



Project ECORUTOUR

Environmentally COmpatible RUrAl TOURism in protected areas for a sustainable development at low emission of greenhouse gasses

carbon foot print

carbon emissions

greenhouse gas

mitigation

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In Italy, thanks to the environmental, naturalistic, landscape and cultural peculiarities that characterize the country, there is a very high potential of tourist offers. However, the growth of the tourism sector brings also a strong pressure on the environment, resources and the transport system. It is therefore necessary that the players involved in the tourist businesses of an area work towards a correct management of the natural resources and a sustainable use of the territory. In this context ECORUTOUR had the objective of **enhancing rural tourism with low environmental impact in protected areas**, where the need for mitigation of the GreenHouse Gas (GHG) emissions is greater, promoting sustainable development policies and awareness among consumers and service providers of the real impact that tourist businesses have on the environment. The project involved companies in the catering and accommodation services sectors of two selected protected natural areas: the area of **the Po River Delta Park** in the Emilia-Romagna Region for all types of services, and the **Monti della Laga** area (Lazio Region) for only catering and farmhouse-accommodation services.



OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the project were to:

- demonstrate that tourism in protected areas, with particular reference to facilities that provide services related to accommodation, catering and agritourism, can be achieved with low GHG emissions;
- identify the best solutions for the management of the structures assessing the environmental, technical and economic benefits achieved, and offering examples of **best practices** to suppliers and operators of tourist service businesses;
- monitor and assess the GHG emissions through LCA (Life Cycle Assessment) study of accommodation and/ or catering services in order to provide real data through which to orient operators towards the use of environmental labels or local purchases;
- develop methods to encourage tourists and suppliers to a conscious and responsible use of the protected areas' resources.

PROJECT PHASES

The project was implemented through the following phases:

- **preparatory actions for training and monitoring of the territory:** training of the staff to perform studies on the territory's characteristics, as well as a carbon analysis; **GIS analysis** of the territory and **study on the characteristics of the catering, accommodation and mobility services** in the project areas; identification, among the local tourist services, of the examples most responsive to a low GHG emission; search of the **best practices** such as zero-kilometer catering, "ecological" farmhouse-accommodation services, search of possible improvements of the tourist transportation in order to build a series of successful models adaptable to local situations. A **methodology** was also developed for the assessment of GHG emissions related to rural tourism services in protected areas, including also those related to

transportation;

- **analysis and assessment of the actual CO₂ emissions.** In a first phase an analysis of the territory was carried out in order to define a representative sample of structures on which to perform the LCA analysis. Collection of data on the environmental impact of the whole life cycle of tourist services concerning 1) catering, 2) accommodation and 3) transportation of tourists to and from the chosen destination.

The aim was to measure the actual environmental impact of the three systems during their entire life cycle, from the extraction of raw materials to the end of life. The analysis was carried out on the 13 structures that joined the project, analyzing for each the elements related to accommodation or catering or both, depending on the type of structure. This served to provide technical support data for the operators of tourist services, and for the development of intervention guidelines for the concerned public administrations. The second phase concerned, instead, the evaluation of the actual CO₂ emissions related to the different restoration modalities (traditional, zero miles, etc.), catering and accommodation services as well as transportation of tourists to and from their destination. For each structure the strengths and weaknesses were identified, thus offering managers the elements of knowledge useful for defining actions to improve their environmental performance. It has been verified that, for all the exercises, the factors that mostly affect global warming are electricity and transportation.

- **support actions and formulation of guidelines.** The activities concerned, in particular, the **establishment of an assistance service** to the local tourist businesses to improve the quality of their services in terms of environmental sustainability; **proposal for local plans** for individual and collective mobility systems of goods and people; and creation of a **sustainable catering/ accommodation model**. Furthermore, experimental actions have been planned aimed at fostering the awareness of tourists and the use of the most virtuous services;
- **dissemination** of the results (through guided tours, [seminars](#), production of information material, etc.) essential to increase the environmental and social awareness and responsibility of the tourist businesses, tourists and local authorities.

PROJECT RESULTS

The ECORUTOUR project developed an **innovative territorial approach methodology** aimed at raising awareness of the impact that tourist businesses have on global warming, and at the same time, providing useful tools to demonstrate how tourist businesses can reduce their CO₂ emissions. The proposed methodology is suitable for being replicated in other territories. An opportunity for replicability resulted following the merging of the Po River Delta Park of Emilia-Romagna Park with the Po River Delta Park of Veneto, that occurred during the project closure phase, and offered the possibility to extend the experimentation area. Furthermore, the activities carried out have attracted the interest of other territories (such as the Marche Region), which have shown their willingness to implement actions promoting sustainable tourism, by using the tools created within ECORUTOUR.

Results achieved and tools developed within the Project were:

- ECORUTOUR online training course on the relevant environmental regulations, greenhouse gas emissions, as well as methods and instruments for detecting and assessing emissions;
- **39 examples of sustainable tourist businesses** registered at community level (tourist services/ accommodation, catering and transportation) collected in a [report dedicated to the best practices](#) that provided the basis for the proposal of **local action plans** for reducing carbon emissions and for the development of individual and collective transportation systems of goods and people (zero miles companies, collective purchasing groups at operators level, use of hydro-methane, fluvial transportation, bike-sharing, etc.). In this context, also an idea of ??a local farmer was picked up, consisting in involving tourists in the transhumance of sheep both in their summer migration towards mountain pastures, and in their winter return to the hilly area of ??Amatrice. The initiative, realized in two stages, was configured as a **tourist pathway of sustainable mobility "Transhumance journey"**;
- **an LCA analysis** which also **quantified the GHG emissions of the services provided by 13 facilities**, 7 in Lazio and 6 in Emilia Romagna (of which 7 provides accommodation and catering, 3 only accommodation and other 3 only catering services). The aim was to provide a quantitative estimate of the actual environmental impact of accommodation, meal preparation and transport services throughout their life cycle;
- **85 companies of Emilia Romagna and 51 farms of the Lazio Region benefited of the assistance provided by the Project to tourist businesses**;
- **2 set of Guidelines: [Guidelines for the providers of tourist services and local authorities](#); and [Report on GHG-emission assessment procedures](#) related to catering, accommodation and transportation services in protected natural areas**, concerning the methodologies for the reduction of the CO₂ emissions and of waste in the production of goods and services, in full compliance with the Ecolabel criteria;
- **["Report on measuring of the CO₂ emissions related to catering and accommodation services provided by the tourist businesses selected in the Po River Delta Park in Emilia-Romagna and Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga Park in Lazio"](#)**

- ”, carried out on the basis of a series of local analyses performed to assess the related effective CO₂ production;
- definition of the **Ecological criteria for granting the community eco-label to camping services - Check List**
 - monitoring of the territory, reported in a **Study on the characteristics of catering, accommodation and transportation services for tourists in the area of the Po River Delta, and Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga Parks**, and a **GIS analysis** on the characteristics of the territory;
 - two **models of sustainable catering & accommodation services, one with accommodation in hotel and one in camping** in the area of the Po River Delta Park (*Parco Vacanze Rivaverde* and *Camping Villaggio del Sole*), visited by about 500 people (students, tourist operators and institutional representatives). In the *Monti della Laga* area also a demonstration model of a low-carbon tourist service (agritourism) was realized, to perform demonstration visits and local dissemination (*Cooperativa Grisciano* of Accumoli di Rieti), where 510 visitors were welcomed (organized groups of businessmen, local operators, personnel of public bodies). The companies involved as models have recognized the importance of adapting to the sustainable tourism standards by deciding to continue their engagement already undertaken with the Ecolabel certification;
 - **“menu.... that does not leave footprints”** with indications of the carbon emissions related to the preparation of each plate of food and beverage. This menu was proposed to 29.861 customers, altogether **13.682 “sustainable” meals** were requested (of which 3.879 ordered in the *Monti della Laga* area and 9.803 in the Po River Delta area). The promotion of this menu has attracted the attention of consumers on the environmental costs related to the production and preparation of food products and the purchase of goods in general. A random survey showed that **63% of the interviewed people considered the initiative useful for the environment**;
 - *brochure* with suggestions for eco-friendly tourism and proposals of sustainable pathways;
 - **educational competition “Planning a sustainable holiday - a small footprint ... for a great vacation”**, addressed to some **primary schools** in the area of the Po delta;
 - through the activities carried out with the students, an attempt was made to pursue one of the objectives of European communication **COM(2011) 21** “A resource-efficient Europe - Flagship initiative under the Europe 2020 strategy” which provides for the fine-tuning of investments on the new generations in order to increase their environmental awareness. The actions for tourists have, instead, reached another of the goals of the initiative: education for an optimal use of resources in a perspective of innovation in the sector.



Acronym
ECORUTOUR

Number of reference



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LIFE08 ENV/IT/000404

Reference Programme
LIFE

Beneficiary Coordinator

Regione Emilia Romagna - Direzione
generale Attività Produttive,
Commercio, Turismo

Contacts

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EU contribution

577.658

Call Year

2008

Start Year

2010

End Year

2013

Beneficiary headquarters

Viale Moro, 38
40127 Bologna BO
Italy

Region

Emilia-Romagna

Description

Parco del Delta del Po (Regione Emilia-Romagna), Parco del Gran Sasso e dei Monti della Laga (Lazio)