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# ***Wadden Sea Tourism Radar***

Recognising boundaries – preserving values:  
Developing sustainable tourism for  
the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site

***A guideline for destinations***





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##### Publisher

WWF Germany, Berlin

##### Contact

Anja Szczesinski, [anja.szczesinski@wwf.de](mailto:anja.szczesinski@wwf.de)

##### Author

Wolfgang Günther

NIT – Institut für Tourismus- und Bäderforschung

in Nordeuropa GmbH

Fleethörn 23

D-24103 Kiel



Commissioned by WWF Germany

##### Editors

Anja Szczesinski & Hans-Ulrich Rösner (WWF)

WWF Germany

Wattenmeerbüro

Hafenstraße 3

25813 Husum

##### Proofreading

[EnvironmentalEnglish.co.uk](http://EnvironmentalEnglish.co.uk)

##### Layout

Katrin Liebmann, Liebmann Feine Grafik

##### Cover

Hans-Ulrich Rösner

##### Download

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# Contents

- 4 Preface
- 5 The *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* in brief
- 6 Introduction
- 7 From the limits of acceptable change to the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar*
- 8 How does the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* work?
- 9 Experiences from the trial in three pilot destinations
- 12 But who should carry out the check?
- 13 Further examples for evaluation of tourism based on sustainability benchmarks
- 14 Communication and use
- 15 Step-by-step instructions for working with the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar*

Inner section:

**List of criteria of the  
*Waddensea Tourism Radar*  
30 self-check criteria**

Detachable  
table section

## Preface

Tourism along the North Sea coast has a long tradition – as does nature conservation in the globally unique Wadden Sea. In many places, nature conservation and tourism have long gone hand in hand, benefiting from each other and striving together for sustainable development of the National Park and World Heritage region.

In some places and at some times, however, limits are becoming visible in tourism development, the crossing of which triggers resistance and entails dangers. Limits of resilience for nature, when protected animals and plants are disturbed in their habitat or driven away; limits of resilience for local people, when a normal everyday life is hardly possible due to too much visitor traffic; limits of economic viability, when there are too few skilled workers and too much seasonal tourism-related work.

Then tourism runs the risk of losing acceptance and endangering the very special values of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site, as well as of the adjacent region. This must be prevented and counteracted at an early stage.

WWF is committed to a well-protected Wadden Sea and sustainable development of the National Park and World Heritage region. Tourism is an important partner in this! Together, we can succeed in preserving the values of the Wadden Sea as a natural World Heritage Site, a highly attractive tourist destination, and a place worth living in.

WWF provides assistance in this regard: with the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* presented here, we would like to invite destinations to take a constructive and critical look at tourism development on site, to recognise limits, and to find a healthy balance. The focus is on the preservation of the wonderful nature of the Wadden Sea, as well as the quality of life for locals and guests!

I wish you an inspiring discussion and good decisions towards rewarding, sustainable tourism.



Anja Szczesinski  
WWF Germany



# The Wadd

The Wadden Sea World Heritage Site is a key component of tourism on the North Sea coast between Den Helder and Esbjerg. A large part of the population makes their living from tourism.

Tourism without intact nature is unimaginable in the region. At the same time, however, tourism can also have negative impacts on nature and the social interaction of inhabitants. As is so often the case, it is a question of finding the right balance.

The point at which the limit is exceeded can hardly be expressed in strict numbers. It depends very much on the nature, the conservation areas, as well as the people at the respective destination.

## *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* in brief

The *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* presented in this report therefore introduces a method that helps destinations to recognise in good time when and in which area this limit is being reached.

The Radar is an instrument that can be used to determine, along defined criteria, whether current tourism activities at the destination are negatively affecting the environment for people, animals and plants, and whether they are threatening the values for which the Wadden Sea has been recognised as a World Heritage Site.

If this is the case, the degree of impairment is determined and appropriate measures are agreed upon to return to a healthy level. In this way, the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* can and should serve as a navigation aid on the road to sustainability in tourism.



## Introduction


The Wadden Sea has a very special value both for the nature of our planet and for people, globally and locally. UNESCO<sup>1</sup> has recognised the Wadden Sea as having Outstanding Universal Value<sup>2</sup> (OUV) and has therefore designated it a World Heritage Site. This value must be protected and preserved for the future. The three Wadden Sea countries have agreed on this as the responsible parties for the World Heritage Site and are thus also obliged to do so before the international community.

Tourism<sup>3</sup> benefits from the value of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site and thus also from the protection of nature and the landscape in the Wadden Sea on the North Sea coast. The unique habitats are a central component of the region's attractiveness for tourism. At the same time, tourism itself can also contribute to the conservation of the World Heritage Site. In order to preserve the special value of the Wadden Sea, it is in the tourism industry's own interest to do so.

Tourism can lead to impacts that result in a loss of valuable characteristics of the region. This must be avoided collectively. Also, for this reason, it is important to keep a close eye on the impact of tourism on the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site and to continuously monitor whether developments become visible that negatively affect or will negatively affect its value in the future. If this is done

regularly with a consistent methodology, an early warning system and monitoring programme is created that helps to identify and react to undesirable developments before permanent damage is done.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has raised questions about the right level of tourism in many places in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site. The people, animals and plants living in the Wadden Sea region experienced both the complete absence and a particularly large rush of tourists in quick succession. Firstly, breeding birds reclaimed parking spaces and then commuters were stuck in traffic jams for hours with day visitors. The desire for sustainability and more resilience in tourism has grown stronger with the pandemic – both among providers and guests. And even if the COVID-19 pandemic will hopefully soon fade away, climate change with its enormous impacts will remain the greatest challenge for the future of the Wadden Sea.



*The Wadden Sea Tourism Radar is designed to support tourism destinations in determining their position and as a navigation guide on the road to sustainability.*

1 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

2 "Outstanding Universal Value", according to UNESCO guidelines, means cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity.

3 In this project, we understand "tourism" to mean the entirety of all activities and actors in connection with visiting destinations outside of the everyday living environment and subsequent return. This can be for one day or for a longer period of time, and be for professional or private reasons (based on Eurostat [2014], Methodological Manual for Tourism Statistics, Version 3.1, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.)

# From the limits of acceptable change to the Wadden Sea Tourism Radar

The *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* was developed within the INTERREG Vb PROWAD LINK<sup>4</sup> sub-project “Tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination: Identifying Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC)”. The project was initiated due to concerns that tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination could develop in a way that would jeopardise the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site. There was a need to set limits that would ensure that such an impact would not occur. At the same time, an attempt should be made to observe and describe such limits, if possible from the perspective of the individual tourism destinations, so that they fit in with real practice and thus provide an important prerequisite for implementing any necessary measures.

One method of defining such limits alongside the actors in the region is the LAC approach (“Limits of Acceptable Change”)<sup>5</sup>. The project first examined whether this method is suitable for use in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site. The approach proposes indicator-based monitoring of defined criteria. Possible indicators were identified on the basis of existing indicator systems and data sources alongside a list of topics classified as relevant. In total, a set of 50 indicators<sup>6</sup> was developed, from which interested destinations can select the indicators that are suitable for them.

In the discussion with regional representatives, however, it was agreed that the effort involved in data collection when using LAC indicators would exceed the time capacities of most of the necessary stakeholders. Therefore, it was decided not to pursue the approach for the time being, but to build on the experience gained and look for an alternative with less effort that can probably also help to ensure that the special value of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site is not damaged by tourism.

**With the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar*, such an alternative is now available.**



<sup>4</sup> Interreg Vb North Sea Region Programme Project PROWAD LINK means “Protect & Prosper: Benefits through linking sustainable growth with nature protection”; see <https://northsearegion.eu/prowad-link>

<sup>5</sup> cf. McCool, S.F. (2013). Limits of Acceptable Change and Tourism. In: Holden, A., and Fennel, D.A. (eds) Routledge Handbook of Tourism and the Environment. Routledge, Oxon, UK. Pp 285–298.

<sup>6</sup> cf. the compilation of indicators is available to download under [www.wwf.de/watt/tourismus-radar](http://www.wwf.de/watt/tourismus-radar)

# How does the Wadden Sea Tourism Radar work?

The basic idea is actually quite simple: The *Radar* uses defined criteria to ask whether current tourism activities at a destination negatively affect the quality of habitats for humans, animals and plants, and endanger the “Outstanding Universal Value (OUV)” of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site. If this is the case, the degree of impact is determined and measures are proposed to respond to it. If possible, references to studies or indicators that can support the assessment will also be included. **Who should answer the questions is described on page 12.**

In this way, all 30 criteria of the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* are discussed one after the other. If no negative impacts of tourism are identified, there is no need for action, at least from the point of view of the local stakeholders involved in the discussion. If, however, negative impacts are noticed, it should be jointly considered how the destination would like to deal with this development. Ideally, the next step would be to agree on a plan of measures or action, coordinated with politicians and local government, which shows how to get back on track.

The *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* serves as an integrated guidance tool by not picking out individual aspects in isolation, but by placing them next to challenges in other areas, thus allowing a broader and more analytical view of the overall situation. If the *Radar* is then applied again in the same way after an agreed period of time, it can be seen whether the measures which

were taken have led to the desired result. New negative impacts can also be recognised and included in the discussion.

The **table with the criteria is divided into four sections**. In the first section, the first three criteria include the UNESCO criteria whose fulfilment led to the recognition of the Wadden Sea as a World Heritage Site. However, since the “Strategy for Sustainable Tourism in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination” as a framework for tourism in the region not only focuses on the protection of the Outstanding Universal Value of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site as a natural area, but also defines the preservation of its social, economic, and ecological value for the region as a goal, further criteria are added in the following three sections: Nine criteria each for the three dimensions “Planet”, “Profit” and “People” (or “Ecology”, “Economy” and “Social”) therefore complete the list.

The **geographical reference area** for answering the questions is uniformly referred to as “destination” in the criteria. However, “destination” does not necessarily mean a single municipality. In principle, the question about impacts can be answered for the entire Wadden Sea as a whole as well as for an island or a group of municipalities with their surrounding area. However, a more differentiated assessment is likely to be easier in a smaller reference area. This will also make it easier to give a valid justification for the assessment and to name specific measures.

**The figure below shows an example of the structure of the questionnaire:**

From left to right, the first step is to assess whether the respective criteria are basically fulfilled for the destination.

It is also possible to record partial agreement.

The next column gives examples of what impacts caused by tourism could look like

If there are data or studies that support the assessment made, these are noted in the following column.

The last column leaves room for suggestions for measures that could be suitable for reducing the negative impacts.

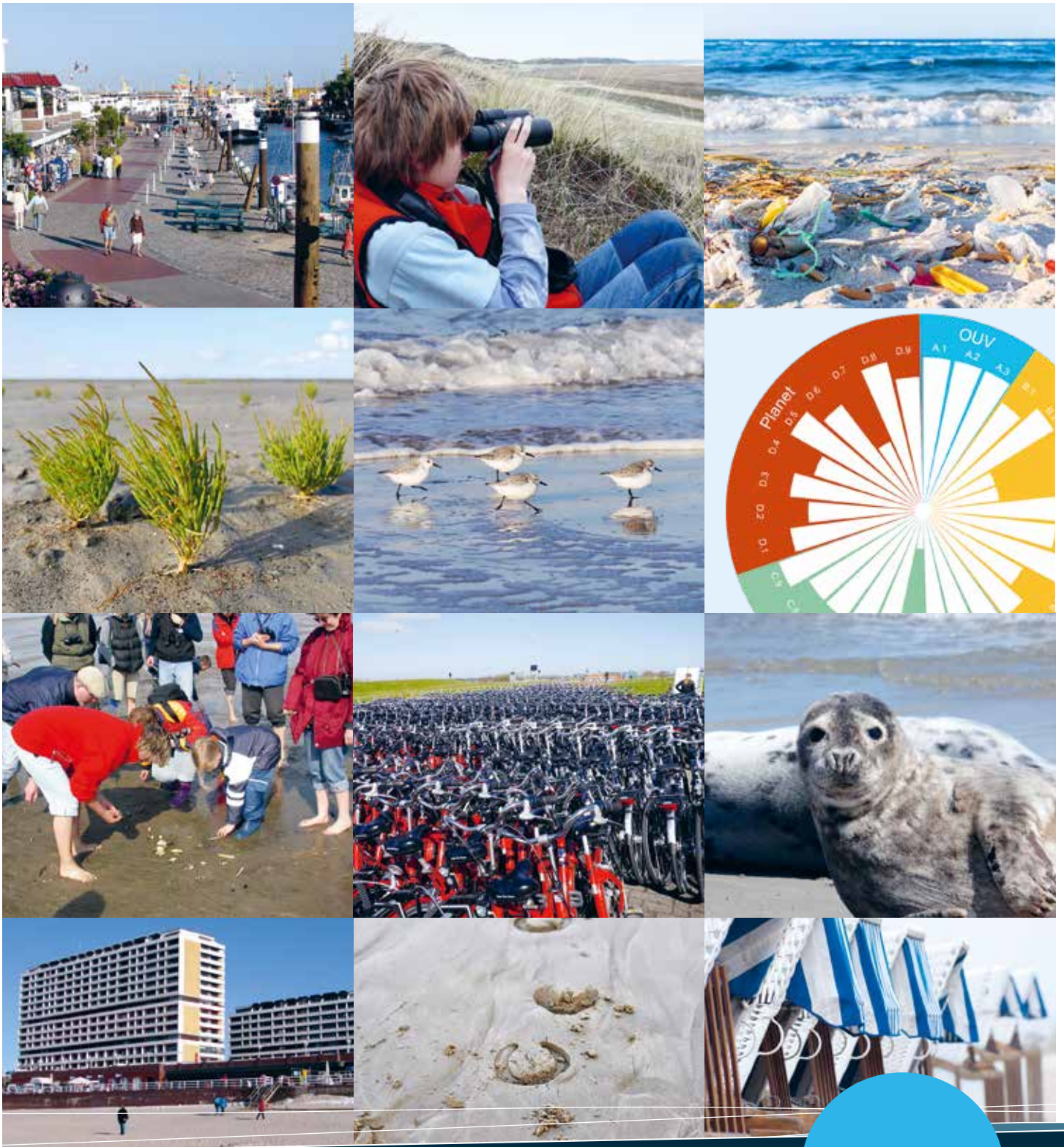
B	Criterion (Explanation)	Statement applies fully 4 rather yes 3 rather not 2 not at all 1	If 1, 2 or 3: Is the criterion negatively affected by tourism development in the area and, if so, in what way?	Examples of impacts caused by tourism	Impairment		Evidence, references, studies, indicators (if available)	Proposed measures
					Degree low 1 medium 2 high 3	Trend ↗ → ↘		
QUALITY OF LIVE	B.1 Residents' perceptions of the impact of tourism on their personal lives and on the destination are generally positive. <i>Tourism should be developed in such a way that the inhabitants like living in their place and have a positive attitude towards tourism. Resident surveys help to determine the current status.</i>	1	2	3 <i>It is important to avoid a situation where the majority of residents have a negative view of the effects of tourism. This can be caused, for example, by excessive traffic and noise, crowded public spaces, housing shortages, or above-average local prices.</i>	4	5	6	7

If the criterion is not fulfilled or only fulfilled to a limited extent, it is noted whether this is also due to local tourism activities and in which form tourism contributes to this.

This is followed by an assessment of the degree of impact, on a scale from 1 (low) to 3 (high).

Then the direction of development of the impact is noted: It can tend to increase (+), stay the same (0), or decrease (-).





Detachable  
table section

# List of criteria of the Wadden Sea Tourism Radar

*Planet, People, Profit – 30 self-check criteria*

*Criteria lists as a Word file as well as an Excel file for generating the results graphic  
are at [www.wwf.de/watt/tourismus-radar](http://www.wwf.de/watt/tourismus-radar)*

# A. Dimension “Planet”: OUV Criteria

A	<b>Criterion (Explanation)</b> <i>Reference point for evaluation is status in the year of recognition of the Wadden Sea as a World Heritage Site 2009</i>	<b>Statement applies</b> 4 fully 3 rather yes 2 rather not 1 not at all	<b>If 1, 2 or 3: Is the criterion negatively affected by tourism development in the area and, if so, in what way?</b>	<b>Examples of impacts caused by tourism</b>	<b>Impairment</b> Degree low 1 medium 2 high 3 Trend ↗ → ↘	<b>Evidence, references, studies, indicators (if available)</b>	<b>Proposed measures</b>
<b>A.1</b> GEOLOGICAL PROCESSES (Criterion VIII)	<p><b>The landscape and structures of the Wadden Sea at the destination are shaped by natural forces (e.g. tides and wind). This occurs without significant human influence.</b></p> <p><i>Interventions in the natural dynamics typical of the Wadden Sea can lead to far-reaching changes that are difficult to predict and the loss of natural mechanisms of action. If it is disturbed or stopped by tourism projects or interventions for tourism, the habitat loses its unique characteristics in that area.</i></p>			<p>The development of tourism infrastructure (e.g. expansion of ferry docks) could change tidal currents in the Wadden Sea. Tourist use may result in the loss of individual shorelines. For example, the groundwater level on the islands could drop to such an extent that wet dune valleys dry out and are lost as a special type of landscape due to excessive extraction of groundwater when the demand from guests increases.</p>			
<b>A.2</b> ECOLOGICAL AND BIOLOGICAL PROCESSES (Criterion IX)	<p><b>Ecological processes typical for the Wadden Sea can take place and the biodiversity and productivity of the ecosystem, which is important over the boundaries of the Wadden Sea, is stable or increasing.</b></p> <p><i>The Wadden Sea is also unique in terms of the animals and plants in their habitats. The ecological processes which are special to the World Heritage Site are therefore this ecological interaction is disturbed by tourism activities and chains of interaction are interrupted, this can lead to far-reaching changes in the system and contribute to the loss of species and productivity.</i></p>			<p>Again, it is primarily construction measures for tourism in the beach areas, tidal flats, and watercourses that are suitable examples of negative impacts. If, for example, construction work is carried out on the beach in front of dunes for tourism purposes, this changes the sand displacement processes that ultimately form the basis of dune formation. But also the introduction of litter by careless holidaymakers can cost animals their lives.</p>			
<b>A.3</b> BIODIVERSITY (Criterion X)	<p><b>The regionally typical Wadden Sea habitats are present and intact and their diverse flora and fauna – in particular also breeding and resting shorebird populations – develop undisturbed.</b></p> <p><i>Stopping the progressive loss of biodiversity worldwide is one of the key challenges for our future. Habitats such as the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site are particularly valuable sanctuaries for endangered species. Resting, moulting, or wintering wading and water birds require special habitat conditions and react sensitively to disturbances. If disturbances increase, they get increasingly distressed and can take in less food, while at the same time consuming more energy.</i></p>			<p>Disturbances of bird flocks caused by tourism – for example by recreational boats, kite surfers, or free-roaming dogs – can lead to the animals not being able to take in enough food for the onward flight and the raising of the young in breeding areas, and the populations shrink. Intensification and/or spatial and temporal expansion of tourist use, for example on the tidal flats, in the beach area, or in the foreshore, can severely impair living conditions for these species and lead to a decline in their populations. For example, many ground-nesting bird species do not have offspring in beach sections that are heavily frequented by tourists.</p>			

# B. Dimension "People"

B	Criterion (Explanation)	Statement applies 4 fully 3 rather yes 2 rather not 1 not at all	If 1, 2 or 3: Is the criterion negatively affected by tourism development in the area and, if so, in what way?	Examples of impacts caused by tourism	Impairment Degree low 1 medium 2 high 3	Trend ↗ → ↘	Evidence, references, studies, indicators (if available)	Proposed measures
B.1	<p><b>Residents' perceptions of the impact of tourism on their personal lives and on the destination are generally positive.</b>  <i>Tourism should be developed in such a way that the inhabitants like living in their place and have a positive attitude towards tourism. Resident surveys help to determine the current status.</i></p>			<p><i>It is important to avoid a situation where the majority of residents have a negative view of the effects of tourism. This can be caused, for example, by excessive traffic and noise, crowded public spaces, housing shortages, or above-average local prices.</i></p>				
B.2	<p><b>Tourists are mostly very satisfied with their stay in the location. New visitors also come back.</b>  <i>Guest satisfaction also has an influence on the atmosphere on site. This in turn has an impact on the well-being of guests and locals alike and on the guests' willingness to return. Guest surveys help to record the current status in each case.</i></p>			<p><i>Dissatisfaction and poor ratings are alarm signals.</i></p>				
B.3	<p><b>The impacts of tourist traffic in the region are only perceived as a serious impairment in exceptional cases.</b>  <i>Tourism is usually associated with additional traffic. This not only leads to undesirable emissions, but also to further impairments of the quality of life for guests and local residents, e.g. through noise and waiting times in traffic jams.</i></p>			<p><i>If the number of guests increases and mobility offers are not adjusted, leading to more protests and dissatisfaction among locals and guests, other than in individual cases, then action must be taken.</i></p>				
B.4	<p><b>The number of people per unit area at the destination is – apart from exceptional cases – not perceived as a serious disturbance, neither in the residential area nor in the countryside.</b>  <i>If many guests and locals come to the same place at the same time, it can lead to crowding, stress, and disruption. Increased disturbances of wildlife can also occur.</i></p>			<p><i>If, due to increasing numbers of guests or inadequate visitor management, there are more frequent protests and dissatisfaction among locals and guests beyond individual cases, or if more disturbances of wildlife are observed, action must be taken.</i></p>				

QUALITY OF LIFE

B	Criterion (Explanation)	Statement applies 4 fully 3 rather yes 2 rather not 1 not at all	If 1, 2 or 3: Is the criterion negatively affected by tourism development in the area and, if so, in what way?	Examples of impacts caused by tourism	Impairment Degree low 1 medium 2 high 3	Trend ↗ → ↘	Evidence, references, studies, indicators (if available)	Proposed measures
B.5	<b>Sufficient medical care is available for residents and guests at all times.</b> <i>Medical care must be adequate at all times, even in holiday destinations, for the people who are in the area. This is a particular challenge when the number of guests varies greatly throughout the year.</i>			<p>If shortages occur due to increasing numbers of guests or the reduction of medical care facilities, then action must be taken.</p>				
B.6	<b>Accessibility is considered and implemented in local tourism planning beyond the legally required level.</b> <i>Creating barrier-free offers is a task for society as a whole in order to enable all citizens to participate in these offers.</i>			<p>When new tourist attractions are created, or old ones are renovated, it should be ensured that they are designed from the very beginning to be as barrier-free as possible. This needs to be taken into account.</p>				
B.7	<b>The destination offers a variety of jobs with good working conditions and fair pay.</b> <i>Jobs with good working conditions and fair pay are a central requirement for a good quality of life for locals and prevention of depopulation.</i>			<p>Tourism should also contribute to this to the same level. If this is not the case, there is a need for discussion.</p>				
B.8	<b>The destination offers demand-oriented opportunities for education and vocational training.</b> <i>Demand-oriented opportunities for education and professional training are another important precondition for a good quality of life for local people and the prevention of depopulation.</i>			<p>Here, too, tourism should provide a relevant contribution. If this is not the case, there is a need for discussion.</p>				
B.9	<b>Local culture and traditions (tangible and intangible) are authentic and vibrant.</b> <i>Local culture and traditions (tangible and intangible) are an important element of local identity. Keeping them authentic and vibrant increases the connection of local people to their place of residence and at the same time gives the place a more individual profile in the eyes of guests.</i>			<p>Negative impacts of tourism can occur, for example, if historic buildings have to make room for tourism construction projects or if traditions and local festivals are so strongly incorporated into tourism marketing that they lose their original character as a separate, communal event for local people.</p>				

# C. Dimension „Profit“

C	Criterion (Explanation)	Statement applies 4 fully 3 rather yes 2 rather not 1 not at all	If 1, 2 or 3: Is the criterion negatively affected by tourism development in the area and, if so, in what way?	Examples of impacts caused by tourism	Impairment		Evidence, references, studies, indicators (if available)	Proposed measures
					Degree 1 low 2 medium 3 high	Trend ↗ → ↘		
ECONOMIC STRUCTURE	<b>C.1</b> <b>The destination has a stable and balanced economic basis.</b> <i>In order to make a place more attractive to tourists or to remain attractive, many places invest large sums of public funds. This is both necessary and appropriate if this expenditure is likely to be matched by corresponding revenue from tourism.</i>			<i>If, in the course of tourism development, a location becomes heavily indebted due to investment in tourism, and if there is no foreseeable corresponding income, this can lead to a dangerous imbalance. This must be avoided.</i>				
	<b>C.2</b> <b>The destination has a long-term, stable overall economic plan.</b> <i>In order to secure the economic basis of the destination in the long run, long-term planning instruments are needed.</i>			<i>If there is no long-term, stable overall economic strategy for tourism in the destination, or if it is outdated, there is a need for action.</i>				
	<b>C.3</b> <b>The destination aims to create value as consistently as possible throughout the year. Seasonality does not further increase.</b> <i>In the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination, there will always be a strong seasonality in tourism value creation for climatic reasons alone, as the summer months are more popular and the summer holidays are during those months. However, by providing attractive offers in the low season, it is also possible to achieve a higher occupancy rate in these periods.</i>			<i>However, this will not succeed if the offers for guests during the off-season are reduced, for example. This also applies to mobility offers and opening hours of tourist infrastructure</i>				
ECONOMIC SITUATION OF THE POPULATION	<b>C.4</b> <b>There is sufficient affordable and suitable accommodation for the local population.</b> <i>Housing prices are strongly determined by local demand. If high incomes can be generated by renting to tourists, rents and property prices will rise.</i>			<i>In individual cases, this can lead to too little housing being left for permanent rent at prices that the local population can afford. This leads to an undesirable displacement of local people from the area.</i>				
	<b>C.5</b> <b>The destination offers adequate year-round employment for the local population.</b> <i>Although the demand for labour in tourism in places with a strong tourism industry fluctuates seasonally, it is desirable to offer skilled workers job prospects throughout the year.</i>			<i>If this is not successful, there is a risk that skilled workers will leave and that companies will experience difficulties during the season.</i>				

C	Criterion (Explanation)	Statement applies 4 fully 3 rather yes 2 rather not 1 not at all	If 1, 2 or 3: Is the criterion negatively affected by tourism and, if so, in what way?	Examples of impacts caused by tourism	Impairment		Evidence, references, studies, indicators (if available)	Proposed measures
					Degree 1 low 2 medium 3 high	Trend ↗ → ↘		
C.6	<b>Locally produced products and services contribute to regional added value. The contribution is stable or increasing.</b> <i>Ideally, the added value achieved in the destination should also bring benefits for local residents. This is particularly successful when local companies produce directly on site and also sell their products in the region. In contrast, this is only the case to a limited extent if many companies do not have their headquarters locally, but are only branches of larger chains.</i>			<i>Therefore, it is undesirable that the number of such businesses increases along the tourism supply chain.</i>				
	<b>The Wadden Sea World Heritage Site contributes to local value creation. The contribution is stable or increasing.</b> <i>If the Wadden Sea World Heritage status is successfully promoted locally for tourism and used to make the destination more attractive and competitive, the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site contributes to value creation.</i>			<i>However, if this opportunity is not seized in marketing and the unique character of the habitat is not translated into appropriate offers, potential added value is lost for the destination.</i>				
C.8	<b>Local businesses mostly feel co-responsible for the protection and conservation of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site.</b> <i>If the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site is an important element of tourist attractiveness of the destination, it is logical that businesses that benefit from this attractiveness also feel jointly responsible for its preservation.</i>			<i>If this is not the case, it should be examined why this is so and how the sense of responsibility can be restored and strengthened.</i>				
C.9	<b>Locally active businesses are committed to the protection and preservation of the natural, social and cultural assets of the destination, either ideally and/or financially. The commitment is consistent or increasing.</b> <i>Together with the outstanding natural asset of the Wadden Sea, the people and special culture of the region also represent a valuable asset that needs to be preserved. If it is lost or damaged, economic development is also affected. Accordingly, companies are committed to preserving this important business asset.</i>			<i>If this commitment decreases, this should be seen as a warning sign and the reason for this should be examined as well as how it can be strengthened again if necessary.</i>				
REGIONAL VALUE CREATION								
CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY								

## D. Dimension “Planet” (other aspects besides OUV criteria)

D	Criterion (Explanation)	Statement applies fully rather yes rather not not at all 4 3 2 1	If 1, 2 or 3: Is the criterion negatively affected by tourism development in the area and, if so, in what way?	Examples of impacts caused by tourism	Impairment		Evidence, references, studies, indicators (if available)	Proposed measures
					Degree low medium high 1 2 3	Trend ↗ ↘ ↔		
<b>CLIMATE PROTECTION</b>								
D.1	<b>Defined climate change targets exist for the destination and measures are taken to achieve them.</b> <i>Climate change brings far-reaching, mostly negative consequences for people and the environment. This also applies to the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site. All economic sectors and regions are requested to make their contribution to the reduction of emissions.</i>			It would be unwelcome if tourism service providers wanted to launch offers on the market that are particularly energy-intensive and/or do not make use of currently available energy-saving options.				
D.2	<b>The tourist carbon footprint of the destination per guest is reduced in line with the agreed climate protection goals.</b> <i>The tourist carbon footprint of the destination includes emissions associated with the arrival and departure, the stay and activities of guests on site. The goal must be to further reduce the footprint in the medium term.</i>			An increase in the carbon footprint can occur, for example, when energy-intensive tourism offers are introduced locally or when more guests arrive from distant source markets.				
D.3	<b>The possibilities to reach the place by public transport and to be mobile on site in a climate-friendly way are in line with the number of guests and climate protection goals.</b> <i>Tourism always means traffic – both for arrival and departure as well as for excursions on site. In order to keep the associated noise and emissions low, it is desirable if guests can use climate-friendly mobility offers. For this, there must be a sufficient number of corresponding offers.</i>			Against the background of the high significance of transport for climate protection, it is important that there are no bottlenecks in public transport, even with a high volume of guests. If this is not the case, barriers arise that lead to more private transport and emissions. If the number of guests increases, the offers may have to be adjusted accordingly.				
D.4	<b>Public and corporate waste management is sufficiently effective that the amount of waste per guest does not increase and the recycling rate of recyclable materials does not decrease.</b> <i>In the interest of resource and climate protection, it is necessary to keep waste quantities as low as possible and to recycle as much of it as possible.</i>			If the amount of waste increases in relation to the number of residents and guests, or if the willingness of municipalities or companies to avoid and recycle waste decreases, this can lead to additional burdens on the environment.				
D.5	<b>There are extensive areas at the destination without disturbance from noise or artificial light. Their extent remains stable or increases.</b> <i>Tourist activities and tourist infrastructure cause light and noise that can lead to significant disturbance of wildlife. It is therefore important to maintain sufficient areas that are free from such disturbances.</i>			Additional impacts from tourism are possible, e.g. through more large events or illuminated tourist infrastructure.				
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION</b>								

D	Criterion (Explanation)	Statement applies 4 fully 3 rather yes 2 rather not 1 not at all	If 1, 2 or 3: Is the criterion negatively affected by tourism development in the area and, if so, in what way?	Examples of impacts caused by tourism	Impairment		Evidence, references, studies, indicators (if available)	Proposed measures
					Degree low 1 medium 2 high 3	Trend ↗ → ↘		
D.6 RESOURCE CONSERVATION	<p><b>Water reserves and water management ensure a water supply that does not extract more groundwater than is naturally replenished.</b></p> <p><i>If more groundwater is withdrawn than can be replenished, the groundwater level is lowered. This in turn can lead to the loss of valuable habitats (e.g. wet dune valleys). But this can also result in supply shortages.</i></p>			An increase in the number of guests and increasing water consumption per guest (due to guest behaviour or offers that consume a lot of water), for example, can lead to too much water being withdrawn.				
	<p><b>Whenever possible, new sealing of surfaces at the destination is avoided.</b></p> <p><i>Every day, additional land is sealed for human activities nationwide and is lost as habitat as well as rainwater drainage areas. This development must be stopped or, even better, reversed, especially in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site.</i></p>			The construction of additional tourism infrastructure can lead to more land sealing. In individual cases, this can be compensated by de-sealing measures elsewhere.				
D.8 NATURE EXPERIENCE	<p><b>The destination offers a variety of environmentally compatible opportunities for direct experiences of nature. The offer is stable or growing.</b></p> <p><i>An essential precondition for an appreciative attitude towards nature is to provide people with opportunities to directly experience and get to know nature.</i></p>			A reduction of nature experience offers or the closure of related information facilities, for example, would be in conflict with this goal.				
D.9 REGIONAL IDENTIFICATION	<p><b>Here is</b></p> <p><b>a) a high acceptance of the protection of the Wadden Sea and of nature conservation measures in the region and</b></p> <p><b>b) high identification of the citizens with the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site.</b></p> <p><i>Permanent protection of the Wadden Sea World Heritage will only succeed if it is carried out together with the people who live in this natural habitat and not against them. It is therefore important to keep an eye on how the local population feels about the World Heritage Site and nature conservation. The Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park, for example, regularly conducts surveys to be able to describe changes in this aspect.</i></p>			If acceptance and/or identification decrease, this is an alarm signal and it should be examined whether this is related to tourism development.				



# Experiences from the trial in three pilot destinations

Part of the development of the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* was, besides research on already existing methods with similar objectives, testing the method in selected model destinations. The following criteria were taken into account in the selection of these destinations:

1. They should be a place with relatively **high tourism intensity**.
2. They should be places on the **mainland as well as on the islands**.
3. They should be located **in or directly by the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site**.
4. There should be local **interest in the topic**.
5. They should be located in **different sub-regions** of the Wadden Sea.

In the end, the islands of Borkum (Lower Saxony), Fanø (Denmark), and Ameland (Netherlands) were chosen, as well as the mainland town of St. Peter-Ording (Schleswig-Holstein). Fanø, however, could not participate in the end due to scheduling reasons.

The procedure for the trial was the same in all destinations. First of all, in consultation with local tourism managers, a group of stakeholders was selected who, due to their background experience as a group, could bring different perspectives from all three sustainability dimensions into the discussion. The group size varied between 6 (Ameland) and 18 (St. Peter-Ording) participants. The participants were sent a copy of the current version of the criteria and project information in advance to help them prepare.



“The participants enjoyed the workshop. They often meet in different contexts and discuss the interaction between tourism, nature and people, but usually only on a single topic. The real value for them was that they could do this in a structured way and with external facilitation. If they get this opportunity together and regularly, it will lead to a common understanding of the issues at hand.

**Sjon de Haan**  
Wadden Sea World Heritage Coordinator,  
Ameland



“Many discussions focus on individual aspects of sustainability and forget about placing the individual issue in the overall system. With the Wadden Sea Tourism Radar, the overall picture is on the agenda. In the discussion along the Radar criteria, all dimensions of sustainability are on an equal footing. This makes it easier to draw a balanced overall picture and thus to draw a fair balance.

**Göran Sell**  
Managing Director, Nordseeheilbad Borkum  
GmbH



The actual workshop, which was moderated and conducted in the presence of the participants, lasted about four hours. After a short introduction, the group went through all the criteria in the table together and answered the question of how they were affected by local tourism. If negative impacts were found, these were directly noted for all to see via screen projection. Due to the limited time frame, the degree and trend of impact were only discussed at the beginning by way of example. Likewise, no possible measures were mentioned. The main objective of the trial was to test how the structure, criteria, and methodology of the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* proved themselves in specific examples. At the end of each event, the participants were asked how they evaluated the work with the tool. The workshops took place one after the other, each several weeks apart. After each event, the draft of the criteria table was revised and further optimised on the basis of the experience gained.

## How does the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* help to identify when the boundaries of acceptable tourism development are crossed?

In order to be able to identify such a line being crossed, the people living in a tourism destination have to agree on a common idea of what is essential for collectively desired tourism development. The *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* offers a framework with selected criteria. It shows which aspects the stakeholders have to pay attention to and suggests a guideline for structured communication based on the criteria. The result is a qualitative assessment of the situation based on a thorough consideration of the overall situation. It reflects the existing knowledge and existing background of values of the discussion group. It thus represents the discussion group's subjective view of the issues. But this is also fair, because the *Radar* is not about

Photos: Nationalparkverwaltung/LKN.SH; Hans-Ulrich Rösner (3); stock.adobe.com (10); Cpro; Sima Etmmer, exclusive design; homydesign; Kzenon; Olaf Schlienger; R. S. TafstolNL (2); Carola Vahldiek; Björn Wylezich; Tourismus-Zentrale St. Peter-Ording



naming generally valid limit values, but about supporting a responsible and conscious way of dealing with natural and cultural values in tourism development specifically for the respective location and the people living there. The *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* thus helps to identify and name undesirable developments that have arisen, for example, from carelessness or a one-sided view of contexts. It does not replace legally binding rules in tourism or nature conservation, but complements them with a differentiated and inclusive assessment from the perspective of the stakeholders from the respective destination.

The *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* is expressly not an appropriate instrument for **quantitatively** recording the burden of tourism or for comparing figures between different locations. On the other hand, a **qualitative** synopsis of the development directions of several locations at the regional level is definitely possible and desirable (cf. page 14).



“ I was positively surprised by how respectful and attentive all participants were towards the other participants. The event was carried by the desire to fulfil the set task to the best of our knowledge and belief with each other and not against each other.

**Sebastian Rischen**  
Sustainability & Nature Experience Office,  
St. Peter-Ording Tourist Board



“ With the help of the Wadden Sea Tourism Radar, stakeholders are motivated to take a step back to perceive different perspectives and see relationships from a different angle. In this way, the importance of nature conservation and the National Park will become clearer and more understandable for a good future for tourism in both economic and ecological terms.

**Christiane Gätje**  
National Park Administration / LKN.SH

## In summary, it can be said that ...

- in the work with the *Radar* there was an **intensive discussion** with and about the points called up and the differently justified assessments of them.
- all groups discussed the criteria in a concentrated and relevant way. Different positions were put forward, listened to in an appreciative manner, and weighed up together. In a few cases, dissent remained, which was recorded in the documentation. As a rule, however, the groups were able to agree on a **common assessment**.
- all groups emphasised the value and insightfulness of having cross-thematic discussions in such a **dimension-spanning composition**. Independent moderation was seen as important and beneficial
- joint consideration of different criteria from different perspectives leads to **more mutual understanding** and lays the foundation for a **common future idea for tourism in the destination**.
- the results in each of the three places clearly show in which areas tourism is in harmony with the goals of nature conservation and the quality of life for people, animals, and plants without any problems, but also where there is a need for action and measures should be taken if the destination wants to **consistently follow the course of sustainability**.





## But who should carry out the check?

It is clear from the previous chapters that selection of the group that uses the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* is very important for the outcome. Ideally, on the one hand, it should be able to give expert opinions from the perspectives of all **three dimensions of sustainability as well as on the World Heritage Site**, and, on the other hand, reflect the **range of values and opinions at the destination**. In order to achieve the highest possible acceptance for the outcome of the consultation, members of the group should also enjoy the **trust of the local population**.

In the model destinations, the committee that carried out the check was chosen in advance in coordination with local tourism officials. It was not elected or selected through a participative selection process. However, it was ensured that at least one person came from each of the following three groups:

### People

e.g. representatives of church,  
youth/school (e.g. also school representative),  
social services/social welfare office,  
youth welfare office ...

### Profit

e.g. hotel and restaurant association,  
destination management organisation (DMO),  
chamber of commerce, chamber of trade,  
retail association ...

### Planet

e.g. national park administration,  
nature conservation associations,  
coastal protection ...

This ensured that the questions were examined from different perspectives and that a cross-sectoral, balanced assessment could be made at the end.

Since the trial was only a test run of the method without involvement in political decision-making processes, it was not necessary in this case to authorise the

group of people from the local community for their task. However, for the application of the *Radar* as a building block in decision-making processes for tourism development of a location, such a body should have the trust and mandate of the local community. The best way to achieve this mandate will vary from place to place depending on the current situation. If, for example, there is already a widely recognised sustainability board or environment and tourism committee that fulfils the above-mentioned requirements, it might be possible for them to deal with the check. If, on the other hand, there is already a controversial discussion in the location about the limits of tourism growth, it is necessary to be cautious when choosing members of the committee in order not to jeopardise acceptance of the *Radar's* results.

One way of openly involving the residents would be to publicly advertise seats on the committee, followed by an election. Interested citizens can put themselves forward as candidates; the people with the most votes form the committee. It is also possible to allocate only a number of the seats in this way and to fill the remaining seats with, for example, municipal representatives and representatives from associations and professional organisations and institutions. It is also possible to appoint members through a random sample of the resident population (cf. [citizens' councils](#)). Austria, for example, has appointed a [climate council](#) of citizens in this way. It is composed of 100 people who have had their main residence in Austria for at least five years, are at least 16 years old, and reflect average society in terms of gender, age, level of education, and place of residence. This ensures that participants from different groups are represented in a balanced way for the total population. The [Citizens' Dialogue](#) in East Belgium is organised in a similar way. It is important that the people selected at the end have both the expertise and the trust of the local people.

# Further examples for evaluation of tourism based on sustainability benchmarks

The *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* offers a way of obtaining one-off or periodic snapshots of the current situation at a destination and to put tourism development to the test. However, it can also be used as a complementary tool in broader tourism development projects aiming at overall tourism sustainability – on the Wadden Sea with special attention to its protection. Three examples of such approaches are briefly

presented below – without intending to exclude other positive examples. What they all have in common is that, just like the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar*, they put the quality of life in the area as the determining factor for tourism development and thus do not represent concepts that are purely economically oriented.

## Example

### 1

#### The habitat concept of the island of Norderney (Lower Saxony)

In a large participation process, Norderney has collectively written down guidelines for the future development of living and working on the island. The islanders themselves describe the reason for their approach as follows: “The island is our (elected) home, our workplace, our daily life – in a word: our habitat. It has changed a lot in recent years – not least because of tourism. Many developments are positive, others are viewed critically. But one thing is clear: our habitat must be preserved and oriented towards sustainable development, in which our nature, our businesses and, above all, we locals have a place.” Now the task is to initiate implementation in the terms of the agreement.

→ [www.norderney.de/staatsbad/lebensraumkonzept](http://www.norderney.de/staatsbad/lebensraumkonzept)

*Before Norderney, the island of Juist had already presented a participatory living space concept “Lebendiges Juist” in 2018. And Borkum is currently following suit with its own similar project.*

## Example

### 2

#### Quality of life in the Wilder Kaiser Region (Austria)

In workshops, forums and discussion groups, tourism experts, community representatives and citizens of the Wilder Kaiser region in Tyrol have, initiated by the local tourism association, addressed the question of how tourism can be oriented towards the needs of all people who holiday, live and work there, while at the same time taking responsibility for nature and society. This process has not only resulted in the vision of an “excellent quality of life for all”, but also in a solid work programme, “[Strategy 2024](#)”.

→ [www.wilderkaiser.info/de/region/lebensqualitaet.html](http://www.wilderkaiser.info/de/region/lebensqualitaet.html)

## Example

### 3

#### CITTASLOW – Network of Liveable Cities (international)

The aim of the participating places in this association is to discover local potential for sustainable local and urban development in smaller towns and to improve local quality of life. Regional added value and the protection of flora and fauna in its typical local diversity are also included. On the way to this goal, according to the rules of the network, economic and community actors are always involved in addition to the administration. The coexistence and community of all groups in society are thereby strengthened, and an undamaged natural and cultural environment ultimately also supports sustainable and future-oriented tourism development, according to the philosophy of Cittaslow. Every place that wants to join the network must first fulfil an extensive catalogue of different criteria, whose compliance is checked by a commission.

Around the North Sea, for example, the towns of Berwick upon Tweed (GB), Aylsham (GB), Sokndal (N), Midden-Delfland (NL), and Meldorf (D) are members of the Cittaslow network.

→ [www.cittaslow.org](http://www.cittaslow.org); [www.cittaslow-nederland.nl](http://www.cittaslow-nederland.nl); [www.cittaslow.de](http://www.cittaslow.de); [www.cittaslow.org.uk](http://www.cittaslow.org.uk)

## Communication and use

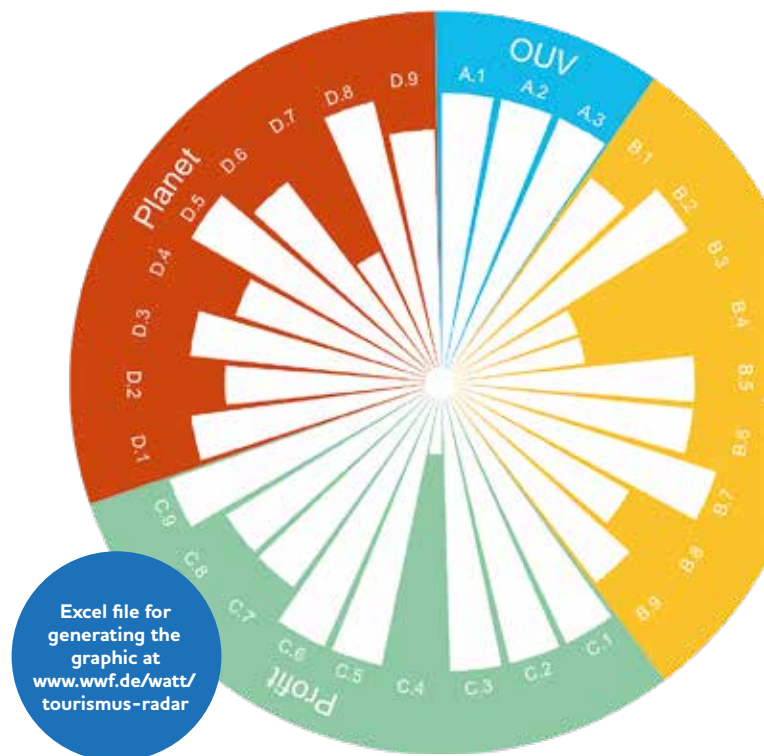
The *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* is intended as an internal management tool. As important as it is to ensure that the people who are going to work with the *Radar* enjoy the trust of the population when selecting them, it is equally important to inform them openly and clearly about the results of consultations. How and by what means this is best done will vary from place to place. In any case, it is important to ensure a high level of transparency in the process.

The figure on the right gives an example of how the core results can be presented in a simple and clear way. This shows at a glance where the destination stands with regard to the *Radar* criteria. An Excel file that can be used to easily generate the graph is available for download [here](#).

### Where and how should the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* be used?

First of all, the *Radar* is generally freely available for use by all interested destinations and tourism regions. If it is carried out at regular intervals using the same methodology, developments over time can be identified.

An overview of development across the Wadden Sea can be achieved if the check is carried out by a selection of locations in or around the Wadden Sea at the same time and the results are summarised at the regional level in an integrated regional report. If this is done several times over a longer period of time, it would be possible to get a more differentiated picture of how well tourism is being developed in accordance with the requirements of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site.



The incorporation of such monitoring into the monitoring programme of Trilateral Wadden Sea Cooperation can contribute to the safeguarding of the Outstanding Universal Value of the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site, to the scientific assessment of tourism in the regular Quality Status Reports, and to sustainable development of the Wadden Sea region.

The *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* has been developed specifically for the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination. This is particularly reflected in the first three criteria, which refer to UNESCO's grounds for recognition. However, the remaining criteria can also be applied to other destinations. Therefore, the *Radar* can generally also be used as a navigation aid on the way to more sustainability in tourism in other regions outside the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site.



# Step-by-step instructions for working with the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar*

Below we have noted what procedure we recommend if you want to work with the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* as a location or region.

## What to do?

### 1. Appoint an advisory team

The first step is to select suitable people who can answer the questions of the *Radar* from the perspectives of all three dimensions of sustainability (cf. page 12). The selected group of people will then be informed about the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* and receive the list of criteria (tables in the middle section).

### 2. Determine moderation

We recommend an independent, neutral moderator for discussion of the criteria.

### 3. Assessment of impacts

For this step, all people selected in step 1 meet for a workshop. Discussing the criteria takes time. They should have at least four hours to agree on a common assessment for each of the 30 criteria. If the degree of impairment is also to be determined, two more hours are needed.

### 4. Developing proposals for action

Step 3 shows which criteria require action. The task now is to find suitable measures to address these points and to deal with the negative impacts. If possible, it should also be noted who could and should be responsible for implementing the measures. The same team that worked together in step 3 can develop the measures. In principle, however, it is also possible to expand or change the group of people or to assign the task to another suitable existing body. However, it should be ensured that all three dimensions of sustainability are equally represented by appropriate stakeholders, in addition to Wadden Sea World Heritage. The time needed for this step depends on the number of criteria for which measures need to be agreed.

### 5. Decision on the measures

Depending on the type of measures, different stakeholders will be needed to turn the proposals into action. They must agree with the proposals, support them and, if necessary, also provide the necessary funds for their implementation.

### 6. Implementation of the measures

This is about actually implementing the measures that have been decided on.

### 7. Evaluation of the measures

After a mutually agreed period of time (e.g., every 3 or 5 years), it should be checked whether the measures have led to the desired results. At this point the *Wadden Sea Tourism Radar* could be used again. The cycle is complete and we return to step 1.

The **Interreg VB project PROWAD LINK** aims to unlock the potential of natural areas as a driver for jobs and sustainable development. Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) are approached to develop nature as a brand to create benefits for both SMEs and the environment.

15 project partners in Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom working with interested SMEs will use the “nature-business-benefit-cycle” concept to develop new, sustainable products and offers in the pilot regions of the Wadden Sea (DK, D, NL), Geiranger Fjord (NO), The Wash & North Norfolk Coast (UK).

The 3-year project is co-funded by and carried out in the framework of the Interreg North Sea Region Programme under the Programme Priority 1 “Thinking Growth”. The programme is funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) of the European Union.

**[www.northsearegion.eu/prowad-link](http://www.northsearegion.eu/prowad-link)**

