

# QualityCoast Award 2016 Jury Report

**Norderney**  
Germany



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Final Version

Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC)  
**Leiden – Barcelona – Klaipeda**



QualityCoast is a programme of the Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC)  
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# Introduction

QualityCoast is a sustainability award for coastal communities, towns and islands. It is the only sustainable tourism destination award developed by local authorities themselves. It is the result of the European Union INTERREG project "Coastal Practice Network" (CoPraNet 2002-2005), led by the EUCC. The QualityCoast criteria have been developed to measure the success of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) at local level, in connection to the EU Recommendation for ICZM.

People are increasingly interested in sustainability issues, also when selecting their holiday destination. Tourism eco-labels have become common features in travel brochures and websites.

Whilst the Blue Flag specifically applies to individual beaches and marinas and Travelife and the Green Key to accommodations, QualityCoast is considering efforts for sustainable tourism in the whole territory of the coastal destination: towns, small regions and islands.

With the QualityCoast programme ([www.qualitycoast.info](http://www.qualitycoast.info)), the Coastal & Marine Union - EUCC aims to establish an international network of coastal communities that share similar values on sustainable and socially responsible tourism, at the same time maintaining high standards in the quality of their tourism offer.

With the QualityCoast Award programme, EUCC aims to encourage tourism destinations for:

- a. their attractiveness for visitors interested in natural and cultural heritage, a clean environment, local identity, or business involvement in sustainable tourism;
- b. their policies re: sustainable tourism and any of the aspects mentioned under point a;
- c. a combination of a and b.

Since the inclusion of all Destinations Criteria of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) in the QualityCoast Award 2013 Application Form, QualityCoast is now open for applications from all continents.

"QualityCoast" has been registered by EUCC as a European Union trademark; the use of the name is restricted under European law.

## **QualityCoast meets European and global standards**

The GSTC Destination Criteria (GSTC-D version 1.0), published 1 November 2013, have already been fully incorporated into the QualityCoast – QualityDestination 2015 Application Form.

In February 2013, the European Commission launched the European Tourism Indicators (ETIS) aiming to measure and enhance the sustainability of destinations across Europe. All ETIS-indicators have also been included into our Award Application Form, mostly for optional use.

## **QualityCoast certifies tourism sustainability policy**

We offer reliable and transparent international Award programmes and a certification option for destinations with serious ambitions for a good sustainable tourism policy. The Awards and certifications are issued for periods of two years.

The programme also offers an assessment of the visible sustainability (performance, or sustainability status) in a broad range of categories and criteria, since tourists are not only interested in policies, strategies, ambitions and plans, but especially on how they experience a destination. The years of experience in this field allow the programme to inform the tourism sector and the public in a transparent way on policies and performance of ca. 1000 destinations, through the national and international ranking lists of the Global Sustainable Tourism Review (<http://www.qualitycoast.info/alldestinations.htm>). Ranking lists are topped by the QualityCoast Policy Award winners, that have been certified on both policy and status. Next are the destinations that received the QualityCoast BasiQ Award – they are mainly selected on the basis of their status and performance in environmental management, natural and cultural heritage, and local business involvement in sustainability.

## **The importance of QualityCoast for tourism sustainability**

Participation of destination management organisations in the Award programme improves their awareness performance and achievements in an international context. The comparison with other awarded destinations provides the community with a good picture of its strengths and weaknesses. The international assessment and recommendations by our international Jury provide the local authority with a guidance to be considered in an agenda for improvement.

Communities join a network of like-minded communities and share their experiences and best practices in order to improve sustainability and social responsibility in tourism. Their performance in these fields is connected to international tourism marketing through certification under the supervision of an independent international Jury issuing the Awards.

## **Promotional benefits of participation in QualityCoast**

EUCC carries out a marketing campaign together with the Awarded destinations to promote them as the most attractive destinations for visitors interested in nature and landscape, environment, and cultural identity and to highlight their performance in tourism quality and sustainability. The marketing campaign includes promotion at holiday fairs, media publicity, wide dissemination of brochures, promotion via our various web sites and social media. Awarded destinations are also recommended by a number of tour operators of TUI-The Netherlands, in their travel brochures.

The community's own international tourism marketing can profit from the status of QualityCoast destination. Experience in several countries learns that this will continue to generate media publicity nationally and internationally. Sustainability based marketing efforts will increase the "green profile" of the destination both externally and internally and this will help mainstreaming sustainability on local policy and decision making.

# **What is the QualityCoast Award?**

The QualityCoast Award is an independent international certification programme for sustainable tourism of coastal and island destinations that:

- ❖ Has a good overall policy performance in sustainable tourism, mainly according to the Global Sustainable Tourism Council Destination Criteria, according to our Standard (<http://qualitycoast.info/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/qualitycoast-standard-2013.pdf>);
- ❖ Offers a sufficient touristic quality to visitors (mainly measured through the BasiQ indicator set);
- ❖ Provides transparent information to residents and visitors (partly through our communication campaigns);
- ❖ Planning for improvement (according to the Recommendations of the International Award Jury).

The Award Standard is publicly available in [www.qualitycoast.info](http://www.qualitycoast.info).

The Award programme is considering policy and performance criteria representing five different categories:

- ❖ Nature
- ❖ Environment
- ❖ Local Identity & Cultural Heritage
- ❖ Host Community & Safety
- ❖ Tourism & Business.

Each criterion is measured through a combination of quantitative and qualitative indicators, on which the applicant must provide information regarding its entire territory.

# What are the QualityCoast criteria?

See the titles of the 2015 Policy Award criteria on the page 8.

The criteria and indicators will remain subject to annual revision, based upon European and global standards.

## How is the QualityCoast Award attributed?

The QualityCoast Award is attributed on the basis of information to be provided by the applicant(s) through an Application Form. For many of the policy related indicators the applicant is invited to make a self-assessment by giving the destination a rate from 1 to 5 ("1" meaning absence of any relevant policy for the indicator, and "5" meaning full availability of policy concerned); and in the case of a rate of 4 or 5 to clarify the rate or give examples. For the GSTC-D indicators even in the case of self-assessment 1, 2 or 3, a clarification of the main obstacles for improvements is requested (not mandatory). It is useful to provide such clarification for the assessment team, but it is also useful for the annual improvement of the criteria. The Application Form lists 88 Core indicators, and 127 optional ("Your Choice") indicators.

**Core indicators:** in principle all Core indicators need to be taken into consideration. However, destinations can ignore up to 25% of the GSTC-D indicators per criterion, if these are less relevant to them, indicating why they are less relevant. However, destinations are advised only to ignore GSTC-D indicators in case of low performance.

**Your Choice indicators:** applicants can choose on which of the Your Choice indicators they will provide information, with a minimum of one per criterion. This means that applicants will provide information on an additional 20 indicators only.

All information provided through the Application Form (including the self-assessment rates) is evaluated and assessed by the QC Secretariat. The Secretariat involves (or hires the services of) a local expert, as a 3<sup>rd</sup> party auditor. The assessment reports produced by Secretariat and local expert are then reviewed by a number of members of the International Award Jury. For each application, a Jury is designated composed of at least three members including: an independent local expert (who is aware of the applicant community); a national expert; and an international EUCC-expert. In order to ensure its independence, the Jury will work anonymously until the moment it is concluding its assessment.

The Secretariat and the Jury assign scores to all indicators, ranging from 1 to 5; "1" meaning absence of any quality (or no information provided for an indicator); and "5" indicating excellence for an indicator.

The score per criterion is based on the scores and weight factors of its indicators.

The average scores of all 20 criteria will then be calculated. This will be the final score. Applicants scoring '1' in two or more of the 20 criteria will not be eligible for the QualityCoast or QualityDestination Award, regardless the scores in the other criteria.

First time applicants with an average score no less than 5.7 (score threshold) will be granted an Award. Destinations applying for the 2nd time need score 5.8, for the 3rd time 5.9 and for the 4th time 6.0 (minimum).

The Jury will issue a report with a complete list of criteria scores and with suggestions for further improvement.

Some of the indicators measure the quality of policies; others measure the performance (policy implementation) or the visible sustainability status. This is why the QC team is able to produce indexes for sustainability policy and for sustainability status.

For successful applicants the Jury report as well as the above-mentioned indexes will be published.

No public reference will be made about unsuccessful applications.

### QualityCoast Award levels

If the Award score threshold is met, the Jury will also check whether the average scores of the individual categories (Nature, Environment, Identity, Tourism & Business and Host Community & Safety) reach a minimum of 8.0 ("excellence").

The following Award levels will be considered:

- Bronze, in case of excellence in one of the five categories;
- Silver, in case of excellence in two of the five categories;

- Gold, in case of excellence in three [but then no other category should be below 5.0] or four categories;
- Platinum, in case of excellence in all five categories.

### **Successful applicants become QualityCoast Destinations**

Applicants who meet the score threshold are invited to the next tourism fair (ITB Berlin, Vakantiebeurs Utrecht, WTM London etc.) or a National or Local Award Ceremony, where they will receive the Award Certificate, and an Award Flag. They can then participate in the joint marketing programme. Awarded Destinations can order extra flags and banners, which can be displayed throughout the destination's territory during 24 months.

18 Months after their application the Awarded destination will be encouraged to submit a renewed Application. The assessment of the new application will take into consideration the coherence between the improvements indicated in the previous one and the integration of the suggestions and the recommendations made by the Jury.

### **Renewal of the QualityCoast Award: important note**

The QualityCoast Policy Award assessment will take into consideration that earlier scores related to sustainability performance reflect the state of knowledge and experience of previous periods. If no progress is demonstrated in certain indicators, this could result in lower scores. E.g. ambitions and implementation levels in renewable energy use are increasing with time, therefore a clear progress on this item should be shown within a period of four years; another example is the assessment of satisfaction of the destination, which should be carried out in periods no longer than two or three years.

It is also important for applicants to realise that the QualityCoast Team is annually improving the indicator set in order to better cover up-to-date considerations about sustainability and relevant criteria, and to increase harmonisation with the global GSTC-D criteria and European ETIS indicators. This is why the score for particular criteria can change compared to two years ago even when the situation hasn't changed.

## GENERAL ASSESSMENT & COMMENTS

### General remarks

The QualityCoast Jury confirms that there is sufficient evidence to approve the QualityCoast Award 2016, and congratulates the applicant with the result.

This QualityCoast Award is a recognition for the high level of tourism quality and sustainability, in particular in terms of environment, local identity & cultural heritage and host community & safety.

### QualityCoast Award: validity and promotion

The validity of this QualityCoast Award is two years (24 months). You are entitled to display the QualityCoast flags, banners and flyers during this period, throughout your territory. The value of the QualityCoast Award for you as a sustainable tourism destination will highly increase if you are able to help make the QualityCoast Award better known among your inhabitants and visitors, through the flags, banners and flyers, and in your own publications, and website and social media.

### GENERAL JURY RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to maintain and improve this high level, the Jury would like to make the following general recommendations to all QualityCoast Destinations:

#### QualityCoast Committee

Developing and managing a destination sustainably requires structural active involvement and participation of all stakeholder groups in the destination. In order to ensure this is done consistently, the Jury recommends to establish a local QualityCoast Committee on order to provide a think-tank and discussion platform for sustainable tourism on the implementation of the QualityCoast Jury Recommendations. A local QualityCoast Committee could also help promote synergies between stakeholders and contribute to the prolongation of the QualityCoast Award within two years. Within a next QualityCoast application the Jury would like to see involvement of the Committee and also to see the work of the Committee reported.

Tasks of this Committee could be:

- To help establish a multi-year tourism strategy that is publicly available, is suited to its scale, that considers environmental, economic, social, cultural heritage, quality, health, and safety issues, and was developed with public participation;
- To help develop a system to monitor, publicly report, and respond to environmental, economic, social, and cultural heritage issues;
- To help monitor residents' aspirations, concerns, and satisfaction with tourism, to be regularly recorded and publicly reported.

We suggest that this Committee would represent:

- The local government (highest possible level),
- The local business sector;
- Independent expertise or NGO on nature conservation and management;
- Independent expertise or NGO on cultural heritage and landscape interests;
- Independent expertise or NGO on environmental issues.

## Norderney, Germany

	Overall (max. 10)	Sustainability Policy (max. 10)	Visible Sustainability (max. 10)
<b>NATURE</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>9.2</b>
1. NATURE & CONSERVATION	9.7	8.8	9.9
2. ACCESS, INFORMATION & EDUCATION	7.8	8.1	6.7
3. GREEN POLICIES	8.7	8.7	-
4. OPEN LANDSCAPES	9.0	10.0	8.5
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>9.3</b>
5. ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT	9.1	8.9	9.8
6. BLUE FLAGS & BEACHES	9.7	-	9.7
7. WATER MANAGEMENT	8.9	8.9	9.0
8. SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY	8.8	8.7	8.8
9. WASTE & RECYCLING	7.8	7.3	10.0
10. ENERGY & CLIMATE MITIGATION	8.3	7.9	10.0
11. CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION	8.0	8.2	7.8
<b>IDENTITY &amp; CULTURE</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>7.0</b>
12. CULTURAL HERITAGE	7.4	8.4	5.9
13. TERRITORY & TRADITION	7.7	8.3	7.0
14. LOCAL IDENTITY	8.0	-	8.0
<b>TOURISM &amp; BUSINESS</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>7.9</b>	<b>6.2</b>
15. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT	8.6	8.5	10.0
16. BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT	5.6	6.6	2.0
17. HOSPITALITY & SATISFACTION	9.6	9.6	9.5
<b>HOST COMMUNITY &amp; SAFETY</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>8.9</b>	<b>9.5</b>
18. FREEDOM & JUSTICE	9.0	9.0	-
19. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	9.0	9.0	9.0
20. HEALTH & SAFETY	9.1	8.8	10.0
<b>FINAL POINTS &amp; SCORE 2015</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>8.4</b>
Number of categories score 8 or more	3		
QualityCoast Award type	<b>GOLD</b>		

## DETAILED COMMENTS & OPINIONS

### NATURE

#### Considerations of weak and strong points

- Strong points
  - Nature is a strong point of Norderney. Not only is a large part of nature legally protected but also the landscape is protected to avoid landscape pollution.
  - Several new 'Thalasso platforms' have been established in the last years which give visitors an even better opportunity to experience nature and the North sea.
  - An information center with the focus on providing visitors with information on nature and conservation thereof has been established. The Jury appreciates the coming of this information center as more interactive source of information that provides visitors the opportunity to learn more and be more aware was recommended last time.
- Issues for improvement
  - Although there is a wide range of hiking and cycling paths, both functions are combined which may compromise safety and comfort during high season.
  - Although the information center does provide visitors with more in-depth conservation information, the information provided on the natural sites themselves could be improved.
  - A structural system to measure the impact of tourism on the natural sites is still missing
  - Adequate measures should be taken with regard to the large amount of rabbits that cause erosion in the dune area.

### RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JURY

The municipality is advised:

- To publish and provide guidelines for proper visitor behavior at sensitive natural sites in order to minimize adverse impacts and strengthen positive visitor behaviors. Such guidelines stimulate visitors to learn more and gain more appreciation.
- To monitor the environmental impact of tourism, conserve habitats, species, and ecosystems, and prevent the introduction of invasive species.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### Considerations of weak and strong points

- Strong points
  - The bathing water quality is very good (100% status "Excellent") and on almost all beaches waste separation is possible.
  - Most of the beaches have good facilities for disabled people.
  - The fact that there is more cooperation between the Municipality and the National Park is a good development. The fact that the Municipality is working on an even better cooperation is encouraged by the Jury.
  - In regards to traffic, two things are worth mentioning:
    1. active promotion of leaving the car on the mainland and not driving it on the island. Also cooperation together with Deutsche Bahn for getting people to the island by train in an affordable way (train passes). Only difficulty is with the ferry company: they in the end have the power to decide how many cars come to the island.
    2. in the center of town, only electric cars are allowed to avoid overcrowding and keep the center clean.
- Issues for improvement
  - Although private actors receive information when requested, they could be better and more actively informed about good environmental practices. E.g. by having a program to avoid water bottles in shops and/or restaurants.
  - There is no systematic way or management plan to protect environmentally sensitive sites
  - Some of the management plans (e.g. waste-) are outdated. The Jury would like to see them updated in order to keep up the good work.

### **RECOMMENDATION OF THE JURY**

- It is advised to actively encourage and support local enterprises to contribute to environmentally friendly practices. This can be done by creating more awareness but also by supporting certain sustainable events and providing information (events) on a regular basis.
- The Municipality could collaborate better with the National Park to monitor tourism and measure (potential) impacts of tourism on environmentally sensitive sites.
- Create or update some management plans that enhance good environmental practices on the island.

## **IDENTITY & CULTURE**

### Considerations of weak and strong points

- Strong points
  - Norderney has recognized the importance of historical buildings and is actively trying to keep the traditional character of the buildings (also by prohibiting much construction on the island)
  - The main cultural asset of Norderney revolves around Thalasso therapy. This is a strong point of the island and is communicated well to visitors. The Badehaus is of great quality and gives visitors a good insight into Thalasso therapy.
  - Several restaurants are improving their overall quality (both in the building itself as well as the menu, namely more modern) while still making use of local products.
- Issues for improvement
  - There is no active monitoring of the potential impact of the amount of visitors during high season on the island's ecology or on visitor experience.

## **RECOMMENDATION OF THE JURY**

- Information (or even promotion) of cultural heritage of Norderney could be improved; providing visitors with more information, background and guidelines would enhance appropriate behavior and general interest in these sites. Local information and involvement from inhabitants is recommended to play an important role in developing interpretive information.
- Since the amount of visitors in high season is very high, a system should be developed to monitor and also manage them. There should be a plan in order to manage possible increases in visitor numbers in upcoming years in order to avoid negative impacts as well as negative experiences by overcrowding of the National Park and the island in general. One suggestion would be to conduct a visitor and resident survey in high season (July-August) to gauge key topics such as opinions, behaviour and impacts.

## **TOURISM & BUSINESS**

### Considerations of weak and strong points

- Strong points:
  - There is a clear view on the economic contribution of tourism on the island and this is monitored well by a yearly report.
  - Visitor satisfaction is monitored elaborately and frequently
  - The focus in the tourism "strategy" is on improving quality instead of attracting more visitors
- Issues for improvement:
  - The fact that a multiyear development strategy / action plan is lacking was already identified in the previous jury rapport and is still absent
  - As indicated before, local inhabitants and (tourism related) businesses could be more actively involved in sustainability issues.
  - None of the (tourism) enterprises on Norderney has an eco-label.

### **RECOMMENDATION OF THE JURY**

- Although Norderney provided as reason for not having any eco-certifications that having a label shouldn't be a goal by itself, it does help monitoring and promoting sustainability of the island's private sector. Moreover, eco-certified enterprises could attract a different type of (German) visitors. With the increasing amount of visitors every year, the municipality wants to attract a more 'sustainable' visitor.
- To prepare a multi-year strategy for sustainable tourism that is publicly available, suited to its scale, that considers environmental, economic, social, cultural heritage, quality, health, and safety issues, and to be developed with public participation.
- Although sustainability is now addressed in different parts of the organisation, it would be useful to create an effective organisation, department, group, or committee responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism. This group has defined responsibilities for the management of environmental, economic, social, and cultural heritage issues.

The jury would still like to see a better cooperation between the private sector and the municipality of Norderney. Working together with the tourism sector could result in taking common action, possibly involving the public at large, in the field of:

- Green energy: e.g. switch to green energy; or generate electricity through solar panels or collectors;
- Low energy schemes and equipment;
- Water saving schemes and equipment; an example is designing a towel washing policy in hotels – and make sure it's implemented;
- Waste reduction;
- Waste separation to enable better recycling;
- Equal opportunities for men vs. women;
- Accessibility for guests with disabilities;
- Buy or use (source) local/regional, sustainable, and/or fair trade goods and services.

Especially for the first two, green energy and energy conservation, it is recommended to prepare a common action plan involving the municipality, business sector and residents, which has advantages in cost efficiency, effectiveness and publicity.

## **HOST COMMUNITY & SAFETY**

### Considerations of weak and strong points

- Strong points:
  - Unemployment rates are very low on Norderney, not only during the high season but also during low season.
  - There are several initiatives through which both visitors and inhabitants can contribute to public facilities (e.g. the hospital)
  - Norderney is a safe place for its inhabitants and visitors.
- Issues for improvement:
  - The jury still advises Norderney to support citizen and NGO participation in local policies in a more structural way, including specification of local government budget to support civil society involvement.
  - There is no specific crisis plan related to tourism, although the island is very much dependent and involved in tourism.

### **RECOMMENDATION OF THE JURY**

- Develop a specific plan / section of the plan devoted to tourism (enterprises) in the crisis plan.
- To monitor residents' aspirations, concerns, and also satisfaction with tourism, to be regularly recorded and publicly reported.