

Smart Blue Regions

Output 4.3 - Transnational blue growth cooperation projects

Project name:

Improving quality of coastal tourism destinations in the BSR

Challenge to be addressed:

1. Tourism experiences are based on services and their quality in the whole of destination. One bad experience can ruin the whole experience and give bad reputation to the whole destination. Thus, quality improvement (customer experience) must be based on cooperation and joint development work among all or most of the actors in one tourism destination. Product and service development to match customers' expectations still needs a lot of work and developing of cooperation models.
2. Quality development of tourism destinations around the BSR is important so that the BSR can better profile itself as a sustainable and high-quality tourism area. Spreading the word on best practices and, for examples, principles of sustainable tourism development are important and need better coordination and cooperation. Because customers demand responsibility from enterprises, developing sustainable and responsible business is a natural part of quality improvement work.
3. Quality development is usually based on different quality programs and labels of individual enterprises. The aim of the project is thus not to create new quality programs, standards or labels but to rely on existing quality programmes and standards and to improve their implementation. The aim is to find practical ways to implement those quality programs. One of the results of the project will be to create a comprehensive plan with best practices on how to better improve quality and how to better monitor results in different tourism destinations.
4. Tourism enterprises around the BSR are often small and they lack developmental resources. Being part of a quality network in a destination makes participation of SMEs possible. Destination-level means that each partner destination would have several businesses from different fields of business such as accommodation, restaurants, museums etc.

Expected results:

Comparing different quality programmes gives an understanding on how different kinds of programmes fit for different kinds of enterprises. It also offers a low threshold for small enterprises, that normally don't have resources for an actual quality programme of their own, to participate.

Through cross border cooperation, coastal tourism destinations can share experiences on developing quality and sustainability in tourism. It also provides an opportunity for peer-learning. At the same time, the actors find common concepts on quality and an understanding on models of sustainable development. Destinations get also more understanding on needs of different customer target groups and ways with which to answer to them.

Actors in the destination get concrete tools for developing quality and sustainability. They also get tools to better use knowledge on customer experience and customer feedback in developing their

services. The destinations form innovational quality development networks. These networks act as a best practice for active collaboration among different kinds of tourism actors.

A main output, a model for developing quality and responsibility, will fit for all destinations. It will save resources, is suitable also for small enterprises and makes use of regional characteristics and expertise.

The project will create an international developmental peer review and quality network.

Target groups:

Regional tourism organizations, R&D organizations, tourism businesses

Main activities and timeframe:

1. Kick off workshops in each partner region. Defining of common strengths and goals.
Creation of local teams.
2. Mapping of current regional statuses: Services, customer satisfaction, staff satisfaction, current status of sustainable development in the area etc.
3. A joint kick off event where the results of regional workshops and mappings are put together. Each partner will send its representatives (1-3 persons) to participate in the event.
4. Developmental actions based on the results of regional workshops are decided. Workshops on product and service development are organized. Utilizing of expertise in experience management, service design and digitalization to create products and services of higher quality.
 - a. Sparring the enterprises: Sustainability, digitalization, service design, experientiality etc.
 - b. Increasing knowledge on other actors in the destination: Visiting other enterprises to get a better grasp of available services, thus being able to recommend other service providers for customers when needed.
5. Each regional team will create an international cross-border team that collects the developmental actions to a handbook and makes plans for future actions.
6. Annual status checks, peer review visits to other destinations and benchmarkings.
7. Determining the customer paths in each destination and improving them. Customer's journey from marketing information to purchase, from travel experience to after sales marketing.
8. Possibly an employee exchange programme between different destinations. Exchange programmes will provide the employees a deeper understanding of regional quality standards and needs of customers from different target groups (such as customers from a certain country).
9. Creating best practices and distributing them. Also giving recommendations for developmental actions.

Partnership:

City of Turku, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Turku Tourism academy and enterprises around the area. Similar actors from other regions or destinations.

Estimated budget:

2-3 million euros

Financing sources:

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Other remarks for further project development:

The project could make use of innovative collaboration methods such as the signal session model, webinars etc.

More information:

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