



BSPC

BALTIC SEA PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE

Report on Sustainable Tourism in the Baltic Sea Region

2020

The BSPC Rapporteurs on Sustainable Tourism
in the Baltic Sea Region
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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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List of Abbreviations

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|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| BSP | Baltic Sea Strategy Point |
| BSPC | Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference |
| BSTC | Baltic Sea Tourism Center |
| BSTF | Baltic Sea Tourism Forum |
| BSR | Baltic Sea Region |
| CBSS | Council of the Baltic Sea States |
| CoR | European Committee of the Regions |
| DG | Directorate General |
| DG EAC | Directorate General Education, Youth, Sport and Culture |
| EDEN | European Destinations of Excellence |
| EEN | Enterprise Europe Network |
| EMAS | Eco-Management and Audit Scheme |
| ETC | European Travel Commission |
| ETIS | European Tourism Indicators System |
| EU | European Union |
| EUSAIR | EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region |
| EUSBSR | EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| HELCOM | Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission |
| NAT-Commission | CoR Commission for Natural Resources |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organisation |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| PA | Policy Area |
| SDG | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SME | Small and Medium Enterprises |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNWTO | United Nations World Tourism Organization |

I. Introduction

The commitment to sustainable tourism as a means of promoting cross-border communication and breaking down prejudices, while ensuring adherence to high environmental standards and working on joint innovative solutions for the sake of a healthy and safe Baltic Sea Region, has been one of the cornerstones of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference's work in recent years. This strong commitment is explicitly reflected in the 25th and 26th resolutions of the BSPC, in the creation of the BSPC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism 2015–2017 and the establishment of the Rapporteur mandate in 2017. The State Parliament of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern is honoured and proud to continue the ambitious and passionate work of Ms Sylvia Bretschneider, former Chair of the Working Group and Rapporteur on Sustainable Tourism, towards our common goal of promoting sustainable international tourism and thus ensuring that the Baltic Sea Region remains a region of peaceful and close neighbourliness, sustainable growth, and ecological awareness. The present – third consecutive – report follows the overarching objective to provide an overview of the recent developments, events, projects and publications on sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea region. Indeed, one cannot overlook the current extraordinary circumstances that have already affected all spheres of public life and will continue to have an impact on our economies and societies in the years to come.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought the world to a standstill and the tourism industry has been among those economic sectors hit the hardest. In an increasingly interconnected world, the virus spread rapidly across continents and prompted states to adopt national measures and policies to contain the epidemic within their own borders. Government responses aiming to contain national outbreaks included travel limitations and partial or complete border closures. Such unprecedented contact and mobility restrictions



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had an immediate impact on the tourism sector and led to dramatic reductions in the numbers of incoming tourists and travellers in the second quarter of 2020 all over the world. The developments in the Baltic Sea region aligned with this global trend. For the Baltic Sea states, tourism is an important economic factor contributing between 8.6% and 1.2% to the national GDPs and provided between 15.7% and 3.6% of total employment.

Although the economic impact of the pandemic on the tourist sector remains uncertain at this point, preliminary forecasts already point to significant losses. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) recorded a 58% decline in international tourist arrivals in Europe in January–May 2020. It is important to note that this figure includes data from January and February – before the outbreak of the pandemic in Europe. The steepest decline was recorded in April – with almost 98% less arrivals compared to the previous year. All BSPC Member States have been affected and will further be affected to varying degrees. According to the provisional calculations contained in the World Tourism Barometer report updated in July 2020, in the Baltic Sea region, Denmark has suffered the sharpest decrease with about 63% fewer incoming travellers in the first five months of 2020 compared to 2019, followed by Germany with 59.3% fewer arrivals. Estonia and Latvia received about 58% fewer international tourists than in 2019, while Iceland experienced a 55.7% decline in international travellers. The figures for Scandinavian countries are somewhat lower, ranging from 44.1% for Finland to 43% and 41.9% for Norway and Sweden respectively. The tourism sectors in Lithuania, Poland and Russia have been affected to a lesser degree with a decline of about 24%, 16 % and 15% in international tourist arrivals respectively.

With the gradual lifting of travel restrictions, the resumption of a number of international flights, and national easing of lockdown regulations in Europe ahead of the 2020 peak summer months, tourism started showing cautious signs of gradual recovery. Although domestic tourism is expected to recover faster, it would not be able to compensate for the losses in international tourism arrivals and receipts. Furthermore, there is significant variation in the shares of domestic as compared to inbound expenditures from tourism across the Baltic Sea states – with figures ranging from 85% in Germany to 12% in Estonia. In order to stimulate the revival of cross-border travel, some Baltic Sea states have reached regional agreements, e.g. the Baltic “travel bubble” created between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Further measures to support the tourism branch included fiscal and monetary measures, steps to ensure the protection of jobs and to promote training and skills, launching of market intelligence initiatives as well as initiatives to restart tourism. Innovative projects such as the digital immunity passport currently tested in Estonia resulted from the search for innovative ways in countering the devastating consequences of the pandemic.

Yet the pandemic’s impact on tourism is not only of a financial nature. Lockdowns and border shutdowns

have prevented and continue to prevent inter-personal contacts and communication, which are essential to foster understanding, promote trust and build bridges between people and peoples. The Baltic Sea region depends on intensive cooperation and mutual trust between all actors dedicated to creating a sustainable and prosperous region – a region of peaceful and close neighbourliness and intensive cooperation. Only together will we be able to find viable and innovative solutions, to overcome the challenges ahead, and to construct a resilient and sustainable future.

This report follows BSPC's established commitment to jointly strive for and support the development of sustainable tourism in the region. It provides an overview of the main political developments, projects, events, and publications in the field. Particular attention is given to the European Commission's communication on "Tourism and Transport" from May 2020, which focuses on the recovery of the tourism sector, supporting businesses, and setting strategic goals to ensure that the European tourism ecosystem remains sustainable and resilient in the face of the current and future crises. Another important development, which this report specifically highlights, is the update of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) Action Plan as well as the novelties introduced within EUSBSR Policy Area (PA) Tourism. The report welcomes the fact that the Baltic Sea Tourism Center (BSTC), towards which the BSPC has signalled its continuous and engaged support, has been singled out as the key achievement within PA Tourism. It is also rewarding to see that the new actions envisioned for Policy Area Tourism have become more concrete and focussed with a view to environmental but also socio-cultural sustainability. The report also summarises the recent activities and achievements of the BSTC and for the first time features a section on relevant publications and studies that could be of interest to policy-makers and stakeholders alike. Finally, the concluding section provides an outlook on the upcoming events, among which the 13th (digital) Baltic Sea Tourism Forum (BSTF), which has fortunately not been cancelled despite the pandemic-induced restrictions, represents a particular highlight.

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II. Main Developments in the Field of Sustainable Tourism

The global COVID-19 pandemic has dealt a serious blow to the tourism industry all over the world, and the Baltic Sea region, which heavily depends on exchange, cooperation and exchange, has not been spared either. Initial government responses largely focused on individual measures and solutions to contain the spread of the virus within regional and national borders. However, under the current circumstances showing a coordinated stance and working in collaboration – not in isolation – on joint solutions for the future becomes more important than ever.

Beyond immediate crisis responses to support the industry and prepare recovery plans, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the EU have called upon states to consider the long-term implications and further pave the way for the structural transformation of tourism and mobility in the direction of higher sustainability and resilience. Thus, in its “Tourism and Transport” package issued in May 2020, the European Commission set the far-reaching goal of making European tourism more resilient and sustainable in the future. In line with the European Green Deal, the strategy aims at developing sustainable transport and tourist accommodation, smart management of tourism flows as well as sustainability skills among tourist professionals. The communication together with its accompanying initiatives was designed to provide a coordinated framework for enabling and ensuring a safe tourist season in the summer of 2020 on the one hand, but also supporting and further developing the sustainability of the tourism ecosystem in the years and for generations to come. The following section will provide brief summary of the long-term outlook on the future of tourism and transport in the EU.

Another important development in the sphere of sustainable tourism has been the work on the update of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) Action Plan, which started in 2018 and entered into its final stages with the renewed Plan agreed on by the National Coordinators’ Group and forwarded to the European Commission in July 2020. The report specifically addresses the renewed objectives and actions introduced within EUSBSR Policy Area Tourism.

1. The European Commission's Communication "Tourism and Transport in 2020 and Beyond"

As part of its overall framework to stabilise the European economy and protect jobs during the pandemic, the European Commission released a communication on "Tourism and Transport in 2020 and Beyond" on 14 May 2020. The Commission presented four key elements to ensure that European tourism, a vital part of the European economy, recovers and returns to former prosperity after suffering enormous losses due to the pandemic-induced travel restrictions and lockdowns. The main emphasis of the document lies on immediate and short-term measures and recommendations to revive safe domestic and intra-EU tourism with a focus on restoring unrestricted free movement, transport and connectivity as well as tourism services, addressing the liquidity crunch and rebuilding consumer confidence. However, it also outlines strategic objectives to retain Europe's leadership position in the area of sustainable and innovative tourism.

The Long-Term Strategy

The European Commission clearly stated that sustainability is the core element of efforts to revitalize the tourism industry with the goal to:

"enable affordable and more sustainable transport and improved connectivity, boost smart management of tourism flows based on sound measurement and tools, diversify the tourism offer and extend off season opportunities, develop sustainability skills for tourism professionals and valorise the variety of landscapes and the cultural diversity across Europe – while protecting and restoring Europe's land and marine natural capital, in line with the strategic approach for a sustainable blue and green economy."¹

In addition to the support offered through the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative, the European Commission advised Member States to develop comprehensive recovery strategies for regions most severely affected by the crisis, encompassing measures to promote digitalisation, sustainability and investment in skills. Incentives are provided through various national and EU Funds, such as the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund, InvestEU, and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural

¹ European Commission, *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions, Tourism and Transport in 2020 and Beyond, May 2020*, https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/communication-commission-tourism-transport-2020-and-beyond_en.pdf

Development. These long-term recovery strategies should be aimed at promoting sustainable tourism and mobility, as well as economic diversification to build resilience to external shocks. The European Commission paid particular attention to Small or Medium Enterprises in its SME Strategy and pledged to work with networks such as the Enterprise Network Europe to help local tourism companies become more resilient through increased sustainability and digitalisation. It further announced a European Tourism Convention, which would take place in October 2020 and bring together EU institutions, the industry, regions, cities, and stakeholders to reflect about future developments in the tourist industry and start preparing a “European Agenda for Tourism 2050” as a roadmap towards a sustainable European tourism ecosystem.

Fostering Vertical and Horizontal Linkages and Cooperation

Calling for a coordinated response to the crisis and bearing in mind the overall goal of sustainable recovery, the European Commission emphasized the need for genuine cooperation across a number of policy frameworks and relevant actors. On the one hand, this cooperation should take place horizontally between local, regional, and national authorities and the Commission, on the other hand vertically – between the different actors and stakeholders within the tourism industry. In view of the latter, the Commission recommended stronger cooperation through cross-sectoral linkages, interdisciplinary knowledge flows as well as stronger connections and capacity building. Networks across Europe, such as the Enterprise Europe Network, the European Clusters Alliance and European Digital Innovation Hubs, shall support sustainability and digitalisation in tourism. These networks would also serve to connect tourism to other industries such as renewable energies, health and life sciences as well as the maritime, cultural, and creative industries.

Training and Skills

The European Commission pointed towards the significance of resilience in the face of external shocks and crises and stressed the need to avoid future shortages of skills. It called upon Member States to make use of existing opportunities for upskilling through national and EU Funds. Thus, the Next Tourism Generation Alliance (NTG), a European project running from 2018 to 2021 and co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme, is designed to promote cooperation between tourism stakeholders to address short- and long-term skills needs. The Commission also referred to the upcoming updated Skills Agenda, which would support sectoral cooperation to tackle skills needs with a focus on digital and green transitions. In addition, the European Commission encouraged regions with smart specialisation strategies for tourism and European clusters active in the tourism area to join forces and make use of the financial support provided through the Erasmus and Interreg programmes.

Digital Technologies and Innovation

Acknowledging the importance of and opportunities offered by digital technologies in overcoming challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Commission underlined their potential to become an integrated part of new tourism frameworks. Thus, new technology has already helped to reinvent cultural tourism by opening new opportunities for creative expression and through expanding audiences during the pandemic. In addition, easy access and constantly updated information concerning travel regulations across EU Member States, including an interactive map, are provided via the “Re-open EU” website (<https://reopen.europa.eu/>). Furthermore, the Commission announced that it would provide support for local businesses to help them cope with the new pandemic-induced realities through Digital Innovation Hubs. Innovative solutions could e.g. include the use of robotics for disinfecting and cleaning, crowd management, and smart booking systems.

The digital transition would also open new paths for managing and predicting tourist flows and customers’ needs and enable operators to respond to arising challenges in immediate and efficient ways. Besides, the Commission reaffirmed its commitment to the further development of the European interoperability framework for mobile applications to support contact tracing.

Promoting Local Tourism

Viewing local and intra-European tourism not only as the key to economic recovery but also as an opportunity to develop sustainable tourism in the future, the European Commission committed to promoting a transition towards a more sustainable model of coastal and maritime tourism in line with its strategic approach for a sustainable blue economy. While cultural tourism plays an important role in many European regions and cities, the Commission highlighted the arising opportunities for coastal, maritime and inland waterway tourism as well as rural tourism to create innovative localised offers for off-season business and recreation. It further indicated its support for agri-tourism as a sustainable model of tourism in rural areas and referred to the proposed European Year of Rail 2021 as an opportunity to focus on sustainable travel and local tourism. Creating awareness about and showcasing hidden European destinations through information campaigns and digital products (such as the Europeana platform, the companion web-app Cultural gems, the European Capitals of Smart Tourism, and European Destinations of Excellence) is an additional step in supporting and promoting local tourism.

2. The Renewed EUSBSR Action Plan

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), which was initiated by the European Parliament in 2007 and presented by the European Commission in 2009, is an integrative framework for cooperation and coordination among the European Union and Member States with the ultimate aim of achieving a sustainable environment and optimal economic and social development in the region. The programme connects the Baltic Sea states through multi-level networks of stakeholders allowing for knowledge sharing and transfer. Its implementation is financed by various national and EU funding schemes, including Interreg Baltic Sea Region, which funds EUSBSR flagship projects in particular and supports macro-regional cooperation on the technical level.

In 2012, the Commission specified the three overarching objectives of the Strategy: “Save the Sea”, “Connect the Region”, and “Increase Prosperity”. It also proposed to establish indicators and targets for each objective in order to facilitate monitoring and evaluation. Consequently, the EUSBSR Action Plan was updated with a view to the objectives, targets and indicators included in the Strategy. In 2014–2015, an extensive round of consultations with Member States and stakeholders in the Baltic Sea region was carried out with the revised Action Plan then agreed in 2015. The revised Action Plan comprised 4 Horizontal Actions and 13 Policy Areas, including Policy Area Tourism.

The current update of the Action Plan accompanying the EUSBSR was launched in 2018 and takes into account emerging global challenges such as climate change, current and future pandemics, demographic change and migration as well as the European Union’s new strategic frameworks, the 2021–2027 Multiannual Financial Framework, and addresses the Strategy’s governance challenges. The EUSBSR National Coordinators’ Group approved the revised version of the EUSBSR Action Plan at their meeting on 29–30 June 2020 and in a silent procedure on 30 June–3 July 2020. The revised document was sent to the European Commission for internal procedure where it still might be modified further. The Action Plan will enter into force after the internal procedure has been finalised and will be published as a Commission Staff Working Document.

The revised Action Plan preserves the main objectives of the Strategy – “Save the Sea”, “Connect the Region”, and “Increase Prosperity” – as well as the multi-level and cross-sectoral cooperation model. The complementary sub-objectives have been reduced from 12 to 9 in an effort to adapt them to the changing circumstances and arising challenges. They are notably interlinked and interdependent with regard to the three overarching objectives. The revised Action Plan streamlines Policy Areas and foresees increasing their number from 13 to 14, adding Spatial Planning as a new PA in order to foster territorial cohesion in the

Baltic Sea region. The former Horizontal Actions Climate (with a focus on climate change) and Neighbours (focusing on cooperation with neighbouring non-EU countries) are mainstreamed as essential elements into all 14 PAs. Such integration ensures that they are properly taken into account and implemented most efficiently in each PA. The total number of actions is reduced from 73 to 44. In doing so, the update follows calls for a more concise and hands on document with clarified roles and responsibilities for stakeholders and effective decision-making as well as reinforced results-orientation. Tourism was preserved as one of the 14 Policy Areas, while the number of corresponding actions in the field was increased from two to three.

Furthermore, and especially relevant for sustainable tourism development, the current Action Plan places Policy Areas in a strategic context by assessing their contribution to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and providing linkages in order to embed the EUSBSR into EU policies and funding programmes. The main priorities derive from the EU strategic Agenda 2019–2024, which sets four long-term goals: protecting citizens and freedoms; developing a strong and vibrant economic base; building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe; and promoting European interests and values on the global stage. However, the Action Plan is also designed to align with the achievement of gender equality, with the objectives of the European Green Deal and reaching EU climate neutrality by 2050.

In establishing the Baltic Sea Strategy Point (BSP) and Steering Groups, the EUSBSR governance structure is enhanced by two entities, which aim to support and coordinate the implementation of the EUSBSR. The BSP serves to provide administrative and technical support for EUSBSR management, development and communication. Each Policy Area will be supported by its respective Steering Group consisting of representatives of national or regional governments of the EUSBSR Member States. The Steering Group will guide and monitor the work of its respective PA in its function as a cooperation body.

3. Developments in Policy Area Tourism

EUSBSR Policy Area Tourism is coordinated by the Ministry of Economics, Employment and Health Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany. On 1 January 2020, Ms Andrea Krabbe took over the position as Coordinator for Policy Area Tourism from her colleague Mr Gerd Lange.

PA Tourism contributes to the Strategy's overarching objectives in numerous ways, for example by improving the long-term competitiveness of the Baltic Sea region, connecting people through cultural, educational or scientific cooperation, and fostering changes in policies, business practices, and consumer behaviour in tourism with a view to environmental protection and sustainability. According to the Action Plan, PA Tourism "provides a strong platform to reinforce sustainable tourism development in the BSR". Furthermore, it promotes cooperation between different stakeholders in the tourism industry and allows all parties involved to search and find joint solutions for common challenges.

The four most relevant UN Sustainable Development Goals for PA Tourism are: Decent Work and Economic Growth (Goal 8), Sustainable Cities and Communities (Goal 11), Responsible Consumption and Production (Goal 12), and Life Below Water (Goal 14). PA Tourism also draws on various European policy frameworks, such as the Agenda for a Sustainable and Competitive European Tourism, the Blue Growth Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Commission's Communication on "Tourism and Transport in 2020 and Beyond" as well as other frameworks on cultural development. Furthermore, PA Tourism is closely linked to the European Green Deal.

Stronger involvement of relevant stakeholders remains a priority within Policy Area Tourism. This includes maintaining already existing collaborations with e.g. PA Education and PA Culture and creating stronger synergies with other PAs (e.g. PA Bio Economy, PA Transport, PA Innovation or PA Health) in the course of initiating and developing new flagship projects. New flagships would seek to engage multiple stakeholders, such as tourist organisations, public authorities, municipalities, business support organisations, higher education and research, Euro-Regions, SMEs, sanitary and epidemiological services, partner countries, international organisations such as the ETC, UNWTO, other interest groups including NGOs, and the civil society.

The establishment and the development of the Baltic Sea Tourism Center (BSTC), towards which the BSPC has signalled its strongest support in its 25th and 26th resolutions, is named as a key achievement within PA Tourism and a leading centre for improved communication and cooperation within the Baltic Sea region. In addition, the Action Plan lists the most important BSTC products, processes, and

developments. Thus, it highlights that the BSTC has issued several publications, among them: the Tourism Market Monitor report and the Tourism Trend Radar, a “Business Plan” and a “Convention Paper” for future work within the framework of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation, and a “Position Paper on Sustainable Tourism development in the Baltic Sea Region Post 2020” to better position the BSR tourism sector at the EU level. The BSTC also devised a series of product development workshops providing tourism stakeholders with essential knowledge on how to launch new offers and published a handbook “Co-development Toolkit – A Shortcut to Expanding your Business”, in order to disseminate knowledge and share best practices. With a view to the 2020–2025 period, the BSTC will continue its work in developing future scenarios for tourism in the BSR 2030, organising meetings, workshops and trainings, publishing position papers and reports, and building new international networks and projects in collaboration with PA Education, PA Innovation and PA Health.

As mentioned above, the renewed EUSBSR Action Plan foresees a change in PA Tourism’s envisioned actions. Whereas the previous Action Plan focussed on two main actions – facilitating networking and clustering of tourism stakeholders as well as promoting the establishment of the Baltic Sea Tourism Center – the renewed actions encompass:

- Transnational tourism development in remote and rural areas;
- Investing in people, skills and technology in the tourism industry;
- Protection and sustainable utilisation of cultural heritage and natural resources in tourist destinations.

These actions are planned to be implemented in 2020–2025 and correspond to the strategic goals outlined within the European Commission’s “Tourism and Transport” communication from May 2020. In order to promote transnational tourism development in remote and rural areas (Action 1) and to improve the protection and sustainable utilization of cultural heritage and natural resources in tourism destinations (Action 3), two flagship projects will be launched in 2021. The Baltic Sea Tourism Center continues to be a key flagship for Action 2 (the investment in people, skills and technology in the tourism industry).

Overall, PA Tourism’s focus has shifted towards increased sustainability, innovation and digitalisation. While the previous overarching target consisted in establishing the Baltic Sea region as a common and coherent tourist destination through improved cooperation and coordination, the renewed actions and targets envision more concrete and streamlined measures to account for environmental and eco-systems protection, to promote sustainable production and consumption, to foster the digital transformation of tourism, and ensure the preservation of the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities.

In addition, in 2020 Policy Area Tourism supported four seed money projects from different thematic fields of tourism, thereby enabling them to apply for EUSBSR seed money. Three of these projects were approved for funding by the Interreg Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat in June 2020. Thus, Baltic DigiTour will provide connectivist massive open online courses for digitalisation in Baltic tourism attractions, whereas BalticBlueMarinas recognises and supports remote Baltic marinas as drivers for sustainable coastal tourism development. RESTinBSR aims at unlocking transformative ecotourism potential for sustainable regional development. The call for applications for seed funding in the Baltic Sea region was released at the end of 2019 by the Swedish Institute, which seeks to develop and strengthen cooperation with EU and non-EU countries around the Baltic Sea and in the immediate area. The projects should be linked to the objectives of the EUSBSR.

4. The Baltic Sea Tourism Center

The BSTC, established in 2016, is one of the key flagships within Policy Area Tourism of the EUSBSR Action Plan and has been highlighted as the PA's main achievement so far. The promotion and support for the further development of the Baltic Sea Tourism Center has been one of the central demands of the BSPC parliamentarians as expressed by the 25th and 26th resolutions of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference.

The Baltic Sea Tourism Center offers a platform for tourism stakeholders in the BSR and provides services in the fields of Tourism Policies, Market Research, Training Offerings, and Sustainable Tourism. The overarching aim is to facilitate cooperation among tourism players and jointly improve competitiveness of sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea region with a focus on three Core Competences: Partnerships, Insights and Skills. Partner institutions ranging from public administrations, research institutes as well as private companies can benefit from this cooperation by growing their international network, enhancing the international visibility of the respective organisations and institutions but also of the BSR tourism industry in general. In order to enhance cooperation and sustainable development and to anchor necessary activities in the BSTC, four permanent working groups, the so called BSTC Expert Groups (Tourism Policies, Market Research, Training Offerings and Sustainable Tourism), have been implemented.

The BSTC also contributes to knowledge gathering, dissemination and transfer through its publications series on the developments and trends in the tourism industry across the whole Baltic Sea macro-region.

With its BSTC Tourism Market Monitor and BSTC Tourism Trend Radar, the Baltic Sea Tourism Center is gathering data, disseminating knowledge and sharing best practices with all participating institutions, which helps them to optimize and adapt their business and political decisions and take advantage of international development trends. The latest BSTC State of the Tourism Industry report (2019) and the BSTC Tourism Trend Radar on Digital Tourism (2020) will be elaborated in more detail in the section dedicated to relevant publications.

Furthermore, the project team developed a service, especially suitable for tourism businesses, which helps them to further improve their tourism product portfolio and make their offerings more sustainable and suitable for the low season. Through a comprehensive Product Development Workshop series, that applied the Design Thinking method as a guiding principle, BSTC partners could learn how to think creatively with diverse techniques such as the Business Model Canvas, Authenticity Model or the Harvard Value Pyramid.

In addition, the BSTC released a Position Paper on “Sustainable Tourism Development in the Baltic Sea Region post 2020”, outlining the need for permanent cooperation patterns, stronger political support, and stable funding opportunities in order to avoid fragmentation in the sector, raise international competitiveness, and jointly address common challenges. Thus, tourism cooperation, tourism policy and tourism funding were identified as three major areas by a comprehensive stakeholder consultation. According to the position paper, Tourism cooperation should focus, among other things, on supporting SMEs in product development and networking, improving the touristic infrastructure as well as the accessibility, visibility and attractiveness of rural areas, mitigating seasonal fluctuations and overcoming skilled labour shortages. In the area of Tourism policy the position paper calls to further strengthen Policy Area Tourism of the EUSBSR, initiate flagship processes, and create guiding themes, facilitate the implementation of the recommendations of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference on sustainable tourism, strengthen cooperation with the BSPC, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS), and non-EU countries such as Belarus, Norway and Russia. In terms of Tourism funding, the paper advises further adjustments to existing funding instruments through e.g. ensuring that funded projects align with regional and national tourism strategies, prolonging the project lifetime from free to over five years, simplifying the administrative burdens for applicants, and ensuring easier involvement of SMEs in the application process.

5. Gothenburg is European Capital of Smart Tourism 2020

The European Capital of Smart Tourism initiative is a competition implemented by the European Commission in order to honour outstanding achievements by European cities as smart tourism destinations. Prizes are awarded in four categories: sustainability, accessibility, digitalisation as well as cultural heritage and creativity. This year, the Swedish city of Gothenburg was chosen as a winner together with the Spanish city of Málaga for their overall commitment to smart tourism and their achievements in all four competition categories. Gothenburg was praised for its efforts to stay on top of digital trends and passing these benefits on to citizens and visitors alike. Smart grids for traffic and electricity, accessible and open government data, a future-oriented public transport system, and dedicated environmental protection platforms all contribute to the enhanced visitor experience in the city. Gothenburg has implemented a progressive sustainable agenda evolving as a pioneer in issuing green bonds and setting consumption-based emission targets. A large majority of hotels and meeting facilities in the city are now environmentally certified and the “Event Impact Calculator” has proven as a beneficial tool helping to evaluate events from an economic, social, and environmental point of view.

We congratulate Gothenburg and Sweden to this great success and their innovative and forward-thinking programmes. This achievement can truly serve as an example and inspiration.

6. Green Tourism as a Priority of the Lithuanian CBSS Presidency

On 1 July 2020, Lithuania took over the presidency of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) from Denmark. The Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Linas Linkevičius, announced the Presidency’s focus on green and maritime tourism as an important sector in reviving regional economy, thereby increasing the region’s visibility and giving employment opportunities to young people. As one of the events of the Lithuanian CBSS Presidency, Lithuania will host this year’s 13th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum, which will be held online on 10–13 November 2020.

III. Meetings and Events

Following the tradition established in previous BSPC reports on sustainable tourism, this section will provide an overview of the recent events, conferences, and meetings, which brought together policy-makers and stakeholders to reflect upon the recent trends, develop recommendations, share experiences and best practices in the field of sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea region. Indeed, the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum is one of the central instruments contributing to transnational exchange and cooperation in the area and serving as an important permanent platform for knowledge and information exchange. In current turbulent times such exchange and collaboration becomes all the more important – it is therefore particularly encouraging and gratifying that the 13th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum has not been cancelled, but will be organised in the form of a digital event. Various other events and fora have also been moved online due to the restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This section will, however, primarily focus on the meetings that took place before the pandemic's outbreak. Prospective events will be elaborated in more detail in the last section.

1. The 12th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum

The 12th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum took place in Brussels on 13 November 2019. For the first time since its establishment in 2008, the annual conference was held outside the Baltic Sea region. Yet the choice of venue was by no means arbitrary, the aim being to bring together stakeholders from the Baltic Sea region and representatives and institutions in Brussels, the de facto capital of the European Union. The forum's motto "SHARE | INSPIRE | CREATE" was designed to convey the need for cooperation beyond national borders in a macro-regional context. In three sessions, participants exchanged experiences, received valuable insights on innovative approaches, and discussed a comprehensive outlook on the multiannual financial framework of the EU and its implications for tourism cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. In addition to the plenum, a B2B Café was organised, offering tourism stakeholders a platform to present and to connect themselves.

The forum featured a multi-level and multi-sector array of speakers, ranging from representatives of the European Commission, national administrations, regional organisations, to businesses and research institutions.

Mr Bodo Bahr, Secretary General of the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, addressed the forum with an opening speech highlighting the role of tourism not only as a significant economic factor, but also as an area that connects people and promotes understanding and trust. He reminded that the creation of the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum was triggered by a call for action of the parliamentarians in the southern Baltic Sea region and emphasised that the BSPPC sees the Forum as a central event for cooperation and exchange on tourism-related issues in the Baltic Sea region. Furthermore, Mr Bahr underlined the BSPPC's support for the further development of the Baltic Sea Tourism Center and expressed explicit appreciation of its Core Competences "Partnerships", "Insights", and "Skills" and the respective Working Groups. While acknowledging the incredible success story embodied by the development of tourism in the Baltic Sea region in the past three decades following the fall of the Iron Curtain, he also cautioned against underestimating the long-term effects of climate change and environmental damage. In this context, he paid special attention to the problem of munition dumps in the Baltic Sea and stressed the need for sustainable practices and regional cooperation to ensure long lasting prosperity in the region.

Further presentations were given by Mr Michael Cramer (former Member of the European Parliament), who spoke about cycling tourism as an alternative tourism industry in Europe, Ms Asa Bjerling (Executive Secretary of the Baltic Sea Commission) with an overview of tourist mobility, and Ms Anna Pollock (Founder of Conscious.travel), who described new approaches to tourism. The audience also heard remarks by Mr Janos Schmied (Program Officer of DG Grow and EEN, European Commission), who introduced the COSME Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), and by Mr Maciej Hofman (Policy Officer of DG EAC, European Commission), who spoke about cultural heritage in the EU.

The first session under the title "SHARE achievements" was opened by Ms Blanka Belosevic (Representative of the EUSAIR), who presented the legacy of the European Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region, followed by Ms Magda Leszczyna-Rzucidło (Head of International Permanent Secretariat, Euroregion Baltic), who shared success stories of international tourism cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. Mr Tomasz Naprawski (Project Manager Baltic Museums Love IT!), Ms Ira Lahovuo (Project Manager Archipelago Access) and Mr. Niclas Fjellström (European Coordinator Baltic Sea Food) each introduced projects within the Interreg Programme framework for the South Baltic, Central Baltic and Baltic Sea Region. The session was closed by Ms Constanze Metzger (Routes4U Senior Project Officer), who presented the Cultural Routes program.

The second session under the motto "INSPIRE partners", featured Prof. Björn P. Jacobsen, Mr Tjark Schlegel and Mr. Christopher Blanck (all from the University of Applied Sciences Stralsund) who

presented the Tourism Market Monitor and the Tourism Trend Radar developed by the BSTC Expert Group “Market Research”. Ms Karin Melbye Holm (Danish Tourism Innovation) took the floor to introduce the so-called “Co-development concept.”

“CREATE perspectives” was the overarching theme of the third session, during which Ms Ramune Genzbigelyte-Venturi (Policy Officer in the Tourism Unit of DG Grow, European Commission) presented the European Commission’s initiatives to promote sustainable tourism. She spoke about the European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS) toolkit, which includes indicators to measure the sustainability performance of tourism destinations. Furthermore, Ms Genzbigelyte-Venturi introduced the EU-ecolabel for Tourist Accommodations and the EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), which help companies and organisations to evaluate, report on, and improve their environmental impact. She also referred to the European Destinations of Excellence (EDEN) and the European Capital of Smart Tourism initiatives aiming to award sustainable tourism concepts in cities and presented a number of preliminary findings produced by the Study on the Contribution of Tourism to Local and Regional Development. Ms Genzbigelyte-Venturi closed her presentation with the announcement of the European Tourism Day initially planned for April 2020 but later postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the same session, Ms Joanna Mouliou (Program Manager of DG Regio, European Commission), elaborated on the role of tourism and culture in the new European Regional Development Fund and connected five policy objectives to possible fields in tourism development. She also spoke about the Regional Policy 2021–2027 and Urban Development and CCIs. Ms Andrea Krabbe (EUSBSR Policy Area Coordinator for Tourism) presented the new actions defined within Policy Area Tourism in the revised EUSBSR Action Plan (which was elaborate in the previous section of this report) and encouraged all stakeholders to engage with these actions through projects, platforms, flagships, and networks. Mr Stefan Hyttfors (Global Speaker, author and Change agent) shared his reflections on the future and reasons for actions and developments.

Closing the forum, Ms Lidija Bajaruniene (Chief Official for Tourism Policy, Ministry of Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania) invited everyone to the next BSTF, which was set to take place in Palanga (Lithuania) in autumn 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 13th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum will take place online on 10–13 November 2020.

2. The First Baltic Sea World Heritage Summit

On 24–26 September 2019, the First Baltic Sea World Heritage Summit took place in Karlskrona, Sweden. The municipality is the leading partner within the Development of UNESCO Natural & Cultural Assets project and invited various stakeholders from the region to strengthen multilateral and multi-level cooperation and to promote exchange and sharing of knowledge and best practices. Sustainable tourism development as a tool to building inclusive communities featured as one of the key topics. Participants received valuable insights about exemplary projects in the area of sustainable and innovative tourism development. Ms Annelie Börjesson (President of the United Nations Associations of Sweden) informed the audience about the importance of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to support a resilient, sustainable and peaceful Baltic Sea region, while the representatives of the non-profit foundation Green Destinations elaborated on the process of becoming a sustainable destination. The summit closed with a discussion of future cooperation formats of World Heritage Sites around the Baltic Sea and the proposal of the Municipality of Karlskrona to create a Baltic Sea World Heritage Centre as a support instrument.

3. Project Exchange Meetings Series in the Baltic Sea Region

In 2019, Policy Area Tourism initiated a series of project exchange meetings and workshops in the Baltic Sea region under the title “Tourism Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region”. Similar meetings were previously organised on an annual basis. The goal of the workshop series was to create a platform for sustainable tourism development where local partners can get to know each other, participants can learn more about ongoing projects on the ground and stakeholders may be encouraged to participate in future EUSBSR flagships.

The first meeting of the workshop series was organised by PA Tourism in cooperation with the Baltic Sea Tourism Center at the International House of Tourism in Rostock, Germany on 12 September 2019. In total 14 projects and 10 organisations participated in the event and seized the opportunity to present their own approaches to sustainable tourism and interact with other stakeholders.

The next meeting was held at the museum of the Palanga Resort in Lithuania on 22 November 2019. The Palanga Tourism Information Center organised the event in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy

and Innovation and the Klaipėda Region as well as PA Tourism. During the meeting, project representatives had the opportunity to interact with each other and exchanged ideas and best practices.

On 13 February 2020, the third exchange meeting, organised by PA Tourism together with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, took place at the Ministry of Transportation and Communication in Helsinki. It followed the common aim of the workshops series to create a discussion platform for sustainable tourism development in the Baltic Sea region. In light of the revised EUSBSR Action Plan and specifically the new actions determined within PA Tourism, speakers presented insights from projects covering all three action areas: transnational tourism development in remote and rural areas (Action 1); investing in people, skills and technology in the tourism industry (Action 2); and protection and sustainable utilisation of cultural and natural resources in tourism destinations (Action 3).

VI. Notable Publications on Sustainable Tourism in the Baltic Sea Region

With a view to the need for tourism data and analysis covering trends, developments, and statistics in the Baltic Sea region specifically, which was identified by the Baltic Sea Tourism Center, this section will provide a brief overview of the recent publications, analyses, and trend reports with a specific focus on sustainable tourism in the region. It is especially noteworthy to highlight the publications prepared by the BSTC and the Routes4U project, since they take into account particular regional trends, specificities, challenges and competitive advantages in order to provide recommendations for policy-makers and tourism stakeholders in the BSR.

1. European Tourism: Recent Developments and Future Challenges

In October 2019, a study on “European Tourism: Recent Developments and Future Challenges” was published upon request of the European Parliament’s Committee on Transport and Tourism. The study aimed at providing a comprehensive overview of the tourism sector in the EU, an assessment of its preparedness to face expected challenges as well as a set of recommendations for EU policy makers. The study urged all tourism stakeholders to think more sustainably not only in terms of environmental protection and awareness, but also with a view to the social, economic, and political aspects of sustainability. Regarding sustainable tourism, the study made the following explicit recommendations:

- Strengthen the tourism industry’s organisational, financial structure and capabilities at the EU level, for example, by introducing a specific tourism budget line and a new stakeholder group or body to support tourism sustainability and responsibility (renew Sustainable Tourism Group and its tasks);
- Update the European Charter on Sustainable and Responsible Tourism with actions addressing more recent tourism challenges (such as over-tourism and under-tourism, individual carbon footprints, sustainable consumption patterns, just tourism, etc.);
- Promote and implement the European Charter on Sustainable and Responsible tourism lines of action;
- Support the transition of the UNWTO Code of Ethics into a Convention and recommend it for adoption by EU Member States;

- Promote and actively support environmentally friendly modes of travel;
- Monitor airline and other tourism transport's contribution to climate change and react accordingly;
- Support and promote actions in regard to tourism flows and management in space and time to mitigate overcrowding impacts on infrastructure, culture, nature, local inhabitants, visitors and the political environment;
- Build critical awareness and support for implementation of economic instruments to reduce the negative impacts of tourism (offsetting, environmental costs, licencing, environmental taxes, etc.).

Furthermore, the study assessed the impact of climate change on coastal destinations and provided examples of good practice in adapting to climate change from around the world. Building on these experiences and practices, the study derived a set of recommendations for the EU:

- Tourism policies and plans need to acknowledge climate change, since this aspect is all too often ignored or not considered seriously;
- Plans should be developed with a two-step process, which should include the assessment of vulnerabilities and planning to improve resilience;
- The above steps and evolutionary resilience more generally should rely on a good understanding of local factors and inclusive engagement with local people/stakeholders;
- Destination developers/managers should consider three forms of resilience – engineered, ecological and evolutionary – and how they should be integrated in different destinations;
- Developers need to consider not only the expected losses, but also potential benefits – new environments between the land and sea, which could also prove beneficial for tourism.

Aside from sustainable tourism development, the study examined the state of investment in technology, effective tourism governance, and European tourism marketing and evaluated the progress in skills and training as well as the role of tourism in the European Union more generally.

2. Tourism Trend Radar “Digital Tourism” 2020 Edition

The Baltic Sea Tourism Center published its first data analysis document summarizing qualitative data usually found in trend studies. The Tourism Trend Radar applies web-based trend analysis in order to

develop forecasts and roadmaps for relevant travel and tourism trends in the Baltic Sea region. In its 2020 edition, the BSTC evaluates the state of digital tourism in the region and examines the role of big data in the tourism sector. It also analyses the role of big platforms such as Airbnb in the tourism economy and introduces smart assistants in the field.

3. Market Report “State of the Tourism Industry in the Baltic Sea Region” 2019 Edition

In its second edition of the report on the State of the Tourism Industry in the Baltic Sea Region, the Baltic Sea Tourism Center provided an overview as well as detailed, comparable data on the main characteristics of the BSR tourism sector. It highlighted the overall economic impact and developments in tourism policy and analysed the industry’s performance. Furthermore, the report encompassed national and regional profiles in the Baltic Sea region, conveying valuable data insights on stakeholders in different regions.

4. Routes4U Feasibility Study on the Maritime Heritage Route in the Baltic Sea Region

In May 2020, a “Feasibility Study on the Maritime Heritage Route in the Baltic Sea Region” was published within the Routes4U framework, a project jointly financed by the Council of Europe and the European Commission (DG Regio). It aimed to map maritime cultural heritage sites in the Baltic Sea region more comprehensively than is usually done within the frameworks of national or type-specific listings and consequently to show the unique and diverse potential of the region. It also identified relevant collaboration structures to support the development of linkages between heritage, tourism, and the different regions within the Baltic Sea area. The analysis of the current state of the maritime cultural heritage in the BSR included a brief historic summary and the exploration of key destinations for a possible route, such as maritime museums, coastal World Heritage Sites, and lighthouses as examples of maritime heritage in recreational use. In addition, the study examined the diversity of other maritime attractions such as diving parks and focused on sustainable travelling and transport in the area. The study included recommendations

directed at various stakeholders, such as the states of the BSR, EUSBSR PA Tourism, and national tourism promotion organisations, Member countries of the BSR Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, with a description of possible cultural routes on maritime heritages and on how to realise the project.

5. Routes4U Branding Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

In addition, in June 2020, the Routes4U programme published a report on a possible branding strategy for the Baltic Sea region. It illustrates the nature and purpose of a branding strategy, elaborates on benefits and challenges for the Baltic Sea region regarding the strategy, and highlights possible themes for BSR Cultural Routes. Among the reasons for creating a brand the study lists the need for more sustainable tourism development, diversification of the visitor experience, and the development of a common identity in the Baltic Sea region. Some of the proposed thematic clusters were spirituality, arts, the life and influence of famous European personalities and societies, including the movement of people in Europe. The approach presents various possible routes such as the Hansa Route, Viking Routes, Impressionism Routes, Route of Saint Olav Ways or a European Cemeteries Route. The study further identifies elements for a BSR brand and offers concrete guidance on the implementation of the brand. In its recommendations, the study also advocates for a broader and more intensive engagement of local stakeholders to guarantee successful implementation.

V. Prospects and Outlook

On the path to develop the Baltic Sea region into the first eco-region, where ecology and economy work together in balance, it is necessary to further support and strive for the implementation of the political recommendations of the BSPC Working Group on sustainable tourism. In addition, it is vital to respond to unforeseen challenges in a creative and cooperative manner. The many projects, initiatives, and cooperation formats already in place need to be connected in order to enable exchange and synergetic effects as well as to avoid parallel international activities. One of most important tools to connect the existing initiatives quickly and productively is the Baltic Sea Tourism Center. The Center offers a strong strategic connection platform for politics and the tourism economy with all its facilities and a comprehensive overview of the activities aimed towards the joint goal of sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea area.

1. The 13th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum

The 13th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum, one of the central events in the field of tourism in the Baltic Sea region, will for the first time in its history be held as an online event. Jointly organised by the Ministry of the Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board, EUSBSR Policy Area Tourism, and the Palanga resort municipality, it will take place digitally on 10–13 November 2020 under the overarching theme “Reviving Tourism in Times of Global Change”. The Forum is featured as one of the events of the Lithuanian 2020–2021 CBSS Presidency, which has identified sustainable development as well as green and maritime tourism among its chairmanship priorities. The Forum will also serve as a platform for working out a future vision for tourism as part of a new forward-looking CBSS Vilnius Declaration “A Vision of the Baltic Sea Region Until 2030”, which the Lithuanian Presidency intends to work on throughout its tenure.

The Forum will open on 12 November and include two sessions on “The Future of Transnational Cooperation” and “Adapting to Change and Rethinking Tourism” with presentations covering a wide array of topics ranging from skills, digital transformations, new business models, to domestic and smart tourism. A warm-up session on “Sustainable Entrepreneurship during Challenging Times” will be organised ahead of the Forum on 10 November. Here participants will specifically look at the impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry in the BSR. On 13 November, a meeting of BSR Tourism

ministers will be organised to elaborate on a strategic outlook for tourism in the Baltic Sea region until 2030.

In addition, the Forum will feature the 1st Sustainable Tourism Award (STA). The award ceremony will take place on 11 November and aims to acknowledge outstanding achievements in the field of sustainable tourism development in the Baltic Sea region and take stock of the positive changes and transformations of tourism businesses in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Baltic Sea Region Sustainable Tourism Award will include three categories: the most sustainable destination; the most sustainable product and exceptional services; the most sustainable private tourism services provider. Cities, municipalities, communities as well as enterprises, tour operators, catering and accommodation establishments were encouraged to apply until 31 October 2020. The Selection Committee is comprised of representatives of the CBSS, the European Travel Commission, Policy Area Tourism, the Baltic Sea Tourism Center, the EU project “Youth Networking for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Baltic Sea Region” as well as national representatives from Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia, and Sweden.

2. New EUSBSR Flagship Projects

In 2021, following the revised EUSBSR Action Plan in regard to PA Tourism, two flagships will be launched to ensure the promotion of transnational tourism development in remote and rural areas (Action 1) and to improve the protection and sustainable utilisation of cultural heritage and natural resources in tourism destinations (Action 3). These flagships will, similar to the Baltic Sea Tourism Center, represent landmark developments for sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea region.

3. “Tourism Recovery through Cooperation” Workshop

Furthermore, PA Tourism will participate in a macro-regional strategy workshop on “Tourism Recovery through Cooperation”, which will take place in October 2020 within the framework of the European Week for Regions and Cities 2020. The envisioned exchange of best practices and coping strategies for

current and future challenges among the European regions will provide valuable insights and inspiration going forward.

4. “Towards More Sustainable Tourism for EU Cities and Regions” CoR Opinion

The Committee of the Regions is planning to adopt an opinion “Towards Sustainable Tourism for EU Cities and Regions” at its plenary meeting on 9 December 2020. The opinion will likely contain references to the Tourism and Transport package by the European Commission, to transport modalities, the impact on the natural environment, social and economic aspects as well as digitalisation with a view to sustainable tourism.

5. The European Tourism Convention 2020

The European Tourism Convention, as announced in the Communication on Tourism and Transport by the European Commission from May 2020, will take place on 12 October 2020 as an online event. The conference will bring together all relevant stakeholders including regions in order to reflect on sustainable recovery policies and develop the European Agenda for Tourism 2050 as a roadmap towards a more sustainable European tourism ecosystem. The event will feature three parallel thematic workshops on safe and seamless tourism experiences; greener holidays; and tourism powered by data. The workshops would aim at mapping key issues and challenges as well as proposing a set of action points to be further presented and discussed at the Convention’s Plenary session.

Sources and Useful Links

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