring the development of the ECST, analyzing, on the one hand, the implementation of the actions planned and, on the other hand, the assessment by the responsible entity of the results obtained.

On the other hand, the Working Group is the technical workspace with an active communication between entities about the development of the actions in the current year. It also periodically reviews situation, taking into account the need for possible collaborations and unforeseen events.

C.33 Have indicators been identified for the impact/success of the strategy and action plan, including how these will be monitored? 2

Indicators have been established. How they will be monitored is not specifically stated, but it is implied in the indicator (minutes of a meeting, number of courses, ...)

Likewise, the option of maintaining the method of evaluation of the results of the ECST as a whole through the definition of indicators for monitoring the ECST by strategic lines.

SECTION D – ADDRESSING THE KEY TOPICS

Please indicate below:

- [A] The level of current activity
- [B] Progress over past five years – including in implementing of the previous action plan
- [C] Level of planned activity in the new plan

Please provide brief comments of explanation, as indicated in at the start of this form.

D1 Protecting valuable landscapes, biodiversity and cultural heritage

D1.1 Influencing land use planning and the control of potentially damaging developments A **2** B **2** C **2**

Work is being done to draft a new Special Plan, taking as reference the last draft document of 2008, to respond to the current challenges. The instrument for managing the Biosphere Reserve is the action plan drawn up in 2014 and during 2020 it's been worked on for its renovation.

D1.2 Influencing the location, type and design of tourism developments

A **2** B **3** C **3**

Some new local tourism infrastructures were created, as well as the improvement of the Bus Parc.

The most interesting actions planned for the future in this direction are:

- Action 13. Promotion of the implementation of environmental improvements in public facilities of the ECST area
- Action 27. Carrying out a diagnosis of the tourist offer and leisure spaces existing in the less frequented areas of the ESCT area

D1.3 Managing visitor flows, activities and behaviour in sensitive areas and sites

A **2** B **3*** C **3**

We highlight the creation of a WhatsApp group among the informants in order to have and exchange information immediately and updated on the status of roads and parking lots in the park.

[...], it is worth highlighting the work carried out in 2020 in regulating access to the Park that has been especially important given the changing situation in the mobility measures of the population motivated by the pandemic situation experienced. Consequently, in the website of the park, in its section "notices and alerts" and through social networks, the conditions of access and regulation established in autumn is reported regularly to the user and the general public, due to the high influx of visitors in specific places.

D2 Supporting conservation through tourism

D2.1 Encouraging visitors and tourism businesses to support conservation, through donations, volunteering and other activity A **1** B **2** C **1**

Work has been carried out to work in this topic although no great results have been obtained.

The Working Group of ECST Montseny companies carried out a first phase of compilation of proposals to develop conservation projects aimed at visitors and companies of the territory, either through monetary contributions or in dedication performing volunteering activities. As a result of this work, the following 3 proposals emerged:

- *Organize a volunteer, workshop or itinerary in the Montseny Natural Park*
- *Develop concrete actions related to the local product and the improvement of the heritage.*
- *Organization of a family-type cooperative day to clean the understory*

The only action that was carried out was a day of cleaning the riverside forests of the Montseny rivers, organized by the Montseny Tourism Business Association in august 2020. The action counted with the support of environmental education companies accredited with the ECST: Ademc Itineraris Montseny, Aprèn Serveis Ambientals and Viladrau Educació. It also featured with the support of the Barcelona and Girona Provincial Councils.

Actions proposed are not very clearly destined to make visitors more involved in the conservation of the PA, except for one.

D2.2 Using revenues obtained from tourism-related activity to support conservation A **1** B **1** C **1**

No specific actions have been developed or are planned in this direction. Indirectly, commitment with the charter and actions voluntarily adopted by companies and entities to improve their environmental behaviour and relation with the Park result in better conservation of the area.

D2.3 Establishing, supporting and promoting tourism-related investments, projects and activities that help to conserve the natural and cultural heritage A **2** B **2** C **2**

Conservation actions are carried out periodically, annually through the “Cercle de Voluntaris dels Parcs Naturals”, a project of participation and environmental awareness of the Barcelona Provincial Council.

In 2017, within the framework of the “Fem festa, fem parc” program, an activity related to water was proposed to the municipalities and carried out where legends were explained and a debate took place with the audience.

Revitalization of the Inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Montseny Natural Park and Biosphere Reserve, which came to an end in 2018 with the cooking recipe contest “Recipes of the biosphere” which, with the exception of 2020, has been held annually since 2016.

Action 28. Initial study of proposals to establish mechanisms of voluntary involvement

for the maintenance of the environment and landscape.

D3 Reducing carbon footprint, pollution and wasteful resource use

D3.1 Working with tourism businesses to improve environmental management, including use of energy and water, waste management, and noise and light pollution A **2** B **2** C **2**

Previous planned actions:

- *Action 9. Creation of work spaces within the framework of the Biosphere Reserve of the Montseny. We highlight the completion of the park's participation in the Life Clinomics project, carried out jointly with the Environment Area of the Diputació de Barcelona, whose objective was the construction of an action plan to develop measures for adaptation and face climate change in the Montseny Biosphere Reserve in three sectors, one of them the tourist. During 2020, work was carried out on the development of an action aimed at companies accredited with the CETS, which consisted in the characterization and definition of environmental improvements and conducting a pilot test*
- *Action 21. Adhesion of companies with the ECST (Phase II) In relation to Phase II, there is continuity with the adhesion of new companies and the renewal of the partner companies*
- *Action 22. Implementation of local initiatives for environmental improvement.*
- *Action 34. Implementation and arrangement of quality systems for companies*
- *Tourist. The managing body of the SICTED in the ECST area during 2016 was working on a change of line of work ceasing to manage this accreditation in quality issues to enhance accreditation to the Biosphere certification system. In order to facilitate the coexistence of both systems the managers of the Biosphere - DIBA Technical Tourism Office- and the managers of natural spaces of the DIBA Natural Parks Network established the compatibility of both systems to facilitate and simplify the work of companies adhered to the CETS.*

Planned actions:

- *Action 7. Adhesion and renewal of companies with the CETS (phase II)*
- *Action 8. Adhesion of travel agencies to the CETS (phase III)*
- *Action 9. Communication of good environmental practices in the CETS area*
- *Action 12. Promotion of the use of less polluting vehicles*

D3.2 Promoting the use of public transport and other alternatives to cars A **2** B **3** C **3**

Previous plan actions:

- *Action 15. Identification of existing itineraries that allow to structure a network. Highlight the results achieved in the identification and dissemination of existing itineraries, especially those that can be accessed by public transport and the publication of the guide "Public transport routes for the Network of Natural Parks" and the creation of the wikiloc profile of the Montseny Natural Park and Biosphere Reserve with information on existing itineraries.*
- *Action 17. Creation of local infrastructures for the interpretation and discovery of the Montseny*

- *Action 18. Improving the supply and coverage of public transport in the entire scope of the ECST*
- *Action 19. Analysis of private transport management and usage habits*

New plan includes:

- *Action 11. Expansion of the public transport network in the CETS area and promotion of its use*
- *Action 12. Promotion of the use of less polluting vehicles*
- *Action 30. Dissemination and expansion of the offer of itineraries that promote sustainable mobility from the population centers of the CETS area*

D4 Providing safe access, quality facilities and special experiences of the protected area, available for all visitors

D4.1 Providing a wide range of access opportunities, with attention to safety and risk management A 2 B 2 C 2

Although no actions were included in the past plan, the ECST area has a great number of diverse activities, itineraries and tourist infrastructures, as well as different means of communicating and promoting them, which assure a wide range of access opportunities. The network of informants are also in the area to inform and assess tourists on options, safety and regulations.

In the information materials recommendations for a respectful and safe visit are included, as well a specific ones: The “Good practices” handouts, also included in the website, “Visit the Park in Safety”, etc.

Special indications are given in specific times of higher restrictions, and the Wikiloc channel is aimed at directing visitors to well indicated and safe tracks and trails, for example.

D4.2 Improving the quality of visitor facilities and services A 2 B 3 C 2

The PA is certified with the Q of Quality in tourism scheme.

Actions in previous plan:

- Action 21. Adhesion of companies with the CETS (Phase II)
- The Action 32. Implementation of a satisfaction survey for visitors and users and clients of tourist services adhered to the CETS didn't succeed because of difficulty of data gathering.
- The Montseny Natural Park annually analyzes the level of satisfaction of its visitors through user satisfaction surveys that are available in equipment and services for public use of the Park
- In application of the tourism quality system, the park also has a procedure for collecting complaints and suggestions available to all users at facilities for public use and via the "suggestion box" website.
- Action 34. Implementation and arrangement of quality systems for tourism companies

Activities foreseen in the new Action Plan:

- Action 14. Improvement and diversification of the offer of tourist activities and sustainable products
- Action 15. Intra-company training to improve the tourist offer

D4.3 Providing visitors with specific tourism offers which involve discovery, interpretation and appreciation of the area's special natural and cultural heritage A 3 B 3* C 3*

3* In sense, quite some interesting activities are taking place:

Very interesting is the program "Viu al Parc", consisting of the programming of a series of plastic, scenic, musical, literary, folkloric and discovery of natural and cultural heritage of the PA (already carried out in the past action plan)

PA highlights the creation of the tourist product "Experiencias Parc a Taula" of which two editions have been carried out. It consists on one-two day activities with accommodation, meals and experiences in the PA involving local companies and products. The document is done and spread for all PA managed by the Diputació de Barcelona. The last one, from 2020, has 6 proposals in Montseny of which 10 ECST companies participate. The catalog has been published in 3 languages: Catalan, Spanish and English.

Many other ecotourism programs, packages and campaigns, such as "Montseny's ambassadors" with well-known personalities of the territory who are related to Montseny and from different areas give their vision of Montseny, from different points of view: craftsmanship, culture, gastronomy, etc. The project developed by the Asociación de Empresaris Turístics del Montseny and has the support of the Girona and Barcelona Provincial Council.

3* An action proposed in previous action plan, but not carried out, is included again, and is a very interesting one (although difficult to articulate): *Preparation of a permanent agenda of activities in the ECST area, which includes the activities of the park, the proposals of the companies adhered to the ECST and the municipalities that will be disseminated through the PA under the label "sustainable tourism".*

D4.4 Providing facilities and information for visitors with special needs A 2 B 3 C 2

With the diagnostical work carried out during last period, it is to expect that improvements will be done in the next one, although only two somewhat vague actions are included in the action plan:

- Action 16. Training and advice to promote accessible and inclusive tourism
- Action 17. Implement improvements for tourism for all

D5 Effectively communicating the area to visitors

D5.1 Ensuring that marketing materials and activities promote the area effectively and responsibly

A **3** B **3*** C **2**

To note is the creation of the Communication Work Group, that coordinates communication and materials of the ECST area amongst all stakeholders.

D5.2 Providing good quality and effective visitor information and interpretation

A **3** B **3** C **3**

The PA has plenty of interpretative material, panels, and trains personnel to ensure this information is passed on to visitors.

D5.3 Ensuring that tourism businesses and other local stakeholders are well informed about the area and provide relevant and accurate information to visitors A **3 B **3** C **3****

Plenty of actions in this direction:

- *Action 10. Creation of CETS communication tools*
- *Action 11. Preparation of a permanent agenda of activities in the CETS area*
- *Action 12. Dissemination of circular itineraries around municipalities*
- *Action 13. Dissemination of available information on ethnological heritage*
- *Action 17. Creation of local infrastructures for interpretation and discovery of the Montseny*
- *Action 21. Adhesion of companies with the CETS (Phase II)*
- *Action 31. Incidence in the movements of visitors through facilitation of visitor information*
- *Action 42. Promote the adhesion of tour operators with the CETS (Phase III)*

Activities foreseen in the new Action Plan:

- *Action 4. Creation of the course for a good connoisseur of the Montseny Natural Park*
- *Action 7. Adhesion and renewal of companies with the CETS (phase II)*
- *Action 8. Adhesion of travel agencies to the CETS (phase III)*
- *Action 15. Intra-company training to improve the tourist offer*
- *Action 19. Agenda of activities in the CETS area*
- *Action 28. Improved coordination between public use facilities and services of the CETS scope*
- *Action 29. Coordinated dissemination and network structuring of itineraries*
- *Action 33. Maintenance and improvement of the spaces for participation of the ECST in the Montseny*

D5.4 Providing specific information and interpretation for young people, schools and student groups A **2 B **2** C **2****

No specific new action was contemplated in previous action plan or on the new one on this direction, but:

There are two educational programs going on in the area, by the Strategic Plan on Environmental Education: Let's get to know our parks "from the Natural Areas Network and "Montseny at school" in the Montseny Natural Park.

There are several environmental education businesses and infrastructures that offer specific activities and materials for this group.

Also, the Guided itineraries program "Passejades guiades" is mainly directed to families.

D6 Ensuring social cohesion

D6.1 Anticipating, monitoring and minimising any existing and potential conflicts with local residents

A 2 B 2 C 2

Mainly through ECST working spaces.

Specific actions are also included in new action plan for specific conflicts that tend to occur:

- Action 3. Awareness and sensibilization for a responsible and respectful visit
- Action 10. Regulation of mobility in the Montseny Natural Park
- Action 27. Carrying out a diagnosis of the tourist offer and leisure spaces existing in the least frequented areas of the ECST area

D6.2 Maintaining good communication and engagement between local residents, businesses, visitors and the protected area authority

A 2 B 2 C 3

Various actions planned for this period that involve communication with the different stakeholders.

D6.3 Encouraging and developing appropriate partnership activity with and between stakeholders A 2 B 2 C 3

Previous plan:

- Action 3. Maintenance of the Tourism Businesses WG
- Action 23. Dynamization of workspaces of the agri-food and artisans producer group. Several networking sessions were held between local food product companies and quality and restaurants and shops, some with the support of the collective "Xarxa de Productes de la Terra "of the Barcelona Provincial Council. There was also continuity to the Producers' Table of the Montseny and the commercialization through the digital platform "Mercat Virtual".

New plan:

- Action 7. Adhesion and renewal of companies with the ECST (phase II)
- Action 8. Adhesion of travel agencies to the ECST (Phase III)
- Action 24. Promotion of networking to achieve a link between producers
- Action 33. Maintenance and improvement of the spaces for participation of the ECST in the Montseny

D7 Strengthening prosperity in the local community

D.7.1 Promoting the provision and identity of local produce and services and their purchase and use by visitors and tourism businesses

A **2** B **2** C **3**

Significant effort is done in this direction:

- *Action 23. Dynamization of workspaces of the producer group agri-food and artisans*
- *Action 24. Creation of a workshop in Tagamanen. As planned, the Tagamanent workshop was created and the continuity of the VEAMAT project (Incubator of Municipal Food Companies of the City Council of Tagamanent) which currently has a total of 15 producers.*
- *Action 25. Increase in the presence of local agri-food products in restaurants, information centers and member companies¹*
- *Action 26. Presence of “Una Finestra al Montseny” in local fairs*
- *Action 38. Approval of the “Montseny Biosphere Reserve” brand: manual and corporate image*

¹*Despite of not fully achieving the established objectives, work has been done on the established line and in the next period 2021-2025 will continue working to achieve the goal set, as foresees in action 22. “Promotion of the presence of local agri-food products in information centers and companies adhered to the CETS ”*

Activities foreseen in the new Action Plan:

- *Action 21. Facilitation of the presence of local producers and processors at fairs from Montseny*
- *Action 22. Promotion of the presence of local agri-food products in information centers and companies adhered to the ECST*
- *Action 23. Promotion of the link between local producers and processors and the sector tourism in the CETS field*
- *Action 25. Creation and implementation of the Biosphere Reserve brand*

D7.2 Supporting the economic viability and performance of local tourism businesses and the provision of local employment in tourism A **1** B **1** C **2**

Up to now, apart from partnership with the ECST umbrella, the main tasks developed in this direction were the communication of grants and funding for tourism companies.

In new plan, three actions are included for this topic:

- *Action 14. Improvement and diversification of the offer of tourist activities and sustainable products. Action by the Association of Tourism businesses that includes analysis of data by the PA, development of proposals by the Regional Councils and offer of the final products by the companies.*
- *Action 15. Intra-company training to improve the tourist offer*
- *Action 20. Sending aggregate information to the tourism sector*

D8 Providing training and capacity building

D8.1 Providing relevant training for staff of the protected area authority in sustainable tourism development and management

A 1 B 2 C 2

Only attendance to ECST events (in Catalonia, Spain and at European level) is contemplated.

Lower rank staff should also be included in training and capacity building programs, such as sustainability, natural and cultural conservation, accessibility and ECST: During the visit to one of the main tourism visitor centres, the informant at the moment wasn't very much aware of the ECST and the Charter partners.

They should receive specific training so as to be able to direct visitors to collaborators' businesses when asked for food or accommodation services, for example.

It may also be interesting that the attend a Forum meeting now and then.

D8.2 Providing and encouraging relevant training and capacity building for tourism businesses and other stakeholders in sustainable tourism

A 2 B 2 C 3

Actions developed in the past 5 years:

- *Action 35. Sending aggregated information to the private tourism sector on training. The technical secretariat of the ECST in Montseny during the period 2016-2020 and in a biannual basis sent the training agenda available by the entities linked to the ECECST to the members of the Permanent Forum of CETS Montseny.*
- *Action 36. Knowledge and improvement of tourist services and the territory The Montseny Tourism Entrepreneurs Association has organized an annual meeting of knowledge of the territory and of the associates that has been carried out when participation minimums have been reached. The conferences have made it possible to publicize tourist resources of the territory and has become a meeting space for those of the sector and its associates. Although they did not often reach the minimum of participants.*

Activities foreseen in the new Action Plan:

- *Action 1. Training and advice in the field of environmental education and sustainability*
- *Action 4. Creation of the course for a good connoisseur of the Montseny Natural Park*
- *Action 6. Dissemination of information on ethnological heritage*
- *Action 15. Intra-company training to improve the tourist offer*
- *Action 16. Training and advice to promote accessible and inclusive tourism*
- *Action 20. Sending aggregate information to the tourism sector*

D9 Monitoring tourism performance and impacts

D9.1 Monitoring of visitors – volumes, patterns, spending and satisfaction A 2 B 3 C 2

Much has tried to be done in this respect although not all the actions were fully developed. For next period the gathering and treatment of visitor data will continue and is planned to improve.

D9.2 Monitoring of tourism businesses – performance and needs A 2 B 2 C 2

Past plan actions:

- Action 3. Maintenance of the Working Group of companies adhering to the CETS
- Action 21. Adhesion of companies with the CETS (Phase II)

Activities foreseen in the new Action Plan:

- Action 7. Adhesion and renewal of companies with the CETS (Phase II)
- Action 33. Maintenance and improvement of the spaces for participation of the CETS in the Montseny
- Action 34. Attendance and participation in the different networking spaces of the CETS

D9.3 Monitoring of tourism impacts – on the environment, economy and community A 2 B 2 C 2

The park annually records the impact of tourism with various parameters related to public use of resources and activities with annual reports the park and the Q for quality.

The monitoring of the state of conservation of flora and fauna is carried out through the studies of the Ecological Parameters Monitoring Plan included in the "Conservation Plan" and the results are collected and summarized in the annual report of the Montseny Natural Park.

Apart from that, there is an assessment of positive and negative effects on tourism in the different meetings of the participatory bodies created for the Charter.

D9.4 Monitoring progress in implementing the action plan. A 2 B 2 C 2

Through the working spaces and participatory forums, and specifically in the yearly and quinquennial ECST assessment.

D10 Communicating actions and engaging with the Charter

D10.1 Communicating sustainable tourism actions and results to local stakeholders and more widely at a local, regional and national level

A 2 B 2 C 2

- *Action 10. Creation of CETS communication tools. In relation to the CETS communication tools, in 2016 the web was created specific of Sustainable Tourism in natural spaces and the information brochure of the companies adhering to the CETS in Montseny that is regularly updated with new editions.*
- *Action 14. Preparation of periodic information material on the management of the Charter area*

Actions related to sustainable tourism and their results have been communicated by adapting the information to the target public. For the work and participation bodies of the ECST, informative sessions have been held and associated documentation has been provided available on the website of sustainable tourism –activities, presentations and annual monitoring report-. In addition, articles, press releases and post have been prepared for the Parques Network newsletter, social networks and other specialized communication channels.

The most interesting action planned for next period is:

- *Action 39. Production of periodic informative material on the management of the ECST*

D10.2 Promoting and making visible the award of the Charter

A 2 B 2 C 2

Good work is being done in this direction, as the PA indicates, although there still plenty of margin for improvement (only one municipality included the ECST logo in their website):

Previous plan:

- *Action 7. Assistance and promotion of the ECST networking spaces*
- *Action 10. Creation of ECST communication tools*
- *Action 14. Preparation of periodic information material on the management of the area*
- *ECST*

The technical secretary of ECST Montseny has monitored the visualization of the ECST by the actors involved and member companies. In addition, a material was created informative that was distributed to the town halls. This material included ECST information for incorporate, totally or partially, in their promotion tools -basically websites- and material informative on the adhesion of companies to the ECST Montseny to distribute among the companies interested in the municipality.

At the level of publications and informative material under the umbrella of the ECST, the new logo has been progressively incorporated, as well as in communications on the web and social networks.

- *Action 19. Agenda of activities in the ECST area*
- *Action 32. Recognition of the participation of the municipal administration within the ECST scope*
- *Action 38. Creation of tools and mechanisms for the communication of the ECST*

D10.3 Engaging with EUROPARC and the Charter Network, including participating in related events and activities A 2 B 2 C 2

- *Action 7. Assistance and promotion of the CETS networking spaces. Representatives of the Montseny Natural Park have participated in the meetings and events of networking for protected natural areas accredited with the CETS at Catalan, state level - permanent seminar of the CETS in Valsaín- and European -renewal event in Brussels, conferences in the Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park, in Italy, days in Tzoumerka National Park in Greece and VI Conference of the CETS network of Spain and Portugal-*

Activities foreseen in the new Action Plan:

- *Action 34. Attendance and participation in the different networking spaces of the ECST*

D10.4 Taking steps for re-application and renewal of the Charter. A 2 B 2 C 2

- *Action 6. Definition of the work process for the renewal of the CETS. The CETS renewal process began in 2020 as planned. It started with a questionnaire open to the Forum based on the principles and key themes of the CET and continued with the review of the Strategy and preparation of a new Action Plan 2021-2025.*

Activities foreseen in the new Action Plan:

- *Action 37. Work for the renewal of the CETS*

SECTION E – EXPERIENCE AND FINAL COMMENTS

Please comment briefly on any points made by the applicant in this section which you believe are of particular interest.

E.1 Examples of excellence and best practice

Please mention briefly the best examples of excellence or best practice you have seen in this Charter area (by cross-reference to the above questions if appropriate)

1. (Related to question B.1. Is there a permanent stakeholder structure, with a defined membership, that enables ...) The Forum, although it hasn't got a formal structure, has concrete rules for membership that ensures an active commitment and participation of the entities included in it.

In order to be admitted as a Charter municipality, these criteria have to be met:

- *Be part of the natural region of Montseny, defined as the topography, geology, climatic, botanic and landscape.*
- *Develop a function of "gateway municipality" to the Park. That is, they have or may have the necessary infrastructures to start a visit to the protected area.*
- *Maintain a historical-cultural relationship with the Montseny massif, a fact that, in some way or another will have influenced the configuration of its landscape over time.*

In addition to these, the following criteria for the involvement of the ECST municipalities of the surrounding area and consequently their permanence in the ECST are in place:

- *Attendance of 50% and excuse of 50% of the calls of the Permanent Forum*
- *Also, from the beginning of the candidacy, it was established that the municipality should carry out a formal communication of the will to participate in the ECST project. The communication was due to be in writing and accompanied by the appointment of a ECST representative per municipality.*

The rule of attendance to at least 50% of the forum meetings also applies to businesses.

2. (Related to B.2. Are local tourism enterprises involved?) There is a specific Tourism Business Working Group
3. (Related to D.10. Communicating actions and engaging with the Charter). An interesting action the PA has included in the new plan is to create a distinction for municipalities with greater involvement, such as a ECST plate to exhibit in their town hall.
4. (Related to D.1.3. Managing visitor flows, activities and behaviour in sensitive areas and sites) There is a WhatsApp group among the informants in order to have and exchange immediate and updated information on the status of roads and parking lots in the park.
5. (D.4.3. Providing visitors with specific tourism offers which involve discovery, interpretation ...): Program "Viu al Parc", consisting of the programming of a series of plastic, scenic, musical, literary, folkloric and discovery of natural and cultural heritage of the PA (already carried out in the past action plan)

Product "Experiencias Parc a Taula" of which two editions have been carried out. It consists on one-two day activities with accommodation, meals and experiences in the PA involving local companies and products. The document is done and spread for all PA managed by the Diputació de Barcelona. The last one, from 2020, has 6 proposals in Montseny of which 10 ECST companies participate. The catalog has been published in 3 languages: Catalan, Spanish and English.

An action proposed in previous action plan, but not carried out, is included again, and is a very interesting one (although difficult to articulate): Preparation of a permanent agenda of activities in the ECST area, which includes the activities of the park, the proposals of the companies adhered to the ECST and the municipalities that will be disseminated through the PA under the label "sustainable tourism".

6. There is another permanent ECST participatory structure, the Communication Work Group, that coordinates communication and materials of the ECST area amongst all stakeholders, to ensure homogeneity, consistency, and an image of destiny.

E.2 Marketing and promotion of the Charter

Is the protected area helping to promote the Charter, e.g. in its publications, website, etc.?

Yes, the website many their publications of the PA include the logo. Minutes of the Forum meetings, are also published on the Park's website

The main information document in the web, in various languages, also includes a text about the Charter and the list of partner businesses.

There is also a specific site in the Barcelona Regional government's Protected Areas Network dedicated to the ECST.

The area also encourages partners and municipalities to include the logo and information in their respective websites and publications.

E.3 Experience of working with the Charter – final comments

B3-B8 questions are hard to answer because in the PA's re-validation report, the Charter area is asked about membership in the forum, and not about how each stakeholder's participation or representation has evolved throughout the previous 5 year period.

A thought: Reports could be updated under the gender perspective? (e.g. to include some questions regarding gender equality, etc.).