

Baltic Sea Breezes

Welcome to the Baltic Sea Region

2011/2012





Evening mood in Nyhavn/Copenhagen

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Cover Picture: View of the church in Mariefred, Sweden
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EDITORIAL

Common Heritage – Common Tasks – Common Objectives

A central public place to meet, debate and exchange ideas – this was the “Agora” around 500 BC in Greece. The project AGORA 2.0 represents not just the ancient Greek term, but it also follows the main principle of bringing different parties closer together, to let them cooperate and benefit from each other's knowledge and work. In this frame, 24 partners from 9 neighboring countries of the Baltic Sea act jointly following the implementation of the *Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013*. AGORA 2.0 was initiated by University of Greifswald's Institute of Geography and is an approved *Baltic 21 Lighthouse* project.



The countries around the Baltic Sea do not only share a long period in history, but also certain natural and cultural resources. However, the inhabitants' perception about the common characteristics is not fully developed yet and the Baltic Sea Region is not well-known as one common region. For this reason, the project AGORA 2.0 aims at identifying peculiarities which might support the development of a common identity of people living in the Baltic Sea Region. It seems that appealing treasures of natural and cultural heritage are very promising features in this regard.

Based on those heritage assets, innovative tourism products should be developed. The promotion of these products will increase the visibility of the whole area as a tourist destination and as an interesting business environment.

Various experts have already met at the “Agora”, in order to pursue the goals of the project. Of course, common heritage, tasks and objectives around the sea will also let the partners keep on cooperating in the future, in order to strengthen the visibility of the Baltic Sea Region.

Prof. Dr. Wilhelm Steingrube





Natural and Cultural Heritage

Promising Potentials for Tourism in the Baltic Sea Region

By Prof. Dr Wilhelm Steingrube, Institute of Geography and Geology, University of Greifswald

Of course, there are countless natural and cultural sites, historical buildings and new astonishing directions in architectural style; very small and also big events; specific food and drinking customs; very old traditions and episodic cultural festivals; UNESCO world heritage labeled and hidden treasures – all these offers lure people to visit the region. So, the Baltic Sea Region is characterized by innumerable touristic attractions.

Tourism is a growing and future oriented market on the one hand, but on the other hand it is a demand driven market, too, which means that it is extremely competitive.

Many attractions are owned and managed by public bodies. Often, they are not very well equipped, financially – but they hope to generate additional benefits from tourism. Furthermore, they need staff that is well educated in

tourism service and management to develop the tourism potentials in an optimal way.

As a little support the Baltic Sea Heritage Tourism Information Service (www.bastis-tourism.info) has been implemented. It is a web-based database that provides market research results of the neighboring countries of the Baltic Sea for everybody who is engaged in heritage tourism in the area.

Another bottle neck of tourism development is the simple mechanism that the power of attraction of single sites and destinations correlates with the distance to source markets: Within and close to the region the attractions are well known, but going further away they become more and more unknown. And even if the information is available worldwide due to web-presentations, tourists will not travel long distances to



View of Skokloster Castle/Sweden

small single attractions. To lure guests from outside the area the tourist destinations of the Baltic Sea Region need to cooperate and to enter the tourism market as a common destination. But then it has to be decided which attractions to boost.

There are two different ways of becoming visible in the world tourism market: either by single unique selling propositions or by common features, which cover and represent most parts of the region.

Unique Selling Propositions of the Region

What are the unique selling propositions of our region? There are the big capitals of the countries and there are several UNESCO world heritage properties. But do they represent characteristics of the Baltic Sea Region? Perhaps there are other sites, traditions or events, which are more typical of the entire region. To collect and identify the most promising natural and cultural heritage assets of the region, there is a public online ranking available on

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©Toomas Volmer

Cities full of tradition – Representative characteristics of the Baltic Sea Region?
(Photo: View of St Catherine's Passage in Tallinn's Old Town)

www.6-bsr-wonders.net. In this contest, the most attractive and popular treasures of the region are to be elected.

Widespread Common Features

The other way to become visible in the world – promoting widespread common features - has to be backed by several peculiarities, which have to represent the whole region.

Typical of the entire region - regarding the natural appearance - are the large areas of forests covering most parts of the region. It is also the coastline with two totally different faces: while stones

characterize the landscape in the North (archipelagos, single blocks & boulders everywhere), the southern coastline is marked by endless sandy beaches, shifting sand dunes and other soft coastal formations.

Regarding cultural features, different socio-economic systems, groups like the Vikings or the Hanseatic League strongly influenced the entire region around the Baltic Sea. Many castles and other historical buildings still document these periods.

The red brick is the characteristic stone in the Baltic Sea Region, which was used to construct numerous public and



©Freddie Bijkerk

Redbrick Gothic architecture:
Church in Kamien Pomorski/Poland



©Betina Meliss (3)

View of the lighthouse in Swinoujscie/Poland

also private buildings. The project AGORA 2.0-Heritage Tourism for Increased Baltic Sea Region Identity, tries to elaborate innovative tourism products and new solutions in heritage tourism in 5 transnational pilot groups. Each pilot group focuses on a subject that is typical of at least three Baltic

Sea states: red brick gothic, castles & museums, forests, shifting sand dunes and stones (blocks & boulders).

“Identity” – The New Key Word

It is very important for the Baltic Sea Region to be promoted as a unit by tourism marketing.

The Baltic Sea is easy to find in a map, but the region surrounding the sea is difficult to define – the definition depends on the discipline and the purpose. So, the area of the Baltic Sea Region varies between “simply neighbouring countries” and the water catchment area of the sea, sometimes addi-



Forest in Zemaitija National Park/Lithuania



tionally involving Norway or even Island, due to political reasons. The EU defined an own programme area for this region. At least since that moment, politicians tend to regard the Baltic Sea Region as a unit. There are the common sea and the natural ap-

pearance, with its geological surface formed during the Ice Age, which give a sense of regional unity. The similar climate supports the idea of a homogeneous region.

And of course, there is a common history of co-operation and conflicts. In the region there have developed similar architectural styles, traditions, cuisine and also related art styles. The high level of economy, education and security is also similar, compared with other parts in the world.

Nevertheless, there is not really a common feeling within the population; there

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Nature in the Baltic Sea Region appears in many fascinating ways.

itage assets. The features offered for evaluation cover all three dimensions of sustainability: 9 elements of natural characteristics, 10 cultural assets and 6 of economy and society.

It is expected not to select just the “one and only” feature, but a pool of characteristics. Such a set is more useful because it is necessary for marketing purposes to know several features, which are backed by the population. This is due to the fact that there are always dif-

ferent target groups in tourism which have to be addressed by different adverts. Therefore, it is important to have a pool of such “common (identity) features”.

The Baltic Sea Region has a lot of potential characteristics as well as numerous attractions, but it is necessary to select those, which cover most aspects, fit to the target markets and are borne and supported by the local population.

©Betina Meliss (2)



Traditional folklore in Belarus

is not yet a common language. Thus, identity is the wrong term!

Unfortunately, this word is mostly used when talking about the Baltic Sea Region.

But instead of discussing and showing the non-existence of a common identity in the whole Baltic Sea Region, AGORA 2.0 goes a different way.

Identity is a very sensitive, slowly growing feeling among many people; it has to be borne by the population.

Following a bottom-up perspective, an online questionnaire survey “What do we have in common in the whole Baltic Sea Region?” (www.bsr-identity.net) tries to identify features that represent a potpourri of cultural and natural her-

Shifting sand dune in the Slowinski National Park/Poland



Feature of Identification for the Baltic Sea Region

Fascinating Cultural Heritage Brick

By Christoph Pienkoss, European Route of Brick Gothic



This is the dream destination for culture addicts, those seeking recreation and time travellers: solitary ice-age landscapes, picturesque lakes and rivers, coasts and beaches, wind-lashed shallow bays, untouched forests, meadows and fields and the tower of a brick church is always peeking out from behind the next turn of the bike path, next to an old inn or between the trees of many old avenues. The church is probably Gothic – Brick Gothic.

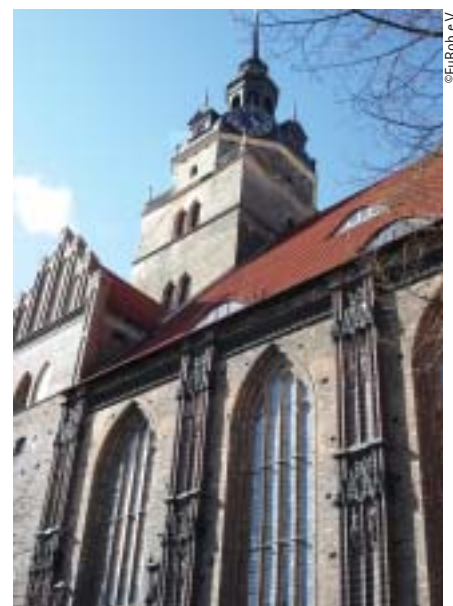
That is because Brick Gothic has left its mark on the landscape along the Baltic Sea and far inland. Churches and basilicas, town halls, monasteries, city gates and fortifications, religious and secular buildings speak their common language, characterised by the great upheavals starting from the 13th century: the Christianisation, the great period of the Hanseatic League, the founding of monasteries and cities, the construction of the castles of knights' orders, the significant period of the Baltic Sea within global Europe of Middle Ages. Each structure is a masterpiece of its own. The following centuries brought many ups and downs – with times of prosperity and burning cities, success stories and wars, hostilities and friendships. Many of the magnificent Brick Gothic monuments withstood these tumultuous times and stood for eternity as intended. Yet it is only recently that visitors can experience along the "European Route of Brick Gothic" how

cities, villages, countries and structures around the Baltic Sea and far into the south were affected in different ways by the same development.

The cultural heritage Brick Gothic is easily recognisable, yet always a bit different in every location. It is an excellent feature of identification for the re-

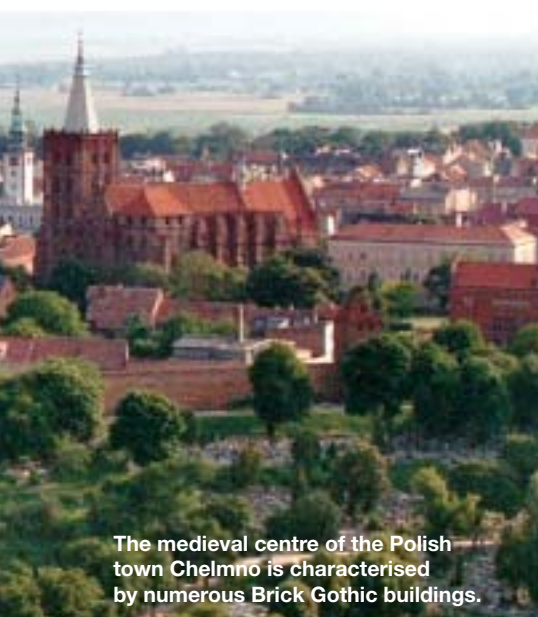


St Mary's church in Gdansk – the biggest Brick Gothic church in Europe



St Catherine's church in Brandenburg is an example of German Brick Gothic architecture

Gothic



The medieval centre of the Polish town Chelmino is characterised by numerous Brick Gothic buildings.

gion. It is always visible, glows red in the sun, is simple yet grandiose, artistically accomplished, comprehensible and touchable, brimming with history and stories. Brick Gothic structures outlived dozens of religious and worldly leaders, are older than the oldest universities, were models for painters such as Caspar David Friedrich and Lyonel Feininger, tower above later baroque, neo-Gothic and classical structures. They are today the cultural counterpoint



St John's church in Schaprode is considered the third oldest Brick Gothic building on the island of Rügen.

©EuRob e.V.

to wellness, cycling, golf, hiking and aquatic sports and are still living buildings in service for people to play in, marvel at, admire and use. Beyond Brick Gothic, many other treasures beckon the curious: forests and lakes, cliffs and dune landscapes, castles, ruins, palaces, farm houses and manor houses from a wide variety of eras. Discover traces of common history and future on the European Route of Brick Gothic and in the Baltic Sea region! Denmark (Haderslev), Poland (Szczecin, Stargard Szczecinski, Slawno, Torun, Plock, Gdansk, Chelmino and Olsztyn) and Germany (Anklam, Bad Doberan, Brandenburg/Havel, Buxtehude,

Greifswald, Güstrow, Lüneburg, Bardowick and Churches around Lüneburg, Monasteries of Lüneburg, Neubrandenburg and Burg Stargard, Neukloster, Parchim, Prenzlau, Ribnitz-Damgarten, the Island of Rügen, Schleswig, Schwerin, Stendal, Stralsund, Wismar and Wolgast) are your hosts. Even beyond these countries, in parts of Sweden and the Netherlands, in Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia (e.g. the city of Tartu), Russia and Belarus, beautiful examples of brick Gothic can be found. A common European history is to be experienced.

www.eurob.org

©EuRob e.V.



The Town Hall of the Polish city Torun belongs to the most outstanding achievements of medieval bourgeois architecture in Europe and served as an architectural model for the Town Hall in Berlin.

©Bildquelle

Sand Dunes in the Baltic Sea Region

A Wonder of Nature to Visit and Experience

By Lise Lyck, Centre Director, Copenhagen Business School

©Lithuanian State Department of Tourism

In the EU project AGORA 2.0 there are 24 partners dealing with and analyzing the natural and cultural heritage in the Baltic Sea Region. They investigate different features of the area, such as the brick architecture, castles, sand dunes, forests and stones. The topic of this article is a very outstanding characteristic of the region, namely sand dunes that can be found in Lithuania, Kaliningrad, Poland and Denmark.

Sand dunes are ridges, hills and small mountains of sand situated close to or at the top of a beach above the usual maximum wade. The wind has blown the sand together forming a ridge or a hill created by the wind from

the dominant wind direction. Initially, the sand is transported by the wind and is stopped by a hindrance in the landscape like a bush, a stone or a rock. The dune will normally grow over time, as well as the marram grass on it,

which will bind and stabilize the dune at the same time. The dunes are exposed to erosion by wind and water and have to be protected.

Sand dunes have many forms. A dune field is an area covered by extensive sand dunes – the large ones are called ergs. Sand dunes are said to be kinds of deserts in which specific types of plants grow and birds live. Most of the sand dunes are relatively stable but some are not, as they are shifting and wandering in the wind direction. This sand movement gives the hills and ridges a very mysterious atmosphere and makes them remarkable features of the landscape.

Shifting Sand Dunes in the Baltic Sea Region

In the Baltic Sea countries sand dunes can be found in Lithuania and Kaliningrad, where especially the Curonian Spit is an outstanding exam-



©Baltic Sea Tourism Commission, Stockholm



©BatikunTourismus Zentrale, Berlin

ple of shifting sand dunes. The 98 km long Spit is a thin and curved peninsula that separates the Baltic Sea and the Curonian Lagoon and it covers Europe's highest moving sand dunes with a height of up to 60 meters (see photos on p. 8 and 9 above). To be mentioned are also the sand dunes in Poland in the Slowinski Natural Park, the sand dunes found in Denmark in the island Bornholm and the dunes in the North of Zeeland. Back in time, sand storms moved the sand dunes and whole villages and churches were buried in the sand. In Poland and in Denmark for instance it is still possible to visit churches almost totally buried by the sand. A famous ex-

ample of shifting dunes is Raabjerg Mile in the North of Jutland in Denmark. Since 1900 it has moved 1500m North-East, normally 15 m annually. It covers an area of 1600 ha, includes 3.5 mio m³ of sand and is 35-40m high. Poland also has shifting dunes, which can be found in the Slovinski National Park, along the Baltic Sea coast between Rowy and Leba. The dunes rise to 42 m above the sea level and can be considered as the most impressive attractions of the park (see photos below).

Why Should People Visit the Sand Dunes in the Baltic Sea Region?

The sand dunes are situated at the coast. You can rest in the sand dunes,

take a swim and enjoy the beauty and the mystery of the landscape. The light grey color of the sand together with the plants, birds and the sea create special colors and the light from the sky and sea offer unique and unforgettable views. The experience from climbing the shifting sand dunes is very impressive for both children and adults and definitely a sight to behold.



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Sustainable Nature Tourism in the Baltic Sea Region

A Plenty of Breathtaking Protected Areas

By Romy Sommer, animare projectmanagement

The Baltic Sea Region (BSR) offers a great diversity of natural treasures which is preserved in protected areas. But these green jewels are not only important habitats for rare species of flora and fauna, but also tourist magnets for the whole area.

The following 8 parks are involved in the project PARKS & BENEFITS, which supports the BSR in gaining visibility as one destination.



Matsalu National Park

©Matsalu National Park



©Biosphere Reserve Southeast-Rügen

Estonia: Matsalu National Park

Matsalu National Park was founded to protect nesting and migratory birds and conserve semi-natural grasslands and the Väinameri region. The park is 48.610 ha in size and embraces Matsalu bay and the delta area of the Kasari River together with surrounding flooded and coastal meadows, reed beds and forests. The park is famous for its reed beds, which are the largest in the Baltic Sea. Matsalu – Ramsar site and awarded with the European Diploma for Protected Areas – is also one of the most important wetland bird areas in Europe.

www.matsalu.ee

Germany: Müritz National Park

The osprey plunges into the lake and the trumpeting of cranes can be heard – over 100 lakes surrounded by large forests make Müritz National Park very special. The park is famed for its crystalclear water and magical landscape. It includes a 500 meter wide strip along the eastern shore of the largest German lake: the Müritz. This area of the park is



©Müritz National Park

characterised by extensive pine forests and bogs. The smaller area around the village of Serrahn features impressive old beech forests in a hilly landscape which have been inscribed in the UNESCO list of World Heritage lately.

www.nationalpark-mueritz.de

Germany: Biosphere Reserve Southeast-Rügen

Situated on Germany's largest island Rügen, the diverse landscape and history of land use in the biosphere reserve has led to an extraordinary variety of habitats. Approx. 50% of the biosphere reserve consists of open water

with habitats such as sea-grass banks, seaweed forests and calm water. The dry grasslands, beech forests, steep shale cliffs, rocky and pebble beaches, salt meadows and sand cliffs also have a great ecological value and underline the close link between land and sea.

www.biosphaerenreservat-suedostruegen.de

Norway: Dovrefjell-Sunndalsfjella National Park

Dovrefjell Sunndalsfjella National Park and the 9 adjoining protected areas have a total size of 4.365 km². The area has a wide range of topography, geology and climate boosting semi alpine landforms, carved out by glaciers, with



©Dovrefjell-Sunndalsfjella National Park

ragged peaks, fjords and the Dovrefjell mountain plateau with Mount Snøhetta as its majestic landmark. The park was created to preserve Europe's oldest wild reindeer population and one of Scandinavia's last intact mountain eco

systems. Visitors mostly enjoy the area's traditional outdoor life, e.g. on guided musk and elk safaris but there are also several visitor attractions in the area worth seeing.

www.dovrefjellradet.no

Lithuania: Zemaitija National Park

Zemaitija National Park is a real discovery for travellers who wish to explore the wild nature and original traditions of the region. It was shaped as a result of the drifting ice blocks that scraped deep holes for lakes and subsided in rifts forming the cobweb of shoals. Islands and peninsulas compose the view of the Plateliai Cascade. The park is famous not only for the diverse and endemic flora and fauna but also for its rich cultural heritage. Zemaitija National Park was awarded the title „2008 European Tourist Destination of Excellence in Intangible Heritage“ (EDEN).

www.zemaitijosnp.lt



©Zemaitija National Park

Lithuania: Kurtuvėnai Regional Park

Here, 15.000 years ago, melting glaciers formed impressive landforms, high banks, continental dunes and a spectacular ridge and canyon-like valley. Hills enveloped with deep forests, valley streams, small bottomless lakes and swamps cover the landscape of the park. Naturalists have counted 1.000 species of plants in the regional park and in the forest huge single trees grow. The swamps attract large amounts of birds including cranes, gray



©Kurtuvėnai Regional Park

herons, grebes and various ducks. The white tailed eagle, black stork, otters, beavers, ermines and wolves are also at home within the park boundary.

www.kurtuva.lt

Denmark: Nature Park Maribo Søerne

In the heart of the island Lolland the Maribo Lakes lie in a unique nature park, one of the most outstanding natural areas in Denmark. The Maribo Lakes and surrounding reed beds, marshes, meadows and broad-leaved forest constitute an area of extremely high biolog-



©Nature Park Maribo Søerne

ical interest because of the unique plant, bird and animal life, with their specialized organisms. The area also contains many cultural and historical attractions and ancient remains. Around the lakes there are large manor houses with woodlands.

www.naturparkmaribo.dk

Latvia: Kemerī National Park

The national park is covered by wetlands of an amazing diversity. Lake Kanieris, e.g. is a Ramsar site. Being a coastal lagoon lake of just about 1 m depth, covering 1.128 ha and comprising large, impassable labyrinths of reedbeds, it is home to almost 200 bird species and an important stop-over place during bird migrations. Underneath the wetlands of Kemerī National Park sulphurous mineral water is formed - a foundation for a health resort dating back to 1838.

www.daba.gov.lv



©Kemerī National Park

European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas

The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas is a practical management tool that enables protected areas to develop tourism sustainably. The core element of the Charter is working in partnership with all relevant stakeholders to develop a common sustainable tourism strategy and an action plan on the basis of a thorough situation analysis. It is based on the 10 Charter Principles for sustainable tourism and comprises a set of guidelines, check-lists and methodologies. All Charter projects and activities aim at protecting the natural and cultural heritage and at improving tourism in the protected areas in terms of the environment, local population and businesses, as well as visitors.

The Charter and the Charter Network is owned, managed and coordinated by the EUROPARC Federation. The Federation represents more than 400 members in 36 countries, who themselves manage the green jewels of Europe's land, sea, mountains, forests, rivers and cultural heritage.

Protected Areas of the PARKS & BENEFITS project go for the Charter in the Baltic Sea Region

The PARKS & BENEFITS project – focusing on the Baltic Sea Region – facilitates international co-operation in many aspects of protected area management. Thinking holistically, we work in a network of eight large protected areas, regional authorities, stakeholders in tourism & environment, and academic institutions backed by EUROPARC Federation as European umbrella organization.

www.europarc-nb.org

www.parksandbenefits.net



Flagship Projects for Closer Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region

Innovations Conducive to Tourism and Environment

eTurku Touring

By Päivi Oliva, Coordinator Turku Touring



The Regional Council of Southwest Finland, Turku Touring, the regional marketing and sales organisation of tourism in Southwest Finland and the Centre of Expertise for Tourism and Experience Management are responsible for the Flagship Project (FP) 12.7, an activity within the framework of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), which concentrates on the development of environmentally friendly coastal and rural tourism. The main objective is a closer cooperation between the actors in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) tourism sector, as well as providing competence and the best practices for the tourism industry.

Join the Network of Baltic Sea Coastal and Rural Tourism

Created by the FP 12.7, the network covers the entire BSR and makes it possible for the actors to attain success, to find the best practices and to share them with each other. Approximately 30 members have joined in the network of Baltic Sea Coastal and Rural Tourism so far. Many events have been organized by the flagship to activate the stakeholders. During the two "Common Future for Baltic

Tourism" seminars, nearly 100 stakeholders from different sectors and regions around the Baltic Sea took part in exchanging experiences and discussing the perspectives and future of the rural and coastal tourism in the BSR. It became obvious that deeper co-operation is needed.

Sharing Successes and Best Practices

FP 12.7 concentrates on the sustainable development of products, services and the accessibility. "A new type of cooperation is needed in the Baltic Sea Region, efficient product development and service competence. We must build commonly marketable product entities, which will be made available for the customers more efficiently, for example by means of electronic commerce," says Ms. Päivi Lappalainen at the Centre of Expertise for Tourism and Experience Management. Ms. Anne-Marget Niemi, Director of Tourism at the Southwest Finland Tourist and Convention Bureau, strongly believes that the keyword is "accessibility" when developing tourism. Activities such as sailing in the Baltic, biking in the Baltic, hiking in the Baltic,

fishing in the Baltic and especially cooking in the Baltic are the key promotion areas of the FP 12.7. However, we must always endeavour to create sustainable means by which we can enjoy the sea, the landscape, the marine life and the wildlife, for many years to come, underlines Ms. Anne-Marget Niemi at Turku Touring.

Towards InnoNet - Centres of Expertise for Innovation Implementation for Tourism in the BSR

Participation in many project preparations has been taken by the FP 12.7, e.g. with Turku Science Park, which submitted a project application for the 4th call under the BSR Programme at the end of March 2011, together with the Centre of Expertise for Tourism and Experience Management and Turku Touring.

Centres of Expertise programme in Finland have successfully managed to gather actors from the public sector, the academia and companies. This co-operation has opened new aspects to the tourism business. This kind of development that the BSR enables should be welcomed. Innovations for service sectors are known to be difficult to find

and easy to copy. However, the needs, based on raising environmental awareness and shift in customers' values towards sustainability, innovations that improve the tourism businesses' actions in environmental responsibility are soon required.

This is exactly what the InnoNet project aims to do. By combining best practises from partners and developing cooperation between countries, the project idea is to form a network that can easily share innovations, quickly adopt new ideas and share development responsibilities. By and large, the project is reflected from the basics of the Finnish CoE programme, but the focus is set on building an innovation environment that shares differences in cultural, educational, industrial and in customer background. It is the type of network that allows unexpected thinking and cross sectoral adaptation of new skills.



Up to Date with BASTIS

Useful Market Information on the Baltic Sea Region

BASTIS, the Baltic Sea Heritage Tourism Information Service, is now online and running. BASTIS aims to provide everybody dealing with heritage tourism in the Baltic Sea region (e.g. SMEs, tourism authorities and associations) with tailored market information, free of charge and easy to access! Have a look at www.bastis-tourism.info! Here you can find, well-structured and at one glance, statistics, market research results and analyses on all Baltic Sea destination countries, on the most important source markets for the Baltic Sea Region and a segmentation and analysis of different cultural and natural tourists in Europe interested in holidays in the Baltic Sea region.

Users can add and update information within BASTIS – this is especially important for the section about heritage sites: If you are a heritage site within the Baltic Sea region, it would be great if you could include your site in BASTIS. To get started, please have a look at the help section and if there are questions, please feel always free to contact the NIT.

To receive all news about the progress of BASTIS, please subscribe to our blog by clicking on "follow blog" in the blog section of BASTIS. BASTIS is part of the Agora 2.0 project, part-financed by the EU within the Baltic Sea Region Programme 2007-2013. It is hosted by the BTC (Baltic Sea Tourism Commission) and was conceptualized by the NIT (Institute for Tourism Research in Northern Europe).

By Ulf Sonntag,
Head of Market Research, N.I.T. Kiel

Enjoy South Baltic!

Fruitful Cooperation under the Umbrella of EU Baltic Sea Region Strategy

By Marta Chelkowska, Pomorskie Voivodeship;
Krystyna Hartenberger-Pater, Pomorskie Tourist Board

The leaders of the Flagship Project 12.9 "Promotion of culture and nature heritage" - Pomorskie Region and Pomorskie Tourist Board continue monitoring activities related to project initiatives implemented in the Baltic Sea Region. Follow-up activities will focus on identifying ongoing initiatives within European Cultural Routes and nature centers around the Baltic Sea states. The leading events, based on the use of unique and competitive Baltic cultural resources, will also be taken into account.

Those actions will be undertaken within the new ESB! project that is co-financed by the European Regional Development Funds within the South Baltic Cross-border Co-operation Programme 2007-2013, and implemented by partners from Poland, Lithuania and Germany. This project will mainly focus on the South Baltic area, but wider scope will also be included because the Baltic Sea Region is defined as one tourist destination on the global tourism market.

The aim of the ESB! project is to strengthen the image and competitiveness of the South Baltic Region, which shall be defined as the "rising star" among other international tourist destinations, and to improve the quality of tourism offers and services throughout

©S. Skladanowski



View of the Neptune's fountain in Gdansk.

direct cooperation with the private sector.

SME's of the tourism branch are key partners in the tourist offer management and selling system. The first stage of the project implementation will focus on the creation of new tourist products and packages on the base of unique resources and observed trends in tourism. The second project stage will be designed to launch the new products on the market. In the end, there will be a vital connection between South Baltic tour operators, tourist agencies and the tourist industry, as well as a close communication base with the end customer, namely the tourist, for whom the offer has been developed.

The Pomorskie region offers varied touristic delights.



©Pomorskie Tourist Board



Baltic Sea Region Records Upswing in Tourism

**Interview with Thomas Mielke,
Director Baltic Sea Tourism Commission (BTC),
Stockholm**

The Baltic Sea region is economically dependent on tourism to a great extent. Was the development of tourism in the region able to profit from the global upswing after the economic crisis?

Th. Mielke: Yes – the tendency for tourism in the Baltic Sea region is positive. For the year 2011 the number of tourists increased in almost all destinations. After the crash in 2009 especially the Baltic countries had a very positive development in terms of the number of nights spent in tourist destinations with two digit growth numbers. But also Scandinavia, Poland and Germany benefited from the increased number of tourists. Transportation companies also profited from the positive development – Tallink achieved an all time high in the number of transported passengers in June 2011.

This development is in line with the global trend for the first half of this year and even slightly better. During the first six months of 2011 there were 5% more holidaymakers worldwide compared to the same period last year.

Again tourism proved to be the first industry which recovered from the crisis quickly which is important for other parts of the economies in our countries. However the clouds of economic decline are still existing which can influence the influx of tourism to our region negatively.

What is the outlook for this year's summer season in your opinion?

Th. Mielke: As I said before the general trend is positive and I doubt this trend will change substantially for the rest of this year. To give you one positive example beside many others – Latvia. The country recently received a lot of attention as the country with the most severe

economic problems in our region which were recently even topped by a political crisis. However in the second quarter Latvia had 30% more tourists in accommodation facilities and also over 30% more nights spent by foreign visitors compared to the same period last year!

What is especially popular with tourists who come to the Baltic Sea region?

Th. Mielke: I think that many of our own citizens discover neighbouring countries. The whole Baltic Sea region – which is very close – offers excellent tourism infrastructure, unspoilt nature, no mass-tourism and is located far away from international epicentres of war or terrorism. Furthermore the Baltic Sea region is a perfect destination for weekend tourism, short or second/third holidays and spa/health tourism.

What new trends are emerging in the Baltic Sea region in your opinion?

Th. Mielke: The growing number of Russian tourists is certainly one of the biggest chan-

ges in recent years in our region. The wealth in Russia is growing and not only concentrated on a few oligarchs but the Russian middle class also discovers our region as a tourist destination and they are not only coming in January (Russian Christmas) and to Finland but Russians even started to cruise – on their own boats, St Peterline – to Helsinki, Tallinn and Stockholm. On the other hand Russia is becoming more and more interesting for EU tourists and visa formalities do not seem to be any obstacle any more and the 72 hours visa-free cruises by St Peterline are one step in the right direction. The advent of Russians to our region has an impact on the incoming tourism industry in our region. Russian language skills need to be improved, products tailor-made for Russians are needed etc... However, the example of Finland shows how successfully Russians can be attracted. After a small setback during 2009/10 cruise-tourism is back on growing track again, flight connections are growing within the region and airports report a growing number of passengers.



A panoramic view of Riga

Baltic Sea Tourism Forum

Stimulating Sustainable Future Cross-border Activities



By Johannes Volkmar - International Marketing at Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board

The Baltic Sea - well known for its natural beauty, clean water and secure environment - invites to discover coastal strips with white sandy beaches, beautiful fishermen's villages and seaside resorts and to explore the inner land with unspoiled nature, rich cultural heritage and colourful cities and villages. Nine countries adjoining the Baltic Sea, which makes the area one of the most diversified and fascinating travel destinations worldwide.

The Baltic Sea region shows high potential in attracting international travellers and guests. However, the area also faces shortcomings especially concerning a joint and coherent image, a cross-national product development and promotional activities as well as transparency and visibility of tourism offers and services in foreign source markets.

To contribute to the development of those, the Ministry of Economics, Labour and Tourism and the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board initialised the first Baltic Sea Tourism Forum in Rostock in 2008 and

invited participants and specialists from tourism institutions around the Baltic Sea. The major objectives are

- to establish and consolidate a long term communication basis,
- to strengthen the cooperation of all Baltic Sea neighbouring countries,
- to ensure the concerns of tourism in the Baltic Sea region and
- to exploit the existing international development potentials more efficiently.

Following the meetings in Vilnius/Lithuania in 2009 and Kaliningrad/Russia in 2010, the fourth Baltic Sea Tourism Forum was successfully held in Sopot/Poland 2011. The identification and determination of areas for effective cooperation and the development and promotion of common products and services have been discussed just as the importance of national tourism organisations and the significance of more information exchange among them and thus between the Baltic Sea neighbouring countries. The 5th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum - held in Germany and Denmark from 14 to 16 November 2012 - will provide a plat-

form and give the opportunity to meet countries' officials of national and regional administrations, representatives of Baltic Sea tourism institutions, private tourism providers and experts of the sector. The Forum focusses on two pillars: Firstly, on an official opening of the countries' representatives and experts of current Baltic Sea topics and secondly, on technical workshops under predefined topics. The Forum will be a perfect opportunity for exchanging knowledge and ideas between colleagues, specialists and decision makers of the tourism sector in the Baltic Sea region and should stimulate sustainable future cross-border activities among tourism institutions. The Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board will organise a pre-meeting in May 2012, in order to prepare the Forum's activities.

The 5th edition of the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum will be also supported by the State Chancellery Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in its function as coordinator for the priority area tourism in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.



The photo shows the participants of the 1st Baltic Sea Tourism Forum Rostock – initialised by the Ministry of Economics, Labour and Tourism Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board

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Journalists from India Visiting the Baltic Sea Region

Exploring a Melting-pot of Cultures

Recently many journalists from overseas countries got acquainted with countries around the Baltic Sea, its people, their history, architecture, cultural highlights, touristic sights and nature on press trips organised by the Baltic Sea Tourism Commission (BTC). In the last two years six journalists from India explored our region in two trips.

All trips were organised in close co-operation with our partner Finnair, other partners and our BTC members. The first trip covered Helsinki, Tallinn, Tartu, Riga, Warsaw and Cracow and the second trip went from Helsinki to Berlin/Potsdam, Lübeck and St Petersburg.

In general all participants returned to India very satisfied with many positive impressions and good memories. The journalists were especially positively surprised by the excellent infrastructure in the Baltic countries and Poland.

Hotels, restaurants and museums were beyond all expectations. The fresh air, pleasant climate and a fascinating nature were an interesting contrast to the

high population density, the tropical climate and nature in India. Architectural and culinary highlights were part of all programs - from the brickstone architecture to Rigas Balzams.

As English is the main communication language in India the excellent knowledge of English of the staff in hotels, restaurants, museums were another positive surprise.

So far six articles from the trips were published among other destinations about Tallinn, the oldest capital in Northern Europe, listed as a World Heritage site as the "best preserved medieval town" by the UNESCO, or Tartu - 1000 years old but due to the many students an eternally young uni-



Old to Gold

Submitted by: Prakash Dubey

A sea coast capital and a rare jewel in the north of Europe in the Gulf of Finland? That's Tallinn. As one of the most completely preserved medieval cities in Europe, it features on the UNESCO World Heritage List...

Whenever I need a break from my busy work schedule, I pick up my laptop and browse the world wide web to hunt for an offbeat destination. This time my location-hunting took me across to Estonia in Eastern Europe. Sitting on the southern coast of the Bay of Finland, the country occupies one end of a strategic land bridge from the Baltic Sea to Novograd in Russia. Estonia borders the Baltic Sea with the Finnish capital of Helsinki just 85 miles away.

Tallinn, the capital of Estonia, has had a rich history with its inhabitants being the oldest settlers of Europe who lived on the coast of the Baltic Sea since the time of the great pyramids. The country was, for the first time, marked on a map by an Arabian geographer in the 12th century. However, from the beginning of the 13th century, Estonia was invaded and occupied by Germans, Danes, Swedes, Poles and Russians until finally in 1991, it regained independence. Now the city has been asserting itself as a major bridge between East and West Europe. So I booked myself on the state-of-the-art brand new Airbus 330-300, Finnair flight from Delhi to Helsinki. To my surprise, the flight time is just six-and-a-half hours. From here, the next morning, I boarded a luxury liner for a short cruise of two-and-a-half hours to reach Tallinn. After checking into my hotel, I had a quick change as I wanted to explore the city. And the best way is to do it by road as my local guide informed me.

...

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View of the Town Hall square in Tallinn

versity town, also known as the "City of Good Thoughts", and the Latvian capital Riga with its splendour of the Art Nouveau architecture.

Not surprisingly one of the tour participants - Mr Prakash Dubey wrote in the Economic Times India "I wish I had a few more days to fully absorb the ethos of this charming city."*

Let's hope that these articles will encourage more indian guests to visit our region and to "stay a few more days"!

By Thomas Mielke

*Economic Times is one of the prestigious economic dailies in India with a readership of 2 million all over India.

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- Baltic Sea Tourism Commission (BTC)
- Skokloster Castle

New Horizons...

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...Welcome to the Baltic Sea Region



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