

Project name:

Parks and Benefits

– Generating socio-economic effects by a sustainable management of protected areas for the benefit of their regions

Project summary:

The Baltic Sea Region holds many sites of typically Baltic or even outstanding natural heritage which are preserved in protected areas. While respecting their conservation and development objectives, sustainable Nature Tourism within and around protected areas can be –or already is– an important element of the regional economies.

Up to now this economic potential is on the one hand underdeveloped and offers vast possibilities for the development of tourism, of public-private partnerships and improved nature conservation. At the same time can existing economic performance be widely underestimated, which often results in mislead discussions and prejudices about the use of nature protection.

On the other hand all stakeholders within regions with protected areas need to practice cooperation and communication on an equal footing for truly sustainable development.

The project "Parks & Benefits" will introduce and strengthen sustainable Nature Tourism approaches in the Baltic Sea Region and communicate the mutual benefits to protected parks and to their surrounding regions for regional development and sustained natural development.

The main instrument is the transfer of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas from Western and Mediterranean Europe to the Baltic Sea Region and the joint implementation in eight protected areas. The Charter process as well as "Parks & Benefits" comprises carrying capacity analyses, visitor management standards, quality development and cooperation with local tourist stakeholders and a progressive communication of substantial mutual benefits on a regional and international level.

The project wants to result in an established network of certified protected areas, an initial BSR- specific Nature Tourism identity, improved and innovative Nature tourism products also for disabled, improved awareness and recognition of the benefits of nature protection on a political level.

The project in keywords:

- Regional development through improved nature tourism
- Activation of economic potential and strategic protection of natural heritage
- implementation of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in protected Areas
- Improved management of natural heritage through visitor management
- Improved nature education and communication
- Quality development of nature tourism products, services and businesses
- Improved accessibility of protected areas for disabled
- Baltic Sea Region network of protected areas and nature tourism identity

Website: www.parksandbenefits.net (under development, online 1st of July 2009)

Regional Partners activities and Benefits:

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Project overview, numbers:

Partnership	Protected area authorities; municipal,- regional and national public authorities; business incubators, universities, non-governmental organisations. Partner organizations from Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania and Norway
Number of partners	18
Lead Partner	Ministry for Agriculture, Environment and Consumer Protection in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Germany
Approximate total budget	2,7 million €
ERDF+Norwegian funding	2,0 million €
Duration	36 months (January 2009 – January 2012)
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