



BEST

B7 Exchange on Sustainable Tourism



INTERREG IIC Baltic Sea Region



The BEST Project

B7 Exchange on Sustainable Tourism



Summary of results, experiences and impressions of the project.

June 2001

Steering Group for B7 the BEST project

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Foreword

This report gives a presentation of major results achieved by the project B7 BEST (B7 Exchange on Sustainable Tourism) regarding sustainable tourism in the B7 Islands.

The project has been running 1999-2001 and has been co-funded by the EU commission through the program Interreg II C. Municipality of Gotland has been Leadpartner.

The Lead partner and project co-ordinator wants to thank the EU Commission and the funding administrators for assistance and good advise in relation to all the project monitoring and financial reporting during the project.

Finally I want to thank all island partners, Bornholm Research centre, Estonian ECO-tourism Association, Gotland University College and Société D'Eco-Aménagement Montpellier, France.

This project has initiated serious discussions in the B7 region about the future development of the tourism sector in a more sustainable way.

June 2001

Bengt-Olof Grahn
Agenda 21 secretary
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1. Background of the project.

The overall objectives of the BEST project are:

- To create an inter-island co-operation network to promote the development of sustainable tourism
- To establish common systems for Codes of conduct, bench-marking and quality control
- To adopt and publish a Green Paper
- “Sustainable tourism in the B7 islands - definitions and markets”
- To initiate at least three development projects
- To make a B7 contribution to the VASAB and Baltic Agenda 21 processes

In order to achieve those objectives, the BEST project, focuses on:

- **Definition** (What is sustainable tourism all about?, State of the art, Best practice)
- **Positioning** (Which segments of the sustainable tourism market are the most promising for the B7 islands? How can the islands develop their comparative advantages into competitive advantages? How can spatial planning contribute to the development of sustainable tourism?)
- **Appearance** (How to appear on the market; Codes of conduct, Joint marketing efforts, Bench-marking)
- **Networking** (Exchanges and interlinks between stakeholders to improve communication and enhance sharing of information about strategies, experiences and know-how)

The European Union through the Interreg IIC initiative supports the BEST project. The overall budget for the project is, 360 000 Euro.

Partners in the project are the B7 member regions except the Estonian islands Hiiumaa and Saaremaa. This is due to that the PHARE programme did not approve financing. Hence, the Estonian islands will remain as associated partners in the project. Other associated partners have been:

- Bornholm Research Centre, Nexö
- Gotland University College, Visby
- Estonian ECO-tourism Association, Pärnu and
- Société D'Eco-Aménagement, Montpellier

2. Planned content and output.

The project proposal was set up by B7 WGE in the summer 1998 and applications for EU co-funding was forwarded in the autumn. INTERREG II C co-funding for the 5 EU partners was approved in December 1998 and contract was signed in April 1999.

The Action Plan and the expected timetable for the project was in – short – this:

1. KICK OFF MEETING (APRIL 1999)

Steering Group meets in Tallinn.

2. STATUS REPORTS (APRIL-JUNE 1999)

Two status reports produced “ Report on sustainable Tourism in B7 islands” and “ Sustainable Tourism - an international overview”.

3. START CONFERENCE IN SAAREMAA, ESTONIA (SEPTEMBER 1999).

More than 120 delegates from all partner islands and associated partners participated.

4. ISLANDS ASSIGNMENTS WITH REPORTS, WEB-site and DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS (OCTOBER 1999- JUNE 2001)

Each island is responsible for a project during the project time.

Gotland – Leadpartner, development project about spatial planning.

Öland – WEB-site and list server with names and addresses & development project about ECO-audits for the B7 tourism industry.

Åland – development project about Codes of conduct in the B7 islands.

Bornholm – To produce a Green Paper about sustainable Tourism in the B7 region.

Rügen – A report on sustainable tourism in Rügen and hosting the final Conference late autumn year 2000.

5. FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCE IN RÜGEN (OCTOBER 200).

An environmental B7 conference with presentation of the results of the two B7 projects SUSWAT and BEST.

6. FINALE (JUNE-JULY 2001)

A final report is produced and the BEST I is finished. Discussions have started whether it is possible to start a BEST II project.

The expected concrete results from the project were:

- The start conference on Saaremaa.
- The elaboration of a joint Green Paper for development of Sustainable Tourism.
- Networking activities (website, and listserver with names and addresses).
- 3 Pilot projects (Codes of conduct, Spatial planning and Eco-audits for the B7 tourism sector)
- Produce 3 Newsletters.
- A “Grand Finale”, i.e. a conference on Rügen.

3. The overall results of the project.

The project started as planned in April 1999. And it has been completed in June 2001 with this final report. The project period has been prolonged with three months mainly due to:

- All coordinators in the island have had a lack of time so the pilot projects and final reports have been delayed according to the planned timetable.
- Things have taken a little bit longer time than expected.

Besides from these changes in the planned timetable, the project has fulfilled the Action plan successfully. The output of the project has been:

Reports:

- An update report "Sustainable Tourism in the B7 islands" from May 1999, 18 pages based on a questionnaire that was sent out to all islands before the project started. The report was handed out during the Saaremaa conference 1999. Printed in 200 copies.
- A report on Sustainable Tourism in general " Sustainable Tourism – an international overview" from August 1999, 26 pages. The associated partner SECA (Société D' Eco-Aménagement, Montpellier in France) compiled the report for the B7 islands. The report was handed out on the conference in Saaremaa. Printed in 200 copies.
- Conference documentation no 1 "Opportunities and challenges, Saaremaa Estonia, 1999", 104 pages. Printed in 400 copies.
- A status report from Rügen " Current status of sustainable tourism on the island of Rügen, Prof. Markus Landvogt, 1999" 60 pages. The report was meant as a tool for the production of the Green Paper.
- A report on the concept of Spatial Planning " Community initiative concerning transnational co-operation on spatial development planning, Mr, Jan Wigsten 2000", 14 pages. Printed in 200 copies.
- An inspiration brochure " Framework for the Codes of Conduct Scheme – Inspiration handbook for the B7 islands" 7 pages, Printed in 2 500 copies.
- Conference documentation no 2 " B7 environmental conference in Sellin, Rügen October 2000" 40 pages.
- Green Paper " Green Paper – Sustainable Tourism in the B7 islands, Ann Hartl and Lise Herslund 2001" 27 pages, printed in 1000 copies.
- "Eco audits for the B7 Tourism Industry" – Tourism on Öland, Viewpoints on sustainable development, Ölands kommunal förbund, 2001, 21 pages.

Other information material:

- 3 newsletters have been published (September 1999, April 2000 and June 2001). Distributed in 500 copies each.
- A homepage for B7 BEST has been set up under the B7 homepage: www.b7.org under BEST- project.
- Article in the International magazine Coastline, Volume 10, no 2001-1. "Tourism and spatial Development planning in the Baltic Sea Islands, by Jan Wigsten, copy can be found in **annex 1**.

Oral presentations:

- Start conference in Saaremaa, September- October 1999, see conference documentation, 125 participants.
- Presentations of the BEST project on the Interreg II C workshop no II in Stockholm, November 26-27 1999.
- Presentation of the BEST project and B7 Environmental Conference in Rügen 24-25 October 2000, more than 100 participants.
- Presentation of the BEST project results on the Interreg II C workshop no III i Ronneby, November 17-20 2000.
- ARCHIBAL, BALDER and BEST conference "Sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea, Planning, Management and marketing, May 21-22 2001, Olofsfors, Umeå Sweden. 40 participants.

Results from the pilot projects in each island:

Bornholm:

The research centre of Bornholm was commissioned by Bornholms Amt to produce a joint Green Paper on sustainable Tourism in the B7 region. The Green paper has been printed and will be distributed in the region. The Green paper will be used as discussion material and idea catalogue for the future development of the tourism sector in the region.

Gotland:

Gotland has started to investigate how the concept of spatial planning can be a tool for sustainable Tourism development. In a smaller study some people in different positions were interviewed and a report was written. The report contains an idea on a following up BEST II project.

Rügen:

Rügen has been responsible to set up and organise the final environmental conference in October 2000 and to produce conference documentation. The conference was a great success. It was held in Sellin and the organisation and hospitality was outstanding. More than 100 participants came from All Islands and also from associated partners. The conference agreed that co-operation within the field of tourism can strengthen one of the most promising development possibilities of our islands. Therefore the principle of sustainability is extremely important in order to maintain the foundations, such as water and nature, for further development.

Åland:

Åland has been responsible to set up a framework for Codes of conduct for all islands. It is important to inform visiting people how to behave when they visit our wonderful but also fragile islands. The Codes of conduct are presented in a brochure with general frameworks that fits all Islands and also an appendix with examples from Åland that shows how to implement the Codes for one specific island.

Öland:

Öland has been responsible to establish a website and a listserver for the BEST project. The website can be found under www.b7.org and projects. Öland has also been responsible for investigate Eco-audits for the camping tourism specifically in Öland but also for all islands.

All reports will be found on the website www.b7.org under the BEST project.

4. The partners impression of the project and the process.

The B7 BEST -project has been running for two years as a co-operation involving 5 islands in 4 different countries with the Estonian islands as observers. Many stakeholders, civil servants, politicians and others have taken active part in the project. Reports have been published and a pilot projects has been started in each island as described. The Steering Group has had 4 meetings and an endless e-mail communication throughout the project period.

The project has of course revealed, that we have different legislation, we have different organisations, and often different administrative and planning procedures and cultures in our islands and countries, but that this does not reduce the need and the opportunities for inter-regional co-operation in the environmental field. On the contrary this makes networking with exchanges of experiences even more relevant.

The Steering Group members are in general pleased with the project, with the process and the results. The project has had a theoretical approach and therefore not been to full satisfaction for all partners. The organisation with individual budgets and specific pilot projects has given the islands a lot of independence in how they want to work. On the other hand this independence has led to that the overall project has in one way been divided in to some smaller isolated project processes. One big frustration is that all coordinators unfortunately seem to have had to less time for being involving a big project like BEST. The coordinators in the islands have been responsible both for running the project with activities and being project administrators. Periodically the administration takes all the time, especially for the leadpartner. A short statement from the other members in the Steering Group will follow.

Narrative final report from the Rügen co-ordinator.

The BEST-Project gave chances to exchange experiences between our 7 islands and to prove challenges for sustainable tourism on Rügen.

On the basis of some results in the past, regarding to the realisation of tourism concept projects on Rügen and to the Rügen talks of German Association for Environmental Education there were great expectations for concrete impacts on sustainable tourism.

Highlights of activities were the both conferences to sustainable tourism.

On Saaremaa conference was discussed how could be supported a more sustainable tourism.

15 representatives from Rügen tourism firms, tourism and environmental organisations took part in this conference.

In preparation of this conference and as a contribution to the Green Paper the consultant partner of Rügen, Prof. M. Landvogt from the Fachhochschule Stralsund, worked out a study about the situation on behalf of the development of sustainable tourism on the island of Rügen.

The main results we discussed on a meeting of politicians and tourism stakeholders in December 1999 on Rügen.

Prof. M. Landvogt presented the main results on the Saaremaa conference, too, because here should start the process for creating a basis for the elaboration of the „Green Paper“, Bornholm was responsible.

In 2000 we organised the Environmental Conference on 24. -25.October in Sellin, where were presented the first results of the BEST-Project. 100 representatives from the 7 Baltic islands, about 50 from the BEST-Project took part. The results are published in a conference documentation.

Bornholm presented a draft of Green Paper, which shall be a basis for further strategies on all B7 islands.

We think, it was a beginning of green paper. There was pointed out the need of exchanging ideas and indicators, which calls for qualitative methods. We translated the paper and sent it out to the German participants of conference, but there was only little reaction on it. I think, it would done better, to work out this paper together in a working group of experts from the B7 for covering all the ideas and experiences of all 7 partners.

The same conclusions I see for the Codes of Conducts, which were presented from? Land. There is a big need to have those „guidelines“ for tourists in various areas on islands. But may be, the interest of our German participants (politicians, stakeholders from tourism firms and organisations) were therefore to little, because the results were described only from the point of view of one island.

Resuming the BEST –activities, we got many impacts and ideas for further activities on sustainable development of tourism. There is constantly a big need of networking between environmental organisations/institutions and tourism firms and organisations and methods for their networking.

The Cupertino between the project leader Gotland and the other project coordinators was very good.

Conclusions for further Cupertino on sustainable tourism are:

- It would be easier for our regional level to co-operate with one-three partners of B7 in
- Regarding to expenditure of time and costs.
- Networking on only one concrete theme can be more effective for regional and local level.
- Concrete following projects which needed more co-operation between stakeholders of nature

Organisations and institutions and tourism firms and associations could be:

1. Application of concrete quality indicators for sustainable tourism
2. Application of Codes of Conducts for selected areas (Harbours, Beaches, Nature reserve areas etc.).

Brigitte Thom
Landkreis Rügen

Narrative final report from the Öland co-ordinator

Working as Ölands co-ordinator in the BEST-project has given Öland, my organisation and myself a lot of experiences both concerning Sustainable Tourism and taking part in a transnational project.

Ölands participation in the project:

- The Saaremaa Conference (EA 2.1)
 - Öland was represented by seven persons (from municipalities, private entrepreneurs and the associated project-partner Högskolan i Kalmar)
- The Rügen Conference (EA 2.2)
 - Öland was represented by ten persons (from municipalities, private entrepreneurs and the associated project-partner Högskolan i Kalmar) working with both the BEST-project and the SUSWAT-project.
- The meetings with coordinators (PC 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4)
 - Taking part in all meetings with coordinators had a high priority in the project. It was important to meet the other coordinators in person and establish contact with the other partners.

You can always use phonecalls and emails in order to maintain your contacts and exchange information. But coordinating project-activities, contracts, report-writing and be able to discuss things in a serious way demands personal meetings.

- The Web (N 3.3)
 - The www-site, linked to the B7 www-site (www.b7.org) opened in November 2000. The idea has been to create a combination of information and dialogue.

Information is supplied with a common www-site, presenting the project, activities documentation etc the www-site has worked as planned and connecting it to the B7 www-site was a strategically correct decision.

Dialogue was supposed to be a result of the electronic network and the possibility to chat on the www-site.

- The Electronic Network (N 3.1)

The electronic network has not been working as planned. It's all there and it is used but not so frequently as we hoped. The reasons for this is probably several but my opinion is that I within the network did not succeed in getting enough "added value" to attract people in the network to use the network.

From my own experience as participant of other electronic networks I have a good idea of how difficult it is to achieve this level of "added value".

- The Eco Audit of the B7 Tourism Industry (DP 5.2)

Our associated partner, Högskolan in Kalmar; has presented a very good report: a good survey of the topic, presenting the current situation, comparisons with the other B7-islands and with a reflection at the future. The only thing that is lacking is a proposal for financial possibilities but there is also an explanation to that. How to develop the experiences from the BEST-project and to continue this process is depending how it's possible to connect this project to the experiences from the SUSWAT-project in order to find a wider strategy for future studies.

Final comments

From my point of view all of experience has a value - the good and "the others". There is no doubt that the BEST-project has given us a lot of good experience:

- Knowledge in a variety of fields about Sustainable Tourism.
- A lot of networking with new contacts on the B7 Islands (and in the Baltic Sea area) which will be useful contacts in the future work with the future co-operation.
- The co-operation with our associated project partner, Högskolan i Kalmar, responsible for our development project, Eco Audits of the B7 Tourism Industry, has given links over to the private sector and an exchange of networking opening new possibilities for the future.
- The Tourism sector on Öland is a very important part of the businesslife and is always in focus for discussions and debates. Among the entrepreneurs in the tourism sector there is an increasing interest for issues about environment, development and sustainability. This means that it's important for the public sector to take initiatives and show interest for this important sector.

Regarding "the others" experiences they also have a value. Perhaps you learn more from the things that you either failed with or at least could have done better - then from the successes. When things don't work out the way you planned you get frustrated. But frustration also gives you a reason to analyse your own efforts and to learn something for the future.

Financing possibilities for the future? Well, it's easy to get stuck in technical discussions about different funding possibilities: EU/Interreg III, national government funding, financial support from the local municipalities etc. But the future work in this field is depending on how the co-operation Baltic Seven Islands develops in the near future. This is a political matter that will be decided at the next annual conference.

Finally, my own personal reflects as the co-ordinator. What could I have done otherwise? What could I have done better? A lot probably. Perhaps there should have been another co-ordinator from Öland in this project with a professional background in the environmental area. Anyway, I would like to express my gratitude to the leading partner co-ordinator Bengt-Olof Grahn for his patience with me and complete my report with these words: "Whatever you think of our part in the project - we did our BEST!"

Jörgen Samuelsson
Öland

Narrative report from the Bornholm Co-ordinator

I am sure that the BEST project will have a positive effect on Bornholm and the other B7 islands in the future. The overall goal is to achieve a common understanding of the requirements of sustainable tourism in the Baltic Sea Region and the BEST project can be perceived as having laid the foundation for a greater exchange of knowledge and expertise within the field of sustainable tourism for the islands involved. Our sub-aim on Bornholm was to adopt and publish a Green Paper, and in co-operation with our associated partner, The Research Centre of Bornholm, we developed "The Green Paper".

Most of the islands involved have experienced unsustainable pressure for holiday development in our landscapes and small towns for many years and I believe there is a need for a policy for sustainable development in tourism.

I hope the BEST project will outline an action programme towards sustainable tourism that should protect and enhance the environmental quality.

Hopefully the BEST project can be such a valuable contribution to new perspectives which can lead to new ideas and activities for the different stakeholders, organisations and authorities on the B7islands and ensure the future of tourism.

Amongst the participants in the project there has been a very good atmosphere and it has from a personal point of view been very interesting to discuss sustainable tourism with the BEST-workgroup and participating in the different seminars and conferences during the project. The role of the BEST project will not be to deal with every identified issue but to agree the key problems on which the Green Paper - in a further process- can deliver results, achieve funding and be implemented. It will be important to agree the expectations for the BEST project in resolving these issues/problems and it will ensure that stakeholders and the public all are clear on what can and cannot be possible. Though we had some difficulties in the beginning of the BEST project by defining "sustainable tourism" I think the project has given us all an awareness, knowledge and understanding of the current problems about sustainable tourism and I hope a further co-operation between the islands will continue on this matter.

Ida Kragstrup
Bornholm

Narrative final report from the Åland co-ordinator

The BEST project was my first experience of the B7- co-operation. It has been stimulating to work with something as big and complex as sustainable tourism. Tourism, as well as the nature, is important for all the participating seven islands.

At times this project has felt to large. It is not easy to know about the different circumstances on the islands and the geographical distance between us makes it almost impossible to arrange regular meetings. Therefore it seemed as a good idea to divide the planned activities between the participating islands. Afterwards it is possible to see that the dividing of responsibility shattered the BEST project into several small projects, almost apart from each other.

Today, when it is time for conclusion all I can hope for is that the work we have done will show result in terms of sustainable tourism and not just end up in a drawer.

Terese Flöjt
Ålands landskapsstyrelse

5. General impressions of the programme.

All partners see the Interreg IIC programme as a fine contribution to interregional co-operation.

The communication with the secretariat for Interreg IIC in Rostock and Karlskrona has been excellent and the administrators here have helped during the project in relation to progress reports. The reporting procedures have been very uncomplicated and non-bureaucratic. It has been very easy to get the individual budgets changed if there has been a need for that. Money has been paid to the partners very rapidly after reports have been approved. The hard thing for the leadpartner is to keep the pace up in the work. Sometimes it takes so long time to get facts and reports from the partner islands. But of course it takes time before you get the routines working. Everything has been running smother towards the end of the project. If this is because of better routines or because of a big sense of fatiguing I don know.

Well, finally this project has come to an end. We hope that there will be a future project co-operation about sustainable tourism. The subject is big and important and the issue of sustainable tourism is a big challenge for all the B7 islands.

Bengt-Olof Grahn
Projectleader

