



Baltic Cultural Tourism Policy Paper

Short version

**Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian
National Commissions for UNESCO**

2001 – 2003

The present Baltic Cultural Tourism Policy Paper was produced with financial and intellectual inputs and support of UNESCO

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to the vision cultural tourism in the Baltic countries will by the year 2006 be an approved branch of the national economies and a leading power of national tourism economies recognized in the Baltic Sea Region and known on the international market as a product concept based on genuine culture and heritage in a sustainable way.

The main goal of cultural tourism development in the Baltic countries is to ensure sustainable economic, social and cultural development combined with preservation and active enhancement of cultural resources through increased supply, diversity and quality and sale of viable cultural tourism services. Based on the current situation and in order to ensure a sustainable development of cultural tourism in the Baltic countries it is of crucial importance to:

- clearly define the responsibility for the development of cultural tourism on a state and ministerial level;
- adopt strategy documents on cultural tourism;
- provide more know-how support to owners of cultural, historical and architectural monuments;
- create financial instruments and tax policies that stimulate the development of cultural tourism;
- continue to implement laws and adopt tough policies to protect cultural heritage against pressure from other interests;
- introduce policies and positive measures to promote access to public and private sites of cultural tourism interest;
- make sites more accessible for all people, including people with physical handicaps;
- provide information in more languages;
- tailor opening hours of sites as well as tourist information offices to the needs of tourists;
- set up more signs and information on how to reach cultural tourism sites;
- set up a Baltic cultural tourism internet portal;
- make food and drink quality regulations pragmatic to allow samples of local cuisine and local beverages for tourists;
- ensure that public support for cultural events can be given 2 years before the event;
- allocate more public funding to add value and renovate, restore and protect monuments, shrines, museums, archaeological and historical places;
- survey revenue flow and leakage of cultural tourism;
- implement tourism impact survey and establish carrying capacity for the sites;
- make the tourism industry more use cultural and historical heritage;
- more support handicraft traditions;
- focus on music and dance to develop cultural tourism;
- use minority cultural heritage and rich multicultural resources;
- use the soviet heritage;
- make use of features that have been kept more or less unchanged for the past 50 years
- pay more attention to cultural tourism in education and research;
- establish systematic, regular and long-term partnership with enterprises;
- discuss the touristification of culture;
- commit the policy-makers to sustainable development;
- establish rules for sustainable cultural heritage and tourism development;
- ensure the awareness and access to protection and conservation know-how;
- strengthen the dimension of intangible cultural heritage in cultural tourism;
- facilitate communication between professionals and the community;
- strengthen international co-operation;
- strengthen international marketing of Baltic cultural tourism products;
- conduct market research;
- increase round-the-year tourism;
- develop the Baltic countries as an exemplary region of cultural tourism;
- broaden cultural tourism product range;
- monitor and improve product quality;
- cover the whole region and seasons with available cultural tourism services;
- develop an investment policy to support investments in cultural tourism;
- consolidate cross-sector cooperation;
- make more efficient use of proximity to the key source markets;
- use more efficiently domestic market;
- provide systematic training opportunities;
- involve more old people in cultural tourism activities.



PROJECT OUTLINE AND PROCESS

The present Baltic Cultural Tourism Policy Paper has been produced with financial and intellectual inputs and the support of UNESCO.

The Implementing Authority of the Baltic Cultural Tourism Policy Paper project carried out in autumn 2001 – spring 2003 has been the Estonian National Commission for UNESCO in cooperation with the Latvian and Lithuanian National Commissions for UNESCO.

The project has aimed at enhancing cooperation among cultural policy makers, local authorities, heritage circles and tourism people with a view to translate the willingness and understanding of the necessity for joint action into concrete policy and activities. The outcome of the project is the present Baltic Cultural Tourism Policy Paper.

The project will contribute to achieve UNESCO's priority in the field of culture that is "the protection of cultural diversity and the encouragement of pluralism and dialogue between cultures". By contributing to the strengthening of the links between culture and development, through tourism, this project is also coherent with the Plan of Action adopted at the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development, Stockholm 30 April – 2 March 1998.

The process of developing the policy paper has included the launching of public discussions in the three Baltic countries on cultural tourism. Working groups were established in all the three countries with representatives from the tourism and culture sector. A series of meetings were held both on national and pan-Baltic level to collect and discuss information for the policy document. The working groups collected information and viewpoints from ministries, tourism organizations, museums and other sites, tourism companies, culture institutions and others with a direct or indirect connection to cultural tourism. Several round table discussions were organized. This work culminated with a Baltic Cultural Tourism Conference in Tallinn in May 2003 – organized in co-operation with UNESCO, WTO, BTC, EU, CoE, ICOMOS, ICOM, Nordic Council of Ministers and

relevant state authorities to discuss the draft policy paper. The policy paper will be submitted to UNESCO, Baltic Assembly and other institutions that in particular can have an influence on the future development of cultural tourism in the Baltic countries.

BALTIC COUNTRIES IN A NUTSHELL

One recent political entity with three historically and culturally different ancient European nations

The Baltic States are and always have been a part of Europe. Soviet ideology did its utmost to disabuse the West of these notions and fifty years of propaganda did its work. By the 1980-1990s many confused the Baltic with the Balkans, and thought of it simply as a part of Russia, where people spoke a dialect of Russian.

There are distinct cultural differences between the Baltic countries, as there are between Germany and France.

The Lithuanian and Latvian languages are both part of the Baltic language family, but the languages are not so close that people can understand each other using the two languages. Estonian and the Liv minority language in Latvia are Finno-Ugric languages and closely related to Finnish. For Latvian and Lithuanians the folksongs *daina* – in their essence different – are as important as the sagas to the people of Iceland. All the three Baltic nations share the unique national Song Celebrations and Open-Air Stages, sometimes referred to as Song Stadiums. The present importance of culture to all the Baltic people is symbolized by the female Latvian president Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, known for her books on the unique *dainas*.

Lithuanians are almost entirely Roman Catholic; the Latvians and Estonians are traditionally Protestant except for the catholic eastern part of Latvia – Latgale. Estonia and Latvia look to the Baltic Sea, and for these two countries maritime interests and fishing are more important than for Lithuania, where agriculture



historically has played a very important role. Lithuania is in many ways oriented towards Poland and Central Europe, while Estonia and Latvia's orientation is more towards Scandinavia and Germany. In addition, Estonia has always had a close relationship with Finland.

The source for many of these differences and similarities can be found in history. Common invasions, common military occupations, common policies directed by foreign powers against the region have all left their imprint, politically, and culturally. The peaceful Baltic Singing Revolution represented by thousands of Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians holding hands from Tallinn to Vilnius on August 23, 1989 showed Baltic solidarity, unity and wisdom in fighting a foreign aggressor in the years leading up to the re-establishment of independence in 1991. For an outsider it is thus more than natural to speak of the Baltic countries as a group.

The Baltic region has been under domination for most of recorded history by the Soviet Union, Russia, various groups of knights of primarily Germanic origin, Poles or Swedes. In modern times the three Baltic nations were independent only from 1918-40 before 1991.

From the late 12th century to the start of the 20th, present Estonia and Latvia – previously known as Estonia, Livonia and Courland were controlled by Germanic noble families, speaking a Low German dialect prevalent during the days of the Hanseatic League. During this period, cities in both Estonia and Latvia were Hanseatic centres, and at one point, Riga was the largest city in the Swedish Kingdom. Influence has mainly come from the Northern European neighbours.

Lithuania, on the other hand, was at times linked to Poland and one of the most powerful states in Europe at the time. By fighting the aggressions in the East and West the Grand Duchy of Lithuania managed in the 1400s to become the largest political entity of the day, stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea.

Even after being absorbed into the Russian Empire Lithuanian lands remained separate from those of Estonia and Latvia. The lands of Lithuanians were broken up into different groupings, and Lithuanians' links were with Poland or Prussia.

Historically the differences between the Baltic States and Scandinavia have been overemphasized, just as the similarities between the Baltic States have been over-dramatized. As time passes the entire Baltic region comprising both the Baltic States and Scandinavia will be seen as a region with strong internal ties that in different ways link all of these countries and cultures. Economically, politically and culturally the Nordic interest for and in the Baltic states is stronger than ever.

Good neighbour relations is one of many reasons why the Baltic states around the turn of the millennium have the fastest growing GDP and economy in Europe. Furthermore, accession of the Baltic countries to European Union represents a return to the era before the rise of the nation state when the Baltic Sea states were all linked to each other in the form of the Hanseatic League.

DEFINITION

Cultural tourism means travel concerned with experiencing cultural environments, including landscapes, the visual and performing arts, and special (local) lifestyles, values, traditions, events as well as other ways of creative and inter-cultural exchange processes.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL TOURISM

Cultural tourism is important for various reasons; it has a positive economic and social impact, it establishes and reinforces identity, it helps build image, it helps preserve the cultural and historical heritage, with culture as an instrument it facilitates harmony and understanding among people, it supports culture and helps renew tourism.

The economic and social impact is caused by the incomes created by the cultural tourism business and supporting



businesses. There is an increase in local production since the cultural tourism activities are strongly connected with other branches of economy. As cultural tourism is employment demanding, there is an increase in employment in the area, as guests participate and appreciate local culture. This helps keep people in the region, which is a positive catalyst for regional development. It, thus, improves the demographic situation in regional areas by giving a perspective to the youth. Cultural tourism is a key instrument in regional development strategies in EU countries. Cultural tourism leads to better overall infrastructure and living environment – not only for tourists, but for the host community, as well as the activities encompass the whole territory of the destination. As cultural tourism gives the destination an identity, it gets known, this attracts interests and people, which again helps to market local production in general. Positive for the economic and social development is that cultural tourism generates new ideas and a wish to cooperate among the local population.

Cultural tourism helps to establish and reinforce an identity. This is an essential element in preserving and enhancing national and local pride and spirit.

Culture and heritage features are essential in building a country's image, thus cultural tourism can be one of the key instruments in developing a positive image of a country internationally.

Cultural tourism helps preserve the cultural and historical heritage. Tourism makes an important contribution to culture and historical heritage by providing means for keeping the traditions alive and finances the protection of heritage as well as increases visitor appreciation of that heritage. In short – more public interest and more funds for protection. Tourism interest in the heritage site can be the key in providing political support for the management and protection of the heritage in question. Well-managed cultural tourism can encourage the revival of traditions and the restoration of sites and monuments. Cultural tourism makes it possible to find the balance between protection and the use of heritage. If overused, the site is ruined, and there will be no future income. In such a way there is a natural need for sustainable thinking.

In a world that is troubled by conflicts and xenophobia often based on misunderstandings, cultural tourism can

facilitate cultural harmony and understanding among people. More in-depth knowledge of other people's culture will stimulate understanding and a wish to cooperate. It promotes communication and integration. Cultural tourism brings extra income to culture and is thus a very important supporting factor for culture itself. And as cultural tourism helps differentiate demands and expand the season, it is essential in further developing the tourism industry. Cultural tourism is more in line with modern trends and is thus likely to see a further increase within the tourism sector. Cultural tourism is in line with the demand created by the rising educational levels, the aging population, the increasing economic role of women, the increase in short trips and the general search for meaning among people. The so-called theme parks have created increased interest in cultural tourism and internet is ideal to promote cultural tourism. The cultural tourists spend more money than the average tourist and travel for a longer time. As the increasing pace of life creates need for free time and preservation of past, cultural tourism becomes big business.

EVALUATION OF THE CURRENT CULTURAL TOURISM POLICY IN THE BALTIC COUNTRIES

Responsibility on state level

The Baltic governments have not defined which ministry on a state level is responsible for the development of cultural tourism. State tourism policy is generally shaped independently from cultural policy. Consequently in the Baltic countries cultural tourism falls between two or more chairs. Neither the ministries of economy, which are responsible for tourism, nor the ministries of culture have taken full operational responsibility for the development of cultural tourism. The ministries are awaiting a government decision before taking action. As a result tourism companies have difficulties in finding a stable and competent partner on the state level to discuss culture and



cultural tourism issues. In order to establish a better coordination of culture and tourism, the Estonian Tourist Board has convened the national cultural tourism working group in April of 2003.

Recommendation:

The Baltic governments are recommended to define which ministry on a state level is responsible for the development of cultural tourism or alternatively establish an inter-ministerial work group to coordinate issues related to the development of cultural tourism. The work group should include representatives from the ministry regularly responsible for tourism development, the ministry of culture and any other ministry, which decisions are of major importance for the development of cultural tourism.

If an inter-ministerial work group is chosen, then it should be led by the representative from the ministry responsible for tourism development, that is in all Baltic countries, the Ministry of Economy.

Plans and strategies

Cultural tourism is mentioned in a series of national development plans and strategies, however mostly briefly. In national tourism development plans or programs in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania there is no separate chapter on cultural tourism. The Estonia's Tourism National Development Plan for 2002-2005 points out, that the main tourism resources of Estonia are historical heritage (city centers from the Middle Ages, fortifications and manor houses), cultural heritage (music, dance and handicraft, folk festivals), natural environment (landscape, waterbodies, conservation areas).

Only Lithuania has on a national level adopted a strategy document on cultural tourism that describes what institutions are going to do what to foster cultural tourism. The document was adopted in 1998 by the Ministry of Culture, but it was not implemented. In the case of Latvia, a draft for a national document on the main principles for the development of cultural tourism has been developed.

A positive trend is seen in regional and local development plans. For example, cultural and historical heritage is

specifically named as one out of seven priorities in the Development Strategy of the Vidzeme Planning Region in Latvia.

The City of Riga, Latvia has worked out a Cultural Tourism Concept.

The development plan of the Estonian city of Tartu not only mentions cultural tourism, but as well defines how cultural tourism should be developed in 2004-2006.

The Development Strategy for the City of Vilnius in Lithuania, approved by the City Council in 2002, includes a large variety of activities facilitating cultural tourism growth. However, the term cultural tourism is not often used.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that there should be more focus, preferably a separate chapter, on cultural tourism in national tourism development plans or programs. The Baltic states should on national levels adopt strategy documents on cultural tourism that describes what institutions are going to do what to foster cultural tourism. Cultural tourism should be properly dealt with in regional and local development plans and programs, as well.

Coordination

The coordination between state, regional and local governmental offices, non-governmental organizations and tourism companies in developing cultural tourism is sometimes criticized of not being sufficiently strong. This can partly be explained by the unclear position of responsibility on the national level.

Recommendation:

The coordination between national, regional and local governmental offices, non-governmental organizations and tourism companies in developing cultural tourism should be strengthened. A more clear position of responsibility on the national level regarding cultural tourism will have a positive impact on this issue.



Implementation of laws and policies

All the Baltic countries have laws on tourism. The countries have no separate law on cultural tourism. Tourism is as a rule not mentioned in legislation relating to culture. Some laws are closely linked to the development of cultural tourism. A good example is the law “On the Preservation and Protection of the Historical Center of Rīga” adopted by the Latvian parliament Saeima on April 16, 2003 partly as a response to threats of an uncontrolled building process and the inability of the City of Rīga to sufficiently protect the cultural heritage of the city’s historical center.

The Baltic governments have increasingly earned respect for implementing the laws and adopting a tough policy to protect the cultural heritage against pressure from other interests.

In March 2003 the Latvian minister of Culture, Ingūna Ribena confirmed the decision made by the State Inspection for Heritage Protection to grant a status as a historical monument to the fortification named Komētforts putting an end to the plans of “Baltic Oil Terminal Ltd.” to build an oil terminal in Rīga’s Daugavgrīva. The company had threatened to go to court and sue the public authorities for several million US dollars in case the works on developing the oil terminal were stopped.

In Tallinn the construction of a new street between Rāvala street and Stockmann department store was significantly postponed to allow proper protection and preservation of the discovered remnants of the medieval buildings. Since the construction was scheduled to end before the Eurovision Song Contest to be held in Tallinn in May 2002, it was not an easy or popular decision to make.

The implementation of rules and regulations are however not always successful. Decisions taken on zoning on a lower public can have serious implications for the cultural and natural environment.

An example is Pärnu City in Estonia where the City Authorities changed the border of the Beach Park (Estonian: Rannapark), which is a protected area, and as a result it currently appears to be possible to build a 5-storey building right next to the beach in the area

which was supposed to be under protection. As the decision to move the border of the protected area was not dealt and approved by the City Council – as it should be done – it is not clear what authority carries the responsibility according to Estonian legislation. The whole process has raised a lot of heated feelings and discussions in the local community, which seems to confront the steps taken by the authorities.

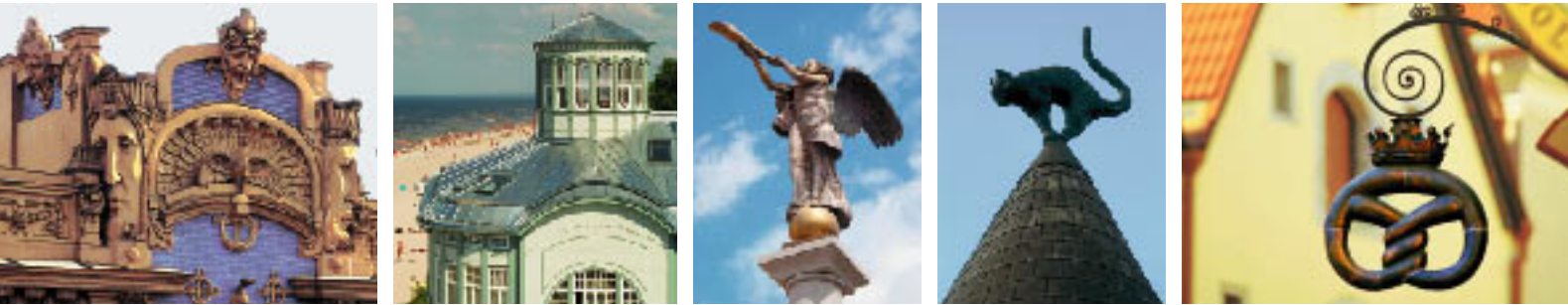
At the same time the same City Authorities initiated a planning for the resort and creation zoning for the years to come, which should be mentioned as a positive step.

Recommendation:

The Baltic governments are recommended to continue to implement laws and adopt tough policies to protect the cultural heritage against pressure from other interests. Change of zoning should not be accepted if this can harm the cultural environment.

Know-how support and information

The Baltic countries have strict rules that regulate conservation, reconstruction and renovation of objects that are defined as cultural, historical or architectural monuments. Limited know-how support is provided by the heritage authorities to owners of such monuments. However, in the case of Latvia and Estonia, different from the General Building Regulations that outline a clear and precise system of getting a building permit, there are complaints that there is not a clear and transparent system for getting a permit from the State Inspection of Cultural Heritage if the object is a cultural, historical or architectural monument. Moreover, there is no public data base or information available on works that have been carried out previously by other owners of such monuments. This can sometimes make it difficult for owners of castles and manor houses to develop these buildings for cultural tourism purposes. Sometimes it appears that the protection restrictions make it even fairly impossible for an owner to develop the property for public and commercial use, although the main idea of the sustainable development is not to protect in the restrictive way only, but mainly ensure supported and healthy development in the interests of all stakeholders and aspects.



In Lithuania, according to tourism experts, the system is so complicated that it functions as an invitation to give bribes to officials. This can partly explain why a series of facades of buildings in the old city in Vilnius have big modern windows, which is not in line with laws and regulations. Such developments can according to heritage experts also be a consequence of an insufficient number of inspectors to control the situation and the current administrative fee system that is complicated, time-consuming and hard to enforce. In the case of the Alatskivi castle in Estonia, the EU-funded reconstruction was put in danger as the heritage authorities imposed stricter regulations on the property renovation half-way into the process and the allotted funds did not allow for the latest criteria to be followed fully.

Recommendation:

More know-how support should be provided by the heritage authorities to owners of buildings that are defined as cultural, historical or architectural monuments. Easy understandable information in paper format and on the internet should be available on how to proceed and what regulation to observe when owners want to preserve, renovate or restore their buildings. It is recommended that the State Inspection of Cultural Heritage and similar public authorities develop precise, transparent and streamlined systems for getting permits for those owners that intend to preserve, renovate or restore buildings of cultural, historical or architectural value. This should include a clear and open policy on what documentation that should be submitted. A public data base or information on works that have been carried out previously by other owners of such monuments should be made available. This could make it easier for owners of castles and manor houses to develop these buildings for cultural tourism purposes.

Financial instruments and tax policies

Baltic financial instruments and tax policies function both as stimulus and obstacles for the development of cultural tourism.

The more funds are invested and the better is the shape of a cultural, historical or architectural monument, the higher becomes its value and as a result, the higher becomes the tax to be paid. That is currently the situation

in Latvia. In such a system the owners of such monuments can sometimes be motivated to keep their building or monument in a bad condition.

Recommendation:

Baltic financial instruments and tax policies should function as stimulus for the development of cultural tourism. The systems should motivate owners to add value and keep their building or monument of cultural, historical or architectural value in a good technical condition.

Real estate tax, access and restrictions

In Latvia there are real estate tax relieves only for cultural, historical and architectural monuments of so-called national significance. A large number of monuments of interest to tourists and of cultural, historical and architectural importance fall outside this definition and the owners have to pay taxes as regular business companies. If there is economic activity, like for instance hotel operations, real estate tax has to be paid even if the monument is of so-called national significance. Despite the fact that these owners have to respect a series of restrictions when renovating and developing their property, they don't get any compensation from the state; on the contrary they get financially "punished" if they keep their building in good technical condition and try to develop cultural tourism. Regardless whether or not the owners decide to keep and restore their buildings with the original historical interior, whether or not they decide to open it up for the public or whether they decide to keep and restore wooden buildings or brick buildings, the real estate tax is the same.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that real estate tax is abolished for a period of no less than 10 years if a building is successfully preserved, renovated and restored and either by national authorities responsible for the protection of the cultural heritage considered to be a monument of national significance or by the local government considered to have local cultural, historical and architectural interest. Such a system can broaden the number of buildings that can be exempt from real estate tax and thus have a positive impact on cultural tourism development. Such buildings can receive



permanent tax relief status, as well. Economic activities, like for instance hotel operations, should not be considered as an argument for not giving real estate tax reliefs.

Regular public access to the buildings should be a requirement for obtaining tax reliefs.

If restrictions on the use of the building cause financial losses to the owners that keep their building of cultural, historical or architectural value in a good technical situation, a system of compensations should be developed by the state.

Through additional financial incentives owners should be encouraged to keep and restore their buildings with the original historical interior. Additional financial incentives should as well address those that want to keep, renovate and restore wooden buildings.

Company income tax

There are no company income tax reliefs for a certain number of years for those hotels or other tourism companies that try to re-develop estates and castles or other cultural, historical and architectural monuments.

If an owner of a castle or manor house is to follow all the state requirements and restrictions and there are no tax deductions, it often becomes too costly to restore the buildings. As a result the buildings are not renovated and fall apart.

Recommendation:

Company income tax reliefs for a certain number of years should be given to those hotel or other tourism company owners that try to re-develop estates and castles or other cultural, historical and architectural monuments.

Local governments' financial policies

Some local governments have adopted financial policies to promote cultural tourism.

The city of Ventspils in Latvia has adopted a policy of providing long-term credits to those people in the city that want to renovate and keep building of cultural, historical

or architectural value in a good technical condition. Other cities in Latvia seem not to have the financial resources to offer the same system. During Spring time the City authorities in Pšrnu, Estonia provide free paint in cooperation with a paint company for the owners of private homes, which are very often wooden buildings of the pre-WWII period, if they want to renovate the façade of their homes.

Recommendation:

Local governments are recommended to adopt financial policies to promote cultural tourism by providing loans or providing financial advantages to those that intend to keep, restore or renovate buildings and monuments of cultural, historical or architectural value.

VAT

All Baltic countries have lowered VAT on accommodation services. In Estonia and Lithuania it has been lowered to 5% (as of 1.01.2004), in Latvia to 9% compared to the regular VAT level of 18% in all the three Baltic countries. Cultural events are mostly exempt from VAT in Latvia. Cultural events in Lithuania are considered being commercial activity and are with a few exceptions charged like other businesses. In Estonia some reductions apply, but not to all events and cultural activities.

Foreign tourists can get a VAT refund on goods they bring out of Latvia if the value is more than 50 LVL (ca. 90 EUR). In Lithuania there is theoretically a similar system, but the practical technology is not approved. Estonia does not have such a system.

Recommendation:

VAT should be lowered to 5% on accommodation services in all Baltic countries. Cultural events should stay exempt from VAT. There should be VAT refund for foreign tourists on purchases that amount to 50 EUR.

Use of taxes on car traffic

Some local governments in the Baltic countries like Rīga and Jūrmala in Latvia and Neringa and Trakai in



Lithuania collect taxes when cars enter the city or a part of the city. Pärnu and Tallinn in Estonia used to have such a system, as well. Despite the fact that car traffic through pollution and vibrations has an impact on the condition of cultural, historical and architectural monuments, a very limited percentage of the collected taxes are channeled towards supporting the renovation of such monuments. In the case of Jürjala 2%, and in the case of Riga 0% of the collected taxes were used to support the cultural heritage in 2002. In the old city of Tallinn in Estonia there are no restrictions on car traffic anymore.

Recommendation:

No less than 40% of the taxes collected when cars enter cities or part of the cities, should because of the impact that car pollution and vibrations have on the condition of cultural historical and architectural monuments, be channeled towards supporting the renovation of such monuments.

Carrying capacity

The Baltic countries have separate laws and well-functioning institutions that control environmental impact issues. Nevertheless, the carrying capacity related to tourism development is seldom investigated.

On the Estonian island of Kihnu a Social Impact Study showed that damage is done not so much to the nature as to the natural way of life as the local community's carrying capacity seems to be already close to the critical level when the active tourism season lasts only for 3 months. Previously the people on Kihnu were used to tourists coming for a 3 – 4 month summer season, but the cold winter of 2003 and ice-covered sea have made it possible and popular for tourists to come also during the winter, which has caused certain complications for a “hibernating” community. There are no restrictions on tourism imposed on the island yet, although the island is actively seeking the status of UNESCO site, which may change the focus on tourism.

Recommendation:

A system of investigating the carrying capacity of tourism development including environmental and social impact

studies should be developed and applied in order to secure a sustainable cultural tourism development.

Public access

The public has usually access to sites of cultural tourism interest. However, there are examples of difficulties in getting access to both public and private buildings as well as to shores of lakes, rivers and sea.

The Presidential Palace in Vilnius is an example, where people must submit an application two weeks ahead of their planned visit to the palace. This makes it difficult for foreign visitors on shorter visits to visit this public building.

In Tallinn there is a initiative by the Presidential Office to keep tourism buses away from the Presidential palace at Kadriorg. Parking has been restricted, also in regards of the groups visiting the near-by Kadriorg Palace that houses a museum.

In the Art Nouveau quarters of Riga it is very difficult to get access to the inside part of the buildings, since the flats are owned by private persons. No policies have been developed to stimulate access to these buildings.

Recommendation:

Policies and positive measures should be introduced to promote access to public and private sites of cultural tourism interest. If the owner of a public or private site is given preservation, renovation, restoration or other forms of support from public authorities, an agreement should be signed that guarantees public access to at least parts of the building at certain hours several times per week. In order to obtain any tax relieves the owners also have to sign an agreement that guarantees public access to at least parts of the building at certain hours several times per week.

Public authorities should pass decisions and integrate clauses in the legislation to ensure that at least a part of all public buildings of interest to tourists should be open at certain hours during the week.



Fences and hindrances

Illegally constructed fences are making it difficult for people in all Baltic countries to enjoy free access to the coastline and to the shores of rivers and lakes as guaranteed by laws. In the old towns in Lithuania access to the historic courtyards is limited because the private owners lock the gates. Public authorities are sometimes criticized for not being sufficiently active in fighting restrictions on access to public areas.

Recommendation:

Public authorities should adopt stricter rules and more energetically react if the rules are not followed in order to avoid illegally constructed fences and other hindrances set up to make it difficult for people to enjoy their lawful free access to the coastline and to the shores of rivers and lakes. Free access is in the interest of tourists and will promote access to places of cultural and historical interest.

Building accessible for all people

A series of museums have lately implemented policies of making buildings more accessible for all people, including persons with physical disabilities. New lifts and entrances have been constructed. There are often discounts on entrance tickets for children, pensioners and persons with disabilities. The Museum of Medicine in Riga offers tours of the museum in sign language.

Recommendation:

All museums and other cultural institutions are recommended to implement policies of making buildings more accessible for all people, including persons with physical disabilities. New lifts and entrances should be constructed. Discounts on entrance tickets should be given to children, pensioners and persons with disabilities.

Information material

Museums and places of cultural, historical and architectural interest often admit the necessity of improving people's access to expositions by offering information in more foreign languages and by providing audio guides.

Frequently there is a lack of information material free of charge.

Recommendation:

People's access to expositions should be improved by offering information in more foreign languages and by providing audio guides. It is recommended that more information materials free of charge should be produced.

Tourist information offices

Tourist information offices, in particular those outside the capital areas, are often closed on Saturday and Sundays and during the evenings, which makes it difficult for tourists interested in culture to obtain information. Museums are sometimes criticized for not having open during evening hours and for not having developed shops with a broad selection of cultural products that could provide tourists memorabilia from the site and improve the financial situation of the sites.

Recommendation:

Opening hours at tourist information offices should be tailored to the needs of tourists. Tourist information offices and museums should be open during weekends and in the summer season during evening hours. Flexibility and a business philosophy with more attention to profit-making than to strict opening rules regulations should be implemented. Museums and other culture tourism sites should develop shops with a wider choice of cultural products to sell in order to improve the financial situation of the sites.

Sign and site information

Despite rapid improvement, many culture heritage sites are still a "well-kept secret" for tourists – there is a lack of signs and information how to get to the sites from roads, bike trails, railroad stations, bus stations and harbors.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that more signs and information how to get to the cultural tourism sites from roads, bike trails, railroad stations, bus stations and harbors should be set up.



Information about sites of interest for cultural tourism should not only be in the national language, but also in the language(s) understood by the main groups of tourists like English, German, Russian as well as Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Scandinavian and Finnish.

Internet portal

There are many impressive internet sites on cultural tourism, but the shortage of a policy of a united system is being felt by the internet users. There is insufficient information in foreign languages on the internet. In particular there is a shortage of day-to-day information on cultural events.

Recommendation:

A Baltic cultural tourism internet portal is recommended to be set up to help internet users navigate into interesting sites on cultural tourism.

Food and drink quality regulations

The Baltic countries have proud agricultural traditions and food processing regulations are strict in order to protect the interest of the consumers. In Estonia such regulations also restrict the opportunities to produce local cuisine and local beverages. It is not allowed to produce home-burnt brandy, the so-called “puskar” that has been a tradition for centuries. In some countries there are no restrictions on production for one’s own use, but one is not allowed to sell it. When some time ago an Estonian tourism farmer as a welcome drink handed out free samples of such a drink to tourists, he was fined of 500 EEK (ca. 32 EUR). He earned that money back thanks to the good marketing from all the Estonian media attention. As a result of the demand, he now legally imports the drink from Lithuania.

In Lithuania the regulations are different. It is illegal to make such a traditional Lithuanian alcoholic drink like “moonshine” (barley brew distillate) for one’s own use. On the other hand it is allowed for individuals to produce local beer. In Estonia this can be done for the commercial use only by the industry.

In Estonia smoked food products like smoked fish can not be produced without the producer having a license subject to health inspection. In Lithuania everything that is produced for public use should according to health requirements be tested to protect the consumers, including the tourists.

Recommendation:

Food and drink quality regulations should stay strict, but should be balanced and acknowledge the need and value of providing tourists with samples of local cuisine and local beverages that are not mass-produced.

Support in time

Though limited, state support is given to keep and restore many buildings of cultural, historical and architectural value. Events taking place in these locations can attract more visitors. However, the policy of public authorities offering support to culture institution that plan to organize festivals, performances and other culture events is often so that the support can not be given more than some months ahead of the event. This makes it difficult for the organizers to do planning and international marketing and give information to foreign partners in time since they often need to print catalogues on culture tourism trips 1,5 years ahead of the event.

Recommendation:

Public authorities should try to develop mechanisms to ensure that organizers of cultural events, which can be used to attract foreign tourists, can get information on support close to 2 years ahead of the events in order to ensure time for sufficient planning and international marketing of the event.

It is recommended that the state allocates more funding to add value and renovate, restore and protect monuments, shrines, museums, archeological and historical places so that these places can attract more tourists and thus create more incomes, thus fostering a sustainable development of the Baltic countries.

The Baltic countries are recommended to develop an investment policy to support investments in cultural tourism



including the development of new tourist attractions with special emphasis on the creation of cultural tourism-related jobs in rural areas.

Pre-structural funds

The Baltic countries are developing policies to successfully make use of the pre-structural and structural funds provided by the European Union. In all the Baltic countries activities linked to the development of cultural tourism are identified as valuable building stones in employment policies, in particular in the non-capital areas. Since cultural heritage objects are well-spread out over the country they can when turned into cultural tourism products create new work places. This can keep more people settled in the region thus having a positive effect on regional employment and development.

Recommendation:

Activities linked to the development of cultural tourism are valuable building stones in employment policies, in particular in the non-capital areas, and should thus be a priority for the Baltic countries in the use of pre-structural and structural funds provided by the European Union.

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