

Wadden Sea Board

WSB 13
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Wilhelmshaven



Agenda Item:	6
Subject:	Report Task Group Sustainable Tourism Strategy
Document No.	WSB 13/6/2
Date:	18 December 2013
Submitted by:	Secretariat

Objective:

The Task Group Sustainable Tourism Strategy (TG-STs) met on 14 September and 12 December 2014.

The attached progress report informs about the activities of TG-STs since WSB 12.

Proposal: The meeting is referred to the proposals in the attached progress report.

Report Task Group Sustainable Tourism Strategy (TG-STTS)

Chair/secretariat: TBA / Mr Harald Marencic

Meetings: TG-STTS 12: 14.09.2014, TG-STTS 13: 12.12.2014

1. Sustainable Tourism Strategy (STS)

The strategy on “Sustainable Tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination” has been translated into Dutch, German and Danish. All language versions of the strategy are now available as download (PDF), and printed versions are currently being prepared.

The **adoption of the sustainable tourism strategy** at the Trilateral Governmental Conference in February 2014 is a milestone in the transboundary cooperation between the tourism sector, nature conservation administrations, regional and local stakeholders and nature NGOs. The strategy is now an approved framework to cooperate and contribute to the protection of the nature values of the Wadden Sea and at the same time providing benefits for local communities and businesses. It defines the World Heritage Destination, the vision, and explains the main elements of sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea region. The four strategic objectives provide next steps for all work fields and are implemented by an action plan which is a rolling work plan for the period 2014 – 2017.

For the first time, an **operational network on sustainable tourism** has been established trilaterally contributing the OUV. In all three countries, a working structure has now been established which has got the official task to implement the tourism strategy and action plan as adopted by the Ministerial Conference in February 2014. The new regional working groups are in charge to coordinate the regional implementation and the transnational activities (see Figure). They will continue the transnational partnership network beyond the end of the PROWAD project.



Almost 800 persons have participated in PROWAD activities since October 2012 representing over 500 organisations. In addition over 2,200 persons of about 1,200 organizations were informed about PROWAD activities at other events. This broad involvement of stakeholders has resulted in a high acceptance of PROWAD which is now an established part of the work on sustainable tourism. The PROWAD project is now well-known

and it can be regarded as a success that almost all stakeholders involved in sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea refer to PROWAD in their daily work.

2. Implementation of strategy and action plan

The TG-STs will organize the further work on the action plan implementing the strategy in the coming period, in specific concerning the priorities, the involvement of stakeholders on local and regional level, and how to organize and coordinate the regional work, e.g. through existing regional networks or World Heritage working groups.

The regional working groups have already discussed the action plan and prepared proposals how the activities can be implemented (including funding possibilities), who is taking the lead regionally and how this is being coordinated trilaterally ensuring a consistent approach in accordance with the agreed strategy.

Overall, it can be concluded, that a significant number of activities of the action plan has already been taken up within the PROWAD project and the regional working groups which are currently being implemented. Priority activities proposed by the regionals working groups cover a.o.

- Visibility of World Heritage needs to be enhanced with a coherent message and approach trilaterally to ensure that all partner work towards the same, one goal protecting the OUV in One Wadden Sea.
- Development of World Heritage marketing and products which communicates the OUV thus creating and added values of stakeholders,
- Extension of training and qualification of multipliers on World Heritage and sustainable tourism,
- Development of an overall framework for cooperation with business partners (e.g. through national park partner programmes) including the use of the WH brand for commercial purposes (based on joint criteria and quality standards),
- Enhancing environmental friendly mobility (communication, cooperation, pilot projects).

Furthermore, the TG-STs discussed measures how to enhance the internal communication (distribution of WH information and products, branding, WH events and campaigns), and the involvement of stakeholders in the strategy and action plan, as well as strengthening local pride and identification with World Heritage by local communities.

Another important topic of the action plan is the development of a monitoring and reporting system to assess impacts of tourism on nature and socio-economic values (e.g. for reporting to the UNESCO) and the harmonization of basic tourism indicators.

3. Results

For the first time, the German Wadden Sea coast (across two Federal States) conducted a **pilot visitor survey** which has been developed jointly with all project partners in the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark. The survey clearly shows the added value of a transnational coordinated approach and recommends the extension of the pilot survey to the entire World Heritage Destination. Furthermore, it provides information for SMEs to optimize existing and development of future tourism products, analyse customer satisfaction, and to adapt marketing and communication activities for specific target audiences. The study also showed the socio-economic value of sustainable nature tourism. An English translation of the summary is in preparation and will be discussed by the TG-STs in 2015.

A comprehensive **World Heritage Brand** description has been developed and a **World Heritage Toolkit** is being prepared which are the main tools for stakeholders to portray a consistent message of the Wadden Sea in both domestic and international sales and marketing. It enables SMEs to engage themselves with the brand, contribute to it and benefit from it.

With the development of the “**Glocal World Heritage flyers**” another well received instrument to stimulate interest in nature experiences and sensitize the tourism sector and visitors has been created. The flyers offer regional and local stakeholders the opportunities to promote their region and motivate tourists to discover and experience World Heritage. In Schleswig-Holstein, flyers for nine regions have already been printed. Local flyers in the Netherlands (8 regions), Denmark and Hamburg are in preparation. In Lower Saxony the content will be integrated in the already existing regional flyers.

PROWAD has developed a merchandising concept and a draft license agreement. The concept was approved by the TG-STs and was then applied by the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation as a framework for the first **merchandising programme** for the “Wadden Sea – World Heritage” brand. A pilot licensing for a postcard series was concluded between the CWSS and a company in July 2014 to gather more experience in the field of licensing. Criteria for selection of licensing partners cover:

1. Corporate Experience (concept of presentation of brand, visibility of the World Heritage Wadden Sea brand, branding of existing products / development of new WH products)
2. Quality standards (related to WS/WH and appropriateness, sustainability criteria, a.o. environmental friendly and social responsibility, quality marks/certifications/labels)
3. Marketability of products in the Wadden Sea (experiences e.g. from the merchandising concept study)
4. Methodological approach (strategic and operational integration of cooperation, network of partners, distribution in the entire WS-area NL,D,DK),
5. Financial benefit for the Wadden Sea World Heritage

An evaluation of the WS/WH Merchandising process is planned for January 2015 to enable the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation to continue respectively to extend the programme in 2015.

The WWF has published a PROWAD study on “Travel and Protect – **Contributing to Nature Conservation through Tourism in the Wadden Sea**” which summarizes good practice on various instruments, mechanism and financing schemes to gain income from the tourism sector for nature conservation without putting tourism business at risk.

PROWAD has provided local stakeholders with PR material on the occasion of the **5th Anniversary** of the inscription of the Wadden Sea in 2014 on the World Heritage List and promoted regional events on a joint website (NL: 3, LS: 8, SH: 3). However, because of a lacking joint concept and limited resources (trilaterally, locally), the chance was missed to reach more stakeholders to engage with World Heritage. The preparation of the campaign 2015 should use the experiences of 2014 to develop a more effective approach.

The main current **PROWAD activities** cover a.o. the preparation of an official WH guide (internet, book), travel itineraries, guidelines for the development of WH holiday packages (by NP Lower Saxony), and feasibility of bird watching offers (by NP Schleswig-Holstein).



The Wadden Sea World Heritage and PROWAD will also be presented at the **International Tourism Fair in Berlin** (ITB 4 – 8 March 2015) the World 's largest tourism fair. This covers:

1. PROWAD Presentation and panel discussion at the ITB congress (5.3.2015, 12:00 - 13:00) (confirmed, free of charge),
2. Joint presentation with the Ecological Tourism in Europe (ETE) on transnational sustainable tourism projects (4.3.2015, 15:00 -16:30) (financed by ETE),
3. PROWAD stand in Hall 4.1.b. "Adventure Travel - Responsible Tourism" (4 – 8 March 2015, financed by PROWAD). Cooperation with tourism partners and national parks, activities planned to promote regions (incl. stage presentations).
4. World Heritage exhibition and presentation on the occasion of the 10th Pow-Wow for Tourism Professionals.

The **International cooperation** was extended. Due to its innovative transboundary approach in connecting tourism and nature conservation, the PROWAD project partners were invited to several important international events to present the PROWAD Tourism Strategy, e.g. UNESCO WH Marine Programme, Corsica, France (October 2013), German Embassy, Madrid, Spain (March 2014), UNESCO Workshop Hangcun, China (May 2014), international conference WH Prehistoric pile dwellings, Konstanz, Germany (May 2014), Nordic Baltic WH Conference in Roskilde, Denmark (September 2014) and Scientific Conference, Irkutsk, Russia (September 2014,), IUCN World Parks Conference, Sydney, Australia (November 2014).

For 2015, an extension of the exchange with the eight European marine and coastal natural WH sites is in preparation (in cooperation with the UNESCO Marine Programme).

PROWAD was also mentioned as case study in April 2014 issue of the UNESCO magazine "World Heritage Review" and as case study for transnational governance of World Heritage Sites in the recent IUCN publication on "Benefits of natural World Heritage Sites". PROWAD will also be part as case study of the newly developed website of the UNESCO Programme on Sustainable Tourism "People Protecting Places".

This clearly underlines the success of the PROWAD approach and the TWSC as role model for other nature sites.

4. PROWAD Final Conference

The final PROWAD conference is planned as a one-day conference in Hamburg on 16 April, 2015. It has the aim to present the PROWAD results to key stakeholders in the three countries and internationally, focusing on multipliers, decision makers, members of regional working groups (networking), national park advisory boards, members Wadden Sea Forum, and representative from the UNESCO and other WH sites. The sessions will be introduced by key speakers and cover:

1. World Heritage Brand – potentials and challenges,
2. World Heritage as Tourism Destination,
3. From awareness to love – how to engage the generations in World Heritage conservation.

The conference will also be used to evaluate the outcome of PROWAD, achievements and lessons learned, in order to provide input into work plan of the coming years and the planning of a PROWAD follow-up project.

5. PROWAD follow-up

The PROWAD project has been extended cost-neutral with 6 months until December 2014. In addition, PROWAD has successfully applied for another 6 months funding (Interreg IVB 10th call, March 2014) with a new work package 6 “Extension of target audiences” which covers the period from January – June 2015. It covers.

- Communication case studies /best practice examples (interviews with stakeholders, 3-4 per regions, to encourage others)
- Face to face communication campaign (a.o. PROWAD stand at regional meetings “road show”, PROWAD panel discussion and PROWAD stand in hall 4.1b at ITB Berlin 4-8 March 2015, inspirational video on youtube communicating the projects results),
- Communication of World Heritage brand (engagement of private sector with the brand, campaign concept 2015 – 18, WH video on experience OUV, brand messaging for different target groups)

For the period after June 2015, a follow-up project should be prepared under the new INTERREG V B North Sea Region programme (2014 -2020) to support the implementation the strategy and the action plan.

A first call for that programme is expected in April 2015; however, the final draft has not yet been adopted (<http://www.northsearegion.eu/ivb/content/show/&tid=187>)

5. Conclusion

The TG-STs confirmed the enormous potential of the World Heritage status for nature conservation and sustainable regional development (as outlined in the strategy) and concluded:

- There is an urgent need to enhance communication and integration with regard to World Heritage and the Sustainable Tourism Strategy on local and regional level to jointly realize the potential and benefits of World Heritage,
- To a limited extent, the necessary activities can be carried on project level (e.g. regional EU funds, PROWAD follow-up project),
- On mid- and long-term, a more effective work structure with sufficient resources should be established to meet the new tasks resulting from the WH status. The role of the proposed WH foundation and a WH centre (§ 7, 10 TD) is an important element to safeguard funding and pooling of resources, including a trilateral coordination, such as a trilateral World Heritage destination manager.

Proposal

The WSB is proposed:

- To comment as appropriate on the progress report and the PROWAD project,



- To endorse the development of a World Heritage campaign concept 2015 -2018 (in cooperation with TG-WH),
- To instruct the TG-STs to prepare a proposal for PROWAD follow-up project including work packages, project partners and finances to the next WSB meeting in May 2015 and to provide the necessary resources,
- To ensure an effective trilateral work structure with sufficient resources at the secretariat to meet the new tasks resulting from the WH status, e.g. through a trilateral World Heritage destination manager.

The development of the strategy and WH communication/marketing is co-funded by the Interreg IVB North Sea Region Programme in the framework of the trilateral project PROWAD – Protect and Prosper: Sustainable Tourism in the Wadden Sea.