

RE-EVALUATION Verifier's Report to the Evaluation Committee

Name of protected area: Malcata Nature Reserve - Terras do Lince

Name of verifier: Azucena de la Cruz

Date of submission of re-evaluation application by protected area: 31st of March 2022

Date of verification visit: 1st to 3rd of June 2022

Date of completion of this report: 30th of August, 2022

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.

Note: In this form you can only write in the dedicated spaces. The rest is protected and cannot be deleted or changed in any way.

To answer a question, please click the box just below the question. As you will notice, no formatting options are available. If you want to enrich your report by inserting images, tables, or just applying bold, italic on your text, you can do it only by “copy & paste” the information in such format from another Word document.

Programme of visit, key sites and partners visited:

Please attach a full list of people interviewed and job titles as an appendix

Legend:

RNSM - Serra da Malcata Natural Reserve;

ICNF - Institute for Nature Conservation and Forests;

ELA - Local Animation Structure (made up of two officers from each Town Council + 1 officer from ICNF + 1 Co-Management Committee technician);

Destinature - Agency for the Development of Nature Tourism; managing entity of Provere iNature;

ADES - Sabugal Business Association;

ASTA - Socio-Therapeutic Association of Almeida;

Wednesday 1st June (1st day of the visit)

08:55 am: Departure from Sabugal

09:30 am: Kick-off meeting at RNSM headquarters

- Penamacor LAS and ICNF + Destinature + Co-management Technician LAS:

Highlighting the work being done by Destinature and the RNSM Co-management

10:30 am: Visit to the RNSM conducted by António Cabanas and the TA companies JPMV, Lda. and Malcata Eco Experience with approach to the actions:

I.3 - Environmental Education in the Lands of the Lynx (ICNF)

IV.19 - Bank of guides for the Lands of the Lynx (Tourism Animation - João Paulo Manaia do Vale - Unipessoal, Lda.)

11:00 am: Visit to Moinho do Maneio (Accommodation - candidate to CETS II) with activity demonstration by Malcata EcoExperience (Tourism Animation - candidate to CETS II and action promoter)

12:30h: Picnic at RNSM (Meimão, Albufeira da Meimoa) with Beir'aja (Tourism Animation - CETS II candidate and action promoter)

14:00: continuation of the Guided Tour at RNSM

17:00h: end of the Guided Tour to RNSM

17:10h: Visit to the rabbit breeding farms in Sabugal with the framework of Lince 2020 and approach to:

- I.1 - Lynx 2030 - the return of the Iberian Lynx to Malcata - Eng. Alberto Barata (responsible for the implementation of the Lynx 2020 project in Sabugal municipality)

18:30h: Guided visit in Sortelha; short meeting with Raízes Apelativas Company (Accommodation - candidate to CETS II)

19:30h: Brief meeting with ADES - Sabugal Business Association - action promoter

20:30h: Dinner at Casa da Esquila Restaurant - Rural Gourmet with action approach:

IV.27 - Foraging in the Lands of the Lynx

Thursday, June 2nd (2nd day of the visit)

07:00h: Drive to Alfaiates (Albufeira) with approach to:

IV.30 - Birdwatching (CM Sabugal + CERVAS Gouveia)

II.12 - Naturcôa - Image, Nature and Heritage

12:30: Lunch at Casas do Torreão (TER - candidate to CETS II)

14:00: Visit to Rewilding Portugal (partner in several actions) of Vale do Carapito and Quinta de Sta. Margarida with approach to the work developed by Rewilding Portugal in the CETS territory

17:00h: end of the 2nd day of the visit

Friday, June 3rd

08:45h: Departure towards ASTA;

09:30h-13:00h: Visit to ASTA - Project "Contigo, Há descoberta" (CETS II Candidate Entity)

13:30h: Lunch at O Caçador Restaurant (candidate to CETS II), Malpartida

14:30h: Guided visit to Almeida

16:00: Final Briefing in Almeida:

- 3 Town Councils (Mayors)

- ICNF (Regional Director)

Approach to actions:

GG.31 - Local animation structure

GG.32 - co-management of the Serra da Malcata NR

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**

The Charter area designation in this re-evaluation report is “CETS Terras do Lince” – Lands of Lynx. In the previous Charter period, it included Gata-Malcata, since the Charter territory aimed to extend to the Sierra de Gata in Spain. However, due to the loss of interest on the Spanish side, they gave up this idea for the time being.

The present Charter territory includes the administrative limits of three Portuguese municipalities: Almeida, Sabugal e Penamacor. In terms of protected areas, there is the Malcata Nature Reserve (IUCN category I) and two Natura 2000 sites: SPA - PTZPE0007

Serra da Malcata, which mostly matches the limits of the Nature Reserve, and SCI PTCO0004 Malcata), both in UICN category IV. In addition, the municipality of Penamacor is part of Naturtejo Geopark.

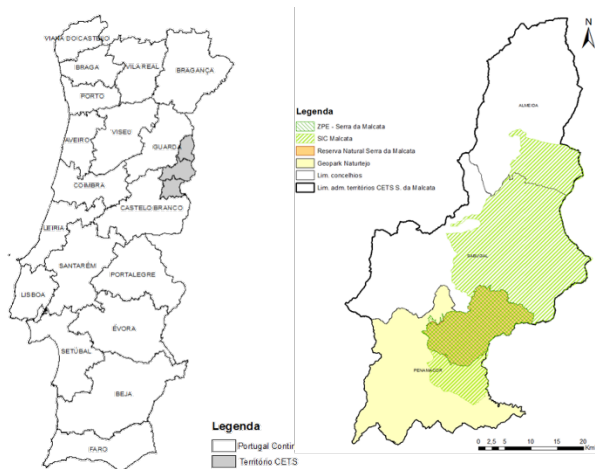


Figure 1. Map of the territory and protected areas (Source: Re-evaluation form)

The area of the Charter territory is 190,429 hectares. From this territory, the Nature Reserve comprises 16,150 hectares; the Natura 2000 sites comprise 79,569.11 (that includes the Nature Reserve). The Geopark occupies 56,361 hectares. Therefore, the total protected area of the territory is 61% of its extension.

The population in the Charter territory is 21,938 inhabitants. It has suffered a significant decrease since 1991. Most of the population resides outside the Malcata Nature Reserve where only a few scattered houses along the Meimoa stream and in the area of the Baságueda River exist.

The Malcata Nature Reserve is one of the nationally protected areas in Portugal managed by the Institute for the Conservation of Nature and Forest (ICNF), which depends on the Ministry of Environment. This entity is also the owner of the Charter because the Nature Reserve does not have administrative or financial autonomy.

The Malcata Nature Reserve has a Land-Use Plan (Plano de Ordenamento da Reserva Natural da Serra da Malcata). It defines the zoning of areas subject to protection regimes, their corresponding objectives and scope, and the types of uses for each zone. It creates four zones: total protection, partial protection, complementary protection and specific intervention areas.

The National Institute for Conservation and Forests (ICNF) manages the Malcata Nature Reserve jointly with all National Protected Areas in the Centre Region. The Nature Reserve has a staff of three Officers (there is no Park Director), one Technical Assistant, five Park Rangers and six Operational workers.

In order to improve management and involve local entities the ICNF approved legislation for the creation of Co-management Committees for the Protected Areas in Portugal. On the 4th of June 2021, the national government created the Co-management Committee for the Malcata NR, formed by: i) Câmara Municipal de Penamacor; ii) Câmara Municipal do Sabugal; iii) Direção Regional da Conservação da Natureza e Florestas do Centro, iv) Universidade da Beira Interior; v) Confederação Portuguesa das Associações de Defesa do Ambiente; vi) Assembleia de Compartes da Freguesia de Malcata; vii) Conselho Diretivo do Baldio dos Fois; viii) Instituto Social Cristão Pina Ferraz.

This Co-management Committee will create a three-year plan to promote economic activities compatible with conservation and conservation activities in the Nature Reserve.

The Charter management structure is the Local Animation Structure. This structure includes two officers from the ICNF (one of them being the officer responsible for the Co-management Plan) and each of the municipalities in the Charter territory.

Since the same officers are part of the Local Animation Structure and the Co-management committee, they will ensure the coordination between these two plans.

In terms of natural resources, the area was the last in Portugal with the presence of the Iberian Lynx - *Lynx pardinus* - because the territory was the target of one of the first nature conservation campaigns in Portugal with the slogan: "Save the lynx and Malcata". Nowadays, the lynx is extinct from Malcata Nature Reserve, but in Portugal, there is still a connection between them. In addition, the local population is very proud of this and still considers the species a symbol of the territory, which they would like to see back.

The municipalities of Penamacor and Sabugal have implemented projects to improve the habitat for the species with a focus on increasing rabbit populations decimated by a series of viral illnesses. To the moment, there has been no success. Meanwhile, in other areas, in the south of Portugal, the efforts for the reintroduction of the Iberian lynx were successful.

The Malcata Nature Reserve preserves flora and fauna representative of the Mediterranean Biogeographical Region with around 218 species of vertebrates, including the black stork, the otter, the griffon vulture and the wildcat. In the watercourses and temporary ponds, there are also species of amphibians endemic to the Iberian Peninsula.

The territory includes well-preserved patches of various Mediterranean habitats, from the black oak forests to the "montados" – anthropic areas with a mosaic of holm oaks and pastures. It also presents well-preserved riparian galleries and rocky habitats with Iberian endemic species.

There are no specific records for the Malcata Nature Reserve. Considering the records of the tourism offices in the three municipalities of the territory reached 121,684 visitors in 2019, before the Covid-19 pandemic. However, Almeida accounts for most of these visitors (99,799). Since it is a historic town in Portugal and is distant from the Nature Reserve, it is unlikely that all those visitors would have visited the protected areas. The interpretation centre/headquarters of the Malcata Nature Reserve in 2019 only registered 788 visitors; however, it is possible to enter the Nature Reserve without passing by this headquarters.

The territory received 40,778 singular visitors for 56,128 nights in 2019. Almeida and Sabugal have a similar number of overnight stays, slightly ahead of Penamacor. The net rate of bed occupancy in the territory did not reach 20% in the whole period, with Sabugal slightly ahead with a net occupancy of 25.2% in 2019. The average stay is less than two days in all the municipalities (1.5 in 2019) which is a very low figure.

The economic importance of tourism activity is also very low, representing only 5% of all the economic income of the territory. This revenue is mostly related to restoration activities (77%), followed by accommodation (20%) and with a very low expression of touristic animation activities (2%). However, all municipalities have presented growth of touristic activities in the Charter period pre-Covid (2016-2019) which shows an interest of the entrepreneurial sector in investing in the territory.

In conclusion, this territory presents a low density of tourism, very low average stay and low bed occupancy despite having a small offer of accommodation and has significant room for growth of tourism while maintaining sustainability.

Promoting and organizing touristic recreational and interpretative activities should be a priority to increase the permanence of visitors and the territory presents a high potential for eco-touristic activities, both active and contemplative. These activities can rely on the natural features present in the area, even if it is not possible to reintroduce the Iberian Lynx yet.

Comments on the application from the Charter area and re-evaluation visit:

Please raise any points and issues relating to the process

The re-evaluation visit allowed a good understanding of the territory and the Charter process in the previous period. All information provided was direct and honest, included the difficulties, and short-comes of the process, for which I am grateful.

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:

It is clear, from all the information provided, that the first Charter period faced some organizational issues that led to a very low implementation of the Charter Action Plan and to the need of reorganization of the Charter structures in the territory.

However, it was also possible to see a renewed commitment from all stakeholders to the process and a genuine will of achieving a higher implementation in this period.

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

- **Low density of tourism** at present that gives room for organized and sustainable growth;
- **Interesting natural assets and landscape:** The territory includes large areas of well-preserved black oak forests, clean rivers and well-preserved riverside forests. Also, the anthropic landscape is beautiful with a mosaic of varied crops, which include trees such as chestnuts, hazelnuts and strawberries trees;
- **Rich “borderland” historical and cultural heritage:** The history of the only “dry frontier” (the only frontier not formed by a river) between Portugal and Spain is long and fascinating. The lack of rough geographical accidents made the connection between the two sides of the border very easy. For this reason, the connections between the inhabitants of both sides were very strong. In addition, it was the scene for many illegal activities, like smuggling and illegal migration. Centuries of this have generated many captivating stories recorded in books. Including these stories in tourism interpretation could make them much more appealing.
- **A good involvement of businesses both individually and with business associations;**

- **Interesting conservation initiatives open for visitation:** The association Rewilding Portugal is buying large areas of terrain and introducing sorraia horses (a Portuguese variety genetically close to wild horses) to recover natural dynamics in a large corridor along the Côa Valley. These areas have an interpretative trail and allow visitation;
- **Great Innovative ideas for eco-tourism products:** Two examples I would highlight are Foraging and project “Contigo, Há descoberta”. Foraging involves workshops for local companies about edible wild plants that include professional show-cooking that could become an original eco-tourism product. The project “Contigo, Há descoberta” from the ASTA (Socio-Therapeutic Association of Almeida) organizes handcrafting workshops and guided walks led by the community members. It allows small groups of tourists to get to know the community and its origins and even to live with them and like them for a period with some local accommodation. In addition, some other innovative touristic and wellness experiences such as nature baths are taking place in the territory.
- **High-level involvement and commitment of the local stakeholders** (Town Councils and ICNF), this was shown by the high-level presence of majors, vice-majors and the director of ICNF in the final meeting of the verification visit.

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

- **Absence of Iberian Lynx in the territory**, which is featured in the name and can lead to confusion among visitors;
- **Little information about visitors** in the area and specifically in the Nature Reserve of Malcata;
- **Lack of a structural offer** - Although there are several activities offers in the territory aimed at visitors, there does not seem to be any coordination of these activities or any connection between companies, which may make it difficult to define the territory as a single tourist destination;
- **Little coordination of offer and promotion between the three municipalities** - From the materials received and from what I observed during the verification visit, it seems that there is no coordination between the three municipalities to create a connected tourism offer and not even in terms of joint promotion of the territory;
- **Absence of a “Natural Reserve Touristic Product” or even a visitation plan for the Nature Reserve:** While Serra da Malcata Nature Reserve is an asset of the territory, the absence of a visitation plan or investment in promoting organized and sustainable visitation to the Reserve is a weak point in terms of Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas;
- **Very weak involvement of supra-municipal tourism entities:** *Turismo de Portugal* – Portugal DMO is involved in the Charter. They only assume one action in the Charter Action Plan regarding touristic promotion, which does not seem very ambitious.

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

While the previous implementation period of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in protected areas fell far short of its objectives, the actors in the territory seem to have adequately identified the reasons for this.

Since 2019, the main partners in the process have acted to address the problem, creating the Local Animation Structure and identifying 13 priority actions to implement. This action could have borne fruit if it had not coincided with the period of mandatory isolation because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

For this reason, the first recommendations regard trying to avoid this Charter period following the same path as the previous one.

1. Try to get some early results by prioritizing and simplifying.

The low execution of the previous phase could have demotivated some stakeholders. In this sense, it will be essential to identify actions that can provide results as soon as possible to show the benefits of joint and coordinated work to participants and stakeholders. These would increase the interest of stakeholders in this process and encourage their deeper involvement. Perhaps it will be possible to do this with some actions started in the previous plan that has some good development.

In addition, some actions have a wide range of objectives and involve many entities, which imply long planning periods to deliver all the foreseen results. To get earlier results, I would suggest selecting fewer priority results and actions and moving towards implementation while leaving secondary results and actions for later planning in a second phase.

2. Ensure good coordination between the different plans taking place in the territory and the allocation of funds for the implementation of the actions included in the Charter Action Plan;

Several plans will co-exist with the Charter Action Plan, especially the Co-management Plan. It is essential, that these tools are not only coordinated but also even include the same actions to ensure that there are enough human and financial resources to implement both plans adequately.

3. Guarantee that the Local Animation Structure has sufficient staff and resources to ensure coordination, animation and regular monitoring of the process;

In line with the previous recommendation, it will be essential for good development of the process that the Local Animation Structure, which will be responsible for all the management of the Charter Action Plan, have sufficient staff and resources to conduct this work.

4. Implement Adaptive Management and include in the process relevant actions taking place in the territory to promote coordination;

While there has been an effort to coordinate and identify actions by all stakeholders for the Charter Action Plan, I believe other actions are in place (i.e. river restoration initiatives in Almeida) that are in line with the Charter principles. The identification

actions and their inclusion in the Charter Action Plan will enrich it and promote coordination at a wider scale. This suggestion is not only an opportunity to boost the Charter Action Plan but also to share good practices between municipalities and create synergies.

Regarding sustainable tourism planning itself, I would also like to list a few recommendations (some of them indicated in the previous verification report and still valid), namely:

5. Manage the Lynx expectations carefully and use the lynx reintroduction project as an educational and interpretation opportunity;

The reintroduction of Iberian lynx in the Malcata area will take a long and some habitat management measures may conflict with the general concept of nature tourism, such as hunting tourism. Hunting has proved to be a necessary measure to reduce the high densities of rabbits by killing weaker ones and thus reducing the spread of viral illnesses.

For this reason, tourist communication of the territory should be careful while addressing this issue to avoid misleading tourists. On the other hand, the actions in place for the recovery of the lynx could be an interesting interpretative product for the territory.

6. Gather information about visitors and potential markets to promote the destination

The lack of information about visitors is a handicap for constructing an adequate touristic offer. Gathering both quantitative and qualitative on the current visitors and their needs is essential, as it is to identify potential sources of visitation to develop an adequate promotion strategy.

7. Prioritize the implementation of the “Charter of Nature Tourism Activities”

This action (III.14) can provide relevant information to create a structural Eco touristic product for the territory. Moreover, since there is no Visitation Management Plan for any of the protected areas, this action could serve as one and ensure an organized growth of tourism activity in protected areas without negative impacts on conservation.

8. Ensure networking of Charter businesses and benefits for them;

The territory is starting the Charter part II, with 14 companies likely to join this year. It would be relevant to ensure close work with them, promote networking and provide differentiated opportunities to keep them motivated.

9. Promote structural actions focusing on the Natura 2000 site to create an Eco touristic product that connects all the territory as well as the natural and cultural aspects;

Identifying and creating an Eco touristic product that could connect the three municipalities and serve, as a presentation card for the destination could be key. The three councils share natural heritage and cultural heritage, namely the Natura 2000 sites and the “borderland” character and stories. Those features could serve as the basis for this structural product.

10. Monitor sustainability indicators of the territory and the impact of the Charter Action Plan in terms of Charter Principles to identify necessary actions regarding the improvement of sustainability of tourism;

Finally, the Charter Action Plan identifies execution indicators for all the actions in the Charter Action Plan, but no impact indicators. Measuring sustainability and impact indicators will be essential to ensure the progress toward sustainable tourism. Action III.13 – Barometer of the Lands of the Lynx, identified as a priority, intends to do this. It would also be a piece of useful information to select relevant actions for future strategies.

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.

Despite the low execution in the previous Charter period, and considering the constraints due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the fact that they are aware of the problems of coordination that led to this low result and they are taking measures to ensure a better coordination and execution in the next phase, I would recommend the re-award of the Charter.

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

Yes, all the application documents were clear and provided adequate information.

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

It was not necessary to ask for additional/amended information

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

All information was available

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

Yes

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

Yes, the territory has a permanent forum since 2015 with an informal character and open to all local institutions public and private that include:

- Local authorities and local development associations;
- Organisations of agro-food products producers;
- Public Administration bodies with relevant competence in managing the territory;
- Local economic agents in the tourism sector and their associative structures

- Environmental associations;
- Other public or private entities interested in Sustainable Development and Protected Areas

This forum met 4 times in this Charter period, in May 2016, February 2017, October 2018 and October 2019, annually with the exception of 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions. The forum met again, for the re-evaluation process in the second semester of 2021 and 6 times in 2022 (four times in January, once in February and once in March).

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 Charter in Terras do Lince is structure with three informal structures: a Permanent Forum of Sustainable Tourism (PFST), a Project Technical Team (PTT) and a Local Animation Structure (LAS).

The Forum of Sustainable Tourism is the wider structures and integrates all local stakeholders; this structure validates the process and choices of the Project Technical Team relating the preparation of the re-evaluation dossier and, later, its implementation. The Charter territory has a Permanent Forum with 90 members at present with the composition shown in table 1.

Table 1. Members of the Permanent Forum

Typology	Nº Entities	Nº Participants
Touristic companies	27	28
Accommodation	15	15
Restauration	2	2
Shops (handcrafting and agro-food)	5	5
Cultural and touristic animation	6	5
Transport	1	1
Privates	16	25
Business associations	2	3
NGOs	13	20
Others	1	1
Public	13	33
TOTAL	61	90

The Project Technical Team includes officers from several public and private entities in the territory and has an executive function in the re-evaluation process and in the implementation.

Additionally, since the first application, the territory considered necessary to include an animation structure, that would be responsible for implementing structural actions and keep the Charter spirit alive. For this reason, the municipalities, the ICNF and the association “Territórios do Côa” signed an agreement to delegate in the latter the responsibility for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the Charter Action Plan as well as

implementing those structural actions contained in the Plan. However, this association did not manage to execute this work and, for this reason, in 2019 the partners created the Local Animation Structure.

The Local Animation Structure is formed by six municipal officers (two from each municipality), one ICNF officer and, since 2021, an officer from the Co-management Commission of the Malcata Nature Reserve. This structure has a specific regulation that defines its main functions, which include:

- To coordinate, implement and monitor the execution of the Action Plan
- To promote periodic meetings of the Permanent Forum of Sustainable Tourism and the Project Technical Team
- To periodically contact the promoters of the actions and ensure good articulation with the partners
- To identify opportunities for cooperation and articulation between the different actions to be executed
- To update the Action Plan with other actions that fit the principles and objectives of CETS

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

Along the Charter period, the participation of stakeholders in the forum has reduced, passing from 214 members in 2016 to 91 in 2022, mostly due to less participation of the enterprises and local community. In addition, some entities reduced the number of active members in the forum.

In terms of functions, there have been no changes.

B.2 Are local tourism enterprises involved?

2

Yes, the forum includes the following business and local development associations involved:

- Acrisabugal - Associação de Criadores de Ruminantes do Concelho do Sabugal
- ADES - Associação Empresarial do Sabugal;
- ADEFS - Associação de Desenvolvimento Encostas da Fonte Santa;
- ASTA - Associação Socio terapêutica de Almeida;
- ADIRAIA – Associação Desenvolvimento Interior Raiano;
- AMCB – Associação de Municípios da Cova da Beira;
- Pro-Raia-Associação Desenvolvimento Integrado Da Raia Centro Norte;
- ADSI - Agência de Desenvolvimento da Sociedade da Informação;
- CCDRC - Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional do Centro;
- CIMBSE- Comunidade Intermunicipal das Beiras e Serra da Estrela.

These associations represent an important number of businesses of the territory and some of them are involved in the actions of the Charter Action Plan 2021-2026 like ADES and AMCB.

Also individual business companies are involved in the Charter Action Plan like Viuva Monteiro e Irmão, Lda., Rotas e Raizes, Malcata Eco-experience, EAT João Paulo Manaia do Vale, Unipessoal Lda. E a Casa Ti Messias.

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

The Charter area has started the implementation of Charter phase II in the territory with 14 companies currently in the process of auditing their businesses to apply to the Charter award.

Additionally, the Charter Action Plan 2021-2026 includes actions to involve local companies:

I.5-Open day: Annual event that aims to promote the touristic offer of the territory (especially that of Charter part II companies) to the local companies, travel agencies, media and local population.

III.15- Training for entrepreneurs: This action will create a diagnosis of the training needs of local companies and provide tailor-made training (on-line and in person) on fiscal issues, creation and development of businesses, EU funds, etc.

III.16- Training about the touristic offer in the territory: This action will promote training for the members at the Local Animation Structure, municipal officers of tourism, ICNF officers and company owners (with priority to Charter II partners) about the existing offer and resources of the territory for tourism.

GG.33- Charter part II – Extension and Animation: This action will promote Charter part II implementation in the territory and de promotion of networking between Charter II partner companies.

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

The territory is implementing Charter part II

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

B.4 Local government?

3

The three municipalities are involved in the Charter process and signed an agreement for the implementation of actions in the Charter Action Plan and to promote and support the work of the Local Animation Structure.

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

2

Yes, all meetings of the Permanent Forum on Sustainable Tourism are open to the public. Additionally the Ribeiro Sanches School Group of Penamacor, all the Parish Councils in the territory and several local associations are active members of the Forum.

In order to reach local population that is not actively involved, the Charter created a blog with information about the process and a Facebook page. In 2021, the Local Animation Structure created a new blog because it no longer had access to the previous one.

B.6 Conservation interests?

2

Yes, despite with low participation, environmental associations are members of the Permanent Forum on Sustainable Tourism. In the first phase, the Forum included Iberlinx Association, the Transcudania Association and the Spanish Foundation "Naturaleza y Hombre". Presently, those associations are no longer participating but the Forum included new associations carrying conservation work in the territory like Rewilding Portugal and linked to promotion of sustainable tourism in protected areas like DESTINATURE.

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

3

Yes, the Forum and other structures of the Charter process include tourism, nature conservation and regional development entities with a wider scope than the territory of the Charter.

Turismo Centro de Portugal, DMO for the central region of Portugal, is involved in both the Technical Project Team and the Permanent Forum on Sustainable Tourism. There was also the active participation of the Committee for Coordination and Development in Central Region of Portugal, an entity with competencies in regional development, environment and spatial planning.

Regarding environment and nature conservation, the Technical Project Team and the Forum integrates the ICNF and the Geopark Naturtejo.

In addition, some of the regional development associations involved in the Forum have larger scopes, this is the case of Pró-Raia, Territórios do Côa and Associação de Municípios da Cova da Beira.

B.8 Any other key groups (please state which), either within or outside the formal partnership structure described above, which have been actively involved? 3

The participation of higher education institutions - Polytechnic Institute of Guarda, Polytechnic Institute of Castelo Branco and the University of Beira Interior is also relevant.

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

Due to some problems, initially with the management entity selected for the animation of the Charter and later due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the implementation of the Charter Action Plan has been very weak.

In the beginning of the process, the partners appointed the association Territórios do Côa as the manager of the Charter implementation and monitor of the process, but due to financial and human resources limitations, they could not execute this function. In 2019, considering the low execution, the partners created the Local Animation Structure and selected 13 priority actions to accomplish until the end of the Charter period. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and all the restrictions on mobility it posed, they could not execute any of the actions.

Anyway, there has been some evolution towards sustainable tourism and ecotourism conducted by the partners independently of the Charter Action Plan, which compensates for the low execution of the Action Plan.

In general, the territory, due to its low density, in terms of both population and tourism and its high natural and cultural value, has the ideal characteristics for the promotion of sustainable tourism. For this reason, most of the actions in the territory go in this direction, which is a good start for a more organized implementation of the Charter.

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

No, in fact the implementation of the Charter Action Plan was weak with only 8% of the actions finalized and 53% not even initiated. As for the rest of the actions, 22% were only initiated and 18% are advanced in completion.

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

There were two main reasons for the reduced implementation of the Charter Action Plan:

In first place, the expected coordination and animation of the process by Territórios do Côa did not happen. This led to a quick loss of momentum by partner entities that also struggled with lack of human resources and financing for the implementation of some of the actions.

In 2019, in an attempt to accelerate the implementation of the Charter Action Plan the partners created the Local Animation Structure and defined 13 priority actions to implement until the end of the period. However, due to Covid-10 pandemic in 2020 this could not happen.

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

Although in terms of execution, the Charter Action Plan did not reach the expected outcome, the process has had some positive aspects in terms of the municipalities working together and learning to improve organisation and execution in the future.

The Charter AP 2016-2021 allowed the three municipalities to start working together, build trust between them, with the ICNF and with local companies and create a common project and prove of that is the agreement signed in 2019 to create the Local Animation Structure and the commitment of officers of the municipalities and ICNF to it.

Although not directly related to the Charter Action Plan 2016-2020, but relevant for the implementation of the new Charter AP it is a significant positive achievement of the territory the creation of the Co-management committee for the Malcata Nature Reserve. This committee includes members from the municipalities in the Reserve – Sabugal and Penamacor, the ICNF (management of the Protected Area).

C.5 What are the main challenges still faced?

Since the implementation of the Charter Action Plan was weak, many of the challenges previously identified remain and some new challenges arise from the fact that the execution was low and some stakeholders may be disappointed.

Therefore, the most relevant challenge is to reinforce the governance by ensuring sufficient staffing and resources for the Local Animation Structure to be able to conduct its work and probably design a coordinator for the structure or assign specific responsibilities between the members;

In line with this challenge, it will be very important to coordinate and create synergies with the Co-management Action Plan and promote its enlargement to the SAC Malcata area in order to include Almeida municipality.

To counteract potential disappointment of stakeholders and avoid more disappointment, it would be important to ensure some initial degree of execution of some structural actions and communicate them as being part of Charter Action Plan.

Other challenges regarding sustainability of tourism and governance are:

- Gather information about visitors and potential markets to promote the destination;
- Implement the Charter part II with local companies, ensure benefits for those companies involved and promote networking between them;

- Ensure greater institutional support for the process at national level;
- Ensure coordination of the municipalities and with the ICNF in the implementation of joint structural actions by creating working groups for their execution;
- Check sustainability indicators of the territory and connection between Charter Action Plan and Charter principles in order to identify necessary actions regarding the improvement of sustainability of tourism in the territory.

C.6 Has the Charter area monitored the results of its action plan over the past five years? 1

As explained before, the lack of coordination led to a difficulty for monitoring the Charter Action Plan during the implementation period.

However, during the re-evaluation process there was an important effort in gathering this progress information for the Charter dossier (see Volume II – Evaluation of the Charter Action Plan 2016-2020 (+2021)).

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

0

Please list the recommendations and give a score for each:

Due to difficulties in the implementation of the Charter Action Plan (explained in C.2), it was not possible to address most of the recommendations made by the previous verification.

Raise the profile of the shared Natura 2000 “Malcata” site and bring it front stage in the strategy - 0

Although no action took place in this regard, it is still a relevant recommendation and the new Charter Action Plan includes one action to increase the relevance of the Natura 2000 area for the promotion and organization of Sustainable Tourism activities.

I.3 – Environmental Education in the Terras do Lince – This action, of the responsibility of the ICNF, which is also responsible at national level for the management of the Natura 2000 area, includes a programme for all three municipalities linked to the conservation values in the Natura 2000 sites of Malcata.

Additionally, the creation of the Co-management Committee for the Malcata Nature Reserve is a first step to ensure a more active development of sustainable tourism activities and environmental education in this protected area. Although to the moment, this committee only involves the two municipalities with territory inside the Nature Reserve; there is an intent from the three municipalities to propose to the Ministry of Environment the inclusion of the Natura 2000 SAC Malcata into the agreement and including Almeida municipality in a pilot project at national level.

Portugal has recently reclassified its Sites of Community Importance (SCI) into Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) that involve the obligation to develop management measures for these areas. This is a fact that will reinforce the will of the territory to include all the Natura 2000 SAC Malcata in the Co-management Plan.

Make a strong bet on the environmental interpretation and sustainable enjoyment of the Natura 2000 site - 0

Same as above.

Raise the priority and importance levels of the proposed “Charter of Nature Tourism Activities in Gata-Malcata” – 1

This action had very little development; however, it was as one of the 13 priority actions selected in 2019 with the creation of the Local Animation Structure. The kick-off of this action was the organization of some meetings with stakeholders interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, so the action could not continue.

It is included in the Charter Action Plan 2021-2026 as III.14 – Charter of Nature Tourism Activities in the Lands of the Lynx and they have ensured the financing for its implementation.

Unfortunately, it no longer includes the transboundary character and does not include the Sierra de Gata area. While, possibly this is a safe choice to ensure its implementation, it reduces the potential for sustainable tourism and promotion, since Spain is certainly an important market for sustainable tourism in the territory and this connection could benefit both areas.

Highlight more strongly the interconnections between the natural, cultural and historical heritage - 0

While the Action Plan included some actions that could include this recommendation, due to the problems in governance structures, they could not execute any of those actions.

The new Charter Action Plan includes two actions that could include this recommendation I.4 – Cultural Education for the Lands of the Lynx territory and IV.20 - Network of Visitor Centres.

Manage the “Lynx expectations” carefully and make stronger educational opportunities out of planned interventions - 1

For reasons related to administrative issues, the municipalities of Penamacor and Sabugal had to take the responsibility of the action I.5 LINCE 2020 - The Return of the Iberian Lynx to Malcata. This action involved the execution of rabbit management actions and environmental education actions related to the management measures in place for the return of lynx to Malcata.

The delay in this transfer of competencies and problems with the coordination between both municipalities delayed the implementation of the conservation actions and did not allow starting the environmental education programme.

The new Charter Action Plan includes and action to continue this efforts (action I.1-Lynx 2030 - The return of the Iberian Lynx to Malcata). This action is oriented for the management of the habitat and the wild rabbit populations in the territory and includes communication actions to promote the interpretation of the Iberian Lynx.

Make knowing your visitors a priority – 0

The stakeholders in the third meeting of the Permanent Forum did not identify this action as a priority during the definition of the Charter Strategy. Coordination problems already explained caused that this action as not executed, nor were there any other actions that could improve the information regarding visitors in the territory.

The new action plan includes an action with this intent: III.13 – Barometer of the Lands of the Lynx identified as high priority. This action will involve municipalities and local companies for the definition of a joint system of visitor’s information gathering and the development of a set of indicators of sustainability of tourism.

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

There was some difficulties in ensuring financing for the execution of some of the actions. However, this was not the main reason for the weak implementation of the Charter Action Plan.

In fact, the actual investment in the Charter Action Plan has been around 10% of the originally foreseen budget.

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?

Since in this case, the protected area is the owner of the Charter but not the entity that is responsible for the execution of the Charter Action Plan, we will focus on the staff changes for the management of the Charter. This entity has suffered a complete change during the execution period that led to most of the problems of execution of the Charter action Plan

As explained before, Territórios do Côa association was initially the management entity of the Charter but they could not ensure this task. In 2019, the Local Animation Structure that includes two officers from each municipality, an officer of the ICNF and the officer responsible for the Co-management Plan of Malcata Nature Reserve assumed the management responsibilities in the Charter Action Plan implementation.

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? 3

Yes, there is a new strategy based on the previous one but with adaptation regarding the learnings of this first period.

C.11 Has a new action plan been prepared for the Charter area and its partners? 3

Yes, there is a new Charter Action Plan based on the strategy and related to the Charter principles – For a summary see Volume III from page 21.

**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.)***

The strategy and action plan are two separated documents: Volume III sets the strategy the thematic lines that will guide the actions and Volume IV presents the descriptive sheets for each one of the actions, a summary of investment foreseen per partner and a monitoring plan.

Both documents are clear and detailed and present all the information necessary for the understanding of the logic links between the territory diagnosis, the learning from the evaluation of previous Charter period and the Charter principles in the definition of the action.

Charter Action Plan sheets are also clear and complete, defining the link of each action with strategy, the general and specific objectives, a coordinator of the action (stakeholder responsible for its implementation), other promoters of the action, partners of the action, budget and schedule of implementation, implementation indicators, related actions and expected results.

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

The Malcata Nature Reserve has a Land-Use Plan approved in 2005, well before the first Charter Action Plan (2015). For this reason, it has no mention to the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism or its Action Plan. However, it does include in its regulation articles concerning the organisation of recreational and tourist activities within the reserve that should be taken into account for the implementation of the Charter Action Plan actions.

The ICNF, the Charter owner, has competencies in the management of tourism activity in the Nature Reserve and a specific investment plan for the promotion of Nature Tourism (*Programa Nacional de Turismo de Natureza*) that can be linked to the implementation of some of the actions within the Charter Action Plan.

The recent creation of the Co-management Committee creates an opportunity for linking more clearly the Charter Action Plan to the management of the Malcata Nature Reserve. The Co-management Plan is under preparation and it will include actions from the Charter Action Plan and synergic to it. The presence of the officer responsible for the Co-management in the Local Animation Structure of the Charter ensures the coordination between both plans.

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

No

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 process of definition of the new strategy and action plan started in December 2021 and finished in March 2022. Previously, the Local Animation Structure had been conducting the Evaluation of the previous Charter Action Plan since June 2021 that included two surveys, one for the members of the Technical Project Team and another for the Permanent Forum members in order to evaluate their perception about the previous Charter period and their expectations for the next.

The **Technical Project Team** met on the **9th of December 2021** to approve the Charter part II reference document and prepare the Sustainable Permanent Forum that would start the discussion of the Strategy and Action Plan.

The **Permanent Forum of Sustainable Tourism** met on the **10th of December 2021**. On this meeting, they approved the reference document for the Charter part II implementation, the Evaluation of the execution of the previous Charter Action Plan and created the Working Groups for the discussion of the Strategy and Action Plan.

Four Working Groups discussed the Strategy and Action Plan. Each group was responsible of the definition of the specific objectives within one of the Strategy Pillars. Each group counted with two people from the forum as curators because of their experience and connection with the Pillar.

On the 14th of January, the **Local Animation Structure** met to define the thematic areas that will serve as basis for the preparation of the Charter Action Plan and on the 21st of January, the **Technical Project Team** defined the round of thematic meetings to hold in order to identify actions in the Charter Action plan 2022-2026.

Five thematic meetings took place between the 26th of January and the 4th of February to discuss the Strategy Pillars and define the actions for the Charter Action Plan. Table 2 presents the meetings, location and n° of participants for each strategic pillar.

Table 2. Thematic meetings for the re-evaluation process

	Time	Municipality	Participants	Strategy Pillar
26/01/22	10h00	Sabugal	15	I- Being/ Feeling the Lands of the Lynx
26/01/22	14h30	Sabugal	18	II- Communication, promotion and marketing of the Lands of the Lynx
27/01/22	10h00	Penamacor	15	III- Research, development, education and training
27/01/22	14h30	Penamacor	18	IV- Nature tourism and complementary products
4/02/22	14h30	Almeida	7	GG-Management and Governance

On the 3rd of March 2022 in a final meeting of the **Permanent Forum**, all participants approved the Strategy and Action Plan. The main entities involved in the process, namely ICNF and the municipalities of Penamacor, Sabugal and Almeida signed these documents, as well as all Forum members present in the meeting.

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

Yes, Local tourism companies were involved in the Forum and in the Working Groups for the definition of the Strategy and Action Plan.

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

Yes. Local community participated in the Permanent Forum of the Charter. In addition, they answered a survey conducted to evaluate the previous Charter period.

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

They did not prepare any specific assessment for the re-evaluation period; however, they used information gathered in several documents, namely:

- Several studies on the natural resources of Serra da Malcata produced for the definition of its Land-Use Plan;
- Geological heritage study of Penamacor for its inclusion in Naturtejo Geopark;
- Characterization and reporting for the Natura 2000 sites in the territory and their Sectorial Plan;
- Municipal Land-Use Plans;
- Studies for Sabugal and Meimoa Water Reservoir Area land planning;
- Action Plan for the development of Birdwatching tourism in Sabugal Municipality;
- Application of Capeia Arraiana (unique bullfighting style) to Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO;
- Built heritage inventory conducted by the municipalities for their Municipal Land-Use Plans;
- Archaeological cartography created for of all municipalities;
- Several ethnographic, archaeological and rural studies on specific relevant issues of the territory like Capeia Arraiana, Madeiro de Penamacor (Christmas tradition), Roman time mining and Smuggling;
- Joint application of Almeida, Elvas, Marvão e Valença of the Fortalezas Abaluartadas da Raia (Bastion Fortresses in the Frontier) to UNESCO World Heritage

C.19 Has there been any further assessment of visitor patterns and needs? 1

Information about visitation in the territory is weak. However, they used the available information from the visitor information centres and museums to define a profile of the visitors. Additionally, they used information from Turismo de Portugal, Portugal DMO that characterizes the visitation in the Central Region of Portugal.

The new Charter Action plan includes and action (III.13-Terra do Lince barometer) that aims to increase this knowledge.

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

Same as above

Implementation

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

3

Yes, it is included in Volume IV of the dossier

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

3

Yes, it is included in Volume IV of the dossier

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?

Total estimated budget of the Charter Action Plan is of 1,593,805 € without staff costs and 2,786,115 € with staff costs.

Due to the lack of financial and administrative independence of the Malcata Nature Reserve, the Charter owner will be the ICNF, which is the overseeing entity for the area. However, it is difficult to define the investment that this institution will actually provide for the Charter action Plan and it has been conservatively estimated as 1,500€ without staff costs and 5250€ with staff costs

There are two other entities in the territory that will be responsible for management of the Charter: the Local Animation Structure and the Co-management Committee of the Malcata Nature Reserve. The first will mostly provide staff, its contribution is estimated in 60,000€ without staff and 226,600 with staff costs. The second, despite it has not defined its Plan yet, provided an estimation of investment of 83,250 € with no staff costs (they are actually included in the Local Animation Structure).

In conclusion, total investment of managing structures of the Charter is estimated in 144,750 € without staff and 315,100 € with staff costs.

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

Investment of all three management entities represents 9% of total budget without staff and 11% of total budget with staff

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

Yes. Many other stakeholders are responsible for the Charter action and have committed to contribute to the budget. This includes all three municipalities, ADES – Entrepreneurial Association of Sabugal, Municipalities Association of Cova da Beira, Entidade Regional Turismo Centro de Portugal – Central Region of Portugal DMO, Polytechnic Institute of Guarda. It also includes local businesses such as Casa Ti Messias; EAT João Paulo Manaia Do Vale, Unipessoal Lda., Malcata Eco Experience, and Rotas & Raízes. These stakeholders will provide 89% of the budget in the Charter Action Plan with ADES being the higher contributor with 62% of the budget.

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

2

Yes. After the weak implementation of the previous Charter Action Plan, they have been very conservative in the selection of the actions in the Charter Action Plan and they selected only actions that already have secured funding.

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

The Protected Area authority, the ICNF is providing two officers for the process and officer from the Malcata Natural Reserve and the officer responsible for the Co-management Plan. However, none of them is full-time dedicated to the Charter. It is not defined the percentage of time dedicated to the Charter for any of this officers.

C.28 Is staffing being provided from other sources?

Yes, each of the municipalities is providing two officers to the Local Animation Structure, one from the tourism area and another from the environmental area. However, none of them is full-time dedicated to the Charter. It is not defined the percentage of time dedicated to the Charter for any of this officers.

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

Yes, so long they ensure adequate coordination and enough time dedication by the staff devoted to the Local Animation Structure. To the moment, they have not defined this allocation and it will be an essential issue.

C.30 Is there a good indication of commitment from partners/stakeholders to implementing the new action plan? 2

Yes. The creation of the Local Animation Structure and signing of the Charter Action Plan shows commitment by all stakeholders. However, the maintenance of this involvement will require a significant effort and dedication by the members of the Local Animation Structure in order to ensure the management of the project.

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

Yes, main entities and stakeholders signed the Charter Action Plan

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

Yes, the Action Plan includes a monitoring plan (see Volume IV pages 97-103) and the Local Animation Structure will be responsible for its implementation.

C.33 Have indicators been identified for the impact/success of the strategy and action plan, including how these will be monitored? 1

The Charter action Plan has not identified indicators for the impact of the strategy; however, action III.13 – Barometer of the Lands of the Lynx aims for the definition and monitoring of sustainable tourism indicators.

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 **1** C **2**

Although not included in the Charter Action Plan, several actions took place in the territory that will contribute to a better land planning, namely:

- The creation of the municipal hunting ground of Malcata, managed by Penamacor municipality since 2016;
- The creation of the Co-management Committee for the Nature Reserve of Malcata;
- The creation of the National Forest of Malcata that applies the national forest management regime to all the public areas;
- Approval of a new Municipal Land-use Plan for Sabugal municipality in 2018 and review in 2021;
- Creation of the Integrated Landscape Management Area of “Terras de Lince – Malcata” this classification will improve forest management to prevent forest fires and improve valorisation of forest resources;
- Preparation of a Contingency Plan for Extreme Agrometeorological Drought Situations in Sabugal municipality;
- Continuation of monitoring and conservation of key species in Malcata Nature Reserve with emphasis on the black vulture that resulted in the constitution of a nesting colony in Serra da Malcata;
- Application of Almeida, with other Portuguese municipalities outside the territory with Bastion Fortresses, to UNESCO Intangible Heritage;

Within the Charter Action Plan, they started two actions, namely:

- I.5. Lynx 2020 – Return of Lynx to Gata-Malcata – This action was partially executed with the characterization of the habitat for Lynx and Wild rabbit, improvement of existing enclosures for wild rabbit creation and construction of new ones – This action continues in the new action plan as I.1. Lynx 2030 – Return of Iberian Lynx to Malcata;
- III.3 Geological Heritage of Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx – The methodology was defined but the action had to be stopped due to Covid-19 restrictions and will be executed and included in the new Action Plan as action III.17 Geological Heritage of Malcata/ Lands of Lynx;

Two actions were not executed, namely:

- I.17 – Forestall valorisation – This action aimed to create touristic opportunities from the valorisation of forest resources of the territory. The responsible entity for its implementation, Forum Forestall – Federation for the Portuguese Forest – did not manage to ensure financing for the project and the new Action Plan does not include this action.
- III.34 - Nature Tourism Activities Charter in Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx – This is one of the actions selected as priority in 2019 but could not be implemented due to lack of human resources of promoter and partners and restrictions due to Covid-19. Only one meeting of partner has taken place in this Charter period. Since the action is ongoing it was included in the new Charter Action Plan as III.14 - Nature Tourism Activities Charter in the Lands of Lynx.

One very relevant action has been included in the present Charter Action Plan that was not included in the previous plan is

- GG.32 – Co-management of the Nature Reserve of Serra da Malcata – This action has started during this Charter period. There is already a Co-management committee and they are preparing the Co-management Plan for the next three years in articulation with the Charter Action Plan.

Considering the characteristics of the territory and its low population, the development of big solar and wind power plants is one potential development that could influence negatively its landscape. This kind of projects are being promoted by the European Green Deal and while this type of energy is renewable and has low carbon impact, the size of some of the foreseen projects in Portugal may have considerable impacts in terms of biodiversity and landscape. During the visit, I understood that there are some projects in this regard planned for the territory.

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

A **2** B **0** C **2**

Several Land-Use Planning actions took place in the territory that, although not included in the Charter Action Plan, had effects in the control of tourism developments (see D.1.1)

Regarding Action III.34 - Nature Tourism Activities Charter in Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx, the partners only managed to concretize a kick-off meeting before Covid-19 restrictions that made it difficult to conduct meetings and field visits necessary for its execution. Since it is a structural action, it is included in the new Charter Action Plan as III.14 - Nature Tourism Activities Charter in the Lands of Lynx.

During the visit, I did not get the impression that there would be projects for any tourism development that could disfigure the landscape since most of the investment is on small projects that build on existing heritage and resources.

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

A **3** B **1** C **2**

Tourism density in the territory is very low, therefore, there has been no need to control flows except for certain events (Capeia Arraiana, Vila Madeiro and Commemorations of the siege of Almeida).

However, there has already been established some limitation of presence in specially sensitive areas by limiting group numbers in interpretative visits, walking trails and sport events, specially inside the Nature Reserve and Natura 2000 areas that require authorization by the ICNF.

Additionally, the promoters of events have also included good practices for reducing plastic and training monitors and guides in order to ensure minimum impacts on nature.

They could only start one of the foreseen actions in the Charter Action Plan: IV.51 – Network of Walking Trails in Penamacor. This action aimed to create seven interpretative trails for geological heritage in Penamacor municipality. This action suffered delays due to Covid-19 pandemic and was finished in 2022.

Additionally, there were five incomplete actions from previous Charter Action Plan, included the new Charter Action Plan, namely:

- I.6. Hunting tourism – This action aimed to promote coordination between the hunting areas in the territory and promote good management practice for the hunting activity so it can be a tool for the conservation of habitats and species. Hunting activity is very relevant in terms of conservation and especially regarding maintenance of adequate densities of rabbits to reduce the incidence of sicknesses in this species, which is important for the reintroduction of Iberian lynx. This action only accomplished the organization of one workshop about hunting activity in the territory and the participation in a promotion fair. Considering the importance of hunting tourism in the territory, this action is in the new action Plan as I.2. Hunting tourism;
- II.26 Tourism Information Points Gata-Malcata/ Terras do Lince: This action required the implementation of the Charter part II methodology and was still ongoing in 2022, with 12 companies preparing their auditory to join. For this reason and being a structural action it is maintained in Charter Action Plan 2022-2026 as: II.10 Tourism Information Points Terras do Lince;
- III.32 Environmental Education Gata-Malcata/ Terras do Lince: The promotor of this action, ICNF, could not execute it due to difficulties in terms of human and financial resources. For this reason and being a structural action it is maintained in Charter Action Plan 2022-2026 as: I.3 Environmental Education in Terras do Lince: This action includes an environmental education programme for schools, the revitalization of existing interpretation centres and celebration of environmental dates;
- IV.47 Bank of guides of Malcata: Reduced availability of qualified and specialized guides of the territory is a weakness for the development of tourism. This action aimed to solve this problem by identifying local people with knowledge of the territory that could do this work and disclosing their contacts with the business owners. Due to a change on the promotor of the action, only the referential document for the bank has been created and the action has been maintained in the new Charter action plan as: IV.19 Bank of guides for the Lands of the Lynx;

The Charter Action Plan includes one action not considered in the previous Action Plan:

- IV.24 Collective mobility experiences in the Lands of Lynx: This action aims to organize one-day visits in the territory involving different companies and partners and linked to specific features (i.e. historical villages, thermal spas, walking trails, visits to fortresses and castles). This action aims to promote longer stays in the territory, which is another of the identified weaknesses of the territory at present.

D2 Supporting conservation through tourism

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

Previous Charter Action Plan included two actions under this principle:

II.21 Charter part II – Touristic companies – It aimed to include 20 companies as Charter partners. There are 14 companies conducting their auditory now that are likely to join the Charter soon. This action will continue in the next Action Plan as **GG.33 Charter part II – expansion and animation** and it aims to include new companies and promote networking between this first group of businesses.

III.31 Volunteer camps in Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx – ICNF could not implement this action for financial and human resources difficulties. However, some other volunteering actions took place in the territory organized by the municipalities and associations. In the new Charter Action Plan, there is an action – **III.18 Environmental Volunteering in the Lands of the Lynx**, which will create a plan for environmental volunteering in the territory involving municipalities, schools, associations and high education institutions.

D2.2 Using revenues obtained from tourism-related activity to support conservation

A **1** B **0** C **0**

The past Charter Action Plan did not include any action on this regard and the new Plan does not either.

This type of schemes are still very rare and difficult to create in Portugal.

However, the festival NaturCôa (included as action II.12 in the New Action Plan), which is an Eco-event of nature photography and filming invests part of its revenues per booking in reforestation actions in the territory and could be an example for other events in the territory.

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

A **2** B **1** C **2**

Many cultural events have taken place in the territory of the Lands of Lynx aiming to link art and nature and create a discussion on the interaction of humans and nature.

The municipalities have promoted many events related to cultural traditions such as Capeia Arraiana and they have organized guided visits to historical heritage. However, those actions were not in the Charter Action Plan, so they do not contribute to overall execution.

Regarding the Charter Action Plan, they only completed one of the foreseen actions: I.12 Valorisation of local produce. In this action, – ADES – Entrepreneurs Association of Sabugal organized markets of local produce and handcrafting in the territory and promoted the continuation of these traditions.

Not executed actions include:

I.7 Discovering the “Raia” (frontier) and I.18. Ethno centre – Memories of the “Raia” aimed to create interpretation areas and centres linked to the history of this borderland with reference to the peninsular wars, smuggling, migration and traditions of this territory.

Although these memories may seem very interesting from the outside, some of them are quite recent and since they are linked to illegal activities it is possible (and this is what I understood during the visit) that the local population is not ready yet to regard them as a proud heritage and promote it as a destination asset. I believe this situation may soon change, and, at least in my opinion, there is a serious potential for unique and very interesting activities here. Anyway, there are books that collect these stories so they do not get lost. Therefore, it is possible that in the future they will build on them to promote touristic products.

I.8. Culture in Gata-Malcata/Lands of Lynx, which aimed to promote culture by networking of cultural institutions and protected areas, and I.9 Historical Heritage of Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx, which aimed to promote recovery, preservation and valorisation of historical heritage respectively. In 2019, the Permanent forum selected them as a priority. The implementation started with a meeting of partners, but it had to stop due to Covid-19 pandemic.

The new Charter Action Plan includes these four actions and their objectives merged into action I.4 Cultural Education for the Lands of Lynx that has a different approach. It aims to promote the cultural and historical assets of the territory working with the schools and creating a circuit in all three municipalities. Afterwards, they will use this circuit to promote touristic visitation to these locations.

I.14. “Menu Raiano” (frontier menu) – This action aimed to produce a guide to create a gastronomical offer with local produce and linked to the cultural and historical traditions on the territory. At present, it is ongoing and for this reason, it has been included in the new Charter Action Plan as I.6. “Menu Raiano”.

Actions I.20 Musicians Park of Bedada and IV.44. Xacobeo 2021 that could not be executed are no longer included in the Charter Action Plan.

Alternatively, new actions were included in the new Charter Action Plan, such as IV.30. Birdwatching that aims to create a plan for the promotion of birdwatching in the territory with inventorying the existing species, promoting environmental education with schools, conducting lectures and seminars, and creating a network of trails and places adequate for this activity and a field guide.

Additionally, within action GG.33. Charter part II – Animation and expansion it is room for the development of actions to preserve the natural and cultural heritage promoted by the Charter Partners. In fact, many of the local companies are already restoring built heritage, promoting local produce and including frontier traditions and stories in their activities.

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 1 B 1 C 2

Only one action in the previous Charter Action Plan aimed to fulfil this objective, action II.21 Charter part II – companies. Fourteen companies are in the process of joining Charter part II. Presently they are preparing their auditory and will join soon. In the new Charter Action Plan, action GG.33. Charter part II – expansion and animation, will continue to develop this work with local companies, including more in the Charter and promoting networking between these first ones.

Additionally, the new Charter action plan includes two new actions for this purpose: II.12 NaturCôa – Image, Nature and Heritage – An Eco-event that is taking place since 2019 on nature photography and filming and aims to promote the territory. This event could serve as example for the organization of other events in the territory.

III.15 – Training of entrepreneurs in the Lands of Lynx – This action will complement the Charter part II and include training on sustainability issues as well as other related to the management of the companies.

D3.2 Promoting the use of public transport and other alternatives to cars

A 1 B 1 C 3

Considering the low density of population in the territory, the subject of public transport is always a difficult issue.

Some action has taken place in the territory regardless of Charter Action Plan, such as participation on PAMUS – Sustainable Mobility Action Plan for a wider inter-municipal community and the creation of a new mobility plan in Sabugal municipality that will modify school and passenger bus routes.

Additionally, all municipalities have created walking trails for the discovery of the landscape with highlight to action IV.51 Walking trails Network in Penamacor which is ongoing but close to finishing.

Most of the available nature tourism activities promote sustainable transport, however, due to the lack of public transport in the territories, clients need to use a car to move in the territory and reach the locations of the activities. However, some group activities promote collective transport.

The previous Charter Action Plan focused in creating infrastructures for sustainable mobility in the territory, namely by bike – action IV.40 Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx by bicycle, IV.41 BTT - Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx and IV.45 Horse riding tourism in Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx but those actions were not executed.

Actions IV.40 and IV.41 were transferred to the new Charter Action Plan as: IV.21. Lands of Lynx by bike and IV.22. BTT – Lands of Lynx.

A new action has been included in the new action plan, IV.24. Experiences of collective mobility in the Lands of Lynx, which aims to promote one-day activities joining different local companies and using collective transport.

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 1 C 0

Turismo de Portugal certifies local tourism companies that promote activities in the territory regarding their safety. Their guides are also certified and trained to ensure the minimization of risks. Additionally, some companies provide activities for people with reduced mobility.

Tourism of Portugal created during the opening of the pandemic the sign “Clean&Safe” that is granted to touristic companies that assist to a training on Covid-19 safety measures and implement them on their activities. Many companies and some public facilities in the territory have adhere to this sign.

In terms of safety, it is relevant to highlight that the territory has many river beaches with water quality tested regularly and one of them, Albufeira de Alfaiates, received the Zero Pollution award in 2022.

Another significant risk are forest fires. In this regard, all the municipalities of the territory have a Contingency Plan for forest fires recently approved for the period 2021 – 2030.

The new Charter Action Plan does not foresee any action for this purpose, which is also not identify as a priority area to the moment.

D4.2 Improving the quality of visitor facilities and services

A 2 B 1 C 2

Some action has taken place in the territory within the Charter Action Plan and outside of it.

Actions II.21 Charter part II – Touristic companies and III.37 Basic training in Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx provided training for local companies to ensure an improvement of their services.

Additionally, the brand “NATURAL.PT” promoted by the ICNF for companies in protected areas in Portugal included 12 companies from Serra da Malcata Nature Reserve (action II.27 NATURAL.PT)

Municipalities have also taken action (although not included in the Charter Action Plan) to improve their facilities and recover their heritage simultaneously. This is the case of the requalification of the castles in Alfaiates and Vila do Touro and the creation of several interpretative trails. Additionally, the councils implemented a system that uses beacons that transmit information to mobile phones with the APP Smiity while passing near a tourist spot.

Sabugal municipality has increased its offer of fluvial beaches completely equipped from two to eleven and implemented the project 5 villages in which they installed interpretation structures in the five medieval villages of the municipality.

All three municipalities have opened new museums or cultural interpretation centres. This is the case of the “Museo Vivo de Vila Maior” (2016) an ethnographical museum; the “Casa da Memória Judaica da Raia Sabugalense” (2017), that explains the story of the Jewish community of Sabugal, and the “Polo Museológico de Vilar Formoso - Fronteira de Paz” (2018), which tells the stories of refugees who fled the Nazis via Portugal and found refuge entering the country at this point.

Some parishes from Penamacor and Sabugal have installed seven panoramic swings, which is a new and growing trend in Portugal promoted by the site “abaloçar.com”.

Many actions in the Charter Action Plan that aimed for this purpose had no execution during this charter period, namely:

- I.9 Historical Heritage in Gata-Malcata / Lands of Lynx selected as a priority but unfinished due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The new Action Plan includes this action into action I.4 Cultural Education for the Lands of Lynx.
- I.10 Forestall Houses of Malcata – This action aimed to recover Forestall houses inside Malcata Nature Reserve and repurpose them for tourism. The new Charter Action Plan does not include this action.
- I.21 Charter part II was only started and therefore action I.22. Charter part III did not take place. The new Charter Action Plan includes action GG.33. Charter part II – expansion and animation in order to work with local companies and create conditions for the implementation in the future of Charter part III.
- The promotor of action III.36 Training in Gata-Malcata, which aimed to provide training for local companies, gave up on its execution and they could not find another promotor for the action. . The new Charter Action Plan includes two training actions: III.15 – Entrepreneurship training in the Lands of Lynx, for managers of local companies and III.16. Training about Touristic Offer in the Lands of Lynx – aiming to municipal officers of tourism to have a wider knowledge of the touristic offer and promote better the whole territory.
- The promotor of Action IV.47 Bank of guides of Malcata was only able to prepare a first manual for the functioning of the bank. For this reason, this action will continue in the new Charter Action Plan as IV.19 Bank of guides for the Lands of the Lynx.

New actions in the Charter Action Plan include:

- IV.20 Network of Visitation Centres – That aims to identify existent centres in the territory and their schedules to promote them together and promote their networking;
- IV.23 Scenic road in the Lands of Lynx – That aims to create a driving route that allows visiting the territory by car and promotes its interpretation. This route will be linked to all the remainder touristic offer of the territory;
- IV.28. Fluvial tourism in the Lands of Lynx – This action aims to inventory all fluvial beaches in the territory and the activities that take place in them in order to promote the product of fluvial tourism.
- IV.29 Nautical Station Lands of Lynx – Sabugal – This action is already on-going and aims to create and certify a nautical sports station in inland waters that is included in the network of Portuguese Nautical Stations (<https://www.nauticalportugal.com/>);
- IV.30 Birdwatching aims to create an structured birdwatching offer in the territory and create facilities for this activities including birdwatching spots and trails;

D4.3 Providing visitors with specific tourism offers which involve discovery, interpretation and appreciation of the area's special natural and cultural heritage A 2 B 1 C 2

Despite the low execution of the actions in the Charter Action Plan, the territory of the Lands of Lynx has had an evolution in terms of tourism with an increase of nature sport and cultural events and diversification of the offer.

In terms of nature sport, the territory has held several international and national competitions of Orientation, Trail Run and BTT.

The territory already had some traditional events, which are getting increased attention by Portuguese public, like the celebration of the Almeida Siege and Penamacor, Vila Madeiro. In addition, the territory has held several medieval and gastronomical fairs. Additionally, they have participated in wider range projects to promote the link between art and nature, like the project "Nature Maps" of the responsibility of DESTINATURE – which is now associated to the Charter process - that promoted an artistic programme in natural areas. In addition, the territory has held some dramatized visits and walks, with highlight to a night walk "Awakening of the senses" that included fire juggling, theatre, a mid-night tea and a concert at the top of a hill.

Actions I.7. Discovering the Raia, I.8. Culture in Gata/ Malcata, I.9 Historical Heritage of Gata-Malcata, I.18 Ethno-centre – Memories of the Raia not executed in the previous Charter period are partially included in new action I.4 Cultural education for the Lands of Lynx, which presents a different approach that starts the works with the local schools to afterwards enlarge it to tourism (extended explanation in D.2.3).

The previous Charter Action Plan foresaw the creation of a traditional cheese factory with room for visits and environmental education activities linking sheep and fire prevention. The original promotor of the action gave up on it and the new action plan does not include this action.

The previous Charter Action Plan included two actions for the promotion of bike tourism not implemented. The new Charter Action Plan will include these two actions in a similar way (see D.3.2).

In relation to the tourism offer linked to the territory's natural heritage, the previous action plan had an action (IV.42 Natural Offer Gata-Malcata/ Terras do Lince) that included the development of birdwatching activities, flora, thematic circuits, interpretative routes and photographic itineraries. The promoter did not execute this action for personal reasons. The new Charter Action Plan includes some actions that will have the same objective, but this time, each action aims for a specific type of nature tourism:

- **I.6. Menu Raiano** (Gastronomy of the frontier) – This action aims to promote local gastronomy and promote a gastronomic tourism;
- **II.12 NATURCÔA – Image, Nature and Heritage** – An eco-festival of photography and filming;
- **IV.24 Collective mobility experiences in the Lands of Lynx** – This action aims to create one-day activities in the territory with cultural and natural interpretation of the territory;
- **IV.26. Stand Up Paddle competitions** – This action aims to analyse the capacity of the territory for the organisation of Stand Up Paddle events and, if it is verified that it exists, to organise competitions.
- **IV. 28. Fluvial tourism in the Lands of Lynx** – This action aims to inventory all fluvial beaches in the territory and the activities that take place in them in order to promote the product of fluvial tourism.
- **IV.27 Foraging** – This is an original and very interesting activity which brings together biologists and a cook to promote the use of the edible wild flora of the territory, starting from its traditional uses but associating culinary knowledge to increase its value. It started with the implementation of three workshops for local companies and the new Charter Action Plan will continue this action, now numbered I.15.
- **IV.30 Birdwatching** – Aims to create the basis for birdwatching tourism

D4.4 Providing facilities and information for visitors with special needs

A **1** B **0** C **0**

During the last five years, some touristic areas have improved their accessibility like Castelo de Vilar Maior and Historical village of Sortelha.

There were two actions in the previous Charter Action Plan aiming for this purpose: III.35 Senior tourism in Gata-Malcata / Lands of Lynx and IV.43 Inclusive tourism by VMI (local company) but none of them was executed.

The new Charter Action Plan does not foresee any action for this purpose.

D5 Effectively communicating the area to visitors

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

A **1** B **1** C **2**

Although none of the foreseen actions in the Charter Action plan in this regard were executed, the Charter territory managed to promote the destination in the main national and Iberian tourism fairs with a stand “Terras do Lince”. In addition, the municipality of Penamacor took the name for its own stand in some tourism fairs, promoting the Charter award.

However, most of the information guides and promotion materials are of municipal level with no coordination so far in terms of communicating the destination as one visitation unit. An exception to this is the recognition of the Lands of Lynx as a visitation unit in a touristic map of the Central Region of Portugal.

A very interesting communication tool produced during this period is the documentary “Malcata – Conto de uma Serra Solitaria” (Malcata – Tale of a Lonely Mountain) which presents the natural, cultural, historical and ethnographic heritage values of the territory of the Serra da Malcata Nature Reserve and, by extension, of the Terras do Lince territory.

A challenge still remaining regarding communication of the territory is the communication of the fact that the Iberian Lynx is no longer present in the area, despite of its name. This would be important in order to prevent disappointment of visitors. While this could be obvious for Portuguese visitors, it is not for foreign visitors. Action I.1. Lynx 2030 – Return of the Iberian Lynx to Malcata should address this issue.

The previous Charter Action Plan included relevant actions to promote this coordination and address these issues. Many of those are in the new Charter Action Plan whether with the same name or reorganized but with the same objectives.

- II.23. Image of Gata-Malcata / Lands of Lynx – This action aimed to define an articulate strategy for communication and marketing of the territory as a sustainable destination. It included the creation of a Marketing Plan, a website, an online directory and merchandising of the territory. This action is included in the new Charter Action Plan as II.8 Marketing Plan Lands of Lynx, which focuses on the definition of the Marketing Plan that will likely include all the other foreseen actions in the previous action.
- II.24 Promotion of Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx – This action aimed to promote the territory as a single destination by organizing Fam trips, Press trips, etc. In the new Charter Action Plan, this objective is included in action II.9 Promotion of the territory Lands of Lynx.
- II.25 Naturguide APP – This action aimed to create a visitation App for the territory but the promotor did not execute it. It is no longer included in the Charter Action Plan.

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

A 1 B 1 C 2

All three municipalities in the territory have a tourism information centre and a touristic website that provides adequate information for the visitors in the territory and the Malcata Nature Reserve has a visitor centre in Penamacor that provides information for visitors. Unfortunately, most of these centres only provide information regarding their territory of competence and not the whole territory.

During the Charter Period, although not included as an action in the Charter Action Plan, some developments have taken place, namely:

- Creation of promotional videos of the Lands of Lynx territory during NATURCÔA event;
- Creation of a new tourist information centre in Castelo Mendo (Almeida);
- Creation of several interpretative circuits with cultural and natural information signs;
- Beacons system in the municipalities of Penamacor and Sabugal that allow visitors with the Smiity App to get information of interest points nearby as they explore the territory.

Regarding the Charter Action Plan, most of its actions did not take place. The new Charter Action Plan includes some of those actions.

- **II.26 Tourism Information Points Gata-Malcata/ Terras do Lince:** This action required the implementation of the Charter part II methodology and was still ongoing in 2022, with 12 companies preparing their auditors to join. For this reason and being a structural action it is maintained in Charter Action Plan 2022-2026 as: II.10 Tourism Information Points Terras do Lince;
- **IV.38 Integrated system for Tourism Offer Management:** This action was of the responsibility of a local bus company aimed to create an integrated booking service for activities and accommodation in the territory and provide transfer services from the airports of Porto, Lisbon and Madrid. The promoter could not execute this action and it is not included in the new Charter Action Plan.

In addition, the new Charter Action Plan includes the following actions for this purpose:

- I.1 Lynx 2030 – Return of the Iberian Lynx to Malcata – This action will consider the importance of adequate information about the presence of the Iberian Lynx in the territory and communicate the efforts that are undergoing to ensure its return;
- I.4. Cultural education in the Lands of the Lynx - This action aims to produce information materials on immaterial and cultural traditions of the territory;
- II.12 – NATURCÔA – Image, Nature and Heritage – This annual event of photography and filming will focus on the natural and cultural assets of the territory and will produce relevant audio-visual tools for the communication and interpretation of the territory;
- III.17 – Geological Heritage of the Lands of Lynx – This action aims to produce quality information on geological heritage in all the territory;
- IV.19 – Bank of guides – This action aims to create a list of contacts of local people with knowledge of the territory that can act as guides for tourist and local companies;
- IV.20 Visitors' centres – This action aims to promote networking between existing visitors' centres in the territory;
- IV.25 Events calendar of the Lands of Lynx – This action aims to create a calendar with all the events taking place in the territory;
- IV.30 Birdwatching – This action will produce quality information on the species and locations for birdwatching.

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 2 B 1 C 2

Although the Charter part II implementation in the territory is still incipient, a few actions promoted training for local stakeholders and tourism companies, namely:

- NATURAL.PT brand, created by the ICNF that involves companies working in protected areas – in this case, Serra da Malcata Nature Reserve - and trains them in order to become information points of the protected area (action II.27 NATURAL.PT);
- Training sessions on birdwatching tourism for local companies promoted with the collaboration of CERVAS (Centre for Ecology, Recovery and Vigilance of Wildlife);
- During 2018-2019 the Sabugal Municipality promoted a capacity building action for municipal tourism officers, tourism companies and any interested person in the territory that included training on geological heritage, natural heritage and touristic offer in the municipality;

No actions included in the action Plan for this purpose were executed. For this reason, some of them remain in the new Charter Action Plan:

- II.22 Charter part III – Travel agencies – This action has not been transferred since it was considered that it would be a priority to consolidate part II and create some product before starting this action;
- II.23. Image of Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx which is partially included in action II.8 Marketing Plan Lands of Lynx;
- II. 24 Promotion of Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx that has been transferred as action II.9 Promotion of the territory Lands of Lynx.
- II.26 Tourism information points in Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx that is transferred as II.10 Tourism Information Points Terras do Lince;
- III.37 Basic training in Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx – This action was executed but it is still on going so it was transferred to the new action plan with some changes on its structure as actions III.15 – Entrepreneurship training in the Lands of Lynx, for managers of local companies and III.16. Training about Touristic Offer in the Lands of Lynx – aiming to municipal officers of tourism to have a wider knowledge of the touristic offer and promote better the whole territory.

Additionally, the new charter Action Plan includes in action GG.33 Charter part II – expansion and animation and action IV.19 Guides bank in Lands of Lynx some training for local companies and local individuals to increase their knowledge of the territory.

D5.4 Providing specific information and interpretation for young people, schools and student groups A 2 B 1 C 2

Although not included in the Charter Action Plan, some actions took place in the territory regarding this objective:

- Penamacor promotes annually the “Explore and Learn Academy” for children 3 to 16 years old during the school break;
- All municipalities produce offer for schools and young people in the form of workshops, school contests, exhibitions, courses and activities;
- The CERVAS (Centre for Ecology, Recovery and Vigilance of Wildlife) has also promoted environmental education activities in schools;

- In 2018 a group of Erasmus students from Romania and Poland were in Penamacor in an exchange action about Ecotourism in which they visited local companies as example of good ecotourism practice;
- In 2019, the municipality of Almeida organized a reforestation action within project “VERDE PURO” (Pure Green) that involved schoolchildren.

None of the actions in the Charter Action Plan for this purpose was executed.

The new action plan includes two actions that build on the role of schoolchildren in disseminating knowledge to the rest of the community:

- I.3 Environmental Education in the Lands of Lynx;
- I.4 Cultural Education in the Lands of Lynx.

Apart from those actions, some other actions will include activities for young people and schoolchildren:

- I.1 Lynx 2030 – The return of the Iberian Lynx to Malcata;
- I.2 Hunting tourism;
- IV.29 Nautical Station Lands of Lynx – Sabugal;
- IV.30 Birdwatching.

D6 Ensuring social cohesion

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

A 2 B 1 C 2

Although the actions in the Charter Action Plan were not executed, and despite the lack of dynamism that the Charter process has suffered during this period, the re-evaluation process has created some new energy. This process and the start of the Co-management Committee of the Serra da Malcata Nature Reserve will probably create a better interaction and relation between the protected area and the local population.

The Permanent forum is open to all local population and publicly announced as it intends to be a place of encounter where people can present and discuss ideas and projects for the territory.

All municipalities promote participation and information gatherings in relevant matters for the local population.

It is a transversal objective in the new Charter Action Plan that the promoters of the activities ensure moments for public hearings and discussion of the actions with stakeholders in order to minimize potential conflicts.

The municipality of Sabugal has a project “Olhos de Lince” that promotes the monitoring of the conservation state of the walking trails and awareness raising for young people on sports practice and nature conservation.

Regarding the new Charter Action Plan, several activities involve conflict prevention and management, namely:

- I.1. Lynx 2030 – The return of the Lynx to Malcata – Aims to prevent conflicts between Lynx’s habitat restoration and activities taking place in the territory;
- I.2. Hunting tourism – Aims to raise awareness on the importance of hunting activity for maintaining heathy populations of rabbits and thus potential reintroduction of Iberian Lynx and prevent conflicts between hunting activities and other touristic activities in the territory;
- II.8 Marketing Plan – This action will include hearing of local population and visitors in order to define the best strategy for the communication of the territory;
- III.14 Nature tourism activities Cartography in the Lands of Lynx will involve local companies and those involved in nature sports, as well as conservationist associations and entities in order to minimize conflicts between activities and between them and nature conservation;
- GG.31 – Local Animation Structure - The contacts of the members of the Local Animation Structure are public and they are available at any time for consults of local population or entities.
- GG.32 – Co-management of the Serra da Malcata Nature Reserve – The co-management and co-management committee will also ensure coordination between entities, thus reducing conflict and preventing duplicity of actions;
- GG.34 – Re-evaluation of the Charter – This action foresees the execution of a new re-evaluation process in the end of this five years period, which will also be a participative process.

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

A 2 B 1 C 2

Again, some action has taken place disregarding the Charter Action Plan and the Charter process that lost momentum due to lack of animation. However, within the re-evaluation process, the stakeholders have gained new energy for the process and some other recent events like the Co-management of the Nature Reserve create a good environment for improved communication between different stakeholders and better coordination.

None of the actions foreseen in the previous Charter Action Plan could be executed.

The action I.4. Enlargement of the territory which aimed to enlarge the territory to Spanish areas on the other side of the frontier and has been abandoned due to lack of interest on the Spanish side.

Action III.30 Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx in the Media was of the responsibility of Territórios do Côa association and there is no information on its execution. This action is now partially included in II.8 Marketing Plan and II.9 Promotion of the territory Lands of Lynx.

The new Charter Action Plan foresees simpler yet effective actions within this objective, namely:

- I.5 Open Day – This action will create an annual event of around three days (Friday to Sunday) that will rotate the three municipalities and promote the touristic offer of the territory, with special attention to the offer of Charter part II companies and interpretative offer. This event will include visits to the territory for the local companies' owners and managers, for local population and for media and travel agencies.
- III.14. Nature tourism activities Cartography in the Lands of Lynx will provide information on the activities available in the territory and create dissemination material to promote them.
- GG.31 Local Animation Structure will be responsible to ensure adequate internal communication between all stakeholders in the Charter process and with local population not involved yet.
- GG.32 Co-management of the Serra da Malcata Nature Reserve will also provide communication and coordination opportunities.
- GG.34 – Re-evaluation of the Charter – will ensure the continuation of the participative process in the end of the five years' period.

D6.3 Encouraging and developing appropriate partnership activity with and between stakeholders A 3 B 1 C 3

Although with a loss of energy in terms of execution, the Charter structures have been maintained active, with annual meetings of the Permanent Forum and a full re-evaluation process that allowed to reorganize, involve new stakeholders and let go other that had no capacity to continue.

Within Charter action, II.28 Charter cooperation networks, the lands of the Lynx territory also organized the VI Meeting of European Charter Iberian Partners, programmed for March 2020 and postponed to November due to the Covid-19 restrictions. In 2021, the municipality of Sabugal proposed to organize the XII Meeting of the Network of Charter Territories, but the worsening of the Covid-19 situation obliged to cancel it.

In addition, the territory has started the implementation of Charter part II with 14 companies preparing to join soon. Before that, the NATURAL.PT brand, managed by the ICNF, distinguished 12 companies in Sabugal and Penamacor (action II.27 NATURAL.PT)

It is also, quite relevant the work that has been taking place in the territory in terms of promoting exchanges with other Charter territories to exchanges best practices (Parque Nacional de Monfragüe, Parque Nacional de Sierra Nevada).

Additionally, other processes taking place in the territory and linked to the Charter process, such as the Co-management of Sierra da Malcata Nature Reserve (GG.32) and Nautical Station of Sabugal/ Terras do Lince (IV.29) will conduct participative processes.

Several actions in the new Charter Action Plan promote participative approaches and involvement of stakeholders in their execution, namely:

- I.5 Open Day – This action will promote a three day event rotating the municipalities to promote touristic activities and will also promote trips for the different stakeholders to get to know each other, their projects and the natural and cultural heritage of neighbouring municipalities;

- I.6 “Menu Raiano” – Frontier menu – This action will promote the involvement of various restaurants for the territory in the definition of the guide for the menu and for creating their own exclusive menus;
- I.7 Selling points – This action aims to promote the local produce, both handcrafted and agro-food and will encourage networking between producers and other touristic companies that can use and sell their products;
- II.10 Touristic information points – This action will promote networking between local companies that can create an space in their establishments were the promote other companies in the territory;
- III.16 Training on local touristic offer – This action aims to promote knowledge of the members of the Local Animation Structure about the natural and cultural heritage, touristic companies and touristic offer of all the territory, enlarging their knowledge so they can promote the destination as a whole.
- IV.20 – Network of visitation centres – This action aims to put all existing centres to network and coordinate;
- GG.31 Local Animation Structure;
- GG.32 Co-management of the Sierra da Malcata Nature Reserve;
- GG.33 Charter part II – expansion and animation.

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 1 C 2

There was one action of the previous Charter Action plan that was partially executed: I.13 Selling point of Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx – This action aimed to promote local produce both from handcrafting and agro-food and had to change its promotor because the first one was not able to implement it. The new promoter – ADES - Entrepreneurial Association of Sabugal was able to create an inventory of local producers from Sabugal municipality to include in the Smartfarmer online shop. This shop, created by the association Oikos, creates baskets of local products to sell online. ADES also organized two workshops in 2019 and 2020 about local products within the celebrations of Penamacor Vila Madeiro (Christmas event). This action will continue in the next Charter Action Plan with the aim of enlarging it to the other municipalities in the territory.

Apart from this action, some actions are taking place in the territory that contribute to this objective, namely:

- The Fair “Lands of Lynx” in Penamacor, which is an annual fair of local agro-food that last for three days;
- “Easter market” in Almeida, which is already an interesting event that attracts tourists, especially from Spain;
- An annual seminar for producers of handcrafting and agro-food that focuses in issues like licensing;

- Three online markets of local produce organized by Sabugal municipality (Made in Sabugal, Christmas market and Easter market);
- An special exhibition in the fair ENERTECH SABUGAL 2021 that involved 19 local producers and handcrafters;
- Organization of seminars to promote local production and endogenous resources.

Several actions have not been executed and some of them will be transferred to the new Charter Action Plan:

- I.11 Solidarity-based economy: from production to integrated consumption – This action aimed to create short circuit for the commercialization of local agricultural products. This action was not executed because of the promotor and has been discarded;
- I.12 Valorisation of local produce – This action of the responsibility of ADES - Entrepreneurial Association of Sabugal did not accomplished its objectives mainly due to a lack of interest of local producers from Almeida and Penamacor. This action is included in the new Action Plan jointly with I.13 Selling point of Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx (explained above) in action 1.7 Selling points;
- I.14 “Menu Arraiano” (Frontier menu) – This action was only started with the creation of the guidelines of the menu and will be continued in the next Charter Action Plan as I.6 “Menu Arraiano” (Frontier menu);
- I.15 Foraging in Gata-Malcata/ Lands of the Lynx – This action aimed to promote the use of wild plants for culinary purposes, linking the traditional, botanical and culinary knowledge to produce. This action has started recently within the previous Action Plan. Since it is ongoing, it will continue in the new Charter Action Plan as action IV. Foraging in the Lands of the Lynx;

Other actions in the new Charter Action Plan that include some efforts for the promotion of local produce are:

- I.5 Open day – An annual event of promotion of the territory that includes the promotion of local artisans and agro-food;
- II.9 Promotion of the Lands of the Lynx – General destiny promotion action that will include the promotion of the local produce as another attractive of the territory;
- II.10 Information points of the Lands of the Lynx – This action aims to create in local companies a corner with promotion of other companies in the territory and will include local handcrafting and agro-food products;
- II.12 NATURCÔA – Image, Nature and Heritage – This photography and filming festival is a good opportunity to also promote local products both by their use in the festival and by creating audio-visual products about them;
- III.16 Training on the touristic offer of the Lands of the Lynx - This action aims to train municipal tourism officers on the touristic offer of the territory including handcrafting and agro-food products;

- GG.33 Charter part II – expansion and animation – The extension of the network of Charter companies can include handcrafting and agro-food producers that allow visits to their workshops of factories.

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

Action II.21 Charter part II was started in the previous Charter period and at this moment there are 14 companies preparing to join the Charter. These companies will get advantages in terms of their recognition and promotion. This action will be continued and enlarged, including more companies, in the next Charter Action Plan as GG.33 Charter part II – expansion and animation

In addition, the 12 companies from Sabugal and Penamacor recognized by NATURAL.PT brand will get these advantages in association to Malcata Nature Reserve.

Additionally, the local development associations (Pro-raia, ADRACES and Raia Historica) and the municipalities have organised actions to support entrepreneurship and promote the creation of local businesses. An example of this is the project “Sabugal investe” that provides training and investment to local companies and the project “Sabores e Descanso” (Flavours and Relax) that offers the creation of promotion videos for local touristic companies.

Several actions could not be completed, namely:

- I.19 Traditional cheese factory – this action foresaw the creation of a traditional cheese factory with room for visits and environmental education activities linking sheep and fire prevention. This action was not executed due to the desistance of the promotor and has been discarded;
- I.13 Selling points of Gata-Malcata / Lands of the Lynx: The promotor, ADES – Business Association of Sabugal started this action and it took place mainly in Sabugal council. It will continue in the new Charter Action Plan as 1.7 Selling points. However, the lack of interest of producers from Almeida and Penamacor may be a difficulty;
- Actions II.21 - Charter part II (only started) and II.22 Charter part III (not executed) will be continued in the new Charter Action Plan as GG.33 Charter part II – expansion and animation – this action aims to create conditions for the implementation of Charter part III in the future;
- Actions III.36 and III.37 of the previous action plan aimed to create training programmes for the development of touristic products and in entrepreneurship for local companies and local people with business ideas. This actions were not executed and were transferred to the new Charter Action Plan as III.15 Entrepreneurs’ training in the Lands of the Lynx;
- Action IV.47 - Bank of guides of Malcata that aimed to create a database of local people qualified and available to act as guides of the territory for tourists and local companies, fulfilling the lack of guides that some companies face. This action started during the previous Plan and it will continue in the new Charter Action Plan as IV.19 Bank of guides of the Lands of the Lynx.

- In addition, action I.5 Open day will contribute for improving the economic performance of local companies by promoting them and encouraging networking.

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 2 B 2 C 2

Although not previously included in the Charter Action Plan, the Lands of the Lynx territory have promoted opportunities to interact and learn from the good practices of other territories in the Charter Network.

Within Charter action II.28 Charter cooperation networks, the lands of the Lynx territory organized the VI Meeting of European Charter Iberian Partners, originally programmed for March 2020 and postponed to November due to the Covid-19 restrictions. It is also, quite relevant the work that has been taking place in the territory in terms of promoting exchanges with other Charter territories to exchanges best practices (Parque Nacional de Monfragüe, Parque Nacional de Sierra Nevada).

In addition, the territory held the VI European Congress of Rural Tourism COETUR under the name “Iberian Destination, rural tourism across and beyond borders” in which the officers of the Local Animation Structure participated

During 2018-2019 the Sabugal Municipality promoted a capacity building action for municipal tourism officers, tourism companies and any interested person in the territory that included training on geological heritage, natural heritage and touristic offer in the municipality;

The new Charter Action Plan includes three actions that aim to train the officers in the Local Animation Structure on sustainable tourism, namely:

- II.12 NATURCÔA – Image, Nature and Heritage;
- III.16 Training on the touristic offer of the Lands of the Lynx;
- GG.31 Local Animation Structure.

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

A 2 B 1 C 2

During this first Charter period, the training was simultaneously for the tourism officers and local companies that were able to participate in all the opportunities created, namely:

- VI Meeting of European Charter Iberian Partners and exchanges with other Charter territories to exchange best practices (Parque Nacional de Monfragüe, Parque Nacional de Sierra Nevada) – within Charter action II.28 Charter cooperation networks;

- VI European Congress of Rural Tourism COETUR;
- Capacity building action from Sabugal Municipality (2018-2019) for municipal tourism officers, tourism companies and any interested person in the territory that included training on geological heritage, natural heritage and touristic offers in the municipality;

In addition, within action III.37 Basic training in Gata-Malcata / Lands of Lynx, ADES promoted training for local entrepreneurs (English, tourism hospitality, e-marketing, social media, online selling, etc. and provided a free consultancy service.

During the previous Charter period, the partners did not execute many actions that included training for local companies in sustainable tourism, namely:

- I.15 Foraging in Gata-Malcata / Lands of Lynx – The training is taking place at this moment;
- II.21 Charter part II - This action is ongoing with auditory for 14 companies in preparation. This auditory process is a form of training in sustainable tourism;
- II.26 Information points;
- III.35 Senior tourism in Gata-Malcata / Lands of Lynx;
- III.36 Training in Gata-Malcata / Lands of Lynx;
- III.37 Basic training in Gata-Malcata / Lands of Lynx;
- IV.40 Gata-Malcata / Lands of Lynx by bike;
- IV.47 Guides bank of Malcata.

The new Charter Action plan includes training for local companies in the following actions:

- I.2 Hunting tourism;
- I.5 Open day;
- II.10 Information points;
- III.15 Training for entrepreneurs in the Lands of Lynx;
- IV.19 Bank of guides of the Lands of the Lynx;
- IV.27 Foraging in the Lands of Lynx;
- IV.30 Birdwatching;
- GG.33 Charter part II – expansion and animation.

Since there are few companies in the territory, it would be relevant to coordinate all these training opportunities and organize them in a way that does not overload them and provokes a lack of adhesion.

D9 Monitoring tourism performance and impacts

D9.1 Monitoring of visitors – volumes, patterns, spending and satisfaction

A **1** B **0** C **2**

This one is probably the weakest point in the territory. There is no adequate information on visitation at all. The tourism information offices and visitor centres only gather partial information about the number of visitors and, likely, many tourists do not pass by them.

Action III.29 Barometer Gata-Malcata/ Lands of Lynx intended to gather information about visitation, but it didn't start. The new Charter Action Plan includes this action as III.13 Barometer Lands of Lynx.

Additionally, in the new Charter Action Plan are some actions that can contribute to this objective, namely:

- II.8 Marketing Plan – To produce the marketing plan, there will be an analysis of actual and potential visitors to the territory.
- II.10 Information Points and GG.33 Charter part II – expansion and animation will encourage local companies to gather data about their visitors.
- IV.20 Network of visitation centres – part of the networking will be to create a uniform system of visitor data gathering.

D9.2 Monitoring of tourism businesses – performance and needs

A 0 B 0 C 2

No action is in place at this moment for this purpose.

In the new Charter Action Plan, two actions will contribute to improve this situation:

- III.13 Barometer Lands of Lynx.
- GG.33 Charter part II – expansion and animation.

D9.3 Monitoring of tourism impacts – on the environment, economy and community

A 0 B 0 C 2

No action is in place at this moment for this purpose.

In the new Charter Action Plan, two actions will contribute to improve this situation:

- III.13 Barometer Lands of Lynx.
- III.14 Nature Tourism Activities Cartography in the Lands of the Lynx – This action will identify the touristic activities taking place in the territory, their impacts and propose management solutions for their minimization.

D9.4 Monitoring progress in implementing the action plan.

A 1 B 1 C 2

While the territory prepared a good evaluation of the implementation of the Charter Action Plan for the re-evaluation process, they could not ensure the continuous monitoring and consequent adaptive management.

The creation of the Local Animation Structure (action GG.31) will ensure that in the next period this monitoring is more regular and allows for adaptation when needed.

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**

The annual organization of Permanent Forum Meetings in the territory ensured internal communication about the execution of the Charter Action Plan and other actions in place (action I.1. Permanent Forum)

The organization of the VI Meeting of European Charter Iberian Partners and exchanges with other Charter territories to exchange best practices (Parque Nacional de Monfragüe, Parque Nacional de Sierra Nevada) – within Charter action II.28 Charter cooperation networks ensured wider communication of the Charter of the Lands of the Lynx.

Also, holding the VI European Congress of Rural Tourism COETUR help the international dissemination of the territory.

The II edition of the NATURCÔA Festival (2021) included a lecture about the Charter of the Lands of the Lynx.

Action I.4 Enlargement of the Charter territory, which envisaged the expansion of the Charter to adjacent areas in Spain, was not achieved, and since those municipalities have lost interest, it will not continue.

The new charter action plan includes three actions that will promote internal and external communication of the Charter process:

- GG.31 Local Animation Structure that will be responsible to ensure internal communication;
- GG.32 Co-management of Malcata Nature Reserve;
- GG.34 Re-evaluation process.

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

A **1** B **1** C **2**

Since they did not execute many of the promotion actions foreseen in the Charter Action Plan, the image of the territory and subsequent use of the Charter Award logo has been scarce, in both paper and online promotion.

Since there are no companies awarded the Charter part II, for the moment the local, companies are not able to use the logo and include it in their promotion.

For disseminating the Charter process and he re-application dossier, the Local Animation Structured create a blog (<https://cetsterrasdolince.blogspot.com/>) that is mainly focused in the Charter process and aimed for internal communication.

The new Charter Action Plan includes several promotion actions that should include de use of the Charter logo in order to valorise the effort that the territory is conducting in terms of developing sustainable tourism, namely:

I.5 Open day

II.8 Marketing plan;

II.9 Promotion of the territory Lands of the Lynx;

II.10 Information points;

GG.31 Local Animation Structure;

GG.32 Co-management of Malcata Nature Reserve;

GG.33 Charter part II – expansion and animation.

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

The territory organized the VI Meeting of European Charter Iberian Partners and they organized exchanges with other Charter territories to exchange best practices, namely Parque Nacional de Monfragüe and Parque Nacional de Sierra Nevada within Charter action II.28 Charter cooperation networks.

Some elements of the Local Animation Structure also participated in the EUROPARC Conference 2020 (online).

The new Charter Action Plan includes three actions aiming to ensure the continuation of the engagement of the territory with the Charter Network, namely:

I.5 Open day;

GG.31 Local Animation Structure;

GG.33 Charter part II – expansion and animation.

D10.4 Taking steps for re-application and renewal of the Charter.

A 3 B 3 C 3

Despite the low general execution of the Charter Action Plan, the lands of the Lynx territory has made a significant effort in reorienting the situation and conducting a good re-evaluation process that involved again all stakeholders and rekindled the spirit of the Charter.

Regarding next re-evaluation, the creation of the Local Animation Structure (GG.31) will try to ensure continuous monitoring and animation and there is a specific re-evaluation action (GG.34).

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)

- Creation of the Local Animation Structure (see B.1) ;
- The Co-management process for Serra da Malcata Nature Reserve and its synergies with the Charter Action Plan (see description of the Area - page 6) ;
- Efforts for the recovery of the population of Iberian Lynx (see D1.1);
- Foraging experience (see Main strengths)
- Project “Contigo há descoberta” (see Main strengths)
- NaturCôa festival (see D2.2)

E.2 Marketing and promotion of the Charter

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

There is little reference to the Charter in the provided touristic dissemination materials and in the websites of the Town Councils and Protected Area Managing institution - ICNF.

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

Despite the difficulties in the implementation of the Charter Action Plan, the overall evaluation of their experience in working with the Charter was very positive, since it allowed more coordination and a joint work that will continue in the future.

The Charter allowed all the participants and specially the officers of the municipalities to get to know better what was happening in terms of tourism and nature conservation in the neighbouring councils and to share experiences. It also help raise awareness of decision-makers on the advantages of joint work and the opportunities that ecotourism/sustainable tourism could bring to the territory

In addition, their involvement with the Charter Network provided learning opportunities for many stakeholders, both from the charter Network meeting and from the exchange actions with specific parks.

Finally, the involvement with the Charter was very positive for local companies that improved their networking and had a better understanding of the municipal initiatives.

In terms of improvement measures for the Charter, they consider that it would be relevant to improve the promotion and marketing strategy of the charter so that it is more widely regarded as a network of sustainable tourism destinations that promotes their members.

