



PARKS & BENEFITS
Baltic protected areas and tourism

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Generating socio-economic effects by a sustainable management of protected areas for the benefit of their regions

Background:

The **Baltic Sea Region (BSR)** holds many sites of typical Baltic or even outstanding natural heritage which are preserved in protected areas. Nature tourism has the potential to be an important and sustainable element of regional economies within and around these protected areas if it respects the conservation and development objectives of these areas.

Up until now this economic potential remains underdeveloped and offers vast possibilities for the development of tourism, public-private partnerships and improved nature conservation. At the same time the existing economic performance can be widely underestimated. This often results in misleading discussions and prejudices about the use of nature protection. For a true sustainable development all stakeholders within regions with protected areas need to practice cooperation and communication on an equal footing.

PARKS & BENEFITS

The PARKS & BENEFITS project came to an end on 24th January 2012. It was a great success for the partners involved and in the results it produced. Many of these publications and reports produced within the project and experiences collected are useful for other protected areas across Europe and around the world. You can read more about them on the project news pages.

The project aimed to ensure the sustainable regional development in eight large protected areas in six countries around the Baltic Sea. The project's main instrument was the transfer of EUROPARC's "European Charter For Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas" to the Baltic Sea Region and its joint implementation in National, Regional and Nature Parks and a Biosphere Reserve.

The project studied and highlighted the economic, ecological and social benefits of sustainable tourism for both the protected areas and the regional stakeholders. Among the results a network of protected areas around the Baltic Sea was developed, new nature tourism products were created and an increased commitment of citizens and tourism entrepreneurs to the Charter and their protected sites was achieved.

Organisation and Partners:

PARKS & BENEFITS was a first round “Baltic Sea Region Programme” project, that ran from February 2009 to January 2012.

New concepts to secure the diversity of ecosystems in BSR emphasise a larger-scale management together with a regional approach. Reflecting on these approaches, the PARKS & BENEFITS partnership consisted of 18 partners from six different BSR countries. The partnership was made up of eight large protected areas across the BSR, regional authorities, stakeholders in tourism and environment and academic institutions.

The network was lead by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Consumer Protection of Mecklenburg Vorpommern (DE) and backed by the EUROPARC Federation as the European umbrella organisation for protected areas and strategic project partner.

For results from the project and more information please visit the [project website](#).