Sustainable Tourism as a Part of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
Introduction

Dear Reader,

EcoRegion is an important project that supports the realisation of sustainable development approaches in the whole Baltic Sea Region and contributes to making it a sustainable and prosperous place.

In recent years, progress has been made to advance sustainable development in the Baltic Sea Region. These efforts are now supported by the EcoRegion project, which seeks to turn this area into the world’s first EcoRegion, where economical growth goes hand in hand with environmental integrity and social justice.

The project is based on the unique multi-stakeholder network of Baltic 21, which was created for the realisation of the Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region. By way of eight sectoral platforms, Baltic 21 members carry out joint actions and cross-sectoral activities to pursue Sustainable Development in the Baltic Sea Region. Furthermore, the project is aligned with the Aalborg Commitments, through which regional governments voluntarily commit to defining clear targets and implementing concrete actions for Sustainable Development.

Through the EcoRegion project, ten model regions prepare strategic sustainability plans and implement a selected set of concrete measures designed to reach these Sustainable Development targets. This process is supported by a capacity building programme on Integrated Sustainability Management Systems. Numerous workshops foster the inter-regional, cross-sectoral and sectoral-regional dialogue and understanding on Sustainable Development within the Baltic Sea Region. In addition, public materials, including a good practices database, provide information on how to foster Sustainable Development on a regional level.

One of the publications produced by the project is the series EcoRegion Perspectives. It presents policies, projects and practices for the sustainable development of the Baltic Sea Region from various perspectives such as tourism, spatial planning and climate change.

We hope this periodical will give readers an insight into the diversity and potential of sustainable development, and trust that you will find it both interesting and informative.

Dörte Ratzmann,
Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety

EcoRegion Project Lead Partner
Introduction

Dear Reader,

Thinking only 20 years back - it was anything but sure that stakeholders from the entire Baltic Sea Region were in discussions about sustainable tourism development, about cooperation and coordination of activities. The iron curtain - dividing Europe and its regions in opposite political systems - made common activities nearly impossible. However, it was not only the political situation but also a lack of awareness and understanding which prevented common efforts.

The more we are glad that the situation has changed and some progress was made. During the past 2-3 years many stakeholders got actively involved in the process of developing the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region - the first European region with an own strategy, including also an Action Plan with concrete responsibilities, measures, actions and flagship projects.

The task tourism is integrated in item 12 of that Action Plan: To maintain and reinforce attractiveness of the Baltic Sea. As one of the most important tourism destinations with still increasing numbers of tourists the German Land Mecklenburg-Vorpommern took the responsibility to act as a coordinator. For the coming years an ambitious programme was made to bring the BSR strategy and its implementation to life and to give positive impulses. Therefore the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013 is an excellent instrument to support common projects to implement the objectives for territorial cooperation.

More than other economic sectors, tourism has the particular potential to be a connecting link between the different countries around the Baltic Sea, not only on a theoretical level but enabling and fostering direct, personal contacts between inhabitants.

For the coming years we will continue our efforts to overcome "provincialism", to strengthen the cooperation of stakeholders, to build up a common identity and in fact - to develop the Baltic Sea Region as one region.

Prof. Wilhelm Steingrube,
University of Greifswald
Baltic 21 Tourism Sector and Member of the Expert Group on Sustainable Development of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)
Towards sustainable and competitive European tourism

Developing European tourism in a sustainable manner is a challenge but also the strength of our continent. The principles of sustainable development must be taken as the basis for further developing and strengthening of tourism within the European Union. Sustainable development means that ecological, economic and socio-cultural welfare go hand in hand. Given the importance of human capital and the strong dependency of tourism on natural and cultural resources, further development of the industry in a sustainable way is also a key to its competitiveness. This has been underlined in the European Commission Communication (2007) “Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism”. The objective of delivering economic prosperity, social equity and cohesion and environmental and cultural protection should guide private and public European tourism stakeholders in their policies and actions and in supporting tourism as a tool for sustainable development of the host countries.

Tourism plays an important role in the development of the vast majority of European regions and the need to improve the attractiveness of the regions acts as an incentive to an increasing number of destinations and stakeholders to turn towards more sustainable and environmentally friendly practices and policies. The growth of an area leads to more jobs and helps raise the quality of life in a region. The local people also take advantage of visitors eating at their restaurants, shopping at their markets and staying at their hotels. It is essential that proper investment in tourism growth has the people’s best interest in mind and a constant respect for natural and cultural heritage.

The European Commission is continuously working to promote the value and diversity of European tourism through its actions and policies (http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/index_en.htm). We are seeking to encourage different stakeholders to work together and to share the best practices in tourism with the aim of promoting its competitiveness and sustainability. The EDEN (“European Destinations of Excellence” www.edenineurope.eu) preparatory action is only one of very successful examples of the Commission’s active participation in promoting sustainable tourism development models across the European Union. Since this year, the European Commission is also highlighting the importance of the „Iron Curtain Trail” - a cross-border cycling route, which will run from the Barents Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south along the former Iron Curtain. I am confident, that this project will find and create synergies with the Baltic Sea Strategy in the near future.

A more competitive tourism industry and sustainable destinations will therefore contribute to the satisfaction of tourists and the confirmation of the position of Europe as the most visited tourist destination in the world. In general, Europe is already a tourist destination characterised by high quality and sustainability. In order to become more competitive, all stakeholders of the tourism industry should work to reinforce this image. Attracting more tourists to Europe and convinced our EU tourists to profit from the richness of our destinations will favour the creation of growth and jobs. Employment growth in the tourism sector has been significantly higher than in the rest of the economy in recent years, making the sector a significant contributor to the Lisbon objective to create more and better jobs. Tourism is a cross-cutting sector, involves a big diversity of services and professions, linked to many other economic activities. It impacts on sectors such as transport, construction, retail and on the numerous sectors that produce holiday products or provide leisure and business travel-related services. Each sector evidently has its own specificities but each is an integral part of a whole system and has an impact on the other. That is why, it is no longer possible to consider tourism in isolation: a global approach is necessary in order to enhance sustainability and competitiveness of European tourism in the future.

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Francesco Ianniello
Head of Tourism Unit, Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry, European Commission
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern’s role in the Baltic Sea Region Strategy

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, as German Bundesland, borders directly on the Baltic Sea. It has intense historical, economic and cultural ties to this area. Since the early nineties, the Land has actively and continuously engaged itself in partnerships and Baltic Sea organizations. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has welcomed and taken part in the various concepts introduced by the European Union for the advancement of the area in general or maritime issues in particular, such as the Northern Dimension and the EU Integrated Maritime Policy.

Since the European Council requested the European Commission to present a Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has taken a strong interest in the development of this new integrated macro-regional approach. To define its position, it conducted a number of workshops with the relevant stakeholders in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and contributed to the consultation process initiated by the European Commission.

On February 5 and 6, 2009, the Land’s Hanseatic City of Rostock was the venue for the 2nd Stakeholder Conference on the EU-Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, organized together with the European Commission.

The sub-national level in the Baltic Sea Region has often - and in my opinion rightly - stressed its vital role in the practical cooperation in this area. It has also regularly - just as rightly - voiced its position in regard to strategies and policies referring to the Baltic Sea Region. Quite a number of these positions have now found their way into the Action Plan. I believe this also entails a certain responsibility when it comes to the implementation of the Action Plan. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, as one of the leading tourism destinations in Germany, will act as priority area coordinator (PAC) for this field, a function otherwise almost exclusively entrusted to the Member State level.

As PAC, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern will facilitate two “cooperative actions”, aiming to „Highlight and optimize the sustainable tourism potential“ and „Network and cluster stakeholders of the tourism industry and tourism education bodies“. In addition three flagship projects will be implemented for which lead partners have already been won. They aim to „Attract tourists to rural areas especially to the coastal ones“ (Regional Council of Southwest Finland, assisted by Turku Touring), „Promote the cultural heritage and the unique landscapes“ (Marshal’s Office Pomorskie Region) and to „Develop strategies for a sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism“ (Ernst-Moritz-Arndt University Greifswald, Institute of Geography and Geology, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern).

I am convinced that the success of the strategy relies on stakeholder and actor participation from the various levels - particularly in fields where the European Union has no, or only limited, competencies. Mecklenburg-Vorpommern will try to contribute its part to make this success happen.

www.baltic-sea-strategy-tourism.eu
Sustainable Baltic Sea Region through tourism actions

For more than ten years, our part of the world, the Baltic Sea Region, has had a clear vision of turning the principles of sustainable development into practice. For a decade, we have had the strongest commitment by the Heads of Government in all countries around the Baltic Sea to tackle environmental degradation and socio-economic inequalities, and foster sustainable solutions and best practices. For more than ten years, Baltic 21 has contributed to advancing sustainable development in the region by coordinating goals and activities, and by serving as a forum for cooperation across borders and between stakeholders.

Sustainable tourism has, since the set up of Baltic 21, been an important sectoral platform to sustain a sound environment, safeguard the recreational quality of natural and man-made landscape, and integrate natural, cultural and human environments. Furthermore, the Baltic 21 Tourism Sector has promoted the competitive quality and efficiency of the tourism business, as well as the creation of satisfactory social conditions for tourists and local communities. An Action Programme for Sustainable Tourism was adopted in 1998. This Action Programme emphasised awareness building, transfer of know-how and education, tourism industry, and services and product development and marketing.

For the last five years, Baltic 21 Tourism Sector has designed, implemented and successfully disseminated the activities and outcomes of the Baltic 21 Lighthouse project AGORA (2005-2007). The project has demonstrated that sustainable rural tourism can produce economically profitable outcomes while avoiding ecosystem damage. The project developed “Sustainability Check” for tourism projects and a toolbox with appropriate instruments. The database YepaT, which was developed within the project, provides information about more than 260 tourism projects in the Baltic Sea Region. Furthermore, the Baltic 21 Tourism Sector and members of the AGORA network provided input to the public consultations on the EU Agenda for Sustainable and Competitive European Tourism. A follow-up project, AGORA 2.0, which is also a Baltic 21 Lighthouse project and a Flagship project in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, aims at developing heritage tourism, including both cultural and natural tourism, based on the principles of sustainability, and thereby increase the common Baltic Sea Region identity. Moreover, the Baltic 21 Tourism Sector is a partner in the EcoRegion project, in which the perspectives of the Sector are demonstrated through good practices and strategic actions for the future work of Baltic 21.

As of January 1st, 2010, Baltic 21 will become the CBSS Expert Group on Sustainable Development – Baltic 21. The biggest change for Baltic 21 will be a transition from Sector platforms to a focus on a handful of key strategic areas of cooperation. These areas include climate change, sustainable urban and rural development, sustainable consumption and production, and innovation and education for sustainable development.

Sustainable tourism is relevant to all these areas and concrete joint actions in this regard will be an important element of the Baltic 21 Strategy 2010. We encourage all tourism partners in the Baltic Sea Region to contribute to the development of this Strategy.

Baltic 21, as an integrated part of CBSS, will be well placed to further promote sustainable tourism at a high political level. During the Lithuanian CBSS Presidency (2009-2010) particular emphasis will be put on fostering cross-border cooperation on sharing best practice and preservation of common cultural heritage. In light of this, the Lithuanian CBSS Presidency convened the 2nd Baltic Sea Tourism Forum on 24-25 September 2009 in Vilnius. The 2nd Baltic Sea Tourism Forum adopted a Declaration (http://www.tourism.baltic21.org/upload/Vilnius_Declaration.pdf), which suggested intensified collaboration on common market research, development of new international markets, infrastructure, Baltic Sea Region products and services, promotional activities and an internet platform.

We look forward to working with sustainable tourism partners to turn the principles of sustainable development into practice and feed back into policy development within CBSS, the EU and beyond, and thereby contribute to prosperous economies, healthy societies and dynamic ecosystems in the Baltic Sea Region.

www.baltic21.org
Rural tourism is the wider understanding of tourism services in rural areas, provided by local people with a high level of integration in the surrounding community. The client may expect a personal welcome by a host family, the experience of a real countryside and rural culture, tasty home-made food with local products, and comfortable but not necessarily luxury accommodations.

Some years back, rural tourism was clearly focussed on local or domestic demand for budget short breaks or family holidays, but this situation has changed considerably. New trends and groups of clients motivated by specific assets such as nature, relaxation, good food, open-air activities, or the experience of real local culture have grown in importance. This list is common all over Europe, but it is precisely the variety that the countries around the Baltic Sea can offer that makes them so attractive for rural tourism.

Rural tourism was traditionally based on domestic demand. As a result, each of the countries around the Baltic Sea has defined its own concept and special “touch” for rural tourism. Among the countries with longer tradition, Sweden and Poland focus on farm tourism, Norway combines tourism services with traditional food, while Finland stands for the log cabins. The visitor can also learn about local recipes and original food products, or may experience traditional celebrations or festivities. Also nature, health, and wellness are increasingly important. This list of assets is common all over Europe, but it is precisely the variety that the countries around the Baltic Sea can offer that makes them so attractive for rural tourism.

The great advantage of our rural tourism is the personal contact between the client and the host, who knows all about the characteristics and possibilities for leisure in the region. The most frequent demand is for light sports (hiking, biking, riding) or simply relaxing in the garden, at a lake, or on the terrace of a local bar. The visitor can also learn about local recipes and original food products, or may experience traditional celebrations or festivities. Also nature, health, and wellness are increasingly important. This list is common all over Europe, but it is precisely the variety that the countries around the Baltic Sea can offer that makes them so attractive for rural tourism.

Visitors should check if the accommodation is registered with any of the member organisations of EuroGites – European Federation of Farm and Village Tourism www.eurogites.org. Throughout Europe, they ensure that common minimum standards regarding equipment and personal attention are observed. These are based on general recommendations for Europe-wide minimum standards in rural tourism accommodation, recently revised in November 2009. Individual owners of rural accommodations can benefit from this promotion by becoming members of their regional or national association.

www.eurogites.org

Using the bikes to get around... © Lauku Celotajs, Latvia

Lithuanian farm house, Zemaitija National Park © Betina Malina

Rural tourism was traditionally based on domestic demand. As a result, each of the countries around the Baltic Sea has defined its own concept and special “touch” for rural tourism. Among the countries with longer tradition, Sweden and Poland focus on farm tourism, Norway combines tourism services with traditional food, while Finland stands for the log cabins. The new EU member countries have made great efforts to develop new offers, with a clear market-driven understanding, with excellent examples in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. All of them have the concept of sustainable tourism development at heart: they do not only offer accommodation, but combine it with all other assets of interest for a visitor in their region. Through this integrated approach, traditional crafts, gastronomy, cultural heritage, nature parks, and any kind of open-air activities all benefit equally from rural tourism.
The European Tourism Day and the European Tourism Forum organised in Brussels by the Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission on October 8th and 9th, 2009, respectively, were very successful experiences. The presence of around 450 participants is a testament to the great interest that the theme of sustainable tourism evokes with the stakeholders and the European public. Every year the European Commission organises the European Tourism Forum, usually in collaboration with the Member State holding the Presidency of the European Union, in order to discuss further actions for tourism development at the European level and to give more visibility to this very important sector of the European economy.

In 2009, the European Tourism Day was devoted to discussing the role of networking in developing European sustainable tourism. The Commission regularly seeks to encourage different stakeholders to work together and share best practices and experiences, as well as to strengthen the development of the networks already working in the field of sustainable tourism in Europe. European Tourism events are an excellent opportunity to present to a large public the different networks and organisations and their role in developing European sustainable tourism, as well as to look for possible synergies and means of cooperation among them. In addition to discussing traditional themes such as indicators for sustainable tourism, the role of SMEs, and knowledge networks in the tourism sector, a fresh new element was introduced through the presentation of interesting thematic networks and the role that they currently play and could play in the future enhancement of sustainability in tourism development. The “Cultural Itineraries” of the Council of Europe, the network “Restaurants du terroir”, as well as the tourism perspective within the “Baltic Sea Strategy” were discussed during this panel. Regarding this latter case, the main challenges for tourism in this “macro-region” were presented by a representative of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Germany), the coordinator of the priority area on tourism.

Attracting tourists to rural areas, facilitating environmentally sustainable cruises in the Baltic Sea, promoting cultural heritage and unique landscapes, and developing strategies for sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism are only some of the identified challenges that can be better addressed through coordination and joint action by the regions involved, which the European Union could facilitate.

As far as the European Tourism Forum is concerned, the chosen theme was “EU Tourism and the Economic Downturn: New Opportunities for a Sustainable and Prosperous Future?” The panel presentations and discussions showed the strong interest of stakeholders in the four proposed themes: “Consumer Behaviour vis-à-vis Sustainability and the Economic Downturn”, “Employer-Employee Relations in Tourism”, “The Regulatory Framework in Tourism”, and “2020 Perspective: Promoting Competitive and Sustainable European Tourism”. Mr. Günter Verheugen’s (Vice-President of the European Commission) pro-active intervention outlined well the political and practical initiatives undertaken by the European Commission in recent years under his stewardship and highlighted the improved legal and operational framework that the future Lisbon Treaty will provide to the EU Tourism public and private stakeholders.

www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism
Participants of the 2nd Baltic Sea Tourism Forum want to strengthen trade mark „Baltic Sea“

Tourism in the Baltic Sea Region has developed more dynamically than tourism in the Mediterranean Region. Still, in the latter, 500 million overnight stays are generated per year, an amount four times as high as in the Baltic Sea Region (Source: Eurostat). According to scientists, tourism in this area can evolve only as a result of appropriately coordinated marketing. Prof. Edgar Kreilkamp, tourism expert at the University of Lüneburg, states that the image of the individual tourism destinations in the Baltic Sea Region is diverse, even though there are many similarities regarding touristic themes.

In order to act as a strong network in the long run, the 1st Baltic Sea Tourism Summit was organised as a forum for mutual exchange in the Hanseatic City of Rostock on 2 October 2008. Forty representatives of countries and regions bordering the Baltic Sea took the opportunity to attend the meeting in which Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and the Baltic Sea bordering states of Hamburg and Schleswig-Holstein proposed different approaches for joint actions. The process of convergence among the tourism regions around the Baltic Sea was continued last August during a workshop on the island of Usedom.

The 2nd Baltic Sea Tourism Forum in Vilnius on the 24 and 25 of September 2009 then aimed at the establishment of a durable communication process. There is large touristic and thus economic potential in the area, which can be exploited by a unified appearance. A strong cooperating community will be able to establish a trade mark that is competitively viable and can be positioned on level with the Mediterranean. It will complement the existing marketing strategies of the various countries and regions meaningfully.

As a result of the Vilnius conference, its participants adopted a declaration which is to pave the way towards more touristic cooperation and to determine individual fields of action. Among others, ideas and initiatives were discussed regarding a common market research concept, possibilities of mutual presentation at fairs, a network of offers of cycling tourism and youth travel, and a common internet platform. The participants agreed on the establishment of a mutual web page, on frequent meetings to find a common ground for market research, and on holding a press conference at the world’s biggest travel fair, ITB in Berlin in 2010. In a further process, other different possibilities for fair presentations, public relations activities, cross border connection of offers, especially regarding cycling and youth travel, and a common travel guide will be debated.

The participating organizations in the 2nd Baltic Sea Tourism Forum took note of the proposal of the European Commission for the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in June 2009. They welcome the various activities proposed therein, particularly those directed at maintaining and reinforcing the attractiveness of this region in the field of tourism. The collaboration between the participants and the strategy co-ordinator for the tourism field is understood as a contribution to the goals of the Baltic Sea Strategy.

www.auf-nach-mv.de

Bernd Fischer
Tourist Board Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Managing Director

Baltic Sea Coast in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern © F. Neumann / Tourist Board Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Fishing boats in a harbour. Baltic Sea coast line in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern © Wesselschmidt / Tourist Board Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
The 2nd Baltic Sea Tourism Forum held in Vilnius, 24-25 September 2009 was a great success. 115 participants from 12 countries arrived to Lithuania, celebrating the millennium of its name first appearing in historical sources, and to Vilnius, the European Capital of Culture 2009.

It was a great challenge for Lithuania to become a successor in this new tradition of the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum. We took the relay from the creators of the idea—Germany, and in particular Mecklenburg-Vorpommern—and we are now ready to pass this on to the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation, to keep this event as a tradition and to strengthen the co-operation between the Baltic Sea Region Countries.

The Baltic Sea Region is among the most dynamic developing regions in Europe and the field of tourism should be particularly strong. Tourism is an important part of the world economy and many countries are dependent on it. But this is a positive dependence, since tourism is an economic activity with high value added potential. Of course, it is necessary to look at the economic changes that take place and have taken place alongside tourism development in Europe and all over the world, as well as to assess the consequences to the tourism sector from all angles.

We should actively work together, create a new strategy and make our region very attractive, competitive and prosperous. We should also pay more attention to the exclusive and specific—countryside tourism, cultural tourism, active and business tourism, resorts, SPAs—to reduce seasonal prevalence.

We believe that tourism development has a positive force and our co-operation will give fruitful results in the realisation of the goals of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

www.ukmin.lt/en
Sustainable Tourism as a Part of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

Since 1983 the BTC organises tourism conferences about recent tourism developments in the Baltic Sea Region. This year’s conference took place for the first time in BTC history in Tartu – member city of the BTC since 1994 – Estonia’s second largest city and the main educational centre, with its well-known university. The decision to organise the BTC conference in Tartu this year was a logical one since Tartu has had a fabulous development as a tourism destination in recent years. New hotels and tourism attractions have been built or renewed, the city is well connected to the outer world by bus, railway, and last but not least, by newly opened air connections to Riga and Stockholm. The BTC also contributed to this development by including Tartu into BTC-organised press trips from Japan, China, Korea and India.

The conference took place in the newly built Dorpat conference centre – attached to the new Dorpat hotel. The conference started with a welcome address by Tartu’s vice mayor Karin Jaanson and by BTC’s President Niels Lund.

One of the conference highlights was a panel discussion based on the topic “The Baltic Sea – Europe’s Cultural Centre”. On the panel were Inga Kalnina, project manager for the Riga Tourism Coordination and Information Centre, Kulli Karing, vice president of Via Hansa, and Elena Natale, head of administration for Tallinn 2011. Knut Hänschke and Thomas Mielke were moderating the discussion. Focus was given to the importance of a European cultural city for local inhabitants and for tourists visiting the city. Here the cooperation between ‘culture people’ and tourism companies was highlighted.

The secretary general of the European Spa Association, Joachim Lieber spoke to the gathering about new trends in the spa and wellness industry.

Always interesting are developments in the airline business. This time special attention was given to regional airlines in the Baltic states – Estonian Air and Air Baltic. Rauno Parras, acting commercial vice president at Estonian Air, and Gregory Pomerantsev, sales vice president for airBaltic, were on the panel in an engaging session.

After lunch, a third panel discussion featured the topic of rural tourism, as Raili Mengel-Sunt of the Estonian Rural Tourism Association, Juha-Pekka Oikkola of the Finnish countryside tourism company Lomarengas, and Torbjorn Fredman of Novasol discussed current and future developments.

The final panel discussion looked at railways and tourism, as Lars Berg Schoebeko of Danish Railway, Vidas Zilins of Lithuanian Railways, and Mehis Kivilo of the Estonian travel agency Reiseexpert talked about the potential for future synthesis between travel agencies and rail travel.

To round off a fascinating day, Jens Bernitzky from the golf marketing agency Golf Tourism Development & Services assessed the impact and potential of golf tourism.

Presentations about newly adopted EU projects – BaltMetPromo and Agora 2.0 completed the proceedings.

www.balticsea.com
Flagship Project 1: Attract tourists to rural areas especially the coastal ones

Responsible organisations: Regional Council of Southwest Finland and Centre of Expertise for Tourism and Experience Management of Turku Touring, the regional tourism organisation of Southwest Finland

Developing tourism products in the coastal regions of the Baltic Sea Southwest Finland is responsible for delivering the know-how and the operational best practices to the benefit of operators and tourism enterprises. The target is to build a “Centre of Excellence” co-operation network of operators, universities and polytechnics, and the public and private sectors, in order to join the resources of know-how and development. The Flagship project is concentrating especially on the development of products, services and accessibility based on culture and nature in the coastal regions and according to the principles of sustainability.

Increasing know-how and co-operation

The Baltic Sea Region has good possibilities to become a tourism region similar to the Mediterranean, which has its own, special brand. It is essential to work together to increase the know-how and the means of co-operation between regions, enterprises, and operators in order to turn the Baltic Sea Region into a worldwide area of attraction. Without high quality product development stemming from the needs of the users and the necessary service know-how, there will be neither joint products nor a joint brand for the Baltic Sea Region available for marketing.

The accessibility of Baltic Sea tourism products

One product alone does not create an attractive tourism destination. The services must be available to the customers and the service chain must function seamlessly together, to make the travel experience successful and memorable. Ease of purchase, travel comfort, and the networking of destinations will promote the growth and competitiveness of tourism in the Baltic Sea Region.

The procedures

The project will start to build a NETWORK OF PARTNERS joining together the research and training, and the operators and enterprises of public and private sectors within the whole Baltic Sea Region. The network will develop a unanimous set of guidelines for future development, in order to discern and recognise the future customers and their needs. The MENTORING Programme joins together the enterprises and operators of the various regions and countries, and increases the know-how in sustainable product development. The regions and enterprises form a network covering the whole Baltic Sea Region, making it is easier to find strategic partners and the best operational practices.

A better understanding of the future directions and the emphasis points jointly developed by a large body of operators will allow a more effective use of the funding programmes and stronger influence on the development of future financing programmes.

BSR Strategy: Three Tourism Flagship Projects

Summary

Coastal Areas FP 1 concentrates on the sustainable development of travel destinations, products and services based on culture and nature in the coastal region and on ensuring their accessibility. The aim for the future is that operators in the Baltic Sea Region will develop joint products and services across borders, offering in this way memorable travel experiences to the customers, profitability to the producers, and vitality to the regions through new enterprises and new jobs.

The development is based on recognising the strengths of the regions, on thematic profiling (for example nature and culture tourism destinations), and on building partnerships between the operators of various branches.

The targets of the Flagship project will be achieved through the development of a project, for which the key to results and successful operational patterns lies in the use of operators of various regions through the network.

The project consists of the following parts:

• Building of a network of partnerships in the Baltic Sea Region
• Mapping the network of enterprises
• Preparing the international mentoring programme. The aim is for peer and example enterprises to act as mentors for business activities and execute mutual exchange of employees to learn from each other.
• Concentrating in, for example, developing the guest harbours to the regional service centres
• Defining the development of products and services based on customer information

www.turkutouring.fi

Innovations, smeared! © Turku Touring
Flagship Project 2: Promote the cultural heritage and the unique landscapes

The Pomorskie Province was invited to act as a leader in a number of projects which implement the ideas of the Baltic Sea Strategy. This was in recognition of its active involvement in Baltic Sea affairs and its experience with international and inter-regional cooperation. The tourism related pillar 12 of the Action Plan, to „Promote the Cultural Heritage and the Unique Landscapes”, shall aim at mapping projects based on unique landscapes and natural area conditions, which are also tourist destinations. Furthermore, this identification will comprise all project initiatives to preserve and revitalise cultural heritage components.

Particular attention will also be paid to the cultural landscape which derives from the historical space shaped by human activity, including products of its civilization and natural objects. Areas of special value in terms of cultural resources can be recognized as cultural parks, allowing for the preservation of unique anthropogenic values coexisting in harmony with the natural environment. Such forms of protection arise from the need to preserve the continuity of the landscape tradition while allowing it to develop in accordance with regional traditions. Both themes provide a strong justification for implementing projects which contribute to setting directions for tourism development in the Baltic Sea area and will have a substantial influence on the development of the image and reputation of this part of Europe.

The Pomorskie region will take advantage of the experiences gained while leading international projects financed with European funds, as well as its established network of multi-institutional contacts in the field of tourism and culture. The international cooperation of project coordinators will allow analysis and research projects to identify priority directions for balanced tourism development in the Baltic Sea Region. The linkage of various ideas and concepts will help generate recommendations for the development of tourism sector products (e.g. complex offers for potential visitors) and indicate potential target markets where promotion activities should be focused.

All tasks undertaken aim at ensuring the balanced development of the Baltic Sea Region and its even penetration by global as well as local tourists. Considering the geographical reach and diversity of the area of action, it is necessary to establish close cooperation and ensure involvement of all interested parties. The Pomorskie Province will attempt to accumulate all ideas and related information, but it will firstly do its best to generate new ideas and inspire cooperation among the tourism and culture related communities, as well as among the regions of the Baltic Sea basin.

The first meeting is scheduled for May 2010 in Gdansk. The participants to be invited are the originators of project activities that implement the priorities of the Baltic Sea Strategy, consultants and interested project beneficiaries. The 2nd Baltic Tourism Forum, to be held in Kaliningrad in September 2010 will be an opportunity to take stock, to identify flagship projects which will determine the character of tourism development in the Baltic Sea basin, and to generate recommendations for further cooperation. The FP3 leader’s performance will be coordinated with FP1 and FP4, which will allow for the exchange of experiences and information and the setting of common priorities.
BSR Strategy: Three Tourism Flagship Projects

Flagship Project 3: Develop strategies for a sustainable tourism

Since 2003 the Institute of Geography of Greifswald's University has been actively involved in Baltic 21 – an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region. Following agreement between the German Federal Ministry of the Environment and the former Ministry of the Environment Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in 2004, the Institute has taken the responsibility as the German lead party of the Baltic 21 tourism sector. Since then many experiences have been gained, good cooperation with stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region was built up, and successful projects like AGORA - Network Sustainable Tourism Development in the Baltic Sea Region - were initiated and implemented.

The focus of this flagship project is mainly on developing and supporting sustainable tourism, with a special emphasis on rural areas, as well as on the accessibility and use of natural and cultural heritage. Another aim is to enhance the process of developing a common identity for the Baltic Sea Region.

Strategic cooperation with stakeholders from the entire Baltic Sea Region is one of the most important actions and shall be permanently continued, in order to influence policies and to strengthen activities for sustainable tourism development. In this regard, the lead has to take over a coordinating function. The collaboration with ongoing projects such as EcoRegion, Parks & Benefits, AGORA 2.0 or Baltic Green Belt (all co-financed by the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013) enables synergies and greater possibilities to realise relevant actions. For example:

- The project EcoRegion collects good practices on sustainable development – among them tourism. A free accessible database will provide this information to the interested public as well as provide support on the use of existing knowledge, methods and experiences.
- Eight national parks from different countries around the Baltic Sea are involved in the project Parks & Benefits. All of them want to get certified as a “EUROPARC” in the future, despite different current states of preparation. That means all national parks have to comply with the requirements of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.
- AGORA 2.0 aims at creating solutions for sustainable use of heritage potentials. (Further information see next page.)

BSR Programme 2007-2013: Ongoing Tourism Projects

AGORA 2.0 – Heritage Tourism for Increased Baltic Sea Region Identity

The project AGORA 2.0 was approved under the second call of the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013. Its main focus is on heritage tourism, with the term “heritage” meant in a wider sense, not only referring to UNESCO’s world heritage list but including all the varied natural and cultural treasures of the region.

Building on previous experiences and following the objectives of the Baltic Sea Region Programme, AGORA 2.0 will contribute to creating solutions for the sustainable use of heritage potential, with benefits for tourism development, regional business development and conservation of heritage assets. Through this project authorities, tourism professionals, business associations, scientific institutions, and green and cultural organisations will cooperate with each other.

One of the work packages will establish BASTIS – a Baltic Sea Heritage Tourism Information Service. It will include a collection of existing and newly produced market data, providing small and medium sized tourism enterprises (SME) with relevant market information to better adjust future supply with customer demands.

A web based collection of natural and cultural heritage assets and a final ranking of “The 6 BSR Wonders” shall contribute to make the Baltic Sea Region – as a common region - more visible, even beyond its borders. Therefore partners will also work on a common identity profile to support marketing activities.

Five transnational pilot project groups will work on concrete heritage assets like castles and museums, red-brick gothic, shifting sand dunes, forest, and the geological asset “stones”. SWOT analyses of the current situation and empirical studies on visitors’ perceptions shall provide a solid basis for developing and implementing new innovative ideas for tourism products. Under the guidance of the universities and using different creativity techniques, experienced actors from different fields of the tourism business and other sectors shall generate new fresh ideas.

Agora 2.0 contributes to the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, tourism part. www.agora2-tourism.net
The Baltic Sea Region holds many sites of typically Baltic and even outstanding natural heritage which are preserved in protected areas. While respecting their conservation and development objectives, sustainable nature tourism within and around protected areas can be – or already is – an important element of the regional economies.

Up to now, this economic potential is on the one hand underdeveloped and offers vast possibilities for the development of tourism, of public-private partnerships and of improved nature conservation. At the same time, existing economic performance can be widely underestimated, which often results in misleading discussions and prejudices about the use of nature protection.

On the other hand, all stakeholders in regions with protected areas need to practice cooperation and communication on an equal footing for truly sustainable development.

The main instrument is the transfer of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas from Western and Mediterranean Europe to the Baltic Sea Region and the joint implementation in eight protected areas.

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas has been developed by the EUROPARC Federation – Europe’s umbrella organisation for protected areas - to enable parks to make a contribution to sustainable development by generating best practices in the management of tourism in protected areas. Indeed, the European Charter should be regarded as a contribution to Agenda 21, the sustainable development programme of the UN agreed at Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

The Charter process as well as “Parks & Benefits” comprises SWOT-analyses, visitor management standards, quality development, cooperation with local tourist stakeholders, and progressive communication of substantial mutual benefits on a regional and/or international level.

The project wants to result in an established network of certified protected areas, an initial BSR-specific nature tourism identity, and improved and innovative nature tourism products, as well as improved awareness and recognition of the benefits of nature protection on a political level.

The project “Parks & Benefits” will introduce and strengthen sustainable nature tourism approaches in the Baltic Sea Region and communicate to protected parks and their surrounding regions the mutual benefits for regional development and sustained natural development.

With the Ministry for Agriculture, Environment and Consumer Protection Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (DE) as the Lead Partner, the project brings together 18 partner organisations from Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and Norway. The partnership represents protected area authorities, municipal, regional and national public authorities, universities and non-governmental organisations.

The total budget of the project is ca. 2.7 Mio € and the project’s runtime is from January 2009 until January 2012.

www.parksandbenefits.net

Impressions from Zemaitija National Park in Lithuania
© Olaf Ostermann

Protected areas participating in the “Parks & Benefits” project
© animare projektmanagement tourismus

Parks & Benefits – Generating Socio-Economic Effects by a Sustainable Management of Protected Areas

Olaf Ostermann
Ministry for Agriculture, Environment and Consumer Protection Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Department for Nature Conservation
Tourism is not only a growing economical sector in the Baltic Sea Region, it is also one of the few economical sectors which can be fully integrated with nature protection and social development. Following the definition of The International Ecotourism Society, ecotourism as one way of sustainable tourism is „responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people.“ This form of sustainable tourism is pursued in the Baltic Green Belt, which comprises the coastal areas of the south-eastern and eastern Baltic from Lübeck to St. Petersburg. These areas used to be part of the Iron Curtain dividing east and west and were therefore partly or fully closed to the public due to military use. As a consequence of the restricted public use, these areas nowadays hold outstanding natural and cultural heritage. It is the vision of the European Green Belt to preserve both the natural and cultural heritage in the area of the former Iron Curtain by forming economically and ecologically sustainable landscapes. One of the fundamental guidelines in the Green Belt approach is integration, which is also reflected in the tourism-oriented activities within the project:

Integration of tourism and nature protection on Vormsi island
Sustainable tourism is designed not to harm the local natural environment beyond its carrying capacity. One way to assure for this is to define the tourism capacity in official agreements. The Estonian island of Vormsi, located just east of the popular touristic islands of Hiiuma and Saarema, is much smaller and has a population of only about 260 people. The main touristic activities promoted here are floral excursions on coastal meadows, biking, hiking and bird watching. During previous projects, touristic infrastructure has been set up including trails, information boards and guides. Within the Baltic Green Belt project, tourism will be fully integrated with nature protection on the island by introducing tourism into the ten year nature protection management plan of Vormsi island. As the management plan is to be developed in a participative manner, the roles of tourism and nature protection will thus be clearly defined by the people.

Integration of regional identity and tourism in Kurzeme, Latvia
Regional identity of local residents plays a major role in sustainable tourism. It is determined by common history, common mentality, common environment and many other factors. In order to get local residents’ support for a touristic product, it is important to include them in the development of tourism products. Within the Baltic Green Belt project, the Latvian Country Tourism Association is giving a good example of how to include a broad range of residents into the development of a touristic product. The product is a military heritage tour including biking and hiking trails, maps and online information. The touristic objects are watchtowers, bunkers, storages and other buildings left in the coastal strip of Kurzeme after Soviet soldiers left the country. Residents are called to contribute their memories of the military heritage sites to a touristic online database. The stories will then be used to develop information material. The benefit of this approach is that locals become more sensitive towards their common heritage and are more likely to actively participate in further development in the future.

These examples are but two of the local pilot projects carried out within the Baltic Green Belt project. In addition to tourism, coastal and marine nature protection, environmentally friendly farming, participative regional development and integrated coastal zone management are also covered.

www.balticgreenbelt.net
The Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety is a long-time advocate of sustainable and climate-friendly tourism. The North and Baltic Seas, being among the most popular holiday destinations, have a particular role to play in achieving this goal. The long-term economic success of tourism relies heavily on an intact environment. However, tourism that is not sustainable can actually damage nature and the environment. Between 1900 and 1990 the rise in tourism led to the loss of around 15 to 20 percent of the dunes along Germany’s North and Baltic Sea coasts.

To help safeguard the region’s unique nature from the negative effects of increased tourism such as greater traffic volumes, the sealing of land for new hotel complexes and higher pollution levels, the Federal Environment Ministry supports the development of sustainable tourism concepts. This includes keeping tourism services primarily in the hands of local actors, thus ensuring that the value generated directly benefits the local population.

Another important goal is to strengthen people’s appreciation for a rich, intact environment and to tap this great potential for the development of new tourism services. Through joint seminars, both visitors and locals gain greater insight into environmental issues. For instance, together with other German partners, the Federal Environment Ministry supports a close cooperation with the region of Kaliningrad. The projects, which were launched in 2008, are being jointly implemented with the Russian Ministry of Education and the Kaliningrad Children’s Centre for Environmental Education and Tourism. In a variety of courses, participants learn about the huge biodiversity of the Curonian Spit and the Zehlau Bog and discuss how these can be used for new, sustainable tourism services.

The tourism operator Viabono is a good example of how sustainable tourism can be marketed successfully. The Federal Environment Ministry was campaigning for an environmental umbrella brand for tourism products as early as autumn 1999, and gave substantial support to the launch of Viabono. The concept which emerged was geared directly to the needs of consumers and the growing demand for environmentally friendly holidays. To be admitted into the Viabono range, tourism services and amenities must meet certain criteria. These cover all the main areas relevant for tourism, such as waste, energy, water, noise, mobility, nature and landscape, architecture and settlements, information, visitors’ well-being, regional economic cycles and environmental management.

Viabono gives consumers a high level of transparency regarding the environmental impacts of tourism services, thus making it easier to market sustainable tourism. Tourist services along the German Baltic Sea coast already include a range of consumer friendly and environmentally sound holiday cottages, apartments, camping sites and nature conservation areas, which in turn also benefit from this marketing concept.

www.bmu.de
The Baltic University is a regional university network in the Baltic Sea Region. The Programme’s main focus is to produce and offer courses for studies on sustainable development of the region, its environment and its political changes. The Baltic Sea Region is in this case the drainage basin of the Baltic Sea. There are 14 countries completely or partially within the basin, including the Nordic and Baltic States, Russia, Poland, and Germany, as well as the major inland states of Belarus, Ukraine and the Czech and Slovak republics. The region has 85 million inhabitants constituting 11% of the population of Europe.

About 225 universities are involved in the programme: Belarus 29, Czech Republic 4, Denmark 5, Estonia 13, Finland 18, Germany 8, Latvia 12, Lithuania 11, Norway 1, Poland 61, Russia 20, Slovak Republic 6, Sweden 20, Ukraine 9. The participating universities include classical universities, as well as universities of technology, agriculture, culture, economics, pedagogics etc. The Baltic University Programme Secretariat is established as a unit at Uppsala Centre for Sustainable Development at Uppsala University. The Director of the Baltic University Programme is Christine Jakobsson. The Programme plans, produces and coordinates undergraduate and master level courses using modern educational technologies in combination with traditional university educational settings, and runs joint research projects. At present almost 10,000 students participate at BUP courses and events annually. The major activities in the network are education (undergraduate and master level education using modern information and communication technologies), research (research cooperation on a regional basis on issues of sustainable development) and arranging conferences, trainings and other events for students and university teachers.

There are 7 courses have been elaborated and delivered to students by the Baltic University Programme and their member universities in the network. In the packages „A Sustainable Baltic Region” and „Sustainable Community Development” the issues of sustainable tourism development are presented within the courses that include seminars. Students can elaborate theses focused on sustainable tourism development, eco-tourism development and so on.

One of the recent research projects conducted within the BUP and lead by Christine Jakobsson is the EHYA project – Ecosystem Health and Sustainable Agriculture. Within this project 3 books for Master level university education will soon be published. Their titles are: Land Use and Rural Development; Sustainable Agriculture; and Ecology and Animal Health. Agrotourism is viewed as one priority activity in the countryside. In addition to delivering the educational courses and holding student conferences and seminars, the Baltic University Programme organizes educational cruises for students in the Baltic Sea on either the „Pogoria” or „Chopin” sailing vessels, and cruises on yachts in the Mazurian Lakes, Poland. The duration of these cruises is usually two weeks. During the cruises students learn a lot about sustainable development, the cruise area, nature conditions, types of tourism and other industries. At the end of the cruise students make reports on the trip. Taking part in this cruise is a great opportunity for students not only to learn about sustainable tourism and eco-tourism, but also to feel what it means to be an eco-tourist and what sustainable tourism is. In June 2009 a group of BUP students with teachers participated in the Japanese Peace boat cruise in the Baltic Sea. They travelled from Stockholm to St. Petersburg, Helsinki, Copenhagen, Bergen and Reykjavik while holding a workshop on Sustainable Development together with the Japanese environmental group on board the ship. They also held demonstrations for COP15 in Copenhagen, Bergen and Reykjavik. Another group of BUP students and teachers sailed on the Brig Tre Kronor in July 2009 in connection with the Tall Ships Race. They held a workshop on board on sustainable development and held seminars in both ports, Turku and Klaipeda.

Students from the BUP Students Conference on Climate Change and Human Rights, 14-18 November 2009, Gneizno, Poland © Christine Jakobsson

In all 76 students from 14 countries participated in the latest BUP Students Conference © Christine Jakobsson

www.balticuni.uu.se
State analysis of opportunities for sustainable water tourism at southern Lake Päijänne, Finland

LAKES – Lahti Regional Development Company is preparing a new tourism strategy for 2010-2015. One of the development focus is to make the most of Lake Päijänne in tourism terms. This article introduces three previous studies made in co-operation with The Lahti University of Applied Science and outlines Päijät-Häme County’s strengths in sustainable tourism.

The first study dealt with senior tourism in Lahti region. The objective was to outline customer needs for tourism services and the service supply. The first part focused on customer behaviour and tourism experiences. The second part included interviews of tourism entrepreneurs in the Lahti region and outlined special characteristics of senior tourists and suitable tourism services for them in the area.

The second study was part of Interreg IIIC WaterTour – Developing Improvement of competitiveness of SMEs and water tourism regions by innovative strategies and technologies. Part of the study involved mapping the products, prices, distribution and marketing communications. The study focused on e-marketing and gave suggestions for developing marketing means and channels, and ideas for product development.

The third study concerned outdoor activities and nature-based tourism across the project areas of Päijät-Häme, Kymenlaakso and South Karelia. The main part of project consisted of collecting, describing and mapping over 2000 kms of outdoor route selections. The routes serve recreational activities like cycling, trekking, riding, snowmobile driving, paddling and nature based tourism. Another component concerned the marketing of routes and their more suitable development for tourism purposes.

There are many attractions in the Lahti region. There are several harbours for boats and cruising, islands, nature conservation areas, the lakes of Päijänne, Vesijärvi and Ruotsalainen, and two canals connecting them. All the attractions are within short distances from each other and from bigger cities. Lakes in the Lahti region increase the tourism value for the entire area. In the future, focus should be on identifying and solving development challenges for sustainable water tourism.

Organising workshops in which different stakeholders can converse and exchange ideas is a way to get entrepreneurs and locals interested and committed to sustainability, since the bottom-up approach is important for the success of sustainable tourism. The region needs to identify its core competencies and development needs (i.e. rejuvenating rural areas) to find a base from which to build tourism. Importance should also be placed on the whole chain of impacts that a tourist has from getting to the destination, to the impacts of the accommodations they use and activities they undertake. This would include efficient public transport, the use of already existing resources, and the planning of activities in such a way that there is a balance between the use of environmental resources and any negative environmental effects. For example, low impact activities such as paddling should be used for minimum disturbance of wildlife and local communities. The outdoor recreation routes still need further development and the lake sceneries and attractions could be better promoted.

The Lahti Region Environment Service is taking part in the ICER (Innovative Concept of Eco-accommodation approach in rural Regions) project, in which partners exchange good practices and find new solutions to enhance sustainable tourism as a livelihood. The project’s (2010-2012) main objective is to create more effective economic attractiveness policies in rural areas for the tourism sector and to provide tangible and long lasting results. ICER will be a step forward in creating investments for tourism in rural areas, as well as developing sustainable tourism methods.

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Local tourism attractors and authentic experiences

Sustainable destinations
Sustainable destination development has been taking place for many years in the Region Zealand. Destination 21 was a new national eco-label for Danish tourism destinations established in 2000. In 2002, Møn and Oddsherred, both located in Region Zealand, became the two first Danish destinations approved according to the Destination 21 scheme. Since then a number of other initiatives have emerged, both from a holistic perspective and from more sectoral ones. Today it is fair to say that sustainable development is becoming one of the important destination design and management principles in our region.

The regional sustainable development strategy
In its Local Agenda 21 strategy, adopted in 2008, the Regional Council gives primacy to sustainable tourism as one of nine fields of action. The main focus is on destination development throughout the region. During 2008-2010, a series of destination development seminars and workshops have been held and will continue to be carried out in order to facilitate knowledge sharing and competence development. This takes place on the basis of expressed needs and wishes. It is a creative process where all participants influence the themes being addressed. The themes so far have been: cooperation models, strategy development and implementation, mobilizing local resources, experience-based product development, innovative branding and marketing methods.

As one of the major outcomes of this process, the production of a “Toolkit for Destination Development” is envisioned, gathering all relevant methods and tools ready for practical application.

An array of innovative concepts
The present efforts at destination level in Region Zealand take up key challenges of our time, such as climate change, and are opportunity driven, such as the promotion of local produce and gastronomic tourism or the application of experience economy concepts in innovation processes.

Some of the most interesting ongoing projects and activities are:

- All year round destination. In Oddsherred Destination a comprehensive involvement process is taking place. It has resulted in a new strategy and a series of new tourism products. One of the bigger activities is the establishment of the Experience Factory - a center for experience-driven innovation.
- Eco-camping. The first camping site in Denmark awarded with the Green Key label is Feddet camping. Many features show its commitment to sustainable development, for example biomass-fired heating, eco-buildings, organic fruit, nature activities.
- Mariibo Lakes Nature Park. The nature park is one of the most outstanding natural areas in Denmark. It is quite unique in terms of landscape, nature types and species, as well as experience opportunities. As a member of the Europarc Federation the nature park follows a number of its guiding principles.
- Clean beaches. A coastal awareness raising action has been developed in Region Zealand in 2009 involving 10 of the 17 municipalities. A beach exhibition shows guests how long it takes waste to decompose in nature, while citizen groups are cleaning the beaches. In 2010, there is the intention to involve the remaining municipalities, and if possible to disseminate the concept to the rest of Denmark.
- Eco-tours - Learning experiences. The Instructive Environmental Experience project aims to promote all-year-round tourism in Region Zealand by developing active learning experiences for different audiences focused on environmental issues which speak to common sense, experience, culture and dialogue. The project develops package tours for travel arrangers in dialogue with the site hosts.
- Local produce - gastronomic tourism. During the past approximately 10 years, a number of networks dealing with locally grown products have developed, as well as several producers and restaurants which give priority to culinary heritage and new local products. On top of these initiatives, a series of regional food events such as “The Day of the Apple” and “Mother Earth” have been developed.

Baltic perspectives
The experiences in Region Zealand and our participation in international projects point to a number of fields where action is needed in order to promote sustainable destinations in the Baltic Sea Region:

1. Awareness raising about sustainable development and its practical implications for tourism enterprises and other destination actors.
2. Development and testing of new forms of cooperation, from open and experimental networks to more formal DMUs.
3. Pilot projects, especially with regard to innovation for sustainable development, valorising cultural heritage and nature assets, and thus creating new attractors and shaping opportunities for tourists as co-creators.
4. Capacity building at both local and BSR level, since it is essential to develop competences concerning strategic action, multi-stakeholder involvement and facilitation of innovation processes.

Most importantly, there is a need for addressing the local level, where “things are happening”, and for linking these actions in the BSR. In addition to addressing sustainable development as a cross-sectoral approach, Local Agenda 21 is an excellent method for engaging all stakeholders in the destination.

www.regionsjaelland.dk
Tourism Related Activities on Regional / Local Level

Tallinn (and Turku) – Capital of Culture 2011

Tallinn is the capital and largest city of Estonia. It occupies a surface of 159.2 km² (61.5 sq mi) in which 406,341 inhabitants live. It is situated on the northern coast of the country, on the banks of the Gulf of Finland, 80 km (50 mi) south of Helsinki.

**Tallinn the European Capital of Culture 2011**

Tallinn was confirmed by the European Commission as the European Capital of Culture 2011 on 16 November 2007. All cities located in the European Union can apply for the title of European Capital of Culture. Every city which is nominated for the title must compile a comprehensive initial plan showcasing itself and outlining how they would view themselves as a Cultural Capital, what the problem areas in the program would be and how they would go about achieving the title. This plan is submitted to the European Commission. It is an initial working document which tends to undergo many changes. Tallinn 2011’s visual identity has also changed, looking to the future without forgetting the past.

**The idea of the European Capital of Culture**

The idea of launching the European Capital of Culture project came to life in 1985, when the Ministers responsible for Cultural Affairs of the European Union decided that each year a European city would demonstrate its colourful cultural scene. The movement was proposed by Melina Mercouri, Minister of Culture of Greece. Back in that time, the project was called “European cities of culture”. Since 1999, the selected cities are called European Capitals of Culture. By this day, the tradition of the European Capital of Culture has given more than 40 cities an opportunity to present their distinct and diverse culture to millions of people from all over the world during one year.

Since 2005, two cities are named Capitals of Culture at the same time. In 2011 Tallinn shares the role with Turku in Finland, a city close to Tallinn and with the nation to which Estonia has the closest ties. So in just a year, the shores of the Gulf of Finland will be filled with unprecedented cultural events to delight the locals and welcome guests from everywhere. Work on the program has started in both Turku and Tallinn. A good number of high quality cultural projects have been picked up from open idea calls and a significant part of the program consists of projects born from co-operation between Estonians and Finns.

The Capital of Culture year is a unique opportunity for both cities to present their own culture, history and future, but also the co-operation that has lasted for centuries in the Baltic Sea region. www.tallinn.ee
Kaunas – City of young people

What is Kaunas? It’s a city which hasn’t come to terms with the fact that it’s labelled as Lithuanian sec-
don city and which hasn’t forgotten that between the two world wars it was the provisional capital of the Lithuanian state.

Kaunas is the second largest city in Lithuania with a population of 335,000. It lies 100 km from Vilnius and approximately 250 km from the port of Klaipėda. The city has excellent railway connections to Tallinn, Riga, Warsaw, Minsk and Kaliningrad. It is also very close to a brand new Baltic motorway, the Via Baltica, which runs from Helsinki-
Riga-Tallinn past Kaunas to Warsaw. Lithuania’s own east-west motorway from Vilnius in the east to the port of Klaipėda on the coast also runs through Kaunas. There are also fre-
quent flights between Kaunas and cities such as Birmingham, Bremen, Dublin, Frankfurt, Liverpool, Lon-
don, and Riga. The international air-
port at Vilnius, with more flights, is about an hour’s drive from Kaunas. The first written record of Kaunas is in a manuscript from 1361, when the city was situated at the junction of the two large Lithuanian rivers, the Nemunas and the Neris. However, the city is certainly older than this. In its varied history, Lithuania was ruled by various knights and noble-
men, and has belonged to Russia and Germany. The Germans invaded in 1915 at a time when the country had belonged to Russia since 1795. After the Polish annexation of Vilnius, Kaunas was the capital of Lithuania-
ship between the wars and flourished remarkably. The old buildings of the city were restored, public transport and a water supply were established, and bridges were built over the two rivers. A large number of buildings for public use were built and many museums and other cultural institu-
tions were established, which still exist today. The Kaunas are proud of a very rich historical and cultural heritage.

Kaunas is the city of young people. The city has a total of eight educa-
tional institutions of university level as well as a number of other colleges, and has a total of 48,000 students. Externally, Kaunas participates in miscellaneous national co-operative ventures concerning tourism. A tour-
ism organisation must be in place for Kaunas to be able to increase its tourism. The Division of City Image and Tourism of the Kaunas munici-
pality administration functions as an internal structure for collabora-
tion within the tourism sector. The Tourism Forum of Kaunas city and Kaunas region takes place twice a year. The Forum involves the public authorities, hotels and other places of accommodation, transport opera-
tors, restaurants, sights and attrac-
tions, and other parties who earn some of their income from tourism. This is to ensure that Kaunas will be a qualified and active partner in dialogues at regional, national and international levels, and thus ensure optimal influence for Kaunas – corre-
sponding to the commitment of the municipality - in external working partnerships concerning tourism.

Kaunas City’s strategic plan for 2005–2015 is a complex legal docu-
ment concerning the general devel-
opment strategy of the city and its implementation tools. The strategic plan for Kaunas City integrates into one system the urban, state and re-
gional priorities that increase en-
vironmental maintenance, urban competition, and economical, social and environmental quality. The plan is grounded on the vision of Kaunas City: “Kaunas – an academic city of the Baltic Sea Region that focuses on the spread of science, knowledge economies and high technologies. Transport and logistics centre in Eastern Europe, the national focus of culture, the capital of sports and close port, a part of two city of Kau-
nas and Vilnius”.

In the long term, the Kaunas develop-
ment strategy foresees economic development and increased regional competition, while taking into con-
sideration present resources as well as underlying trends of develop-
ment. It seeks to develop transport, comunication and other physical infrastructure as an integrated net-
work, while trying to apply EU and national resources rationally. It seeks to create and implement a rational policy on tourism, to provide favora-
ble legal and investment conditions for all participants in the tourism bus-
business, and foresees to effectively create attractive tourism products for the domestic and international market.

In the “Kaunas strategy for tourism” the vision of Kaunas tourism sum-
maries: Kaunas should be developed as a de-
lightful and dynamic place for citi-
zens, tourists and business people, on the basis of existing recreational and cultural assets and aspects, in such a way that its individuality is preserved and without it becoming tiresome.

The intention is that the vision in the Kaunas area should be for tourism a
“guiding star” in future work with tourism both in the short and long term and will thus direct marketing and product development to a con-
siderable extent. Last three years one part of develop-
ing Kaunas tourism product was par-
ticipation in regional project “Cul-
tural and touristic route of the Baltic Fortresses” (Baltic Fort Route), par-
tially financed by INTERREG III B pro-
gram. The rich heritage of European culture, partially Baltic Sea Region, its cultural diversity (in languages, traditions, and material culture), its deep historical roots, the quality and diversity of its environment all pro-
vide an ideal frame for this rediscover-
y of the “special” and “typical”, which are seen as the very symbols of an improved quality of life, and the foundations for an enriched per-
sonal experience. The route include Dömitz Fortress (Germany), Spand-
au citadel in Berlin (Germany), Hah-
neberg Fortress in Berlin (Germany), Peitz Fortress (Germany), Gorgast Fortress (Germany), Kostzryn upon Oder Fortress, Seinuojus Fortress (Poland), Boyen Fortress in Glzy-
cko (Poland), Kolobrzeg Fortress (Poland), Grodзk fortress in Gdansk (Poland), the Weliszycz Fortress in Gdansk (Poland), Kalin-
ingrad Fortress (Russia), Kaunas For-
tress (Lithuania), Modlin Fortress in Nowy Dwor Mazowiecki (Poland).

On the grounds of the mentioned project there is a pilot demonstra-
tion project „Example for utilization of historic monuments with modern tourism trends in fort number V of Kaunas Fortress“, Travelling exhibi-
tion, guides of the different tourist routes and the brochures with infor-
mation being prepared. Using EU, national resources and different funds some other project of tourism development in Kaunas is on implementation. The ‘Sport and recreational palace are under construction, started re-creation (partially) of Kaunas Castle, in the nearest future recreation of Monas-
tery of Benedictines, Pazalis abbey (pearl of baroque) and new camping construction will start. For all Lithuania’s inhabitants, Kau-
nas is unique modern city with a rich history and peculiar spirit.
Tourism Related Activities on Regional / Local Level

Set course for Pomorskie

Pomorskie Region is not only the Tri-City (Gdansk, Gdynia and Sopot) and the coast. This fascinating region has much more to offer than beaches, sea and sun. Development of the region is strictly connected with cultural, leisure, water and active tourism, which reaches into every corner and beyond the tourist season.

The heart of the region is one thousand year old Gdansk, abounding in numerous world class sights. The city’s rich and stormy past has influenced the recent history of Europe. It was here that World War II started, and here too that “Solidarnosc” came into existence - the movement that led to the collapse of communism in Poland, and later on also in other countries of Eastern Europe. The European Solidarity Centre as a cultural institution creates cultural activities, inspires stories related to the broader themes of solidarity and organizes concerts and festivals.

In Pomorskie Region 2808 objects are entered in the register of monuments. There are two national parks – Slowinski and Tuchola Forest - nine landscapes parks, and several nature reserves. In Slowinski Park, which forms a UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve with its famous wandering dunes - a unique phenomenon in Europe - tourists surrounded by sandy hills have the impression of suddenly finding themselves in the Sahara. Through the Tuchola Forest flows the Brda river, a paradise for canoeists. Lovers of the sport argue that this is the most beautiful kayaking trail in Europe. Not without reason is the area known as the Kashubian Switzerland. Pomorskie is also a region full of enterprise and local initiatives. In the interest of tourists a comprehensive range of tourism packages are on offer always adapted to the needs of the specific customers.

While Kashubia is a land of lakes, rivers, hills and forests, the more eastern parts of the province form the vast plain of Zulawy, cut by ditches. Part of this land, a depression, reaches 1.6 meters below sea level. In Zulawy can be found traces of the culture of Mennonites, who arrived from Holland. They created, in Zulawy, a homeland like the wetlands they knew, with the original architecture of arcaded houses. It is a region of great opportunities. The project Peta Zulawska (Zulawy Loop), carried out with EU funding, will enable a sailing base to be created in the area of the Vistula Delta and will contribute to promotion of the national tourist product. Because of that this area will be included in the network of the International Waterway E70 leading from Holland to Lithuania.

All sub-regions in Pomorskie have great scenic and cultural sites. There are theme routes such as the Cistercian Route, Amber Route, Gothic Castles Route, Hydraulic Engineering Constructions and Lighthouse Routes, which can be followed not only by car but also by designated cycle and kayaking routes and even sections for walkers. Cultural routes invite you to visit their pearls of culture, providing a turbulent history of the Pomeranian area. The largest Gothic castle in Malbork, the Cistercian cathedrals in Pelplin and Oliwa as well as the Amber Museum in Gdansk attract thousands of tourists.

The area of Pomorskie region is surrounded by EuroVelo international cycle routes R-10 and R-9, and also the planned Vistula Bicycle Route running along the biggest Polish river. For hiking enthusiasts Pomorskie offers well-prepared Kashubian Nordic Walking trails, and in both Kociewie and Kashubia you can sightsee by horseback. Pomorskie’s seaside beaches are more than 300 kilometers in length. It is a paradise for everyone who likes to relax on the sand and swim in the water. Pomorskie also attracts fans of sailing and kitesurfing who can practice these disciplines in the waters of Puck Bay and the open sea.

Pomorskie has also the coast which acts as a good practice to organize cultural tours, giving visitors the opportunity to take advantage of the natural assets of the entire region, and to participate in various outdoor events. Among this type of tourist attraction there are regular events such as the Open’er Festival in Gdansk which move tourists in to the past. Lovers of Organ Concerts can find them in Cathedral in Oliwa and fans of rock, pop or instrumental music necessarily must visit Open’er Festival in Gdynia. Tourists can also spend time in several museums such as the National Museum in Gdansk or Museum of Central Pomorskie in Slupsk.

Every year about 5 million tourists visit Pomorskie. During the holidays they can experience the region’s culture, its unique qualities, natural and unique atmosphere, reminiscent of the history of Solidarity Movement and at the same time the great changes in recent years.

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Tourism Related Activities on Regional / Local Level

Set course for Pomorskie

Sustainable Tourism as a Part of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

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Tourism Related Activities on Regional / Local Level

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Szymbark tourist attractions, Pomorskie Region, Poland

The Kashubian Switzerland is the most varied landscape in the The Pomorskie Region. There are the hundreds of crystal-clear lakes, the hilly terrain covered by beautiful forests and the sandy beaches of the coast. Wielzyma, the highest peak of the Central European Plain (328.6 metres above sea level) rises there. Beautiful views can be seen from the more than 30-metre-high observation tower standing on the top. The area around the hill is protected as the Wielzyma Peak Nature Reserve. In winter, skiers can find good slopes with various ski-lifts. The Centre for Education and Regional Promotion of the Region (CEPR) is situated at the foot of Wielzyma, in Szymbark. It beats records of popularity in Pomorania. Through the organization of recurring events or innovative tourist attractions, it became one of the most visited places in the region. Last year the number of visitors reached 350 thousand.

Permanent attractions include:
1. Kashubia - with replicas of a noble mansion, a wooden church, a forge and an oven where guests can personally bake bread using traditional recipes and methods.
2. Siberia - presenting a model of a prison camp, a loading ramp with the original locomotive and carriages used for transporting people to Siberia, an eighteenth century original Siberian House moved in its entirety from the village of Zapleskino, 360 km east of Irkutsk, Russia, and which recalls the tragedy of the Polish deportees who survived.
3. The Secret Military Organization Pomeranian Griffin exhibit – presenting a replica of the Pomeranian Griffin bunker, an exhibit dedicated to the Pomeranian and Kashubian activists of the Resistance during World War II.
4. The Carpentering Museum with 2,300 artifacts (objects used for woodworking).
5. A replica of the 300-year-old manor house of Salina and the pre-war Scout’s House where the history of the youth organization is presented.

The main local attraction is the upside-down house. We enter the house through a window peak. The furniture is bolted to the floor and we walk on the ceiling. The interior is decorated in the real style of socialism. This house symbolizes the People’s Republic of Poland (PRL) times, Kashub’s participation in the destruction of the communist system, the evils of communism, the valiant struggle for independence and a world turned upside-down, where organisations operate with exceptionally noble intentions, while at the same time entire nations are being slaughtered. Such houses should be built in various parts of the world to remind people what went wrong and what must be repaired, for instance opposite the Kremlin, the White House, in Brussels, at Tiananmen Square so that the rulers of this world can look upon them every day.

In the Carpentering Museum can be found the world’s longest plank (36.83 m), which is entered into the Guinness Book of World Records and Nobel Prize winner Lech Wałęsa’s table for 200 people, weighing 6 tons and the largest in the world made of one tree. It was a huge, 120-year-old and over-51-metres-tall Douglas spruce from the Kashubian forest. The transport of the cut down tree from the forest to CEPR (6 km distance) took over 16 hours. Four heavy vehicles were used to transport the tree. Within 9 days several hundred people came to cut the plank. Forest keepers, police, fire department, the army, railway employees, hunters and the local population gathered around. Cutting the plank brought the entire Kashubian community together and provided the foundations for the establishment of the Local Tourist Organization Wieyca Peak. CEPR provided the technical, cultural and medical assistance for the participants and the constant flow of beer. The plank was cut in the traditional way used by our ancestors. In addition to the plank and the slab some 300 kg of sawdust were produced. This place being a pride of the region is definitely worth a visit any time of the year. It has won a certificate granted by The Pomeranian Polish National Tourist Office for the best tourist product in 2008.

www.ug.gda.pl/en
Kaliningrad region as prospective centre for development of ecotourism in the South-East Baltic

The Kaliningrad region is one of the most attractive areas on the map of Europe for ecotourism development. The region has a set of offerings suitable for ecotourism: wild nature, ethno-cultural heritage, scientific and educational facilities, as well as an information center for ecotourism. Biological resources are of special value for this type of tourism. The area is very rich both in unique species of animals and plants, some of which are included in the Red Book, and in diverse ecosystems, such as bogs, marshes, littoral meadows, etc. In the future development of the region, it is important to continue following the principles specific to ecotourism.

Different approaches for classifying ecotourism can be found in the scientific literature. The most adequate to our objective is the classification proposed by D. Fennell in “Ecotourism. An Introduction” (4, 10). The following kinds of ecotourism have been developed in the region:

- Birdwatching, which is confined to habitats of specific bird species (forests, meadows, coastal ecosystems)
- Wildlife tours, which usually combine specific wildlife viewing and exploring regional flora and fauna.
- Rural tourism, associated with direct involvement of tourists in agricultural work: cultivation of plants, care of domestic animals, and getting to know their habits.

Several diverse birdwatching centres can be identified: the upland swamp Zelau (Pravdinsk), the delta of the Neman river and eastern coast of the Curonian lagoon, the Pregolya river valley, the wetlands of Pobytne, Pregele, Rezanske, Ushakovskoe, Serenovskoe, the Dainij island (Remote island), the Malyj island (Small island), the Dlinnyj island (Long island), the Uzkij island (Narrow island), and the wetlands of the former State Natural Sanctuary “Kamenskij”, “Egerninken, Krugloe (Round), Bolshoe (Big), Papushinskoe, Lindenbush, Lageninshskoe) (L. 5).

Wildlife tours have become an organized activity in the National Park “Curonian Spit”. Here one cannot merely watch birds but also study them. This unique opportunity is provided by the oldest European ornithological station, established at the beginning of the 19th century and located within the National Park “Curonian Spit”.

Rural tourism is one of the priorities of tourism development in the Russian exclave on the Baltic Sea. This kind of tourism opens up additional opportunities for the development of internal regional and national tourism. Rural tourism is of particular interest under conditions of economic crisis, as it enables tourists to organize recreation near their places of permanent residence, which considerably reduces transportation costs and provides additional workplaces in the region’s rural areas.

Over 100 farms in the region, having various specializations, offer recreation services in rural areas. Most of them not only offer outdoor recreation, but also follow the key principles of sustainable development.

Thus, despite the fact that the Kaliningrad region is densely populated and largely developed, there are still places preserving unique natural ecosystems which can be considered important resources for the development of ecotourism.

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www.edc.albertina.ru

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Gusev Municipality: Towards sustainable tourism development

The Gusev municipal district is situated in the Eastern part of the Kaliningrad region. The town of Gusev is the administrative centre of the district and is situated on the two rivers of Pissa and Krasnaja. In the North, the Gusev municipal district borders with Krasnoznamensk region, in the East with Nesterov region, with Chernjachovsk in the South and in the North-West with Namansk region. Also, Gusev is situated at the crossroad of railway channels. Road connections are developed as well: Gusev-Kaliningrad, Gusev-Kaunas-Vilnius-Minsk-Moscow, and Gusev-Goldap-Suvalki (Poland)-Grodno. There are two 24-hour border-crossing checkpoints.

Gusev (Gumbinen in the past) is situated in the centre of the Prussian historical region of Nadruva, which has a very rich historical heritage. There are more than 150 historical, cultural and architectural memorials, including a chapel built in 1928 (renewed in 2003) in memory of Russian and German soldiers murdered during World War I and a sculpture of giant-moose by Ludvig Fondemayer.

Proximity to the Lithuanian and Polish borders provides opportunities for active development of international cooperation in different spheres. The Gusev municipal district has signed partnership agreements with the Polish cities of Goldap, Olecko, and Elk, and with the Lithuanian cities of Kazlu-Ruda, Shakaj, Koblenz, as well as with Belefeld (Germany) and Vitsensk (Belarus). Gusev is also a member of the Euroregions “Neman” and “Lina-Lava”.

The Gusev municipal district’s development strategy emphasizes the spheres of tourism and sustainable development, and proposes the following challenges:

- Rise of service standards in the tourism sphere
- Development of youth and family tourism
- Search for best practices of youth enterprise in tourism
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