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**Gata-Malcata / Terras do Lince**

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**Gata-Malcata / Terras do Lince**

**Award of European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas**

Following the official verification in your protected areas of the work under the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas, I am pleased to inform you that the Evaluation Committee, at its recent meeting, examined carefully the thorough report which the appointed verifier prepared as a result of his visit to the areas.

Decision and recommendations:

**It was unanimously agreed to award the Charter certificate to your protected area for a five-year period from 2016 to 2020.**

The Evaluation Committee congratulates the Park on the good work they have implemented in the short time they have worked with the Charter, laying the key foundations, partnership structure and keystone actions that will allow a continuous improvement process towards more sustainable tourism outcomes in the region. The Committee was pleased by the comprehensive consultation process developed, joint identification of issues and priorities by a wide range of stakeholders, and the bottom-up way the proposed actions and strategy were developed.

The commitment and enthusiasm of the key parties was noted, together with their experience and exploration of synergies. The Committee recognised the need to raise the profile of the shared Natura 2000 “Malcata” Site and bring it front stage in the strategy, as well as to make a strong play on the environmental interpretation and sustainable enjoyment of the Natura 2000 site. It is important to raise the priority given to the proposed “Charter of Nature Tourism Activities in Gata-Malcata”, highlighting more strongly the interconnections between the natural, cultural and historical heritage.



We draw your attention to the other recommendations the verifier makes in his report which the Committee endorses.

### **The next five years**

As you know, the award recognises an on-going process of sustainable tourism development in cooperation with a wide range of local partners and stakeholders. It is awarded for an initial period of five years.

Because the award is part of that on-going process, the Evaluation Committee particularly emphasises the need for networking with other protected areas over the next few years. This will be one of the aspects which verifiers evaluate at the time of the re-evaluation in 2020.

The Committee also strongly recommends the following:

- Please make sure that all the actions in the strategy and action plan are monitored on an annual basis.
- You need to ensure that the necessary funds for the re-evaluation in five years are included in your budget plans well before 2020, should you wish to continue as a Charter area.
- Towards the end of the current five-year period you will need to check that all the recommendations contained in the evaluation report have been considered and acted upon.

This year's Charter Awards will be celebrated in the **European Parliament on 5<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2016** in Brussels.

**You are especially invited to be present to receive your award.** Due to the security requirements of the Parliament, registration for the Charter Awards will be essential.

Please register all participants by filling the online form available at the following link:  
<http://ow.ly/6ail304EiEy>

We look forward to celebrate this achievement with you next December in Brussels.

We should like to congratulate you once again on being awarded the Charter and hope that you will continue to work closely with other Charter areas.

With all good wishes for every success in your future activities.

Yours sincerely,

Ignace Schops  
President  
EUROPARC Federation