

Working Group on Sustainable Tourism

Mid-way Report



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Mid-Way Report of the BSPC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism

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The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) was established in 1991 as a forum for political dialogue between parliamentarians from the Baltic Sea Region. BSPC aims at raising awareness and opinion on issues of current political interest and relevance for the Baltic Sea Region. It promotes and drives various initiatives and efforts to support a sustainable environmental, social and economic development of the Baltic Sea Region. It strives at enhancing the visibility of the Baltic Sea Region and its issues in a wider European context.

BSPC gathers parliamentarians from 11 national parliaments, 11 regional parliaments and 5 parliamentary organisations around the Baltic Sea. The BSPC thus constitutes a unique parliamentary bridge between all the EU- and non-EU countries of the Baltic Sea Region.

BSPC external interfaces include parliamentary, governmental, sub-regional and other organizations in the Baltic Sea Region and the Northern Dimension area, among them CBSS, HELCOM, the Northern Dimension Partnership in Health and Social Well-Being (NDPHS), the Baltic Sea Labour Forum (BSLF), the Baltic Sea States Sub-regional Co-operation (BSSSC) and the Baltic Development Forum.

BSPC shall initiate and guide political activities in the region; support and strengthen democratic institutions in the participating states; improve dialogue between governments, parliaments and civil society; strengthen the common identity of the Baltic Sea Region by means of close co-operation between national and regional parliaments on the basis of equality; and initiate and guide political activities in the Baltic Sea Region, endowing them with additional democratic legitimacy and parliamentary authority.

The political recommendations of the annual Parliamentary Conferences are expressed in a Conference Resolution adopted by consensus by the Conference. The adopted Resolution shall be submitted to the governments of the Baltic Sea Region, the CBSS and the EU, and disseminated to other relevant national, regional and local stakeholders in the Baltic Sea Region and its neighbourhood.

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Introduction



Ms Sylvia Bretschneider

Ladies and gentlemen,

The BSPC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism was launched by the 24th BSPC in Rostock on 1 September 2015. As President of the Parliament and Chair of the Tourist Board of Germany's number one tourist destination Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, I collected many experiences in the field of tourism. Therefore, I feel much honoured that the Standing Committee of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) determined me as Chair of the newly established Working Group on Sustainable Tourism.

The Working Group is constituted as an ad-hoc working group under the auspices of the Standing Committee of the BSPC in accordance with the BSPC Rules of Procedure. The overarching objective of the Working Group is to elaborate political positions and recommendations pertaining to sustainable tourism in all its economic, ecological, social and cultural aspects, as well as knowledge and competence building including curricula, challenges and opportunities for sustainable tourism, measures to promote it, and business opportunities.

At the inaugural meeting of the Working Group the members elected Sara Kemetter, Åland Islands, and Andre Sepp, Estonia, as Vice Chairs. At this point, I would like to thank both for the very good cooperation and for chairing each one of the meetings. Furthermore, I would like to thank all the members of the Working Group for their high-quality contributions to the meetings and therefore for a very successful work until now. As the meetings are characterized by intensive discussions as well as a harmonious atmosphere, I am very sure that we will continue this fruitful work. I emphasize these very good conditions, because it is not self-evident that cooperation in a field, that is naturally known as a competitive market, leads to a success.

This mid-way report is an overview of the first results of our work. The main focus is on the political recommendations which were elaborated during the meetings and are forwarded to the 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in Riga, 28 – 30 August 2016. Thereby, this report should be seen as a strategic summary of our work. Detailed information concerning the content issues will be part of the final report of the Working Group. The presentations of the first two meetings can be retrieved on the BSPC-website under the information concerning the Working Group as Annex to this report.

Sylvia Bretschneider

President of the Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Chair of the Working Group on Sustainable Tourism

Mid-Way Report

BSPC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism

The Working Group and its members should – according to their mandate determined by the Standing Committee of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference - aim at raising the political attention on sustainable tourism and contribute to the exchange of knowledge and best practices within its area of responsibility.

For this purpose, the Working Group should establish and maintain contacts with relevant institutions, organizations and other actors in the Baltic Sea Region and furthermore help to actively drive tourism cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region as well as to follow and influence political initiatives such as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and its corresponding Action Plan.

1. Summary: Political Recommendations

The following political recommendations were adopted by the members of the Working Group and will be conveyed to the 25th BSPC in Riga 28 – 30 August 2016:

The BSPC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism calls on the Governments, and where appropriate the Parliaments, of the Baltic Sea Region:

Regarding the implementation of approaches on Sustainable Tourism

- against the background of the general competitive situation in the field of tourism and against the background of the current tense situation in Europe to welcome transnational strategies and long-term commitments for fostering cross-border approaches in the field of sustainable tourism;

- to support transnational strategies which promote the development of tourism in the Baltic Sea Region and to include the creation of synergies between projects and a communication strategy for the Priority Area Tourism;
- to ensure the better inclusion of all Baltic Sea countries in joint projects and strategies as well as of the private sector to improve direct economic impact;
- to work towards increased coherence with regard to approaches to Sustainable Tourism in the region;
- to order to help mobilize the full potential of Sustainable Tourism to establish the BSR as a common and coherent tourism destination;
- to jointly work towards a common understanding of Sustainable Tourism and to strive to establish a joint marketing and joint labels;
- to support the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum and its newly-established project for a permanent platform for information and know-how exchange – the Baltic Sea Tourism Center – as coordinator for the implementation of activities on Sustainable Tourism in the region;
- to especially foster the 2nd call by the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum to apply for financial support via the EU-INTERREG-Programme "South Baltic 2014-2020" to achieve the establishment of an operational service unit for Sustainable Tourism cooperation and permanent platform for information and know-how exchange at transnational level, the so-called "Baltic Sea Tourism Center";
- to support the objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan to facilitate and strengthen the BSTF process as well as to facilitate coordination with stakeholders through joint workshops;
- to facilitate the networking and clustering of tourism stakeholders;
- to reinvigorate and update existing but untapped knowledge in the BSR about Sustainable Tourism, for instance the Agora Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Baltic Sea Region;
- to work towards creating longer-term impacts and benefits, thus increasing public acceptance.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Mid-Way Report is to present a first set of political recommendations from the BSPC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (WG ST) to the 25th BSPC in Riga 28-30 August 2016. This is pursuant to the mandate of the WG (see section 4 below for background information about the WG).

The report also gives a cursory account of some trends and challenges that the WG sees as drivers behind the need for a Sustainable Tourism in the Baltic Sea Region. A preliminary definition of the concept is also presented, together with brief remarks on its potentials and barriers.

3. Sustainable Tourism

3.1 Definition

The World Tourism Organization¹ defined the sustainable tourism development in 2004 like the following:

“Sustainable tourism development requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to ensure wide participation and consensus building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous process and it requires constant monitoring of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive and/or corrective measures whenever necessary.

Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.”

¹ <http://www.sustainabletourism.net/sustainable-tourism/definitions/>

Against this background Sustainable Tourism should cover all tourism activities of whatever motivation holidays, business travel, conferences, adventure travel and ecotourism. Sustainable tourism should respect both local people and the traveller, cultural heritage and the environment. It seeks to provide people with an exciting and educational holiday that is also of benefit to the people of the host country.

Sustainable Tourism means that problems caused by tourism, such as social dislocation, loss of cultural heritage, economic dependence and ecological degradation should be prevented.

3.2 Challenges

These challenges currently base on published official data. It is strived to provide data of the entire BSR, amended by national and regional data within the final report.

Tourism is one of the world's fastest growing industries and is a major source of income for many countries. Being a people-oriented industry, tourism also provides many jobs which have helped revitalise local economies.

In 2012², one in ten enterprises in the European non-financial business economy belonged to the tourism industries. These 2.2 million enterprises employed an estimated 12.0 million persons. Enterprises in industries with tourism related activities accounted for 9.0 % of the persons employed in the whole non-financial business economy and 21.9 % of persons employed in the services sector. The tourism industries' shares in total turnover and value added at factor cost were relatively lower, with the tourism industries accounting for 3.6 % of the turnover and 5.5 % of the value added of the non-financial business economy.

Residents (aged 15 and above) from within the EU-28 made an estimated 1.2 billion tourism trips in 2014, for personal or business purposes. Short trips (of one to three nights) accounted for more than half (57.4 %) of the total number of trips made, while three quarters (74.9 %) of all trips made were to domestic destinations, with the remainder abroad.

In 2014, Spain was the most common tourism destination in the EU for non-residents (people coming from abroad), with 260 million

² See all data: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tourism_statistics

nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments or 21.5 % of the EU-28 total (see Figure 3 and Table 4). Across the EU, the top four most popular destinations for non-residents were Spain, Italy (187 million nights), France (131 million nights) and the United Kingdom (105 million nights, data for 2013), which together accounted for more than half (56.6 %) of the total nights spent by non-residents in the EU-28. The least common destinations were Luxembourg and Latvia; the effect of the size of these Member States should be considered when interpreting these values.

Tourism is an important economic driver in the Baltic Sea Region as well. Therefore, it is a challenge to foster the potentials of the Baltic Sea region and establish the whole region as a model for the growing market of sustainable tourism.

It supports economic growth and employment. One of the biggest challenges, however, is to reinforce and improve sustainable tourism development in order to ensure the long-term competitiveness of the industry. By managing tourism in a sustainable way the aim is to ensure to recognise the limits and capacity of the tourism resources and encourage tourism development that balances optimising the immediate economic, environmental and socio-cultural benefits, whilst also ensuring the long-term future for the European tourism industry.

The concept of Sustainable Tourism faces a number of challenges, theoretically and practically. These challenges can also be perceived of as drivers behind the need for a joint concept of a Sustainable Tourism for the entire Baltic Sea Region.

Tourism offers various dimensions of sustainability, i.e. environmental, social and economic aspects. Sustainability in general has developed from a niche societal issue to an actual lifestyle. Sustainable Tourism is important as the competitiveness of the European tourism industry is closely linked to its sustainability, and because there is a growing demand for Sustainable Tourism offers.

Finding the right balance between an autonomous development of the destinations and the protection of their environment on the one side and the development of a competitive economic activity on the other side may be challenging. The work of several touristic stakeholders however confirmed that more than any other economic activity tourism can develop synergies in close interaction with environment and society. That is because the development of tourist destinations is closely linked to their natural environment, cultural distinctiveness, social interaction, security and wellbeing of local populations. These characteristics make tourism the driving force for the conservation and development of the destinations – directly through raising

awareness and income support to them, and indirectly by providing an economic justification for the provision of such support by others.

Recognising the crucial role that tourism plays for the EU economy, the Commission adopted in March 2006 a renewed Tourism Policy³ with the main objective to contribute to “improving the competitiveness of the European tourism industry and creating more and better jobs through the sustainable growth of tourism in Europe and globally”.

Global trends and priorities change. Thus, more than ever, the overarching challenge for the tourism sector is to remain competitive while also embracing sustainability. Recognising that, in the long term, competitiveness depends on sustainability. In particular, climate change is now seen as a fundamental issue also requiring the tourism industry to reduce its contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and the destinations to adapt to changes in the pattern of demand and in the types of tourism they offer.

As one result of the renewed Tourism Policy, the Commission set a new Agenda⁴ for a sustainable and competitive European tourism in 2007. It fulfils a long-term commitment taken by the European Commission⁵ and further supported by the other European institutions⁶. It builds on the Tourism Sustainability Group report and on the results of the ensuing public consultation exercise⁷. The agenda represents a further contribution to the implementation of the renewed Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs and of the renewed Sustainable Development Strategy.

The EU Commission supports several approaches to promote sustainable tourism in the European Union. To diversify the EU tourism offer, the European Commission for example offers co-funding through the COSME programme to sustainable transnational tourism products⁸.

3 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52006DC0134>

4 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV%3A110132>

5 See also: COM(2001) 665 final of 13.11.2001 (Measure 8); COM(2003) 716 final of 21.11.2003 and COM(2006) 134 final

6 Council Resolution of 21.05.2002 on the future of European tourism (2002/C 135/01), Council conclusions on the sustainability of European tourism (8194/05, 19.04.2005), European Parliament Resolution on new prospects and new challenges for sustainable European tourism (2004/2229 INI)

7 http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/services/tourism/index_en.htm

8 http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/sustainable/transnational-products/index_en.htm

These diversifying offers are thematic products (or services) in areas such as eco-tourism, sports tourism, food and wine tourism, health and wellbeing tourism, protected natural sites-based tourism and nature tourism. As a result, thematic tourism products such as transnational itineraries or projects or 'slow tourism' – travel which allows tourists to engage more fully with communities along their route – were developed.

The aim of this initiative is to strengthen transnational cooperation in sustainable tourism. It is also strived to encourage greater involvement in sustainable tourism for small and micro enterprises, and local authorities. Another goal is to stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector.

Another approach of the EU Commission is the European Tourism Indicator System⁹. The European Tourism Indicators System is a comprehensive and simple tool to help destinations measure and monitor their sustainable management performance and enhance their sustainability. This Europe-wide system is suitable for all tourist destinations, encouraging them to adopt a more intelligent approach to tourism planning.

The development of a European Tourism Indicator System for Sustainable Management at Destination Level¹⁰ is one of the key initiatives, which the Communication calls the Commission to implement. The European Indicator System aims to contribute to improving the sustainable management of destinations by providing tourism stakeholders with an easy and useful toolkit. It will help stakeholders to measure and monitor their sustainability management processes, and enable them to share and benchmark their progress and performance in the future.

In June 2010¹¹, the European Commission also adopted the Communication, "Europe, the world's No. 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe¹²". This communication set out a new strategy and action plan for EU tourism.

9 http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/sustainable/indicators/index_en.htm

10 http://bookshop.europa.eu/en/the-european-tourism-indicator-system-pbNB3213182/downloads/NB-32-13-182-EN-C/NB3213182ENC_002.pdf?FileName=NB3213182ENC_002.pdf&SKU=NB3213182ENC_PDF&CatalogueNumber=NB-32-13-182-EN-C

11 http://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/policy-overview/index_en.htm

12 <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0352>

Four priorities for action were identified:

1. To stimulate competitiveness in the European tourism sector;
2. To promote the development of sustainable, responsible, and high-quality tourism;
3. To consolidate Europe's image as a collection of sustainable, high-quality destinations;
4. To maximise the potential of EU financial policies for developing tourism.

The significance and chances of sustainable tourism is also discussed in forums world-wide. The UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has also adopted a 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Tourism¹³. Within this Agenda, the WTO aims with 17 Sustainable Development Goals at, inter alia, ending extreme poverty, fighting inequality and injustice, and tackling climate change.

Based on this universal, integrated and transformative vision, UNWTO is placing its efforts and tireless work in contributing with its technical assistance and capacity-building to the achievement of these global goals. UNWTO is working with governments, public and private partners, development banks, international and regional financial institutions, UN agencies and international organizations to achieve the SDGs, with a special focus on Goals 8, 12, 14, in which tourism has been featured. Goal 8 is defined as "Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all"¹⁴. Within Goal 12 it is aimed to "Ensure sustainable Consumption and Production patterns"¹⁵. Goal 14 strives to "Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development"¹⁶.

13 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs> (adopted formally during the 70th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, 25-27 September 2015)

14 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg8>

15 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg12>

16 <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg14>

4. Working Group Meetings 1-3

Since the BSPC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism was launched by the 24th BSPC in Rostock on 1 September 2015, three meetings took place. Currently, up to four more meetings are planned. During the Working Group meetings different thematic priorities were chosen and reflected in the expert presentations.

This report is supposed to be a mid-way report. Thus, the summaries of the expert presentations as well as the intensive discussions during the Working Group meetings will be part of the final report of the Working Group.



WG at the inaugural meeting in Rostock

The BSPC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (WG ST) held its **inaugural meeting** in Rostock on 13 November by the newly elected Vice-Chair **Sara Kemetter** from the Åland Parliament. The meeting furthermore appointed **Andre Sepp** from the Estonian Parliament as second Vice Chairman of the group.

The thematic focus was on “Sustainable Tourism – setting the scene”. The members of the WG were provided an overview of challenges, achievements and needs of Sustainable Tourism in the Baltic Sea Region. Therefore, three experts were invited: Michael Deckert (German Economics Institute for Tourism - dwif), Johannes Volkmar (Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board) and Dr. Anja Gelzer (Ministry of Economics, Construction and Tourism Mecklenburg-Vorpommern/EUSBSR – Policy Area Tourism, Coordinator Team).

At first, the members were provided a comprehensive overview of the topic by the German Economics Institute for Tourism (dwif). The expert underlined the environmental, social and economic dimensions of sustainability in tourism and provided the meeting with a host of examples for demand for sustainable products and services in tourism. However, the expert did stress that there are obstacles to overcome, e.g. additional costs, lack of added-value and/or comfort, incomplete information or non-reliable sustainability logos. Regarding existing approaches in the Baltic Sea Region with a view to sustainable tourism, the expert highlighted the heterogeneity. The expert called on the members to find a common understanding of sustainable tourism.

This point was further discussed by the second expert who briefed the WG on milestones of the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum, which among others strives to identify common approaches in tourism in the Baltic Sea Region.

Lastly, the WG was briefed on the priority area “Tourism” in the context of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, which aims to establish the Baltic Sea Region as a common and coherent tourism destination. The presentations can be found in the annex of this report. The meeting was primarily devoted to a reconfirmation of the WG mandate and deliberations over its scope of work, priorities and mode of work. The WG members intensively discussed the Working Programme of the WG as well as the new input by the experts.



WG members in the Parliament of Finland, Helsinki

The second meeting was held by the Chair of the WG **Sylvia Bretschneider** in Helsinki, 20 – 21 March 2016. Four experts provided presentations with the focus on: Sustainable Tourism - Examples of best practices in Island Tourism, Cruise Tourism, Cycling Tourism and the Implementation of sustainable approaches of a National Strategy. The experts were: Petteri Takkula (Development Manager of the Governing Body of Suomenlinna), Kari Noroviita and Antti Pulkkinen (Port of Helsinki), Nina Vesterinen (Ministry of Employment and the Economy Finland) and Raija Ruusunen (Karelia University of Applied Sciences).

Beginning in the Sunday evening, 20 March, Petteri Takkula gave an expert presentation about “UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Baltic Sea Region, Case Study: Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Suomenlinna”. According to Petteri Takkula the highest challenge is to preserve the cultural heritage on the one hand and to present and market it on the other hand. The only way to meet both requirements is a respectful use of the resources to achieve a successful asset management. His core conclusion is that the protection, preservation and presentation of the intrinsic value produces sustainable extrinsic value for the destination. On Monday morning the meeting continued at the Port of Helsinki with an expert presentation of Kari Noroviita and Antti Pulkkinen about the “Cruise Ship Waste Water treatment in the Baltic Sea Regions – Best Practices of the Port of Helsinki”. The representatives from the Port of Helsinki explained the expansion of the port, especially the waste water facilities. The background of the necessity to renew the port reception facilities in the entire Baltic Sea region is an international agreement between all Baltic Sea rim states with the aim to achieve the status as a so-called “special area” via the International Maritime Organization. The Baltic Sea states committed themselves to implement the requirements of the international agreement (IMO MARPOL Resolution und Annex IV, MEPC.200 (62)) within the next years. Afterwards, the meeting was provided two presentations about the “Finnish Strategies and Experiences on Sustainable Tourism” by Nina Vesterinen and the second about “Cycling Tourism in Europe, case Iron Curtain Trail” by Raija Ruusunen in the Finnish Parliament. Both presentations offered good and very practical examples and approaches that can be transferred to other regions.

Following the presentations, the members of the meeting discussed under the chair of Sylvia Bretschneider the issues of the Working Group Programme, including a strategic prioritization, as well as a first draft of the Mid-way Report as outcome of the Working Group. The meeting also agreed on the first part of political recommendations which will be forwarded to the annual Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in Riga, 28 – 30 August 2016.



WG members in Petrozavodsk

After some years, a BSPC meeting was held again in Russia. Valentina Pivnenko, member of the BSPC Standing Committee and also member of the WG, invited the WG to her home area Karelia. Thus, the third meeting of the WG was held in Petrozavodsk. Vice-Chair **Andre Sepp** chaired the meeting which included the following themes: Sustainable Tourism – the use of local expertise for the development of Sustainable Tourism in the Culture Heritage of UNESCO, assessment of natural and antropogenic impact on the Baltic Sea within the borders of the Kaliningrad Region and ways of its reduction, creating of tourism and recreation cluster, objects of sustainable tourism development. The experts were: Elena Bogdanova (Director, Federal State Budgetary Institution of Culture “State Historical-Architectural and Ethnographic Museum-Reserve “Kizhi”), Anna Kuznetsova (Head of the Neva-Ladoga Basin Department, Federal Agency of Water Resources), Alexey Lesonen (Ministry on Culture of the Republic of Karelia), Dmitry Subetto (Director, Doctor of Geographical Sciences and of the Institute of Water Problems of the North Karelian Research Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences), Anton Yushko (Chairman of the Commission of eco-efficient tourism of Leningrad regional department of the Russian Geographical Society), Irina Kakovka (Head of Lahdenpohja urban settlement of the Republic of Karelia, “Pitkyaranta” Company), Vera Meshko (Chairman of organization “Golubaya doroga”) and Valentina Bulavtseva (Head of Administration of Kalevala national municipal region).

Among the regular Working Group members, the President of the BSPC, Prof. Dr. Janis Vucans, and Franz Thönnies, Head of the German Delegation to the BSPC followed the invitation to the Working Group meeting in Russia. At the beginning of the two days, the Working Group was provided a visit to Kizhi Island, the largest open air museum of Russia. Since 1990 the Kizhi Architectural Ensemble is included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage sites. Therefore, the first presentation contained “The use of local expertise for the development of sustainable tourism in the object of Culture Heritage of UNESCO” which was held by Ms. Elena Bogdanova. For Kizhi Island it is a great challenge to preserve the cultural ethnic heritage and the wooden architecture on the one hand and to increase the number of tourists on the other hand. The presentation continued the expert presentation about “UNESCO World Heritage Sites in the Baltic Sea Region, Case Study: Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Suomenlinna” which was held in Helsinki by Petteri Takkula. Within the actual Working Group meeting seven presentations concerning environmental issues in the Karelian region and impacts on the Baltic Sea as well as concerning objects of sustainable tourism development of the Republic of Karelia and concerning tourism development in Kalevala national municipal region were provided. Following the presentations, the meeting decided under the chair of Andre Sepp, Vice-Chair of the Working Group, on a new version of its strategic focus within its Working Programme. As consequence, the 13 former priorities were limited to 9 priorities so that the scope of work will now be more streamlined and more focused. Furthermore, the members of the Working Group agreed on political recommendations that will be forwarded to the upcoming 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference which will take place in Riga, 28 - 30 August 2016.

The presentations of the experts of the first two meetings can be found in the annex of this report. The annex can be retrieved at the homepage of the *www.bspc.net*.

5. Background

The Mandate of the Working Group was determined by the Standing Committee meeting in Rostock, 30 August 2015.

Mandate and Objectives

The overarching objective of the Working Group is to elaborate political positions and recommendations pertaining to sustainable tourism. For this purpose, the Working Group should establish and maintain contacts with relevant institutions, organizations and other actors in the Baltic Sea Region.

The scope of work of the Working Group should cover, but not be limited to, issues such as

- Sustainability from an economic, ecological, social and cultural perspective
- The state of sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea Region;
- Knowledge- and competence building in sustainable tourism;
- Best practices in sustainable tourism;
- Measures to promote sustainable tourism;
- Challenges and opportunities for sustainable tourism;
- Business opportunities for the Baltic Sea Region through sustainable tourism;
- Sustainable tourism as a competitive advantage for the Baltic Sea region;
- The role of SMEs in developing products and services in sustainable tourism;
- Potential for sustainable tourism;
- Including sustainable development in the curricula on all levels in the educational systems in the Baltic Sea States
- Awareness-raising about potential benefits from sustainable tourism.

The Working Group and its members should aim at raising the political attention on sustainable tourism, for instance by pursuing those issues in the national parliaments of the members of the Working Group. Moreover, the Working Group should contribute to the exchange of knowledge and best practices within its area of responsibility. It should furthermore help to actively drive tourism cooperation in the BSR and to follow and influence political initiatives such as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and its corresponding Action Plan.

The Working Group should provide political input to the Conference resolutions of the 25th and the 26th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conferences.

Scope of Work

The Working Group elaborated on the basis of the mandate that was adopted by the Standing Committee meeting in Rostock on 30 August 2015, the following scope of work within its Working Programme.

The overarching objective of the Working Group is to elaborate political positions and recommendations pertaining to sustainable tourism. For this purpose, the Working Group should establish and maintain contacts with relevant institutions, organizations and other actors in the Baltic Sea Region.

The scope of work of the Working Group should as strategic priorities cover, but not be limited to, issues such as

- The state of sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea Region from economic, ecological, social and cultural perspectives;
- Cooperation of all actors at all levels, including internationalisation of cooperation, exchange of experiences and political gatherings;
- Knowledge- and competence building in sustainable tourism, including sustainable development in the curricula on all levels in the educational systems in the Baltic Sea States to prevent skills shortages and to strengthen workforce;
- Awareness-raising and promoting the image of the Baltic Sea Region as travel destination, including marketing and communication strategies as well as campaigns and brandings;

- Measures to promote sustainable tourism as a competitive advantage for the Baltic Sea Region, including the development of attractive products which balance seasonality and also diverging interest;
- Awareness-raising about the potential benefits and business opportunities for the Baltic Sea Region through Sustainable Tourism, especially the role of SMEs in developing high-quality products and services in sustainable tourism – tax incentives being one of these benefits;
- Collection of best practices in sustainable tourism as a methodical approach to support the transfer of advantages and opportunities of sustainability into other states;
- Sustainable mobility, sustainable infrastructure and environment-friendly public transport possibilities to reduce the use of private cars;
- The importance of current unresolved Baltic Sea environmental issues and the challenge of climate change, with relevance to sustainability of the tourism industry, namely discharges from cruise ships and their treatment as well as the issue of sewage dumping in the Baltic Sea, especially in the Kaliningrad region.

The Working Group and its members should aim at raising the political attention on sustainable tourism, for instance by pursuing those issues in the national parliaments of the members of the Working Group. Moreover, the Working Group should contribute to the exchange of knowledge and best practices within its area of responsibility. It should furthermore help to actively drive tourism cooperation in the BSR and to follow and influence political initiatives such as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and its corresponding Action Plan.

The Working Group should provide political input to the Conference resolutions of the 25th and the 26th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conferences.

6. Political Recommendations

On the basis of its mandate, the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference Working Group on Sustainable Tourism proposes the following political recommendations as a result of its work. The recommendations should also be a result of deliberations and proposals of the meetings of the Standing Committee of the BSPC and could include the contribution of partner organisations of the BSPC. The political recommendations will be adjusted and amended continuously in follow-up to the WG meetings.

The following political recommendations will be conveyed to the 25th BSPC in Riga 28 – 30 August 2016:

The BSPC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism calls on the Governments, and where appropriate the Parliaments, of the Baltic Sea Region:

Regarding the implementation of approaches on Sustainable Tourism

- against the background of the general competitive situation in the field of tourism and against the background of the current tense situation in Europe to welcome transnational strategies and long-term commitments for fostering cross-border approaches in the field of sustainable tourism;
- to support transnational strategies which promote the development of tourism in the Baltic Sea Region and to include the creation of synergies between projects and a communication strategy for the Priority Area Tourism;
- to ensure the better inclusion of all Baltic Sea countries in joint projects and strategies as well as of the private sector to improve direct economic impact;
- to work towards increased coherence with regard to approaches to Sustainable Tourism in the region;
- to order to help mobilize the full potential of Sustainable Tourism to establish the BSR as a common and coherent tourism destination;
- to jointly work towards a common understanding of Sustainable Tourism and to strive to establish a joint marketing and joint labels;

- to support the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum and its newly-established project for a permanent platform for information and know-how exchange – the Baltic Sea Tourism Center – as coordinator for the implementation of activities on Sustainable Tourism in the region;
- to especially foster the 2nd call by the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum to apply for financial support via the EU-INTERREG-Programme "South Baltic 2014-2020" to achieve the establishment of an operational service unit for Sustainable Tourism cooperation and permanent platform for information and know-how exchange at transnational level, the so-called "Baltic Sea Tourism Center";
- to support the objectives of the Baltic Sea Action Plan to facilitate and strengthen the BSTF process as well as to facilitate coordination with stakeholders through joint workshops;
- to facilitate the networking and clustering of tourism stakeholders;
- to reinvigorate and update existing but untapped knowledge in the BSR about Sustainable Tourism, for instance the Agora Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Baltic Sea Region;
- to work towards creating longer-term impacts and benefits, thus increasing public acceptance.

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Presentations of the first Meeting in Rostock

1. Michael Deckert - Opportunities of Sustainable Tourism in the Baltic Sea Region (German Economics Institute for Tourism - dwif)
2. Johannes Volkmar - Milestones of the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum (Regional Tourist Board Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)
3. Dr. Anja Gelzer - The policy field “Tourism” in the context of the EU-Baltic Sea Strategy (Ministry of Economics, Construction and Tourism Mecklenburg-Vorpommern)

Presentations of the second Meeting in Helsinki

1. Petteri Takkula – Sustainable Tourism Strategy for Suomenlinna (Development Manager of the Governing Body of Suomenlinna)
2. Kari Noroviita and Antti Pulkkinen – Waste Water Treatment in the Baltic Sea Regions – Best Practice of the Port of Helsinki (Port of Helsinki)
3. Nina Versterinen – Finnish Strategies and Experiences on Sustainable Tourism (Ministry of Employment and the Economy)
4. Raija Ruusunen – Cycling Tourism in Europe, case Iron Curtain Trail (Karelia University of Applied Sciences)

The presentations of the experts of the first two meetings can be found in the annex of this report. The annex can be retrieved at the homepage of the *www.bspc.net*.

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