

## VaBene – Communication of sustainability

Both guests and providers of tourism services have got requirements in sustainability to make sure that activities are environmentally friendly, socially fair and economically useful. These requirements are important to minimise the negative impacts of tourism on the environment and communities while promoting positive effects. Main topics are environmental protection, social responsibility, cultural respect, economic sustainability, awareness-raising, biodiversity, climate protection and cooperation.

To reach these goals, there is a need of communication values and measures. With the right way of communication people can be motivated to act more responsible. Sustainability communication must be understandable, credible, comprehensible, activating and sensitising. There are several strategies to present a common picture of sustainability efforts. Some specific recommendations of action are listed below. It is important to say that these are recommendations, not regulations.

Within the VaBene project, we focus on having a common language in communication of sustainability. This handout can be used as a supporting document for all project and network partners. It is split up into aspects from the VaBene project application, an overview on framework criteria and content from the NTS communication concept.

**Interreg**



Kofinanziert von  
der Europäischen Union  
Medfinansieret af  
Den Europæiske Union

**Deutschland – Danmark**

**VaBene**

## Sustainability Framework Criteria derived from VaBene application

<b>Common Sustainability Aspects</b>	<b>Other Sustainability Aspects</b>
<b>Transportation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Means of travel to destination</li><li>• Means of travel in the Wadden Sea region</li><li>• Local production chains</li></ul>	<b>Nature protection</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoid disturbance of protected areas</li><li>• Educate on nature protection and appropriate behavior</li><li>• Promote expansion of natural habitats</li></ul>
<b>Resource efficiency</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Low energy consumption and use of renewable energy</li><li>• Use already existing products (e. g. second hand)</li><li>• Use reusable products</li></ul>	<b>Consistent sustainable behavior</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Address and compare sustainable behavior in vacation destination and at home</li><li>• Identify and support personal motivation for sustainability</li><li>• Focus on effective and easily implemented sustainability measures</li></ul>
<b>Waste reduction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reusable equipment</li><li>• Biodegradable materials &amp; recycable materials</li></ul>	
<b>Organic and local products</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Protecting local ecosystems</li><li>• Strengthening local economy</li></ul>	

## Common Sustainability language and framework criteria

	We say	We mean
<b>Transportation</b>	<b>travel near and use public transportation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel of visitors to vacation destination</li> <li>• Local transportation to hands on activities, training course and guided tours (SG2 and SG3)</li> <li>• Use local raw materials and resources (SG4)</li> <li>• Promote public transportation (SG5)</li> </ul>
<b>Use of resources</b>	<b>use renewable resources – use them efficiently</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little and long lasting equipment (SG2)</li> <li>• Resource friendly accommodation for training course and inclusion of resource friendly businesses/offers in guided tours (SG3)</li> <li>• Resource friendly production chains (SG4)</li> <li>• Promote resource friendly businesses and consumption (SG5)</li> </ul>
<b>Waste management</b>	<b>use what you can decompose and recycle</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decomposable/Recyclable equipment, materials and food packaging (SG2 and SG3)</li> <li>• Low waste production chains and decomposable/recyclable products (SG4)</li> <li>• Promote low waste businesses and offers (SG5)</li> </ul>
<b>Organic and local products</b>	<b>healthy nature – healthy food</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use organic and local food products (SG2 and SG3)</li> <li>• Include organic and local food businesses and offers in training course for sustainability guides and guided tours (SG3)</li> <li>• Increase number of organic and local food producers in partner network (SG4)</li> <li>• Promote organic and local food businesses and offers (SG5)</li> </ul>
<b>Protection of the Wadden Sea</b>	<b>the Wadden Sea is your UNESCO World Heritage – preserve it</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities to benefit natural habitats (SG2)</li> <li>• Address UNESCO World Heritage in training course for sustainability guides (SG3)</li> <li>• Increase number nature and national park guides in partner network (SG4)</li> <li>• Consider nature protection in promotion of sustainable businesses and offers (SG5)</li> </ul>
<b>Consistent sustainable behavior</b>	<b>here and at home</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivate for hands on activities at home (SG2)</li> <li>• Include transferable sustainability information in guides sustainability tours (SG3)</li> <li>• Find and support sustainability motivation in national park partners outside of economic/market motivation (SG4)</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote sustainable vacation together with sustainable way of life (SG5)</li> </ul>
<b>Distributing tourism more evenly throughout the year</b>	<b>“have space” vacation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing off season offers and tourism</li> <li>• High season activities in lowly frequented sites (SG2)</li> <li>• Guided sustainability tours throughout the year according to season (SG3)</li> <li>• Networking activities for partners during off season (SG4)</li> <li>• Promoting off season offers (SG5)</li> </ul>
<b>Communication of sustainability/VABENE</b>	<b>spread the word (on sustainable tourism)/tell your friends</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reaching as many people as possible</li> <li>• Consequent use of Wadden Sea (Word Heritage) brand and VaBene-Interreg logo</li> <li>• Social media posts on SG2 to SG5</li> <li>• Impact reports for on site activities (SG2) (e. g. together with nature protection NGOs, monitoring results for participants)</li> <li>• Train local sustainability guides in sustainability communication and use tour participants as multipliers (SG3)</li> <li>• PR on sustainable partner products and offers (SG4)</li> <li>• Sustainability themed local partner networks (SG4) (e. g. organic foods network, maybe pairing with product network, e. g. organic beer network)</li> <li>• Professional sustainability communication (SG5)</li> </ul>

## Recommendations of action from NTS communication concept

<p><b>Green Washing</b></p>	<p><b>Avoid</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concealment and lack of evidence</li> <li>• Unclear and euphemistic terms</li> <li>• Concealment of failures</li> <li>• Publishing of incorrect or no figures and data at all</li> </ul>
<p><b>Nudging</b></p>	<p><b>Goal: Influence behavioural changes in a transparent way</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognising and addressing human behaviour patterns</li> <li>• No focus on prohibitions</li> <li>• Make the desired choice more attractive</li> <li>• Supporting people to make informed and positive decisions</li> <li>• Using nudging in an ethical way - with trust and without manipulation</li> </ul> <p><b>4 principles of nudging:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People choose the easiest way: set environmentally friendly options as the default choice</li> <li>2. Social desirability: support guests to make environmentally friendly decisions because people strive to behave in such a way that they are accepted and perceived positively by those around them</li> <li>3. Self-commitment: offer a voluntary commitment for environmentally friendly behaviour while travelling because people tend to adapt their behaviour when they commit themselves out of their own conviction</li> <li>4. Convenience: Minimise obstacles to make the desired behaviour as easy and comfortable as possible</li> </ol>
<p><b>Reason-Why-Effect</b></p>	<p><b>Tell people why they should or should not do something</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instead of “Please keep dogs on a lead!” better say: “Please put your dog on a lead. Birds are nesting on the ground here in the the bank. The grass gives them shelter. If dogs run around here, it leads to stress for the young birds.”</li> <li>• Instead of “Use buses and trains!” better say: “Travel by bus and train. It's cheap. You also get to see much more of the surrounding area. 70 % of all guests already travel by train, 90 % explore the area by bike, on foot or by bus.”</li> <li>• Instead of “Avoid single-use plastic!” better say: “Use multi-packs and unpackaged food. Every year 500 kg of plastic waste ends up on the beaches and in the sea along our coast alone. This kills over 10,000 seabirds every year just here in the North Sea.”</li> </ul>

