

SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE TOURISM ACTION PLAN FOR THE CURONIAN SPIT (LITHUANIA / RUSSIAN FEDERATION)



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Cover image: The highest mobile dune strip on the Curonian Spit stretching across the Lithuanian-Russian border (by Ramunas Povilanskas)

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PREFACE

Modern tourists are ever more inquisitive, savvy, and discerning while taking ever shorter and more frequent trips with multiple aims. This tourism multiplicity is rooted in their fundamental diversity of interests and motivations, which implies pursuing a varied mix of experiences while travelling. The shift in focus is particularly pertinent when one considers the transformation of seaside tourism. The integration of the South Baltic seaside resorts with the rich and well-preserved coastal cultural heritage based on sustainability gives a clue to possible ways of mitigating their disadvantages in a challenging international competition where warm coastlines lure away sun-seekers from Northern and Western Europe.

Therefore, the second part of the Main Output 1 of the DUNC project is an Action Plan comprising the long-term vision, goals and objectives for sustainable World Heritage tourism development. The Action Plan is a structured, comprehensive long-term activity outline for the heritage tourism stakeholders in the World Heritage destination concerning each of the essential issues of interest. It includes a comparative analysis of actions and measures that need to be prioritised based on a particular set of weighted criteria. The final part of this document comprises all annexes.

Three different heritage tourism action alternatives have been developed for each site based on the results of strategic analysis, including SWOT analysis: 1) Business As Usual' ('0' Strategy); 2) Actions averting coincidence of threats and weaknesses ('0+' Strategy); 3) Sustainable heritage tourism development priority actions. The comparative analysis aimed to check if sustainable heritage tourism development priority actions are more efficient and viable than Business As Usual' or averting coincidence of threats and weaknesses. The results of the comparative analysis have confirmed the initial notion that sustainable heritage tourism development priority actions are more efficient and viable than Business As Usual' or averting coincidence of threats and weaknesses.

Measures for successful implementation of a sustainable heritage tourism management plan are concrete tools (actions and activities) to pursue the anticipate objectives for achieving the goal in an identified theme. The stakeholders at the World Heritage tourism destination should focus on the essential measures best suited for sustainable heritage tourism development. A few necessary preconditions must be met and taken advantage of for successful achieving of anticipated results, including proper identification of the key institutional actors for each action. Therefore, after identifying the most appropriate measures, the planners proposed functional roles, responsibilities, and resources assigned to different actors.

A well-managed World Heritage site, which is also a sustainable tourism destination, relies on strong leadership, active collaboration network, and good governance. Hence the essential functional roles of the main actors: coordinators, pivotal actors, knowledge repositories and process facilitators. These roles may change in the process of the Action Plan implementation. Naturally, the heritage tourism action plan is a working document that should be revised regularly to reflect changes in the destination, tourism economy, and the needs of its community. However, it would be good if the coordinating institution and the knowledge repository remain the same throughout the entire lifespan of the current version of the Action Plan (i.e., five to seven years).



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1. FRAMEWORK FOR THE ACTION PLAN

Mission & Vision



The ultimate purpose of strategic planning of sustainable heritage tourism development on the Curonian Spit is to connect three essential strategic aspects into a single and effective Action Plan:

destination's **mission** - defining the criteria for sustainable heritage tourism of the Curonian Spit as a transboundary World Heritage tourism destination;

destination's **vision** describing what heritage wardens and tourism stakeholders and interest groups want to achieve;

measures to realise the mission and vision in five to seven years.

The Mission Statement for the UNESCO World Heritage site of the Curonian Spit as a transboundary sustainable heritage tourism destination should respond to the question *'Why do we need sustainable heritage tourism at the destination and how do we want to achieve it?'* In our opinion, the mission statement should be the same for all UNESCO World Heritage sites which are partners in the DUNC project (otherwise there wouldn't have been much sense for the sites to participate in the project).

The DUNC project partners have agreed on an apt mission statement responding to the above question: ***Sustainable development and delivery of heritage-related quality products and services to extend or/and prolong the tourist season.***

The best way to elicit the **vision** statement for sustainable heritage tourism development on the transboundary World Heritage site like the Curonian Spit deemed to be an interactive exercise.

It was agreed that the definition of the vision should not be overly sophisticated. The more concise the definition of the vision is, the more likely other people are to accept it.

Hence **the Vision Statement** of the Curonian Spit as a transboundary sustainable heritage tourism destination is as follows: ***“to preserve the cultural landscape of outstanding symbolic and universal value of the continuous interaction of humans with nature so that wherever tourists go they could see evidence of the World Heritage features”***



SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE TOURISM THEMES AND THEIR KEY ACTORS

The **tourism planning sustainability** criteria are the following:

- i) **durability of the practice;**
- ii) **resource efficiency;**
- iii) **economic sustainability;**
- iv) **environmental sustainability;**
- v) **cultural sustainability.**

The durable and efficient tackling of environmental problems at the coastal cultural World Heritage sites like waste management, provision of clean air and water, 'green' transport solutions are the key criteria of tourism sustainability. In the case of World Heritage tourist destinations, the

preservation of integrity and authenticity of a World Heritage property for future generations is also among the essential sustainability criteria. Additionally, there are several other main issues specifically pertinent to **sustainable tourism at coastal cultural World Heritage sites:**

-  **Learning about the true heritage conservation needs;**
-  **Local community interests and visitor desires;**
-  **Providing integrated management of broader environment, including coastal and maritime spatial planning;**
-  **Caring that the development of tourism infrastructure is in accordance with the conservation requirements of the World Heritage site.**

Based on previous investigations, two sustainable heritage tourism themes have been elicited as common and pivotal for the entire trans-boundary UNESCO World Heritage cultural landscape. Both pivotal themes build a synergy and cater in their kind for the appeal of the Curonian Spit as an attractive tourism destination on a national and international cultural, nature and multi-purpose tourism markets:

- I. **Coherent nature management and cross-border educational tourism on the Curonian Spit**
- II. **Cherishing traditions of artisanal fisheries, architecture of traditional fishing villages and fish gastronomy**



Some institutional actors are most pivotal for sustainable heritage tourism development on the Curonian Spit (see Annex 2 for description). Notably, a few important regional actors that could play a pivotal role in the sustainable heritage tourism development on the Curonian Spit missing: a transboundary World Heritage Tourism Association of the Curonian Spit, or a joint World Heritage Management Forum of the Curonian Spit. They are not existing yet.

Meanwhile, such organizations - one dealing with the cross-border heritage tourism promotion and another focusing on the World Heritage conservation promotion on the Curonian Spit - could provide a platform for a broader and more cohesive sustainable heritage tourism facilitation.



2. SUSTAINABLE WORLD HERITAGE TOURISM THEME AND ACTORS

COHERENT NATURE MANAGEMENT AND CROSS-BORDER EDUCATIONAL TOURISM ON THE CURONIAN SPIT

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS:

- 🦶 The primary challenge of promoting the Curonian Spit as a tourism destination is to create attractive offers catering to outdoor experiences curated for various shoulder season visitor groups to avoid congestion in the summer peak season, and to increase the number of visitors staying overnight.
- 🦶 The priority on both sides of the Curonian Spit is given to the expansion of the network of self-guided hiking trails - from restoring the pre-war network of footpaths based on historical documents to better connecting of self-guided hiking trails with mobile dune lookouts.
- 🦶 However, to appreciate the World Heritage and experience the uniqueness of the Curonian Spit, people need to get into nature with a professional guide.
- 🦶 The educational tourism zones are designated for guided visits on specially arranged trails, for wildlife- and bird watching guided tours, and for environmental education.
- 🦶 Dedicated conservation efforts for the World Heritage landscape combine protection of cultural landscape values and include the maintenance of the main structural elements: the Great Curonian Dune Ridge and the foredune of the Baltic Sea, an open coastal plain (palve) on the Curonian Lagoon coast and deflation hummocks (kupstyne) at the foot of grey and mobile dunes.
- 🦶 On the territory of both national parks, access to the seaside will continue to be allowed only in specially designated places. However, visitors should not be prevented from hiking on the Baltic Sea beach even in the strict reserve areas.
- 🦶 The Curonian Spit is traditionally attractive to nature lovers. Its abundant birdlife has long since attracted visitors who appreciate nature. Sustainability awareness is high among the guests, especially birdwatchers.
- 🦶 The Curonian Spit claims the highest number of sunshine hours on the southeast Baltic seacoast. Although the heaviest rainfall occurs in July, yet, a long summer daylight makes the summer climate particularly pleasant suitable for diverse seaside leisure.
- 🦶 Catering to experience tourism activities with special theme weeks during shoulder seasons with a different focus on World Heritage (such as period cuisine and clothing, music and Imperial seaside resort architecture).
- 🦶 Having been converted into fashionable seaside resorts in 1880s, the settlements on the Curonian Spit are noted for their period seaside resort architecture which ought to be restored and cherished again.
- 🦶 The German Imperial (Wilhelmine) period seaside resort planning and architecture on the Curonian Spit was inspired by the best examples of the English and French seaside resort architecture of the Belle Époque, however, with its own original features.
- 🦶 It becomes quite fashionable among people of creative professions to move to the Curonian Spit and live there at least for part of a year.

KEY ACTORS (see Annex 3 for the description):

MAIN HUMAN AND INSTITUTIONAL ACTORS (along with the multi-functional ones listed above)

-  Forest Management State Enterprise (LT) 1
-  Academic institutions / experts in landscape conservation (LT / RU) 2
-  Nature guides (LT / RU) 3
-  Tour service providers (LT /RU) 4
-  Ecotourism companies (LT / RU) 5
-  Notable people associated with nature of the spit (LT / RU) 6
-  Ludwig Gedeminus Rhesa (LT) 7
-  Nature ambassadors, friends and volunteers 8
-  Visitors interested in nature 9
-  Hobby birdwatchers 10



MAIN NON-HUMAN ACTORS

-  **Baltic Sea amber (LT / RU)** **11**
-  **Baltic Sea beach stabilization (LT / RU)** **12**
-  **Lagoon reed beds (LT / RU)** **13**
-  **Protective foredune (LT / RU)** **14**
-  **Integrated coastal management (LT / RU)** **15**
-  **Grey dunes (LT / RU)** **16**
-  **The Great Curonian Dune Ridge (LT / RU)** **17**
-  **Kustyne (deflation hummocks) (LT / RU)** **18**
-  **Villages covered with sand (LT / RU)** **19**
-  **Palve plain on the Curonian Lagoon coast (LT / RU)** **20**
-  **Ancient forests (LT / RU)** **21**
-  **Monuments and tombs of famous foresters (LT / RU)** **22**
-  **Migratory birds (LT / RU)** **23**

MAIN NON-HUMAN ACTORS (coninued)

	Cormorant Colony in Juodkrante (LT)	24
	Forest Management Project (LT / RU)	25
	Forestry regulations (LT / RU)	26
	National park management documents (LT / RU)	27
	UNESCO World Heritage Management Plan (LT / RU)	28
	Curonian Lagoon Biosphere Polygon (LT)	29
	Strict nature reserves (LT / RU)	30
	NATURA 2000 regulations and management plans (LT)	31
	Educational zones, self-guided trails and routes, lookouts (LT / RU)	32
	Border zone regulations and restrictions (LT / RU)	33



INTANGIBLE ACTORS:



Traditions of mobile sand stabilization (LT / RU)

34



Traditions of foredune management (LT / RU)

35



Myth of Neringa (LT)

36



Sustainability awareness among birdwatchers (LT / RU)

37



Legend of the dancing forest (RU)

38



CHERISHING TRADITIONS OF ARTISANAL FISHERIES, ARCHITECTURE OF TRADITIONAL FISHING VILLAGES AND FISH GASTRONOMY

MAIN HIGHLIGHTS:

- 🦆 Only few visitors of the Curonian Spit are really aware about the origin and quality of the fish served at local restaurants.
- 🦆 Even less visitors know that ornamental traditional weather vanes on the ethnographic boats reflect the 19th century pattern of division of lagoon areas for fishing among the villages around the Curonian lagoon.
- 🦆 Autumn Harvest festival of Nida should primarily focus on fish gastronomy and be held each September for two days in parallel in Nida and Rybachy cherishing local traditions of fisheries and fish gastronomy.
- 🦆 Lectures could be given to visitors where they can learn more about the local traditions of artisanal fisheries and fish gastronomy. Visitors could also buy and taste fish and thus support local producers.
- 🦆 Conservation of traditional features of the fishing villages should be the primary focus on both sides of the Curonian Spit - maintenance or restoring of traditional roof and window elements, verandas, original cinnabar-red and navy-blue painted walls and roof constructions, garden fences.
- 🦆 The synergy of cherishing the heritage of artisanal fisheries and water tourism includes promotion and support for the usage of ethnographic boats - Kurenas - by providing information assistance and involvement in collaboration projects, promotion and facilitation of excursions, including cross-border ones, to explore the Curonian Spit from the lagoon by ethnographic and period boats.
- 🦆 It is necessary to position internationally the entire Curonian Spit as an indispensable stopover within the Baltic Sea motorized and cycling tourism circuit, especially when the visa-free entry to the Russian side of the Curonian Spit facilitates crossing the entire spit without red-tape difficulties.
- 🦆 The Curonian Spit being an important 'stepping stone' of the northeast Atlantic flyway for migratory birds should use this fact for international nature and educational tourism marketing also establishing a yet an-other connection for the Curonian Spit with other Baltic Sea coastal protected and World Heritage areas, e.g., Southern Öland and Rügen.
- 🦆 Developing of a common cross-border system of heritage signage and online visitor guidance over the entire Curonian Spit should be considered.
- 🦆 For the facilitation of the cross-border water tourism on the Curonian Lagoon, it is necessary to complete the access roads and harbour facilities in the river cargo and passenger multilateral checkpoint Rybachy.
- 🦆 If properly rendered and marketed, the Curonian Spit could play an important role in the south Baltic seaside tourism system (chain) of former artisanal fishing villages on barrier spits turned into seaside resorts and creative hubs. The southern part of Nida is among the best-preserved and most complete examples of such a village.

KEY ACTORS (see Annex 4 for the description):

MAIN HUMAN AND INSTITUTIONAL ACTORS (along with the multi-functional ones listed above)

	Lithuanian Maritime Museum (LT)	39
	Local fish producers and sellers (LT / RU)	40
	Experts and guides in artisanal lagoon fishing (LT / RU)	41
	Baltic Sea Marina Association (LT / RU)	42
	Ethnographic boating tradition keepers (LT / RU)	43
	Fishermen's folklore interpreters (LT / RU)	44
	Families on summer holidays on the Curonian Spit (LT / RU)	45
	Seaside visitors (LT / RU)	46
	Domestic maritime tourists (LT / RU)	47
	Foreign maritime tourists (LT / RU)	48

MAIN NON-HUMAN ACTORS:

	Curonian Lagoon (LT / RU)	49
	Border zone regulations and restrictions (LT / RU)	50
	Marina and checkpoint Nida (LT)	51
	Marina and checkpoint Rybachy (RU)	52
	Navigation installations (LT / RU)	53
	Fish and fishing (LT / RU)	54
	Ethnographic boats Kurenas (LT)	55
	Traditional weather vanes (LT)	56
	Local restaurants (LT / RU)	57



INTANGIBLE ACTORS:

	Traditions of artisanal fisheries (LT / RU)	58
	Fishermen's Day (LT / RU)	59
	Autumn Harvest Festival (LT)	60
	Traditions of boatbuilding (LT / RU)	61
	Architecture of fishermen's villages (LT / RU)	62
	Fish gastronomy (LT / RU)	63



3. ACTIONS FOR SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS AND 'BUSINESS AS USUAL' ('0') STRATEGY

The sustainable heritage tourism development plan should consider future pessimistic, optimistic and realistic scenarios. It is easily achievable in the following way: each (eventually realised) opportunity from the accomplished SWOT analysis represents an action in the optimistic scenario, while each (eventually realised) threat represents an action in the pessimistic scenario. Naturally, a realistic scenario is an intermediate version between optimistic and pessimistic ones, i.e., somewhere in between the realised opportunities and threats. However, in each specific case, the realistic action might be either closer to the pessimistic action or to the optimistic one.

The realistic scenario which is drawn in this way also represents a '0' option of the strategic sustainable heritage tourism development plan, i.e., what will happen if World Heritage wardens and tourism managers do not do anything pro-actively ('business as usual'). Any prediction of the future is, naturally, more vague than the analysis of the current situation. Therefore, the realistic scenario, which aims to predict the future as realistically as possible, lacks details compared to realised anticipated opportunities (optimistic scenario) or realised threats (pessimistic scenario). For this reason, one predicted action in the realistic scenario might represent several optimistic and pessimistic counterparts (see Annex 1). Nevertheless it can deliver a fully feasible future development vision.



FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS

Social and economic sustainability

- 🦋 Number of second homes on the Curonian Spit increases drastically due to high real estate prices turning the spit into one of the most popular second-home places in Lithuania and Kaliningrad urban agglomeration

Economy

- 🦋 The Curonian Spit turns into a second-home resort void of almost any lasting socio-economic activities except for summer months

Sustainable heritage conservation and management

- 🦋 Ever increasing risk of disastrous droughts with declining precipitation and catastrophically dropping groundwater levels in summer

Heritage tourism sector

- 🦋 Shifting tourist profiles and demand towards 'new seaside crowds', reduces the opportunities and, hence, revenues from heritage and nature tourism

Heritage and overall tourism competitiveness

- 🦋 Real estate prices become too high on the Curonian Spit for urbanites, particularly young people to buy second homes

LEGAL AND REGULATORY ASPECTS

Historical legacy

- 🦋 A sharp decline of interest and/or commitment of the HORECA businesses and customers in sustainability or heritage designation due to 'concept inflation'

Legal and management aspects of heritage conservation

- 🦋 EU NATURA 2000 regulations in place implying support for keeping an open landscape on the Lithuanian side of the Curonian Spit while on the Russian side visual disruption happens in Lesnoy and Rybachy

Recent/current/eventual legal and administrative development

- 🦋 UNESCO continues having a supervisory authority regarding development plans in the core and buffer zones of the World Heritage

Designations facilitating sustainable tourism

- 🦋 All local settlements on the Curonian Spit are state-designated health or seaside resort settlements providing opportunities for sustainable wellness and wellbeing tourism services

ORGANISATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS

Organisational framework

- ↳ Both Kaliningrad Region and Klaipeda Region are members of the transnational federation of the Euroregion Baltic

Institutional framework

- ↳ There are between 10 and 20 HORECA companies and civic organizations that are interested in the development of a heritage tourism offer

Institutional role of the heritage tourism-related stakeholders

- ↳ With abolishment of visas for the EU citizens to the Kaliningrad Region, the Curonian Spit functions as an attractive hinterland for Palanga visitors

Institutional role of other stakeholders

- ↳ Extensive new development of HORECA facilities and unsustainable projects within central parts of the World Heritage property

Coordination of sustainable World Heritage property management

- ↳ Institutional difficulties, e.g. disinterest of local municipalities to stay committed to upkeeping of the World Heritage values

Provision of information and education to visitors

- ↳ Development of ICT technologies for the visitor-tailored interactive provision of knowledge about the World Heritage



DESTINATION MARKETING ASPECTS

The marketing potential of the Outstanding Universal Value

- ↳ Dedicated investments into education infrastructure development hampered by pest invasion or a devastating fire damaging ancient pine forests

Destination marketing based on the USP

- ↳ Nearshore or offshore environmental disaster (oil spill, algal boom etc.) spoiling the image of the destination

Destination marketing based on other features

- ↳ Shifting tourist profiles and growing demand for more 'sun-sand-sea' reduces interest in heritage and urban tourism fuelled by Instagram influencers

Events and festivals as heritage brands

- ↳ EU support could be available for positioning Nida as a World-Heritage-themed event site

Value for money

- ↳ Over 30% of tourists visiting the Curonian Spit still are affluent or retired German-speaking ones ('silver tourism')

Care for the quality of the tourist offer

- ↳ Erosion or loss of traditional life, making the heritage tourism a 'missing link' in the Curonian Spit tourism system

Care for visitor satisfaction

- ↳ Number of tourists which come to explore the Curonian Spit for a day or two and cross the border is increasing

Heritage tourism marketing innovations

- ↳ External support opportunities for start-ups and business incubators in ICT-based heritage tourism product development related to academic institutions on both sides of the border

Seasonality and length of stay

- ↳ A protracted decline in overnight stays on the Curonian Spit with an even more significant prevalence of weekend visitors

Heritage tourism product development

- ↳ Struggle among significant stakeholders over destination marketing priorities and messages

Sustainability awareness

- ↳ European conservation volunteer networks assist in raising sustainability awareness

Creative industries and local crafts

- ↳ It is quite fashionable among people of creative professions to spend at least part of the year on the Curonian Spit

ACTIONS AVERTING COINCIDENCE OF THREATS AND WEAKNESSES ('0+' STRATEGY)

SWOT analysis adds a note of realism into strategic planning. For practical purposes, it might be useful to pay more attention to the 'pessimistic' part of the SWOT analysis, i.e., on analysing weaknesses (internal conflicts or bottlenecks) and threats (external conflicts or risks). By matching and analysing weaknesses and threats in various combinations, it is possible to acquire a better picture of potential hindrances to sustainable

development and propose suitable aversion measures. The essential question to be raised and answered in that case should be 'How to avoid or avert the coincidence of a specific weakness (an internal conflict or a bottleneck) and a threat (an external conflict or risk)? Financial and legal aspects are of particular relevance for sustainable heritage tourism planning.

PROPOSED ACTIONS

FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS

- 👉 Engage creative industry adepts who bought second-homes on the Curonian Spit ('new locals') to participate more actively in the Autumn Equinox festival
- 👉 Develop and launch a wide-scale and segment-tailored World Heritage marketing campaign to make sea convalescence on the Curonian Spit more attractive for elderly second-home owners and tourists
- 👉 Promote the Curonian Spit as a cutting-edge innovative ICT-based sustainable tourism 'lab' offering contemporary take on coastal heritage tourism
- 👉 Impose tax incentives (e.g. even more contrasting car toll) between the high and shoulder season to regulate the visitor flow and the load on utilities
- 👉 Apply the best practice from the English Lake District to celebrate and reward those entrepreneurs from HORECA and related sectors that invest in quality through greater exposure to the World Heritage marketplace
- 👉 Increase real estate taxes on second-homes on the Curonian Spit up to the maximum level permitted in Lithuania and Russian Federation

LEGAL AND REGULATORY ASPECTS

- 👉 Strengthen collaboration with ta UNESCO-listed Southern Öland Agricultural Landscape to learn and acquire democratic and inclusive heritage tourism development practices
- 👉 Join efforts with other interested stakeholders to establish the transboundary World Heritage Office of the Curonian Spit
- 👉 Develop and implement a World Heritage 'Storytelling Master Plan' for vivification and animation of the underpinning farming culture creatively adapted from the English Lake District that faces similar challenges of 'concept inflation' and turning the living landscape into an open-air museum
- 👉 Joining efforts of both parks on the Curonian Spit with the Polish coastal national parks (e.g. Slowinski) to establish a Southeast Baltic sustainable coastal tourism network

SUSTAINABLE HERITAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ACTIONS

- 1. Promoting cultural experiences of the World Heritage.** Since one of the main objectives of tourism development on both sides of the Curonian Spit is to promote event tourism, enhanced efforts have to be taken to preserve the historic fabric and cherish traditional crafts. Examples of activities could be special theme weeks during shoulder seasons with a different focus on World Heritage (such as period dishes and clothing, boat construction, music and architecture). Conservation of traditional features of the Curonian Spit fishing villages should be the primary focus on both sides of the spit - maintenance or restoring of traditional roof and window elements, verandas, original wall and roof constructions, garden fences.
- 2. Outdoor experiences in the World Heritage.** The priority interest of both national parks is to make the visitors to get out of car, move around in the landscape and explore. The Curonian Spit offers plenty of possibilities for outdoor activities, on land and on water. The priority is given to the expansion of the network of self-guided hiking trails - from restoring the pre-war network of footpaths based on historical documents to better connecting of self-guided hiking trails with mobile dune lookouts. This also implies promoting the spit as an attractive destination for active leisure in the overseas priority markets. On the territory of both national parks, access to the seaside will continue to be allowed only in specially designated places. However, visitors should not be prevented from hiking on the Baltic Sea beach even in the strict reserve areas.
- 3. Reducing seasonality:** both national parks on the Curonian Spit want to extend the peak season at least from May to October. Kursiu Nerija National Park plans launching a traditional Autumn harvest festival in September in Nida. Meanwhile, Kurshskaya Kosa National Park puts the main emphasis on offering the visitors off-season organized educational tours. The educational tourism zones are being designated for guided visits on specially arranged trails, for wildlife- and bird watching guided tours, and for environmental education. These activities - traditional off-season events and education tours should be developed as concerted efforts in both national parks.
- 4. Improving the World Heritage infrastructure and making it more accessible to visitors.** Transportation planning measures should be more actively applied to regulate and reduce car traffic flows, especially in central areas of the settlements and near the seaside beaches. Dedicated efforts should encourage vacationers to go to the seaside beach on foot and to travel on the Curonian Spit by bike, including transferring the knowledge on bicycle interactive stops approved in Kursiu Nerija National Park during the DUNC project to Kurshskaya Kosa National Park. Also, developing of a common transboundary system of heritage signage and online visitor guidance should be considered.
- 5. Development of the transboundary system of biking (on the spit) and water tourism (in the Curonian Lagoon) linking both national parks.** A transboundary cycling path between Nida and Morskoye should be built linking both sides of the Curonian Spit. An international Russian-Polish-Lithuanian project "Creating a transboundary cycle route along an old postal route on the Curonian Spit: EUROVELO-BALTIC" should create a single cycling tourism system EuroVelo 10 on the entire spit. For the facilitation of the transboundary water tourism on the Curonian Lagoon, it is necessary to complete the access roads and harbour facilities in the river cargo and passenger multilateral checkpoint Rybachy.

6. The key tasks of **facilitating water tourism in both national parks** of the Curonian Spit are: promoting the travelling of tourists to, from, and along the Curonian Spit by water transport: development and adaptation of small harbours and marinas at the settlements on both sides of the Curonian Spit for accepting hydrofoils and period boats; promotion and facilitation of boat excursions by providing necessary guidance support for boat excursions aimed to explore the Curonian Spit and the highest mobile dunes from the Curonian Lagoon, including possible transboundary visits; promotion of leisure activities on the lagoon (sailing, windsurfing, angling, etc.); promotion and support of the construction and usage of ethnographic boats - Kurenas - by providing information assistance and involvement in various projects, including transboundary ones.
7. **Dedicated conservation efforts for the World Heritage landscape** based on combining the protection of cultural landscape values with the interests of the Curonian Spit residents and visitors. These efforts include the maintenance of the main structural elements of the landscape. Particular attention must be paid to the protection and sustainable management of the Great Curonian Dune Ridge and the foredune of the Baltic Sea, an open coastal plain (palve) on the Curonian Lagoon coast and deflation hummocks (kupstyne) at the foot of grey and mobile dunes,
8. **Develop augmented reality (AR) experience** of South Baltic World Heritage. The start-up pilot idea is to develop and apply a dedicated AR tool for experiencing the central part of the Great Curonian Dune Ridge between Nida and Morskoye as it was 100 years ago seen from the lookouts on Parnidis Dune on the Lithuanian side and on Kaspalege Dune (at Lake Lebed) on the Russian side. It may have a strong educational effect showcasing the recent evolution of the great Curonian mobile dunes in the last century and the necessity for their conservation.



VIABILITY OF WORLD HERITAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES

Three different heritage tourism action alternatives have been developed for each site based on the results of strategic analysis, including SWOT analysis

1. Business As Usual' ('0' Strategy)
2. Actions averting coincidence of threats and weaknesses ('0+' Strategy)
3. Sustainable heritage tourism development priority actions

The aim of the comparative analysis was to check if sustainable heritage tourism development priority actions are more efficient and viable than Business As Usual' or averting coincidence of threats and weaknesses. The comparative analysis of

these three alternatives closely followed the methodology developed in the earlier stages of the DUNC project. Altogether 10 criteria have been applied with the weighing factors ranging from 1.0 to 4.0

1. **Efficiency** (weighting factor is 2.0). The first step is to assess which strategy will deliver the most significant socio-economic breakthrough.
2. **Socio-economic acceptability** (w.f. is 3.0). It is necessary to assess which alternative is the best to achieve long term sustainability goals.
3. **Technical feasibility** (w.f. is 1.5). If the strategy requires a new technology to be developed or acquired, then the degree of its uncertainty is very high, and the likelihood of successful implementation is rather low.
4. **Policy feasibility** (w.f. is 1.0). Unacceptable alternatives that violate the principles of sustainable local development must not be offered.
5. **Suitability** (w.f. is 1.5). A strategy that has a narrower impact range than one whose results cover very different areas is more acceptable.
6. **Reliability** (w.f. is 2.0). Will the implementation bring the expected results and deliver the improvement outlined at the outset of the plan?
7. **Prevalence** (w.f. is 1.0). The option that best fits the prevailing public opinion is often preferred.
8. **Flexibility** (w.f. is 3.0). Is the strategy suitable for solving the issues even as circumstances change, new circumstances become evident, new knowledge is acquired, the situation changes, etc.? This criterion can be decisive when the issues and their solutions are highly uncertain.
9. **Smoothness** (w.f. is 2.0). Assesses the length of time between strategy adoption and implementation.
10. **Implementation costs** (w.f. is 4.0) usually play a decisive role in choosing the most appropriate strategy.

The results of the comparative analysis confirmed the initial notion that sustainable heritage tourism development priority actions are more efficient and viable than Business As Usual' or averting coincidence of threats and weaknesses.

SUMMARY OF VIABILITY OF WORLD HERITAGE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	FINAL SCORE
STRATEGY 'BUSINESS AS USUAL' ('0 STRATEGY)	-6.0	-9.0	4.5	-1.0	4.5	6.0	-3.0	-9.0	6.0	12.0	5.0
MITIGATING COINCIDENCE OF WEAKNESSES AND THREATS	2.0	3.0	4.5	0.0	3.0	6.0	-3.0	-6.0	4.0	12.0	25.5
AVAILABLE HERITAGE-BASED TOURISM DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS	4.0	9.0	4.5	3.0	-1.5	6.0	3.0	6.0	6.0	-8.0	32.0

4. GOALS, OBJECTIVES, MEASURES, ACTORS

In this interactive strategic planning methodology, the goals, objectives, measures and actors are interlinked in a GOMA (Goals, Objectives, Measures and Actors) matrix. The implementation of all suggested GOMA measures should tackle the elicited controversies for all planning aspects and allow to achieve the sought vision. Future-proofing is very critical.

Sustainable heritage tourism has to evolve as the community develops to ensure it continues to offer high-quality opportunities. The awareness of this and flexibility in the established plan, as well as proper policy, is critical to sustainable heritage tourism development. There is no end to strategic planning.



Strategic planning is always a work in progress, continually evolving to reflect the challenges faced by the destination. Knowledge is never perfect or finished. It is the process of learning and finding the information that matters. This is what can ensure the sustainability of tourism at the coastal World Heritage destination.

1.ACTION: PROMOTION OF CULTURAL EXPERIENCES OF THE WORLD HERITAGE

GOAL: TO GIVE STAKEHOLDERS AN OPPORTUNITY AND ABILITY TO TEACH INTERESTED VISITORS ABOUT THE WORLD HERITAGE IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

OBJECTIVES:



Making more visible and developing new World Heritage products.



Preserving the historic fabric and cherish traditional crafts.

MEASURES:

- 1.1.To promote event tourism especially World Heritage weeks in a coherent way on both sides of the border.
- 1.2.To establish and promote special World Heritage theme weeks during shoulder seasons with a different focus on World Heritage (such as period dishes and clothing, boat construction, music and architecture).
- 1.3.To list the conservation of the traditional features of the Curonian Spit fishing villages on both sides of the spit as a primary focus of the national park and World Heritage management documents.
- 1.4.To maintain and/or restore traditional forms of small architecture: roof and window elements, verandas, original wall and roof constructions, garden fences.

Roles	Coordinating Actor(s)	Pivotal actors	Knowledge repository	Facilitators
Human and institutional actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kuršiu nerija national park• Kurshskaya kosa national park	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neringa Municipality• Curonian Rural District	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academic institutions / experts in landscape conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local fish producers and sellers• Fishermen's folklore interpreters• Ethnographic boating tradition keepers
Non-human and intangible actors		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Architecture of villages• Kurenas boats• Traditional weather vanes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Traditions of artisanal fisheries• Traditions of boatbuilding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Baltic Sea amber• Villages covered with sand• Myth of Neringa• Monuments and tombs of foresters• Fishermen's Day

2. ACTION: FACILITATING OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES IN THE WORLD HERITAGE

GOAL: TO USE MORE ACTIVELY THE WIDE RANGE OF POSSIBILITIES FOR OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES OFFERED ON THE CURONIAN SPIT.

OBJECTIVES:



Expanding the range of opportunities for heritage-related outdoor activities on the Curonian Spit.



Making the visitors to get out of car, move around in the landscape and explore it.

MEASURES:

- 2.1. Expand the network of self-guided hiking trails - from restoring the pre-war network of footpaths based on historical documents to better connecting of self-guided hiking trails with mobile dune lookouts.
- 2.2. Promote the spit as an attractive destination for active leisure in the overseas priority markets.
- 2.3. Fine-tuning of the network of the access to the seaside on the territory of both national parks, with the precondition, that visitors should not be prevented from hiking on the Baltic Sea beach even in the strict reserve areas.
- 2.4. Promote the Curonian Spit as an attractive transboundary destination for active leisure in the overseas priority markets.
- 2.5. Launch a long-term marketing programme on social media using influencers for promoting the importance of outdoors in a unique heritage environment for mental and physical health.
- 2.6. Develop the cross-border cycling route network.

Roles	Coordinating Actor(s)	Pivotal actors	Knowledge repositories	Facilitators
Human and institutional actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kuršių nerija national park • Kurshskaya kosa national park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neringa Municipality • Curonian Rural District • Nature guides 	Academic institutions / experts in landscape conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature ambassadors, friends and volunteers • Notable people associated with nature of the spit
Non-human and intangible actors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National park management documents • Educational zones, self-guided trails and routes, lookouts 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ancient forests • Legend of the dancing forest • Cormorant Colony in <u>Juodkrante</u>

3. ACTION: REDUCING SEASONALITY ON THE CURONIAN SPIT

GOAL: TO EXTEND THE PEAK SEASON ON THE CURONIAN SPIT AT LEAST FROM MAY TO OCTOBER

OBJECTIVES:



Launching an Autumn Harvest Festival in September in Nida by Kuršiu Nerija National Park.



Offering the visitors off-season organized educational tours by Kurshskaya Kosa National Park

MEASURES:

- 3.1. Develop traditional off-season events and education tours as concerted efforts in both national parks on the Curonian Spit
- 3.2. Designate educational tourism zones for guided visits on specially arranged trails with an emphasis on shoulder season attractions
- 3.3. Engage creative industry adepts who bought second-homes on the Curonian Spit ('new locals') to participate more actively in the Autumn Equinox festival
- 3.4. Impose tax incentives (e.g. even more contrasting car toll) between the high and shoulder season to regulate the visitor flow and the load on utilities

Roles	Coordinating Actor(s)	Pivotal actors	Knowledge repositories	Facilitators
Human and institutional actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kuršiu nerija national park • Kurshskaya kosa national park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neringa Municipality • Curonian Rural District 	Academic institutions / experts in landscape conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecotourism companies • Forest Management State Enterprise
Non-human and intangible actors		Migratory birds	Sustainability awareness among birdwatchers	Autumn Harvest festival



4. ACTION: IMPROVING THE WORLD HERITAGE INFRASTRUCTURE AND MAKING IT MORE ACCESSIBLE TO VISITORS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER

GOAL: TO CREATE A STIMULATING ENVIRONMENT FOR ENTREPRENEURS AND MAKE THE WORLD HERITAGE BETTER ACCESSIBLE TO VISITORS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER

OBJECTIVES:



Creating a stimulating environment for entrepreneurs with heritage-related interests.



Making the World Heritage better accessible and enjoyable for visitors across the border.

MEASURES:

- 4.1. Actively apply transportation planning measures to regulate and reduce car traffic flows, especially in central areas of the settlements and near the seaside beaches.
- 4.2. Encourage vacationers to go to the seaside beach on foot and to travel on the Curonian Spit by bike, including transferring the knowledge on bicycle interactive stops approbated in Kursiu Nerija NP during the DUNC project to Kurshskaya Kosa NP.
- 4.3. Develop a common cross-border system of heritage signage and online visitor guidance in both national parks on the Curonian Spit.
- 4.4. Facilitate closer tourism-related collaboration between both national parks on the Curonian Spit.
- 4.5. Ensure closer cooperation between the key actors and stakeholders in making the World Heritage better accessible for visitors.

Roles	Coordinating Actor(s)	Pivotal actors	Knowledge repository	Facilitators
Human and institutional actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kuršiu nerija national park • Kurshskaya kosa national park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neringa Municipality • Curonian Rural District 	Academic institutions / experts in landscape conservation	Baltic Sea Marina Association
Non-human and intangible actors		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marina and checkpoint Nida • Marina and checkpoint Rybachy 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curonian Lagoon • Navigation installations





