

FORUM DECLARATION

ADOPTED BY THE 9th BALTIC SEA TOURISM FORUM

The participants of the 9th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum (BSTF) „Seasonality and Sustainability”, convened in Pärnu, Estonia, from 19 to 20 October 2016,

- appreciating the hosting of the 9th BSTF in Pärnu, one of the most important seaside resorts in Estonia, thereby strengthening the visibility of the Forum also in the Baltic States,
- thanking the 2015-2016 Polish CBSS presidency for its promotion of tourism cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, in particular the support of the concept of a Baltic Sea Tourism Center,
- welcoming the 2016-2017 Icelandic CBSS presidency, hoping that tourism policy issues will be of relevance during the presidency, mainly in the frame of the Baltic 2030 process,
- welcoming the conference resolution of the 25th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference, in particular items 50 to 62 “regarding sustainable tourism”, which support the activities of policy area tourism and speak out for more coherent and cooperation-based approaches to sustainable tourism development in the Baltic Sea region,
- welcoming the UNWTO’s “2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development”, in the frame of the Global Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals,
- welcoming the adoption by the CBSS member states of the Baltic 2030 Declaration, renewing their commitment to sustainable development in the Baltic Sea region, and supporting the envisaged elaboration of a corresponding Action Plan,

call on the national, regional and local governments of the Baltic Sea region, the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the European Union, networks, NGOs, private entities, tourism organisations and other tourism stakeholders,

regarding seasonality in the Baltic Sea Region,

1. to recognise the strong impact of seasonality on tourism performance in the Baltic Sea region, characterized by large coastal areas, rather short summer periods at moderate temperatures as well as long autumn and winter periods,
2. to acknowledge that all activities of the tourism sector aimed at smoothing the strong seasonality patterns contribute to balancing the sector’s performance and are thus key to a more sustainable development of tourism - ecologically, economically and socially,
3. to accordingly turn a focus of tourism policy on seasonality issues, also against the background of tourism being the main economic factor in many rural (coastal) areas,
4. to further promote and support transnational collaborations as they can promote a more balanced demand for destinations, increase peer learning effects and help to gain new insights into developing innovative tourism offers as well as transnational products targeting the off season or the whole year,
5. to reiterate that, in order to overcome seasonal fluctuations, beyond other things, smart pricing strategies, the diversification of tourist attractions, diversification of markets and target groups and targeted marketing are crucial to extend the season,
6. to thus ensure a sustainable tourism financing in the BSR for improved marketing and promotion of year-round products and services,

regarding sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea region,

7. to recall that previous initiatives to foster the development of sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea region (AGORA, AGORA 2.0) are a solid foundation both for the strategic and practical advancement of sustainable tourism development in the Baltic Sea region and should thus be reinvigorated, primarily by Policy Area Tourism in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region,
8. to acknowledge that with the UNWTO “2017 International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development” ahead of us, sustainable tourism will not only move into the global political focus, but also requires common effort from all stakeholders in the Baltic Sea region with a view to claiming our active and effective role in advancing sustainable tourism development,
9. to recall that the actual role of tourism in the sustainable development process of the Baltic Sea region also depends on the active involvement of the tourism community in the CBSS Baltic 2030 process, including the envisaged Action Plan,
10. to stress that peer learning should not be limited to the Baltic Sea region, but also include best-practice examples from other macro-regions in the European Union and beyond,
11. to consider that conditional on a holistic, coherent and collaborative approach to sustainable tourism, the BSR macro region should claim no less than a pioneering role in sustainable tourism development,

regarding the future of the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum,

- to acknowledge that the sustainable future and high quality of the Baltic Sea Tourism Forum require a more secure and long-term financing scheme,
- to further intensify the cooperation with EU funding programs, primarily the Interreg Baltic Sea Region, Interreg Central Baltic and Interreg South Baltic Programs,
- to consider that a more content-based and thematically focused Forum, e.g. in the fields of cultural tourism, active tourism, culinary, market research, science-business collaborations, might be especially beneficial for a stronger involvement of the private sector,
- to build up a more continuous, up-to-date communication platform which complements the annual Forum and thus raises the potential for improved networking and coordination, also with the help of the flagship Baltic Sea Tourism Center,
- to further align the BSTF and Policy Area Tourism in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region with a view to increase potential synergies.

The participants welcome the kind offer of Turku Region to host the 10th Baltic Sea Tourism Forum on 11-12 October 2017 in Turku, Finland in cooperation with Policy Area Tourism in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Tourist Board.