

## HELCOM RECOMMENDATION 21/3

Adopted 20 March 2000, having regard to Article 20 (1), Paragraph b) of the 1992 Helsinki Convention

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

#### **THE COMMISSION,**

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

**BEARING IN MIND** that the Action Programme for the Baltic Sea States co-operation, decided at the Baltic Sea States Summit 1996, states "The economic exploitation of natural resources through agriculture, forestry and tourism will be carried out taking full account of the need to protect the natural richness and biological diversity of the Baltic Sea Region",

**TAKING INTO ACCOUNT** the Common Recommendations for Spatial Planning of the Coastal Zone in the Baltic Sea Region by the Fourth Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning and Development within the Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea 2010 and other high lever conferences, such as the Berlin Conference on Biological Diversity and Tourism in March 1997, the "Rügen Recommendations", November 1997 and recommendations from Baltic Tourism Commission 1998,

**RECALLING ALSO** Recommendation No. R (94) 7 on a general policy for sustainable and environment-friendly tourism development, Recommendation No. R (95) 10 on a sustainable tourist development policy in protected areas and Recommendation No. R (97) 9 on a policy for the development of sustainable environment-friendly tourism in coastal areas, all adopted by the Committee of Ministers at the Council of Europe,

**BEING AWARE** that the Baltic Sea Region contains many different landscape types with great biological, geophysical and cultural richness, and thus they constitute a common heritage, which should be preserved for present and future generations,

**BEING DEEPLY CONCERNED** of the possible damage to nature and the socio-cultural environment by the rapid growth of tourism and leisure activities in the Baltic Sea Region,

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

**BEING CONVINCED** that sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism, practised in alliance with the local population can be a major instrument for economic development of many regions and countries; at the same time sustainable tourism has the potential to contribute to the conservation of biological biodiversity outside and inside protected areas,

**APPRECIATING** the measures that have already been taken by several Baltic Sea countries in order to develop environmentally friendly tourism,

**RECOMMENDS** to the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention:

- a) to base their tourism development policy and plans for new tourist projects, and in particular their financial incentives, on the "GUIDELINES FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE BALTIC SEA AREA", as contained in the Attachment to this Recommendation;
- b) that all development, marketing and management of tourism should be based on the criteria of sustainability, which means that it must be ecologically sound in the long term, economically viable, as well as ethically and socially equitable for the local communities and also be oriented on the objectives, principles and obligations of the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992);
- c) that for the development of large scaled tourist projects such as holiday villages, hotel complexes, large marinas, large camping grounds and golf courses that need new specific infrastructure be preceded by a spatial planning process on national or regional level and be incorporated into, e.g. integrated coastal zone management plans;
- d) that Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) or similar procedures according to each Contracting Party's national law be carried out, before realizing tourism infrastructure and tourism operations, because they have significant negative impacts on biological and landscape diversity;
- e) that all Contracting Parties work together and design bi - or multilateral transboundary strategies for environmentally friendly tourism development in order to harmonise activities aiming at sustainable use and the preservation of the natural beauty and biodiversity of the coastal area of the Baltic Sea.

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HELCOM Recommendation 21/3  
**ATTACHMENT**

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

The following principles for sustainable environmentally friendly tourism shall be applied for planning of tourism in the marine environment of the Baltic Sea and within the "Coastal Planning Zone" according to HELCOM Recommendation 15/1:

1. Tourism in the coastal zone should be developed under the conditions of the points (2)-(13) and in partnership between representatives for local businesses, community authorities, local NGOs and residents as well as in close crossborder cooperation, and in a way which benefits the local communities, strengthens the local economy, employs local workforce and wherever ecologically sustainable, uses local materials, local agricultural products and traditional skills.
2. The cultural and social carrying capacity should be assessed, in order to avoid tourism development and visitor numbers that adversely affect local communities and their way of life and to determine the level beyond which the essential qualities that people seek in the tourist site would be destroyed by further touristic developments.
3. Particularly for protected areas but also for tourist and recreation areas, the carrying capacity of the environment should be determined, i.e. the degree to which the environmental and natural conditions of a site, an area or a region can accommodate the various impacts connected to tourism and also recreational or leisure activities, like boating, surfing, camping etc.
4. Tourism and recreation in and around protected areas should be oriented on management plans and nature conservation goals according to the respective IUCN-criteria.
5. Untouched or seminatural landscapes and threatened marine and coastal biotopes should be protected and conserved against any build up.
6. New touristic facilities should preferably be established on existing sites. In scattered settlements new tourist facilities should preferably be realized by use or reconstruction or conversion of existing buildings and be situated close to already developed infrastructure in order not to exceed the carrying capacity of the site. New facilities should be realised in accordance with local building traditions and they should harmonise with surrounding environment.
7. Such constructions should use environmentally sound technologies for saving water and energy, prevent pollution, treat waste water, avoid the production of solid waste and encourage recycling.
8. In particular, water resources should only be used in proportion to their renewal capacity and energy supply should be based increasingly on renewable energy sources.
9. These facilities should fulfil respective EU-Directives on, e.g. drinking water, bathing water and sewage, or other appropriate standards.
10. In accordance with Agenda 21, and in particular with the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity training programmes for tourism managers should be organized, dealing with subjects like environmental awareness, sustainable development and nature conservation in order to promote sustainable and environmentally friendly tourism.
11. Leisure activities should be managed, particularly in the protected areas, in a way that they fulfil the requirements of biological and landscape diversity and soil

conservation. Clear limits must be set for any motorized recreational activity in and around protected areas on the sea and at the coast.

12. Environmental awareness of all tourists should be increased by appropriate means.

13. Free public access to the coast should be guaranteed.

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### **Reporting format for HELCOM Recommendation 21/3**

1. Does in your country exist any national Strategy or Programme for Sustainable Tourism development?
2. Which paragraphs of the HELCOM Guidelines for Sustainable and Environmentally Friendly Tourism in the Coastal Zones of the Baltic Sea Area have been integrated into the national Strategy or Programme?
3. Which large-scale tourist projects have been preceded by special spatial planning processes?
4. Which large-scale tourist projects have been incorporated into an integrated coastal zone management plan?
5. What Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) or similar procedures have been carried out concerning tourism infrastructure and tourism operations?
6. In what way has your country cooperated with others in order to harmonize transboundary tourist activities?
7. In what way have the National Authorities informed the tourist sector about the HELCOM Recommendation?