



BSPC

BALTIC SEA PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

**Working Group on
Sustainable Tourism**

Final Report
2017



Working Group on Sustainable Tourism

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2017

Report of the BSPC Working Group
on Sustainable Tourism

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Layout: produktionsbüro TINUS

Photos: BSPC Secretariat

Print: Produktionsbüro TINUS

Print financed by
Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

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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 Cooperation (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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I. Introduction



Ms Sylvia Bretschneider

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Promoting the Baltic Sea Region as a comprehensive sustainable tourist destination was and still is one of the most important priorities of the Members of the Working Group on Sustainable Tourism. Cooperation of all actors at all levels, including the internationalisation of cooperation and the exchange of experiences are the keys to achieve this goal. However, the tourism sector is also a competitive market in which every region and every tourism provider still competes for his or her own profit. Realizing this challenge, I am proud that members of parliament from all around the Baltic Sea participated to work intensively on the way to achieve a more sustainable tourism. It was a great opportunity to share information, ideas, best practices and to learn more about the positioning of the tourism sector of the Baltic Sea Region.

This final report is a strategic overview about the efforts of the Working Group since the establishing in September 2015. We present the elaboration of political positions and recommendations pertaining to sustainable tourism in its economic, ecological, social and cultural aspects. Furthermore, we include the description of opportunities and challenges for sustainable tourism and summarize the

working group activities. Finally, this reports gives a first approach on the implementation of the 25th resolution with regard to Sustainable Tourism.

My special thanks go to all working group members from the BSPC member parliaments; you can find a compilation in annex A. In two years of intensive work, we already realized a lot together. Yet, there is still much to do for further developing the Baltic Sea Region as a comprehensive sustainable tourist destination. Especially in the year 2017, as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development, declared by the United Nations, it is important to foster the awareness and importance of sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea Region. On behalf of the Working Group, I encourage all stakeholder to work on this issue.

Sylvia Bretschneider

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

Political Recommendations

Based on its mandate, the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference Working Group on Sustainable Tourism proposes the following political recommendations as a main result of its work. Half of the political recommendations were already mentioned in the Midway report in 2016 and most of them were integrated in the 25th resolution of the BSPC.

a) Final Recommendations

The Working Group members adopted the final recommendations on the last Working Group meeting from May 29 to May 30 on the Åland Islands. These recommendations were conveyed to the 26th BSPC in Hamburg 3 – 5 September 2017:

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

Regarding Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, to

- elaborate a common programme based on a strategy within the framework of CBSS to develop sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea Region, considering the following aspects
 - the reduction as far as it is possible of obstacles in cross border travelling to promote the freedom of travel,
 - the improvement of sustainable transport and touristic infrastructure,
 - support the idea of Baltic Sea Region States creating a common Baltic Sea Brand, based on cultural and natural heritage, to strengthen tourism competitiveness,
 - the improvement of travel options especially for young people (e.g. interferry).

Regarding Sustainable Tourism, to

- make sure that the consequences of tourism are sustainable and for this reason adopt models and methods to save and protect nature;
- further examine the use of carbon footprints to improve the comparability and attractiveness of Tourism products and their ecological and economical effects; further improve the transparency of Tourism products as to their quality in terms of sustainability, e.g by using common labels and standards;
- promote wastewater facilities at harbours in the Baltic Sea Region;
- improve interrailing, promote the use of alternative sources of energy and foster a sustainable multimodal split (sea, road, rail), improve the bike infrastructure including bicycle stands and Ebike charging stations at transport hubs as examples for ecological forms of tourism;
- jointly task a Tourism Transport Impact Assessment Study to analyze ongoingly the output of different political actions for increasing the level of sustainability;
- counteract the lack of skilled workers in the tourism sector in the Baltic Sea Region, e.g. by establishing an international winter school to increase labour skills, language and intercultural skills;
- fully use possibilities of the circular and fair sharing economies to create new jobs in the service sectors;
- foster a joint promotion of the Baltic Sea Region as a tourism destination by private and public stakeholders especially in new source markets and to foster the cooperation in the region as a main key for the successful development of the Baltic Sea Region;
- better use the potentials of digitalization in promoting sustainable tourism and further support the development of the Baltic Sea Tourism Center into a permanent platform for information and exchange of know-how at transnational level, especially with regard to the long-term priorities of the CBSS.

Furthermore, the working group members encouraged that the following recommendation could be placed in the introduction of the 26th resolution:

The Working Group on Sustainable Tourism furthermore recommends continuing involving youth into the procedure of the BSPC working groups. Especially during the second half of a two-year mandate of a working group the vivid debate with young people nominated by the member parliaments can be an enrichment also with regard to the annual conference.

b) Mid Way Recommendations

As a mid-way result of the first three working group meetings, the members adopted the following recommendations:

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-INTER-REG-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.

c) Sustainable Tourism in the 25th BSPC resolution

From the mid-way recommendations the 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference adopted the following points:

The participants, elected representatives from the Baltic Sea Region States, assembling in Riga, Latvia, 28-30 August 2016, call on the governments in the Baltic Sea Region, the CBSS and the EU,

Regarding Sustainable Tourism, to

- against the background of the unique natural environment of the Baltic Sea and the vulnerability of many habitats, to work on cross-border strategies in order to minimize existing conflicts between tourism, marine and coastal protection;
- strengthen the rural development and agricultural production in accordance with the environment in such a way, that the natural landscape and sound environment as precondition for a sustainable tourism in rural areas are protected and restored;
- 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 Policy Area Tourism;
- 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;
- work towards increased coherence with regard to approaches to Sustainable Tourism in the region;
- in order to help mobilize the full potential of Sustainable Tourism to establish the Baltic Sea Region as a common and coherent tourism destination;
- jointly work towards a common understanding of Sustainable Tourism and to strive to establish joint marketing and joint labels;
- 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;

- especially support the application for the 2nd call by the Baltic Sea Tourism Center for financial support via the EU-INTER-REG-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”;
- support the objectives of the Policy Area Tourism in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region to facilitate and strengthen the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum process as well as to facilitate coordination with stakeholders through joint workshops;
- facilitate the networking and clustering of tourism stakeholders;
- reinvigorate and update existing but untapped knowledge in the Baltic Sea Region about Sustainable Tourism, for instance the Agora Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Baltic Sea Region;
- work towards creating longer-term impacts and benefits, thus increasing public acceptance;

1. Purpose of the report

The purpose of the final Report is to present the full set of political recommendations from the BSPC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (WG ST) to the 25th and 26th BSPC. This is pursuant to the mandate of the WG (see section 2 for background information about the WG).

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

2. Mandate and Scope of Work

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

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

The scope of work of the Working Group should have covered, but was not 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 have aimed 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 have contributed to the exchange of knowledge and best practices within its area of responsibility. It should have furthermore helped to actively drive tourism cooperation in the BSR and followed and influenced political initiatives such as the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and its corresponding Action Plan.

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

3. Sustainable Tourism

3.1 Definition

The World Tourism Organization 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.”

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 and Opportunities

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 that have helped to revitalise local economies.

In 2012, 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 complete 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 nights spent in tourist accommodation establishments or 21.5 % of the EU-28 total. 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 are also 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 also depends on 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 could develop synergies in close interaction with environment and society. That is because the development of tourist destinations also depends on 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 Policy 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 that they offer.

As one result of the renewed Tourism Policy, the Commission set a new Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism in 2007. It fulfils a long-term commitment taken by the European Commission and further supported by the other European institutions. It builds on the Tourism Sustainability Group report and on the results of the ensuing public consultation exercise. 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 products.

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 that 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 System. The European Tourism Indicators System is a comprehensive and simple tool to help destinations to measure and monitor their sustainable management performance, and to 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 Level 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 2010, the European Commission also adopted the Communication “Europe, the world’s No. 1 tourist destination – a new political framework for tourism in Europe”. This communication set out a new strategy and action plan for EU tourism.

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 worldwide. The UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has also adopted a 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Tourism. Within this Agenda, the UNWTO 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”. Within Goal 12 it is aimed to “Ensure sustainable Consumption and Production patterns”. Goal 14 strives to “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”.

4. Working Group Activities

4.1 Meetings

Since the BSPC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism has been launched by the 24th BSPC in Rostock on 1 September 2015, seven meetings took place around the Baltic Sea Region. During the Working Group meetings, different thematic priorities were chosen and reflected in the expert presentations.

The BSPC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism (WG ST) held its **inaugural meeting** in Rostock on 13 November, chaired 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.



WG at the meeting in Rostock

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).

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.

The Chair of the WG Sylvia Bretschneider held the **second meeting** in Helsinki, 20 – 21 March 2016. Four experts provided presentations with the focus on:



WG members in the Parliament of Finland, Helsinki

- 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).

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 that were forwarded to the annual Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference in Riga, 28 – 30 August 2016.



WG members in Petrozavodsk

After some years, a BSPPC meeting was held again in Russia. Valentina Pivnenko, member of the BSPPC 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 BSPPC, Prof. Dr. Janis Vucans, and Franz Thönnies, Head of the German Bundestag Delegation to the BSPPC followed the invitation to the Working Group meeting in Russia.

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 be more streamlined and more focused. Furthermore, the members of the Working Group agreed on political recommendations to the 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference.

The WG held its **fourth meeting** back-to-back to the 9th Baltic Sea Tourism Conference in Pärnu, Estonia, 18 – 20 October 2016. As expert Rainer Aavik, the Deputy Mayor of the Pärnu City Government, attended the meeting and provided the WG members a presentation concerning the tourism concept of Pärnu.

In addition to the presentation, the members of the Working Group discussed the distribution of budgets and taxes in their states and regions. The attendees especially presented their different taxation models and tax incentives in the tourism sector. In general, it can be seen as a trend that tourism is a growing sector so that the fiscal policies in the Baltic Sea states have to react on these tendencies.

Following the Working Group meeting, the members participated in the 9th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum. As chairperson of the Working Group, Sylvia Bretschneider provided the participants of the forum a status report about the Working Group. As vice-chair of the Working Group Sara Kemetter also contributed to the Baltic Sea Tourism



WG Members at the 9th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum, Pärnu

Forum. She participated in an expert debate with Dario Bazargan (Cruise Lines International Association – CLIA), Krista Kampus (Council of the Baltic Sea States – CBSS) and the moderator Jana Apih (Institute Factory of Sustainable Tourism, GoodPlace).

On 24 January 2017, the WG held its **fifth meeting**. More than 30 Baltic Sea parliamentarians, experts, observers and administrative employees followed the invitation of Sylvia Bretschneider to the rooms of the Information Office of the State of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern at the European Union.

The session began with a video conference with Isabel Garaña, Regional Director for Europe at the UN World Tourism Organization. She informed the participants about the global developments in the tourism sector with a special view on 2017 as the International Year for Sustainable Tourism of the United Nations. Subsequently, Prof. Paul Peeters from the Centre for Sustainable Tourism and Transport of the University of Breda gave a presentation about the



WG Meeting in Brussels

connections between environmental protection, climate change and sustainable tourism. Especially in the field of the optimization of traffic routes, concrete recommendations for actions in order to establish “Sustainable Tourism” have been presented. The third expert was Carlo Corazza, Head of Unit Tourism, Emerging and Creative Industries of the European Commission, who briefed the participants on support measures for linked private and public tourism projects.

Furthermore, Veiko Spolitis, member of the Parliament of Latvia, was elected as second Vice Chair of the Working Group. In addition, textual and organizational questions concerning the future work have been discussed.

Upon the invitation of the Landtag Schleswig-Holstein, the **sixth meeting** of the BSPC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism took place in Kiel on 13 and 14 March 2017.



WG Meeting in connection with the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum in Kiel

The experts were Kerstin Ehlers (Head of Unit for Tourism, Ministry for Economic Affairs, Employment, Transport and Technology, Schleswig-Holstein), Ilan Sonne Sørensen (Ehrenberg Kommunikation GmbH, Hamburg), Ron Gerlach (Managing Director, Stena Line GmbH & Co. KG) and Christina Pfeiffer (Ministry for Energy, Agriculture, Environment and Rural Areas, Schleswig-Holstein). The experts presented different challenges for the tourism sector in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR). The core of the discussions were the cross-border presentations on the BSR, maritime tourism as well as touristic infrastructure and mobility. The integration of rural areas, especially with a view to the local economy and the environment, had been deepened.

Young people appointed by the BSPC members were included in the discussions of the Working Group. The parliamentarians and young adults evaluated the presentations and discussed several proposals, ideas and impulses. The topics included several aspects of sustainable tourism – education, digitalization or the question of a common “Baltic Sea Brand”.



WG members in Mariehamn, Mariehamn as well as on the islands „Silverskär“ and „Klobben“

The objective of this Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum is to transmit the jointly elaborated proposals to the BSPC so that they can influence their future work.

The **seventh and final session** took place from May 29 to May 30 2017 on the Åland Islands after almost two years of intensive work. Jörgen Pettersson, Vice-President of the BSPC and Sara Kemetter, Vice Chair of the Working Group, welcomed the members on behalf of the delegation of the Åland Parliament to the BSPC.

Experts began the meeting by presenting the numerous developments concerning sustainable tourism that have already been achieved or will yet be implemented on the Åland Islands. The Deputy Head of Government of Åland, Camilla Gunell, presented a Development and Sustainability Agenda that is central to these developments, featuring seven strategic goals.

Furthermore, the members of the Working Group were briefed on concrete tourism projects in the archipelago, providing sustainable and naturalistic offers. Above all, comprehensive recommendations and a call for action for this year's resolution of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference were advised and adopted. The presentations of the experts can be found on the homepage of the BSPC (www.bspc.net).

4.2 Homework

Due to the lack of comprehensive data on different fields and areas in the tourism sector around the Baltic Sea, the members decided in their second meeting to collect information from their governments. This so-called homework consists of seven different questions especially on topics like:

- government strategy for sustainable tourism,
- national or regional labelling schemes,
- collection of all the tax systems in the field of tourism of the local level as well as on the national level, and
- best practice examples (including all responsible partners, companies and organizations involved and the respective contact information) to transfer them into other countries.

With the help of the collected information, it is possible to get a more detailed overview on the status of the sustainable tourism in the states and regions of the Baltic Sea Region. These data laid an important base for the elaboration of concrete political recommendations and call for action.

The compilation of the answers of all the states and regions can be found in the annex of this report.

4.3 Especially: Involving youth, the Baltic Sea Youth Forum in Kiel

A key point concerning policy sustainability is to integrate the youth of the Baltic Sea Region into political processes. Recognising this, the second last WG meeting was held in connection with the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Youth Forum. In this Forum, youth



Members of Parliament and youth participants at the workshop

representatives from all around the Baltic Sea came for three days to Kiel, 13 – 15 March 2017.

The members of parliament and the youth participants took part in expert presentations and discussed the following questions in an open space workshop:

- Which topics and/or activities can be used to profile the BSR as a future tourism destination?
- Which challenges/problems have to be overcome in order to develop the BSR as a sustainable tourism destination in the future?
- What are the success factors in order to achieve a sustainable tourism development of the BSR?

The main goal was to collect inspiration for the development of the overall profile of the BSR as a common sustainable tourism destination in 2030.

At the end of the Youth Forum, the young participants nominated Friederike Schick and Elias Lindström as their representatives. In the aftermath of the forum the participants continued on noting the results and formulating political proposals.

Both of them will represent the Youth Forum at the 26th BSPC in Hamburg and present the central results of the Forum. Elias Lindström already participated at the final WG meeting on the Åland Islands and presented the first results of the Forum.

The Chair of the WG, Sylvia Bretschneider, pointed out the importance of the youth forum. She said that “we should continue and perpetuate the integration of young people in the work of the BSPC. The youth symbolizes the future of our countries and of the whole region. It is important for them to make cross-border contacts with peers. We would do well to provide space for the creativity of young people in our region and to involve them in our discussions.”

Because of that awareness of the WG, the members decided to recommend the continuation of involving the youth into the procedure of the BSPC working groups. Especially during the second half of a two-year mandate of a working group the vivid debate with young people nominated by the member parliaments can be an enrichment also with regard to the annual conference.

5. A first approach: Implementation of the 25th resolution with regard to Sustainable Tourism

Due to the fact, that the governments of the states and regions distributed their answers concerning the implementation of the 25th resolution, it is possible to analyse the implementation of the recommendations regarding sustainable tourism. These are the recommendations under chapter *political recommendations* b) and c), developed by the WG in the mid-term.

In these answers, it becomes obvious that the governments are working actively on the topic sustainable tourism. Especially three issues are becoming apparent:

A fact to be welcomed is, that the topic of cooperation plays a key role in many answers of the governments. Especially the cross-border cooperation between different states and regions around the Baltic Sea in the field of tourism is a relevant issue for the governments.

It is important to notice, that the topics “tourism” and “sustainability” are no separated policies. Many answers are illustrating the growing connection between tourism and sustainability.

A very gratifying aspect is that governments are mentioning and supporting the Baltic Sea Tourism Center in Rostock and the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum. The opening of the Baltic Sea Tourism Center and the supporting of the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum were key recommendations in the 25th BSPC resolution.

The Compilation of Statements of the governments in the Baltic Sea Region to the 25th BSPC Resolution can be found in the annex of this report.

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B. Compilation of answers from the governments of the region

–summary –

1.) *Question from Denmark:*

Does your government (local government) have a national (regional) strategy for “Sustainable Tourism”, or does your government (local government) in other ways work targeted in relation to “Sustainable Tourism”?

Estonia

The main goal of the Estonian National Tourism Development Plan 2014-2020 is to ensure competitive and sustainable development of Estonia's tourism sector.

The development of sustainable tourism is an underlining principle of National Tourism Development Plan 2014-2020

Finland

In Finland there is no separate strategy for sustainable tourism, but sustainability is a base for any tourism development and it is integrated into the national tourism strategy *“Achieving more together”* Roadmap for Growth and Renewal in Finnish Tourism 2015 -2025.

Latvia

Latvia does not have a national strategy for „Sustainable Tourism“, however the idea of sustainable tourism development is incorporated in Tourism Law and various other documents like the Latvian Tourism Development Guidelines for 2014-2020 or Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia until 2030.

Lithuania

On 12 March 2014 the Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved the National Tourism Development Programme for 2014-2020. Taking into account the principles of sustainable tourism the Programme sets out the national tourism development objectives, goals and development priorities until 2020. The Programme is the main national strategy for tourism in Lithuania.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

The German National Sustainable Development Strategy was adopted in 2002. Every four years a progress report is published. The last report was made available in 2012. According to item 15 of the coalition agreement of the new regional government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, a regional strategy for sustainable development shall be developed in line with the national strategy. However, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has adopted a climate protection concept in 1997, which was last updated in 2011. The corresponding “Action Plan Climate Protection” collects climate protection projects in the region in seven different areas of action – tourism being one them.

At sectoral level, there is no national or regional strategy exclusively devoted to sustainable tourism.

Poland

Issues related to the development of sustainable tourism are defined in TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM 2020 (TDP 2020). The main objective is closely linked to the implementation of the objectives of the National Development Strategy in 2020 and integrated strategies, by taking into account the global challenges and development trends. An important role in the implementation of tasks related to the TDP 2020, will play a central government that carries out tasks including in the following areas: sustainable use of natural resources for the development of tourism, while maintaining the protection of natural and landscape values and the development of environment-friendly infrastructure.

Moreover, Poland at the Fourth Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention in Mikulov, Czech Republic 24-26 September 2014, adopted by acclamation *Strategy for the development of sustainable tourism in the Carpathians*. This document defines the vision of the Carpathian countries for the implementation of sustainable tourism.

Sweden

In 2010, the tourism industry presented a strategy on how the sector is to be developed by 2020. This strategy was developed by the Swedish Tourist Association in cooperation with, among others, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth and Visit Sweden.

Sweden will be a natural first choice for selected target groups. In order to achieve this, at least 35 mature export destinations in Sweden must offer attractive experiences to international guests with high level requirements. Sustainability issues will also be included in these development operations. In 2016 the government appointed an inquiry to propose a coherent policy for sustainable tourism

and the growing tourism industry. The purpose of the study is to give the government a basis for strengthening the tourism industry that exports and jobs engine in the country.

Åland

The Åland Islands do not have a special strategy on sustainable tourism. The main documents consist of the Tourist Strategy for the Åland Islands 2012-2022 and the recently approved agenda for the development of a Sustainable Åland in 2051. The Tourist Strategy outlines a special chapter on sustainable tourism and accessibility.

Russia

State Program of the Russian Federation “Development of Culture and Tourism for the Years 2013 – 2020”

The main goals of the state program are, in particular, the implementation of the Russian potential of culture as a spiritual and moral basis of the development of the individuals and society as well as the tourism development. The state program defines the development of culture and tourism in Russia up to 2020 and is a system of measures and public policy tools to provide as part of the implementation of key government functions to achieve the priorities and public policy objectives in the field of culture and tourism.

Hamburg

In Hamburg, the Hamburg Tourismus GmbH (HHT, controlled by the Hamburg Ministry of Economy, Transport and Innovation) conducts the operational tourism business. HHT has been analyzing and conceptually approaching the field of sustainability for some time now. HHT plans to complete a concept draft for sustainability regarding city tourism in Hamburg until spring 2017.

2.) *Question from Denmark:
What is your definition of
“Sustainable Tourism”?*

Estonia

Sustainable tourism takes full account of its current and future economic, socio-cultural and environmental impacts and it is addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.

Finland

Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.

The intangible cultural heritage, living heritage, as well as its preservation are key elements of the definition of cultural tourism in Finland.

Latvia

There is no official definition of „Sustainable Tourism“ in Latvian legislation, however it is understood as any type of tourism that is developed in the long-run and balanced within the natural, social and economic environment. Latvia also acknowledges the definition given by the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

Lithuania

Being a member of the UNWTO, Lithuania uses the definition of the Sustainable Tourism as the UNWTO defines it. Following the Guide for Policy Makers, published in 2005 by the UNWTO, Sustainable tourism is tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Currently, there is no clear definition of sustainable tourism officially used by the Ministry of Economics, Employment and Health Mecklenburg-Vorpommern or the regional government of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. However, in a speech to the regional parliament the Minister of Economics, Construction and Tourism stipulated that “(...) sustainable tourism is a chance for economic, social and ecological development in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern – primarily in rural areas.”

Poland

„Sustainable tourism“ means tourism that provides sustainable use of natural resources, prevent threats to biological and landscape diversity, which is essentially based, and minimizes the adverse effects of environmental, ecological, cultural and social; it provides educational opportunities, contributing to the growth of knowledge and respect for natural ecosystems and biological resources; respect the socio-cultural authenticity of communities acting as hosts, while preserving their architectural and intangible heritage and traditional values, contribute to intercultural understanding and tolerance and contributes to a viable, long-term business, providing all stakeholders fairly distributed socio-economic benefits, including stable job prospects and earning and social services for the community acting as hosts, and contributing to poverty alleviation

Sweden

Visit Sweden works in accordance with the UNWTO:s definition which stipulates that sustainable tourism must:

- Optimise the use of natural resources as a key factor for tourism development in a manner that maintains essential ecological processes and helps to protect natural and cultural heritage and biodiversity.
- Respect the social/cultural authenticity of the local region, maintaining the region's created and living cultural heritage and traditions and contributing to intercultural understanding and tolerance.
- Ensure reliable, long-term economic activities providing economic and fairly-distributed benefits to all stakeholders, including stable employment and income opportunities and social services for the local region and contributions to the alleviation of poverty.

Åland

In 2017 the Åland Island government has decided that sustainability as well as accessibility is a central part of the criteria's for obtaining support when investing in living and housing.

3.) *Question from Denmark:
Which areas do you consider defined as
“Sustainable Tourism”?*

Estonia

See the previous answer.

Latvia

Within the term „Sustainable Tourism“ all of the tourism related areas are considered. Latvia believes that is important not to exclude any areas in order to fully embrace the concept of sustainability in developing tourism products.

Lithuania

Traditionally the definition of sustainable development includes the aspects of economic, environment protection, social and cultural sustainability. Thus, sustainable tourism could be referred to different tourism services, i.e. accommodation (waste management, use of alternative energy resources), transport, provision of information and other areas.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

(See the previous answer.)

4.) *Question from Denmark:*
Do you have any kind of national/regional “labeling schemes” regarding Sustainable Tourism, or do you consider introducing such schemes?

Estonia

There are two national labelling schemes regarding Sustainable Tourism: international eco-label the Green Key and national label for tourism products EHE – Estonia the Natural Way. In addition Estonia is participating in European Commission program - EDEN - European Destinations of Excellence which is an initiative promoting sustainable tourism development models across the EU.

Finland

There are close to 15 schemes used in Finland. For example

- a. Green Start Finnish travel trade sustainability coaching
- b. EcoCompass - a Finnish environmental management system and environmental certification for events and event venues as well as for small and medium sized businesses and public offices (regional)
- c. Green/Responsibility DQN– Finnish travel trade quality & sustainability coaching for destinations (2,5 – 3 year-programmes)

Finland has not planned to introduce any new ones.

Latvia

Regarding specific national or regional sustainable tourism labels, the Investment and Development Agency of Latvia has introduced a quality label Q-Latvia that is specifically aimed at enhancing tourism service quality with sustainable requirements and criteria.

Apart from Q-Latvia there are other voluntary incentives that contribute to the ecological aspect of sustainability and come from non-governmental and private sector. Non-governmental organizations in Latvia award tourism establishments with eco-labels such as „Green Certificate“ or „Green key“.

For coastal and inland bathing site quality improvement an important role has eco-label „Blue flag“.

Lithuania

The national labelling schemes are being developed in Lithuania. Lithuania as a representative from the European Region in the UN-WTO Committee on Tourism and Sustainability will organize a special capacity building activities for tourism professionals in Lithuania about the practical implications of sustainability. The main

idea of the workshop is to present sustainability issues and indicators on how it could be used for national tourism development programs, planning and projects.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

(Non-exhaustive) list of labels combining tourism | mobility and (aspects of) sustainability:

- Regional | local label: Certifies products and services from the region (regional value chains), Not only tourism
- Regional | national label: Sustainable destinations
- German-based label, EU-wide certification: Travel businesses | all processes around tourism offers; ISO 26000 conformity (social responsibility)
- National label: Tourism sector
- EU-wide certification: Accommodations and camping sites

Poland

Poland does not have such schemes. Development and implementation of such a system determines the task 2 of the Joint Action Plan Strategy for the development of sustainable tourism in the Carpathians

Sweden

There are several sustainability and quality systems related to the hospitality industry, for example the Nordic Ecolabel (Nordic Swan), Nature's Best, KRAV-label, Bra Miljöval, ISO standards, Green Key, EMAS, Blue Flag, Swedish Welcome and Visitas classification.

For the Nordic Ecolabel (Nordic Swan) the quality and sustainability system includes the hospitality industry in the form of criteria and a long list of licenses for hotels, hostels and conference facilities. In addition there is the EU-wide labeling EU Ecolabel (Flower), which has criteria for accommodation and campsites.

Hamburg

Due to diversity and complexity of the related aspects, there are no general labeling or certification systems for sustainable tourism in Hamburg — not on federal nor on state level. After comprehensive coordination with involved associations, a certification system has been introduced in the field of Accessible Tourism. Furthermore, there are several labeling systems in terms of particular sustainability aspects.

5.) *Question from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern:
How is the tax system concerning relevant taxes
in the tourism field structured? (regional/
national taxes)*

Estonia

There are no tourism specific taxes beside that there is a reduced VAT rate implanted on accommodation sector.

Finland

We do not have any specific tourism related taxes in Finland. But there are reduced value added tax rates in some of the tourism services (standard 24 %):

Restaurant and catering services 14 %

Use of sporting facilities 10 %

Passenger transportation 10 %

Accommodation and the right to use harbour 10 %

Admission to cultural services (shows, cinema, theatre) and amusement parks 10 %

Latvia

Regarding the tax system in Latvia, there are no specific tourism related taxes. There is, however, a diminished VAT tax of 12% (from original 21%) for accommodation establishments. Apart from that there is an entrance fee to the resort town Jūrmala during the summer season, which is 2 EUR per car.

Lithuania

According to the Law on Levies of the Republic of Lithuania the local authorities are entitled to determine, among others, the local levies for the use of public tourism and recreational infrastructure of the inhabited localities, with the exception of children under 18 years. Local levies are determined by the decision of the Municipality Council.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Tax type	Level of legislation	Legal document	Description
Mehrwertsteuer value added tax	National	Umsatzsteuergesetz UStG Value Added Tax Act	Normal rate at 19% (§12 (1)) Reduced rate at 7% (§12 (2), in particular 7. a) entrance fees for cultural facilities 7. d) circuses, zoos 8. a) not for profit organizations 9. pools and spas, spa facilities 10. passenger transport 11. accommodation bedroom renting
Kurabgabe visitor's tax	Regional	Kommunalabgabengesetz KAG M-V Local Rates Act	§11 (1) 1. for: administration, maintenance of public facilities; to be paid by all "Ortsfremde" (non-locals, visitors)*
Fremdenverkehrsabgabe tourism tax levy			§11 (1) 2. For: marketing; to be paid by those individuals and associations of individuals which (potentially economically) benefit from tourism*

* Only authorized health and spa resorts (Kur- und Erholungsorte) according to Kurortgesetz KOG M-V

Poland

Poland does not have such a system.

Sweden

Differentiated VAT rates on goods and services.

Åland

There is no special taxation for tourism.

Hamburg

Besides common business taxes on federal and on state level, the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg (FHH) introduced an additional „culture and tourism tax“ (CTT) in 2013 that is based on overnight stays in commercial accommodation businesses. It is due by the respective accommodation companies. The tax rate depends on the accommodation price that is to be paid by the guest.

6.) Question from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern:
What are your best practice examples for sustainable tourism or flagship projects (including all responsible partners, companies and organizations involved and the respective contact information) that can be transferred into other countries?

Estonia

A best practice regarding sustainable tourism is implementation of EDEN project (European Destination of Excellence), which has been a successful opportunity to raise awareness of sustainable tourism within destinations as well as develop new products and encourage cooperation between entrepreneurs and DMOs.

On the best example of new product, which have been developed for EDEN award is the package “Three Beautiful Manors of Lahemaa - come and experience the wonders of the Lahemaa Manors”. The EDEN award from last year on the topic of tourism and gastronomy encouraged our second biggest island Hiiumaa to promote themselves as a food tourism and gastronomy events destinations. The award gave them a lot of publicity and possibilities for cooperation projects with other destinations.

Finland

Above mentioned schemes to question 4

- Culture Finland -programme prepares, facilitates and coordinates the development of theme-based and sustainable cultural tourism in Finland.
- Regarding education, Sustainable development is one of the key competences of National Vocational Qualifications in the Tourism Industry. As well all Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences offer Sustainable tourism courses

Latvia

A best practice example for sustainable tourism development that Latvia is proud of is a POLPROP-NATURA project in Slitere national park. The project created five new sustainable tourism products for the area. It also developed a monitoring methodology providing key data for new tourism initiatives. As a result, there was an increase in the number of visitors, the length of their stay and the amount of money they spent on average in the park territory.

Lithuania

In 2016, the UNWTO during the 12th Excellence and Innovation in Tourism awards has named the Treetop Walkway in Anykščiai, Lithuania, as one of the most sustainable and innovative tourism projects in the world.

The Treetop Walking Path Complex contributes to the promotion of ecological, educational and sustainable tourism.

The Path is 300 meters long and gradually rises up to 21 meters above the ground. The watchtower at the end of the Path is 34 meters high. The Path is a good example of Sustainable Tourism in the Baltic States and Eastern Europe.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Regional flagship examples are:

- Gut Stellshagen, a bio and health resort situated close to the Baltic Sea in the region of North-West Mecklenburg.
- With a view to offer climate neutral overnights, youth hostels in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern are currently evaluating their carbon footprint. The climate compatibility has been calculated for half of the facilities already. The project is implemented by the service provider Viabono, a tourism sector initiative and receives support from the agency for the environment, nature protection and geology Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.
- Abenteuer Flusslandschaft is an EDEN – European Destinations of Excellence – award winning initiative offering water tourism tours in the West Pomeranian Lake District. Abenteuer Flusslandschaft received their award in 2010 for their canoe trip arrangement called “Paddling on the Amazon of the North”.

Poland

Currently, two projects received funding sustainable tourism under the Interreg Baltic South:

- 1) *Biking South Baltic! Promotion and development of the Baltic Sea Cycling Routes in German, Lithuania, Poland and Sweden*, whose project leader is the Pomeranian Regional Tourist Organisation
- 2) *The Baltic Museums Love IT! New brand of gamified tourism products of natural and cultural heritage tourist destinations*, whose leader is the University of Szczecin.

The projects will be implemented in the coming year

Sweden

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth was tasked to implement measures to develop sustainable tourism destinations and strengthen the quality and competitiveness of small and medium-sized tourist and experience companies. Between 2012-2015, the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth

implemented such inputs through their Sustainable Destination Development Project. This project covered the five destinations: Bohuslän, Kiruna, the Stockholm Archipelago, Vimmerby and Åre. One conclusion in the project's final report is that the tourism industry is important to long-term sustainable growth throughout the country. It is vital that the municipalities, in close dialogue with the industry, work together with regional authorities to develop constructive cooperative solutions for long-term growth and development strategies at local and regional levels. One important conclusion from the project is that both municipalities and regions need to take the lead and create the necessary preconditions by, according to the project report, promoting the positive development of this industry that has become increasingly important as a complement to traditional basic industries in Sweden, especially in rural areas.

Åland

The Green Key certification for accommodation, restaurants and cafes is a good way to help tourist businesses become more environmentally friendly while at the same time saving resources. In 2015, an inventory of 45 different types of lodging, museums, shops, conference centers, etc. was done. The inventory included an action plan for each facility.

In January 2017, the tourist project group "Åland for all - accessible tourism" invited members from Visit Åland, the Åland's business, trade and industry, the various disability organizations together with politicians and ministers as well as representatives from the third sector to a conference together with speakers from the Nordic Centre for Welfare and Scandic Hotels availability ambassador. The event will hopefully lead to more companies working towards making the society more accessible and sustainable.

Russia

The following positive results are expected from the implementation of the state program:

- Development and implementation of a set of measures of cultural development in small cities and rural areas, the formation of cultural environment that meets the growing needs of the individual and society, improving the quality, diversity and efficiency in the field of culture and tourism services;
- strengthening the international image of Russia as a country with a high level of culture and favorable for tourism.

The effectiveness of the state program is determined by the achievement of the following key indicators: the proportion of objects of cultural heritage, are in satisfactory condition, the total number of objects of cultural heritage of federal, regional and local (municipal) values.

Hamburg

Here is a selection of offers that could serve as good examples for other destinations:

- HHT itself is a good benchmark: It was one of its first objectives to serve as a good example. HHT is the first touristic marketing organization in Europe that has been certified. It was awarded with the Green Globe which stands for sustainability in the touristic marketing.
- Mobility offers (for example StadtRad with bicycles) that allow a flexible and environment-friendly experience of Hamburg to guests and residents
- Walderhaus Wilhelmsburg — A sustainable hotel combined with a science center
- On 120 sqm at Magdeburger Hafen in the heart of HafenCity, the Pavilion of Sustainability „Osaka 9“ deals with the core topics of ecological and sustainable urban development.

*7.) Question from Mecklenburg-Vorpommern:
Do you have a special tourism system on the
regional level, especially official regional authorities
responsible for the regional tourism or strategies?*

Estonia

Estonia has following regional tourism organizations:

- South-Estonian Tourism Foundation:
<http://www.southeastonia.ee/>
- North-Estonian Tourism Foundation
<http://www.northeastonia.eu/>
- West-Estonian Tourism Foundation
<http://www.westestonia.ee/>

Finland

At the territorial level, there are various public authorities handling local tourism affairs. The Regional State Administrative Agencies foster regional parity. The Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY) manage the regional implementation and development tasks of the state administration. There is a sector manager for tourism who acts as a national expert on tourism for all ELY Centres. The Regional Councils are in charge of regional planning and they supervise the regional interests, including the development of the tourism sector.

There are also about 30 regional tourism organisations in Finland. Locally, tourism issues are handled by municipalities and local tourist information offices.

Latvia

There are national and regional tourism strategies in Latvia. Altogether there are 5 planning regions in Latvia that develop regional development strategies. These regional strategies also include tourism development plans. These have to be in line with the Latvian Tourism Development Guidelines and also coordinated with the Ministry of Economics.

Lithuania

The Law on Tourism of the Republic of Lithuania establishes the responsibilities of local authorities in the area of tourism.

The Law on Regional Development of the Republic of Lithuania provides establishment of the Councils for Regional Development.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

- Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board (Regional umbrella DMO)
 - Local tourist boards
 - Regional trade associations
-

Poland

The regional authorities Marshal Offices prepare their own sustainable development strategies for their regions. Poland has examples of strategies for sustainable tourism development in the regions.

Sweden

The Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth is responsible for tourism and tourism issues. In addition, this government agency coordinates multi-agency operations including currently 13 agencies and state companies operating in tourism and hospitality. Visit Sweden AB is jointly owned by the state and the Swedish tourism industry and is intended to contribute to increasing tourism through the promotion of Sweden as a tourist destination abroad. In addition The Swedish Environmental Protection Agency have within their responsibility to specifically coordinate ecotourism and the The Swedish Board of Agricultur to specifically coordinate fishing tourism. The local authorities (counties and regions) also have within their scope to voluntarily work with tourism within their region.

Åland

There is no special tourism system on the regional level.

Russia

Responsible executor of the state program is the Ministry of Culture of Russia, co-executer – Rostourism Federal Agency

Hamburg

Touristic responsibilities are centralized in the Hamburg Ministry of Economy, Transport and Innovation. The ministry defines the fundamental touristic goals and topics. The operational business is located in the Hamburg Tourismus GmbH (HHT) which is organized as a public-private partnership.

C. Compilation of statements from the governments of the region to the 25th BSPC Resolution

Åland

The government of Åland has during 2016 developed a sustainability agenda for the Åland islands, based on the UN sustainability goals of 2030 which in large parts also concerns sustainable tourism. The implementation of sustainability agenda is now in progress.

When it comes to eco-labeling, a growing number of accommodations. Restaurants, cafes, and conference facilities on Åland are in possession of to the green key certification. A natural next step will be to look at the possibility to certify marinas and beaches with the corresponding blue flag certification. A larger marina project is under planning with total of 33 marinas including 14 on Åland which is scheduled to undergo the blue flag certification.

The government of Åland has a tourism strategy developed in cooperation with the tourism sector, which is monitored and reviewed on a yearly basis. For the Government and its partners, a sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea Area is of great concern when it comes to keeping Åland as a green island in a blue sea.

Denmark

The government supports cooperation on Baltic Sea tourism. VisitDenmark and other Danish players regularly attend Baltic Sea Tourism Forum meetings. Denmark is also represented on a steering committee with focus on

tourism in connection with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The steering committee meets about twice a year and is an obvious choice of forum for coordinating tourism among the EU countries that border the Baltic Sea. The issues discussed include opportunities for EU funding of new collaborative projects. Denmark has supported the establishment of the Baltic Sea Tourism Centre with a view to creating a permanent platform for data collection and knowledge sharing in connection with developing tourism in the Baltic Sea region.

Estonia

The cooperation in the field of tourism between the three governments of the Baltic States is carried out as part of the framework of the intergovernmental agreement signed in 2002 and renewed in 2013.

The agreement lists the following areas of cooperation:

- 1) Promoting the Baltic area as a tourist destination for short-haul and long-haul markets;
- 2) Development of Baltic tourism brand;
- 3) Development of tourism products;
- 4) Development of tourism infrastructure and quality of tourism services;
- 5) Reducing administrative burdens;
- 6) Collecting of statistical information;
- 7) Participation in international tourism organizations;
- 8) Applying of modern technologies for tourism development;
- 9) Development of projects in various international aid programs.

To ensure the implementation of activities, a Joint Tourism Committee is established consisting of tourism officials from Estonian Tourist Board, Latvian Tourism Development Agency and Lithuanian State Department of Tourism. The committee meets in quarterly basis (3-4 times in year).

The activities carried out in recent years include:

General cooperation:

Baltic Connecting international workshop for European tourism industry EDEN (product development (specialized maps and itineraries), marketing activities, press trips etc., targeted at the German market)
 Cross-border product development (main roads, routes, roundtrips, etc.) towards Europe and distant markets
 Preparation of the working programs for periods of two years
 Product development, educational study tours and information distribution within the Baltics.

Publications and e-marketing:

Baltic maps in Chinese, Japanese and American English

Baltic itineraries (camping maps and brochures) in English and German

Flash presentations in English and German

Press and FAM trips from long haul markets:

Journalists' and tour operators' visits from China, Japan and USA

Joint campaign for Baltic domestic tourism promotion:

Great Baltic Travel project (joint campaign for Baltic domestic tourism promotion)

Cooperation on harmonizing the new Package Travel directive etc.

In addition, all three Governments are involved with the implementation of the Baltic Sea Strategy priority area "Tourism". As one

of its activities we would like to highlight the 9th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum which was hosted 19-20 October 2016 by city of Pärnu. The main subjects of the forum were seasonality and sustainability - two selected issues that have and will have considerable impact on the future development of the Baltic Sea region.

Germany

Due to the federal structure of the Federal Republic of Germany, tourism-related competences are in principle divided between the Federation and the Länder (federal states), and this system has proven its worth. The development of tourism and the marketing of German tourist areas in Germany are matters for the Länder. Via the German National Tourist Board (Deutsche Zentrale für Tourismus), the Federation promotes Germany as a whole abroad as a destination for tourists and is responsible for the general conditions for tourism and the tourism industry in Germany. In addition, the Federal Government supports tourism-related pilot projects and studies which are in the general interests of Germany as a whole.

It also plays a coordinating role, including in the framework of a regular, institutionalised dialogue with the Länder in the Federation-Länder Committee on Tourism, to allow a full flow of information and to coordinate matters which are relevant for the Federation and the Länder. Only individual Länder in Germany are involved in the tourism-related aspects of the European Commission's macro-regional strategies. The federal interest is therefore limited; instead, this is primarily a matter for the individual Länder concerned.

Against this background, the German contribution to tourism-related cooperation between the Baltic Sea countries is coordinated by the Land Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. Federal interests are represented by the German National Tourist Board (GNTB), which promotes Germany abroad as a destination for tourists on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy. The role of the GNTB, which is represented in the Baltic Sea region's source markets, includes engagement in international bodies, where this is compatible with its marketing function.

In the framework of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, the GNTB attends the meetings and workshops of the Steering Committee for the Priority Area Tourism. The issues covered include strategies and projects to develop multinational routes, with the aim of boosting the perception of the Baltic Sea region as a joint tourist destination ("Baltic Sea" brand), and to introduce sustainable tourism products.

The Steering Committee's leadership is embedded in the Ministry of Economics of the Land Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. In addition, the Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania tourist board (TMV) has

successfully applied to be the lead partner for the new Baltic Sea Tourism Center which is to be established in Rostock, and which is being financed by EU funding from the Interreg South Baltic Programme. In the Federal Government's view, tourism is an important element of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. With the Land Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania as coordinator of the Priority Area Tourism, a partner has been found which can bring wide-ranging experience to the table of developing tourism in its own Land. The GNTB has significant expertise in areas which are relevant for the development of tourism in the Baltic Sea region. This includes theme marketing and branding, communication and social media, and the topics of rural areas, sustainability and accessibility. Germany is therefore well-placed to make an effective contribution.

Hamburg

With regard to paragraph 50 of the Resolution:

In the framework of its 2020 Agricultural Policy Concept, the Senate resolved to put particular emphasis on support for organic farming with the objective of achieving an expansion of the organically farmed hectareage in Hamburg. This was most recently affirmed in February 2017 in a Senate communication to the Hamburg Parliament entitled "Strengthening Agriculture in Hamburg – Hamburg Organic Action Plan 2020" (Hamburgs Landwirtschaft stärken – Hamburger Öko-Aktionsplan 2020). In parallel, the tried and tested support instruments within agri-environment measures, such as the extensive use of grassland and conservation management agreements, are being continued. Hamburg and Lower Saxony have jointly initiated the Altes Land Plant Protection Regulation (Altes Land Pflanzenschutzverordnung) at federal level to preserve the Altes Land cultivated landscape, with its characteristic fruit growing and its typical landscape structures influenced by the marshland channels.

With regard to paragraphs 10, 51, 54, 55, 56 and 59 of the Resolution:

ONE Baltic Sea Region, the EU project to market the Baltic Sea Region, was completed in September 2014 after two years. The partners in the tourism project, in addition to Hamburg, were Helsinki, Riga, Warsaw, St Petersburg and Vidzeme University in Latvia. The goal was to develop cooperation with northern European and Baltic capitals and to position Hamburg in the US market as a strong metropolis alongside other northern European cities.

The cross-border Fehmarn Belt Project "Building Tourism" was initiated in 2012 and implemented jointly with different regional and municipal institutions in the STRING area – Hamburg, Copenhagen, Ostsee-Holstein Tourism and Skåne Region. At the project's core was preparation for the planned opening of the Fehmarn Belt

Crossing in 2021. During the project, the participating partners developed joint strategies to promote tourism in both countries jointly and by means of the crossing. Subsequently a cooperation agreement covering the period 2014–2015 was signed for Fehmarn Belt Region “Building Tourism II”.

In 2016, cooperation was agreed with Wonderful Copenhagen, the city’s official destination marketing organisation. The goal is to have a joint presence in European partner destinations to work together with these relevant destinations on increasing the level of awareness of Hamburg.

Latvia

Answer prepared by the Ministry of Economics:

- The European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) that also applies to tourism sector offers guidelines on how the joint projects should be carried out, what should be the focus and common goals achieved. After their implementation these cross-border projects have to be sustainable enough to continue performance even after the project has been done – the products/results should be self-sufficient in the long-run.
- Latvia is collaborating with Estonia and Lithuania in cross-border cooperation programs that are based on cross-border strategies. These strategies include guidelines on how joint projects should be carried out, including various environmental, coastal and other aspects.
- Regarding tourism practices in rural and agricultural areas, tourism products are developed in accordance with the Tourism Law that determines tasks for tourism industry that include promotion of the preservation and sustainable development of the rural social, economic and cultural environment, and facilitate the development of rural tourism and eco-tourism and ensuring harmonized development of tourism in accordance with nature and cultural environment protection so that tourism does not come into conflict with nature and cultural environment protection.

Additionally, environmental considerations regarding tourism development are also determined by the following policy planning documents and laws:

1. Coastal Spatial Development Guidelines¹ , 2011.-2017 (in force since the 20th of April 2011);
2. Landscape Policy Guidelines² , 2013-2019 (in force since the 7th of August 2013);
3. The Environmental Protection Law³ (in force since the 29th of November 2006);
4. Law on Pollution⁴ (in force since the 15th of March 2001);

5. The Law On Specially Protected Nature Territories⁵ (in force since the 7th of April 1993);
 6. The Protection Zone Law⁶ (in force since the 11th of March 1997);
 7. Laws on National Parks in Latvia:
 - The Gauja National Park Law (in force since the 30th of June 2009);
 - The Rāzna National Park Law (in force since the 1st of January 2007);
 - The Slītere National Park Law (in force since the 30th of May 2001);
 - The Ķemeru National park Law (in force since the 19th of April 2000).
- Latvia is currently involved in the development of a strategy for Transnational Destination Branding for the Baltic Sea Region (hereinafter – BSR), which is part of the Policy Area (hereinafter – PA) Tourism Steering Group’s initiative.
 - The previously mentioned Transnational Destination Branding for the BSR is perceived as such a tool in the future.
 - Even though the development of a strategy for Transnational Destination Branding for the BSR is in still in process, it has been concluded by the PA Tourism Steering Group that a joint label/brand most likely would not be effective enough and therefore the BSR should be more focused on the transnational destination identity. The rationale behind this decision was, that without a common identity, branding is rather a waste of resources than a contributor to a competitive advantage. The joint identity should include innovativeness, sustainability and high quality.
 - Latvia supports the Baltic Sea Tourism Center as an associated partner in that project. Latvia supports the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum by participating in its panel discussions or presenting various projects and their outcomes in the forum.
 - Networking and clustering of tourism stakeholders is facilitated via the joint BSR projects. Latvian entrepreneurs and regional associations take active part in these projects and various stakeholders are involved as partners.

Answer prepared by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development:

Currently Latvia has one of the highest levels of biodiversity and unique cultural richness in Europe, which provides excellent resources for the development of sustainable tourism in this region.

The resource is immense. There are altogether 333 Natura 2000

territories, including four National Parks, one Biosphere Reserve, four Strict Nature Reserves and others. Latvia's cultural heritage (2017) presents 8 924 existing cultural heritage objects including two sites of the UNESCO World Heritage List and three sites of the Tentative List.

There are two specific objectives of the operational programme "Growth and Employment" supported by the European Structural and Investment Funds:

- to protect and reinstate biodiversity and soil, and promotion of ecosystem services, including by use of "Natura 2000" network and green infrastructure,
- to preserve, protect and develop important cultural and natural heritage, as well as to develop related services.

It is planned that the projects for activities of these two specific objectives will be launched in 2017, and will be managed by the MEPRD and the Ministry of Culture.

Additionally, the Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund annually announces project tenders for funding from the Fund, including publications in the field of environmental education, implementation of activities for protected areas, promotion of friendly environmental lifestyle. Most of these projects support the development of sustainable tourism in rural areas.

The Latvian Tourism Development Guidelines (2014-2020) promote nature tourism, especially ecotourism among other branches of the industry. The Latvian Environment Policy Guidelines (2014-2020) strengthen the quality of biodiversity and ecosystem services considered as the most important resources for sustainable tourism in general.

The strategies and development programs of many planning regions and local governments ensure the planning and co-ordination of development, and co-operation for sustainable tourism in Latvia. In this regard the balance must be so achieved that the requirements for environmental protection would always have priority over any prevailing economic circumstances.

The MEPRD in co-operation with the concerned associations and foundations, the objective of which is environmental protection in accordance with the statutes, has established an Environmental Consultative Council which promotes involvement of the public in the taking of decisions associated with the environment.

The higher education institutions in Latvia offer courses on tourism and environment to study eco-technologies, renewable energy resources, reduction of emissions of sewage water and air pollution, green mobility, promotion of organic farming and ecobuilding.

Sustainable tourism will be able to reap the benefits of a successful and competitive environmentally friendly tourism products and services that will provide benefits in all areas of sustainable

enterprise, thus adding immensely to the Baltic States region's reputation abroad as a Green region among the nations of the world. The National Strategy for the Spatial Development of the Coastline (2011 - 2017) defines the natural and cultural heritage as the central value and resource of the Latvian coastline. Development of tourism has been set as one of the major development priorities by all of the 17 coastal municipalities. The long-term thematic plan for the public infrastructure development of the Baltic Sea coastline has been adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on November 16, 2016 (http://www.varam.gov.lv/lat/darbibas_veidi/tap/lv/?doc=18794). Latvia together with other Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme's Monitoring Committee Member States (Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Finland, Sweden, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Russia, and Belarus) has contributed to work which is directed towards support of implementation of European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. During project selection process priority to EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region flagship projects has been given. As a result joint cooperation projects on macro - regional level have been selected for financial support, contributing to the development of a more innovative, better accessible and sustainable Baltic Sea Region. Furthermore, with the Interreg Baltic Sea Region programme's support networking of key implementing stakeholders of the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region for better performance of the Strategy have been facilitated as well as activities which are deriving from the tasks set for the PACs/HALs (including Policy Area Tourism) in the Action Plan have been supported.

With regard to encouraging transnational strategies and long-term commitments for fostering cross-border approaches in the field of sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea Region some projects of the Interreg V-A Latvia-Lithuania Programme 2014 – 2020 out of 41 recently selected for funding could be mentioned as examples of action.

- UniGREEN project activities will facilitate sustainable tourism in border regions of Latvia and Lithuania to stabilize and increase number of visitors and overnight stays in the region by management of the nature objects. New tourism infrastructure in 10 nature territories in Kurzeme, Aukštaitijos and Žemaitijos will be established:
 - o six walking trails in total length of 5200 m,
 - o three watching towers, located near water bodies therefore offering option to see landscape and watch birds (Latvia and Lithuania are active regions of the migrating birds),
 - o seven pontoon piers, one parking lot and three resting areas,
 - o 19 info stands including pilots with texts in Braille.
- Project Balts' Road involves 6 partners – two from Lithuania and four from Latvia seeking to promote the sustainable preservation,

development and popularization of natural and cultural heritage objects, services and products. Main activities of project implementation will cover the territory of four Lithuanian regions (Klaipeda, Telsiai, Siauliai, Panevezys districts) and two Latvian regions (Kurzeme and Zemgale). New touristic “Balts’ road” attractions will be created (including crafts, traditional food, education, service providers’ catalogue), latest technology interactive exhibitions will be established at renovated partners’ premises, and annual Balts Unity Days as well as promotional tours will be organized.

- Overall objective of AGRI-HERITAGE project is to build and promote a sustainable cross-border heritage based on agro tourism products and covering all programme area in Latvia and Lithuania. In many rural farms people maintain inherited traditions in farming, culinary, crafts, fishing, building, architecture, and gardening. The project involves these topics as part of rural cultural heritage and sees high potential for a competitive cross-border heritage agro tourism product. The project output will be agro-heritage tourism products together from 50 farms in Latvia and 50 farms in Lithuania linked in 10 tour itineraries.
- Main objective of JESLL project is to increase the number of expected visits to supported sites of cultural heritage objects in Lithuania - Latvia by the creation of a new eco sign for restaurants and hotels in those areas. Main output of project would be sustainable tourism - increased number in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural heritage objects. Consumer research shows that tourists more often choose the accommodation and catering establishments that implement sustainable tourism and have the eco sign. Created eco sign will put higher standards for hotels and restaurants in cultural heritage objects to be more eco-friendly. Also new tourism route will be created and promoted.
- Protected areas project from Latvia–Lithuania Cross Border Cooperation Programme 2007–2013 could be also mentioned as an example of action. Nature parks and reserves in both countries combined forces in the project to improve the capacity of their employees and to help farmers to farm in a more environmentally friendly way in five municipalities: Jelgava, Krustpils, Rundāle, Birštona and Aizkraukle and three regional parks in Kurtuvėnai, Žagare and Biržai. Infrastructure that will help tourists to learn about the diversity of the environment without causing it harm was created in the project area: 100 benches; 50 bicycle stands; 50 bins, four stairs, two toilets, one pontoon bridge, five tables, footway covering restoration done. The project also created a volunteer monitoring system, thus involving local residents in the protection of the environment.

Lithuania

Lithuania represents the ideas of the Baltic Sea region within the UNWTO. In 2016, the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Lithuania and the UNWTO signed the Memorandum of understanding. The parties of the Memorandum recognized the important role of tourism and its positive contribution to the socio-economic and cultural development of the country and expressed the intention to combine their efforts and work together in the further promotion of tourism in Lithuania and the Baltic States. The areas of mutual interest were identified. Lithuania, being active member of the UNWTO agreed:

- to foster close collaboration on common tourism policy approaches, and to ensure a more strategic framework for cooperation at all levels between Lithuania and UNWTO;
- to enhance the role of the tourism sector in the socio-economic development and international positioning of Lithuania;
- to improve the tourism sector's competitiveness while providing expertise in the field of tourism on human resource development, particularly skills development and training;
- to enhance knowledge-sharing and exchange, and help support best practices with a view to fostering improved co-ordination and synergies in the field of sustainable tourism development;
- to promote the development of sustainable tourism policies, including environmental preservation and biodiversity, social equity and cohesion and economic prosperity of local communities. (Information submitted by the Ministry of Economy)

The Ministry of Economy, in cooperation of the UNWTO and the Coordinators of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (Policy Area „Tourism“) organized the workshop on Practical Implications of Sustainability within the framework of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development which was held on 16–18 November 2016 in Šilutė, Lithuania. The workshop was dedicated for the presentation of the Baltic Sea Strategy and for the preparation for the year 2017 – The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. The 2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development is the perfect opportunity for taking joint action to raise awareness internally and thus create a new momentum in the sustainable tourism development process in the Baltic Sea Region.

Mobilizing the full potential of sustainable tourism is one of the key pillars of action behind the action plan of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in the policy area of tourism. Against the background of the Global Agenda 2030 and the adoption of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) member states have recently renewed their commitment to

sustainable development in the 'Baltic 2030 Declaration'. (Information submitted by the Ministry of Economy)

Rural tourism is already an important part of the European tourism sector. But many aspects and resources for recreation in rural areas are yet not used, or remain undetected. In this contest, Lithuania will take part at the International conference on Sustainable Tourism for Rural Development to be held in Italy, Bergamo, on the 15-17 of February, 2017. The next action, dedicated for the rural tourism is the 6th European Congress on Rural Tourism. This event will be organized in 2018 in Lithuania in a close cooperation with the UNWTO and the EUROGITES (European Rural Tourism Association). (Information submitted by the Ministry of Economy).

In order to strengthen cooperation in tourism, the competent authorities of Lithuania and Latvia have submitted an application for the implementation of the project "Heritage based agro-tourism in Latvia – Lithuania". The aim of the project is to carry into effect the tourism and heritage potential of agricultural farms and small fishing businesses in Latvia and Lithuania, opening them to visitors and creating a strong cross-border agri-tourism product to increase visitor numbers in the area. The agri-tourism product will have a wide coverage as all regions in the programme area in both countries will be represented. Latvia and Lithuania are a single tourism destination for international tourists willing to see both countries in one trip. Small agricultural producers are attractive as tourism objects carrying unique identity of the two Baltic States (pending approval of Interreg). Similarly, another application has been submitted for the implementation of the project "Revival of old traditional fruit, vegetable and ornamental plants and their products: Heritage Gardens Tour". The project is aimed at increasing attractiveness and accessibility of old horticultural plant collections as cultural and natural heritage objects and revival of old products from fruits and vegetables (pending approval of Interreg). (Information submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture)

Lithuania works actively in the field of sustainable tourism. In 2015, Lithuania was elected to represent Europe in the Committee on Tourism and Sustainability of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The Committee's activities mainly deal with the 10YFP Sustainable Tourism Program. Nowadays, the guidelines of the Sustainable tourism development for the private and public sector is under the preparation of the Ministry of Economy. (Information submitted by the Ministry of Economy)

According to the official agreement (02.06.2002) among the Governments of the Republic of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia on Co

– operation in Field of Tourism, three Baltic States started its activities at the Joint Tourism Committee (JBTC). At the beginning of its activities, the JBTC focused on cooperation in European markets. In 2010 the JBTC started its activity in long haul markets. In October 2016 the traditional Baltic Connecting event took place in Riga and was a new platform for business contacts between Baltic tourism business representatives and tourism operators from long haul markets such as Japan, China, USA and South Korea. Today all three Baltic countries effectively cooperate in long haul markets – China, Japan, USA, partly in Germany and South Korea. The united activities encompass the participation at international tourism exhibitions, road shows, development of joint publications, organization of FAM trips for journalists and tour operators. (Information submitted by the Ministry of Economy)

Lithuania supports the transnational projects and participates as a partner in the INTERREG project “Baltic Sea Tourism Center”, participates and supports the Baltic Sea Tourism Forums. In 2019, Lithuania is planning to host the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum. (Information submitted by the Ministry of Economy)

Lithuania supports the idea of tourism clusters. The national Medical Tourism Cluster from Lithuania initiated the creation of Baltic medical Tourism cluster. Unfortunately, due to the lack of financing, the idea of the Baltic cluster failed. (Information submitted by the Ministry of Economy)

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Environmental aspects and environmental costs of tourism are considered in the scope of a sustainable organization of the concept for tourism in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

The promotion of agriculture and the rural regions aims at increasing the attractiveness of the rural areas. A diverse and ecological agriculture and the development of the infrastructure both contribute to that aim. Increasingly, regional products are offered and accepted. The projects “Baltic Sea Food” follows that approach and aims at stronger marketing of regional products.

The creation of synergies between transnational cooperation projects is one of the main tasks of the policy field tourism in the scope of the EU-strategy for the Baltic Sea Region, that is coordinated by the Ministry for economy, labour and health Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Its importance is stressed in the coalition contract. Part of the communication is the mediation of contents and the active

use of Social Media Channels, inter alia the Facebook page of the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum.

ensure the better inclusion of all Baltic Sea countries in joint projects:

An inclusion of Russia into the work of the steering committee in the policy field tourism is seen as useful and is further aimed at. A direct inclusion of enterprises as partners in transnational cooperation projects is not possible in the INTERREG-programs. A speech is held through the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum.

work towards increased coherence with regard to approaches to Sustainable Tourism in the region:

Joint approaches could achieve increasing coherence.

in order to help mobilize the full potential of Sustainable Tourism to establish the Baltic Sea Region as a common and coherent tourism destination:

That is a primary goal of the policy field tourism, which was determined in the Action plan for the Eustrategy for the Baltic Sea Region together with the steering committee and the European Commission.

The development of a common marketing or a common brand are disputed in the steering committee responsible for the policy field tourism. Especially the Scandinavian countries see no need for such a brand. In a workshop the topic identity and the possibilities of the processing of common issues was received favorably. In the scope of the eighth Strategy Forum in June 2017 in Berlin, experts should discuss potential fields of actions.

The Baltic Sea Tourism Center started into its implementation-phase. The project will focus on Active Tourism and determine sustainable structures for the longterm establishment of the center. The policy area tourism actively supports the project and wants to make an effort, in order to achieve a long-term settlement at the international house of tourism in Rostock.

The organization and implementation of the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum is supported in a professional and a financial manner. The coordinator is highly involved in the organization and implementation of the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum and prepares the final declaration for the members of the forum. At the Tourism. Forum in Pärnu, the future possibilities of financing the forum has been discussed. In this context, the coordinator contacted the committee of the senior officials of the Baltic Sea Council, in order to achieve a cooperation with the aim to connect the Forums with the Baltic Sea presidency of the

member states. This request was accepted. The organization of stakeholder workshops is part of the tasks of that policy area as well. In 2016, workshops were held in Rostock, Copenhagen and Silute.

facilitate the networking and clustering of tourism stakeholders:

That claim corresponds to the first measure of the action plan for the EU-strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The measure is primarily implemented through the promotion of the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum and the Baltic Sea Tourism Center Project.

The use of already generated knowledge is the aim of the policy area tourism. The transnational project AGORA was again presented at the last Forum of the Baltic Sea Strategy in the scope of a workshop. Approaches for the update should be deepened at the next annual Forum and the next Baltic Sea Tourism Forum, also against the background of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development of the World tourism organization of the United Nations.

work towards creating longer-term impacts and benefits, thus increasing public acceptance:

This is an aim of the coordination task of the policy area tourism. Especially, because the implementation of the EU-Strategy for the Baltic sea Region should happen through project plans that have a limited duration. Because of this, a strategic cooperation for the development of common approaches or the promotion of important projects is indispensable. The advance of the coordinator to establish a close cooperation with the Baltic Sea Council is part of that objectives.

Norway

Recommendation with regard to tourism:

In March 2017, the Norwegian Government presented a White Paper on Tourism to the Parliament. Sustainability is a commitment underlying the development of Norwegian tourism in a long-term perspective. This industry is already investing in sustainable solutions. Undoubtedly, the market will increasingly demand green, sustainable, responsible and ethical tourisms. We fully agree that these factors should also be the guiding policy for our cross-border approaches in the Baltic Sea Region.

Environmental certification and labelling will provide opportunities for communicating standards and document quality.

As maritime transport is an important mode of transportation in the tourism sector both along the Norwegian coast and in the Baltic Sea, development of clean shipping and green ports is important for promoting sustainable tourism.

IMO, the UN maritime organization, has increasingly engaged itself in development of stricter international environmental regulations for shipping in recent years. Norway has clearly been advocating stricter environmental requirements in this process.

Poland

The Ministry of Sport and Tourism plans to implement points 50-52, 55-56 and 60 within the Baltic Sea States' cooperation in the framework of the currently developed Baltic Sea Tourism Centre. The Ministry's Department of Tourism supported works in the field of developing the project Baltic Sea Tourism Centre – sustainable development structures for active tourism, cofunded under the Interreg South Baltic Programme. The leading partner in the project is the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board (MVTB). The Ministry of Sport and Tourism encouraged the Pomeranian Regional Tourist Organization (PRTO) to join the project as a partner and, consequently, PRTO is one of the main partners. The Ministry also sent a letter of support to the project leader, MVTB, and encouraged the Polish Tourist Organization to carry out activities under the project. As a result, the Organization joined the project as an associate partner.

Russia

Para 50 - 61 — The resolution of the 9-th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum (Pärnu, 19-20 October 2016) included a section on the development of sustainable tourism.

Regarding the Youth politics: October 2016 CBSS Youth Round Table took place in Berlin – Russia was represented by 3 organizations (Association Norden (St. Petersburg), Organization "Green front" (Kaliningrad and St. Petersburg).

13-19 November 2016 both Gdansk and Kaliningrad witnessed "CBSS Youth dialogue", an annual event held in cross-border cities. Participants (about 20 people) visited Gdansk to further go to Kaliningrad, where they met local public communities.

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Print financed by Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern