

MEETING DOCUMENT

Wadden Sea Board (WSB 39)

29 November 2022
Wilhelmshaven



Agenda Item:	5 Draft Wilhelmshaven Declaration
Subject:	Updated Action Plan on Implementing the WSWH Sustainable Tourism Strategy
Document No.:	WSB 39/5.1/c
Date:	15 November 2022
Submitted by:	NG-ST

The WSB 37 (August 2022) requested an amended version of the Action Plan to be submitted after consultations with partners and local stakeholders have been concluded.

At the last Network Group -Sustainable Tourism (NG-ST) meeting 29 in Denmark on the 08th of September was the Action Plan once again discussed and agreed on how to meet the request from the Wadden Sea Board:

- **Discuss also in local communities (NL)** –especially aimed at local councils: The respective officers received the latest update of the Action Plan, additionally it was presented to local politicians and the OBW (Omgevingsberaad) a Dutch stakeholder council.
- **Verify and amend with NP administrations (SH + NDS + HH)** – an internal communication round was organised in the NP administrations as well as an exchange between the 3 German National Parks.
- **Finetune with tourism partners and create commitment for implementation** – the action plan was presented as a dynamic plan (living document) to the main tourism partners again and got their approval as multipliers.

An additional “Management Chapter” accompanying the Action Plan was drafted stating how the requests by the WSB have been met and more importantly how the management / implementation of the Action Plan will be addressed in the future.

This paper presents the new management chapter and the updated draft Action Plan on Implementing the Wadden Sea World Heritage Tourism Strategy.

Proposal: The meeting is invited

1. To **note** the amendments made by the Editorial Board of the NG-ST;
2. To **endorse** the draft version of the trilateral Action Plan on Implementing the WSWH Sustainable Tourism Strategy;

Implementing the Sustainable Tourism Strategy in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination through Trilateral & Local Action Plans

Management Chapter

**Prepared by the
Editorial Board of the NG-ST**

(Version 09. November 2022)

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in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination (updated draft version 09 November 2022)

1. Scope of document

This document outlines how, through trilateral and local action plans, the Sustainable Tourism Strategy in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination will be implemented in the coming years. The main purpose of the document is to provide information of *who* is doing *what* and *how*. It further defines monitoring measures and evaluation processes to be applied by all involved partners.

2. Status

Since 2013 the respective Action Plan is an important tool for the relevant stakeholders to implement the strategy.

There are successful existing local, regional, national and trilateral initiatives throughout the entire area, creating synergies and new partnerships to strengthen the cooperation and commitment of stakeholders.

Role of NG-ST

The Trilateral Network Group on Sustainable Tourism (NG-ST) is coordinating and monitoring on the regional level the implementation and progress of the strategy for sustainable tourism and the action plan in a participatory approach with the relevant stakeholders.

Members

- ✓ nature administration at a state and regional level
- ✓ tourism and marketing organisations
- ✓ green NGOs involved in management and tourism planning in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination.

Tasks

- ✓ is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the strategy and action plan
- ✓ reporting on the progress
- ✓ facilitates the initiation of trilateral as well as bilateral projects with sustainable tourism as the main objective
- ✓ Contribute to commitment for the implementation amongst stakeholders
- ✓ meets twice a year

Ownership and Financing

The action plan is a tool to identify necessary steps towards ONE Wadden Sea – most sustainable World Heritage Destination. The inclusive participation of all relevant stakeholders¹ constitutes an essential factor for an effective Action Plan implementation. In order to ensure full ownership and inclusion throughout the process and the implementation of the Action Plan, members of NG-ST as well as local Stakeholder groups (like Team Waddenzee Werelderfgoed, NL; AG Weltnaturerbe Wattenmeer Niedersachsen/Fahrtziel Natur D - Lower Saxony; Weltnaturerbe AG Westküste/ Trägergruppe Fahrtziel Natur D- Schleswig-Holstein; Strategyforum WS Municipalities in DK) have been consulted and respectively local action plans have been developed. For the future their analysis of progress on achieving the objectives set out in the Action Plan and the possibility to include recommendations for further improvements will be given.

For further facilitation will the local action plans be translated in the local languages after approval.

The action plan is a starting point for projects and policy development, both locally, bilateral or trilateral. There is no budget claim for the action plan, projects that will be developed will have to look for funds, one can think about European funds, national or regional funds but also many projects only need manpower already available in the countries.

Indicators

For each criterion of success, result indicators are specified where possible, and sensible to be able to monitor the implementation of the actions in a more consistent way. As monitoring and compiling information is often time and cost-intensive, this must be done in a cost-effective way. These indicators are for the action plan as a whole, reached by activities in the countries and jointly through CWSS.

Living document

The Action Plan is a living document and will be subject to future revisions during its implementation period and this is expected especially when the new Sustainable Tourism Strategy (STS) is approved by the Wadden Sea Board. These reviews will take stock and assess implementation progress and will identify specific areas where actions should be further enhanced to help reach the stated criteria of success. This will also allow for refining the indicators of this Action Plan if needed.

For 2023 an internal review to assess the impacts of the strategy and the STS Action plan is scheduled to provide evidence reflecting scale and diversity of planning and activity in the tourism sector. The results will feed into a debate among tourism stakeholders to enhance their

¹ As defined in the Sustainable Strategy (page 34): Key stakeholders are:

- States parties, regional and local authorities;
- Local communities;
- Tourism sector;
- NGOs.

involvement in the STS (a.o. entrepreneurs, residents, tourists, investors, local authorities) and if appropriate could lead to recommendations to adapt the Action Plan.

3. Implementation

The implementation and progress of the Action Plan is based on voluntary commitment of the participating partners and stakeholders and is not legally binding.

The majority of actions:

- Use and build upon existing mechanisms and practices; and
- Engage and make use of local, third-party resources

Some actions, however, would require a decision by the Wadden Sea Board (WSB) on trilateral activities, or local authorities (local action plans) in order to provide either the necessary mandate or the necessary financial or human resources, or both.

Wadden Sea Board engagement will be sought on specific components of the Action Plan, as distinct elements and as proposals reach maturity for Board consideration. There is a strong commitment to developing proposals in a consultative and transparent manner, and Board constituencies will be engaged through structured consultation processes on key proposals requiring Board decision.

At the trilateral level Network Group Sustainable Tourism (NG-ST), regular interaction is envisaged between the Common Wadden Sea Secretariat (CWSS), liaison persons and different stakeholder groups such as Destination Management Organizations (DMO), Local Tourism Organizations (LTO) and nature Nongovernmental Organizations (NGO) to consider and refine proposals in support of the Action Plan.

Liaison persons for each work field will build and maintain mutually beneficial (local) relationships, facilitate communications, and coordinate local activities where appropriate.

CWSS is seen as coordinator, continuously monitoring the implementation together with NG ST and taking on the role of a facilitator, who initiates exchange among and cooperation with the key stakeholders (e.g., DMOs / TMOs, NGOs and national parks).

Implementation per country

Denmark

The Wadden Sea National Park (NPV-DK) will together with the Strategy Forum for the (Danish) Wadden Sea World Heritage work for an implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy for the Wadden Sea World Heritage and the accompanying action plan. NPV-DK will attend the NG

ST meetings and deliver progress reports on activities and results in DK. Furthermore NPV-DK will work through the NPV-DK Partner Program to engage and activate partners (municipalities, NGO's, DMO's, SME's and other partners) in supporting and protecting the outstanding, universal values of the World Heritage. NPV-DK will lead, facilitate and join local, regional, national and cross border projects, which on an operational level realize the STS and the action plan.

Germany (Schleswig-Holstein)

The Schleswig-Holstein Wadden Sea National Park Administration (NPV-SH) will facilitate and support the implementation of the Action plan on a trilateral and regional level by attending NG - ST meetings on a regular basis, organising (together with the North Sea Tourism Services (NTS)) the regional World Heritage Working Group meetings and providing the NG-ST with an update on the progress of the regional actions in a timely and consistent manner. Where possible the NPV-SH will participate in cross-border projects that address aspects of sustainable tourism and the OUVs of the World Heritage status of the Wadden Sea. National Park Partners (NPP-SH) will be – where possible and feasible – involved in the implementation of the Action Plan. Training, workshops and discussion tables during the annual meeting organised by the NPV-SH for the NPP-SH will include information on the OUV, Brandspace and other relevant topics of the Action Plan (e.g. sustainable transport).

Germany (Lower Saxony)

The implementation of the Action Plan relies on the commitment and cooperation of many stakeholders in Lower Saxony. Representatives of the Lower Saxon Wadden Sea National Park Authority (NLPV LS), the Lower Saxon Office for Regional Development Weser-Ems (ARL Weser-Ems) and a regional tourism organisation participate in the NG-ST. The ARL Weser-Ems has been organising a regional Wadden Sea World Heritage Working Group since 2014 as an interface from the trilateral to the regional level and for the exchange on activities for a more sustainable tourism, in which diverse relevant stakeholders are represented. The NLPV-LS also addresses relevant topics of the Action Plan in the framework of its National Park Partnership Programme and of the cooperation with the municipalities in the Lower Saxon Wadden Sea Biosphere Region. With the help of national and European funding programmes, regional and cross-border projects can emerge that advance the goal of developing sustainable tourism in the World Heritage Site. As far as possible and feasible, the NLPV-LS will participate and involve also other regional partners. The newly founded regional tourism marketing organisation TANO (Tourismus Agentur Nordsee) has announced that it will support the implementation of the Action Plan.

Germany (Hamburg)

The National Park administration Hamburg has made first steps to shape their *local Action Plan* aimed to define together with the local stakeholders activities to implement the STS in NP Hamburg.

Implementation Netherlands

The coordinator Wadden Sea World Heritage in the Netherlands, financed by LNV, Provinces and councils, will coordinate the implementation in the Netherlands. The role will be informing and stimulating partners, bring partners together to develop joint projects and influence policy development. Partners for implementation are at least the provinces, councils, ministry of LNV, Beheerautoriteit Waddenzee, nature organisations, tourism organisations and entrepreneurs. For financing of projects partners can approach funds like, Waddenfonds, Investeringskader Waddengebied or even European programmes. The progress of the implementation will be discussed in the team Waddenzee Werelderfgoed. The action plan is in line with the objectives of the “Agenda voor het Waddengebied” this means there is a good support for the actions.

4. Monitoring & Evaluation

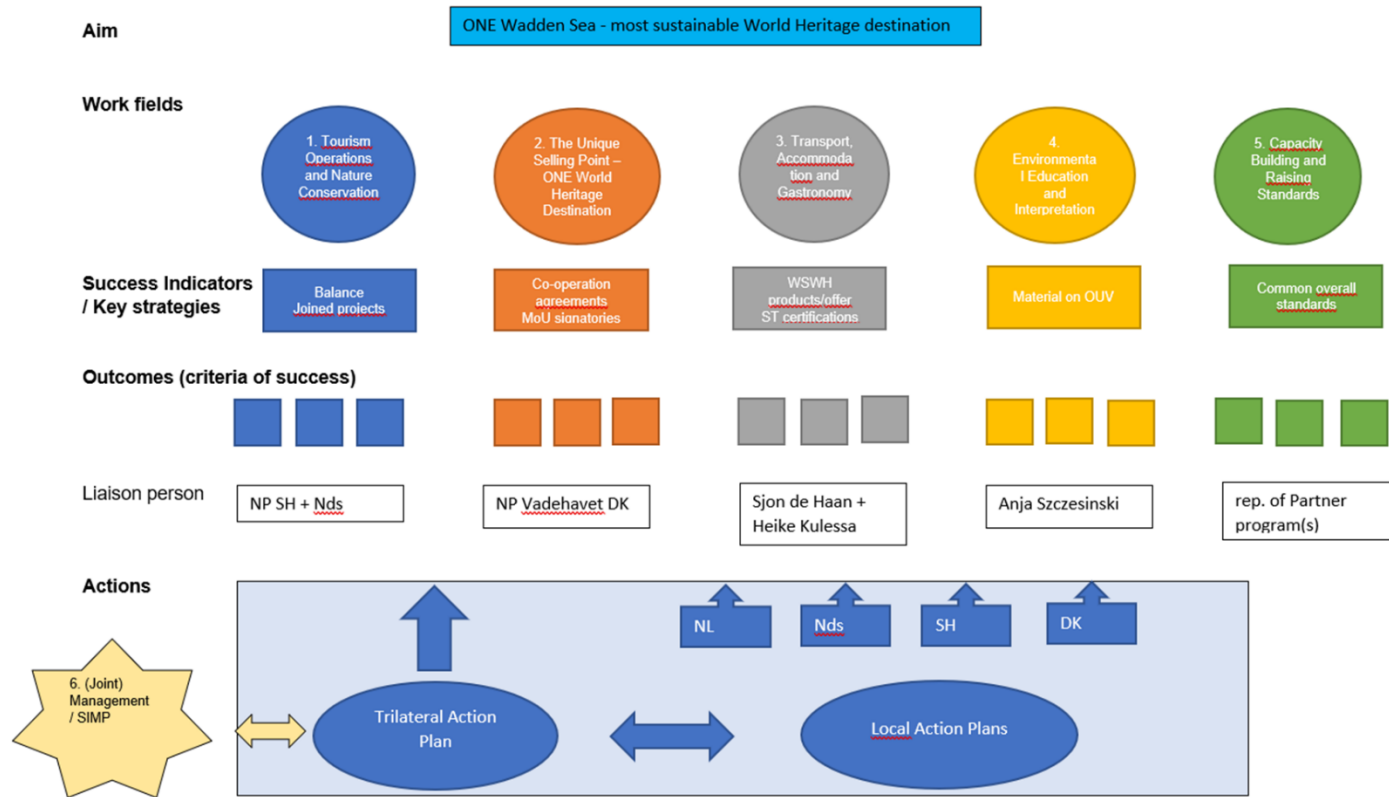
The action plan will be used to monitor progress on implementing the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.

Assessments will be discussed primarily in the framework of the NG-ST and in the relevant regional groups.

All involved parties report every half year to the NG-ST on progress. The results of the assessments will be presented to the Wadden Sea Board every spring (first time 2024) in a report on the progress.

Annex 1

Overview / Structural approach



Trilateral Action Plan on Implementing the Sustainable Tourism Strategy in the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination

Draft version 09 November 2022 – updated with input from local consultations
Authors: Editorial Board of the NG-ST



Trilateral Draft Action Plan

1. Tourism Operations and Nature Conservation		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
1.1. Stakeholders participate in planning, development, and management of sustainable tourism, taking responsibility for the protection of the OUV.	At all levels (trilateral, national and regional) there is a least twice yearly (online/in person) a meeting attended by stakeholder (representatives from the following sectors: tourism, environmental protection, administration, transport...) addressing the subject of sustainable tourism in and around the Wadden Sea World Heritage.	
		1.1.1. Maintain the Netgroup Sustainable Tourism and establish further trilateral cross sectoral working groups coordinating Wadden Sea World Heritage (e.g., Tourism Management at Unesco World Heritage Sites ; Working Group on Biodiversity Communication, etc.) if appropriate / necessary.
		1.1.2 Develop and maintain an overview on (tourism) initiatives on marine litter

		1.1.3. Develop and maintain an overview on (tourism) initiatives on climate change adaptations
		1.1.4. Develop and maintain on overview on tourism initiatives which benefit nature
		1.1.5. Maintain and strengthen local WSWH focal points in the regions/countries

1. Tourism Operations and Nature Conservation

Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
1.2. Tourism planning in the Wadden Sea Destination is in line with the OUV, minimising the potential conflicts between recreational activities and Wadden Sea values.	Every country has by 2024 zonation plans established and agreed upon by partners.	
		1.2.1. Develop a mutual understanding and agree on issues to be treated among policy makers, experts and stakeholders, cross sectoral.
		1.2.2. exchange experiences and best practices in the Wadden Sea.
		1.2.3. Develop guidelines for Codes of Conduct.
		1.2.4. Support the development of Visitor Management tools.

1. Tourism Operations and Nature Conservation		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
1.3. Tourism impacts on nature and socio-economic values are monitored and results are available to support planning and sustainable development.	regions report every two years on tourism impact	
		1.3.1 develop and agree on acceptable impact models for tourism and WSWH
		1.3.2 collect data on tourism (Quantitative and qualitative) and WSWH in a coordinated way

1. Tourism Operations and Nature Conservation		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
1.4. visitor information (on OUV) is widely available	90% of our guests know about OUV and World Heritage	
		1.4.1. Provide guidance and support to focal points (e.g., via Brandspace)
		1.4.2. Foster the exchange of good practices trilaterally
		1.4.3. Repeat the trilateral visitor survey from 2020/21 every 4 or 5 years.

2. The Unique Selling Point – ONE World Heritage Destination		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
2.1. The WSWH brand is widely used as starting point for the development of quality products, services and facilities.	By 2025 the majority of stakeholders directly operating in the Wadden Sea and 20% of tourism entrepreneurs operating around the Wadden Sea use tools from the WSWH Brand and are aware of possibilities to get engaged in the different partner programs.	
		2.1.1. strengthen and establish WSWH brand: Create and coordinate easy to use tools
		2.1.2. establish a structure (analogous to an organisational structure) with tasks and responsibilities for brand communication from the trilateral to the national to the regional level. Facilitate the use of WSWH brand locally
		2.1.3. encourage partners to use WSWH logo in their communications
		2.1.4 Provide knowledge how to include WSWH in Social media content (e.g. Hashtag #happywaddensea)
		2.1.5 Communicate activities trilaterally (newsletters, SoMe, website)
		2.1.6 show new projects on how they can connect to the WSWH brand

		2.1.7 share examples of good projects that connect to the WSWH brand
		2.1.8 review brand guidelines with specification on the use by partners

2. The Unique Selling Point – ONE World Heritage Destination

Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
2.2. WSWH destination is known as a sustainable tourism destination	By 2025 the Wadden Sea is part of the Top 10 most sustainable tourism destinations (e.g., ITB Green Destination Award).	
		2.2.1. conduct feasibility study to develop preconditions for a transnational sustainable destination approach
		2.2.2. Facilitate the participation in a global certification program (e.g., Green Destination)
		2.2.3. Explore the possibility of getting recognition by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)

2. The Unique Selling Point – ONE World Heritage Destination		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
2.3. A sustainable ‘Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination’ marketing concept used by partners– showing the value of existing regional brands and adding value and synergies to create further benefits.	75% of the partners around the Wadden Sea use the World Heritage brand as part of their own brand	
		2.3.1. define tasks/responsibilities about the marketing of the brand. Facilitate cooperation with the DMOs / TMOs and national parks.
		2.3.2. upload, organise, manage and distribute WSWH brand info and files from one centralized online location (Brandspace)
		2.3.3. provide communication material and examples (texts, photos, podcasts, videos, style guide)
		2.3.4. explore the possibility of providing a digital watt experience (audio guide) expandable
		2.3.5. intensive communication with e.g., targeted "hands-on workshops" that are practice-oriented and help the stakeholders to integrate the materials into their own communication media.

2. The Unique Selling Point – ONE World Heritage Destination		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
2.4. Partners are aware of the market development and potential for sustainable tourism in WSWH	10% of the registered partners download at least once a year a market update from brandspace.	
		2.4.1. Facilitate regular visitor survey's for WSWH to get comparable data
		2.4.2. compile monitoring data on tourism in WSWH
		2.4.3. get data on tourism which is comparable (to be further defined)
		2.4.4. regularly update information on market developments for WSWH

2. The Unique Selling Point – ONE World Heritage Destination		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
2.5. Consistent World Heritage communication and promotion of high-quality products for the entire destination.	Outreach on media and social media (e.g., yearly 100 different messages published on the socials aimed at the general public (for now Instagram & Facebook) which have a total reach of at least 100.000 views and 10.000 likes / reactions)	
		2.5.1. manage WSWH social media channels and use common Hashtags
		2.5.2. organize regular meetings with focal points on communication (social media workshop etc)
		2.5.3. publish trilateral calendar of WSWH events
		2.5.4. set up training on communications and storytelling for strategic WSWH ambassadors (with tools)

3. Transport, Accommodation and Gastronomy		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
3.1. Improved partnerships and cooperation between tourism entrepreneurs and the nature conservation sector.	<i>Yearly 15% new admission:</i> entrepreneur active in the World Heritage join partner programme / signed a partnership agreement with a nature organisation, national park or WSWH	
		3.1.1. Facilitate exchange experience and best practices in the WSWH
		3.1.2. Define a goal how many partnership agreements should be reached by 2025 - to be further defined / concrete aim to measure this 3.1.
		3.1.3. Develop and activate internal networking tool (e.g., via Knowledge Exchange platform)
		3.1.4. explore the possibility of a Mentoring Programme – from experiences to less experienced stakeholder

3. Transport, Accommodation and Gastronomy		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
3.2. Efficient, sustainable public transport for all visitors to and within the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination with clear and accessible information.	All destinations have & provide information about how to reach and travel within the destination in a sustainable way	
		3.2.1. compile best practices of sustainable transport in the WSWH destination
		3.2.2. Promote best practices on WSWH webpage

3. Transport, Accommodation and Gastronomy		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
3.3. Existing transport systems and infrastructure are linked, including e-mobility and hiking and biking facilities.	Every destination has transfer points where different modalities come together.	
		3.3.1 compile best practices
		3.3.2 Coordinate exchange to create positive emphasis

3. Transport, Accommodation and Gastronomy		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
3.4. Regional, sustainable quality products, services and facilities in transport, accommodation and gastronomy are available, which can also contribute to the reduction of energy, water consumption and carbon emissions.	All partners improve every three years the sustainability of their offer	
		3.4.1. Facilitate partners to engage in co-creation
		3.4.2. Stimulate exchange visits of entrepreneurs to experience sustainable products / provide network contacts
		3.4.3. Set up a qualitative follow up for each region's action plan

4. Environmental Education and Interpretation		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
4.1. Partners have access to educational resources and activities focusing on communicating and educating about the OUV	Educational materials are available on brandspace	
		4.1.1. Develop joint education materials through IWSS
		4.1.2. Integrate IWSS materials online available into existing/planned platforms
		4.1.3 create an overview of available communication materials (stories etc) focusing on One Wadden Sea World Heritage

4. Environmental Education and Interpretation		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
4.2. Partners / (strategic) Ambassador offer authentic nature experience in cooperation with WSWH	75% of the partners active within WSWH, and 10% of those around the WSWH area have activities that explain the OUV	
		4.2.1. support partners in including WSWH in their experiences
		4.2.2. make information material available for focal points

4. Environmental Education and Interpretation		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
4.3. Stakeholders have good knowledge and appreciation of the Dutch-German-Danish WSWH .	Stakeholder in the WSWH are aware and participate (yearly) in a training about WSWH that includes trilateral aspects	
		4.3.1 organize annual Wadden Sea World Heritage Day
		4.3.2. develop and run a communication plan for WSWH day.

4. Environmental Education and Interpretation		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
4.4. Partners communicate the value of the OUV and its visibility to stakeholders, locals and guests.	Visibility - comparison over the years	
		4.4.1. provide standard texts and pictures for partners (e.g., brandspace)
		4.4.2. Create infographic

5. Capacity Building and Raising Standards		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
5.1. Stakeholders are aware of the social, economic and conservation benefits of Wadden Sea World Heritage brand.		
		5.1.1. define clear benefits of belonging to the network
		5.1.2. develop or extend annual exchange programmes for stakeholders as regular offer
		5.1.3. conduct studies on socio-economic impact of responsible tourism

5. Capacity Building and Raising Standards		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
5.2. Products and offers from the WSWH destination are sustainable and have common high standards	20% of the offers available in the destination fulfil the criteria set up by WSWH	
		5.2.1 Provide criteria

5. Capacity Building and Raising Standards		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
5.3. Stakeholders have capacity and tools to manage tourism efficiently, responsibly and sustainably.	Stakeholders participate in a trainings about WSWH and sustainable tourism (mandatory for partners)	
		5.3.1. organise / set-up a (trilateral) inventory on WHS training courses and -material for stakeholders
		5.3.2. coordinate exchange programmes trilaterally and provide support on contents

6. (Joint) Management / SIMP		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
6.1. The implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan are advanced through trilateral cooperation.	National focal points (liaison persons) for WSWH have sufficient time to ensure cross border cooperation and transfer of knowledge to WSWH partners	
		6.1.1. Maintain and increase the support of visitors, local entrepreneurs, destination marketing organizations and other stakeholders in the tourism sector for nature conservation
		6.1.2. Provide consistent information for the site, through visitor centres and partnership programmes.
		6.1.3. support the Partnership Hub and facilitate the link to regional and local programmes

6. (Joint) Management / SIMP		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
6.2. Site managers are connected to the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.	Have a set of policies which support tourism activities by communicating boundaries and expectations, establishing a culture of compliance within the WSWH.	
		6.2.1. Facilitate to connect site managers to the Sustainable Tourism Strategy dependent on their specific competencies in the three countries.
		6.2.2. Set-up an exchange on the effectiveness of the current national/local policies on sustainable tourism.

6. (Joint) Management / SIMP		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
6.3. Initiatives for cross-border cooperation that foster the nature conservation aspect of sustainability in tourism are strengthen.	at least 3 cross border projects are implemented or approved until 2025	
		6.3.1. Activate and support partners to work together, to mobilise resources for national, regional, trilateral, (international?) and cross-sectoral collaboration
		6.3.2. investigate possibilities of donations/funding of projects together with tourism sector

6. (Joint) Management / SIMP		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
6.4. A transnational market research concept and visitor survey for the Wadden Sea World Heritage Destination.	Regularly visitor surveys are done in the different WSWH destinations. (Suggestion: at least every 4-5 years)	
	A standard market research concept is available and partners and WSWH commit to use it by 2025.	
		6.4.1. develop a trilateral monitoring and assessment approach for tourism data (TMAP, QSR)
		6.4.2 support exchange of best practice on regional market research concepts and visitor surveys
		6.4.3. Develop and compile basic tourism data set to be used in the region to calculate impacts (socio-economic impacts, impacts on nature values) considering EU /UNWTO definitions.

6. (Joint) Management / SIMP		
Criteria of success	Indicator	HOW
6.5. Sufficient staff capacity is available to ensure an effective protection of the World Heritage Site.		
		6.5.1. take stock of the experience of staff already involved; coordinate activities with a view to encourage management of cross-cutting matters.
		6.5.2. Maintain and strengthen local WSWH focal points in the regions/countries
		6.5.3. exchange experiences and best practice examples in the Wadden Sea. Cooperation with UNESCO and other international organisations.