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Editorial

Dear project partners,
as the summer is near, you might look forward to some relaxed hours
on the beach or hiking in a National Park on the Baltic coast. Living where
other people go on holiday; this is a common slogan in my home
region Schleswig-Holstein, but it is also true for nearly the entire Baltic
Sea Region. Our project agora stands for the sustainable development
of tourism in this beautiful part of the world.

But what does this means in practice? Our work package 2.2. (Sustain-
nability Check) just delivered a draft tool to assess the sustainability of
tourism project. We believe that this is the right tool at the right mo-
ment. Numerous administrations are currently preparing their funding
guidelines for the next EU funding period starting in 2007. We would
like these new project requirements to benefit from our tool and we
have many opportunities to do so! We can use our agora network to
communicate this draft check tool to our national funding institutions
and recommend them to consider it when deciding on the support for
a tourism project. Therefore, your commitment is crucial.

But this is only one example where it is valuable to be networked with like-minded partners in the region.
It is not incidental that the proposals for the coming period of the Baltic Sea Region INTERREG programme
stress the relevance of pan-Baltic organisations as strategic partners for supporting the programme imple-
mentation. Among others, shaping the natural and cultural environment as factors for the BSR’s competi-
tiveness as well as the development and marketing of pan-Baltic assets and tourist products are discussed
to a focal point of one the new priorities.

Wolfgang Guenther
Baltic 21 Tourism Task Force/ N.I.T.

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see www.agora-tourism.net for more information
On Top
2nd Agora meeting in Jurmala

Welcome to Jurmala. Nearly one year of practical work within the Agora network lies behind us - a year of starting pilot projects, discussing indicators of sustainability and of course of working on the first results out of the work packages. This time, the Agora partners came together in Jurmala, Latvia. „The city on the wave” is one of the oldest and second biggest recreation area on the Baltic Coast, with this special mixture of modern spa and wellness hotels and impressing 19th century wooden architecture. During the joint conference, first work package outcomes were presented and discussed and Agora partners made planning for the near future and the development of the project and partner cooperation.

But before starting the very official part of the conference, Agora partners had the possibility to join a training seminar on impact assessment and spatial planning for tourism. This workshop was organized by the Swedish partners from ETOUR under the chairmanship of Lars Emmelin from the Blekinge Institute of Technology in Karlskrona, Sweden. Other topics discussed were: „Sustainability Appraisal of Tourism Projects and land use planning”, presented by Simona Kosikova from Szentendere, Hungary, „Planning for nature tourism”, presented by Hans-Georg Wallentinus from the Swedish EIA Centre, Uppsala, Sweden. Wolfgang Guenther from the N.I.T. Kiel gave the first results from the development of Baltic 21 indicators for the development of sustainable tourism on local and regional level. Jan Wigsten, operator of Nomadic Journeys gave an insight on planning ecotourism from an operators view. The second Agora conference gave also space for meetings of the Baltic 21 Tourism Task Force (TOUFF) and the Agora Steering Committee, which took place in the end of the Agora Training Seminar Day.

On 15 June the second Agora meeting was officially opened by warm welcome words by the Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Latvia and Undersecretary of State on sectoral policy issues, Ilga Preimate. Project work started this day. The Info Base on Sustainable Tourism in the Baltic Sea Region -YepaT and the new Agora website were shown to the participants. Furthermore Viabono from the second work package and representatives from the Toolbox presented the results of their work in milestone one and two. There was also a timeframe for all the pilot projects to show very short their steps of success. The afternoon was thematically focused on farm tourism in Europe. Ulf Sonntag from the N.I.T Kiel gave an overview on the trends and perspectives of farm tourism in Europe. Best practice models from Latvia (Lauku Celotajs) and Poland (Polish Ecological Club) gave insights in their work, talked about success factors and also about future challenges in this tourism branch.

16 June was reserved for several parallel work session discussing the next steps within the services of the Information and Service Hub and the coordination of the meetings within the Toolbox and Trainings. Furthermore, there were discussions on the SWOT analysis. Agora’s financial manager, Jens Masuch gave hints for the second progress report, due in the end of June.

The last day, participants went on an excursion to the Latvian countryside and visited the Kemeri National Park, the Bee Trail at Laumu Nature Park and were informed about sustainable tourism in Latvian rural areas and best practices.

see www.agora-tourism.net for more information
Smile and Cheese....
Pictures from the second Agora meeting in Jurmala/ Latvia
News

Project Work

WP 1 - YepaT is born

It’s a YepaT! The Baltic Sea Tourism Info Base as one outcome of Agora’s work package 1 is born. From now on, YepaT is available at the world wide web under www.yepat.info, structuring and collecting projects on sustainable tourism development in the Baltic Sea Region.

The database is still under construction but on the first stage of development, you as a user will be able to search under hundreds of projects by choosing several different search criteria. Main categories as „title“, „outcomes“, „project description“ or „budget“ and „duration“ will give you a first overview on the running and terminated projects, part-financed by the European Union in programmes as INTER-REG (II-III A, B, C), Leader + or LIFE.

At a second stage YepaT will even provide more detailed information, till example complete downloads of project results and publications as flyer and brochures.

YepaT will fit the need of its users, is therefore constructed as a dynamic database and is open for your wishes and hints, related to the future structure and content of the database. YepaT is always looking for the latest projects and activities concerning sustainable tourism development. Get in contact with YepaT!

www.yepat.info

WP 1 - New Agora website

...and more good news from WP 1. If you visit Agora’s website these days, you will find it in a new whole new style. House of New Media Greifswald (HNM) designed the website and made it available to the public the week before the second Agora meeting.

A new sidemap will guide you through Agora’s universe and will hopefully give you a better overview on and orientation in Agora’s work. Easy access to presentations, reports and further information make project results visible to the public. Downloads are fast and easy to handle.

In designing the sidemap WP 1 followed the wishes and needs defined in the Agora-kick off meeting report. But the structure and content will hopefully be shaped and further developed by all Agora partners and web users. Get in contact with the web administrators in Greifswald, Germany by sending them an email with your hints or wishes.

All working results from WP 1.1 and the partners in Greifswald were also presented during the second Agora meeting in Jūrmala 14-17 June 2006 and are of course available on Agora’s website.

see www.agora-tourism.net for more information
News

Project Work

WP 2 – Draft version of Sustainability Check finalised

A draft version of the Sustainability Check for Tourism Projects has now been finalised after a second meeting of the agora ‘Sustainability Check Advisory Board’. In the Board the Pan-Baltic networks Baltic Chamber of Commerce Association (BCCA), the Coalition Clean Baltic (CCB) and the Social Hansa represent the three dimensions of sustainability. The meeting took place on April 25th 2006 in Kiel and was used to discuss the draft checklist which has been prepared by the Institute for Tourism Research in Northern Europe (N.I.T.) on the basis of the terms of reference adopted by the Advisory Board in December 2005.

The checklist now contains three sections covering the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainability in relation to tourism projects as well as a detailed manual for using the checklist (see the agora website for a download of the checklist document).

As a next step, the Sustainability Check will now come up for discussion at the second agora meeting in Jurmala in June 2006 and any further feedback gained from this will be integrated afterwards. Later on this year, the Sustainability Check will also be tested within the agora pilot projects and within another case study in Mecklenburg-Pomerania before a final version is produced.

As many public bodies and organisations are currently preparing their funding guidelines and criteria for the next EU funding period starting in 2007, the Advisory Board also decided that the Sustainability Check should be sent out now to selected institutions around the Baltic Sea, so that these may benefit from or even adopt the checklist for their future work. Wolfgang Guenther wolfgang.guenther@nit-kiel.de

WP 3 - Labelling Terra Maritima

Logos and trade marks are markings that instantaneously give you the clue who’s product or service it is, and you also understand what the service or product is about.

For example, when you see Nike’s swoosh, you automatically realize that this means a product of Nike. Trade marks are for differentiating from similar products or services.

State Nature Conservation Center (SNCC) Hiiu-Lääne region is trying to do the same thing. Another “hidden” reason behind that is to HIGHLIGHT our region from others. To make ourselves visible.

In Estonia there are several regions that work together in developing the tourism sector or developing sustainable tourism. But few of them have distinctive trade marks.

SNCC Hiiu-Lääne region chose this logo because it characterizes the name of the area of six municipalities that closely work for the benefit of the tourism sector. The Latin word “Terra Maritima” means land by the sea. Terra Maritima has been mentioned even before six municipalities started their co-operation. So it was quite logical that the area is now referred as Terra Maritima.

The name is also noted in our tourism and recreation development plan. Even neighbour county mentions co-operation area “Terra Maritima” in their own tourism development plan. As you can see we are already known and accepted in our next-door counties. And through Agora hopefully all over the world!

The logo has a characteristic element in the form of a flying bird-aquila. The ring symbolizes unity- it holds the elements together and makes the whole unity flexible and dynamic. Logo’s font is traditional and clearly readable with a fragrance of an old ship or ship’s steering-wheel. Colors symbolize the area- blue sea and black/dark brown land or earth. Terra Maritima is a very attractive region and has a unique nature and many interesting sight-seenings. Hopefully the logo will attract visitors even more! Welcome!

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Wolfgang Guenther wolfgang.guenther@nit-kiel.de
Around the Baltic Sea...
Finland - The End of Swedish Mare Nostrum
Historical Tourism being developed in Agora pilot project

History tourism and research actors from Finland, Latvia, Norway and Sweden were gathered together in a workshop at Riga 21-22.3.2006 to plan a joint history tourism project. The theme of the upcoming co-operation was established around the central role of Sweden as the dominant power of the Baltic Sea in the 17th century and how this status was lost during the 18th and ultimately in early 19th century.

The focus of the upcoming history tourism project was set to be on two wars: the Great Nordic War 1700-21 in which Denmark, Poland-Saxony and Russia attacked Sweden and the Russo-Swedish War 1808-1809 a part of Napoleonic wars in which Swedish kingdom lost Finland to Russia because it refused to participate in the Continental blockade against Britain.

At the present moment the pilot project consists of six partners. University of Helsinki Ruralia Institute is responsible for the overall coordination of the pilot project by setting up two workshops. The University of Helsinki Ruralia Institute is also coordinating the work of History Tourism in the Kvraken Region project that has developed Finnish-Swedish thematic history tourism route “Road of War and Peace” build on the events of Great Nordic War and Russo-Finnish War. Museum of Riga History and Navigation has expertise of the time of Swedish rule in Latvia and its items. Municipality of Isokyro represents one of the local level actors within the project, and it is well known in Finland for its historical sights such as Napue battlefield of the Great Nordic War. Naboer Ab is a joint Swedish-Norwegian company specialized in historical tourism owned by municipalities of neighbouring Jämtland and Tröndelag counties. Naboer has long experience in the development of historical tourism and one of its products is “Armefeldts Karoliner” - a thematic history tourism route based on the deadly march of the retreating Swedish soldiers in the Norwegian campaign 1718-1719 of the Great Nordic War. The Swedish Army museum has wide expertise in the history of the Swedish armed forces and their events in the battlefields of Great Nordic War and Russo-Swedish War.

Aapo Jumppanen

On the Road of War and Peace

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Do you want to present your project here? Don’t hesitate! Please contact the Newsletter editor for more details: maxi.nachtigall@uni-greifswald.de
Around the Baltic Sea...
Sweden - TurGiS® - Visitors guide at your service
First results from pilot projects in Tourism & IT

The tourism industry is intensively using information. Service and quality are two very important issues. Either if you are transmitting information or if you are planning your own trip the need for actual and correct information about the supply in a specific area is needed.
Maps of a region often helps to visualize an image of the area about things like distance, environment and surrounding villages. But when the information flow is great, there is a demand for a system which can deal with a great amount of data with descriptive information about objects. This pilot project wants to create an innovative application for efficient information management for tourism organizations as well as for tourists by using the Geographical Information System (GIS). It is called TurGiS®-a digital visitors guide. The system can combine different techniques as information management, navigation and linkings to homepages. By linking this application to a tourism organization the tourist information can be visualized for the users and for the tourist destination.
The goal is, by using technical tools to increase the quality in management of information within the tourism industry in rural areas and in smaller villages. The created database is unique. The company or object is described and specific contacts are mentioned. The information can be available through a computer with or without high speed Internet connection.
If there are some areas where the Internet connection is bad or missing a “stand alone station” can be the solution. By presenting the GIS application accessible via Internet, which is going on right now, the potential visitor can sit back home at the computer and search for information about a planned vacation. Because the objects/companies are positioned in GPS system it is easy to transform the data for navigation systems. Within the tourism industry GIS can be the tool for efficiency at the office.

By using GIS the system is able to implement indirect cost and get efficient solutions as:
- having a greater supply of tourism information without increasing the cost for printing
- reaching a high level of the visitors’ expectations related to service and quality and at the same time give accessible, actual information rapidly
- increasing the cooperation between businesses, authorities, tourism information centres and individual companies by using the marketing platform which has been created by TurGiS.
Because tourism is an industry where the need of accessible and actual information is very important the use of GIS will increase remarkable. The future for TurGiS® therefore seems to be positive.

Leif Nilsson

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Around the Baltic Sea...
Germany - Darss Marathon
Big success for Agora’s pilot project

On the 7th of May the 1st Darß-Marathon took place on the most beautiful peninsula Fischland/ Darß/ Zingst. It was the first weekend with a wonderful sunshine this year and so it was no surprise that about 300 runners more than expected came to take part in the event. At the end there were 1305 finishers over Marathon and Halfmarathon distance and 110 kids taking part in the kids run.

Sustainable Tourism at its best, because many of the runners visited Fischland/ Darß/ Zingst for the first time and enjoyed the wonderful scenery. Runners were taking part in guided tours through the Nationalpark “Vorpommersche Boddenlandschaft” and got to know all about environmental education in protected areas. Many of the participants took the opportunity and combined the running event with some extra holidays. So the event generated additional value for the whole area.

A few days after the race the “Ministry of the Environment” sent a letter that pointed out the sustainability of the event starting from chinaware plates at the Pasta Party to the paperboard cups to serve water along the track. Many considerable aspects of sustainability according to the Agora project will be part of the discussion at our meeting in Riga soon. So far you will find a lot of pictures on www.darss-marathon.de if your are interested to get an impression.

For next year the online-registration is now open and we really hope to attract a lot of participating runners from all the involved Baltic States. See you soon!

Christoph Lampert

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Germany-
Energy Efficiency Campaign
in German Accommodation and Catering

The contribution of the tourism sector to the overall German greenhouse gas emissions is considerable. While the larger portion is emitted by transportation, the accommodation/catering sector ranges second. Under the national climate protection programme the Federal Minister for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and the German Hotels and Restaurants Head Association signed a memorandum of understanding in February 2006 to cut down CO2 emissions from hotels and catering companies by appr. 100 000 tons/a over the next five years.

By means of an internet – based interactive programme participating hotel owners are guided towards energy savings on their premises simply by implementing technical and organizational improvements in the different sections “kitchen, housekeeping, lighting, heating and cooling, wellness, etc.”

For this purpose, topical information leaflets and checklists are provided every three months starting with a leaflet on “General energy savings tips”. The core of the campaign is a benchmarking tool to which each participant gets access in form of an individual energy account on the campaign website.

This benchmarking tool is much easier to handle than other existing calculation programmes for hotels. It monitors the performance of the participant in terms of energy consumption and monetary savings and calculates CO2 emission reduction.

The campaign is complemented by newsletters informing on advanced technology, best practice, funding programmes and it supplies information and training material for staff. Participation is free of charge, the running cost of the campaign is borne by the German federal government. It has been inspired by a similar programme – Hospitable Climates – which keeps successfully running in Great Britain for some years. The author gratefully acknowledges permission to use the English material for the German campaign.

Christa Morawa

Event Calendar on Tourism

28-30 June 2006
http://www.eco-efficiency-conf.org/

13-15 September
2nd European Fair on Education for Sustainable Development. Hamburg, Germany.

20-22 September 2006
The Transformation of Tourism Spaces. University of Lodz, Lodz, Poland.
http://www.atlas-euro.org/pages/content/plodz.html#announcement

6-8 September 2006
http://www.wessex.ac.uk/conferences/2006/tourism06/index.html

13-16 September 2006
The third international Conference on Monitoring and Management of visitor flows in recreational and protected areas. Rapperswil, Switzerland.
http://www.wsl.ch/mmv-3/

5-7 October 2006
Tourism Regional Conference on Tourism Communications for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Tbilisi, Georgia.

8-10 October 2006
3rd Agora meeting and BTC conference Vilnius, Lithuania.

11-14 October 2006
Easy Eco Conference, Saarbrücken, Germany.
http://www.sustainability.at/easy/?k=conferences

19-22 October 2006
Visions of trans modern tourism. Savonliaa, Finland.
Publications and Events

BSR - Baltic Sea Tourism Conference
The Center of Tourism and Culture Management (TCM) of the Copenhagen Business School organized its Baltic Sea Tourism Conference Mai 17-18 2006 in the new buildings of the CBS in Fredriksberg, Copenhagen, Denmark. The center director, Lise Lyck gave a presentation on tourism „as an instrument and driver for the Baltic Sea Region Integration“.

Speakers were among others: Thomas Lundén, Director of the Center of Baltic and Eastern European Studies, Stockholm, Sweden, Svend Lisdorf, Hekla Travel and Signe Adamsen from the Cruise Baltic Project.

Topics dealt with questions on the „Baltic Sea Area as a Target for Tourism“, „Leisure and Adventure in Poland“ or the „Cruise Tourism in the Baltic Sea“. One of the highlights was the panel discussion on the topics presented during the conference joined by the former minister and commissioner of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, Helle Degrn.

DE - Workshop Tourism and IT
On Mai 26, Leif Nilsson from the University of Kalmar, partner in Agora’s pilot project Tourism & IT, presented first results during a workshop in Greifswald, Germany. One outcome of his work is the visitors guide TurGis® (see page 8 for more details). He also brought some of his students to Greifswald who had researched on the island of Öland in Sweden on agriculture and complementary activities of farmers and also on reasons of in- and out-migration to and from the island.

In their research the students found out that mostly small farms have complementary activities as bed and breakfast or farmer shops. From the interviews the students made, they could give advices to the municipality of Öland in case of the future development of the world heritage on the island, the support of small farm development from the administration, the handling of in- and out migration and other future challenges the island has to deal with in case of the (sustainable) development of the rural island in the Baltic Sea.

BSR - INTERREG III B Conference
More than 400 participants counted the organizers of the Baltic Sea INTERREG III B project conference „Regions in Motion“ in Malmö 16-17 Mai 2006. They were welcomed by Mr Uno Aldregren, President of the Regional Executive Board, Region Skane, which hosted the conference.

Further, Olle Lundgren, the Swedish Minister of Industry, Employment and Communication, Ms Gabriele Koetschau from the CBSS and the INTERREG programme director, MS Susanne Scherrer sent welcome greetings to the participants and gave insights in the work of INTERREG.

During the first day participants already started with the work within the five working groups on topics as „Our Sea“, Challenges and Risks“ or What we achieved so far and where are we going to“. Agora participated in the workshop „Connecting Regions“ which focused in its discussions on development processes in macro-regions including actions taken to overcome obstacles for further development of these regions. These discussions continued and were finished on the second day. The conference participants were even though invited to the Malmö town hall for dinner. All in all it was a great conference which gave place to meet other people working with INTERREG, get in contact with stakeholders and actors in the region and participate in the future development of INTERREG.
Finances - Peter Hausmann
Agora's auditor at PWC Germany

As all participants in the project could realise for the first time at the beginning of the year financial handling and control of the project are also subject to external supervision by auditors. They need to confirm the project reports and payment data as precondition for the further handling with the Lead Partner and finally for paying out the budget means. The Lead Partner’s auditor also confirms the summarised report to the secretariat basing mainly on the audit certificates issued by the auditors of the single project partners.

I, Peter Hausmann, auditor with the Schwerin office of PricewaterhouseCoopers represent this part for Agora. The close and trustful collaboration with Landgesellschaft Mecklenburg-Vorpommern as the Financial Manager of the project is a basic prerequisite for efficiently monitoring the application of funds. Experience gained in the first round was basically good and all participants were very committed to the case. The time schedule, however, may be optimised in a lot of cases by taking organisational precautions in good time and using the tools consistently. And in the end the times for paying out the subsidies will depend on this. In this connexion it may also be recommended to always place the payments into the desired half-year period.

Key issues always to be taken into consideration are placing sub-orders and acquiring equipment. Obtaining several quotations and substantiating the decision for acquiring in detail simplify auditing and confirming these cases a lot. As far as the general question of handing in vouchers and evidence is concerned the idea emerged to request a convincing documentation in addition to the work sheets in the second round, too, in order to be able to recognise arising problems quickly and to solve them. Besides, and who would be surprised, the question is shifting of course with the progress made by the project ever more towards documenting results and complying with the financial budget.

PricewaterhouseCoopers and the Schwerin office take over numerous tasks within EU programmes and projects. Let me briefly refer to evaluating Interreg III subsidies below. Among others the medium-term requirements, targets and planned results, strategies, coherence with EU priorities and quality of the programmes (in short: balancing) are evaluated. Experience shows to take care to further harmonise subsidies while providing them continuously and to pay attention to real collaboration. For instance funded contents and prerequisites are not always sufficiently compatible and national co-financing cannot always be guaranteed. Demographic aspects should be ranked among the priorities, i.e. the future demand for services and infrastructure of an aging population or the importance of a reduced number of young employees for the labour market and the resident industry. Cross-border benefit is increasingly getting to the foreground. The whole is supposed to generate more than the sum of the single results.

Finances - Money transactions within Europe

Since the first July 2003 international money transactions within EU-member states has to cost the same fee as national transactions. This regulation from the European commission makes it easier for all private people and companies to use the so called european standard money transaction in every day life and in handling the daily transferring of money especially within international cooperation networks. But some criteria has to be fulfilled. The transaction can only be addressed to one member state at a time. The amount of the money to be transferred shall not exceed 50,000 Euro and has to occur in Euro. The charge regulations amount always SHARE, that means that the beneficiary and the sender, respectively their bank institutions share the charge for the transactions. Important are the following codes: BIC (the international bank code) and the IBAN (the international account number) as well as the name of the beneficiary. The one who is transferring the money is responsible for the transaction and the correctness of the specifications of transaction. Normally a money transaction within the EU takes about 5 regularly working days. For more information you can always ask the staff, working at you local bank.

Peter Hausmann, peter.hausmann@de.pwc.com

Karsten Lange, Berliner Volksbank, Berlin
By the way...

How to produce newsletters?

...well obviously with a lot of fun - and a good beer on the ferry on the way to Riga.

...and with long lasting nature impressions

Who said that project work is always just a serious business?

Agora is everywhere - This time on Sweden’s westcoast

Long hello and short goodbye...
Starting August 2006, a new project assistant will take over Maxi’s work in the Agora team in Greifswald. Maxi received a grant from a German foundation and is now going on her own field studies. Maxi says thank you to all Agora partners, especially to the team in Greifswald for a great year with a lot of new experience. Good luck to all of you and your projects!

Imprint

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Do you have any remarks or contributions to the newsletter,