

Workshop summary

On 12 September 2012, tourism representatives and partners from the RADOST project came together in the coastal resort of Kühlungsborn to discuss how tourism at the German Baltic Sea could adapt to future challenges of climate change. As organisers, the Coastal Union Germany (EUCC-D) and the “Verband Mecklenburgischer Ostseebäder” (Association of Baltic Resorts Mecklenburg - VMO) opened the workshop. Karin Beese and Franziska Stuke (Ecologic Institute Berlin) put the event into context with the overall RADOST tour, which aims to communicate the project’s results to regional decision-makers as well as the public and thus to gain more acceptance and support in the region.

Afterwards, different findings of the project were presented. Inga Krämer (Leibnitz Institute for Baltic Sea Research in Warnemüde, IOW) presented possible impacts on the development of the bathing water quality of the Baltic Sea. Factors relevant for tourism are for example algal blooms, pathogenic organisms or jellyfish abundance. Climate change might have an effect on these factors but more important is the reduction of nutrient input into the Baltic Sea. Rieke Müncheberg (National Board for Agriculture and Environment, StALU MM) talked about possible coastal protection measures to adapt to a rising sea level and changes in sediment transport. Important for tourism are new coastal protection constructions and the preservation of beaches. Regional socioeconomic aspects of climate change were discussed by Jesko Hirschfeld (Institute for Ecological Economy Research, IÖW). He presented three possible scenarios for economic development at the German Baltic Sea and pointed out that tourism can have positive as well as negative effects. Inga Haller (Coastal Union Germany) stressed how important long-term climate change adaptations are, since tourists might easily choose other destinations if the Baltic Sea region loses its attraction.

The following discussion was based on a fictional postcard from the year 2050, showing a future in which climate change adaptation has been neglected in the past. The participants noted that some of the addressed problems are not that fictional and are already important today, such as capacity limitation and traffic jams in peak season. Also, the promotion of the region as all-year-round holiday destination is already an issue today. Since climate change is a global phenomenon it is not easy to anticipate the shifts in tourism in Germany and Europe. However, European beach tourists may not have many alternatives to the Baltic Sea if the temperatures in Europe rise.

Another important point in the discussion was the need to secure and maintain the beaches of the region since they are an important characteristic. It is not enough to preserve their functional value as natural coastal protection structure, as it is done by the regional authorities. Additional measures are required to ensure their touristic value. The water quality was also discussed since it has often led to uncertainty among tourists in the past. Emergency communication plans are missing and even though it is possible to estimate threats, the communication between regional authorities and local communities can be improved (Inga Krämer). Furthermore a conflict between agriculture and tourism was identified in relation to water quality. Good weather conditions should be used more offensively to promote

spontaneous short trips, such as good wind for water sports. Furthermore the participants stressed the importance of information and motivation to act in order to cope with changing conditions.

The measures which came up during the discussion can be summarised briefly as follows:

short-term measures:

- closing beaches (e.g. during blue-green algal blooms)
- efficient distribution of intense tourist flows
- individual practical solutions upon specific situations (e.g. handing out umbrellas)

medium-term measures:

- promoting low season (e.g. with special offers)
- developing new sources of information (e.g. information leaflet about blue-green algae, employee training)
- sand nourishment (e.g. after storm floods)

long-term measures:

- financing beach protection measures
- flexible and optimised utilisation of low- and off-season
- cross-sectoral cooperation (e.g. science and tourism)

Following the discussion, Philipp Schmidt-Thomé (Geological Survey of Finland) presented the project BaltCICA and two case studies about successful public participation in the conception of long-term adaptation strategies in Latvia and Denmark. Inga Haller presented the project baltadapt and showed synergies between regional and Pan-European climate change adaptation: Climate change as a global challenge has to be seen in an international context, whereas adaptation often needs a regional scale to be efficient. A combination of both international and regional scales seems to be a fruitful attempt. Then, future RADOST activities were discussed as well as possible activities after the project is finished. Especially an improvement and building of regional climate information centres was favoured by the workshop participants.

At the end of the event, Kai-Michael Stybel (head of VMO) summarised the impressions of the workshop and pointed out that the workshop was an important step to implement the topic of climate change in the structure of his organisation without using horror scenarios for an unknown climate impacted future. A first step could be to develop a concept of action, which regulates the areas of responsibility and accessibility of the different authorities as well as efficient public communication. Mr Stybel closed the workshop with the vision that a sustainable approach to deal with climate change may be a competitive advantage in addressing a sustainable oriented target group.