



The 1st Baltic Sea Region Sustainable Tourism Awards: Promoting Sustainable and Competitive Tourism in the Baltic Sea Region

The COVID-19 pandemic is an unprecedented crisis for the travel and tourism economy, with very tangible impacts for many people, places and businesses. Global tourism will be hard hit throughout 2020 and perhaps beyond. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the global dimension of the tourism economy, and the need for a co-ordinated policy action at local, national, regional and international level, to build a more sustainable and resilient tourism economy, to support the transition to a green tourism economy in the nearest future.

In this context, we see the need to support recovery and shape the development of a sustainable and resilient tourism system.

Tourism provides real prospects to deliver benefits for people, places and businesses, but a suitable balance needs to be struck between the environmental, economic and social impacts. Innovative policy solutions are needed to mainstream sustainability in tourism policies and business practices, address the potentially damaging impacts on the natural environment, and maximise the benefits for host communities. The COVID-19 crisis presents an opportunity to rethinking the tourism system to promote the low carbon transition that will be needed to build a stronger, more sustainable, resilient and green tourism economy in the future, the time of NEW REALITY.

As global tourism trend indicates, with increasing diversification and ever-growing competition locally, nationally and internationally in tourism made destinations to reconsider their approach to tourism planning and management. On the one hand, destinations are required to search for the ways to enhance sustainability of their offering; while on the other, it is of crucial importance to ensure their sustainable positioning which have become particularly complex recently, facing the COVID.

2. Objectives of the Sustainable Tourism Awards

Sustainable tourism awards have been conferred worldwide to recognise achievements of diverse stakeholders for their contribution towards more sustainable and green tourism practices at the local, national, regional and international levels.

The major objective of the Baltic Sea Region Sustainable Tourism Awards is to provide a permanent platform to recognise initiatives and actions adhering the highest standards of



sustainability to support a balanced development of tourism in the Baltic Sea Region during and after the COVID-19 outbreak.

The goals of the Baltic Sea Region Sustainable Tourism Awards are:

- to feature the Baltic Sea Region's achievements towards sustainable tourism and position the Baltic Sea Region as a sustainable and competitive destination at the European and global scale;
- to provide a meaningful platform for best practices and know-how exchange within the Baltic Sea Region countries;
- to encourage involvement and foster cooperation among tourism stakeholders who are committed to sustainable and responsible tourism in all Baltic Sea Region countries;
- to promote the sustainable practices within the Baltic Sea Region;
- to stimulate tourism recovery and new sustainable initiatives during and after COVID.

3. Organisers of the Sustainable Tourism Awards

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region under Policy Area Tourism (hereinafter EUSBSR), the Baltic Sea Tourism Center, in close cooperation with the Tourism Policy Division of the Ministry of the Economy and Innovation of the Republic of Lithuania are the main organisers of the Baltic Sea Region Sustainable Tourism Awards.

4. Categories and Participants of the Sustainable Tourism Awards

The Baltic Sea Region Sustainable Tourism Awards aims to acknowledge the achievements in the field of sustainable tourism development in the Baltic Sea Region and positive changes and transformation of tourism business during and after COVID. Applicants are expected to indicate and proof how their activities are related to and contribute to sustainable tourism development, to positive and perspective tourism transformation in the Baltic Sea Region.

Only the Baltic Sea Region countries are eligible to take part at the Baltic Sea Region Sustainable Tourism Awards.

The Baltic Sea Region Sustainable Tourism Awards recognize achievements in the following categories:

- the most sustainable destination;
- the most sustainable product and exceptional services;
- the most sustainable private tourism services provider (business).



In the category of **the most sustainable destination**, every tourism destination shall be considered:

- cities;
- municipalities;
- communities;
- protected areas;
- cluster of tourist attractions;
- any other location or cluster of activities that is perceived as tourism destination by visitors.

Any providers of products and services can participate in the Baltic Sea Region Sustainable Tourism Awards in the category of **the most sustainable product and exceptional (COVID period) services**. These may include but not limited to:

- catering establishments;
- accommodation establishments;
- tour operations;
- tourism information centers;
- craft centers;
- providers of tourism attractions and experiences;
- establishments with provisions for services for tourism purposes.

In the area of **the most sustainable private tourism services provider (business)**, any private businesses with provisions for services for tourism purposes can partake in the Baltic Sea Region Sustainable Tourism Awards. However, private businesses have to provide substantial and tangible evidences for sustainable tourism business practices, processes, services and products.

5. Process of the Sustainable Tourism Competition: Application and Selection

The entire application and selection process of the Sustainable Tourism Awards takes place online. Such approach provides equal participation opportunities across the countries, complies with impartiality principle and features the organisers commitment towards sustainability.



Application and selection process

September	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The announcement and active promotion of the Competition (organised by countries). Official letter for Ministers and national coordinators of the EUSBSR PA Tourism• Start of the Competition - 27th of September (the World Tourism Day)
October	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The application period - till 31st October.• Applications should be send by email tps@eimin.lt. Pictures and videos could be added by wetransfer;• Online meeting of the Selection Committee (October 15 after the PA Tourism Steering Committee meeting);
November	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Online meeting of the Selection Committee. Final Election of 1 winner and 2 laureates in every category. November 3rd (online)• Invitations for the winners and laureates. November 4• The Awards Ceremony. November 11 (online).• The pizes for the winners and laureates (by mail) after November 13.

6. Selection Committee of the Sustainable Tourism Awards

The Selection Committee of the Baltic Sea Region Sustainable Tourism Awards consists of one member from the CBSS, European Travel Commission, Policy Area Tourism Coordinator, Baltic Sea Tourism Center, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Russia & Sweden, EU project “Youth Networking for Sustainable Tourism Development in the Baltic Sea Region”.

7. Selection Criteria of the Sustainable Tourism Awards

The geographical scope of the Baltic Sea Region is a key in all the Baltic Sea Region Sustainable Tourism Awards categories. Therefore, one of the major selection criteria that has to be met by all the participants is to show **how their activities are related to and contribute to sustainable tourism development in the Baltic Sea Region**. Taking into the consideration the COVID-19 outbreak and the topic of the 2020 of the CBSS and the BSR Tourism forum, the advantage will be given for young applicants (up to 35 years).



In the category of the most sustainable destination, the applicants have to provide the following information related to their destination:

1. Short **summary** of destination.
2. Briefly explain how your destination qualify for **the most sustainable destination** in terms of direct and indirect economic, environmental, and social and cultural impacts. What are the main differences from business-as-usual approach in your destination? What are your activities to recovery after the COVID-19 outbreak promoting local communities' local business, domestic travel?
3. Explain how your destination is related to and contribute to overall sustainable tourism development in **the Baltic Sea Region**.
4. Describe how the **governance, management and promotion of your destination** contribute to local, regional and global sustainability strategy and vision in your destination?
5. Describe how do you aim to **support the transition to a green tourism economy, reduce overall negative environmental impacts** in your destination, e.g. awareness raising, engagement of and with the community, provide information and facilities to recycle, opportunities to use environmentally-friendly means of transport (e.g. bicycles).
6. Describe how do you aim to **recovery and improve overall positive economic impacts** in your destination, e.g. transformation of business, building tourism offer based on local crafts and craftsmen, provide employment to local population, employment to unfavourable social groups (e.g. elderly, disabled), provide additional benefits for local population to engage in the economic activities locally.
7. Describe how do you aim to **improve overall positive social and cultural impacts** in your destination, e.g. effort to preserve and promote local cultural and natural assets, provide information about local natural, including protected areas, and cultural activities and sightseeing opportunities, preserve and promote local culture and traditions, use of innovative measures to protect and preserve local material and non-material heritage, provide opportunities for community members with special needs (e.g. elderly, disabled, families with young children) to participate in tourism-related activities, ensure that tourism providers offer authentic tourism services.
8. Describe how do you **raise awareness about and engage local communities and tourist with** sustainable tourism and its importance in your destination that involve your guests, tourism service producers and providers as well as local communities?
9. Have the destination management and local community leaders participated in any **training or capacity development programme** related to sustainable tourism development in the period of last three years?



10. Have your destination received a **sustainability-related award or recognition** of its sustainability efforts? If so, which one(s)?
11. Any other **relevant comment** you would like to add to your application.
12. Please provide up to 3 min. video illustrating the description.

In **the category of the most sustainable product and exceptional services**, the applicants have to provide:

1. Short **summary** of your products and services as well as the processes how they are produced and provided.
2. Briefly explain how your products and services as well as the processes how they are produced and provided qualify for **the most sustainable products or services** in terms of direct and indirect recovery after the COVID-9 outbreak, digitalisation, economic, environmental, and social and cultural impacts. What are the main differences from business-as-usual products and services?
3. Explain how your products and services are related to and contribute to sustainable tourism development in **the Baltic Sea Region** and recovery after COVID.
4. Describe how do you aim to **reduce negative environmental impacts** through your products and services as well as the processes how they are produced and provided, e.g. products or ingredients from sustainable and/or local sources, information and facilities to recycle, approaches to reduce waste (e.g. resources, food, packaging).
5. Describe how do you aim to **improve positive economic impacts** through your products and services as well as the processes how they are produced and provided, e.g. provide employment to local population, use of locally sourced products, ingredients and resources.
6. Describe how do you aim to **improve positive social and cultural impacts** through your products and services as well as the processes how they are produced and provided, e.g. employment to unfavourable social groups (e.g. elderly, disabled), promote local and/or regional heritage and traditions, provide opportunities to use your facilities for people with special needs (e.g. elderly, disabled, families with young children).
7. Describe how do you **raise awareness** about sustainable tourism and its importance in your activities that involve your customers and employees?
8. Have your team participated in any **training or capacity development programme** related to sustainable tourism in the period of last three years?
9. Have your products and services received a **sustainability-related certification and/or award**? If so, which one(s)?
10. Any other **relevant comment** you would like to add to your application, taking into the consideration the COVID and new reality.



11. Please provide up to 3 min. video illustrating the description.

In the category of the most sustainable private tourism services provider (business), the applicants have to provide:

1. Short **summary** of your business, including products, services and processes.
2. Briefly explain how your business practices, including products, services and processes qualify for **the most private tourism services provider** in terms of direct and indirect economic, environmental, and social and cultural impacts. What are the main differences from business-as-usual approach during the COVID and new reality?
3. Explain how your business is related to and contribute to sustainable tourism development in **the Baltic Sea Region and recovery**.
4. Describe how do you aim to **reduce negative COVID-19 and the environmental impacts** through your business, including products, services and processes, e.g. information and facilities to recycle, use of locally sourced and/or seasonal resources, preserve and promote natural protected areas, develop tourism services, digital services, approaches to reduce seasonality effects.
5. Describe how do you aim to **improve positive economic impacts and recovery** through your business, including products, services and processes, e.g. provide employment to local population, including to unfavourable social groups (e.g. elderly, disabled) in the field of tourism, provide opportunities to merchandise local crafts and food products.
6. Describe how do you aim to **improve positive social and cultural impacts** through your business, including products, services and processes, e.g. promote local material and non-material natural and cultural assets and traditions, use of innovative approaches, digitalisation to produce your products, services and in your business processes, provide opportunities for community members with special needs (e.g. elderly, disabled, families with young children) to participate in your activities.
7. Describe how do you **raise awareness** about sustainable tourism and its importance in your business and through your products, services and processes that involve employees, customers and local community?
8. Have your team participated in any **training or capacity development programme** related to sustainable tourism in the period of last three years?
9. Have your business, including products, services and processes, received a **sustainability-related recognition and/or award**? If so, which one(s)?
10. Any other **relevant comment** you would like to add to your application.
11. Please provide up to 3 min. video illustrating the description.



To ensure **consistency and the relevance of applications** for the Baltic Sea Region Sustainable Tourism Awards, every reply is limited to 150–300 words per reply. Applicants are advised, if relevant, to submit up to 5 high resolution photos supporting their statements in the applications and up to 3 min. video illustrating the description.

The submissions are evaluated as per evaluation scale in the table 2 below.

Table 1. Evaluation scale

Score	Meaning	Explanation
1	Insufficient (no impact)	No evidence of activity, unrelated to the criterion under the question, no attention to the COVID-19 impact.
2	Sufficient (low impact)	Little evidence of activity and little relation to the criterion under the question, little attention to the COVID-19 impact..
3	Good (average impact)	Evidence of activity and poor relation to the criterion under the question, the attention to the COVID-19 impact.
4	Very good (high impact)	Clear evidence of an activity, the target public is provided sustainable tourism experience in the field of a category, clear attention to the COVID-19 impact.
5	Excellent (exceptional impact)	Clear evidence of an activity generating a systemic change that has significantly empowered the target audience and contributed to sustainable tourism development in the region, clear attention and focussed activities to reduce the COVID-19 impact. The support the transition to a green tourism economy is important.

8. Award Ceremony of the Sustainable Tourism Competition

The online Award Ceremony will be organised on November 11, 2020.

9. Promotion of the Sustainable Tourism Awards and the winners

Publication about the winners on the BSTC website.

Special prize, created by local Lithuanian artists.