

## **Baltic Sea Regional Workshop Series**

### **The Baltic Sea – Protecting our Economic Future**

### **Connecting the Tourism Industry & the Baltic Sea**

**Time:** 23 October 2014

**Place:** Panevezys, Lithuania

CITYWATER participated in the workshop “The Baltic Sea – Protecting our Economic Future Connecting the Tourism Industry & the Baltic Sea” that took place in Panevezys, Lithuania. The main organizer was the Baltic Sea Challenge partner Race for the Baltic. There were around 20 participants, among them were representatives from different sectors: municipality, business, national park, NGO and waste water treatment. The seminar provided a day with interesting presentations and new contacts from different parts of Lithuania, and provided a very good opportunity to market the Baltic Sea Challenge (BSC) network to a Lithuanian audience.



During the seminar, the Baltic Sea Challenge was brought up as a tool for taking concrete action for the Baltic Sea. The CITYWATER project expert and the Baltic Sea Challenge coordinator had the opportunity to have one brief talk each, where the Baltic Sea Challenge network and the CITYWATER project as well as the Life+ programme as the main co-funding instrument of the project were presented, and participants were welcomed to join the network.

The theme was sustainable tourism and the seminar brought up topics such as waste water treatment in the Panevezys region, sustainable tourism in a nutshell; economic and societal benefits of responsible tourism and tourism facts for Lithuania.

In the presentation about waste water treatment in Panevezys region, it was brought up that Panevezys was regarded as a hotspot by HELCOM until 2009. Hence improvements in the WWTP owned by Panevezys city and Panevezys district had shown results. A series of modernizations had taken place, among them a modernization of sludge drying facilities in 2001. Two Swedish speakers, Jeppe Klockareson from Fair Travel and Camilla Zedendahl, Destination Sigtuna talked about sustainable and responsible tourism. Klockareson brought up the fact that currently, the tourism industry creates 9,5% of global gdp, and that it is growing. Hence, it is crucial to make it as sustainable as possible. Zedendahl talked about the need for “co-opetition” between tourism businesses – to not only compete, but to cooperate where it gains all involved partners. Dr Aida Macerinskiene from Vilnius University told about

tourism in Lithuania. There are 2,1 million foreign tourists visiting Lithuania every year, most of them are from Russia, Belarus and Latvia. For tourists, Lithuania offers for example cultural heritage and health tourism. However, a challenge related to sustainable tourism is that most of the tourists do not care about sustainability. Who then should take the initiative for sustainable tourism? Macerinskiene suggested that business should start.

The seminar day was concluded by small group discussions around the questions what is sustainable tourism in your country; what benefits could it bring; what is needed to enable more sustainable tourism practices; and what are the constraints that are hindering sustainable practices from being implemented.

The seminar took place at the Bistrampolis Manor outside Panevezys, which is 140 kilometres north of Vilnius. This was the second time CITYWATER participated in a Baltic Sea Regional Workshop organized by the Race for the Baltic (Zennström Philanthropies). The first time was in Stockholm in the spring 2014 and there the theme was sustainable economic development in cities and municipalities in the Baltic Sea region.



*In the pictures: Aida Macerinskiene; a representative from Panevezys region waste water treatment plant; Jeppe Klockareson; Camilla Zedendahl and small group discussions.*

Text and pictures: Tina Nyfors