

The QualityCoast Award Program

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Introduction

QualityCoast aims to establish a worldwide network of coastal communities that share the same values and practices on sustainable development, holistically integrating their natural, cultural and social values and at the same time maintaining high standards in the quality of their tourism. It has been developed through the CoPraNet project, a European Union project with 21 partners from 11 countries under the lead of the Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC) – one of the largest coastal expert networks in the world. QualityCoast provides new ways of cooperation between coastal communities whereby they come together in a network of like-minded communities to share their experiences and exchange best practices in order to improve sustainability in the fields of nature, environment and socio-economics. As well, their performance in these fields can be connected to international tourism marketing through the QualityCoast Award.



The QualityCoast Awards Program

QualityCoast utilizes 110 indicators to assist the tourist in choosing the best possible destination for their holiday based upon the tourist's individual desires and interests. These indicators are the building stones to the several award levels (bronze, silver, gold and platinum). The awards are mentioned in magazines of tour operators (like TUI) and are actually working as a marketing tool.

Twenty QualityCoast criteria have been adopted to provide a measure of the sustainability of coastal communities and the quality of information available. Each criterion provides information on a distinctive aspect of sustainability.

The criteria are divided into three categories:

- **Nature and Biodiversity**
- **Environment**
- **Socio-Economics**

The criteria themselves will be the subject of periodic reviews, a process that will involve the QualityCoast destinations.

NATURE

1. NATURAL VALUES: Presence of internationally and nationally important habitats and species that occur within the territory.

2. INFORMATION AND EDUCATION: Information sources and facilities that promote interaction with the natural values in and around the territory.

3. CONTACT WITH NATURE: Appropriate level of accessibility of natural areas for low-pressure recreational access and nature experience.

4. GREEN POLICIES: The extent to which natural values are enhanced through cross-sector approaches.

5. OPEN LANDSCAPES: Presence of open landscapes and existing trends in land-use and land-cover patterns.

6. QUIET PLACES: Presence of areas where people can escape from traffic, crowds and noise.

The identity of the destination is an increasingly important issue to the tourist. Reviewing this, starting 2011, we are giving identity special attention in the categories of CULTURAL HERITAGE, TERRITORY AND TRADITION, LOCAL IDENTITY, QUIET PLACES, and HOSPITALITY AND SATISFACTION.

ENVIRONMENT

7. TOURISM PRESSURE: The pressure and the impacts of tourism on the territory and the way the applicant is controlling tourism pressure.

8. BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT: The extent to which the local business community is involved in efforts for environment, sustainable development and marine conservation.

9. BLUE FLAGS AND BEACHES: Environmental beach management, meeting bathing-water quality standards of Directive 2006/7/EC and Blue Flag.

10. WATER MANAGEMENT: Sources of water, environmental and efficient use of water, supply, wastewater treatment and reuse of depurated water.

11. SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION: Availability and promotion of sustainable transport modes.

12. WASTE AND RECYCLING: Policies and structures for waste collection, recycling and re-use.

13. CLIMATE AND ENERGY: Policy aimed at reducing greenhouse gases and promoting renewable energy.

SOCIO-ECONOMICS

14. CULTURAL HERITAGE: Presence and level of protection of elements that are connected to the history of the territory.

15. TERRITORY AND TRADITION: Presence of valuable landscapes that are man-made or man formed and traditional use of the territory.

16. LOCAL IDENTITY: Presence and attention for a distinct physical and/or social aspect that is considered typical for the territory.

17. LEISURE AND RECREATION: The way sustainability aspects are taken into account in leisure and recreation activities and facilities in the territory.

18. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: Local initiatives to promote community participation and stakeholder involvement in management and decision-making.

19. SATISFACTION AND HOSPITALITY: The appreciation level of residents and tourists regarding the territory.

20. HEALTH AND SAFETY: Presence of a healthy, safe and secure environment and preventive measures.

(CRITERIA: Description)

Since 2007, 29 coastal communities from 10 European countries have received the QualityCoast Award. The only region where all communities have met the QC Award requirements (2010), are the Azores.

The QualityCoast BasiQ scan is now performed for international (coastal) tourism destinations in the following countries:

- Cyprus
- Greece
- Slovenia
- Malta
- France
- Spain
- Portugal
- Italy
- The Netherlands and the Netherlands Antilles

Developing the QualityCoast Partnership

In January 2011, EUCC started to develop a partnership of NGOs to implement a first series of pilots applying the QualityCoast BasiQ indicator set (1.0) in a number of countries. The NGOs are independent of the coastal communities to be assessed.

So far the QualityCoast partnership consists of:

- AKTI Project and Research Centre, Nicosia, Cyprus
- Black Sea Coastal Centre, Constanta, Romania
- Centro Mediterraneo EUCC, Barcelona, Spain
- Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance, Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles (to be confirmed)
- EUCC-France, Lille, France
- EUCC-Germany, Warnemünde, Germany
- EUCC-Malta, Sliema, Malta
- Vereniging Kust & Zee, Leiden, the Netherlands

2011 QualityCoast Ceremony and Workshop

The 3rd International QualityCoast Award Ceremony and Workshop was recently held in the medieval castle of Kouklia (Cyprus), near the Rock of Aphrodite. Representatives from local and regional authorities exchanged experiences in the field of sustainability in tourism. EU Commissioner Dr. J. Potocnik and the Minister of Environment of Cyprus addressed the audience and presented the QualityCoast Awards and the QC BasiQ Certificates on behalf of EUCC's President, Minister of State Johan Vande Lanotte (Belgium) and the international QC Jury. Award and certificate winners represented more than 10 countries.

More Information

For more information please check:

- *the QualityCoast website for partners and applicants, www.qualitycoast.net;*
- *the QualityCoast website for the public, www.qualitycoast.info;*
- *Coastal & Marine Union – EUCC, www.eucc.net;*
- *or contact the QualityCoast Secretariat at EUCC in Leiden (NL).*

AFFILIATED PROJECTS

The INTERREG IV B co-funded IMCORE project has just completed its first year of activities in 2010. It aims to promote an innovative and sustainable approach to reduce the ecological, social and economic impacts of climate change on the coastal resources of northwest Europe. This approach is based on the association between a research group and a local authority, working together and bringing in multidisciplinary views and experiences to achieve more integrated solutions to local management. These partnerships were named Expert Couplet Nodes (ECN) during the previous project COREPOINT and are being further formalized and developed during IMCORE.

Each of the nine ECNs established in coastal areas of the United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium and France are addressing particular local issues and developing strategies to adapt to climate change at a local scale but at the same time are designing and testing various tools and techniques. These include stakeholder mapping and future scenarios of potential climate-change impacts, whose value can then be shown and made available to other local and regional authorities.

As a partner in the project, EUCC is assessing the engagement and process within the ECNs, defining guidelines and recommendations on this approach and to collaborate in the development of a set of indicators to monitor their process. These will be one of the project products integrating the Multimedia Distance Learning Tool – the final output of IMCORE – a comprehensive resource of information and tools designed to help coastal managers planning for climate-change impacts in their coastal areas. *For more information, go online at www.imcore.eu or contact info@imcore.eu.*

ACCMA – Climate Change Adaptation in Morocco – As elsewhere in the Mediterranean, Morocco's coastal province of Nador is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. ACCMA is a research project to develop capacity for, and contribute to, policy and decision making for strategic coastal land-use planning and management, with the purpose of reducing the vulnerability of coastal communities to the impacts of sea level rise, coastal flooding, and related extreme-weather events.

The project aims to advance the science and technology that underpin preparations for, and responses to climate-related events, and contribute to the information systems that guide policies of public protection. Its results will inform the Nador ICZM Action Plan developed by the EUCC-led project CAP Nador, and support the assessment and implementation of adaptation measures in a regional context.

These goals are being pursued through development of vulnerability assessments, participatory deliberation of land-use and climate-change-adaptation strategies, and the formation of capacity through technology transfer, awareness rising, and institutional strengthening. EUCC is playing an important role throughout the project by supporting information activities, stressing the policy perspective and advising the lead partner ENFI, a Moroccan research institute. *For more information, go online at www.pik-potsdam.de/~kropp/accma/.*