

Actions for Sustainable Growth in Euro Region Baltic
ERB-Seagull Conference in Gdansk
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Report

Workshop 3 - Tourism Development – the potential to attract visitors to our region: what do we have to offer?

Moderator: Ms. Annelise Molin, Chairman for the Board of Development, Regional Municipality of Bornholm

Expert: Mr. Tomasz Studzieniecki, Maritime Academy, Gdynia

Secretary: Ms. Nino Javakhishvili Larsen, Centre for Regional and Tourism Research, Bornholm

Participants: see in the list provided on the conference

The goals of the workshop:

- To conduct the discussions concerning the tourism development issues in the Euro Region Baltic;
- To identify the potentials, destinations and come up with the tourist products;

Summaries of the presentations:

Mr. Tomasz Studzieniecki, “Euro Region Baltic – With New Transnational Destination?”

The Baltic Sea Region is the transnational area. The general opinion in Europe is that it is the most efficient region as the cooperation is well developed then compare to other regions in Europe. The region includes some part of Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Russia (in some documents it is written that two parts of Russia belongs here: Kaliningrad Oblast and Leningrad (St. Petersburg) Oblast), Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Poland. The region is characterized by high variety of diverse concepts, diverse points of views.

The history is the heritage and can be transferred into an interesting tourism product, but it is only theory. Looking at the history, culture, and traditions Euro Region Baltic consists of two big sub regions the north and the south. The northern part is famous for achievements in cooperation and integration. The history is also the source of motives to create attractions and create products; and the periods of Nordic development give guidelines for tourism experts to show different products, as good examples of transnational cooperation that the Nordic countries have. But South is totally different. Twenty years ago Poland had the neighbors that do not exist anymore; these were GDR, Czechoslovakia, and USSR, now it has 7 neighbors. There is the concept of South Baltic Arc, which is also the type of integration in the southern Baltic Sea part. As to the tourism development, there is also great diversity and these are identified in different regional tourism networks: Network of Baltic Countries, Baltic Sea Cooperation, and Union of Baltic Cities-UBC.

In 1992 the Council of Europe elected 2 among 22 European cultural routes which both are in the Euro Region Baltic: Vikings and Normans European heritage and Hanseatic sites routes and monuments, which are mostly for Northern part of the Baltic Sea Region. However,

Baltic Sea Tourism Commission promoted the local products of 110 tourist attractions and 4 transborder roads (routes). One of them is Amber road (Riga, Nepean, Kaliningrad, Gdansk), which is particularly significant, because Amber is the Gold of the Baltic Sea from the Hanseatic era. This road will refer to not only transnational destination but also European destination referring the historical Amber routes. There is even the symbol created the sterling silver and amber. The Amber can be one of the transnational motives in creating the tourist products.

To look at the theoretical point of view the Euro Region Baltic can hardly be the destination, the question is whether promote this region as a destination or not? Perhaps it is better to leave the regional concept as a political umbrella of the activities, including the tourism activities. On this stage perhaps it is better to concentrate on the limitations in the tourism development. Every national component in the region has the potential but there is no transnational product. But the experience is vivid and it should be exchanged and learned from the ones who have already achieved tourism development on their local level, e.g. experiences from Bornholm.

Pomeranian Region has identified 40 tourism products. Others also have many different tourism products, which most of them do not have the transnational character. Besides, there is the strong competition in the Baltic among the tourist institutions as all apply for the same EU funds and there is the lack of political initiative, political willingness at the level of Euro Region Baltic to promote and to integrate tourism development in the region. How can transnational tourism be developed when the nationally based problems still exist (Kaliningrad border, lack of amenities)?

And finally, 3 A-s are crucial for the basis of tourism development:

1 A – is Accessibility: there is the poor accessibility; to develop tourism the accessibility has to improve.

2 A – is Attractions: there is the potential of good tourist attractions in the region but they are hidden, unknown, in different places. Tourists do not have the information.

3 A – is Amenities: the amenities are developed on the national level but not transnational level.

The model of tourism emerges system of organization, it consists of several levels, this is national level, regional level, and 5 sectors: government administration, self-government administration, education, business sector and non-profit sector. However, the improvement of 3 A-s is very much depended on all levels.

Annelise Molin, “Brief description of tourism development on Bornholm”

There were historical commonalities among all the regions in Baltic Sea Region, there were long time knowledge and cooperation as well; nowadays the relationships are still on different levels, at the political level, as well as at the level of local fisherman communities. There is the sea, which can either increase the distances or even make the regions and nations closer. There is the common problem of accessing each other and if ERB wants to develop tourism in the region, there should be common understanding that this region is not natural destination and to promote it more creativity should be involved. Therefore, the discussion on the workshop shouldn't start from identifying the regional destinations, but from that point of how to promote the destinations that already exist on the local levels. There is a great diversity among the regions in Euro Region Baltic, and there is also not much information in some regions about their attractions not only for the international tourists but also for the people in the region. It is too early to focus much on the particular destinations, but it is the

time to start discussions on how to develop tourism together in the region. However, later on, when the regions have worked together and had good cooperation in the tourism sector, the development of some tourism destinations and the products can become the issue of discussion. There are some destinations already well-known and popular (like Bornholm), but there are also great potential and attractions which there is difficult to access. Perhaps discussion should also cover the ways the regions can help each other in development of tourism or in promotion. Mainly the discussion on the tourism development should be at the political level, as in most of the cases governments are willing but do not create the policy initiatives, or financial support as an input for this willingness, however, the cooperation should be also at the level of people working within tourism by starting making networks, and etc.

There is a great example of how tourism developed on Bornholm that consists of two periods, which is quite common for the tourism development process.

First, the initiative started around 100 years ago from the small cities and villages situated on the coastline that started to make local tourist information agencies owned by the local private people who created local tourism communities. However, the promotion of the local destinations was only on the national level, and was not accessible for the international tourists. Later the state involved itself in investing some money in this sector. The national organization was established, which started to promote the country on the international tourism market, however, tourist had access to the local information when they have entered Denmark. Later, 10-15 years ago, the state decided to give the local authorities financial initiatives to integrate local tourism attractions into one tourism destination in a bigger area, with the preconditions that local governments were also pay part. The initiative was to continue for 7-8 years and the state paid less every year. Local governments raised the money through the private sector involvement. The policy initiative was successful in Bornholm as well. Bornholm local government started to create the tourism institutions, first the Welcome Centre “Destination Bornholm”, situated at the Rønne harbor, and the centre did the coordination and marketing of the tourism on Bornholm. After some time the centre achieved good results in promotion and good marketing at the international level. However, the local information agencies remained and were still run by private local tourism communities, which were responsible on promoting their products and booking and selling the tickets. 10 years ago there was the crisis in the fishing industry on Bornholm and the state initiated different opportunities to develop on Bornholm, one of them was tourism. Therefore, the Centre for Regional and Tourism Research was established on this basis. The establishment of the Centre has been quite beneficial for the island. Besides this is the only research centre in tourism in whole Denmark. The centre is doing the research in Tourism not only on Bornholm but in all the Nordic countries, in Baltic Sea Region, etc. The centre has helped the local tourism businesses as well as local government to emphasize the methods and techniques regarding the tourism business, regional planning, improving the marketing, developing the qualitative aspects in tourist products and services. Nowadays, there is more intention towards improving the quality of the products in order to increase the competitiveness of the island on the international tourism market.

Summary of the discussion:

According to the speeches, Annelise Molin started discussion and raised the questions, which were not on development of particular tourism products, but more at the level of political cooperation. At the beginning discussion started about what were the other experiences that the participants wanted to share. At this point Jaroslaw Szczukowski (Chairman of International Relations Commission of the Regional Parliament in Pomeranian) described

how the Pomeranian tourism strategy has been elaborated and he emphasized that there was the lack of interregional understanding even between Pomeranian and Warmia-Mazurian regions, which share many tourism attractions and products or activities. He raised the issue on the regional cooperation in tourism and proposed to create open working group, which could work on specific themes of tourism, prepare some documents, and even prepare the projects, to achieve common understanding of tourism development in the ERB.

This idea was lifted and expanded; therefore Kenneth Johannesson raised the issue on the possibilities for exchanging the information and learning from each other, as well as identifying the common interests, and local interests. Annelise Molin confirmed Mr. Johannesson's point by bringing the example about the Centre for Regional and Tourism Research, which have studied local people's interest and desires to make a rational use of the existing resources that population could also support. On the exchanging the information, Nino J. Larsen emphasized the local characteristic of the tourism product and diversities in priorities among the regions, and proposed to work together to elaborate common methods and tools that all regions can use in their tourism planning and marketing and also develop the products at the local level. Here Tomasz Studzieniecki agreed the discussion and emphasized the synergy affect of this cooperation. Besides, he mentioned that there were already some Baltic Sea tourism institutions and was interesting to learn from them. Bo Frank (Deputy Mayor of City Vaxjo) commented that the marketing of the regional destinations was highly important and suggested to include in the cooperation.

According to this discussion Nino J. Larsen summarized that there was the need for regional cooperation, which included exchange the experience and establish the networks, conduct research, arrange educational and training programs and underlining the marketing importance.

Annelise Molin reminded that the there was the need to find out how to help each other to achieve development, to have common strategy as a ground to achieve things together. Here Nino J. Larsen added that it was only possible if establishing the working group as mentioned at the beginning should be prioritized and the tourism development issues should be promoted on the ERB board.

Annelise Molin suggested the participants to talk about the priorities and she confirmed that right after achieving the consensus on how can the regions help each other, the setting up the working group should be the next step and thirdly, she proposed to make a new program. At that point Bo Frank confirmed that the Seagull program was going to end and this proposal should be introduced to the ERB board. Afterwards, the participants talked about the importance of well-planned activities, and involvement of right number of qualified people. The funding issue was also raised and Nino J. Larsen proposed to ask ERB Board to identify the stakeholders from each region and from each sector (public, private, civil society) who can participate in the working group meetings, discussions, establish the networks and be responsible for the exchanging the information, arrange the activities and projects to support the tourism development in the ERB. Participants agreed on this proposal and even came up with the idea that one of the ways to exchange the information was to make the tourism event monthly calendar and publish them in the regional local newspapers for free. As the last aspect, Steen Schoneman emphasized the possibilities to get financial input for this cooperation from the renewed structural funds.

Conclusion:

1. There is the urgent need for stronger and more systematic cooperation

2. There is the need for developing the network in the tourism sector;
3. There is the need for openness and exchange of the information
4. There is the need for exchanging the knowledge and experience
5. There is the need for setting up common tourism development strategies, which is acceptable at the national or/and regional level
6. There is the need for marketing, plan destination development, regional promotion, etc...

Proposal:

Centre for Regional and Tourism Research from Bornholm elaborated the brief proposal based on the workshop discussions, which is **attached** to this report. The full proposal will be provided for the ERB board meeting in January, 2005.

Prepared by:

*Nino Javakhishvili Larsen
Consultant*

*Centre for Regional and Tourism Research
Stenbrudsvej 55
Nexø, 3730
Denmark
Tel.: +45 56 44 00 28
Cellular: +45 27 40 72 31
Fax: +45 56 49 46 24
e-mail: Nino@crt.dk*

Attachment:

Establishment of Tourism Development Working Group in ERB

PROPOSAL BRIEF

According to the discussions on Tourism Development Workshop No. 3 at the ERB-Seagull Conference in Gdańsk on 2 December 2004, Centre for Regional and Tourism Research elaborated the brief draft of the proposal to be introduced to ERB board.

The conclusions from the workshop clarified the needs for:

7. stronger and more systematic cooperation
8. developing the network in the tourism sector
9. openness and exchange of the information
10. exchanging the knowledge and experience
11. setting up common tourism development strategies, which is adoptable at the national or/and regional level
12. Marketing, plan destination development, regional promotion, etc...

The workshop participants proposed to establish the *Tourism Development Working Group (TDWG)* (The name and status will change according to the agreements with all parties)

The Overall Vision:

The *Tourism Development Working Group (TDWG)* is the entity which coordinates and supports the tourism development in the ERB geographic area.

The Possible Responsibilities and Activities of the TDWG:

1. Conduct the group meetings, where the group members discuss the problems in tourism development in the region; the ways and methods to tackle these problems; as well as perspectives, resources, sustainable development, etc...
2. Establish the tourism institutional network, where all the tourism institutions will be connected: local, regional, public, private, NGOs, educational/research institutions, indirectly related institutions, etc... This network is supposed to support the openness and information exchange in the tourism sector (suggestion was to make the tourism events calendar monthly and publish in each regions local newspaper for free, as well as using other methods of communication, such as bulletins, website, brochures, e-mails, etc...)
3. Initiate the exchange of knowledge and experience in the region: organize the educational programs, training courses, study tours, academic conferences, etc...
4. Conduct discussions on the tools and methods of marketing and region's promotion, elaboration of the destination plan
5. Plan the specific projects/activities and find the funding opportunities for their preparation and implementation

Proposed Preparation Phases:

- I. Identifying the partners/actors and problems/issues of relevance for the network to explore/address and design the next phases (including preparation of application(s) for funding)

[**Note:** As the establishment of TDWG might involve the complications regarding the diverse interests and view points of all the countries in the ERB, also it will require involvement of large human or financial resources, therefore Centre for Regional and Tourism Research proposes to make the *pilot project* and test the ground of the cooperation. The pilot project is considered to be *the study trip and first workshop*, where the potential representatives of each country in ERB will meet for the first time and will identify the common interests or themes in tourism development in ERB, as well as discuss the ways of organizing the TDWG. The Centre offers to make the proposal for this type of pilot project to the Baltic Education Island Funding Program (Danish Ministry of Education) for the small grants. This project will prove whether the cooperation in the Tourism Development issues in ERB and establishment of TDWG is realistic, or not. According to these results the proposal can be transferred into the longer term perspectives.]

- II. Strengthen the network based on analyses of the issues as well as workshops, seminars and so on (from here on other sources of funding are needed).
- III. Evaluation of the network and the potential for and relevance of future cooperation on tourism development (responsibility of the Board, but evaluation should of course be funded as part of the project in phase II).

The coordination:

The coordination of establishing and leading the Tourism Development Working Group is proposed to be carried out by Centre for Regional and Tourism Research (CRT)

Why CRT?

1. The expertise in tourism and regional development and consultancy
2. The expertise in the Baltic Sea Region
3. Successful integration of science (academic expertise) and practice
4. Experience in cooperative activities and partnerships with the regions in the Baltic Sea
5. Research facilities
6. Long-term experience working in EU programs and projects
7. ...For detailed information visit: www.crt.dk

This proposal has been acceptable for Regional Municipality of Bornholm and ERB Board members from the Danish side.

For further questions regarding the proposal, please contact

Ms. Nino Javakhishvili Larsen

Centre for Regional and Tourism Research
Stenbrudsvej 55
3730 Nexø, Bornholm
Denmark
Tel.: +45 56 44 11 44
Direct: +45 56 44 00 28
Cellular: +45 27 40 72 31
Fax: +45 56 49 46 24
e-mail: Nino@crt.dk

Ms. Annelise Molin

Regional Municipality of Bornholm
Ullasvej 15,
3700 Rønne, Bornholm
Denmark
Tel.: +45 56 92 13 03
Cellular: +45 24 27 06 11
E-mail: Annelise.molin@brk.dk