

“Culture and Nature”

Declaration about the role of ecotourism in protecting and preserving natural and cultural heritage

Cieszyn, March 29th, 2023



The Signatories of this Declaration

TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION global declarations and documents that draw on the fundamental principles of sustainable tourism and ecotourism, including:

The Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism, UN International Year of Ecotourism, 2002¹;

The Framework Convention on the Protection and Sustainable Development of the Carpathians (Carpathian Convention), Kiev, 2003;

The Oslo Statement on Ecotourism, Global Ecotourism Conference, 2007²;

The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria, IUCN World Conservation Congress, 2008³.

¹ Quebec Declaration on Ecotourism, UN International Year of Ecotourism, UNEP and UNWTO, 2002.

² Oslo Statement on Ecotourism, Global Ecotourism Conference, TIES, 2007.

³ Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC), IUCN World Conservation Congress, UNEP, UNWTO and Rainforest Alliance, 2008.

The Lille Declaration towards a European Greenway Network, 2000; and the subsequent Madrid Declaration for a European Green Network, European Greenways Association, 2010⁴;

The Declaration of the 2nd European Ecotourism Conference, European Ecotourism Network, Brasov, 2013⁵;

The Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference COP 26, Glasgow, 2021⁶.

TAKING FULL ACCOUNT of the UN Transforming Our World – The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which defines 17 sustainable development goals,

PURSUANT to the definition of ecotourism as formulated by the Global Ecotourism Network, to wit:

Ecotourism is responsible travel to natural and cultural areas that conserves the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and creates knowledge and understanding through interpretation and education of all involved: visitors, staff and the visited.

Have agreed as follows:

1. Ecotourism is built on local resources, heritage and *genius loci*. It contributes to preserving and protecting local natural and cultural heritage. It makes it possible to learn about the communities and explore the region and discover its diversity and what makes it stand out. Furthermore, it increases awareness not only among tourists but also local residents and strengthens community support for important natural, cultural and landscape areas including protected areas.

2. Ecotourist destinations should - with the involvement of local communities and different generations - focus on creating attractive and engaging presentations and interpretations of what it is that makes that local heritage worth discovering: the history, arts, historical sites, landscapes, nature and contemporary regional culture, including events celebrating local heritage. There are many different ways to make heritage interpretation more attractive in the context of ecotourism and they include, among others, thematic villages, ecomuseums, learning farms, creative workshops, greenways, heritage quests, outdoor learning games etc.

3. Ecotourist destinations should place special emphasis on protecting the cultural landscape, especially taking care of the aesthetics of the surrounding environment, keeping to high standards of architecture and spatial design, and developing model examples of landscape

4 Lille Declaration towards a „European Greenway Network”, 2000; Madrid Declaration for a European Green Network, European Greenways Association EGWA, 2010.

5 Declaration of the 2nd European Ecotourism Conference, European Ecotourism Network, Brasov, 2013.

6 The Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, UNWTO, 2021.

protection and good practice, all the while making sure that local communities and tourists alike have a greater appreciation for this.

4. The long-term and comprehensive growth of border regions rests on sustainable development, an important element of which is ecotourism. Cross-border collaboration is essential to safeguard and protect the natural environment in these regions. Natural ecosystems don't care about national borders and to allow for their effective protection alongside economic development requires they be treated as part of a larger whole.

5. Ecotourism unleashes the power of community in people from different generations and walks of life, but especially young people, women and senior citizens. In effect it creates opportunities for less advantaged groups to take the lead and contributes to greater overall equality of opportunity. Ecotourism acts as an important impulse for empowering various groups and communities, and in effect gives people from all age groups opportunities to work for the common good.

6. Community-based ecotourism plays an important part in advancing equality of opportunity, especially as concerns strengthening the role of women. Ecotourism offers an amazing opportunity for women to pursue their professional and personal goals in the communities in which they live and work. Furthermore, women, whatever their skills, interests and passions, can find a place for themselves thanks to the inclusive and broad nature of this approach to community development. Significantly, ecotourism binds women closer to where they live, with all the benefits to community and the different age groups that come with it.

7. Ecotourism can play a truly unique role in helping communities and societies the world over to bring back growth and stability, because unlike any other form of economic activity, it depends on constant, authentic interactions between people and within and between communities, international dialogue, respect for local culture and diversity, openness, collaboration and solidarity that transcends national boundaries*.

***Sources:**

Jampol Glenn, Janér Ariane, *World, Interrupted*, Global Ecotourism Network, 2020.
Zaręba Dominika, *Ekoturystyka*, IV wyd., PWN, Warsaw 2020.

Photo: archive of the "Olza" Association for Development and Regional Cooperation

Signatories:

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ČSOP Veronica / Czech Union for Nature Conservation Veronica, Czechia

Youth Initiative for Human Rights, Serbia

Dunakanyar Kultúrtáj és Környezetvédelmi Egyesület/Danube Bend Cultural Agglomeration and Association for Environmental Protection, Hungary

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European Ecotourism Network

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"KREAKTYWATOR", Poland

Dom Przyrody i Kultury / Nature and Culture House, Poland

Postomińskie Stowarzyszenie "Razem Lepiej" / Postomino Association "Together Better", Poland

Strefa Rytmu / Rhythm Zone, Poland

Stowarzyszenie CO SIE TO POROBI / WHAT'S GOING ON Association, Poland

Miejski Ośrodek Kultury, Sportu i Rekreacji w Chełmku / Municipal Center of Culture, Sports and Recreation in Chełmek, Poland

Stowarzyszenie Orzeł i Reszka / Heads or Tails Association, Poland

Stowarzyszenie Schron Kultury Europa / European Culture Shelter Association, Poland

Fundacja Made in Brochów / Made in Brochów Foundation, Poland

Stowarzyszenie Cech Rzemiosł Różnych / Association of Various Crafts Guilds, Poland

Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Lanckorony / Friends of Lanckorona Society, Poland

Stowarzyszenie Ekologiczno-Kulturalne "Na Bursztynowym Szlaku" / "On the Amber Trail"
Ecological-Cultural Association, Poland

26 signatories, update 11th of April, 2023

The Declaration is a part of “Nature and Culture. Local Communities for Heritage: Good Practices in Central Europe” Conference (Cieszyn, Poland 29th of March 2023). We invite all the organizations and institutions that endorse the Declaration, to sign it.

The Conference is organized within the project “Reclaim our Civil Space!” implemented by a group of partner organizations from Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Czechia, Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia and Norway . The “Reclaim our Civil Space!” project benefits from a 1,8 million € grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants Fund for Regional Cooperation.