

9th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum 2016

Seasonality & Sustainability

Programme

19-20 October 2016

Pärnu / Estonia

Initial situation and major aims of the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum

In 2008 the then Ministry for Economy, Employment and Tourism and the Tourist Board of the German state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern initiated the first Baltic Sea Tourism Forum (Summit) which took place in Rostock / Germany. Core aims of this touristic rapprochement process were to develop forms of collaboration which complement the countries' and regions' own marketing strategies in a meaningful way and give the Baltic Sea as a tourism brand a better place on the market.

Major aims are:

- Support a sustainable and balanced development of tourism and voice the interest of the tourism economy in the Baltic Sea region.
- Strengthen the sustainable and responsible cooperation of all Baltic Sea region countries and exploit the existing international development potentials more efficiently.
- Provide and secure a permanent platform for information and know-how exchange with the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum at its core for continuous collaboration on the basis of a multilevel process.
- Position the Baltic Sea as a coherent travel destination on the global tourism market and promote the area as an attractive, safe and natural destination for international travelers.

Since 2012, the annual forum is closely linked to the implementation process of Policy Area Tourism in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. It contributes strongly to the aims of the macro regional strategy, the revised action plan and defined actions adopted by the European Commission in 2015.

Objectives of the 9th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum 2016

The annual convention brings professionals from economics, politics and academics together to examine the sustainable development of tourism in the Baltic Sea region. In 2016 the forum will focus on two thematic priority areas: **seasonality** (1st conference day) and **sustainability** (2nd conference day) - two selected issues that have and will have considerable impact on the future development of the Baltic Sea region.

The Forum will provide valuable insights into the main challenges the region is facing with regards to both topics. Experts from different sectors will highlight latest trends and the efforts that are already under way to extend the season and make tourism more sustainable in the region.

In addition, the Forum provides excellent opportunities for networking and exchanging business ideas. Peer-to-peer workshop sessions support a target oriented exchange of good practices. The '**Tourism Networking Village**' offers the opportunity to promote new and ongoing project initiatives in BSR tourism at transnational level to stimulate future cooperation. It gives funding programmes, project initiatives and interested organizations the opportunity to present themselves with a stand during the two conference days.

Moreover, with "**PEOPLE, STREETS, HOUSES**", for the first time an exhibition will provide interesting facts and figures of the cultural heritage of Baltic Sea resorts. Pre- and post-convention tours and a joint dinner on the first evening of the Forum will complement an exciting cultural programme.

Target audience

The Baltic Sea Tourism Forum addresses tourism stakeholders that show a common interest in international cooperation and that are convinced of the added value of transnational collaboration in the Baltic Sea macro-region - in particular:

- representatives of Baltic Sea tourism organizations and institutions,
- officials of national and regional as well as local administrations,
- lead- and project partners of tourism related EU projects,
- private tourism operators and experts of the sector.

Organizers

- City of Pärnu | Estonia
- University of Tartu/Pärnu College | Estonia
- Enterprise Estonia (EAS)
- Foundation Pärnumaa Tourism – www.visitparnu.com
- Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board | Germany
- Ministry of Economics, Construction and Tourism Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in its role as the coordinator of Policy Area Tourism (EUSBSR)
- International experienced group of like-minded partners

Date & Venue

October 19-20, 2016 | Pärnu / Estonia

Estonian Resort Hotel & SPA | A. H. Tammsaare puiestee 4A, Pärnu, 80010 Pärnu maakond, Estonia

www.spaestonia.ee

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Programme - 18 October 2016

All day Individual arrival
Back-to-back meetings

Programme - 19 October 2016

09.00-11:30 Pre-conference tour – Pärnu: introducing latest destination development projects of Pärnu (walking tour, if not raining, starting point from Estonia hotel)
Organiser: Foundation Pärnumaa Tourism – www.visitparnu.com

09:00-13:00 Registration of the participants
Back-to-back meetings

12.00-13:00 Lunch at the venue

OPENING SESSION

13.00-13:30 Opening
Hanno Tomberg, Chairman of the Board, Enterprise Estonia
Romek Kosenkranius, Mayor of the City of Pärnu, Estonia
Gerd Lange, Coordinator Policy Area Tourism, Head of Tourism Unit, Ministry of Economics, Construction and Tourism Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

SEASONALITY SESSION

13:30-14:00 **Key note: Strategic foresight and the challenge of seasonality**
Dr. Albert Postma, Professor of scenario planning, Stenden University o.A.S. / European Tourism Futures Institute (*The lecture is organized by Estonian Tourist Board and supported by European Union European Regional Development Fund*)

14:00-15:00 **Panel discussion: Seasonality and its impact on the performance of seaside resorts in the Baltic Sea region**

Introductory Statement and moderation

Peter Haxton, Policy Analyst, OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs and Local Development

Panellists

Rainer Aavik, Deputy Mayor, Pärnu City Government
Ole Eskling, Resortmanager and Boardmember, Dansk Turisme Innovation
Claudia Hoerl, Tourism Director, health resort administration Boltenhagen
Egidija Smilingienė, Acting Director, Palanga tourism information centre

15:00-15:30 Coffee break and networking (Tourism Networking Village)

15:30-17:00 **Parallel workshop session on transnational tourism themes with focus on seasonality in the Baltic Sea region:**

Workshop A: Active Tourism - trends, challenges and best practices

Antje Enke, Abenteuer Flusslandschaft, Office for Media & Tourism

Aivar Ruukel, Partner, Soomaa.com

Workshop B: Baltic Sea Culinary Routes

Niclas Fjellström, European Coordinator, Regional Culinary Heritage Europe

Knud Hjortlund Hansen, Project Coordinator, Savour southwest Denmark. Board member, "Taste of Denmark"

Reet Kokovkin, Manager, Hiiumaa LAG

Raili Mengel, Manager and Chairwoman, Estonian Rural Tourism Organisation

Jan Tjosaas, President, "HANEN"; President of the Board of "Eurogites" European Rural tourism federation

Moderator: Ain Hinsberg, Haaga-Helia Hospitality Competence Centre in Estonia

Workshop C: Cultural tourism and its potential for extending the season

Rainer Aavik, Deputy Mayor, Pärnu City Government

Inger Harlevi, Project Manager, Interreg Central Baltic HANSA project; Inspiration Gotland

Alfredas Jomantas, Chairman of the Governing Board of the EPA on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

Mercedes Muñoz Zamora, Director, European Greenways Association – EGWA

Raitis Sijāts, Managing Director, Latvian Greenways Association

Lawrence Okey Ugwu, Director, Baltic Sea Cultural Centre Gdańsk

Ruta Vasermane, Project Manager, Vidzeme Planning Region

Jacek Zdrojewski, Tourist Consultant, Gdańsk, Pomorskie

Moderator: Marta Chelkowska, Director of Tourism and Promotion Department, Marshal's Office of Pomorskie Voivodeship

17:10-17:30 **Evaluation of workshops, discussion and summary of the day**
Rapporteurs of the workshops

17:30-18:30 **Free time**

18:30-19:00 **Guided walking tour from the conference hotel (Estonian Resort Hotel & SPA) to Pärnu College**

19:00-21:45 **Dinner and get together at Pärnu College, Ringi 35, Pärnu**
Evening dress-code: smart casual

21:45 **Start of bus transfers back to the conference hotel (Estonian Resort Hotel & SPA)**

Programme - 20 October 2016**SUSTAINABILITY SESSION**

09:00-09:15 **Prospects for 2017 and the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development by the UN – a global perspective**
Isabel Garaña, Regional Director for Europe, World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)

09:15-09:30 **Status report from the working group on Sustainable Tourism – a macro-regional perspective**
Sylvia Bretschneider, President of the Landtag Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Chair of the working group „sustainable tourism“, Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

09:30-09:45 **Sustainable Tourism development in Slovenia as best practice – a national/destination perspective**
Jana Apih, Director, Institute Factory of sustainable tourism, GoodPlace

09:45-10:00 **Sustainable entrepreneurship as a competitive advantage – a business perspective**
Dario Bazargan, Manager European Government Affairs, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Europe

10:00-11:00 **Moderated expert debate: The Baltic Sea macro-region as a pilot for sustainability in tourism – Challenges, prospects and potential benefits from transnational cooperation**

Dario Bazargan, Manager, European Government Affairs, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Europe

Krista Kampus, Senior Adviser and Head of the Sustainable Development Unit – Baltic 2030, Council of the Baltic Sea States

Sara Kemetter, MP, Åland Islands, Working group „sustainable tourism“, Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference

Moderator: Jana Apih, Director, Institute Factory of sustainable tourism, GoodPlace

11:00-11:30 **Coffee break and networking**

11:30-12:30 **Parallel Workshop Session on sustainable transnational cooperation:**

Workshop D: Baltic Sea Tourism Forum - development opportunities for a sustainable communication and cooperation platform

Tobias Weitendorf, Deputy Managing Director, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board

Johannes Volkmar, Project Manager International Marketing, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board

Workshop E: From blind date to effective co-creation – cooperation between educational institutions and the tourism sector

Heli Müristaja, Lecturer and the head of department of Tourism Studies, University of Tartu, Pärnu College

Workshop F: Sustainable projects - management, product development and results

Inger Harlevi, Project Manager, Inspiration Gotland | HANSA project, co-financed by the Interreg Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020

Betina Meliss, Scientific assistant / Project coordinator, University of Greifswald, Institute of Geography | Fish Markets project, co-financed by the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014-2020

Ola Runfors, Regional Developer and Project Leader, Swedish Forest Agency | Attractive Hardwoods project, co-financed by the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014 – 2020

Triin Sakermäe, Project Manager, Tallinn City Government Environment Department | NATTOURS project, co-financed by the Interreg Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020

Hanna Ylitalo, Recreational Amenity Specialist, Metsähallitus/ Parks & Wildlife Finland | Lights On! Project, co-financed by the Interreg Central Baltic Programme 2014-2020

Moderator: Iuliia Kauk, Project Officer, Joint Secretariat, Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014 – 2020

CLOSING SESSION

12:40-13:00 **Summary of the workshops
Rapporteurs of the workshop**

Adoption of the Forum declaration

Dr. Anja Gelzer, PA Tourism Coordinator Team, Ministry of Economics, Construction and Tourism MV

Invitation to the 10th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum 2017

Päivi Pohjolainen, Development Manager, City of Turku/Visit Turku

13:00-14:00 **Networking lunch**

Conference Moderator: Dr. Mart Noorma, Vice Rector for Academic Affairs, University of Tartu

15:00-20:00 **Post-tour to Pärnu county - study trip visiting county tourism entrepreneurs and dinner at some local place (Price 40 EUR/per person, paid individually by the participant, minimum number of participants: 20)
Organiser: Foundation Pärnumaa Tourism – www.visitparnu.com**

Appendix – Content alignment of sessions

SEASONALITY SESSION

Keynote: Strategic foresight and the challenge of seasonality

Strategic foresight is a relatively new approach in the domain of leisure and tourism. It offers a perspective to address strategic issues that is different to conventional thinking. During this keynote Dr. Postma will introduce you to the principles, characteristics and requirements of strategic foresight and demonstrates how this approach could be applied to address the challenge of seasonality. [back to top](#)

Panel: Seasonality and its impact on the performance of seaside resorts in the Baltic Sea region

Seasonality is a widespread economic phenomenon. In tourism the fluctuation of tourists and visitor numbers causes considerable challenges for businesses and destinations. Seaside resorts around the Baltic Sea face an imbalanced share of tourists and visitors throughout the year. During the summer month arrivals and overnights might be higher than the resort can accommodate while at other times the numbers are considerable low. Tourism destinations and businesses and sectors that benefit indirectly from tourism are strongly affected by seasonal impacts.

However, there do exist approaches to overcome these fluctuations by taking smart countermeasures on different levels. Examples are pricing strategies, the diversification of tourist attractions, diversification of markets and target groups and targeted marketing to extend the season.

The panel on seasonality will highlight approaches that Baltic Sea seaside resorts pursue to absorb some of the negative effects seasonality produces. Concrete examples will serve as good practices and provide useful insights for the participants.

The discussion will be completed by measures on how to seek financial assistance by governments and the tourism industry to overcome the effects of seasonality and to support a sustainable and responsible tourism development of seaside resorts in the Baltic Sea region. [back to top](#)

Parallel workshop session on transnational tourism themes with focus on seasonality in the Baltic Sea region:

Workshop A: Active Tourism - trends, challenges and best practices

Status quo: An increasing number of people want to discover self-determined and actively the respective region, country and local inhabitants of their visit. Destinations that offer products of high quality are more competitive. But how active tourism can be defined? The Baltic Sea region, with its intact natural landscape and its thinly scattered population is particularly attractive for discoverers and nature lovers. It is not necessarily a must for active tourists to hike with backpacks along the fjords of Norway or paddle across Finland. At the same time, the season in the north is extremely short especially for water related tourism offers. Tourism operators and providers are forced to position offers that extend the season successfully on the market and to change the image of the “cool” north or use it deliberately.

Approaches to trigger changes: Individual countries and regions around the Baltic Sea are well-known for its holidays close to nature since many years, others just recently have built up a reputation. The workshop highlights examples of enterprises that perform successfully on the market with offers that combine the ability to extend the season. Moreover, first transnational cooperation's will be described. Last but not least opportunities will be discussed to position a competitive active tourism offer in the Baltic Sea region successfully on the European and global market. A critical assessment of the actual state of play should not be missing. [back to top](#)

Workshop B: Baltic Sea Culinary Routes

Content: Seasonality is in general defined as the state or quality of being seasonal or dependent on the seasons. In the business context it means a periodic, repetitive, regular and predictable pattern in the levels of business activity where most or all sales originate in a particular season. Seasonality has become one of the most distinctive and determinative features of global tourism industry with the only regional difference being the exact time of occurrence and duration of the peak and low seasons - the same in our region, the Baltic Sea Region. We present a number of cases all over the region in order to find out, what is the overall situation in seasonality and what aspects are underlined.

Objectives: We try to find out the following - especially during our Q&A and Panel Discussion sessions: How similar are the peak and low seasons in their time of occurrence and duration around the Baltic Sea? If the similarities are there and quite obvious, we have at least a platform to consider cooperation in order to deal with the matter. If not, we can then only refer to it in a very general context. What and how and by whom can actually be done in order to deal with the negative impact of the seasonality? Are there any positive aspects arising from the seasonality? If yes, can we enhance those instead if not much can be done regarding the negative ones? To what extent these issues are relevant also to the seaside resorts.

Results: Key negative aspects characteristic and main positive aspects in our region mapped in the regional span. Established general understanding among the stakeholders regarding whether based on the similarities we have a platform to consider cooperation in order to deal with the matter. Drafted list of joint activities based on the outcome of the above issue also pointing out, whether the seaside resorts are supposed to take a path of their own or can join the overall marching order. [back to top](#)

Workshop C: Cultural tourism and its potential for extending the season

The aim of the workshop is to find new approaches for the use of cultural recourses that will have its reflection in all year offers and services. Presented examples and good practices will provide a fresh overview upon joining seemingly different fields like activity and culture, tradition and modernity, etc.

Cultural heritage delivers knowledge, emotions and keeps the tradition alive. It is a sense of history for future generations. But the way of presentation depends on the actual trends and customer's preferences. The offer should be developed in line with socio-economic progress. Tourists look for intelligent adventure, the knowledge which is presented in different ways up to the client and directly to his needs. Presently, it is also important to address the offer to Z generation. Moreover, the cultural offer is also a chance to prolong the season and it is important to create the offer customized.

The workshop will highlight at least the following three aspects:

1. What is cultural tourism – how to define the term. (*introduction*)
2. Case studies of good practices with cross boarder / transnational character, discovering cultural tourism. (*presentations*)
3. New products that could be developed in the future with focus on all year season. (*discussion of the experts*) [back to top](#)

SUSTAINABILITY SESSION

Key-notes and Moderated expert debate: The Baltic Sea macro-region as a pilot for sustainability in tourism – Challenges, prospects and potential benefits from transnational cooperation

In September 2015 the United Nations General Assembly has adopted the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” along with 17 sustainable development goals and 169 associated targets. In support of and with a view to actively contributing to the global Agenda, the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) member states have recently renewed their commitment to sustainable development in the “Baltic 2030 Declaration”. Tourism as a cross-cutting and much localized sector, which benefits from and at the same time depends on the preservation of destinations’ natural and cultural resources, forms an integral part of these undertakings. Therefore, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has declared 2017 “The International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development”.

Against this background, the “Sustainable Tourism” session takes up these developments and the potentially important role tourism can play towards a sustainable development both at the global and the Baltic Sea region level. The panel seeks input from speakers representing different levels of governance and activity with a view to providing a comprehensive overview of the most important trends, challenges and prospects regarding sustainable tourism and sustainability in tourism.

Isabel Garaña from the UNWTO will provide some insights into the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development in the light of the sustainable development goals. Sylvia Bretschneider from the Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC) will give a status report of the Working Group on Sustainable Tourism and corresponding key challenges from the perspective of national and regional parliaments. Jana Apih from the Association for Sustainable Tourism (GoodPlace, Slovenia) will present their experiences with implementing green tourism policies in Slovenia and Slovenian destinations. Finally, Dario Bazargan from the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Europe will deliver some insights into the industry’s specific challenges and activities regarding sustainability.

During the subsequent panel discussion, the panelists will then discuss – also against the background of the keynotes – their views and perspectives on the “Baltic Sea region as a model region for sustainable tourism”. Guiding questions will be the following:

- What are the preconditions for and key elements of a more sustainable development of tourism in the Baltic Sea region (strategic | political level, implementation | destination level)?
- How can we align the various activities of stakeholders working at different levels of policy making and implementation?
- How can transnational cooperation contribute to the process?

The session then offers three parallel workshops which take up specific aspects of more effective and sustainable transnational cooperation: the future of the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum, sustainable projects as well as science-tourism-sector cooperation. [back to top](#)

Parallel Workshop Session on sustainable transnational cooperation:

Workshop D: Baltic Sea Tourism Forum - development opportunities for a sustainable communication and cooperation platform

The Baltic Sea Tourism Forum claims to be the communication and cooperation platform for tourism in the Baltic Sea region. The starting point was the first Baltic Sea Tourism Forum in 2008 (summit at this time), launched by a loose affiliation of partners that have contributed from then on year after year with a strong commitment. Counting almost 200 participants from all Baltic Sea countries in 2015, the tourism sector shows the necessity for such an information and exchange forum. However, such a conference cannot be taken for granted, but requires continuous efforts. The annual declarations and evaluations of the recent Fora confirm

that the Forum requires beyond other things a more strategic and operational orientation, continuous topics to be elaborated, sustainable funding and a permanent structure.

The workshop will highlight some milestones of the forum and its development in the past years. Moreover, it will discuss ways and opportunities to make the forum viable for the future. After a short introduction by one of the permanent organisers all participants are asked to participate in a moderated discussion to work out ideas for the future set up of the BSTF. Four areas will be considered in the workshop:

- A) structure, funding opportunities and commitment of stakeholders,
- B) future content alignment and better involvement of the private sector,
- C) benefits of and contribution to the EUSBSR,
- D) improved communication among tourism stakeholders. [back to top](#)

Workshop E: From blind date to effective co-creation – cooperation between educational institutions and the tourism sector

For the universities and vocational schools the main aim is to offer up-to-date education for the students and one of the tool is „real-life“ research and development cases. On the other side there are tourism companies and public sector organisations as the “owners” of the cases. Sometimes the “dance” between partners goes well, but sometimes there is a feeling of a “blind date” and you will never know does it have a happy end for both parties or not. How to make this unpredictable “blind date” for into more stable co-creation, this is the question we are focusing on during the workshop. [back to top](#)

Workshop F: Sustainable projects - management, product development and results

The workshop is organised in three sessions to highlight requirements for sustainable projects in the Baltic Sea region across projects and programmes areas. The **first session** is designed to provide participants with the strategic advice on how to develop a good and sustainable Interreg project (from the Programme perspective). General topics of sustainability and addressing sustainability in the projects will be touched upon. The **second session** is organised in a format of a panel discussion and presents reflections from projects of the South Baltic and Central Baltic Programme. The project leaders will reflect on the following issues: 1) What is a joint tourism attraction (cross-border product/ service package) and how to build it? 2) How to implement and jointly market a cross-border service package? 3) If and how to involve target groups in the different stages of the product development (design, development, pilot/ testing)? 4) What are the impacts (e.g. enhancement of other business activities of the region), how to measure this impact 5) How to make a project sustainable and how to sustain results?

The **third session** will focus on the potential of the project clustering, cross-fertilisation across programmes and cross-programme cooperation to enhance tourism development in the Baltic Sea region (e.g. by establishing a unique selling point of the BSR). The sessions provide a basis for open discussions and reflections from the audience. The workshop targets stakeholders active in the field of tourism, looking into cooperation prospects for the development of a competitive Baltic Sea tourism industry. [back to top](#)