



## Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission

Working Group on the State of the Environment and Nature  
Conservation

STATE & CONSERVATION  
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<b>Document title</b>	Draft HELCOM guidelines for sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism in the coastal zones of the Baltic Sea Area
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<b>Submitted by</b>	Latvia

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*Note that this document was submitted after the established deadline. It will be decided by the Meeting whether the document can be discussed or is postponed to the next meeting.*

### Background

HOD 55-2018 meeting took note of the proposal of STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018 that HELCOM Recommendation 21/3 on sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism in the coastal zones of the Baltic Sea area will be deleted and the efforts will be focused on reviewing and updating the guidelines on sustainable tourism. HOD 55-2018 noted the study reservation by Poland on the deletion of the recommendation prior to the finalization of the guidelines and agreed to come back to the consideration regarding the deletion of the recommendation once the guidelines on sustainable tourism have been developed.

STATE & CONSERVATION 9-2018 invited Contracting Parties to send their proposals on what should be included in the guidelines to Latvia.

STATE & CONSERVATION 11-2019 took note of the progress on development of guidelines on sustainable Tourism and noted that no proposals for revising the Recommendation were received.

This document contains the first draft of the guidelines on sustainable tourism as prepared by the lead country Latvia.

### Action requested

The Meeting is invited to discuss the first draft of the guidelines on sustainable tourism and agree on the next steps of further development of the guidelines.

## HELCOM GUIDELINES FOR SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY TOURISM IN THE COASTAL ZONES OF THE BALTIC SEA AREA

“HELCOM guidelines for sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism in the coastal zones of the Baltic Sea Area” are developed:

**NOTING** Article 15 of the 1992 Helsinki Convention, and HELCOM Recommendation 15/1 on “**Protection of the Coastal Strip**”, particularly: “that in this protected coastal strip, activities which permanently change the nature and landscape,” ... “not to be allowed, except when proved overwhelmingly in the public interest . . .”, and also “ that a zone of at least 3 kilometers landward from the mean water line be established as a coastal planning zone ..”;

**BEARING IN MIND** the three general objectives of the **European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (2009) Action Plan** - (1) save the sea; (2) connect the region; (3) increase prosperity, as well as the importance of the macro-regional strategy for the development of sustainable tourism and the goal of the **European Green Course** to make the European Union's economy sustainable by turning environmental and climate challenges into opportunities and ensuring that change is fair and inclusive,

**TAKING INTO ACCOUNT** “**BaltSeaPlan Vision 2030**”<sup>1</sup> aim to achieve a balance between the environment, the economy and the social sphere, incl. “tourism, the development of which is based on the high quality of the environment in the Baltic Sea, is one of the leading economic sectors that creates jobs and income throughout the Baltic Sea coastal zone” and the “**European Union Biodiversity Strategy 2030**”<sup>2</sup>, which focuses on urgent action to conserve, monitor and define specific and measurable targets for biodiversity, as well as the cyclical seven-year **Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programs**, which support integrated territorial development and co-operation for a more innovative, accessible and sustainable Baltic Sea Region,

**RECALLING ALSO** UN General Assembly Resolutions (2015) 70/1: “**Transforming Our World: A 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**”<sup>3</sup> sustainable development goals 8, 11, 12 and 14, Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — **Tourism as a driving force for regional cooperation across the EU**, paragraph 32 and Recommendation No. R (94) 7 on a general policy for sustainable and environment-friendly tourism development, Recommendation No. R (95) 10 on a sustainable tourist development policy in protected areas and Recommendation No. R (97) 9 on a policy for the development of sustainable environment-friendly tourism in coastal areas, all adopted by the Committee of Ministers at the Council of Europe, and the **Global Code of Ethics for Responsible Tourism**<sup>4</sup>,

**BEING AWARE** that there are many different types of landscape of high biological, geographical and cultural value in the Baltic Sea Region and thus constitute a common heritage that must be preserved for present and future generations (**European Landscape Convention**) and that there are cities on the shores of the Baltic Sea with their own needs; in their development, they must take into account the **Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (2007)**, which emphasizes that urban development must take into account all aspects of sustainability, including economic prosperity, social balance and a healthy environment,

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.baltseaplan.eu/index.php/BaltSeaPlan-Vision-2030:859/1>

<sup>2</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1590574123338&uri=CELEX:52020DC0380>

<sup>3</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2020/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://webunwto.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2019-10/gcetpassportglobalcodeen.pdf>

**BEING DEEPLY CONCERNED** of the possible loss and damage to biodiversity, nature, the social environment and the cultural environment, incl. the traditional landscape of the Baltic Sea region, by the rapidly growing tourism and leisure activities,

**NOTING FURTHER** that where local people do not share in the benefits from environmentally friendly tourism, they have little incentive to utilize these areas in a sustainable and environmentally friendly way,

**BEING CONVINCED** that sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism, practiced in alliance with the local population can be a major instrument for economic development of many regions and countries, emphasized in “**European strategy for more growth and jobs in coastal and maritime tourism**”<sup>5</sup>, at the same time sustainable tourism has the potential to contribute to the conservation of biological biodiversity outside and inside protected areas.

## **GUIDELINES FOR SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY TOURISM IN THE COASTAL ZONES OF THE BALTIC SEA AREA**

### **1. General**

- 1.1. Tourism in the coastal zone should be developed under the conditions of the points (1.2)-(8.3) and in partnership between representatives of local businesses, community authorities, local NGOs and residents as well as in close cross border cooperation, and in a way which benefits the local communities, strengthens the local economy, employs local workforce and, wherever ecologically sustainable, uses local materials, local agricultural products and traditional skills.
- 1.2. Tourism planning, development, marketing and management activities must be based on the sustainability criteria, which means that it must be long-term stable, with low impact on environment and low greenhouse gas emissions, economically viable and ethically and socially just for the local community.
- 1.3. Tourism and recreation in and around protected areas should be oriented on management plans and nature conservation goals according to the respective IUCN-criteria and European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS<sup>6</sup>)-criteria on the sustainable development of tourist destinations while maintaining the Baltic Sea Region as a unique, unified and distinctive tourist destination.
- 1.4. The cultural and social carrying capacity should be assessed in order to avoid tourism development and visitor numbers that adversely affect local communities and their way of life and to determine the level beyond which the essential qualities that people seek in the tourist site would be destroyed by further touristic developments.
- 1.5. Opportunities for local communities, businesses, non-governmental organizations and local action groups to be involved in local coastal management and the implementation of development strategies, development of tourism services should be provided and supported, thus promoting private-public partnership projects and initiatives.
- 1.6. All the Contracting Parties work together and design bi- or multilateral transboundary strategies for environmentally friendly tourism development in order to harmonize activities aiming at the sustainable use and the preservation of the natural beauty and biodiversity of the coastal area of the Baltic Sea, such as the Interreg Baltic Sea Region Transnational Cooperation Program.

<sup>5</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/ENG/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2014%3A86%3AFIN>

<sup>6</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/sustainable/indicators\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/tourism/offer/sustainable/indicators_en)

## 2. Coast and integrated mobility

- 2.1. Free public access to the coast should be guaranteed.
- 2.2. Untouched or seminatural landscapes and threatened marine and coastal biotopes should be protected and conserved against build up which increases environmental pressure.
- 2.3. Measures should be taken to reduce the environmental impact by ensuring access to the coast and the infrastructure developed on it:
  - 2.3.1. Create adequate and competitive public transport networks (combining different modes of transport - train, bus, tram, ship, taxi, bicycle, walking, etc.); also by developing products and services specially created for tourists (public transport maps, suitable guides, etc.),
  - 2.3.2. Restrict the possibility of parking vehicles on the roadsides by creating parking lots,
  - 2.3.3. Develop areas where different modes of transport have an advantage, such as pedestrian lanes, cycle paths, bicycle rental points, etc.,
  - 2.3.4. Develop lightweight multimodal mini-mobility solutions and innovations in lightweight mobility (including secure parking for electric scooters, etc.),
  - 2.3.5. Use universal design solutions in the development of public infrastructure (including situations of reconstruction or new projects) that fits into the landscape and increases accessibility for all types of social groups, including seniors, people with reduced mobility, parents with prams<sup>7</sup>.

## 3. Waste management

- 3.1. A waste management policy should be improved promoting waste prevention, reduction and recycling, which releases the environment from pollution, the implementation of such policy should be promoted.<sup>8</sup>
- 3.2. The principles of the circular economy should be implemented and educational activities promoted, which is also envisaged by CIRCULAR BALTIC 2030 - the circular economy in the Baltic Sea region.<sup>9</sup>

## 4. Tourism and recreation infrastructure and construction

- 4.1. The development of large-scale tourist projects such as holiday villages, hotel complexes, large marinas, large camping grounds and golf courses that need new specific infrastructure should be preceded by a spatial planning process on a national or regional level and be incorporated into integrated coastal zone management plans.
- 4.2. Due to significant negative effects of large-scale tourism projects on biological and landscape diversity, an environmental impact assessment (EIA) or equivalent procedures must be carried out before the implementation of tourism infrastructure and the start of tourism activities in accordance with the national legislation of each Contracting Party.
- 4.3. New tourist facilities should preferably be established on existing sites. In scattered settlements, new tourist facilities should preferably be realized by the use or reconstruction or conversion of existing buildings and be situated close to already developed infrastructure in order not to exceed the carrying capacity of the site. New facilities should be realized in

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/epdf/10.18111/9789284417919>

<sup>8</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/LV/TXT/?qid=1597047772744&uri=CELEX:52020DC0098>

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.baltic-sea-strategy-tourism.eu/static/Regierungsportal/Ministerium%20f%C3%BCr%20Wirtschaft%2c%20Arbeit%20und%20Gesundheit/EUSBSR/Inhalte/Circular\\_Baltic\\_2030.pdf](http://www.baltic-sea-strategy-tourism.eu/static/Regierungsportal/Ministerium%20f%C3%BCr%20Wirtschaft%2c%20Arbeit%20und%20Gesundheit/EUSBSR/Inhalte/Circular_Baltic_2030.pdf) and [http://www.baltic-sea-strategy-tourism.eu/static/Regierungsportal/Ministerium%20f%C3%BCr%20Wirtschaft%2c%20Arbeit%20und%20Gesundheit/EUSBSR/Inhalte/No\\_time\\_to\\_waste.\\_Unlocking\\_the\\_circular\\_potential\\_of\\_the\\_Baltic\\_region.pdf](http://www.baltic-sea-strategy-tourism.eu/static/Regierungsportal/Ministerium%20f%C3%BCr%20Wirtschaft%2c%20Arbeit%20und%20Gesundheit/EUSBSR/Inhalte/No_time_to_waste._Unlocking_the_circular_potential_of_the_Baltic_region.pdf)

accordance with local building traditions and they should be in harmony with the surrounding environment.

- 4.4. In case of development of new sites or expansion of existing infrastructure, certified experts should be attracted for species and habitat identification, as well as geologists and experts on the assessment of site vegetation and visitor flow on the site and the selection of solutions.
- 4.5. Such construction should use environmentally sound technologies for saving water and energy, prevent pollution, treat waste water, avoid the production of solid waste and encourage recycling.
- 4.6. In particular, water resources should only be used in proportion to their renewal capacity and energy supply should be based increasingly on renewable energy sources.
- 4.7. These facilities should fulfil the respective EU-Directives on, for example, drinking water, bathing water and sewage, or other appropriate standards.
- 4.8. Well-thought-out placement of tourism information in nature should be implemented (information stands, signposts) in order not to pollute the landscape, choosing durable materials, taking into account natural conditions, as well as installing solar and wind energy power sources in information stands.
- 4.9. Public infrastructure should be introduced in places where it can contribute to reducing anthropogenic pressures.
- 4.10. High-quality public infrastructure should be developed for various types of recreation by the sea, which can serve as an alternative to amenities in specially protected nature areas, which occupy a large part of the Baltic Sea coast.

## 5. Technologies and digitization

- 5.1. Taking into account the rapid development of technologies, the habits of travelers in accordance with digital opportunities and the change of generations, technologies and digital solutions should be introduced corresponding to sustainable tourism, incl. attendance records for long-term visitor flow monitoring.
- 5.2. Digital media should be used responsibly (in combination with other marketing tools), not to overload target groups and, as a result, destinations in nature, but to provide digital support to tourists before, during and after the trip.<sup>10</sup>
- 5.3. When making information materials, both digital content marketing and the provision of tourism information in a digital format should be improved and developed, thus reducing the volume of printed materials.
- 5.4. Ports need to develop the availability of technologies and eco-technologies that ensure access to electricity and integration into smart energy, thus ensuring emissions from recreational craft and ships, in line with the directives of the Council of the European Parliament.<sup>11</sup>
- 5.5. Technological solutions should be used in an effort to direct the flow of visitors in accordance with the allowable anthropogenic loads, including the introduction of electronic car meters in front of narrow access roads with parking lots, etc.
- 5.6. The use of popular coastal areas outside the most demanding hot summer season should be diversified by implementing a broader understanding of the use of ecosystem services.

## 6. Events and leisure

- 6.1. Recreational activities, especially in protected areas, must be organized in such a way as to meet the requirements of biodiversity and landscape diversity and soil conservation.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.baltic-sea-strategy-tourism.eu/static/Regierungsportal/Ministerium%20f%C3%BCr%20Wirtschaft%2c%20Arbeit%20und%20Gesundheit/EUSBSR/Inhalte/BSTC%20Tourism%20Trend%20Radar%20E2%80%93%202020%20Edition.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0456:FIN:EN:PDF>

Restrictions on any type of motorized recreational activity in and around protected nature areas at sea and on the coast must be clearly defined.

6.2. Tourism and leisure activities in coastal areas must be developed in a sustainable way, taking into account aspects such as the venue and accommodation of the participants, environmentally friendly energy sources, transport, sustainable shopping and services, waste management, water consumption and food choices.<sup>12</sup>

6.3. Environmental education activities should be integrated into public events.

## 7. Environmental awareness and environment

7.1. By appropriate means (interactive training, outdoor training, images, action studies, etc.), the environmental awareness and responsibility of tourists and visitors, the understanding of the circular economy and the principle of "*What you bring, take it away*" waste management should be promoted.

7.2. In order to promote sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism, training programs should be organized for tourism service providers as well as regional, local destination organizations in areas such as green infrastructure, green materials, environmental awareness, sustainable development and nature conservation in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals<sup>13</sup> and in particular the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

7.3. By creating sustainable tourism and leisure offers, services and infrastructure, responsible cooperation and synergy within the macro-region should be built - networking for the exchange of know-how, clusters, joint projects, etc. At the same time, seasonality should be decreased and sustainable tourism services developed, such as water sports, boating, windsurfing, diving, adapting these services and infrastructure to people with reduced mobility, creating recreational opportunities for people with special needs in general.<sup>14</sup>

## 8. Supervision and monitoring

8.1. Particularly for protected areas, but also for tourist and recreation areas, the carrying capacity of the environment should be determined, i.e. the degree to which the environmental and natural conditions of a site, an area or a region can accommodate the various impacts connected to tourism and also recreational or leisure activities, like boating, surfing, camping etc.

8.2. Coastal and marine sustainability indicators should be implemented and monitored through initiatives such as the European Union Ecolabel, Blue Flag beaches<sup>15</sup>, compliance with ETIS principles. In order to improve destination management and planning, statistical data collection and compilation should be carried out, incl. attendance records.

8.3. Cooperation with the local coastal communities and organizations (e.g. local Young Rangers movement<sup>16</sup>) should be developed in order to improve the monitoring, improvement and procedures of the tourism and recreation infrastructure in specially protected nature territories.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.homoecos.lv/lat/wm/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/VideiDraudziguPasakumuOrganizesana-Rokasgramata.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2014:0086:FIN:EN:PDF>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.blueflag.global/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.europarc.org/nature/young-people/junior-ranger-programme/>