

Project Workshop

Steps towards a common Baltic Sea Region

Chaired by Greifswald University <http://www.agora2-tourism.net/>

Riga, 23.03.2011.

Minutes

Presentations:

1. Strategies for sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea Region.

Betina Meliss, University of Greifswald, Institute of Geography, Germany

2. What do we have in common in the whole Baltic Sea Region?

Prof. Wilhem Steingrube, University of Greifswald, Institute of Geography, Germany

Proceedings:

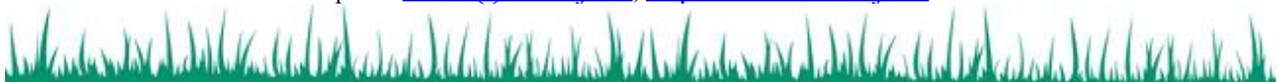
Betina Meliss introduced the Baltic Sea Region programme objectives and highlighted survey results showing that the Baltic Sea Region has low visibility among general public. Ms. Meliss introduced the project structure and work packages, stressing the main tasks and activities:

- collection and assessment of potentials for cultural and natural heritage,
- set-up of a web based BSR heritage panel,
- Ranking: 6 BSR Wonders
- Sustainable use of heritage: business sector + tourism sector + heritage organisations
- Inspirations for developing innovative tourism product ideas
- Common Identity Profile
- Make inhabitants aware of rich potentials and uniqueness of the BSR
- Attract tourists in- and outside the BSR
- Programming (Start ranking: end of 2011)
- Involve the public and BSR organisations

Betina Meliss invited workshop participants to cooperation and networking.

Professor Wilhelm Steingrube invited to identify the common identity of the Baltic Sea Region countries and highlighted the reasons why we are looking for the BSR identity:

- it raises the awareness of the region's natural and cultural peculiarities
- makes the region more visible and competitive
- brings the countries around the sea closer together
- macro-region with an identity
- raises the attractiveness for international tourism





Professor stressed that those features shall be marketed with which local population identifies the region. Local support is essential. Common identity of the BSR shall be looked for in all dimensions.

Professor Staingrube presented the survey form which is elaborated to find out the common identity features of the BSR. The first investigation results show common features in:

- 1) culture, history, traditions: red-brick Gothic, castles, lighthouses, pre-historic sites, vikings, Hanseatic League, arts and crafts, folklore and traditions, sauna;
- 2) nature: forests and lakes, beaches and dunes, stones, northern lights, white nights, elks, birches, herring, amber, buckthorn;
- 3) society&economy: education, economy, living standard, infrastructure, safety, environment protection;

Conclusion: there are no „big winner” features, We have a (big) set of common BSR characteristics that fits to the need of marketing: Due to several target groups we need different attracting features.

After presentations, the participants filled in survey forms on BSR identity features. Survey results will be summarised and published in the project web site.

Participants discussed what is common and what the BSR branding should be built on, like BSR diet, lifestyle, holiday, architecture, landscape. There are opportunities for the BSR like political context, business context, „dare” to find a niche, more external marketing and more coordination between existing efforts. It is observed that there are many projects, networks and organisations working to brand and market the BSR or seeking to build a common identity; there is some „mental maturity” for branding and promotion, there is some fragmentation and lack of long-term perspective; more scope for collaboration is required. There is a need for common platform for communication and marketing, perception research and wide consultation process, to identify priority areas, sectors and target markets.

