Sustainable Tourism Development and Recreational Use in the Wadden Sea Region

by NetForum

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General information

This report presents the results of four workshops held by NetForum, an "expert laymen's" group. NetForum consisted of representatives from the tourism sector, environmental and recreational interest organisations, the municipalities, counties, and from the trilateral governmental level. NetForum was an independent forum established on the initiative of the Inter-regional Wadden Sea Cooperation in consultation with stakeholder organisations, with the goal of developing policies for sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea Region.

The report is divided thematically into the following sections:
Section 1 gives IRWC information on cross-bordering co-operations in the Wadden Sea Region, the principles of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and the background for NetForum.
The "Guiding Principles" and "Strategic Goals and Tools", which are the frameworks upon which the proposed policies have been built, are described in section 2: Guiding Principles for Sustainable Tourism.
The sections 3-7 are divided thematically into Nature and Recreational Activities, Culture and Cultural Tourism, Accommodation Facilities, Accessibility and Transport and Follow-up Activities.
Each section is further subdivided into a description, including explanations of NetForum's opinions, illustrative examples, proposals for policies, and proposals for projects.

NetForum has aimed at reaching consensus on most proposals. Where this has not been possible, it is marked with a ~

The Political Context

In 1994-95 the Danish Counties of Ribe and Southern Jutland, the Dutch Provinces of Groningen, Friesland and Noord-Holland and the German State of Schleswig-Holstein established the Inter-regional Wadden Sea Cooperation.
At their 3rd Inter-regional Conference in 1997, they agreed upon joint visions for the sustainable development of tourism and recreational use in the entire Wadden Sea Region for the next 20 years, i.e. the Wadden Sea, the Wadden Sea islands and the adjacent mainland areas.
In addition, they decided on the development of proposals for common policies for sustainable tourism development to be done with as much local involvement as possible.

The Report was the subject of an extensive consultation round in August/September 1999 involving relevant stakeholder organisations in the Wadden Sea Region of Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, before the submission to the Tourism Conference in November 1999 in Stade with the expectation that the Conference would give further input to the finalisation of the Report.

Follow-up by the Inter-Regional Wadden Sea Cooperation

The IRWC will deal with the contents of the Report and ensure that the proposals are dealt with as part of the regional political considerations, to the 9th Trilateral Governmental Conference in 2001.

IRWC presents the results to the European Commission as part of the reporting of the EU demonstration projects on Integrated Coastal Zone Management.
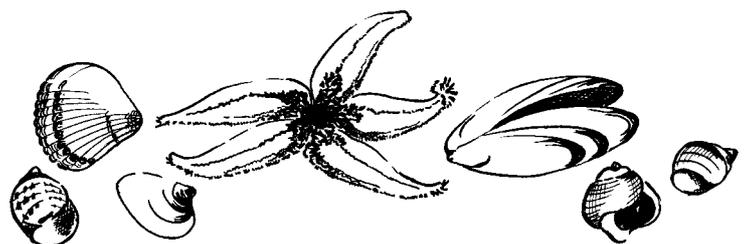
0. Summary

Section 1: Introduction

Cross-border co-operation concerning the Wadden Sea Region has a long tradition. At the end of the 1970s national and international co-operative initiatives on the protection of the Wadden Sea were launched, in which governmental authorities at different levels together with various interest groups played a substantial role.

Today the main cross-border co-operations are:

- the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation (governmental level)

- the Inter-regional Wadden Sea Cooperation (regional level)

- the EUregio the Wadden (municipal level)

- the environmental organisations the Dutch Wadden Society and the German and Danish World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) launched the oldest cross-border co-operation. It started some years before the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation was initiated.

The Tourism project of which the work of NetForum is an essential part is also one of 35 EU-demonstration projects, which the Commission launched in 1996 on Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM). ICZM is defined by the European Commission as a dynamic, continuous and iterative process designed to promote sustainable management of coastal zones, in the member states.

Section 2: Guiding Principles

8-10 million tourists visit the Wadden Sea Region annually, the main reason is the unique nature. They are primarily families, but there is also a significant number of "senior citizens". Most of them come from the Wadden Sea countries themselves.
In almost every part of the Region, tourism is an important economic activity in terms of both income and employment. On most of the islands and at some of the mainland locations it is the most important economic activity.

The direct benefit to the local municipalities derived from tourism differs in the three countries:
- in Denmark a complex system of calculation of all the municipalities' needs means that the income from tourism goes to the state and is then divided among all Danish municipalities according to estimations of general needs of funding for all the municipal activities;

- in Germany the "kurtax" system in "kurorte" gives those locations a direct benefit, which they are obliged to use in improving and maintaining the tourism infrastructure;

- in the Netherlands municipalities can demand tax from the tourists in forms of an extra fee on overnight stays, ferry tickets, etc. The tax goes to the municipal treasury and can be used for general purposes.
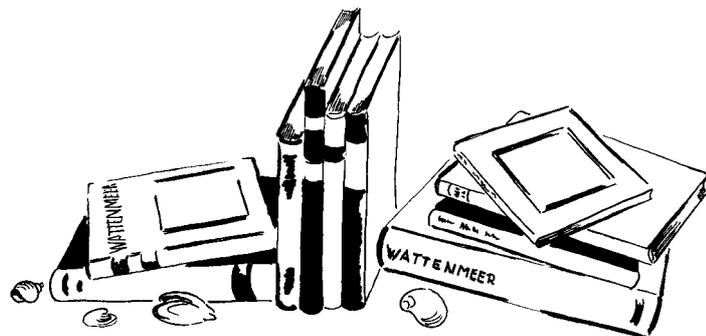
Opportunities from tourism
- maintains and creates income
- supports the maintenance of viable communities
- supports the maintenance of the natural and cultural heritage

Challenges from tourism
- prospects of jobs all year round
- dependency on it as the main source of income and job creation demands a continuous development of the tourism product
- the seasonal variations in employment should not hinder the maintenance and creation of a continuous development of jobs
- limiting the negative impact on the social life in local communities and characteristic natural and cultural aspects as much as possible
- ensuring the local population's influence on development and management of tourism
- ensuring continuous evaluation of the tourism development to avoid irreparable damage to nature

The expected global trends that will influence the development of sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea Region include the following:
- a general growth in the tourism sector worldwide
- competition will be global
- the tourist season will extend over the whole year
- tourists will be more active and demand better information
- tourists will demand customer oriented solutions
- tourists will be concerned about development and demand sustainable solutions on all levels.

The expected Wadden Sea trends that will influence the development include the following:
- the Region will be used more actively, which might result in a higher burden on nature

- new technologies in the field of information will attract more tourists
- the increasing economic volume will attract more external investors
- marketing will highlight special qualities and be targeted at specific groups
- the Region will have to adapt to tourism all year round by attracting new target groups
- accommodation facilities will have to specialise to suit certain target groups
- sailing with displacement (slow motor) boats will remain an important activity, especially in the Dutch and German parts of the Region.

Vision and Guiding Principles for sustainable Tourism

NetForum proposes the following vision for sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea Region:

"To enhance the reputation of the Wadden Sea Region as a high quality tourist destination, by building on its internationally important coastal environment, history, culture and the hospitality of its people".

Sustainable tourism is defined as ecologically preservable, economically viable and socially acceptable.

Summary

NetForum has identified two guiding principles which express the long-term aims:

A joint understanding on implementation of sustainable tourism

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A continuous process of weighing recreational, economic, social and associated interests against general and specific protection aims in a way suitable for maintaining natural and cultural assets for future generations. Unreasonable impairments of the interests of the local population and its traditional uses in the Wadden Sea Area have to be avoided.

The main basis for the development of sustainable tourism is the uniqueness of the nature, landscape, culture and the local communities

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- The Wadden Sea Region should be maintained as a unique coastal landscape and natural area.
- It is essential that the local communities and the local population benefit from tourism to the fullest extent possible.
- In agreement with the local population, the Wadden Sea Region should aim at developing high quality tourism at all levels.
- The Wadden Sea Region should achieve a unique selling position through its combination of unique natural assets and cultural attractions.

The strategic goals and tools to fulfil the guiding principles are:

- safeguarding natural assets
- emphasising cultural and historical assets
- developing partnerships
- improving the tourism opportunities in terms of local welfare
- improving the information available to tourists
- encouraging the use of best available knowledge
- improving sustainable transport to and within the Region

Furthermore, NetForum finds it useful to apply the principles of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) in cross-border co-operations.

Section 3: Nature and Recreational Activities

Tourism in coastal areas such as that of the Wadden Sea is based on intact nature and the recreational activities are related both to the land and the water. The Region is also a place where people live, work and spend their leisure time. If future generations are to enjoy the qualities of the Region it is essential that a long-term strategy is implemented. Without natural assets there can be no outdoor recreation.

The best available knowledge should be used as a starting point with regard to the carrying capacity. Area, species and time limit the carrying capacity of nature for recreational activities. There is no general carrying capacity level for the Region as a whole.

Future management of natural assets must be based upon a more precise balance of exploitation and conservation than has hitherto existed. Zoning in time and space and concentration of activities should be better applied both to preserve natural assets and meet the demands of tourism

NetForum is of the opinion that:

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a **the existing system of regulations and zoning tends to be inflexible. Where possible, regulations should be replaced by information.**
a **the information concerning nature currently provided to tourists is, however, of an uneven quality as no common concept for the whole Region exists.**
a **it is important to maintain the variety of recreational activities. Avoidance of activities, which have an undesirable impact on nature and/or other interests, should be ensured by providing information and by flexible zoning. Prohibition should only be used if there are no other possibilities.**

a **seen from an environmental point of view some recreational facilities are problematic because of their consumption of energy, space, water and fertiliser.**
a **building of such facilities should, in the opinion of some members of NetForum, be avoided, while other members are of the opinion that careful examination is sufficient. ~**

Some illustrative examples are:

- in the Netherlands a "Code of Behaviour" has been implemented with the aim of presenting short and understandable guidelines for visitor behaviour. The Code has been developed by a group of stakeholders in collaboration with the authorities.
- in the district of Nordfriesland in Germany, the stakeholders within tourism have been involved from the beginning in the development of a joint local concept of tourism.
- in Denmark special areas for certain recreational activities have been designated in order to prevent conflicts between different types of recreational use.
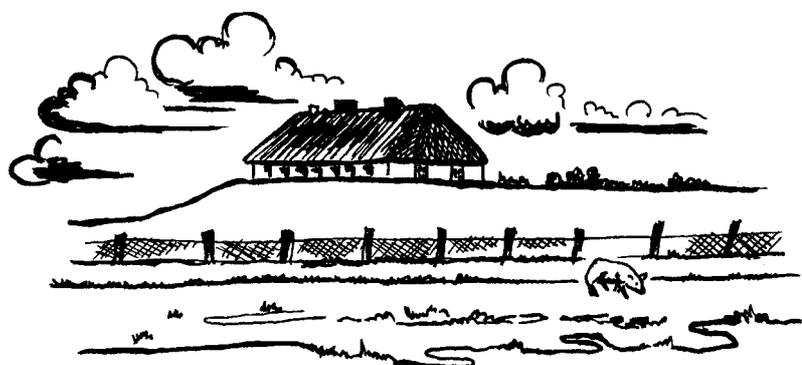
Summary

NetForum recommends the following common policies:

1 support the trilateral protection aims for the Wadden Sea on all levels, also with respect to protection against pollution

2 apply the principles of precaution and careful decision-making in situations where there is a risk that natural assets or ecological processes can be permanently damaged

3 start communication among residents, users, interest groups and the authorities as early in the decision-making process as possible

4 replace regulations by information whenever possible

5 only use further regulations for precautionary protection of nature or where and if absolutely necessary on the basis of monitoring results

6 improve monitoring of the impact of recreational activities on nature

7 improve flexibility within the existing zoning system in time and space in designated nature reserves and National Parks ~

8 develop user-friendly information material through close co-operation and co-ordination among the stakeholders

9 make the trilateral dimension more visible in information material than it is today

10 build recreational facilities in accordance with the natural and cultural values, and building should meet sustainable standards

11 restrict recreational activities with an undesirable impact on nature to suitable areas or prohibit them entirely

12 establish reception facilities for oil and other types of waste as well as other necessary facilities at all harbours.

Additional suggestions for projects to support the realisation of the policies are: to develop a (transnational) digital information system which integrates information about nature and cultural and historical information; an information package which integrates information about sustainable visitor behaviour; activities for joint marketing and establishment of joint criteria for and monitoring of tourism.

Section 4: Culture and Cultural Tourism

Culture can be viewed as comprising what people:
- *think* (attitudes, ideas, values)
- do (ways of life, behaviour patterns) and
- *make* (architecture, crafts and artwork)

Culture is composed of processes as well as the products of these processes.

The tangible elements linked to cultural tourism are buildings, historical towns and villages, archaeological monuments, museums and technical structures and installations such as windmills. The intangible elements are events (e.g. music festivals, church concerts), traditions and customs, history, language and food cover both "heritage tourism", related to artefacts of the past, and "art tourism", related to the contemporary cultural production.

There are few "pure" cultural tourists in the Region, because the majority of the tourists perceive the culture as part of their overall experience.

Common culture developed due to intensive trade. The old sea-traffic routes along the Wadden Sea Coast were important in the creation of certain customs. Apart from trade, whaling has also been an important common feature, especially on the islands.

An example of the common cultural elements of recent times is the traces of man's interaction with, and use of, the natural resources, which has given the entire Region a landscape formed by agriculture, where windmills and the modern ways of water-management are prominent features.

The special natural conditions under which the culture has developed allow the Region to offer the tourist an insight into a special area of European history, in which man has had a distinct role not only in the creation of the culture itself, but also in the development of a unique landscape.
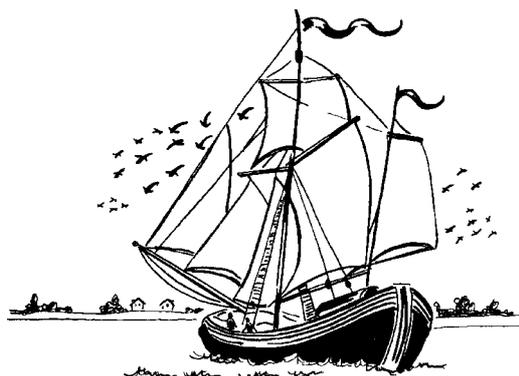
The continued, living existence of the traditional "Wadden Sea Culture" is essential for sustainable tourism development in the entire Region and the survival of many small communities, especially on the mainland.

Here, heightened public awareness of, and pride in, the common cultural heritage and its unique characteristics, are one of the preconditions for success.

NetForum finds that cultural tourism should be developed in such a way that it, amongst other things:

- **first and foremost benefits the local population**
- **contributes to lengthening the season (provided it does not lead to a negative impact on the cultural, social and natural assets)**
- **combines existing cultural and natural attractions**
- **creates synergy between nature and culture related tourism which could lead to more tourists in areas not often visited today**

In all three countries cultural tourism is a field where the responsibility and power to exercise influence on the development are, to a great extent, in the hands of the local municipalities. However, not all municipalities and counties currently demonstrate an awareness of this in their

day-to-day policies, nor of the fact that local initiatives in the field of culture can create new job and income opportunities.

Some illustrative examples of sustainable tourism are:
- in the Netherlands historic sailing ships are used for tours on the Wadden Sea
- in the district of Dithmarschen in Germany a guide to all the natural and cultural attractions has been developed
- in Denmark tours to visit the bunkers from World War II are offered at several locations along the coast

NetForum recommends the following common policies:

1 **increase the awareness of the values of cultural identity of the Region among the local residents and raise the level of consciousness of the values of the Region among the visitors**
2 **strengthen the efforts to preserve the common cultural heritage and use it as a tourist selling point**
3 **consider the use of the site for cultural tourism when deciding on preservation ("Schützen durch Nützen")**
4 **raise the economic standard of the Region by creating better assets in cultural tourism**
5 **strengthen the framework in the tourism sector**

Proposals for projects to support the realisation of the policies are for example: the development of joint marketing of cultural activities; a gastronomy award and an educational package on regional history.

Section 5: Accommodation

The type, standard and price level of accommodation facilities are essential aspects for the tourists' experience of the Wadden Sea Region and together they constitute one of the most important factors in determining whether to go to and where to stay in the Region.

The accommodation facilities are also a dominant factor in terms of job-creation.
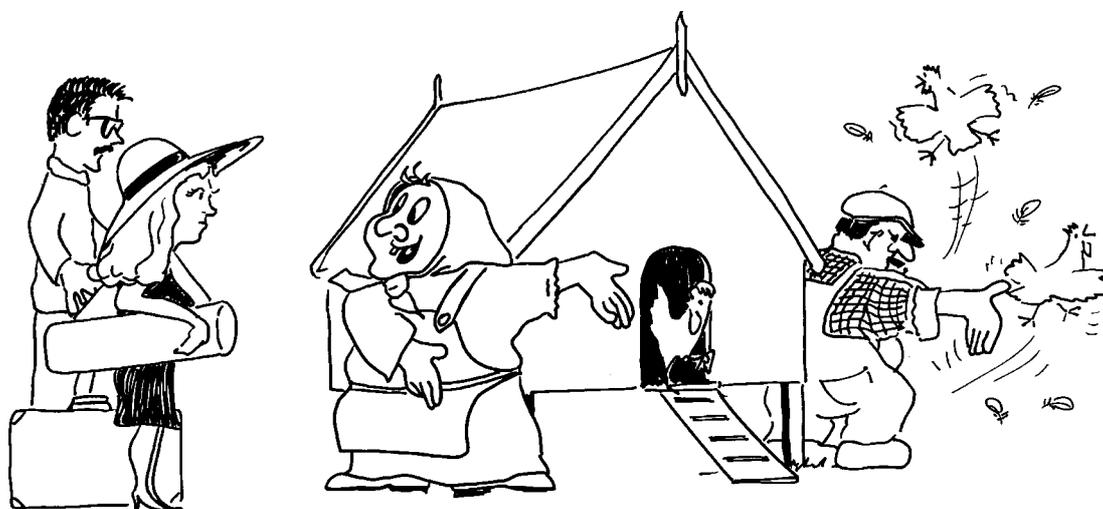
Local planning in the coastal zone of the whole Region is to a large extent related to the location and visibility of the accommodation facilities and encompasses fresh-water supply, waste handling, infrastructure etc.

Lodging Capacity and Overnight Stays
In Denmark the lodging capacity has almost doubled since the mid-seventies; in Germany it has increased by approximately 11 %, whereas in the Netherlands there has been no increase. The total lodging capacity in the Region is approximately 295,000 beds.

The accommodation facilities in all three countries are concentrated on the islands and in certain areas on the mainland. The legacy of recent decades in the form of buildings which do not fit in with the environment is evident throughout the Region.

The dominant accommodation facilities in Denmark are summer cottages and to some extent, campsites, whereas the picture in the two other countries is more differentiated. Holiday apartments and hotels play a considerable role, as do overnight stays in boats in the Netherlands.

The number of overnight stays in the whole Region has increased by almost 40% in the last 20 years. Today the total number of overnight stays is approximately 53 mill. per year.
There are few "luxury" facilities in the Region.

The diverse structure of accommodation facilities should be ensured
NetForum finds it essential that the diverse structure of the accommodation facilities is ensured and that development of new facilities in the rural and inland areas should be encouraged, provided that traffic problems are solved beforehand and the individual, regional character is not lost.
Furthermore, it is the opinion of NetForum that the refurbishment and renovation of existing facilities should be given priority over the building of new facilities.
The quality of the facilities should correspond to the customers' requirements, including the needs of senior citizens and the disabled.
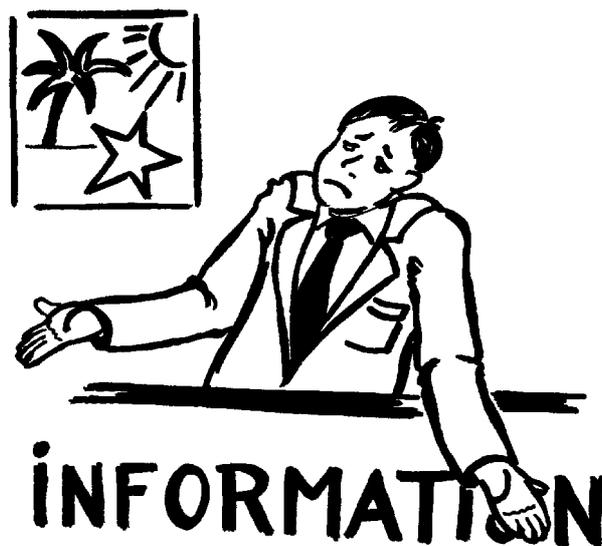
Summary

**The accommodation facilities
have to develop in a sustainable way**
Sustainable solutions and behaviour in the field of accommodation form an essential part of an increased quality-price awareness. They have to be introduced as a second step in the development of a transparent and comparable classification system throughout the Region. The introduction will be a long-term process, which has to be adjusted by the tourist operators through motivation and advice.

**Qualitative Development of Tourism
must be Economically Sustainable**
In many remote areas tourism is in fact the only commercial activity. There is a risk that this dependency can threaten the survival of these "isolated" communities. Entering agreements (partnerships) with the remaining local farmers for the supply of products to hotels is one way to counter or avoid this development.

The ownership structure in the tourism sector has traditionally consisted of many small and medium-sized enterprises. Owners of these enterprises often fight hard to survive and lack time (but not the will) to deal with qualitative improvements, such as use of new technology, sustainable operation, better promotion, etc. The local authorities could support improvement of the quality by, for example, initiating seminars and courses developed in co-operation with local and national tourism organisations.
Also, To compete in the future a digitalised booking system should cover the local, regional and national market.

It is also essential that the jobs related to tourism are made attractive for qualified people. A rise in year-round tourism is one of the preconditions for such a development.

The improvement of existing offers and the development of new offers for new target groups are essential to fulfil this.

Some illustrative examples are:
- in the Netherlands the organisation for operators in the field of campsites and summer cottages has introduced an "Environmental Barometer"
- in Germany the organisation of hotels and restaurants has established a competition for "Environmentally Friendly Hotels and Restaurants"
- in Denmark the "Green Key," a certification system for sustainable running of accommodation facilities has been working for several years and is well-known and accepted.

NetForum recommends the following common policies:

1. maintain the diversification of accommodation facilities
2. avoid extending the accommodation facilities, use the existing capacity more efficiently
3. encourage the development of accommodation facilities in the inland municipalities, provided that traffic problems are solved beforehand and the individual, regional character is not lost
4. ensure that the accommodation and recreational facilities meet the requirements of sustainability in terms of location, architecture and technical requirements
5. renovate old facilities and develop new ones based on local/regional characteristics
6. develop common criteria for sustainable accommodation, environmentally friendly restaurants and other recreational facilities

7 **make the systems of quality of accommodation (star classification) comparable**

8 **initiate local partnerships between the tourism industry and primary production industries to help ensure a sustainable development in local communities**

9 **extend the marketing of the Wadden Sea Region as a destination for which the "green profile" of each of the various regions is defined and promoted**

Additional suggestions for projects to support the realisation of the policies are for example: the promotion of "Sustainable Standards" for accommodation in combination with a Code-of-conduct; a backpack of sustainable holiday arrangements and facilities for the less mobile and disabled.

Section 6: Accessibility and Transport

Access to the coastal zone is, except for the main roads to the larger sea-side towns in the three countries, composed of a network of small roads which become congested in the peak season(s) with consequent local problems and long travelling times. These problems are worst in the vicinity of the seaside towns with ferry connections to the islands and other tourism hot-spots such as beaches, attractive sightseeing points and in the villages. The days on which accommodation periods change, also create problems such as traffic jams.

The smaller towns in the German part of the Region in particular have no bypasses around the town-centres. Construction of too many new roads may have an undesirable impact upon the landscape, but is probably a necessary solution for some towns.

Driving and parking cars on beaches is allowed in Denmark. In Sct. Peter Ording in Schleswig-Holstein parking on beaches in certain areas is permitted.

There are railways from the main cities to the main tourism centres along the coast. The number of actual train fares is often limited and travelling by train into the Wadden Sea Region requires several changes.

Busses are mainly used for local transport within the Region and the density of the bus-network varies. Busses are also chartered for day trips. Aeroplanes are mostly used for private or chartered transport. The need of disabled tourists for adequate public transport facilities and help with luggage etc. is only taken into account at a small number of locations in the Wadden Sea Region.

The public transport facilities are thus, generally speaking, poorly developed into and within the Wadden Sea Region and cannot currently be regarded as a viable alternative to the use of private cars.

Summary

High-speed ferries are to a limited extent used in the Dutch and German parts of the Region. Normally, they do not pose a problem if they stay in the main waterways, but in places where the waterways are shared by water sport activities, the ferries can cause additional inconvenience. There are no high-speed ferries in the Danish part of the Wadden Sea.

It is expected that the tourists' demand for faster transport to their destinations due to the increase in shorter and more frequent holidays will increase. Therefore it is essential to ensure that the use of high-speed ferries does not conflict with the overall goal of sustainable development.

NetForum does not find it acceptable to implement traditional solutions to traffic problems, i.e. making better and wider highways and roads and increasing the number of parking places.

Some illustrative examples are:
- in the Netherlands "Park and Ride Systems" have been used for many years;
- the municipality of Schiermonikoog is paying to maintain cheap and secure parking on the mainland to avoid cars on the island;
- in Lower Saxony in Germany, car traffic is prohibited on almost all the Wadden Sea islands;
- in Bad Reichenhall in Bavaria a project during a ten year period has contributed to the reduction of car-traffic in the town centre;
- the "BodenseeClick" is an Internet based computer system, which facilitates the use of public transportation in the Bodensee Area;
- in Denmark flexible arrival and departure days have been introduced at several of the tourist hot-spots.

NetForum recommends the following common policies:

1 ensure that all policies on minimisation of car traffic are sustainable
2 improve public transport connections (trains, busses) into and within the Wadden Sea Region
3 avoid fragmentation of the landscape
4 improve the infrastructure by taxation parking fee etc. ~
5 make different arrival and departure days for tourists in the different areas
6 introduce convenient luggage transportation to holiday destinations
7 make the use of public transportation economically competitive with the use of private cars
8 promote and provide information concerning public transport facilities
9 minimise environmental problems and disturbance to tourists caused by air traffic
10 no new airfields should be built in the Wadden Sea Region ~
11 minimum flight altitude should be 2000 feet ~
12 avoid further high-speed ferries in the Wadden Sea Region ~
13 avoid negative environmental impacts from high-speed ferries and other fast vessels
14 extend the visitor information system to all ferries
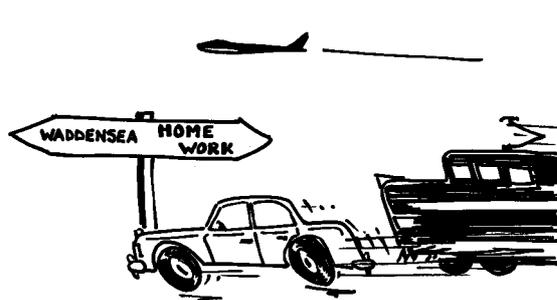
Additional suggestions for projects to support the realisation of the policies are for example: the introduction of Park and Ride systems at Hot Spots and the establishment and promotion of alternative transport-systems on islands with excessive car traffic.

Section 7: Follow Up Activities

It is the task of the Inter-regional Wadden Sea Cooperation, having commissioned the NetForum to develop proposals for a sustainable tourism development in the Wadden Sea Region, to initiate, co-ordinate and facilitate the follow-up activities in a further participatory process with the stakeholders.

Furthermore, NetForum invites the Inter-regional Wadden Sea Cooperation to share the valuable experiences with the participatory approach with a larger community, in particular, the European Union and the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation.

Finally NetForum emphasises that the occasion of the regularly held Trilateral Governmental Conferences, of which the forthcoming one will be held in Denmark in autumn 2001, should be used as a focal point for future work on this issue and for the presentation and evaluation of projects as well as the creation of further common commitments.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Wadden Sea Region in a European Context

For thousands of years man has lived, resided and worked in harmony with the natural rhythm of life of the Wadden Sea. In the course of the last century and especially from the middle of this century the influence of man has increased through the development of technical possibilities and economic opportunities, sometimes in disharmony with nature.

There are few, if any, coastal zones in Europe with as many potential fields of conflict between nature and mankind as the Wadden Sea Region. One of the reasons is the fact that the International Wadden Sea Area is a natural area of world-wide importance, but also has a vital commercial significance for large parts of Europe.

Some of Europe's largest cities and industrial areas are situated in the catchment area of the Wadden Sea. A large part of the pollution from this area is discharged, directly or indirectly, into the Wadden Sea through the rivers Rhine, Ems, Weser and Elbe.
The Wadden Sea borders the North Sea, one of the seas with the heaviest traffic in the world, and it is the only gateway to the rest of the world for large central and coastal zones of Europe. The exploration for oil and gas both in the North Sea and the Wadden Sea has increased and strong national interests are involved in this.

The Wadden Sea Region also holds a great fascination for tourists, because of its scenery and distinctive ecological and cultural character.

Millions of tourists visit the Region each year. Tourism creates a considerable benefit for local and regional economic and social development. In many areas it exceeds farming and fishery as the most important source of income for the inhabitants.

1.2 Cross-border Co-operation

In the beginning of the 1970s, national and international co-operative initiatives on the protection of the Wadden Sea were launched, in which governmental authorities at different levels, together with various interest groups, played a substantial role. Cross-border co-operation with regard to the Wadden Sea has thus a long tradition in the three Wadden Sea Countries.

1.2.1 The Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation
During the last 20 years the decisions from the Trilateral Governmental Conferences have had an increasing influence on the common development in the Wadden Sea Area. Through this and initiatives at other levels, a common understanding of the Wadden Sea as an area with unique natural and cultural assets, which has to be protected both for future generations and as the basis for the livelihood of the current local inhabitants, through, for example, tourism, has been reached.

In 1978 the first Trilateral Governmental Conference on the Protection of the Wadden Sea was held between the three governments. Since 1978 Wadden Sea Conferences of the relevant ministers have been held regularly.
In October 1997 the 8th Wadden Sea Conference was held in Stade, Germany. Here a Trilateral Wadden Sea Plan was adopted, constituting the overall framework for the future management of the Wadden Sea Area.

In the Wadden Sea Plan, the three countries agreed upon a shared vision, which encompasses the countries' aspirations:

- *"a healthy environment which maintains the diversity of habitats and species, its ecological integrity and resilience as a global responsibility*

- *sustainable use*

- *maintenance and enhancement of values of ecological, economical, historical, cultural, social and coastal protection nature meeting the aspirations of and providing enjoyment for the inhabitants and users;*

- *integrated management of human activities which takes into account the socio-economic and ecological relationship between the Wadden Sea Area and adjacent areas;*

- *an informed, involved and committed community".*

1.2.2 The Inter-regional Wadden Sea Cooperation

In 1994 the Inter-regional Wadden Sea Cooperation (IRWC) was established. Today it consists of the three Dutch Provinces of Nord-Holland, Fryslân and Groningen, the German districts of Dithmarschen and Nordfriesland in Schleswig-Holstein and the two Danish Counties of Southern Jutland and Ribe.

In 1995, at the 2nd Inter-regional Conference, the regions agreed to co-operate more closely with the aim of the conservation and sustainable use of the whole International Wadden Sea Region. At their 3rd Inter-regional Conference in 1997 (Husum), the regions also decided to base their co-operation on the principles of "subsidiarity" and "integration".

Furthermore, they agreed upon joint visions of the sustainable development of tourism and recreational use in the entire Wadden Sea Region for the next 20 years, taking into account local concepts and the following items:

- *"assessment of the current tourism development and recreational activities in relation to the impact on nature and environment as well as the socio-economic climate in the Region. This will include putting forward common criteria for which types of activities do not seem to accord with the preservation of the Wadden Sea environment;*

- *proposal as to how sustainable tourism can be developed (qualitatively and quantitatively) without long term impact on the environment;*

- *proposal for which areas within the Region that have a development potential ecologically and socio-economically;*

- *proposal as to how cross-border management, built on joint principles, can be incorporated into the existing national and EU-related provisions and regulations."*

The Husum Report on sustainable tourism and other material concerning tourism development in the Wadden Sea Region have provided the basis for the work carried out in NetForum.

1.2.3 Other Cross-border Co-operations in the Wadden Sea Region

The Dutch, German and Danish Wadden Sea islands have co-operated since the 80s. In spring 1999 the "EUregio the Wadden" was established, in order to enable better co-operation on common issues and activities and to attract funding for activities and projects.

The co-operation with regard to the Wadden Sea between the environmental organisations of the three countries almost certainly has the longest tradition of any of the co-operative ventures mentioned. It started some years before the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation at the governmental level was established.

The initiators were the Dutch Wadden Society together with the German and Danish World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). This co-operation has been essential in promoting the joint efforts to protect, conserve and wisely manage the Wadden Sea as an ecological entity.

1.3 Trilateral Acknowledgement - and Involvement

The following agreements on tourism were the outcome of the 8th Governmental Wadden Sea Conference in Stade, Germany in 1997:

- *"The Ministers ACKNOWLEDGE the work carried out by the Inter-regional Wadden Sea Co-operation regarding the analysis and visions of sustainable tourism development and recreational use in the Wadden Sea Region.*

- *The Ministers AGREE to initiate inter-regional cooperation to develop and implement policies on sustainable tourism, together with relevant stakeholders[1], as well as local and other relevant authorities. They INVITE the Inter-regional Wadden Sea Cooperation to carry out this task."* (§36).

The political discussions and decision-making resulting from the above agreements are planned to take place at the Inter-regional and Governmental Wadden Sea Conferences in the year 2001.

1.4 Development of a Common Tourism Policy – also an EU Project

For the period 1997-2000, the EU Commission has subsidised the development of a common tourism policy for the Wadden Sea Region according to the EU Demonstration Programme "Integrated Coastal Zone Management" (ICZM).

The Wadden Sea Tourism Project is one of the 35 demonstration projects in coastal zones all over Europe which have the aim of providing the EU Commission with information about, and experience of, spatial planning aspects within the member states. It focuses on how co-operation and involvement with the local and national authorities as well as the various commercial and other interest groups within the Region can be developed and promoted.

The gathering of experience from the 35 projects in EU has shown that most of the problems related to spatial planning and to the development of Integrated Coastal Zone Management, are due to a lack of political planning, and a lack of functioning procedures for communication across the different sectors and across the different interests within the coastal zone. It has also shown that a lack of sufficient information and knowledge about the dynamics of the coastal zone regarding both the natural environment and the socio-economic development is another common problem. Most of the projects put heavy emphasis upon the aspect of local involvement and commitment as a basis for solving the problems in coastal areas.

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[1]*Stakeholders are to be understood as: any person, institution, organisation, agency, department, authority, club, association etc., which has in the broadest sense and interest in, or association with, a particular issue.*

The Wadden Sea Tourism Project is thus an integrated part of the realisation of the political decisions taken by the Inter-Regional Wadden Sea Cooperation and also part of EU activities concerning the development of Integrated Coastal Zone Management.

1.4.1 What is Integrated Coastal Zone Management?

The European Commission defines ICZM as a dynamic, continuous and iterative process designed to promote sustainable management of coastal zones.

Within the limits set by natural dynamics and carrying capacity, ICZM seeks, over the long-term, to balance the benefits from:
- economic development and human uses of the coastal zone,
- protecting, preserving, and restoring coastal zones,
- minimising loss of human life and property,
- public access to and enjoyment of the coastal zone.

Although ICZM refers to "management", the ICZM process in fact covers the full cycle of information collection, planning, decision making, management and monitoring of implementation. "Planning" is thus intended in its broadest sense, to mean strategic policy development, rather than only land use planning or other sector planning.

1.4.2 General principles and dimensions for ICZM

The European Commission has put forward a series of general principles on which sustainable management of the coastal zones should be based:

- take a wide-ranging perspective
- build on an understanding of specific conditions in the area of interest
- work with natural processes

- ensure that decisions taken today do not foreclose options for the future
- use participatory planning to develop consensus
- ensure the support and involvement of all relevant administrative bodies
- use a combination of instruments

These principles can be divided into four dimensions:

territorial integration taking into account the interrelations and interdependencies between the terrestrial, estuarine, littoral and offshore components of the coastal zone;

horizontal integration of policies, management arrangements and development plans amongst different sectors, services and agencies at a given level of government;

vertical integration of policies, management arrangements and development plans from national through to local levels of government;

consistent integration of sustainable development objectives, policies, plans and management strategies through time.

The implementation will need to consider various legal, economic and policy instruments that could be put to the service of ICZM, and the conditions

under which each instrument might be appropriate. It will also need to consider the responsibilities of the various administrative levels (in the application of the principle of subsidiarity), and the information basis needed at each of these levels in order for them to meet their responsibilities.

1.5 Organisation of the Wadden Sea Tourism Project

The tourism project has consisted of the following three key units:

NetForum

NetForum was an independent forum established on the initiative of the IRWC in consultation with stakeholder organisations.

NetForum consisted of key persons from environmental and tourist organisations and public authorities on all levels within the Region, apart from Lower Saxony. Here the representation was to be maintained by the administration from the National Park authorities in Wilhelmshaven.

To ensure close contact from the regional level to the national level the Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation was represented in NetForum, and the chairman of NetForum was the executive secretary of the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS).

The task of NetForum was to develop proposals for joint policies on sustainable tourism and for ways of implementing these policies. This also included proposals and initiatives for follow up projects.
NetForum discussed and agreed upon the issues "from scratch" and the Report was developed during four theme workshops and three meetings held by NetForum in 1998, 1999 and 2000.

Names and addresses of the members are listed in Appendix B.

Regional Boards

In the Netherlands, a regional tourism board has been established. It maintains communication among the various stakeholders and provincial authorities dealing with tourism and recreation in the Dutch Wadden Sea Region.
In Schleswig-Holstein communication to and from NetForum primarily took place within the two regional councils in Dithmarschen and Nordfriesland.
In Denmark information about the work undertaken by the NetForum was disseminated through the Danish Advisory Council for the Wadden Sea.

NetForum Secretariat

The Secretariat took care of all tasks related to NetForum, the workshops and the Tourism Conference, such as planning, the collection and creation of background material etc. It also edited a newsletter on "Tourism In the Wadden Sea Region" issued in Danish, Dutch and German three to four times a year.

The Secretariat will continue the work until the results from the project are presented to the EU.

The links among the different units in the Tourism Project are shown in the following diagram.

Organisation

THE INTER-REGIONAL WADDEN SEA COOPERATION

THE INTER-REGIONAL COORDINATION TEAM (ICT)

THE NETFORUM SECRETARIAT
- Project coordinator
- Secretary

Regional officers
- 1 from NL
- 2 from SH
- 1 from DK

THE NETFORUM

Chairman: leader of the CWSS

NL
- 1 county level
- 2 municipality level
- 1 tourism org.
- 1 environmental org.

SH
- 1 ministry of tourism
- 1 county level
- 1 municipality level
- 1 environmental org.
- 1 tourism org.

NdS
- 1 National Park Administration

DK
- 2 county level
- 1 municipality level
- 1 environmental org.

Others:
- 1 Wadden Sea Islands
- 1 Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation

Total: 18 members

REGIONAL FORA

The Netherlands
A regional (tourism) group of stakeholders

Schleswig-Holstein
The regional Advisory Boards in Dithmarschen and Nordfriesland

Denmark
The Wadden Sea Advisory Board

Legend: **DK**: Denmark, **NL**: the Netherlands, **SH**: Schleswig-Holstein, **NdS**: Lower Saxony
CWSS: Common Wadden Sea Secretariat

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2. Guiding Principles

2.1 Status of Tourism and Recreation

Annually 8-10 million tourists visit the Wadden Sea Region, this being the Wadden Sea, the Wadden Sea islands and the adjacent mainland areas, mainly because of its unique nature. The intact nature[2] of the area, its remarkable landscape, a healthy climate, the hospitality of the people and the cultural heritage continuously give the Region a high recreational value and make it exceptionally attractive for tourists.

In large parts of the Wadden Sea Region tourism is an important economic activity in terms of income and employment.

According to estimates, the turnover in the Danish Wadden Sea Region is approximately 267 mill. Euro in the Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea Region approximately 688 mill. Euro and in the Dutch Wadden Sea Region 586 mill. Euro.

In 1996 in the Schleswig-Holstein Region, app. 286 mill. Euro (42%) was direct profit to the owners of the facilities and salaries to those employed in the tourism sector. It is estimated that 20% of the employment in the SH-Region derives from tourism. This corresponds to about 9,000 jobs and one third of the inhabitants depend on turnover originating from tourism activities. This clearly underlines tourism as a vital local source of income and job creation.

Information indicates that income and employment in the tourism sector in the Danish and Dutch Wadden Sea regions are comparable to those in Schleswig-Holstein. On the majority of the islands and some mainland locations in the German Wadden Sea Region tourism is the most important economic activity.

[2] Should be interpreted according to the overall protection goal:

The overall framework on protection of the Wadden Sea Area has been stated in the Trilateral Wadden Sea Plan, decided on the 8th Trilateral Governmental Wadden Sea Conference, Stade 1997:
"The guiding principle of the Trilateral Wadden Sea Policy is, as far as possible, to achieve a natural and sustainable ecosystem in which natural processes proceed in an undisturbed way. The principle aims at:
• maintaining the water movements and the attendant geomorphological and pedological processes;
• improving the quality of water, sediment and air to levels that are not harmful for the ecosystem;
• safeguarding and optimising the conditions for flora and fauna including:
  - preservation of the Wadden Sea as a nursery area for North Sea fish;
  - conservation of the feeding, breeding, moulting and roosting areas of birds
  - conservation of the breeding and resting areas of seals as well as the prevention of disturbance in these areas.
• maintaining the scenic qualities of the landscape, in particular the variety of types of landscape and the specific features of the wide, open scenery including the perception of nature and landscapes".

2.1.1 Opportunities
- Tourism maintains and creates income and jobs in the Wadden Sea Region, which has encountered structural changes and decline in the agricultural and associated sectors.
- Tourism supports the maintenance of viable communities.
- Tourism can support the maintenance of the natural and cultural heritage.

2.1.2 Challenges
- Prospects of jobs all year round.
- The dependency on tourism in large parts of the Wadden Sea Region in terms of income and jobs demands a continuous development of the tourism product to meet competition and seasonal variations.
- Seasonal variation in employment should not hinder the maintenance and creation of continuous structural employment in the Wadden Sea Region, i.e. a development that strengthens the residents' possibilities for permanent jobs.
- The negative impact of tourism on the social life in local communities and characteristic cultural aspects should be limited as much as possible.
- Tourism can in some cases be a danger to the regional identity and it is therefore important that a maximum of influence is given to the local population on the development and the management of tourism.
- Tourism developments must on a continued basis be evaluated to avoid irreparable damage to natural assets.

NetForum is of the opinion that no matter what choices are made it is essential that:

the economic benefit from tourism should be gained as much as possible by the local communities and local population.

2.1.3 Who are the Tourists?
Most of the tourists who visit the Region are families and, to a lesser extent, "senior citizens". Most of the tourists come from the Wadden Sea countries and very few are from other parts of Europe.

2.1.4 Where do they go?
The distribution pattern of tourism can be divided into two main destinations regarding the number of tourists and the facilities offered:

- the islands attract most tourists, primarily because of the beaches, landscape, the opportunities in the field of health tourism and the cultural features;
- mainland locations which have turned themselves into significant tourist centres, either because of ferry connections to the islands, good transport/road connections to and from inland, the scenic landscape or because of their distinctive historical character.
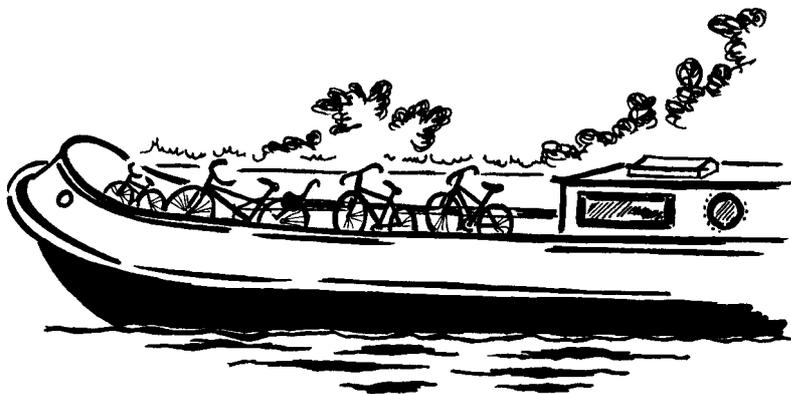
Furthermore, in the Netherlands a considerable number of tourists spend their leisure time on the water.

2.1.5 What are they offered?

The Wadden Sea Region presents a great variety of attractions to tourists from natural assets and the recreational activities to fascinating cultural attractions.

Nature

The Wadden Sea Region offers unprecedented natural qualities. Tourists are attracted to the islands, mainland coast and the seaside for its pure vastness and the peaceful, relatively undisturbed landscape. Furthermore visitors are attracted by the "living" nature of the Wadden Sea Region (birds, seals, salt marshes in bloom, etc.).

Culture

The activities of man have created a common "Wadden Sea Culture" with important elements such as fertile land, wealth, and a magnificent cultural landscape.

The building and maintenance of dikes has always been an important part of human activity and this has had a considerable impact on the cultural landscape as well as upon the development of local involvement.

Agricultural activities have formed the cultural landscape and distinctive building traditions can be seen in the farming lands of the Region.

Trade and fishery have been the basis for the development of wealthy towns and cities.

Accommodation Facilities

The main types of accommodation offered to the tourist in Denmark are summer cottages. In the Netherlands the accommodation facilities are more diverse. Here, tourists, to a large extent, can choose between hotels, boarding houses, campsites and summer cottages. Overnight stays on boats also play a considerable role. In Germany hotels and apartments together with boarding houses are the main types.

In Germany many of the accommodation facilities are located in appointed "Kur-towns", which receive a direct benefit from tourism.

The raising of "kurtax" is only allowed here, in these specially qualified and officially designated tourism communities. Each tourist in these villages has to pay a certain amount per overnight stay, which varies between 1 Euro and 2.80 Euro in the peak season. The money goes to the community and has to be used for tourism infrastructure (e.g. cleaning of beaches, beach guards, swimming pools, special events etc.).

In addition the community can raise a special tax from all companies gaining a profit from tourism (accommodation, restaurants, shops, doctors etc.)

The total amount of "kurtax" in Schleswig-Holstein is approximately 36 mill. Euro per year and the amount of the special tax is 5.1 mill. Euro per year.

In the Netherlands municipalities can impose tax on the tourists when they spend the night on campsites, at apartments or holiday-centres or, for example, take a ferry. This tax goes to the municipality treasury and can be used for general purposes. The amount per person differs within each of the municipalities.

In Denmark there is no specific tourism tax. Under the Danish tax system municipal and county tax income from, for example, tourism is first collected by the national authorities and then again distributed by the state among the municipalities and counties according to a complex system of calculation of needs.

Accessibility and Transport

The roads of the Region are mainly minor, and there are very few highways. The tourists' main means of transportation to and within the Region are cars, which can result in serious seasonal traffic problems and air pollution. Public transportation to and within the Region is poorly developed.

2.2 Tourism Value Chain of Tourist Products

Tourism can contribute to the fulfilment major objectives of the European Union, namely the promotion of the European citizen´s interest, growth and employment, regional development, the management of cultural and natural heritage and a strengthening of European identity. However, tourism can only contribute to achieving these activities in the long term if it is based on the principles of sustainable development.

The Tourism Value Chain must be respected in the development of sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea Region. When those elements are respected/used, tourism will be based on sustainability.

The elements of the Tourism Value Chain are:
• journey to and from the destination
• information at destinations
• appropriate booking systems
• accommodation
• food and catering
• attractions and amenities
• quality of life at destination
• environment
• farewell and return journey
• after sales, contact and memories

2.3 The Region must define the Future Development

The high number of tourists attracted by the Wadden Sea Region underlines how important it is for the Region to define the future development of tourism. Sustainable tourism can ensure the continued attraction to the Region and thus ensure economic stability, while the natural and cultural assets can be preserved in accordance with the Region's international status.

It is important to be informed about the expected development of tourism, irrespective of the Region's initiatives, so that also in the future the right choices can be made.

2.4 Expected Trends

2.4.1 Global Trends
In the industrialised countries there are a number of trends which will influence the development of tourism both outside and within the Wadden Sea Region:

• a general growth in the tourism sector is expected world-wide. In the Wadden Sea Region some areas have, however, experienced stagnation and even decline in recent years;
• competition will be globally intensified. The quality of the destination and the unspoiled natural assets may play a major role in the future development of prices;
• tourists will be able to take their vacations at any time of the year, resulting in a tourist season all year round;
• tourists will be more active and demand better information. Multimedia information will be available;
• already today tourists critically assess the relationship between price and quality and demand customer oriented solutions. This will apply to an even greater extent in the future;

- tourists will be concerned about the environment and demand sustainable solutions at all levels.

2.4.2 Wadden Sea Trends
- the Region will be used more actively which might result in a higher burden on nature;
- new technologies in the field of information will attract more tourists;
- an increasing economic volume of tourism will attract more external investors;
- marketing will highlight special qualities and be targeted at specific groups;
- accommodation facilities will have to specialise to suit certain groups of customers;
- the Region will have to adapt to tourism all year round by attracting new target groups;
- sailing with deplacement boats will remain an important activity, especially in the Dutch and German part of the Wadden Sea Region.

2.5 Vision and Guiding Principles for Sustainable Tourism

NetForum proposes the following vision of a future and sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea Region:

> **to enhance the reputation of the Wadden Sea Region as a high quality tourist destination, by building on its internationally important coastal environment, history, culture and the hospitality of its people.**

Sustainability is defined as ecologically preservable, economically viable and socially acceptable.

NetForum has identified two guiding principles for the development of sustainable tourism. These principles express the long-term aims, which are the basis of the proposed strategic goals, tools and policies:

I) A joint understanding on implementation of sustainable tourism:

> **NetForum finds that :**
>
> ────────────
>
> **sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea Region is to be understoodas a continuous process of weighing recreational, economic, social, cultural and associated interests against general and specific protection aims in a way suitable for maintaining natural and cultural assets for future generations. Unreasonable impairments of the interests of the local population and its traditional uses in the Wadden Sea Area have to be avoided.**
>
> ────────────

II) A unique landscape, nature, culture and the local communities are the main basis for the development of sustainable tourism:

Together, the stakeholders should develop tourism which is environmentally friendly and socially appropriate, and where tourist facilities are of high quality at all levels.

NetForum finds that:

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a **the Wadden Sea Region should be maintained as a unique coastal landscape and natural area**

a **it is essential that the local communities and the local population benefit as much as possible from tourism**

a **in agreement with the local population, the Wadden Sea Region should aim at a development of tourism with high quality in all aspects**

a **the Wadden Sea Region should achieve a unique selling position through the combination of the unique nature and the cultural opportunities**

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2.6 Strategic Goals and Tools

To fulfil the two guiding principles NetForum has developed the following strategic goals and tools:

- Safeguarding of Natural Assets
Recreational developments and activities must be evaluated on a continuous basis to avoid damage to natural assets.
The pollution of the North Sea and the Wadden Sea has to be reduced.

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a **tourism depends on intact nature - and must play its part in safeguarding its very basis. Careful decision-making, understanding and respect for conservation regulations as early as the pre-planning stage and clear opposition to pollution are necessary**

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- Emphasis of Cultural and Historical Assets
Improvement of cultural tourism should consequently be a qualitative development of small-scale tourism, with small-scale attractions. It is the combination of those attractions within a certain area which is essential.

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a **within the Wadden Sea Region there are common as well as regional/local cultural and historical characteristics and values. The local awareness of the Region's cultural heritage should be strengthened. Improvement of the development of cultural tourism can help to reinforce cultural identity**

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- Development of Partnerships
Only through joint and co-ordinated procedures will it be possible to establish a corporate identity of the Wadden Sea Region with a broad spectrum of different attractions both for tourists and inhabitants.

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a **to obtain the commitment of the inhabitants to a sustainable tourism development and to keep them informed, communication must be improved and has to become a permanent process, which needs to be co-ordinated by the parties involved. Successful development depends on the best possible co-operation among those parties, f.ex. the tourist sector, the cultural sector and conservation groups**

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- Improvement of Tourism Opportunities
Sustainable tourism can contribute to a continuously high level of economic and social welfare in the local communities. This requires an early and

appropriate reaction to visible trends in demographic and social developments. It also includes environmentally friendly accommodation and public transportation and more ecologically oriented products. Also, the (further) development of nature-oriented activities and other activities suitable for the Wadden Sea Region will contribute to sustainable tourism.

a **sustainable tourism can be economically profitable. Accommodation facilities and products which comply fully with environmental standards can be designed so attractively that tourists prefer them**

a **laws and regulations should support investments in qualitative improvements rather than new quantitative developments**

- Improvement of Information

Information is a key element in reaching a compromise between the aspirations of tourists and inhabitants and the requirements of nature.
Information on the cultural elements is also essential as a means of strengthening the local, regional cultural identity; as well as a means of drawing tourists' attention towards the cultural characteristics of Wadden Sea Region.

a **tourists should be convinced of the need to achieve the protection goals and must be well informed about the cultural elements too. This requires a good visitor information system, preferably harmonised between the Wadden Sea countries. It is also the aim that a well-protected Wadden Sea can be experienced, and act as a "nature school" for other regions in Europe**

- Encouraging the Use of Best Available Knowledge

It is essential that data on tourism and nature should be directly comparable within the whole Region. This information should be available to the public as well as to decision-makers in an appropriate and understandable form and also include local and regional expert knowledge.

a **decisions must always be taken on the basis of the best available knowledge.**
To encourage this it is necessary to have trilaterally harmonised data collections and also a transfer of information to tourists and all stakeholders

- Improvement of Sustainable Transport and Accessibility to and within the Region

The large amount of individual car traffic results in disadvantages for the inhabitants and tourists, mainly in the holiday season. In addition it raises air-pollution.
It is important to ensure that concepts of transport of tourists are valid from the home area of tourists and include transportation facilities for disabled persons as well as accompanying solutions for inhabitants. Local initiatives which only cover the Wadden Sea Region, are not sufficient.

a **traffic into and within the Wadden Sea Region should be as friendly to the environment and as comfortable for the users as possible**

2.7 Integrated Coastal Zone Management is Essential

In the Wadden Sea Region the "territorial integration" between land and sea and offshore components is only to a limited extent taken into account.

The existing legal instruments dealing with "horizontal integration" in all three countries aim at fulfilling this through balancing the interests of different sectors (tourism, farming, industry, nature protection etc.) in the policies, management arrangements and development plans.

"Vertical integration" of plans and management strategies from national to local level does exist in the Netherlands in particular, and in Germany, whereas this is not the situation in the Danish Wadden Sea Region.

The NetForum report aims at contributing to the fulfilment of ICZM, in cross border activities as well, including principles mentioned in Section 1.4.2 and the above dimensions, although NetForum is aware of the fact that tourism is only one of the sectors relevant for ICZM in the Wadden Sea Region.

NetForum finds that:

a **the Wadden Sea Region should aim at using the principles and dimensions of Integrated Coastal Zone Management also in cross-border co-operation in the process of implementation of the policies for sustainable tourism**
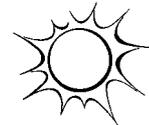
3. Nature and Recrational Activities

3.1 Without Nature - no Outdoor Recreation

"The Wadden Sea Area is an area of outstanding natural value. It is characterised by a high biological productivity and high natural dynamics. The Wadden Sea is the largest European wetland area and its tidal flats form the largest unbroken stretch of mudflats world-wide[3]."

Tourism in coastal areas like the Wadden Sea Area and the nature-protected areas in the adjacent areas on the mainland is based on an intact nature. Tourism also contributes to the awareness of nature conservation by spreading knowledge and generating money. On the other hand, tourism development can damage the natural surroundings and thus cause conflicts.

Outdoor tourism activities in the Wadden Sea Region are land or water-based. Spending time in the dunes, along the beaches, in the woods, walking, biking or horseback riding are typical land activities. Recreation linked to the sea includes of (sun) bathing at the beaches and the dikes, mudflat-walking, angling, sailing and windsurfing.

The natural surroundings of the Wadden Sea Region available to tourists are indeed distinctive natural assets. The flora and fauna is unique, as are the dynamics in a geographical perspective (the tide, the development of dunes) and the large open spaces. When tourists are asked for their motives when visiting the countryside in the Wadden Sea Region, answers are not exclusively linked to the biotic components. The simple presence of unspoiled scenery and absence of human influence also play a major role.

The Wadden Sea Region is also a place where people live, work and spend their leisure time. If future generations are to enjoy the qualities of the area it is essential that a long-term strategy is implemented with the objective of protecting these natural assets and the biological diversity.

Without nature, there can be no outdoor recreation.

The majority of tourists and other visitors come to the Wadden Sea Region to enjoy the countryside. This large interest can however, conflict with the fact that many come to enjoy "unspoiled nature". The more people who visit the area, the greater the risk that nature is adversely affected.

Tourism development has both directly and indirectly contributed to the reduction of the diversity of the flora and fauna. This can be seen most obviously in the areas around tourist attractions. Areas of conflict, which are places where the interests of nature conservation run up against the most damaging recreational use of the land, are especially prominent around accommodation and other recreational facilities.

The carrying capacity of nature for recreational activities is limited by area, species and time. There are no general carrying capacity levels for the Region as a whole. The best available knowledge with regard to carrying capacity of an area should therefore be used as a starting point.

Future nature management must, to a higher degree than now, be based upon a more precise balance of exploitation and conservation.

There are nevertheless many ways of enjoying the natural areas and the cultural landscape of the Wadden Sea Region. Many of the areas of natural

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[3] *Quotation from The Trilateral Wadden Sea Plan, page 15*

interest can still be regarded as "wilderness". But it is essential that the national, regional and local planning authorities and tourism organisations are aware of the fact that an intensification of tourism can cause irreversible changes to the very basis of nature itself. If not, "wilderness" will be a scarce resource.

To protect this basis it is important that planning is always based upon the principle of "Best Available Information" and to apply the "Precautionary Principle".

Tourism and other use of the natural resources in the Wadden Sea Region should be based on guidelines which in the opinion of NetForum first and foremost must respect that:

a **the natural assets of the Region are maintained and improved, and**

a **the countryside is used with respect for its scenic, biological, cultural and historical assets**

a **zoning in time and space and concentration of activities should be better applied to preserve natural values and tourism requirements**

3.2 Selected Recreational Activities – and their Conflict Potential

Bathing tourism is common throughout the entire Region and the beaches are normally able to sustain the visitors. It usually creates no major conflicts with nature and the local residents. However, on some occasions traditional bathing tourism creates conflicts by disturbing endangered species of nesting birds.

Use of the dunes may also result in deterioration of the dunes themselves or of their vulnerable vegetation as well as disturbance of species in these habitats.

The Region attracts a number of visitors who prefer to be active during their vacation. They are offered different types of guided tours such as mudflat walking, bird watching or charter sailing. Participation in guided tours gives the visitor an opportunity of a well-qualified introduction to the Wadden Sea Region.

Visitors also like to experience nature on their own. This may result in activities which disturb birds in breeding and migration periods or, to a lesser degree, disturb sensitive species throughout the year. Mountain biking in the dunes and hiking in areas where there are no paths are examples of such activities. Windsurfing, sailing with multi-hulls and flat-bottom ships and canoeing are examples of activities that can create disturbance to seals and birds in the sea territory. These activities are difficult to control as they can easily intrude on vulnerable nature areas.

Some of the activities may also result in conflicts between the different activities undertaken. Jet-skiing is an example of an activity that conflicts with other recreational activities and the overall protection aims of the Wadden Sea Area.[4]

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[4] In the Wadden Sea Plan (§4.1.21) it is amongst other things stated that:
" …the use of jet skis, water skis and similar motorised equipment has been or will be prohibited or limited to small designated areas."

NetForum is of the opinion that:

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a **the variety of recreational activities should be maintained to the greatest possible extent**

a **activities with an undesirable impact on nature and/ or other interests should be managed by a continuous process of communication, by providing information, by flexible zoning in time and space and if there is no alternative, by prohibition**

## 3.3 Selected Recreational Facilities – and their Conflict Potential

3.3.1 Harbour Facilities

It is important to ensure sustainable waste-handling of oil and other types of waste from ships and yachts, and also to have sufficient harbour reception facilities for tourists who travel by yachts. In the Danish and Dutch parts of the Region these facilities exist in most yacht harbours and sometimes their use is included in the harbour fee. They are not yet established in all yacht harbours in Germany and where established the visitors have to pay separately.

Many of the existing harbour facilities in all parts of the Region need to be improved. The public authorities are aware of this but lack financial means, as both the repairs and the necessary improvements to ensure sustainable waste handling are expensive.

3.3.2 Golf Courses

Golf courses are popular recreational facilities. Local communities aim at attracting wealthy tourists and the number of golf courses in the Region has increased considerably in recent years. They require a lot of space and are often situated in areas of high recreational value for other people than golfers. Furthermore, maintenance of golf courses requires a great deal of water and fertiliser.
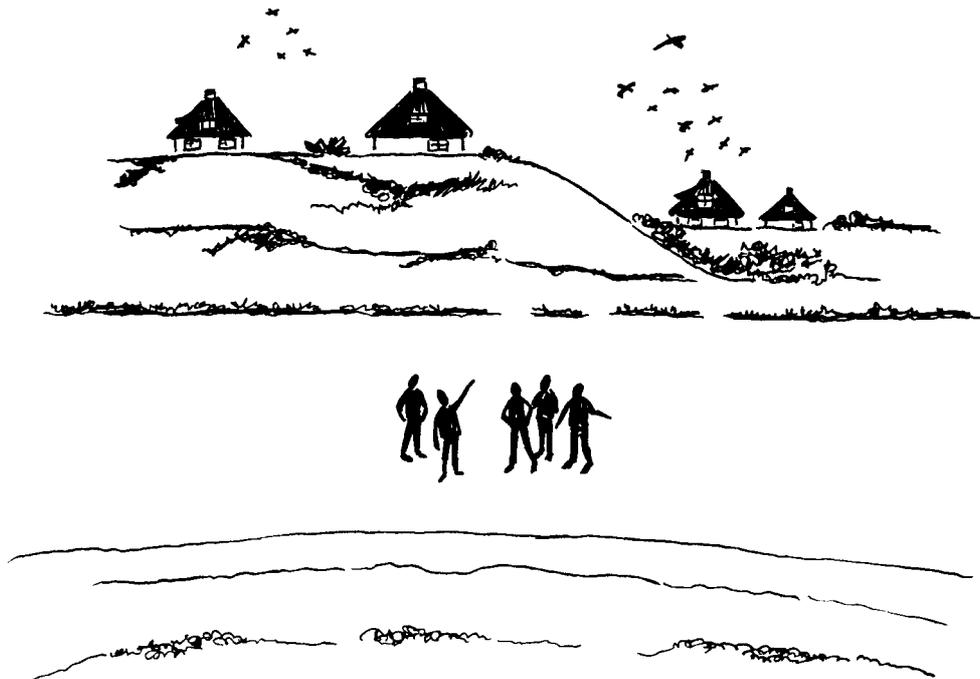
3.3.3 Indoor Waterparks

Indoor waterparks, aquaparks, and similar facilities are problematic from an environmental point of view because of their consumption of energy, space and water.

NetForum is of the opinion that:

a **all harbours should offer reception facilities for oil and other types of waste from yachts and ships, as well as other necessary facilities (toilets and showers)**

a **improvement of harbour facilities as well as their maintenance should be supported financially by the European Union and the National Governments**

a **the building of golf courses, on the islands in particular, should be assessed very carefully beforehand and any such building should be according to "Best Environmental Practice"**

a **building of recreational facilities such as large indoor waterparks with an undesirable impact on nature should be avoided [5] ~**

a **building of recreational facilities such as large indoor waterparks should only be started after careful examination because of their negative impact on nature and environment [5] ~**

3.4 Better Information and Increased Communication

Information about the specific natural features of the Wadden Sea Region is, in all three countries, provided to tourists. Information centres in the Region are not just offices where folders, exhibitions and information are offered. They are also part of the leisure opportunities for tourists as well as for the local population.

The overall strategy is to make the visitor aware of the global importance of the Wadden Sea and to communicate the problems and any regulations, whether in force or envisaged.

The experience of National Parks in USA and to some extent also in Germany has shown that it can be economically profitable to offer attractive information material at a reasonable price. This has been supported by a recent German study done by WWF, where tourists stated their willingness to pay a certain amount for this information.

Co-ordinated and organised information systems, as for example those offered by the German National Park authorities and the Dutch visitor-centres, aim at ensuring an acceptable behaviour by the visitor in terms of preserving vulnerable nature.

NetForum is of the opinion that:

a **information to the tourists is of an uneven quality, especially with regard to user information**

a **tourist publications contain little or no information about nature or sustainable visitor behaviour**

a **there is no common concept for visitor information in the Region**

a **the co-operation between different actors, especially trilaterally, is not visible to visitors and local residents**

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[5] *Some members of NetForum are of the opinion that certain facilities have to be avoided, whereas others disagree and have proposed the second formulation.*

a **information should be developed through close co-operation and co-ordination between stakeholders**

a **information should either be freely obtainable or paid for voluntarily by visitors**

a **the tourism sector, the cultural sector and other stakeholders should contribute financially to the information material about nature to a greater extent than they do currently**

A specific problem is the communication between the authorities and the interest and user groups. Mutual understanding and acceptance of opinions as well as responsibilities are often lacking. The discussions are quite often destructive, especially in debates concerning regulation.

NetForum is of the opinion that:

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a **through joint public participation, as early as possible, in the decision-making processes on new policies, user conflicts can be perceptibly reduced**

3.5 Legislation and Administrative Structures – Similarities and Differences

The administrative structures in Denmark and in the Netherlands show a considerable degree of similarity. The planning system and division of tasks and responsibilities among the three levels of authorities in these countries are comparable for the land territory, whereas they differ for the sea territory.

The administrative structure in the Federal Republic of Germany shows differences in several aspects, regarding levels of authorities, their competencies and enforcement powers of the National Park authorities within these.

The strategic instruments also show similarities. As an example zoning of the Wadden Sea/Wadden Sea Area is based on the same principles in regard to ecological vulnerability and human use:
• areas where most recreational activities are permitted all year round
• areas with restricted recreational use, graduated in defined periods
• areas where recreational activities are either prohibited or strictly limited

Comparable regulations are applied differently. For example, in Denmark and Schleswig-Holstein the islands are excluded from the zoning principles of the Wadden Sea Protection Area. In the Netherlands and especially in Lower Saxony, most areas of the islands are part of the zoning system in the Wadden Sea Area.

NetForum is of the opinion that:

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a **the existing systems of regulations and zoning tend to be inflexible in the short term if the dynamics of nature require changes**

a **where possible, regulations should be replaced by information**

3.6   Illustrative Examples

NetForum has identified some illustrative examples of sustainable tourism in the Region rooted in the regional nature and culture and/or history and generating economic benefit for the local population without having negative impacts on nature.
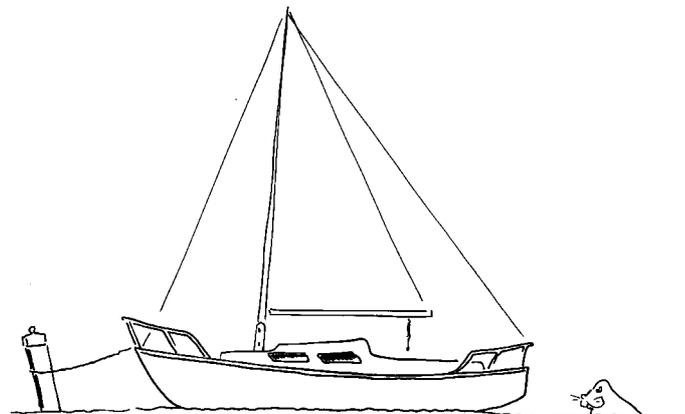
The Netherlands
• In 1998 a "Code of Behaviour" was drawn up by a group of stakeholders together with the authorities with the aim of presenting short and understandable directions for how visitors should behave when visiting the Dutch part of the Wadden Sea Region.

• Information through personal communication with visitors: professional rangers, guided walks and organised sailing tours (charter).

Germany
• Involvement of stakeholders as early in the decision making process as possible: in Nordfriesland a joint concept of tourism development has been discussed and formulated "from scratch" by local residents, user groups and authorities.

• The National Park authorities in Schleswig-Holstein have, together with the local authorities along the coast, developed a comprehensive visitor information system for the National Park. This includes, among other things, specially designed information boards and specially educated rangers.

• In order to balance the natural interests and recreational activities at very popular and crowded tourist resorts, main parts of all Wadden Sea islands in Lower Saxony, as part of the National Park, are encompassed by a common zoning system.

Denmark
• In the nature reserve special areas have been designated for exceptional activities ("recreational zoning"), such as windsurfing, buggy-kite driving and beach sailing. In the state forests special areas have been designated where dogs are allowed without a leash. Also special marked routes for horse trekking on the islands have been established.

• Employment of a seasonal beach ranger on the island of Rømø. The rangers will provide the tourists with information on special conditions relating to safety, e.g. the daily tide and current situation, and opportunities concerning recreational activities on the beach and in the dunes.

3.7 Recommendations for Common Policies

Remarks

1 Support the trilateral protection aims for the Wadden Sea on all levels, also with respect to protection against pollution

Active participation and support of the trilateral policies as formulated in the Wadden Sea Plan

2 Apply the principles of precaution and careful decision-making in situations where there is a risk that natural assets or ecological processes can be permanently damaged

Take decisions on the basis of the best available information, to ensure the implementation of sustainability

3 Start communication among residents, users and interest groups and the authorities as early in the decision-making process as possible

If residents, user and interest groups become involved in the development of new policies etc., before the authorities present final suggestions, the chance of finding a solution acceptable to all parties is considerably improved

4 Replace regulations by information whenever possible

5 only use further regulations for precautionary protection of nature or where and if absolutely necessary on the basis of monitoring results

The responsible authorities should introduce as few regulations as possible

6 Improve monitoring of the impact of recreational activities on nature

Trilateral monitoring of parameters on tourism and recreation should be presented at the next Governmental Conference. All the results should be available to the public

Proposed Policies	**Remarks**
7 Improve the flexibility within the existing zoning system in time and space in designated nature reserves and National Parks [6] ~	In a flexible zoning system protection measures will only be used in periods when they are necessary and only in areas where needed Areas which have been closed for the public to prevent disturbance of certain species such as seals or birds, should be re-opened to the public on the basis of the results of monitoring [7] ~ Revision of the zoning should be carried out in consultation with stakeholders.
8 Develop user-friendly information material through close co-operation and co-ordination among the stakeholders	Stakeholders have knowledge of how to present information to their user groups. This knowledge should always be used when developing public information. Assignment of areas for special activities should be developed through co-operation between the authorities and the relevant user groups.
9 Make the trilateral dimension more visible in information material than it is today	The fact that a geographical entity is also treated as a trilateral entity by the authorities should be more visible than it is today. It could, for example, be included in the text on information signs and boards, etc.
10 Build recreational facilities in accordance with the natural and cultural values, and building should meet sustainable standards	Establishment of joint criteria in the entire Region on principles for new developments.

[6] The members of NetForum disagree on the degree of flexibility.

[7] There are different opinions in NetForum on how to deal with the improvement of nature, especially concerning how and when results of the monitoring should be applied with regard to flexible zoning.

Proposed Policies	Remarks
11 Restrict recreational activities with an undisirable impact on nature to suitable areas or prohibit them entirely	NetForum finds that jet-skiing for example is an activity that conflicts with the overall protection aims of the Wadden Sea because of its disturbance to the environment and other recreational users.
12 Establish reception facilities for oil and other types of waste as well as other necessary facilities in all harbours	NetForum supports the ongoing initiatives to endorse an EU-directive demanding this.

3.8 Proposal of Projects

3.8.1 Priority Projects

• **Development of a transnational, digital database, integrating information on nature and cultural-history**

On the basis of the experience in Schleswig-Holstein it should be considered how to develop a joint visitor information system for the whole Region with the aim of ensuring that information is of the same high standard. The trilateral dimension should be more visible.

• **Development of a Wadden Sea information system combining information about sustainable visitor behaviour and general tourism information**

Information on sustainable visitor behaviour already exists but is seldom presented in the tourist publications (brochures). Integration of information into existing media could ensure that visitors are informed about the values of the Region and the need for their considerate behaviour.

• **Development of a (standard) Tourism monitoring in the Wadden Sea Region**

The existing data on tourism is incomplete and lacks comparability. Moreover the criteria of what to observe are not the same in all three Wadden Sea Countries. There is no standard programme determining which or how data is to be collected. In all European countries there are similar problems with data on tourism.

• **Development of a thematic marketing strategy for the Wadden Sea Region**

Joint marketing of the whole Region would enhance the possibilities of promoting the Region on the bigger European and/or worldwide market. Promotion could, for example, be based on the development of a joint theme for the Region each year. The theme could be a general one for the entire area and then developed further in the individual regions and reflect local history.

3.8.2 Tentative and Preliminary Projects

• **Development of a field-guide arrangement**

An arrangement to employ field-guides during the high season in order to provide information to visitors. This can contribute to minimising the conflicts both between groups of tourists and between recreational activities and nature values. An arrangement with personal and goal-directed information can furthermore contribute to a reduction in zoning, sign-posting and fencing.

4. Culture and Cultural Tourism

4.1 What is Cultural Tourism?

Culture can be viewed as comprising what people:
* *think* (attitudes, ideas, values)
* do (ways of life, behaviour patterns) and
* *make* (architecture, crafts and artwork)

Culture is composed of processes as well as the products of these processes.

The tangible elements linked to cultural tourism are buildings, historical towns and villages, archaeological monuments, museums and technical structures and installations such as windmills. The intangible elements are events (e.g. music festivals, church concerts), traditions and customs, history, language, and food cover both "heritage tourism", related to artefacts of the past, and "art tourism", related to the contemporary cultural production.

Rural areas have a strong attraction because they still contain a "living culture". Especially attractive are high quality experiences and activities rooted in the cultural heritage of the Region.

4.2 Common Wadden Sea Heritage

The Wadden Sea Region is a geographical entity and as such has many cultural and historical elements in common.

Man's ability to adapt to the dynamic natural environment of the Region is visible in the cultural traits in all three Wadden Sea countries.

The special natural conditions, under which the culture has developed, allow the Region to offer the tourist an insight into a special area of European history, in which man has played a distinct role not only in the creation of the culture itself, but also in the development of a unique landscape. In Friesland they say that "God created the sea but the Friesians created the land".
The dikes, the mounds and the structure of the villages built upon the dikes, as well as those built upon the mounds are excellent examples of this. The tide and storm-surges have limited the locations where settlements could be placed in the landscape, but have also created fertile ground for farming and trade.
The building of dikes from early human settlements until today has also been the basis of democratic traditions. Through the organisation of "Dikers' Associations" to ensure the maintenance of the dikes, some of the earliest democratic structures in Europe were founded in the Wadden Sea Region.

Common culture developed due to intensive trade. The old sea-traffic routes along the Wadden Sea Coast were important in the creation of certain customs. Apart from trade, whaling has also been an important common feature, especially on some islands.

Cultural tourism is difficult to define.
Visitors who travel specifically with the intention of experiencing culture should be considered as "cultural tourists". They are generally highly edu-

cated with a more than average income. In the Wadden Sea Region there are few "pure" cultural tourists because the majority of the tourist perceive regional culture through their overall experience.

An example of the common cultural elements of recent time is the traces of man's interaction with, and use of, the natural resources, which have given the entire Region a landscape formed by agriculture, where windmills and the ways of water-management also are prominent features.

The fact that the Friesian language is still "alive" in the Dutch and German parts of the Region, as well as the traditional songs and shanties, are also examples of the common culture of the Region.

4.3 Wadden Sea Heritage and Local Characteristics

Although the Region has a common history and heritage, each local area has developed its own characteristic features.

Until 17th-18th centuries, the historical development within the Region followed the same track, whereas the industrialisation and agricultural development from the 17th century onwards resulted in cultural developments which tend to have more in common with the national characteristics of each of the three Wadden Sea countries.

This mixture of cultural elements specific to the Wadden Sea Region itself and cultural elements specific to each of the three countries have created a cultural heritage which is unique in Europe.

The islands and especially the Halligen in Schleswig-Holsten have their own characteristics based upon proximity to the Sea and the sailing and trade traditions. Whaling features are, for example, dominant elements on the islands of Rømø, Föhr, Ameland and Schiermonnikoog.

The mainland is dominated by traditions connected to farming where the regional differences can be seen in the farm buildings, for example. The building traditions are based on the landscape characteristics and the specific opportunities for farming created by the natural surroundings. The typical huge farmhouses ("Haubargen") in Noord-Holland and in Eiderstedt in Germany are examples of this.

Many of the small towns in the Region are often placed the same way in the landscape, based on the same structure, but the building styles differ considerably in the three countries. (The older churches are, however, often alike!).
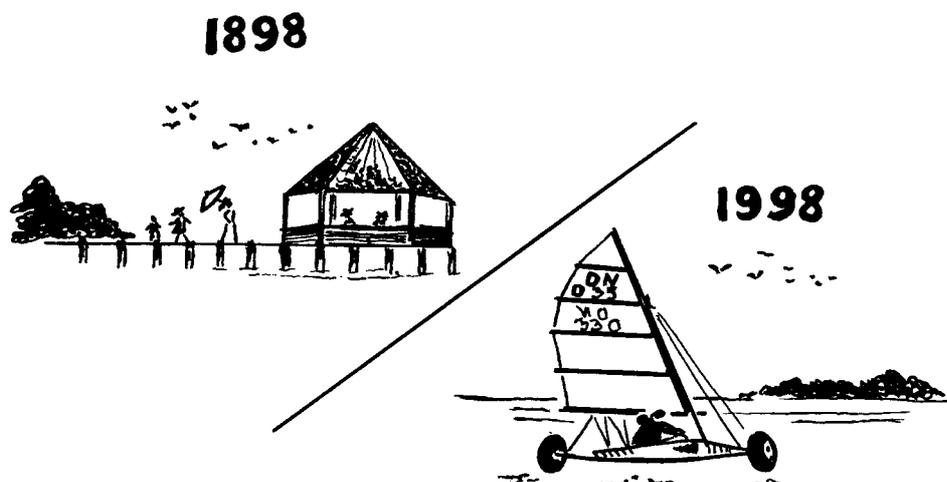
4.4   Local Identity and Awareness

Traditionally the Wadden Sea Region received and absorbed elements and traditions from foreign cultures through sea-trading.

Today however, multinational companies often dominate. On the one hand this gives opportunities for socio-economic lifts to the Region. On the other hand market mechanisms, and the fact that multilateral elements and habits are introduced, diminish the possibilities of maintaining the quality of the local culture in the short run and may contribute to its disappearance in the long run.

Examples are the decreased number of restaurants where local gastronomy is still the trademark of quality, and the continued struggle to keep the Friesian language alive and to preserve its usage in the public sphere.

Individuals, organisations and authorities have been seeking to conduct and turn this development to preserve the traditional cultural heritage of an area or region. Their efforts have been centred on initiatives to preserve and save specific parts or sights.

Local economy may be enhanced by restoring and reusing of historic buildings and sites, establishment of visitor centres and culturally oriented cycle routes, etc.

A special expression of the regional culture is the "regional languages." Friesian, for example, is closely connected to the landscape and so is the link between the population and the cultural landscape. Therefore it is essential to stimulate the use of these languages.

The continued, living existence of the traditional "Wadden Sea Culture" is essential for a sustainable tourism development in the entire Region and the survival of many small communities, especially on the mainland. Here, heightened public awareness of and pride in the common cultural heritage and its unique characteristics is one of the preconditions of success.

The central paradox of cultural tourism: local identity hinges on the creation of local culture, intelligible to insiders and indecipherable to outsiders. However, it is that very local identity that the tourists seek, and which must be made understandable to them. It is the process of "opening" the local culture to the gaze of the outsider, which many fear will lead to loss of the local identity. In this situation, local cultures cease to be produced for locals, but are reproduced for the consumption of tourists. (Greg Richards, 1999)

Seen in the light of sustainable tourism development, there is no doubt about the importance of the continued existence of the "Wadden Sea Culture" alongside all the new cultural inspirations.

NetForum finds that:

a **preservation and awareness of the cultural heritage, including stimulation of the different languages in the Wadden Sea Region is the most important precondition of cultural tourism and the development of its potential**

a **mobilisation of the local awareness of the Region's common cultural identity is essential**

a **ensuring a living culture in the Region which respects the cultural heritage and yet allows room for a population with a modern lifestyle**

4.5 Cultural Tourism as a Development Potential

As stated earlier, cultural tourism is not the main pull-factor for tourists to visit the Wadden Sea Region. Nonetheless, the tourists of today look for experiences that are authentic and special to the localities they visit.

The importance of authenticity in tourism can be demonstrated by the EUROTEX project, which researched tourists' decisions to purchase craft products. Almost 80% of purchasers indicated that authenticity was either "very important" or "important" in their decision to buy. Authenticity was significantly more important for elder visitors and for those with a professional occupation and least important for those in lower occupational groups. Authenticity was also more important to those who had already made previous visits to the survey region. In the Wadden Sea Region there are existing projects aimed at determining the importance of authenticity.

Tourism also provides an essential boost to craft industries. However, many of the goods and services which tourists consume are often "imported" from other regions, causing high economic leakage and loss of employment opportunities in disadvantaged regions. Unless local production can be stimulated, tourism development is often economically and culturally unsustainable.
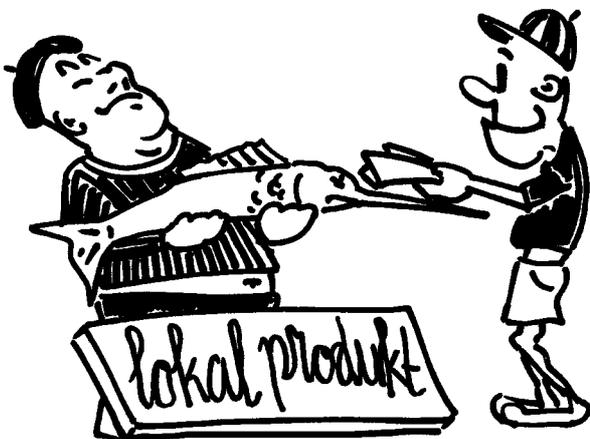
Cultural tourism also holds a potential for a development outside the "traditional" tourism areas, which can also help to reduce the pressure on some of the designated nature reserves. The integration of information on nature and cultural history is a prerequisite for developing this further.

Cultural tourism can also develop synergy between tourism on the islands, the water-bound tourism and tourism in the inland.

To reach the mainland coast and the islands the tourists drive through a number of inland municipalities. Naturally, these municipalities would derive greater economic benefits if the tourists could be convinced that they should stop there for a couple of days. Many museums of the local history of the localities can be found, as well as museums dedicated to the history of art in the Region. Local museums are often based on enthusiastic contributions from volunteers in the municipalities.

Many small harbours along the Wadden Sea coast are also of cultural value, therefore the maintenance of these sites is essential so that they do not lose their cultural character.

The cultural attractions of the Wadden Sea Region are typically isolated or clearly delineated elements of the landscape. They are scattered and seldom joined to one tourism product. An example of an isolated element is an art museum in a historical building in which a local artist has lived. The tourists are informed about the museum, but they are not informed about other cultural elements related to the issue, such as where to go if they want to see the motifs which inspired the artist.

It is important that the local municipality supports and stimulates the development of the above mentioned issues to ensure that the local population profits from this.

In order to attract younger target groups there should be special cultural events and activities as well as the sporting activities linked to the Region (e.g. rock concerts, discotheques and other events with "acceptable prices").

NetForum finds that the existing potential for development should be used in such a way that:

a **the development of cultural attractions benefits first and foremost the local population**

a **cultural tourism contributes to socio-economic development**

a **it improves the development of tourism**

synergy can be created by combining nature-based tourism with cultural tourism, which may lead to more tourists in areas that are currently not often visited

a **it combines existing cultural attractions to motivate the tourists to prolong their visits**

a **it contributes to a lengthening of the season, if it does not lead to negative impact on of cultural, social and/or natural values**

4.6   The Role of Public Authorities and Organisations

The public authorities and policy makers at local and regional level are able to exercise their influence in the field of culture and cultural tourism in many ways. For all three countries, culture is a field where the responsibility and powers to a great extent are in the hands of the local municipality.

The awareness of this and of the fact that local initiatives in the field of culture can result in new employment and income opportunities for the population are, however, still not reflected in the day-to-day policy of all municipalities and counties. Spatial planning on all levels includes aspects of relevance for cultural tourism, such as improvement and re-use of existing buildings for cultural purposes, protection of historic monuments etc. The authorities should create the basic conditions for the development of cultural tourism by offering room for local initiatives. Therefore, public authorities must be aware of their role as protectors of the cultural heritage, as well as their role as supporters in the development of cultural tourism through spatial planning.

The contact should be intensified between the "cultural sector" and the "tourism sector". The local and regional authorities play an important role as facilitators of increased contact between the two sectors.

For example it is important that when new cultural initiatives are developed which have the potential of attracting more tourists, they are co-ordinated with the "tourism sector".

These issues often involve aspects where the municipal authorities have to develop local plans or make judgements such as, whether suitable accommodation facilities for the type of tourists these new cultural initiatives attract, or not.

On other hand it is also essential that the "tourism sector" and the "cultural sector" co-operate directly with each other when promoting the Region.

NetForum states that:

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a **the regional and local public authorities (as well as the national authorities) should improve the awareness of spatial planning as a means of protecting cultural values as well as a means of strengthening the development of cultural tourism**

a **the regional and local public authorities should facilitate and improve the contact and co-operation between the tourism and the "cultural sector"**

a **it is essential that local and regional policy-makers support local cultural initiatives morally and financially**
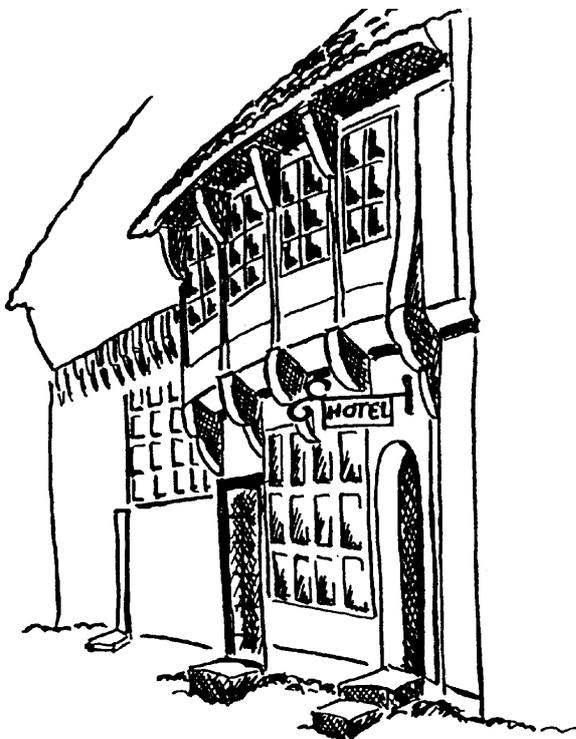
4.7   Illustrative Examples

The Netherlands
• The municipality of Het Bildt has restored an old church and uses it as an information centre.

• The Wadden Product Line, a range of products made by local manufacturers, is promoted as being from the Wadden Sea Region.

• The commercial use of historic sailing ships for tours on the Wadden Sea.

• "Pronkkamers Project": accommodation is offered in old estates and farmhouses, where the selling point is the "pronkkamer". This is a living room with the best furniture and other valuable items. The room was only used for special occasions.

Germany
• Dithmarschen has started the creation of a guide to all the natural and cultural attractions in the Region, with the aim of making the tourist stay longer in the area.

• The small town of Albersdorf in Dithmarschen is establishing an 'experience' in the whole village, which combines the local cultural history with the modern way of living.
• The initiative "Kultursommer Nordfriesland" has increased the knowledge on cultural attractions in Nordfriesland. At the same time the marketing has been improved.

• The Marine Museum in Wilhelmshaven, where the exhibition is placed inside an old submarine.

• In Nordfriesland signs for cycle paths are in some cases both in German and Friesian. Furthermore, a concept for ensuring the existing variety of languages is being developed.
• Windmill climbing is one of the newer cultural attractions.

Denmark

- The County of Ribe has set aside funds to finance translation of texts into German and folders in the museums in the county.

- Tours to visit the bunkers from World War II are offered at several places along the coast.

- The nature rangers combine their nature tours with information about the history of the Wadden Sea Region.

- The Fishery and Maritime Museum in Esbjerg has introduced an exhibition based on old sea-farers and modern industrial culture named "Wadden Sea – World Sea".

Joint activities

- In 1996 the museums "Ribes Vikinger", "Fries Museum" in Leeuwarden and "Museum für Naturkunde und Vorgeschichte" in Oldenburg staged an exhibition called "The Danes, the Friesians and the Saxons; Culture along the North Sea from 400 to 1000 A. C." The exhibition was shown in each of the museums in turn.

- The "Wadden Sea Festival" based on traditional music from the Region, is held every second year on one of the Wadden Sea islands.
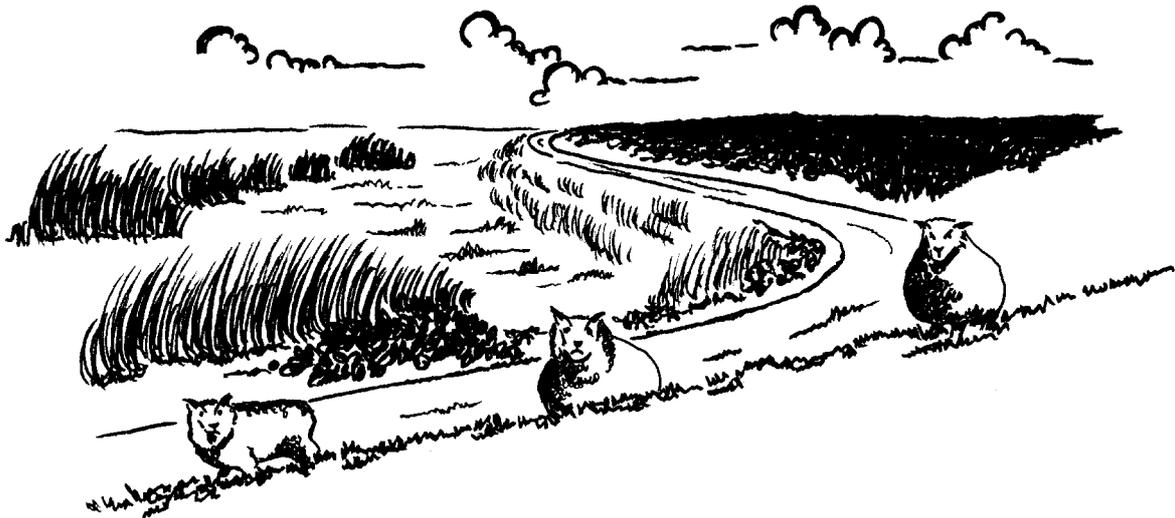
4.8 Recommendation for Common Policies	Remarks
1 Increase the awareness of the values of cultural identity of the Region among the local residents and raise the level of consciousness of the values of the Region among the visitors	NetForum supports the trilateral initiative on mapping and registration of the cultural heritage of the Wadden Sea Region. NetForum stresses that the results should be published in a way that makes them useful for the local population and local/regional organisations and initiatives.

The "cultural sector" should produce material on the common cultural heritage directly applicable for the use in the media.

Development of educational material which consists of the Region's cultural and natural history.

The education concerning one's own region should be intensified in the schools.

Visitor centres in all three countries should jointly provide information about the cultural heritage. |
| **2 Strengthen the efforts to preserve the cultural heritage and use it as a tourist selling point.** | Apply appropriate regional and local planning. Provide funding or reduce taxes on historic properties, especially when they are in public use. |
| **3 Consider the use of a site for cultural tourism when deciding on preservation ("Schützen durch Nützen")** | Actions from individuals, NGO's or public authorities on preservation should have multiple purposes. |

Proposed Policies	Remarks
4 Raise the economic standard of the Region by creating better assets in cultural tourism	The local culture should to a greater extent be included in municipal, regional and national planning.
	Give moral and financial support to developing tourism products such as events, travel routes, gastronomy and information as well as education
	Stronger awareness of the local and regional political institutions role as moral and financial supporters in the development of cultural tourism.
	Support for relevant projects in the Region initiated by local residents.
5 Strengthen the framework in the tourism sector	Strengthen cross-sector and cross-border co-operation: the tourism-sector and the "cultural sector" should be brought together at local as well as cross-border level.
	The infrastructure to support cross-border activities on cultural tourism should be created.
	Joint activities with the involvement of relevant stakeholders to protect landscapes, sites and structures

4.9 Proposal of Projects

4.9.1 Priority Projects

• **Establishment of a gastronomy award on Wadden Sea menus**

Granting a seasonal or yearly Wadden Sea gastronomy award for specific menus in combination with an arrangement or local event. This could promote local gastronomy as well as local products.

• **Development of education-packages on regional history**

Develop education packages (3 languages) on regional history for primary and secondary schools, by use of multimedia and state-of-the-art communication-devices.

4.9.2 Tentative and Preliminary Projects

• **Development of Joint Marketing of Cultural Activities**

Promotion could be based on special events reflecting regional history and culture e.g. folk-festivals, language symposia etc.

• **Supply Information to the Tourism Sector on Cultural Items**

The creation of better knowledge and understanding in the tourism sector of the cultural values of the Wadden Sea Region, through the arrangement of seminars and excursions in the Region.

• **Integration of existing Visitor Information Systems**

The combination of local and regional attractions into one single guiding system through the production of a brochure containing information on natural and cultural elements, and/or co-operation among all the attractions in one or more Wadden Sea municipalities.
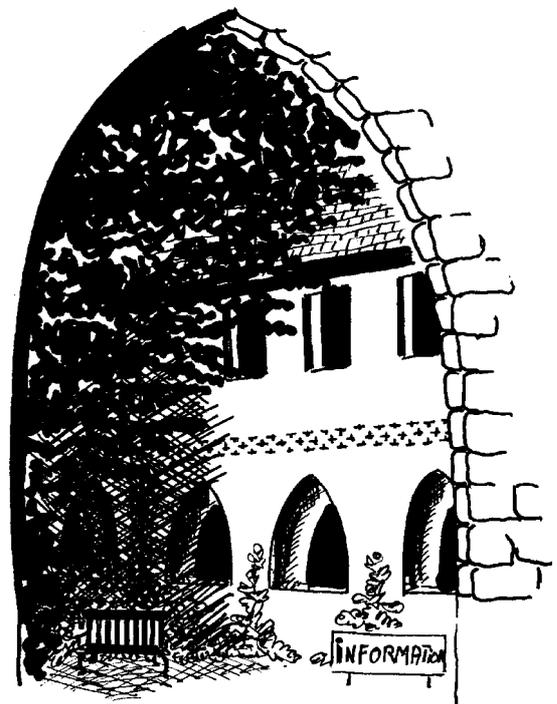
5. Accommodation

5.1 Introduction

The type, standard and price level of accommodation facilities are essential aspects of the tourist's experience of the Wadden Sea Region, and together they constitute one of the most important factors which determine the choice of whether to go and where to stay in the Region.

Local planning in the coastal zone in the whole Region is to a large extent related to the location and visibility of the accommodation facilities and encompasses fresh-water supply, waste handling, infrastructure developments, etc.

The accommodation facilities are also a dominant factor in terms of job-creation activities in many parts of the Region.

5.1.1 Lodging Capacity

The lodging capacity calculated in average number of beds has almost doubled in Denmark since the mid-seventies (summer cottages and campsites), but does not seem to have increased in the Netherlands. On some Dutch islands there has even been a decrease.

In Germany the average number of beds has increased by approximately 11% (apartments and hotels) although the lodging capacity in some municipalities along the coast of Schleswig-Holstein shows a decrease.

Today the lodging capacity is 130,000 beds in the German part of the Region, 100,000 beds in the Dutch part and 65,000 beds in the Danish part – in total 295,000 units.

5.1.2 Number of Overnight Stays

Since the mid-seventies the increase in overnight stays has been almost 40% in the Region as such. This also means that there has been a relatively higher increase in the number of overnight stays compared to the number of beds. The tendency to spread the tourism season, together with the trend towards more frequent, shorter holidays,

and holidays in off-season periods too, partially explains this development.

Although there are differences with regard to the methodology used when calculating overnight stays in the Wadden Sea Region, it can be estimated the current number of overnight stays including the official statistics from the statistical bureau, as well as the additional information from local tourism offices, is 53 mill. per year.

The Lower Saxonian part of the Region has the largest number of overnight stays; 20,500.000, the Dutch part 11,000.000, the Schleswig-Holstein part 17,000.000 and the Danish part 4,700.000. The distribution of the categories of accommodation differs substantially within the Region.

5.2 Diversified Accommodation Facilities are a Strength

The difference in types of accommodation facilities today is mainly the result of historical factors, national laws, policies and, nowadays, socio-economic aspects such as different taxation systems.

Each of the three Wadden Sea countries has its characteristic profile within the field of accommodation facilities:

- In Denmark, summer cottages are the dominant type, and in 1996 approximately 56% of all overnight stays took place in summer cottages. Furthermore, a considerable number of overnight stays took place on campsites (26%).

- Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony are dominated by hotels, holiday-apartments and, to an extent, sanatoriums and campsites. In 1997, 37% of all registered overnight stays in Schleswig-Holstein, were at holiday-apartments, 20% took place in hotels, 13% of the overnight stays took place at campsites and 10% in sanatoriums.

• In the Netherlands, campsites, hotels, holiday-apartments and youth hostels dominate. Approximately 70% of the overnight stays took place in hotels, holiday-apartments or youth hostels. It should be noted though, that in 1996 approximately 11% of all overnight stays took place on yachts. On the Dutch islands camping at farming estates is also popular.

Accommodation facilities are concentrated on the islands and in certain areas on the mainland, (e.g. Den Helder and Harlingen in the Netherlands, the harbour towns in Lower Saxony, Büsum and St. Peter Ording in Schleswig-Holstein and Blåvandshuk in Denmark). This has the advantage that the flow of tourists can be directed to these main centres, and environmental impacts on other areas can be diminished.

On the other hand these centres are often over-burdened by tourism. For the rural and inland areas it may be of considerable importance from an socio-economic perspective to encourage tourism, particularly with a view to securing employment. This is also an opportunity to reduce some of the pressure on the tourism centres.

NetForum finds it essential that the diverse structure of the accommodation facilities is ensured and that the development of new facilities in the rural and inland areas is encouraged, provided that the individual, regional character is not lost and traffic problems are solved beforehand.

NetForum is of the opinion that:

a **the diversification of accommodation facilities should be ensured, as it gives added value to the Region.**

a **tourism in the rural and inland areas should be encouraged provided that traffic problems are solved beforehand and this development should not imitate the coastal tourism, but should harness inherent strengths based on the regional character.**

5.3 Accommodation Aspects and Planning Examples

The diversification means that the local communities (planning authorities) have the possibility of influencing which type of tourist comes to the Region. The "choice" of different types of accommodation on the two East Friesian islands Norderney and Spiekeroog is an illustrative example.

Norderney is dominated by large sanatoriums; hotels and owner-occupied flats, which attract wealthy tourists, whereas Spiekeroog has small family-owned boarding houses or hotels, which attract families and tourists with less desire for luxury.
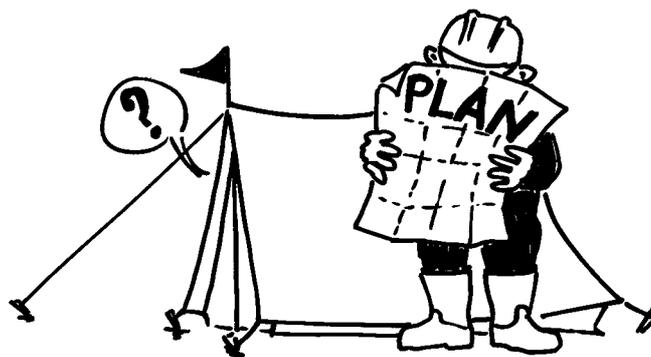
In Denmark vast amounts of space have been used for summer cottages during the last 50-60 years. This has resulted in a large impact on nature in extensive areas.

In some parts of the German Wadden Sea Region accommodation facilities are so high that the users of the facility may have an excellent view of the Wadden Sea, but visitors coming to experience "unspoiled nature" will be disappointed.
The only advantage of placing holiday centres in high-rise buildings is that they do not need as much space as summer cottages, which take up a considerable ground area per tourist.

In all three countries the legacy of recent decades in the form of buildings which do not fit into the environment is evident.

Due to the occupation of existing facilities and current regulations there is little space left for building new facilities within a short distance from the beach on the islands and at locations close to the Wadden Sea on the mainland. There are, however, still possibilities for new and sustainable developments in inland areas, which can be initiated if this is in accordance with the tradition of local communities.

Since 1970, land use in Denmark has been regulated by a zoning system, which divides the land territory into "urban zones", "rural zones" and "summer cottage zones". The "summer cottage zones" are designated for tourism and recreational purposes, including concentration of summer cottages, in order to keep vulnerable coastal stretches free of accommodation facilities.
Furthermore, a designated 3 km zone along the entire coastline aims at preserving the coastal landscape and scenery. Recreational facilities can only be established when tourism plays a decisive role and must be located near towns or landwards of larger existing recreation areas.

5.4 Quality of Accommodation Facilities

The development of new accommodation facilities has slowed down in recent years. The emphasis has apparently been upon the renovation of existing facilities.
In all three countries policies concerning the rebuilding and/or construction of new accommodation facilities have focused on quality and aesthetic values as an important factor. The implementation has, however, not been carried out to its full extent. In Denmark Southern Jutland for example 75% of the hotels have not been renovated within the last 14 years, and almost 25% have not been renovated within the last 7 years.

The optimisation of existing facilities also includes the upgrading of facilities, if needed, and making them sustainable. The starting point of the optimisation should be based on local traditions (building style, type of accommodation etc.). There are, however, no common criteria in the Region concerning indicators to guide either the renovation of existing buildings or any developments.
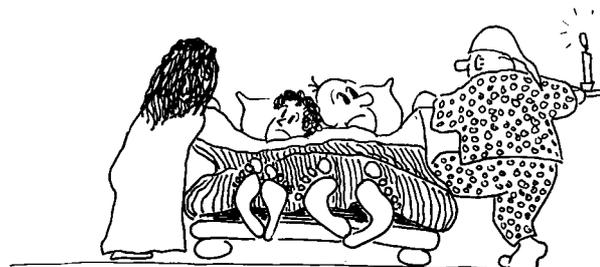
Accommodation and recreational facilities should fit into the landscape of the specific area in which they are located. Moreover, they should be adapted to the (special) demands of the growing market-share of seniors, such as appropriate physical interior solutions, and should be located in such a way that the use does not create extra needs for transport.

NetForum is of the opinion that:

a **existing facilities must be sustainable in the future**

a **the quality should correspond to the customers' demands (e.g. families with children, senior citizens and the disabled)**

a **refurbishment and renovation of existing facilities should be given priority over building new**

a **accommodation facilities should be constructed or renovated in accordance with the regional architecture and landscape and be as environmentally friendly as possible**

5.4.1 Star Classifications

One way to evaluate the quality of accommodation is the traditional star classification system, which provides a consistent standard seen from the user's point of view, such as availability of televisions, en suite bathrooms, etc. However, there are national differences in the criteria. The number of units (hotels, campsites, etc.) in the Region which use the star classification systems is limited. Very few accommodation facilities, which

are certified, are ranked with four or five stars (highest ranking). Most of the certified facilities are ranked with three stars or less. A qualitative development could lead to more facilities being certified within the star classification systems.

The classification systems are not transparent. As indicated above it is not possible to make a direct comparison across the borders. There is a need for clarification, in order for the customers to know what they are being offered. This also implies that monitoring the changing demands of the tourists is necessary.

If possible common processes of development at the international level should be adjusted, and especially offer customers the service of a standardised presentation (comparable classification and compatible booking systems) of accommodation facilities.

NetForum is of the opinion that:

a **the star classification systems in the three countries should be comparable**

a **all accommodation facilities should be classified as an instrument of customer information**

a **the establishment of classification systems for special target groups such as families and the disabled would be useful**

a **the qualitative development of facilities must be carried out primarily through the involvement of the tourism industry**

5.4.2 Sustainability as Certification Parameter

It is important that there is a broad awareness of trends and developments in the tourists' demands. It is essential that the politicians make decisions concerning to what extent they want to satisfy these demands. The balance between responding to the tourists' demands as well as to the local population's demands and the needs of nature and the environment is a sensitive and difficult matter.

Sustainability as a certification parameter aims at measuring the sustainability of the operation and the running of the accommodation facility.
Existing certification systems for sustainable accommodation such as the "Green Key" in Denmark, the "Environmentally Friendly Hotels and Restaurants" in Germany and the "Environmental Barometer" in the Netherlands, involve criteria for the use of water and electricity, demands for sorting of waste and not using pesticides on the outdoor facilities, etc.
The members are continuously checked to ensure the quality of the classification (See also "Illustrative Examples").

Sustainable solutions in the field of accommodation form an essential part of an increased quality-price awareness. They have to be introduced as a second step in the development of a transparent and comparable classification system throughout the Region. The introduction will be a long-term process which has to be adjusted by the tourist operators through motivation and advice.

NetForum finds that:

a **common criteria for certification of sustainable accommodation facilities, restaurants and other recreational facilities should be developed on the basis of existing certification systems**

a **the development of such criteria must be carried out through involvement of the tourism industry**

5.5 Qualitative Development of Tourism must also be Economically Sustainable

The qualitative development of accommodation and recreational facilities is also economically essential.

NetForum finds that the following is important in ensuring a sustainable development:

a **The maintenance of the diverse ownership structures and the improvement of quality**

The Wadden Sea Region has traditionally had many small and medium-sized enterprises and this pattern should be preserved. However, it could also be a hindrance to higher quality in the field of tourism. Small and medium-sized enterprises often fight hard to survive and the owners lack time (but not will) to deal with, for example, improvement of the booking-systems (e.g. through the Internet), use of new technology, introduction of sustainable operations, evaluation and improvement of the quality in the promotion etc. Many owners who let summer cottages and who

do not have this as their main source of income may even lack the incentive to introduce such improvements.

Local authorities could act as initiators of short seminars and courses, developed in co-operation with local and nation-wide organisations for accommodation facilities (for example Horesta in Denmark, the German Dehoga and the organisations for rural tourism).

a **Improve (private – private/public) partnerships**

In many remote areas tourism is in fact the only commercial activity. There is a risk that this dependency can threaten the survival of these "isolated" communities. Entering partnerships between for example the remaining local farmers and hotels operators for the supply of products to hotels is one way to counter or avoid this development.

a **An increase of permanent jobs is essential**

Creation of permanent full-time jobs attracts people who generally have higher formal qualifications than those who are seasonally employed. Permanent jobs are also an incentive for the employed to settle in the Region and thus create a more balanced demographic pattern.
The economic basis of permanent full-time jobs is spreading of the season.

a **Make jobs in the tourism sector attractive for people with qualifications**

The job structure in the tourism sector with many employees only seasonally occupied includes the risk that the jobs are occupied by people who lack qualifications.
Lack of knowledge of and education in service may result in low quality of the product offered.
The service-personnel at the accommodation facilities often have little or no knowledge of the natural, cultural and other aspects of the Region. In chapter 4 NetForum has stated that the strengthening of cultural tourism in the Region is one factor with a potential for generating more jobs and income for the Region.

a **Families and seniors are important target groups**

Families and seniors are the two most important groups of visitors to the Region. They have a need for door-to-door transport from their homes to the holiday destination. Moreover the need for special facilities for the disabled is relatively high in the group of senior tourists and those facilities are not available to any great extent in the Region.

a **Promote and integrate "green awareness" in marketing**

The environment should be placed in the centre for future tourism at all levels including both destinations and customers. Therefore a complete and effective strategy is required to influence customers through the in-co-operation of "green marketing" at the destinations which to a great extent should meet the requirements for sustainable operation.

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a **Improve a co-ordinated monitoring of the internal and external environments on the destinations**

An improved and co-ordinated overview of both the internal and external environments at destinations is an essential precondition in meeting the requirements of the customers for opportunities to choose and their demands for quality and sustainability. One way to achieve this is through collecting and storing a large variety of data.

NetForum states that:

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a **a qualitative development of tourism requires sustainability**

a **a rise in all-year tourism gives a possibility for creating more permanent jobs which is desirable for the Region**

a **owners of small and medium-sized enterprises in the tourism sector should have possibilities of support for initiatives that raise the quality of their facilities**

a **in order to compete in the future, a digital booking system should cover the local, the regional and the national market**

a **creating jobs for qualified people is important to attract and keep employees in the Region. The qualifications of the employees should also include knowledge of sustainable behaviour and of the natural and cultural values in the Wadden Sea Region**

a **various offers to the target groups, e.g. families and senior citizens, should be improved to keep them as important customers in the future**

a **specific offers should be developed for new target groups such as the disabled and youngsters**

5.6   Illustrative Examples

The Netherlands
- The organisation of companies in the field of campsites and summerhouses (RECRON) has introduced the "Environment Barometer." Certain requirements have to be met and the facility then receives a qualification (bronze, silver or gold.) Independent observers regularly check that the requirements are kept. Several operators in the Dutch part of the Wadden Sea Region have obtained one of the qualification levels.
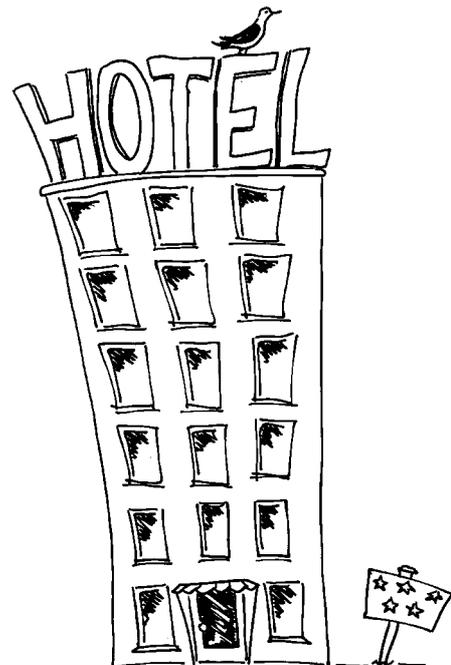
Germany

- The "National Park Friendly Hotel" is an example how to develop quality and a unique selling position by promoting the National Park in Schleswig-Holstein.

- The organisation of Hotels and Restaurants in Schleswig-Holstein has introduced "Environmentally Friendly Hotels and Restaurants".

Denmark

- The Green Key classification system has introduced 54 criteria on how to make accommodation facilities sustainable. The system has been working for several years and is well known and respected.

- The island of Rømø has been appointed as one of seven localities for development of "Destination 21", a pilot project to establish criteria on what is needed for a whole destination to be regarded as sustainable. Danish tourism organisations and recreational organisations have taken this initiative.

- The publication of a practical, economical and user friendly environmental handbook for 17,000 organisations in the tourist sector should promote higher standards and awareness for both the service providers and the customers.
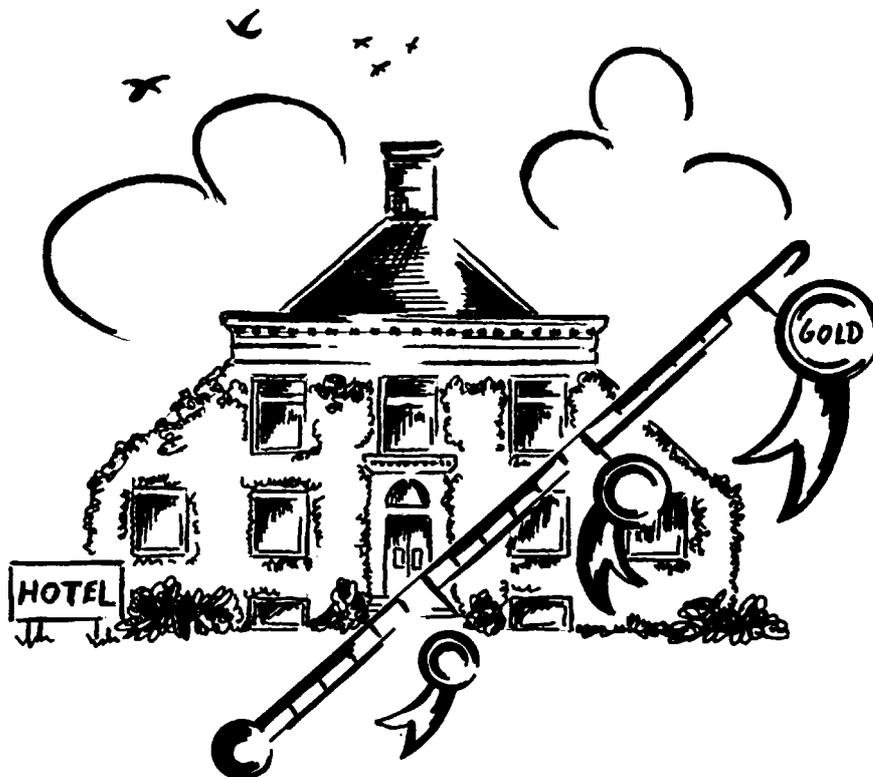
5.7 Recommendation for Common Policies	Remarks
1 Maintain the diversification of accommodation facilities	
2 Avoid extending the accommodation facilities, use the existing capacity more efficiently	Initiatives to lengthen the season and subsidy for investments in renovation of existing capacities should be promoted
3 Encourage the development of accommodation facilities in the inland municipalities, provided that the individual, regional character is not lost	
4 Ensure that the accommodation and recreational facilities meet the requirements of sustainability in terms of location, architecture and technical requirements	Through voluntary participation in existing organisations such as the Dutch " Environmental Barometer" or the Danish Green Key
5 Renovate old facilities and develop new ones based on local/regional characteristics	
6 Develop common criteria for sustainable accommodation, environmentally friendly restaurants and other recreational facilities	See 5.8
7 Make the systems of quality of accommodation (star classification) comparable	See 5.8
8 Initiate local partnerships between the tourism industry and primary production industries to help ensure a sustainable development in local communities.	Examples from the German area of Röhn and from some Greek islands should be considered (TUI)
9 Extend the marketing of the Wadden Sea Region as a destination for which the "green profile" of each of the various regions is defined and promoted	

5.8 Proposal for Projects

5.8.1 Priority Projects

• **Promotion of "Sustainability Standards" in the Wadden Sea Region**

In the Danish and German parts of the Wadden Sea, classification systems of sustainable accommodation have been initiated. On the basis of these joint criteria covering the Wadden Sea Region should be developed.

• **Development of a sustainable package-holiday**

The promotion of holiday-arrangements that are consistently sustainable. This includes travelling by public transport ("Wadden Sea Ticket") to destinations that meet sustainability criteria in accommodation, offering of nature-experiences, cultural and historic events as well as other cure and fitness activities

• **Enhancement of facilities for less mobile and disabled people**

The enhancement of facilities both for nature experiences, accommodation and other facilities for less mobile and disabled people.
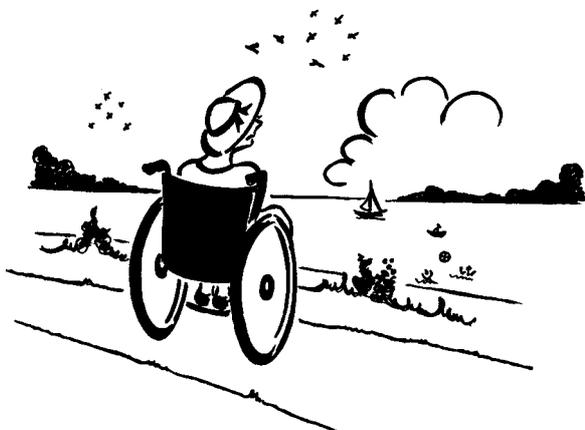
5.8.2 Tentative and Preliminary Projects

• **Make the star classification systems comparable**

The existing star classification system works in accommodations in all three Wadden Sea countries, but there are differences in the criteria. They should be harmonised and thereby made more user-friendly.

• **A Sustainable "Backpack" for practical Use**

In all three countries different organisations have developed and published books, folders, etc with ideas and experience about how to make accommodation facilities, restaurants and other recreational facilities sustainable. The development of a "sustainable backpack" is a good starting point for the development of sustainable running of accommodation facilities.

• **Establish a sustainability award in the Wadden Sea Region**

An award each year to tourism operators to improve sustainable tourism and, development in the Wadden Sea Region. This would be a good way of continuous promotion and providing information about the issue.

• **Establish comparable classification and compatible booking systems**

If possible common processes of development at the international level should be adjusted, and especially offer customers the service of a standardised presentation of accommodation facilities.

6. Accessibility and Transport

6.1 Introduction

Transportation in the Wadden Sea Region can be divided into two main means:
- Transportation into, from and through the Region
- Transportation within the Region

Most of the tourists come to the Wadden Sea Region by car, which creates considerable seasonal traffic problems along large parts of the Wadden Sea coast. It has been estimated that around 85% of the tourists come by car and that the total use of public transport covers less than 10% of the total transport average of people.

6.2 Private and Public Transport

6.2.1 Car Traffic and Roads
Access to the coastal zone is, except for the main roads to the larger seaside towns in the three countries, composed of a network of minor roads, which become congested in the peak season with consequent local problems and long journey time. The problems are worst in the vicinity of the seaside towns with ferry connections to the islands, and at tourism hot-spots such as beaches, attractive sight-seeing locations, in villages and towns and on days on which accommodation periods change.

In the Aurich district in Lower Saxony recent research has clearly underlined the problems related to car traffic. The findings of this research include the following:

- approximately 88% of all tourists reach their holiday destination by private car;
- private cars are also used intensively during the holiday. More than 60% of the tourists' excursions within the area are by car which is probably similar in the whole Wadden Sea Region;
- private cars are perceived as a more independent and cheaper means of transportation than the majority of public transport facilities;
- tourists' use of cars contributes less than 50% to the overall movements of cars in the area. This means that the inhabitants' own use of cars should be regarded as an important factor when developing alternative solutions to the use of private cars.

In Germany many smaller towns and cities in particular have no bypasses around the town-centres. Construction of too many new roads has an undesirable impact upon the landscape, but is probably a necessary solution for some towns.

In Denmark driving and parking cars on some beaches is allowed. In Sct. Peter Ording in Schleswig-Holstein it is allowed to park on the beach in certain areas.

The main problems with car traffic arising in the peak season are:
- many people leave their cars in parking places close to the ferry departure points, or take their vehicles to the islands if this is possible
- parking places are overfilled, searching for free places causes additional traffic
- noise and air pollution affects inhabitants as well as tourists
- bike riding and walking is affected or even dangerous due to cars
- most of the movement within the area is also by car, e.g. excursions and shopping

6.2.2 Public transport and facilities
Generally speaking, today the situation is that adequate public transport connections to/from and within the Wadden Sea Region are limited and poor, and cannot currently be regarded as a viable alternative to private cars.

Public transport connections from the inland to the coast are better in the Netherlands, and even more so in Germany, than in Denmark.

Public transportation (offered by public or private companies) includes train, bus, ferry and plane connections which are mainly organised as line-transport, i.e. forms of transport with regular departure and arrival times on defined routes. Chartered transport, for example by boat from island to island or by plane from the mainland to some of the islands, is also regarded as public transportation.

Trains and Buses

Trains from the main cities in the inland can reach the main tourism centres along the coast. In Schleswig-Holstein the island of Sylt is also connected to the mainland by a train connection. The number of actual train fares is, however, often limited and travelling by train into the Wadden Sea Region often involves many changes. Busses are mainly used for local transportation and the density of the bus-network varies. Busses are furthermore used for charter excursions, where the departure and the destination point is outside the Region.

Disabled tourists have a special need for transport. Their demand for adequate public transport facilities and help with luggage, etc. is only taken into account at very few locations in the Wadden Sea Region. Access to the countryside in the Wadden Sea Region also includes the possibilities of access for the disabled.

Other mean of private transport into the Region such as boats, planes and bikes are of less importance. [8]

Ferries and Boats

The ferries primarily connect the mainland to the islands, but there are regular line-ferries among some of the islands in all three countries. Chartered boats are widely used for one-day excursions[9] and also for trips from island to island (island hopping).

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[8] Boats and bikes are also discussed in the section on "Nature and Recreational Activities" as they are also seen as a recreational activity and not as a mean of transport.

[9] See section on "Nature and Recreational activities".

A fairly new development in the Wadden Sea Region is high-speed ferries alongside the traditional ferry connections. They are currently used in the German and Dutch parts of the Wadden Sea Area.

In Schleswig-Holstein a route connects the islands of Nordstrand, Amrum, Sylt and Hallig Hooge. Companies are planning high-speed ferry connections from Hamburg and/or Cuxhaven via Helgoland to Sylt and other German Islands. Vlieland and Terschelling are connected to the mainland and to each other by high-speed ferries.

The use of this means of transport is regarded by some in Schleswig-Holstein as a problem. It has been found that it causes problems in the form of disturbance to seals and birds and tranquillity and that it causes socio-economic problems due to the increasing number of very short-time tourists on the islands.

In the Dutch part of the Region high-speed connections can cause additional inconvenience to the water-sport activities, in the waterways.

Air Traffic
Many islands have small airfields. Most of them are located in Germany, where the islands of Sylt and Juist have most landings and take-offs (16,000 and 33,600 in 1996). "Public" transport by plane to the Wadden Sea Islands is possible in Germany, especially in Lower Saxony. Only a few islands are connected to the mainland by regular (line-traffic) airlines.
Plane and helicopter connections are used for transportation of persons and goods in emergency situations as well as for recreational flights and other tourism activities.
Some tourists can reach their holiday destination by chartered or private planes to make short weekend, daily trips to islands or for sightseeing.

6.3   Future Trends

The trend with regard to the tourists having more frequent and shorter vacations combined with the use of traditional solutions to traffic problems, namely:

- enhancing the quality of road access by better and wider highways and roads to and inside the Region
- increasing the number of parking places

may result in the following:

- the volume of cars will stay high or even increase
- air pollution will continue
- the quality of the destination will decrease
- the landscape will be even more fragmented by infrastructure elements

and these solutions will be expensive, non-profitable and non-sustainable.

Furthermore, an increased growth in road traffic is expected along the Schleswig-Holstein and Danish Wadden Sea coast if and when the planned road extensions are completed in Northern Germany (plans for an additional West-Crossing of the Elbe river and extension of the current tunnel, village detours of the main road in Nordfriesland, improvement of the coast-road in Denmark). This work will make the "Wadden Sea Route" i.e. the roads through Northern Germany

towards Denmark more attractive than it is currently.

Some expect that the Region will experience a slow but steady growth of charter tourism, i.e. transport of large groups of tourists from a departure-point outside the Region to an arrival point inside the Region. This may result in an increased demand for and use of aeroplanes and high-speed ferries. On the other hand, charter tourism in the Region today is done through busses and normal ferries.

6.4 Public Transport and Charter Tourism must be Improved

To reduce the number of cars in the Wadden Sea Region and to avoid traffic jams on the way to holiday destinations, tourists should be offered attractive solutions for alternative transportation starting from their home areas. This means that public transport has to be improved and possibilities of combination with charter travelling have to be explored.

If the tourists are adequately informed about the existing possibilities for public transport and if more bus stops are placed close to accommodation facilities and other recreational facilities, the use of public transport will be more attractive for tourists. The improvement of public transport facilities should also result in improvements for the local inhabitants.

Better connections, qualitatively better transportation and an intensified transport system for luggage are preconditions for sustainable tourism at the Wadden Sea coast.

NetForum finds that:

a **solutions to ensure accessibility and to aim at minimisation of use of private cars and development of alternatives to car traffic must respect the interests of the population and the tourists to ensure the possibilities in the future**

a **solutions must be carefully evaluated to ensure that they are indeed sustainable alternatives**

a **solutions taking into account the tourists' use of transport right from their homes to the final holiday destination in the Wadden Sea Region are needed. These solutions must be combined with measures in the Region**

a **air traffic and high-speed ferries cause environmental problems: i.e. noise and disturbance to nature and also to local residents and to those tourists who come to enjoy peace and tranquillity [10] ~**

a **aircraft transportation of tourists should be minimised [11] ~**

a **ferry routes and time-schedules should respect, for example, moulting periods of sea birds as well as the requirements of seals and harbour porpoises**

a **timetables for ferries supplying the islands and Halligen, must suit the needs of the inhabitants at the locations. Nature should also be considered when doing this**

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[10] *Some members of NetForum found that an increase in the use of high-speed ferries and aeroplanes could not be considered disturbing because the alternative to the use of those means of transport might be even worse*

[11] *Some members of NetForum found that aircraft transportation in some cases could be seen as a sustainable mean of transport.*

ⓐ **high-speed ferries are not considered to be a sustainable mean of transport in the Wadden Sea Area, due to fuel consumption, noise, disturbance to animals, etc**

ⓐ **high-speed ferries do not, on the other hand, pose a problem in main waterways connecting harbours with the North Sea unless the waterways are also used for water-sports [12] ~**

ⓐ **transportation of tourists by ferries starting at large cities such as Hamburg could relieve traffic on the roads to the holiday destinations. This may however, cause problems for marine nature**

ⓐ **all ferries should inform about the natural assets of the Wadden Sea on board**

6.5 Illustrative Examples

Germany

- The pilot project in the district of Aurich concerning minimisation of the tourists' use of private cars. Achievements include the following:
  - Analysis of existing patterns of mobility with the aim of finding sustainable solutions.
  - Involvement of the local stakeholders, especially the public authorities and the companies responsible for transport of people.
  - Introduction of special low-price tickets for tourists.

- Car traffic is prohibited on almost all the Wadden Sea Islands in Lower Saxony.
- In the community of Sct Peter Ording tourists can use the buses free of charge if they show their "kurkarte" (which they have to buy in any case).

- Tourists who come by train to their holiday destination can buy 'holiday tickets' together when booking their accommodation for a reduced price. The use of public transport within certain regions (Schleswig-Holstein for example) for one, two or three weeks is also free of charge.
- Bad Reichenhall in Bavaria has almost eliminated car-traffic in the town centre through free parking lots in the outer parts of the town in close vicinity of major roads and by high costs of parking in the town centre, organised public transportation from the parking lots to the town centre.

- The Bodensee Click is an Internet based system which facilitates the use of public transportation in the Bodensee Area. The project makes it possible to connect different national traffic-systems into a single system integrated with a "tourism database".

The Netherlands
- Park and Ride systems have been used for many years in the Netherlands.

- Car traffic is prohibited on the islands of Vlieland and Schiermonnikoog.

- High-speed ferries are used in the IJsselmeer and in the Delta Area around Rotterdam to relieve traffic on the roads.

- The municipality of Schiermonikoog is paying to maintain cheap and secure parking facilities on the mainland in order to avoid cars on the island.

Denmark
- Flexible arrival and departure days have been introduced at several of the tourism hot spots.

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[12] *Some members of NetForum found that the use of high-speed ferries in the Wadden Sea Region in any case cause problems.*

6.6 Recommendation for Common Policies	Remarks
1 Ensure that all policies on minimisation of car traffic are sustainable	Make a specific evaluation in each case. Reduction of the need for (car) transport by tourists and local inhabitants should be included in integrated spatial planning
2 Improve public transport connections (trains, busses) into and within the Wadden Sea Region	Re-opening of the cross-border train connections between Denmark and Germany, better and faster links to existing main train routes (e.g. Bremen–Groningen) Expand the car train facilities within the Region and combine user friendly systems Extend existing networks (e.g. to and from Milan-Munich-Frankfurt-Hamburg) to the Wadden Sea Coast such as Niebüll-Sylt
3 Avoid fragmentation of the landscape	Construction of detours to solve local traffic problems should only take place when absolutely necessary
4 Improve the infrastructure by taxation, parking fees, etc [13] ~	Introduction of parking fees at the beaches and the raising of parking fees at existing parking places in places where this has not yet been done
5 Make different arrival and departure days for tourists in the different areas	Regional tourism organisations should enter into agreement with travel agencies and rental bureaus to use weekdays instead of Saturdays or Sundays

[13] *Some members of NetForum disagree with the use of parking fees and taxation.*

Proposed Policies	**Remarks**
6 Introduce convenient luggage transportation to holiday destinations	Travel companies should strengthen the work with the "Combi Wadden Sea Ticket" which starts in the home areas of tourists and includes all public transport structures and transport of luggage as well. More connections and accommodation facilities should be incorporated in this type of organisation
7 Make the use of public transportation economically competitive with the use of private cars	Increased subsidies for public transport [14] ~
8 Promote and promote information concerning public transport facilities	Increased promotion of and information on public transport facilities through, for example, production of an information network on public transport facilities, as well as through information at the booking offices for accommodation
9 Minimise environmental problems and disturbance to tourists caused by air traffic	NetForum supports the trilateral policy not to construct new airports on the Wadden Sea islands, establishing minimum flight altitudes in the Wadden Sea Area and aiming at a prohibition of advertisement flights Existing initiatives in some parts of the Region to reduce the noise from air-traffic should also be introduced in the rest of the Region
10 No new airfields should be built in the Wadden Sea Region[15] ~	Through national legislation and spatial planning

[14] *The regional authorities in all three countries are to a great extent responsible for the subsidies for public transport. In many cases they have very limited financial means and it was as a result of this that some members of NetForum found the proposal unrealistic.*

[15] *Some members of NetForum were of the opinion that future needs for an establishment of airfields could occur and could be sustainable.*

| **Proposed Policies**	**Remarks**
11 Minimum flight altitude should be 2000 feet [16] ~	Through national legislation and spatial planning
12 Avoid further high-speed ferries in the Wadden Sea Region[17] ~	Through national legislation and spatial planning
13 Avoid negative environmental impacts from high-speed ferries and other fast vessels	NetForum supports the trilateral policy of introducing speed limits for high-speed ferries inside the Wadden Sea Area
	Shipping companies should respect the demands of nature and users in the Wadden Sea Area and in the surrounding North Sea
14 Extend the visitor information system to all ferries	Ensure that information on nature is given on board
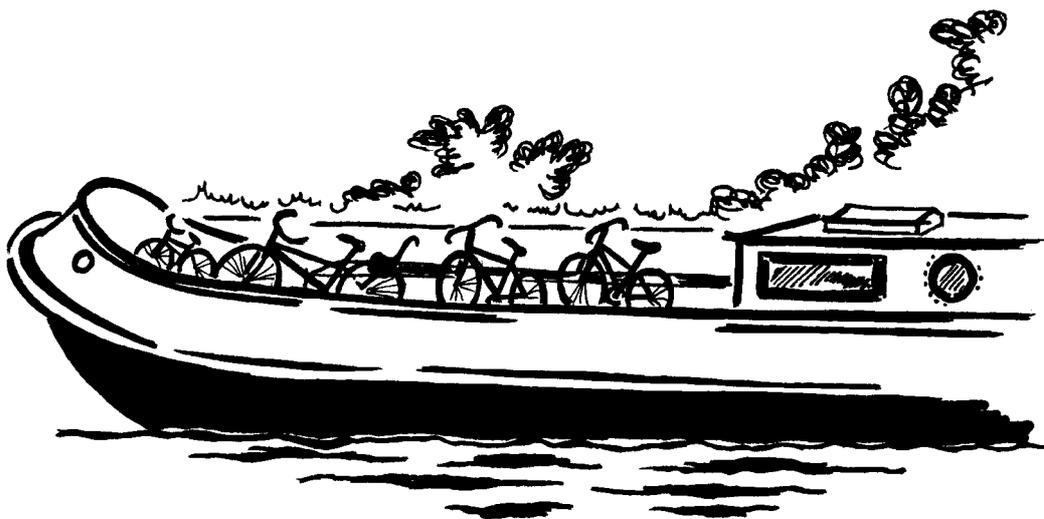
[16] *Some members of NetForum were against the 2000 feet because there might be cases where the planes had to go lower. Flying at higher altitudes also requires more fuel.*

[17] *Some members of NetForum were of the opinion that high-speed ferries in some cases could be useful and did not support future avoidance.*

6.7   Proposal for Projects

6.7.1 Priority Projects

- **Creation of Park and Ride-facilities at Hot Spots throughout the Wadden Sea Region**

  In the vicinity of tourist hot spots "Park and Ride Systems" should be introduced, using existing parking facilities. A "Park and Ride System" means that people can leave their cars at the parking place and then use bus/train or continue their journey together with others in one car.

- **Establishment and promotion of alternative transport-systems on islands with excessive car traffic**

  Island communities with car traffic should use the experience of islands with no car traffic or with strict regulations on this. The project should also cover initiatives to ensure transportation from and to accommodation as well as transportation of luggage, bike-hire etc.

6.7.2 Tentative and Preliminary Projects

- **Issuing a Catalogue of Traffic Minimisation Ideas and Measures**

  Collection of information and assessment of existing measures regarding minimising individual traffic outside the Wadden Sea Region too, in order to transfer knowledge, ideas and existing solutions.

- **The introduction of a Wadden Sea Cycle Path (part of the North Sea Cycle Route)**

  The introduction of the North Sea Cycle Route should be covered by a special section signed "Wadden Sea". This should include visitor information on nature and culture along the route as well as bike-hire stations, luggage transportation along the route and possibilities of cheap access to intermediate bus and train connections.

- **The establishment and Promotion of the existing "Combi Wadden Sea Ticket"**

  A Wadden Sea Ticket that combines all kinds of public transport (for people and luggage) from home to the holiday destination. The ticket could be combined when booking accommodation at a low price (now done in Germany). Special attention needs to be given to the disabled.

- **Least cost planning in mobility**

  Every project for implementing alternatives to individual car traffic should be accompanied by a "Least Cost Assessment" in order to prove the long-term profitability of such an alternative at all relevant levels. This necessitates an assessment of the financial, environmental and social impact of a given solution and its alternatives.

- **The development of a Wadden bike-hire system**

  The development of a system for hire of special "Wadden Bikes" covering the whole Region which must include possibilities for transport of luggage for bikers. This would attract biking tourists especially to mainland locations.

- **The improvement of the information on Public Transport Opportunities**

  Information on public transport in the brochures from the hotels, restaurants as part of the general regional information. This information should be given on the Internet (e.g. through local and regional tourism organisations).

- **The improvement of service at railway stations**

  More customer friendly opening hours and providing functioning ticket machines.

  A corresponding number of free parking spaces at the railway station for people with tickets. Gastronomic offers at the railway stations. Also general conditions of the station should also be taken into consideration (e.g. facilities, access for disabled etc.).
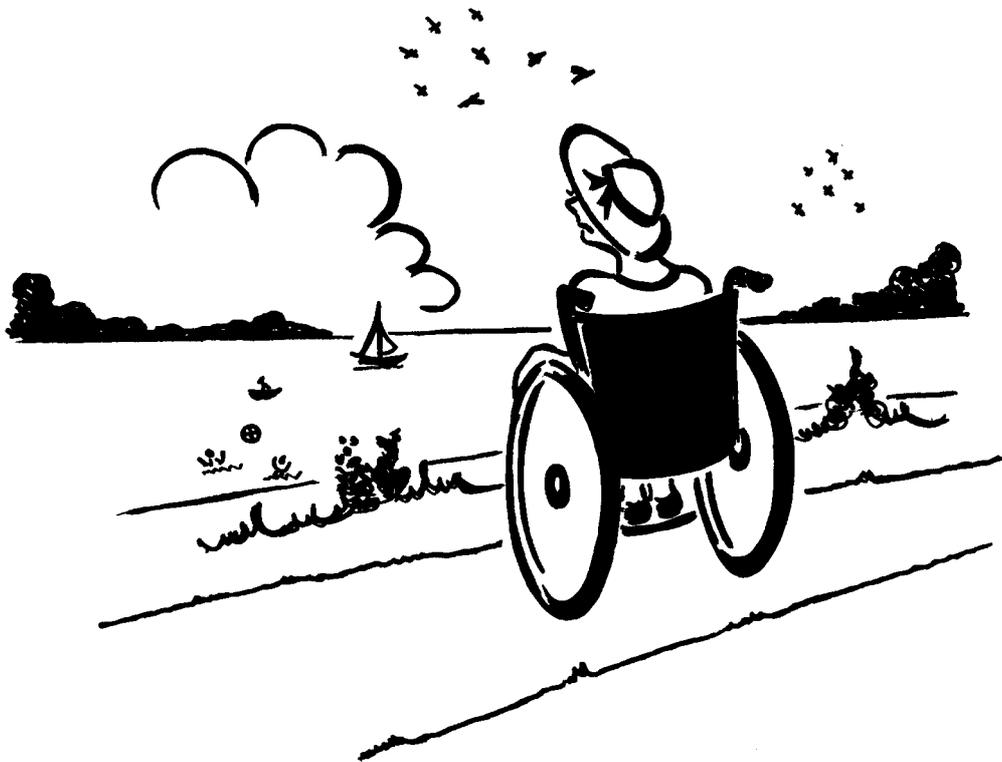
7. Follow up Activities

NetForum has developed proposals for principles, policies and projects for the Inter-regional Wadden Sea Cooperation. It is of the opinion that these suggestions constitute an essential input to sustainable tourism in the Wadden Sea Region on which there is a broad consensus among the relevant stakeholders. But these suggestions must be followed-up by initiatives and activities to continuously support sustainability.

It is the task of the Inter-regional Wadden Sea Cooperation, having commissioned NetForum to develop proposals for a sustainable tourism development in the Wadden Sea Region, to initiate, co-ordinate and facilitate the follow-up activities in a further participatory process with the stakeholders. The NetForum suggests that the Inter-regional Wadden Sea Cooperation, as a first step, adopt an action plan which should entail the following elements:

a **Implementation of the suggested policies: how, by whom and when**

a **Implementation of the priority projects including their funding and the setting up of an adequate organisation for the implementation and co-ordination of the projects**

a **Monitoring of the activities**

The implementation of the action plan needs to be co-ordinated by the secretariat of the Inter-regional Wadden Sea Cooperation or a unit designated for the purpose equipped with appropriate resources to facilitate the implementation.

The action plan should take into account cross-thematic activities and should therefore embody approaches such as the following:

- The tourism development should be more oriented towards target groups
- Support should be given in establishing a communication and co-operation strategy for the local level
- The establishment of a network designed for the technical support and counselling of the partners in the Wadden Sea Region with regard to the implementation of environmental measures in the tourism sector ("practitioners support practitioners") should be designed
- The development of demand oriented and competitive solutions
- Making use of public-private-partnership (PPP).

NetForum concludes that the current monitoring systems are inadequate in terms of providing appropriate information for managers and stakeholders.
The Inter-regional Wadden Sea Cooperation should initiate and support the establishment of an adequate monitoring system for tourism and recreation in the Wadden Sea Region to enable decision-making for sustainability.

Furthermore, NetForum invites the Inter-regional Wadden Sea Cooperation to share the valuable experiences with the participatory approach with a larger community, in particular, the European Union and the trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation.
NetForum would finally like to emphasise that the occasion of the regularly held Trilateral Governmental Conferences of which the next will be held in Denmark in autumn 2001, should be used as a focal point for future work on this issue and for the presentation and evaluation of projects as well as the creation of further common commitments ".

Appendix A

Prioritised Projects

Proposal no. 1

Development of a transnational, digital database, integrating information on nature and cultural-history.

Project description

- Development of a joint visitorinformation system within the whole region on the basis of the experience of the core-centres (Multimar S-H, Ecomare NL, Fiskeri and Søfartsmuseet DK) Development of German and Danish 'front doors' to InterWad (NL).
- Developing links between nature, cultural history and tourism information.
- The combination of local and regional attractions into one single guiding system through multimedia and production state-of-the-art communication devices.
  New creative products give information to the (young) visitors

Proposal no. 2

Development of an information system combining information about sustainable visitor behaviour and general tourism information

Project description

- Information on sustainable visitor behaviour and nature already exists but it is seldom presented in the tourist publications (brochures). The integration of this information by way of state-of-the-art innovative psychological approaches into existing tourism-media ensures that visitors are informed about the values of the Region and the need for considerate behaviour. This can consequently be used as a 'selling-point'. Angle: "Tempting not Preaching".
- Package should contain a 'dry' and a 'wet' module.

Proposal no. 3

Development of (standard) Tourism Monitoring
in the Wadden Sea Region

Project description	• The existing data on tourism is incomplete, lacks comparability and the criteria about what to observe are not the same in the three Wadden Sea countries. In all European countries there are similar problems with gathering tourism data. • A standard programme should be developed that directs which data to collect, how often, and in what way in all three countries. Followed in its wake by a module of what management tools are available to deal in a visitor-friendly way with a growing number of tourists. • In co-operation/participation with local entrepreneurs

Proposal no. 4

Development of a thematic marketing strategy
for the Wadden Sea Region

Project description	• The development and execution of a (bi)annual promotion program aimed at joint marketing of the selling points of the Wadden Sea Region as a whole and thus reaching a bigger market (European, world-wide). Suggested themes: • Man and Water Management • New and Old Technical Installations • History of Windmills • Lighthouses in the Wadden Sea Region • Whale-fisheries • Historical sailing-ships (in use) • International Wadden Arts Route • Sandcastles

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**Proposal no. 4
continued**

Project description

- Local tourism offices and entrepreneurs adopt the theme, material is provided, and they give it their angle after a start-up campaign.
- Launching a campaign to promote a common understanding among entrepreneurs within the tourism sector about the values in the Wadden Sea Region by organising seminars and excursions in the Region. This project can be used as a kick-off.

Proposal no. 5

Establishment of a gastronomy award on Wadden Sea menus

Project description

- Promoting local gastronomy by organising an award on (authentic) Wadden Sea-menus. A jury decides on specific menus. In combination with a local event or arrangement.
- Possibly together with the promotion of region-grown (eco-) products (e.g. Stichting Waddenproducten/Wattendelikatessen).

Proposal no. 6

Development of education-packages on regional history

Project description

- Develop education packages (3 languages) on regional history for primary and secondary schools, by use of multimedia and state-of-the-art communication devices

Proposal no. 7

Promotion of "Sustainability Standards" in the Wadden Sea Region

Project description

- In all three countries certification systems on sustainable accommodation facilities have been initiated. The projects consist of the promotion of these standards in the Wadden Sea Region (and extension to charter-sailing boats). The aim is to develop joint criteria for the Region on the base of these past experiences.

- In all three countries different organisations have published books, folders and so on with practical ideas on how to make accommodation facilities, restaurants and other recreational facilities sustainable. The development of a joint code-of-conduct with suggestions and ideas for practical use concerning sustainability for tourism-sector (based on Dutch Code of Conduct aiming at Wadden Sea visitors).

Proposal no. 8

Development of a sustainable package-holiday

Project description

- The promotion of holiday arrangements that are consistently sustainable. This includes travelling by public transport ('Wadden Sea Ticket") to destinations that meet sustainability criteria in accommodation, offering of nature-experiences, cultural and historic events as well as other cure and fitness activities

Proposal no. 9

Enhancement of facilities for less mobile and disabled people

Project description	• The enhancement of facilities both for nature enjoyment, accommodation and other facilities for less mobile and disabled visitors of the Wadden Sea Region. • Based on the report Encounter Nature: Seashore for all! (by Lebenshilfe Wittmund e.V. and National Park N.S.-Wattenmeer. • Facilities for disabled people should be explicitly included.

Proposal no. 10

**Creation of Park and Ride facilities at Hot Spots
throughout the Wadden Sea Region**

Project description	• The introduction of "Park and Ride Systems" in the vicinity of tourist hot spots, such as attractions and ferry harbours, using existing parking facilities. This will be a place where people can leave their car and then use (free?) bus/train or continue their journey. Aimed at a reduction of private car-use near beaches and other resorts, in cities and villages.

Proposal no. 11

**Establishment and promotion of alternative transport-systems
on islands with excessive car traffic**

Project description	• Islands with car traffic should make use of experiences from islands with no car traffic or with strict regulations to reduce car traffic. The project consists of the organisation and promotion of new and high quality transportation to and from the accommodation as well as transportation of luggage, bike renting etc. Using available knowledge collected over the past 2-3 years.

Appendix B

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