6th Parks & Benefits Meeting in Apšuciems village / Latvia connected to the Baltic Nature Tourism Conference in Riga / Latvia
(21 – 26 March 2011)

Conference Location: Radisson Blu Daugava Hotel, in Riga
Meeting Location: Hotel SPA Arkadia, in Apsuciems (Kemeri National Park)

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21st March 2011:

Arrival of conference participants

20:00 Informal pre-conference get-together at Beer Restaurant Merlin

22nd March 2011: Baltic Nature Tourism Conference

8:30 Registration and coffee

9:00 Welcome and opening of the Conference
(Asnāte Ziemele, President of the Latvian Country Tourism Association)

9:05 Facilitate tourism cooperation - The EU-Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
(Wolf Born, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany)

9:20 - 10:40 Panel 1: Nature protection policies - ways to impact and proposals to improve them based on experiences in grass-root level.

The panel discusses interaction between nature protection and rural development sectors, involvement of local stakeholders in aware and constructive participation to national nature protection policy building for benefit of both sectors. Case studies on how nature protection policies are implemented in protected nature areas and what is the process to improve these policies and their interpretation through local community involvement.

Keynote speech:
“Policy proposals for tourism development and nature protection balance, based on demonstration of sustainable tourism model in the Siltene national park, Latvia”, by Juris Smalinskis, Latvian country tourism association, project POLPROP-NATURA)

Panel discussions: Moderation: Naut Kusters, ECEAT - Netherlands
- “How a conservation organisation got involved in tourism”, by Mike Pugh, Forest of Bowland, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in UK
- Johan Frederiksen, Ministry of Environment in Denmark

10:40 Coffee

11:00 - 12:30 Panel 2: Nature based tourism products in protected nature areas – market demand, product, promotion &marketing.

The panel discusses methods in development of sustainable competitive nature based tourism products in protected nature areas. Case studies will be presented how development of tourism products according to the market needs, in cooperation between the local communities and professional tour operators knowing the market, facilitate solution of social and economic problems in rural areas.

Keynote speech:
“Cycling, walking, canoeing, wildlife – bird and animal watching, botanical and mushrooming tours: how to develop products demanded by the market”, by Andris Klepers, project Sustainable use and management of nature resources in the Natura2000 sites - popular and potential tourism destinations in Latvia
12:30 Lunch

13:30 – 15:30 Panel 3: European Charter parks – trends, steps, cooperation, challenges

The European Charter for Sustainable Development is a (practical management) tool that helps protected areas and their partners develop tourism sustainably. The panel discusses how to implement the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas in the Baltic Sea Region. 4 protected areas in the Baltic Sea Region are already certified Charter parks, 6 further parks are about to apply for the certificate, going through the process of setting up stakeholder forums and developing a sustainable tourism strategy together with entrepreneurs in their areas. The panel will give answers to questions like how and why to join the European Charter, how to involve local people and tourism businesses, how to develop strategies for a future sustainable development of the region and what are the steps to go through such a process. 4 protected areas will talk about their experiences and what are the costs and benefits to join the Charter.

Introduction: Olaf Ostermann, Ministry for Agriculture, Environment and Consumer Protection in Mecklenburg Western Pomerania / Lead Partner of “Parks&Benefits” project

Experience report: “European Charter parks – trends, steps, cooperation, problems”, by Lasse Loven, EUROPARC Working Group on Sustainable Tourism, Metsahalitus, Finland

Panel discussion: led by Romy Sommer, animare tourism project management / Project Manager of the Parks&Benefits project

• Agnese Balandina, Kemeri National Park, Latvia
• Klaas van Ommeren, The Dovrefjell Council, Norway
• Martin Kaiser, Müritz National Park, Germany
• Asnate Ziemele, Latvian Country tourism association, Latvia

15:00 Coffee

15:30 – 17:00 Panel 4: European and Baltic Green belt – a product, an initiative or even potential brand in tourism?

The panel discusses management opportunities of heritage sites in protected nature areas, their use in tourism and the potential to develop Green Belt products as a brand in tourism. The European Green Belt initiative unites countries along the former Iron Curtain, where the former restricted, often also military areas offer well preserved nature values and cultural heritage sites. Their common vision is to create the backbone of an ecological network, running from the Barents to the Black Sea that is a global symbol for transboundary cooperation in nature conservation and sustainable development.

Keynote speech:

“The European Green Belt: history of the initiative and examples of Green Belt tourism”, by Dr. Karin Ullrich, German Federal Agency of Nature Conservation

Panel discussions: Moderation: Wolfgang Gunther (Institute fur Tourism and Recreational Research in Northern Europe (N.I.T.) and Stefanie Maack (Kiel University)

• Latvian Green Belt: Asnate Ziemele “Lauku Celotajs”, Latvia
• Austrian Green Belt: Alois Lang, Nationalpark Neusiedler See - Seewinkel, Austria
• Slovenian Green Belt: Implementation in 3-lateral park Goričko-Raab-Örseg (SLO-AT-HU), Stanka Desnik, Goricko Nature Park, Slovenia

20:00 Dinner

22:00 End of conference day
23rd March 2011: Baltic Nature Tourism Conference - Workshops

Open workshops (Working language is English).

The workshops will discuss the progress and results of projects and organizations described below. The projects address issues of nature protection in the context of rural development, their progress and results are relevant and of interest to large audience apart from the project partnership. Workshops are open to general public as parallel discussion sessions. The participants can freely move between rooms. However, for organisation purposes, please register for a particular workshop you would join first.

1. workshop: The Benefits of Protected Areas
2. workshop: Tourism as a Part of the EU Strategy for the BSR
3. workshop: “Dimensions of sustainability in tourism at the Green Belt: nature protection, mobility and beyond”

1st workshop: The Benefits of Protected Areas


Joint workshop, chaired by the project lead partner, Olaf Ostermann:

09:00 - 10:00 “How to measure carrying capacity in 8 protected areas of the Baltic Sea Region – results of a comparative analysis”, Jesper Brandt, Roskilde University

10:00 – 10:40 “Carrying capacity in protected areas – local experiences & strategies” Martin Kaiser, Müritz National Park & Klaas v. Ommeren, Dovrefjell National Park

10:40 – 13:00 “Benefit Monitor – Measuring economic and social benefits of tourism in protected areas. Method & Outcomes”, Prof. Wilhelm Steingrube, University of Greifswald (11:00 – 11:20 coffee break)

13:00 – 14:00 Lunch

15:00 – 16:00 Coffee and discussion on establishment a Baltic Sea Platform for Charter parks

16:30 Departure to Kemeri National Park for 6th partner meeting

19:00 Dinner

21:00 End of conference day

2nd workshop: Tourism as a Part of the EU Strategy for the BSR

With this workshop, the lead partners of the tourism related flagship projects in the EU-Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region present their projects and related work, [http://www.baltic-sea-strategy-tourism.eu](http://www.baltic-sea-strategy-tourism.eu)

Steps towards a common Baltic Sea Region, chaired by Greifswald University [http://www.agora2tourism.net/]

09:00 - 09:15 “FP 12.10 – Strategies for sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea Region”, Betina Meliss, University of Greifswald, Institute of Geography

09:15 - 09:50 “What do we have in common in the whole Baltic Sea Region?”, Prof. Wilhelm Steingrube, University of Greifswald, Institute of Geography

09:50 - 10:25 “Branding the Baltic Sea Region”, Marcus Andersson, Baltic Development Forum

10:25 - 11:00 “The Six Baltic Sea Wonders”, Prof. Przemyslaw Kulawczuk, Gdansk University

11:00 Coffee break
11.30 – 13:00  "Rural and heritage tourism in the EU-Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region": Presentation and discussion of the Flagship Projects 12.7 and 12.9

With regard to rural and cultural heritage tourism, essential questions will be dealt with during the workshop: How to attract tourists to rural and coastal areas in the BSR? How to create a competitive offer based on environmental and cultural resources? How to promote sustainable joint tourism packages that possibly relate to e.g. farm, food, hiking, winter sports, nature and cultural heritage based tourism? What do customers expect and find today when they travel to rural areas? Chaired by the lead partners of the flagship projects on “Rural and coastal tourism” (FP 12.7) and “Cultural heritage and natural landscapes” (FP 12.9), practitioners will report on their experiences, followed by a discussion with the participants on what can be deduced as general answers as to the aforementioned questions. Furthermore, the next steps to be taken in the two flagship projects shall be discussed.

13:00  Lunch

3rd workshop: “Dimensions of sustainability in tourism at the Green Belt: nature protection, mobility and beyond”

Projects MobEE and “Baltic Green Belt”, http://www.balticgreenbelt.uni-kiel.de/, chaired by the lead partner. This workshop is meant to generate a common understanding of how sustainable tourism at the Green Belt should be defined, which aspects should be included and which standards it should follow. Based on practical examples presented, the participants will discuss good and bad practice as well as future options for the development of sustainable tourism with a focus on the area along the former Iron Curtain, nowadays perceived as the European Green Belt.

Moderation: Wolfgang Gunther (N.I.T.) and Stefanie Maack (Kiel University)

9:00 – 9:20  “Defining Sustainable Tourism - Outline on current approaches to catch a slippery eel”, Wolfgang Gunther (N.I.T., Kiel, Germany)

9:20 – 9:40  “Combining nature protection and tourism – examples from the inner German Green Belt”, Melanie Kreutz (Project office of the Central European Green Belt, Nurnberg, Germany)

9:40 – 11:00  Moderated discussion

11:00  Coffee break

11:30 – 11:50  “Examples of low-energy mobility in touristic areas”, Stefan Gossling (Lund University, Lund, Sweden)
23rd March 2011 - continuation

16:30 Departure by buses from Radisson Blu Daugava hotel to Spa Hotel Arkadia
18:00 – 18:30 Check in at Spa Hotel Arkadia
19:00 Dinner
20:00 Informal welcome to Ķemeri National Park (incl. video film)
21:00 – 23:30 Owl excursions (in groups of 10-15 people)

24th March 2011 - 6th PARKS & BENEFITS project meeting

09:00 – 15:30 Excursion “Following the healing bonanza of Ķemeri National Park”

Some of the sites to see:
- Ķemeri historical resort (landscape park, sanatorium, sulphur spring “Little Lizard”), Administration building of Ķemeri National Park “Forest House
- Short excursions in sanatorium “Jantarnij Bereg” and rehabilitation centre “Jaunķemeri” – use of healing resources in the past and nowadays
- Lunch in holiday centre “Valguma Pasaule” with short outdoor exercise

16:10 – 16:30 Official Welcome of the 6th project meeting
16:30 – 18:30 Presentation of the status quo of the Charter certification processes in the protected areas
16:30 - 16:50 Müritz National Park
16:50 – 17:10 Kemeri National Park
17:10 – 17:30 Maribo Regional Park
17:30 – 17:50 Zemaitija National Park
17:50 – 18:10 Kurtuvenai Regional Park
18:10 – 18:30 Discussion

19:00 Departure for dinner
19:30 Dinner
22:00 End of meeting day

25th March 2011 - 6th PARKS & BENEFITS project meeting

08:30 – 10:00 Marketing session (members of marketing group will be invited separately)
10:00 – 10:15 Coffee break
10:15 – 12:30 Workshop on development of a visitor strategy for BSR Charter Parks & its implementation at local level
12:30 – 13:30 Lunch
13:30 – 14:15 Input presentation on sustainable transport & accessibility of protected areas – status quo of comparative analysis, led by VCD
14:15 – 16:00 Workshop World Café – Development of strategies for an action plan for a low impact transport system network, led by VCD
16:00 – 16:30 Coffee break
16:30 – 17:00 Discussion of Workshop results
17:00 – 17:30 Wrapping up the meeting & next steps
18:30 Departure for dinner
19:00 Farewell dinner
23:00 End of meeting day