

FORUM DECLARATION

ADOPTED BY THE 5th BALTIC SEA TOURISM FORUM

The 5th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum “Tourism Cooperation in the EU Programme Period 2014 - 2020”, convened in Rostock, Germany, 14-15 November 2012, attracted participants from all countries bordering the Baltic Sea and beyond. They discussed the perspectives of tourism co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region with regard to the next EU programme period 2014 - 2020 and the implications of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the Strategy of social and economic development of the North-West Federal District of the Russian Federation until 2020.

Since its first convention in 2008, the annual Baltic Sea Tourism Fora (BSTF) have contributed to building a closer co-operation in the tourism sector in the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) by offering a platform for exchange of information, best practice, and the promotion of new projects among practitioners and for debate among the relevant representatives in tourism policy. A close interaction with Priority Area Tourism in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) has been developed, which strongly supported the BSTF 2012.

The participants of the 5th BSTF call on the governments in the BSR, the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS), the EU and the authorities responsible for preparing the EU programme period 2014 - 2020, as well as tourism organizations and networks, relevant projects, and further tourism stakeholders,

regarding the economic relevance of the tourism sector in the BSR,

1. to take account of the contribution of the tourism sector to the economic, social and environmental development in the BSR, being the third-biggest sector in the EU economy in terms of turnover and number of employees, and its proven ability to create jobs and to promote Europe’s competitiveness due to its labor intensive nature and cross-cutting impact;
2. to acknowledge the important role that the tourism sector can play for the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the EU Blue Growth Strategy;
3. to strengthen the role of international incoming tourism to profile the BSR at global scale, not only as a sustainable, high-quality destination but also as a place to do business, to work and to live;
4. to support the tourism sector to meet the major challenges that it is confronted with, namely the increasing global competition, the demographic trends and changing tourist behavior, climate change, a growing sensitiveness to sustainability, and the accelerating use of innovative technologies;
5. to take into account the prevailing SME structure of the sector which makes a case for appropriate support and co-operation structures, e.g. with regard to market information, training, the development of a competitive tourism offer and its successful marketing;

regarding the role of tourism co-operation,

6. to continue efforts towards the development of a tourism policy framework for the BSR, stating common objectives and actions, which also permits to commit the necessary resources;
7. to further develop the creation of a permanent co-operation platform at transnational level with the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum at its core for continuous collaboration on the basis of a multilevel process;
8. to explore and identify new areas of co-operation at transnational level, also with a view to prepare for the EU programme period 2014 - 2020;
9. to get involved in smart specialization processes by entering into an entrepreneurial learning process with tourism-related fields like science and technology, social media, health, nature, cultural heritage, experience economy, creative industries etc.;

regarding the preparation of the EU Operational Programmes 2014 - 2020 in the BSR,

10. to make tourism co-operation eligible for funding in the relevant European Territorial Cooperation programmes 2014 - 2020 and to facilitate the cooperation with non-EU partners, especially from the Russian Federation;
11. to strengthen the commitment of relevant sectoral policies to tourism, e.g. in transport and infrastructure, employment, rural development, environment, SME, technology and innovation, culture, education and training, foreign policies (travel facilities) and maritime policy;
12. to further develop the clustering of like-minded projects across different EU programmes, involving also other relevant actors, in order to foster the integration of know-how, to exploit synergies and to possibly trigger smart specialization activities at transnational level;
13. to make each co-operation project elaborate a durable ex-post perspective with a focus on the subsequent use of the expected project results and through the early involvement of potential catalysts outside the project;
14. to consider the eligibility for funding of small scale investments for prototypes in order to improve the development of a long-term and possibly market-related perspective of project results.

The participants welcome the kind offer of VisitEastDenmark to host the **6th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum** in 2013 in co-operation with Priority Area Tourism in the EUSBSR.

Rostock/Germany, November 15, 2012