

Saulkrasti: Reimagining Tourism for the Future

1st Stakeholders' Workshop. 23rd to 25th January 2024, Saulkrasti – Latvia.



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Executive Summary

This report summarizes the key findings and discussions from a stakeholders' workshop held in Saulkrasti to explore visions for future tourism development. The main objective of workshops in Saulkrasti which was held in 23-25 January was to understand the situation in climate changes from municipalities, local stakeholder side/perspective and youth thoughts about climate changes and how it will impact Saulkrasti. The workshop engaged three key target groups: municipal authorities from different departments, local communities from diverse groups, and teenagers from local Saulkrasti High School.

The BEACH-SOS project aims to empower Baltic Sea coastal communities to adapt and thrive in the face of climate change. This report details the outcomes of the first project workshop, held in Saulkrasti, Latvia. The workshop focused on activities 1.1 and 1.2, laying the groundwork for two key deliverables:

- **Guidelines for Developing Adaptation Pathways:** This report-format deliverable will serve as a resource for Baltic municipalities. It will document the process and recommendations for developing adaptation pathways specific to coastal tourism. The focus will be on methodologies, along with practical guidance on accessing readily available climate data.
- **Climate-Smart Community Action Plan for Saulkrasti:** This tailor-made action plan will address Saulkrasti's unique situation. It will be accompanied by a comprehensive toolkit, replicable across the Baltic Rim countries. Both the plan and toolkit will be informed by stakeholder input gathered during the workshop series.

Context and Challenge:

The Baltic Sea region boasts a thriving coastal tourism sector, a significant contributor to the Blue Economy. However, climate change poses a growing threat to this industry. Rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and ocean acidification jeopardize the very foundation of coastal tourism – the beaches themselves. These challenges can lead to reduced attractiveness, landscape

degradation, and increased health risks, ultimately impacting the visitor experience and the economic prosperity of coastal communities.

BEACH-SOS and the Path Forward:

The BEACH-SOS project addresses this critical challenge by:

- Building institutional capacity among local authorities, tourism stakeholders, and NGOs focused on coastal conservation and environmental education.
- Supporting the local communities to adapt to climate change.
- Supporting the FEE Blue Flag Programme's efforts to incorporate climate sustainability considerations into beach management practices.

The first project workshop served as a crucial starting point for achieving these goals. It provided a platform for engaging stakeholders in exploring climate change impacts on Saulkrasti's beaches and the tourism sector. The workshop also initiated the co-creation process for developing the adaptation pathways and the Saulkrasti Community Action Plan.

This report details the workshop's methodology, key findings, and the roadmap for moving forward. It lays the foundation for future deliverables that will empower Saulkrasti and other Baltic communities to navigate the challenges of climate change and ensure the long-term sustainability of their coastal tourism sector.

Introduction

The BEACH-SOS project kicked off its field activities with a comprehensive three-day workshop held in Saulkrasti, Latvia, in January 2024. This workshop aimed to engage stakeholders and lay the groundwork for developing strategies to strengthen the resilience of Saulkrasti's coastal tourism sector in the face of climate change.

The workshop unfolded across three dedicated sessions, each targeting a specific audience:

- **Day 1 (January 23rd): Local Authorities Session:** This session kicked off the workshop by convening representatives from Saulkrasti's municipal authorities. The focus was on fostering a shared understanding of the challenges posed by climate change. Discussions centred around the potential impacts on Saulkrasti's beaches and the future of coastal tourism in the region. This session took the local authorities' lenses. This collaborative dialogue laid the groundwork for exploring potential adaptation pathways, paving the way for a more resilient future for the tourism sector.
- **Day 2 (January 24th): Local Communities Session:** The second day of the workshop shifted its focus to engaging Saulkrasti's local communities. This interactive session aimed to raise awareness about the potential impacts of climate change on the town's cherished beaches and the vital tourism sector. Participants actively participated in discussions, not just exploring the potential challenges, but also collaboratively envisioning the future of Saulkrasti's tourism and coastal economic activities in the face of a changing climate.
- **Day 3 (January 25th): School Students Session:** The final session targeted students from Seja School in Saulkrasti. This interactive session used innovative methodologies to engage students in understanding climate change and its potential effects on their beloved beaches.

Building upon the outcomes of these sessions, the BEACH-SOS project will develop key deliverables including:

- Guidelines for Developing Adaptation Pathways for coastal tourism in Baltic municipalities.
- A Climate-Smart Community Action Plan tailored specifically for Saulkrasti.

This report details the proceedings of the workshop, capturing the key discussions, findings, and next steps. It highlights the project's collaborative approach and its commitment to empowering Saulkrasti to adapt and thrive in a changing climate.

Methodology

Workshop Format: Building Understanding and Collaboration

Each day of the workshop featured a structured format designed to foster engagement and knowledge exchange:

- **Local Language Focus:** Recognizing the importance of clear communication, all sessions were conducted entirely in Latvian. This ensured participants from the local community and municipal authorities felt comfortable expressing themselves and actively contributing to the discussions.
- **Day 1: Local Authorities Session (January 23rd)**
 - The workshop commenced with a concise presentation outlining the potential impacts of climate change on Saulkrasti.
 - Following the presentation, participants engaged in an individual mapping exercise, pinpointing areas of concern within their respective areas of responsibility within the municipality.
 - Building on the individual maps, the session transitioned into a visioning exercise. Participants collaboratively explored how climate change could affect their specific roles and responsibilities within the local authorities.
 - The session concluded with an open discussion focused on identifying the most significant threats posed by climate change to Saulkrasti's beaches and tourism sector.

- **Day 2: Local Communities Session (January 24th)**
 - Mirroring the Day 1 format, the session began with a presentation on climate change impacts specific to Saulkrasti.
 - Participants then embarked on a group mapping exercise, divided into two teams. One team focused on impacts at the local scale (within Saulkrasti), while the other considered national-level challenges.
 - Following the mapping activity, each group presented their findings to the broader audience, sparking a lively discussion that explored potential solutions and adaptation strategies.
- **Day 3: School Students Session (January 25th)**
 - The BEACH-SOS team ventured to Seja School in Saulkrasti for a session specifically designed for students.
 - This session employed an innovative methodology utilizing AI-generated images. These images served as prompts, sparking discussions and fostering a two-way knowledge exchange. Students shared their visions for the future of the beach, while the BEACH-SOS team provided insights on climate change.

By employing a structured format with interactive elements, the BEACH-SOS workshop successfully fostered a collaborative environment. This approach ensured all stakeholders felt empowered to contribute their valuable perspectives and participate in shaping a more climate-resilient future for Saulkrasti's coastal tourism sector.

Results

Session 1. Municipal Authorities:

As a first step in Activity 1.1, 1.2 of the BEACH-SOS project, a workshop was held in Saulkrasti, Latvia, this first session was specifically aimed at municipal authorities. The session kicked off with an introductory presentation delivered in Latvian by our partner from the Saulkrasti tourism office. This presentation served to familiarize participants with the BEACH-SOS project and its goals (**Image 1**). To delve deeper, the workshop then transitioned into a series of individual exercises designed to spark discussion and identify potential climate change impacts on various municipal departments. In the end, each individual presented to the room the elements that had been

identified and open discussions took place. The following section will delve deeper into these issues and opportunities, providing a more comprehensive analysis of Saulkrasti's path towards a sustainable future based on the inputs provided by the different participants.



Image 1: Workshop session with the local authorities.

Local Action Group Sea Land's

The Local Action Group (LAG) Sea Land's proactive approach to adapting to the realities of climate change in Saulkrasti recognize the potential impacts on our operations and the future of Saulkrasti's tourism industry. They propose a series of strategies that will enhance our resilience and ensure long-term sustainability.

Anticipating Challenges:

- **Shifting Tourist Flows:** Climate change may lead to a diversification of tourist destinations along the coast. LAG Sea Land should explore strategies to attract visitors to a wider range of locations within Saulkrasti.

Building Resilience:

- **Education and Awareness:** Investing in staff and community education on climate change allows LAG Sea Land to become a credible source of information and empower residents to take action.
- **Improved Mobility:** Develop alternative transportation options like trains, ferries, and cycling routes to connect Saulkrasti with Riga and other major cities. This reduces reliance on cars and promotes eco-friendly tourism.

Enhancing Coastal Protection:

- **Sustainable Forestry Practices:** Promote the growth of mature pine forests by selectively removing smaller, non-native species. Mature pine trees act as natural barriers against strong winds and sand erosion.
- **Responsible Construction:** Advocate for stricter regulations on building in sensitive beachfront areas. Protecting the pine forest and dune systems is crucial for Saulkrasti's long-term resilience.

Water Management Strategies:

- **River Maintenance:** Implement a program for removing debris and vegetation from rivers while preserving the natural ecosystem. This promotes healthy water flow and reduces flood risks.
- **Sustainable Beach Access:** Invest in designated pathways and boardwalks to access the beach that minimize disruption to the dune system. Stone walls offer a good solution for controlling erosion at specific locations.

Extending Tourist Stays:

- **Destination Development:** Support initiatives that extend the appeal of Saulkrasti beyond day trips. This can involve promoting local businesses, cultural events, and outdoor activities throughout the year.

By implementing these strategies, LAG Sea Land can adapt to the challenges of climate change while promoting sustainable tourism practices. This ensures the continued success of Saulkrasti as an attractive tourist destination for years to come.

Saulkrasti Projects Development Department

Head of the Projects Development Department

- **Leading Coastal Infrastructure Development:** We're focusing on building stronger, more resilient infrastructure along the coastline using improved materials and stricter regulations.
- **Enhancing Tourist Flow Management:** We're developing strategies to manage tourist traffic more effectively, ensuring a better experience for all visitors.
- **Expanding Summer Water Access:** We're increasing the number of access points for freshwater, especially during the peak summer season when demand is highest.
- **Creating New Coastal Access Points:** We're planning new access points to the coastline to help distribute tourist crowds and alleviate congestion in specific areas.
- **Preparing for Climate Change:** As we develop a comprehensive climate change plan, our workload will undoubtedly increase. We're committed to making Saulkrasti more sustainable and resilient in the face of a changing environment.

Technician of the Projects Development Department

Coastal Concerns:

- **Erosion Threat:** Climate change is causing coastal erosion. We're actively seeking solutions to protect our shorelines.
- **Saules Bridge Vulnerability:** The stability of Saules Bridge near the seaside is at risk due to climate change. We're developing plans to address its structural integrity and potential beach loss.

Building for the Future:

- **Adapting to Extremes:** With colder winters and hotter summers becoming the norm, we need to rethink building design, construction methods, and road planning to ensure long-term resilience.

Saulkrasti Communication and Tourism Department: Strengthening Communication

Graphic designer and communicator:

Enhancing Department Knowledge:

- **Building Expertise:** We're committed to ongoing education for our department to ensure we possess the knowledge (processes, scientific terminology) to effectively inform the public.

Crisis Communication Preparedness:

- **Understanding Storm Impacts:** We recognize the significant influence of storm-related processes on crisis communication strategies.
- **Targeted Communication Materials:** We're developing informative materials focused on areas experiencing these climate-related events.

Communication Specialist:

- **Increased Rainfall Concerns:** We anticipate more frequent and intense rain events, potentially raising groundwater levels, which could pose challenges for the Zvejniekciems-Saulkrasti region.
- **Double-Edged Sword of Tourism:** While warmer weather may attract more tourists to Saulkrasti, it can also strain local resources. We will need to address issues like waste management, increased demand at shops (potentially leading to shortages), police workload, noise from events, and pressure on the sewage and water systems. Additionally, limited access to some services may occur during peak season.

- **Social Media Management:** We expect a rise in negative comments on the municipality's social media platforms. We'll be prepared to address these concerns effectively.
- **Continuous Learning:** We recognize the importance of staying informed ourselves so we can effectively educate others about climate change impacts on Saulkrasti.

Tourism Specialist/Tourism Information Center:

- **Visitor Surge:** As a tourism information center worker, I anticipate a significant increase in visitor numbers.
- **Extended Season:** We expect a longer tourist season, requiring us to adapt our services accordingly.
- **Water Quality Awareness:** Keeping visitors informed about water quality will be crucial.
- **Enhanced Communication:** With a potentially longer season, we may need to increase the frequency and scope of information provided to tourists. This includes details about cafes, parking options, and other practical matters.

Saulkrasti Traffic and Building Management: Addressing Climate Challenges

Coastal Erosion Threat: Rising sea levels and erosion threaten coastal buildings. We'll need to explore cost-effective solutions for repairs and preventative measures, such as reinforcing wooden paths, beach cabins, and platforms.

Riverbank Protection: Increased flooding could exacerbate riverbank erosion, impacting land area and fish populations. Regular river clean-up of fallen trees and potential restoration of fish spawning grounds will be crucial but require additional funding.

Tourism and Infrastructure: A rise in tourist numbers due to warmer weather is anticipated. This will put additional strain on infrastructure and necessitate increased cleaning efforts. Securing adequate budget allocations will be essential.

Beach Cleaning Challenges: The unique sand composition in Saulkrasti makes mechanized beach cleaning impractical. Alternative methods or increased manual labour may be required.

Saulkrasti Urban Development Board

Impact of Warmer Temperatures: Warmer weather is likely to lead to a surge in tourism, placing a greater demand on infrastructure maintenance. Our department will need to adapt accordingly.

Increased Construction Activity: We anticipate a rise in construction projects within Saulkrasti. This will directly impact our workload and require strategic planning.

Potential Land Availability: Increased demand for construction may lead to the development of new areas. Our department will be instrumental in managing this growth effectively.

Conclusions

Several key topics emerge. Infrastructure improvements, sustainable practices, and promoting year-round tourism are crucial for the long-term viability of the tourism industry. Coastal erosion and infrastructure resilience require solutions and adaptations to building practices for future weather extremes. Effective communication is seen as vital, with departments focusing on staff education, informative materials, and preparing for a potential tourism surge and its challenges. Protecting shorelines and riverbanks, while managing increased strain on infrastructure due to tourism, are priorities. Finally, potential land development necessitates adapting to growth for long-term success.

Overall, this multi-departmental approach demonstrates Saulkrasti's commitment to adapting to climate change and ensuring its future as a thriving tourist destination.

Session 2. Local Communities

To explore local perspectives on Saulkrasti's future coastal tourism, a diverse workshop was held (**Image 2**). Participants included marina and port representatives, local fishers, youth groups, artists, tourism technicians from neighbouring towns, Local Action Groups, and local activists among others (**Image 3**). A balanced mix of genders was ensured, though participants weren't asked to identify. Four local and two national working groups, each with a variety of stakeholders, engaged in discussions centred on three key questions:

- How will tourism in Saulkrasti evolve by 2050?
- What's the ideal vision for the town's coastal tourism development?
- What challenges exist in achieving this vision?

The workshop yielded unique insights from Saulkrasti residents, offering a valuable perspective on the town's future coastal tourism. Additionally, each group completed a mapping exercise that identified iconic coastal attractions, both natural and man-made, at local and national levels (**Image 4**). This spatial approach provided a more comprehensive understanding of Saulkrasti's and Latvia's coastal tourism landscape and its potential for future development.



Image 2: Participants to the Local Communities session.

Local-Level Working Groups

Group 1. Local fisherman, Saulkrasti neighbor, one member from Youth Council

- How will tourism in Saulkrasti evolve by 2050?

Saulkrasti's tourism industry is poised for a vibrant transformation by 2050. The influx of tourists will necessitate the development of more pathways to the sea, alongside an overall improvement in tourism infrastructure. This growth will likely foster a rise in small, tourism-oriented businesses, potentially attracting a new generation of local fishermen and residents to Saulkrasti.

- What's the ideal vision for the town's coastal tourism development?

The ideal vision for our coastal tourism thrives on a vibrant mix of local charm and modern amenities. Imagine a destination where family-run businesses flourish, offering unique experiences alongside a well-organized infrastructure that caters to all. Picture bike lanes and pathways weaving through the town, leading to ample parking and straight to the heart of the action. Foodies can indulge in fresh, local seafood through engaging masterclasses, while a luxurious spa and recreation center provide pampering and year-round entertainment. This vision transforms our town into a dynamic, all-season destination that celebrates both relaxation and exploration.

- What challenges exist in achieving this vision?

Bringing this vision to life faces a multitude of hurdles. Securing enough funding is a major obstacle, but it's not the only one. We're also facing a labour shortage, making it difficult to get the manpower needed. Even if we have the workforce, there's a lack of space to accommodate them, with limited land and a booming housing market driving real estate prices through the roof. Finally, there's a need to address knowledge gaps and motivational issues to ensure everyone is on board and equipped to make this vision a reality.

Group 2. Three youth council members and a local photograph

- How will tourism in Saulkrasti evolve by 2050?

Saulkrasti's tourism industry faces an interesting future by 2050. While the rise of mega-tourism could bring in more visitors, it might come at the cost of Saulkrasti's charm. The dominance of large corporations like ELVI supermarkets and Alko outlet shops could replace local businesses and character. Additionally, frequent infrastructure damage from storms may necessitate constant rebuilding, leading to a somewhat impermanent feel to the area. However, this impermanence could be balanced by a focus on adaptable beach facilities, with "changing cabins in every part of the beach" reflecting a willingness to adjust to the ever-changing environment.

- What's the ideal vision for the town's coastal tourism development?

The ideal vision for our coastal town's tourism development prioritizes a thriving year-round experience. A stable local economy, fuelled by tourism, would be bolstered by a well-connected transport system, including water transport linking us to Riga and Jurmala. A public yacht club and events like Rally Saulkrasti would attract water sports enthusiasts. For landlubbers, a main promenade, a swimming pool, and competitive educational programs would offer diverse attractions. This combination would cater to a wider range of tourists, ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future for our town.

- What challenges exist in achieving this vision?

Saulkrasti faces several hurdles in realizing its vision for the future. A tight budget for development restricts its ability to invest in improvements. The community also struggles with an aging population, as young people leave for opportunities in other cities. This lack of youthful energy further discourages young people from staying in Saulkrasti, creating a vicious cycle. Additionally, securing construction permits along the coast appears to be a bureaucratic obstacle. Finally, the region's economic dependence on the summer tourist season limits its year-round appeal. Overcoming these challenges will be essential for Saulkrasti to achieve its vision.

Group 3. Local activist and one member of Youth Council

- How will tourism in Saulkrasti evolve by 2050?

Saulkrasti's tourism industry faces an uphill battle by 2050. The pristine beauty of the coast is being eroded by several factors. Firstly, the quality of the water itself falls short of the standards required for a Blue Flag beach designation, a coveted symbol of cleanliness. Secondly, the rise of pollution from Skulte harbor is further sullyng the nearby Zvejniekciems beach, detracting from its appeal. The construction boom in the dune zone not only scars the natural landscape but also worsens erosion. This, coupled with a general lack of investment in tourism infrastructure to accommodate a growing influx of visitors, paints a worrying picture for the future of Saulkrasti's tourism industry.

- What's the ideal vision for the town's coastal tourism development?

Imagine Saulkrasti transformed into a beacon of green tourism. The town embraces a "zoning" philosophy, where designated areas cater to specific needs. Commercial zones provide a vibrant hub, while recreational areas offer opportunities for leisure. Most importantly, expansive zones are dedicated to simply enjoying nature, minimizing humanity's footprint. This eco-conscious approach extends outwards, with Saulkrasti working alongside Skulte village to become a model of environmental responsibility for the entire Baltic region.

The crown jewel of Saulkrasti is, of course, its coastline. Imagine the pristine waters of the Baltic Sea, the cleanest and most beautiful beach you've ever set foot on. Dunes and pine forests frame this idyllic scene, while the nearby river teems with fish, a testament to the town's commitment to a healthy ecosystem. Here, the sea remains vibrantly full of fish, allowing locals to continue their sustainable fishing traditions.

To truly appreciate this paradise, the center of Saulkrasti transitions into a pedestrian zone. Cars are no longer a nuisance, replaced by a network of nature-friendly transportation options. This car-free environment allows visitors to fully immerse themselves in the tranquility of Saulkrasti, the sound of the waves and birdsong replacing the hum of traffic. Saulkrasti's reputation as a green haven attracts a curated number of tourists, ensuring the town retains its

charm while minimizing its environmental impact. This is the future of Saulkrasti - a place where nature reigns supreme, attracting visitors who seek a sustainable and unforgettable travel experience.

- What challenges exist in achieving this vision?

Achieving a unified vision for the Latvian seaside region's development faces several hurdles. Local residents are hesitant to engage with government officials, hindering communication and collaboration. There seems to be a resistance to acknowledging and addressing core issues, like the impact of Skulte harbor and waste management burdens. Apathy and a lack of collective identity further complicate matters. People feel like outsiders in their own region, unable to influence its trajectory. This disunity makes it difficult to establish a shared vision and implement effective development strategies.

Group 4. Local activist, Skulte Yacht Club and one member from Youth Council

- How will tourism in Saulkrasti evolve by 2050?

Saulkrasti's tourism industry is poised for a major transformation by 2050. The entire 17km coastline is expected to see development, creating a more comprehensive tourist experience. Water transportation will play a bigger role, with a potential harbor for yachts right in the center of Saulkrasti. This increased accessibility will likely lead to a surge in tourist numbers. Water sports are also anticipated to flourish, offering exciting activities for visitors. Notably, the harbor development won't just cater to tourists; plans are in place to ensure easy access for locals as well. This dual focus on attracting visitors and serving the local community suggests a well-rounded approach to Saulkrasti's future tourism landscape.

- What's the ideal vision for the town's coastal tourism development?

The ideal vision for the town's coastal tourism development focuses on creating a multifaceted experience that caters to a variety of tastes. Imagine a vibrant Saulkrasti where luxury meets leisure. A cruise from Skulte Harbor whisks you away, while a big new ship/yacht harbor in the center allows grand vessels to dock, adding a touch of opulence. World-class SPA centers with impeccable service ensure relaxation, while carousels and an aquapark provide family fun. For shopping enthusiasts, a large center offers international brands, while locally-owned shops add

a touch of charm. Decorative fountains throughout the town create a whimsical atmosphere, and a grand ice-skating arena extends the tourist season into winter. This blend of luxury, entertainment, and relaxation ensures there's something for everyone, making Saulkrasti a year-round coastal destination.

- What challenges exist in achieving this vision?

Even though the vision is exciting, bringing it to life faces several hurdles. Funding is a major obstacle, as finances are needed to acquire land, develop infrastructure, and manage the project. Local environmental groups might voice concerns that need to be addressed. Additionally, there's the challenge of finding suitable space within Saulkrasti existing urban landscape. Finally, navigating Latvian government regulations could add another layer of complexity to the entire process.

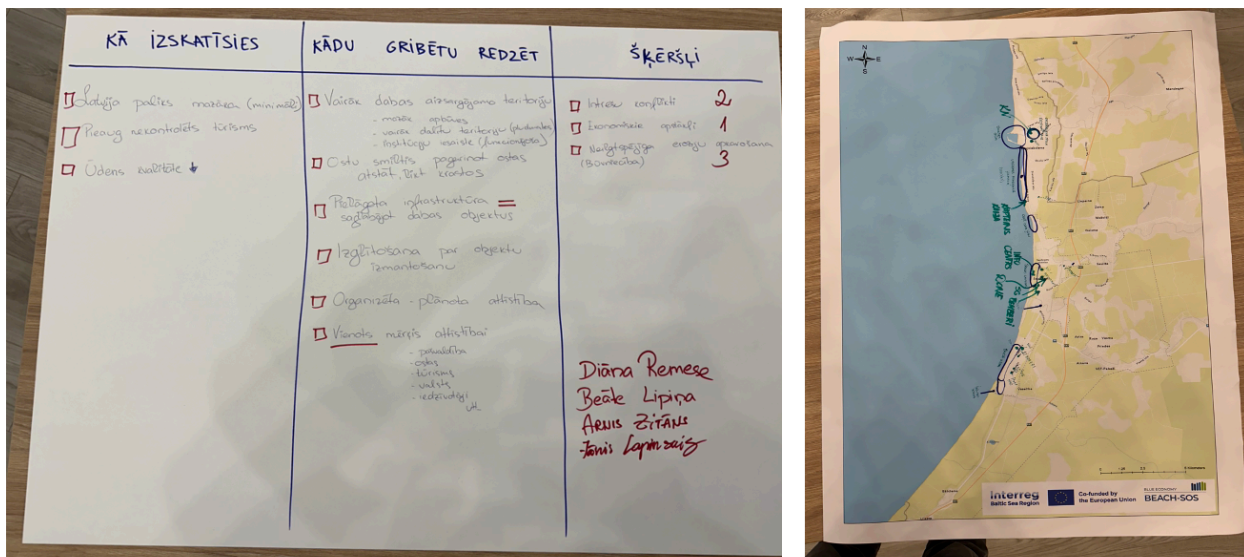


Image 3: Right: Poster with the results of one of the Local level working groups showcasing the tourism vision and barriers for Saulkrasti by 2050. **Left:** Mapping exercise with the results of one of the Local-level working groups showing iconic natural and people-made structures on the coast of Saulkrasti.

National-Level Working Groups

Group 5. LAG Baltijas krasti, Carnikava and Salacgriva tourism information center, Skulte Yacht Club

- How will tourism in Latvia evolve by 2050?

By 2050, Latvia's tourism industry is poised for a transformation powered by sustainability. Wind-powered parks will likely play a significant role, in reducing the environmental impact of tourism. Water tourism is also expected to flourish, with visitors enjoying the beauty of the region's waterways. Innovation will take center stage as well, with E-Vitol aircraft and drones potentially providing unique travel experiences and scenic perspectives.

- What's the ideal vision for the national coastal tourism development in Latvia?

The ideal vision for our coastal tourism thrives on a beautifully preserved natural coastline. Imagine pristine beaches and vibrant ecosystems attracting visitors who appreciate and respect the environment. This vision is achieved through a balanced approach. We prioritize nature protection while fostering economic growth through tourism. The infrastructure seamlessly integrates with the landscape, enhancing the experience without detracting from the natural beauty. Educated tourists, aware of local regulations, minimize their impact. Most importantly, our local community actively participates in shaping tourism, ensuring a mutually beneficial experience for all.

- What challenges exist in achieving this vision?

Achieving this vision faces a complex web of challenges. Corruption can act as a major roadblock, diverting resources and undermining trust. Furthermore, a lack of cooperation and a shared vision create an environment where everyone works at cross-purposes. Uncertainty, perhaps due to political or economic instability, can further stall progress. Seasonal fluctuations and the absence of a long-term strategy only exacerbate these issues, making it difficult to maintain momentum and focus efforts.

sand dredged from harbours can be strategically used to replenish eroding coastlines, maintaining the beauty and functionality of the beaches. Third, educational programs must be established to teach tourists about responsible practices and the importance of respecting the natural environment. Finally, achieving this vision requires a united front. Collaboration between local government, harbour authorities, the tourism industry, and residents is essential for organized and planned development that minimizes negative impacts. By working together, the town can foster a thriving coastal tourism sector that coexists harmoniously with the natural environment.

- What challenges exist in achieving this vision?

While the vision for a sustainable future for national tourism is clear, there are significant hurdles to overcome. Conflicts of interest can arise, with some prioritizing short-term economic gains over long-term environmental health. Additionally, purely economic solutions might not be enough, as some practices, though profitable, may lead to lasting erosive damage. Finding solutions that consider both economic and environmental well-being is crucial for achieving a truly sustainable future.

Conclusions

Both at Saulkrasti's and national level future tourism development hinges on finding a balance between economic growth and environmental preservation. While some groups envision a bustling tourist hub with luxurious amenities and year-round activities, others prioritize protecting the pristine coastline and fostering a sustainable approach. Common challenges include securing funding, navigating regulations, and overcoming a lack of collaboration among stakeholders. All groups agree that Saulkrasti's natural beauty is its key asset, and the successful development of its coastal tourism will require a unified vision that respects the environment while creating a memorable experience for visitors.

Session 3. Seja School Students

This workshop aimed to inform Saulkrasti students about the potential near-future effects of climate change on their beloved beach experiences **(Image 5)**. To foster student participation and creativity, we implemented an innovative methodology utilizing artificial intelligence (AI)-generated images.



Image 5: Group of students and the BEACH-SOS team during the workshop at Seja Schol in Saulkrasti.

The workshop unfolded in two stages:

1. **Dream Beach Day:** Students used AI to generate images depicting their ideal beach outings. This interactive exercise allowed them to express their preferences and identify aspects of the beach environment they value most, **(Image 6)**.



Image 6: Students Ai-Generated Beach Day Dreams

- Climate Change Impact:** We subtly modified the AI prompts, incorporating a mid-century timeline (+30 years) and a climate change impact (unrevealed to the students). Students then analyzed the generated images, prompting a discussion to identify the climate change effect and its potential consequences, **(Image 7)**.

This approach aimed to leverage student imagination and visual learning to connect with the realities of climate change. Below we present some of the insights and results of this exercise.



Image 7: Envisioning the Future Beach: Student Dreams Meet Climate Change. Examples include imaginary but plausible scenarios of wet summers, drought, coastal erosion and eutrophication due to climate change (Ai-Generated images).

Student Engagement Through Interactive Climate Change Workshop

The BEACH-SOS workshop in Saulkrasti proved to be a resounding success in engaging students on the topic of climate change. Here's a breakdown of the key factors that contributed to this positive outcome:

- Language Familiarity:** Conducting the session entirely in Latvian, the students' native language, fostered a comfortable and inclusive learning environment. This eliminated language barriers and ensured all students could fully grasp the concepts presented.
- Gamification with Technology:** By framing the session as a learning game that utilized novel AI-generated images, the element of play sparked student interest and active participation. This innovative approach went beyond traditional lectures, making the learning process more engaging and memorable.
- Effective Methodology:** The overall design of the workshop, with its two-stage structure, proved to be highly effective. The initial stage allowed students to express their connection

to the beach environment, while the subsequent stage introduced the element of climate change through AI-generated images. This approach successfully bridged the gap between students' personal experiences and the potential future impacts of climate change.

Outcomes, Conclusions and Next Steps

The positive student engagement is a strong indicator that the methodology employed was successful. By using AI and gamification elements, we were able to effectively open a discussion about various climate change threats to Saulkrasti's coast and beaches.

The next workshop will build upon this foundation. We will re-engage the students, this time presenting them with real climate change data. This will allow for a deeper exploration of their vision for the future coastline in the face of these challenges. By collaboratively exploring solutions, we can empower students to become active participants in shaping a sustainable future for Saulkrasti's beaches.

Workshop Conclusions and Next Steps

The BEACH-SOS project's 1st workshop in Saulkrasti concluded with a wealth of insights and a clear roadmap for building a climate-resilient future for the town's coastal tourism sector.

Key Themes and Opportunities:

- **Multi-Departmental Collaboration:** Representatives from various municipal authorities highlighted the need for a coordinated approach. Infrastructure improvements, in response to changing weather patterns, require collaboration between planning and construction departments. Effective communication strategies within the municipality are crucial for staff training, informing tourism stakeholders, and managing potential tourism surges.
- **Balancing Growth and Sustainability:** Engaging local communities revealed a shared desire to maintain a balance between economic growth and environmental preservation.

Developing new tourism offerings alongside shoreline protection and sustainable practices emerged as a priority. Additionally, fostering cross-stakeholder communication and navigating regulations are key elements in achieving this balance.

- **Preserving Saulkrasti's Uniqueness:** All stakeholders recognized the pristine coastline as Saulkrasti's primary asset. The future success of tourism hinges on developing a unified vision that respects the environment while creating a memorable visitor experience.
- **Empowering the Next Generation:** The student session's positive engagement demonstrated the effectiveness of innovative methodologies like AI-powered images. These tools facilitated open discussions on climate challenges and ignited a passion for environmental stewardship among students.

Building on the Momentum:

Drawing on the workshop's rich findings, the next steps for BEACH-SOS include:

- **Deepening Student Engagement:** Revisiting the students with real climate change data will provide a more concrete foundation for their visions of the future coastline. This collaborative exploration of solutions empowers them to contribute meaningfully to Saulkrasti's long-term sustainability.
- **Developing Actionable Strategies:** Leveraging the multi-departmental input, the project will move forward by crafting a comprehensive action plan. This plan will address infrastructure resilience, sustainable practices, and effective communication strategies. It will also incorporate the community's vision for balanced tourism development.
- **Fostering a Collaborative Future:** Ongoing stakeholder engagement will be central to the project's success. By working together, local authorities, tourism stakeholders, and residents can create a robust and adaptable coastal tourism sector that thrives in a changing climate.

The BEACH-SOS project's first workshop served as a powerful catalyst, bringing together diverse perspectives and sparking a collective vision for a climate-resilient future for Saulkrasti's treasured beaches. By building on this momentum and fostering collaborative action, the project is well-positioned to ensure the long-term success of Saulkrasti's coastal tourism sector.

Annexe

I. Workshop Agenda

Saulkrasti: Reimagining Tourism for the Future –
1st BEACH-SOS Project Stakeholders' Workshop. 23rd to 25th January 2024, Saulkrasti – Latvia.

Day 1: Building a Shared Vision with Local Authorities	
10:00	• Welcome & Introductions
10:15	• Project presentation
10:30	• Mapping exercise
10:45	• Visioning exercise
11:00	• Presentation of results and discussion
12:00	• Wrap up and closure
12:30	• Lunch

Day 2: Engaging Local Communities - A Collective Envisioning	
09:30	• Coastal walk
10:00	• Project presentation
10:30	• Mapping exercise
11:00	• Visioning exercise
11:30	• Presentation of results and discussion
12:30	• Wrap up and closure
13:00	• Lunch

Day 3: Empowering the Next Generation - Students Take Centre Stage	
09:00	• Welcome & Introductions
09:15	• First exercise. Imagine the Perfect Beach Day: Close your eyes and envision the ideal day at the beach. What sights, sounds, and sensations surround you? What activities do you enjoy?
09:45	• Second exercise: What have changed in the perfect beach day? Climate change and Saulkrasti beach by 2050
10:30	• Debrief and Discussion



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II. List of Participants

- Find in the enclosed shared folder

III. Minutes of the Workshop Sessions

- Find in the enclosed shared folder

IV. Photos of the Workshop Sessions

- Find in the enclosed shared folder