

QualityCoast Award 2016 Jury Report

St Eustatius
Dutch Caribbean



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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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What is QualityCoast?

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), 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 Assessment Platform.

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 (). Ranking lists are topped by the QualityCoast Policy Award winners, which 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-Benelux, 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:

- ❖ Have a good overall policy performance in sustainable tourism, mainly according to the Global Sustainable Tourism Council Destination Criteria, according to our [Standard](#).
- ❖ Offer sufficient touristic quality to visitors (mainly measured through an indicator set);
- ❖ Provide transparent information to residents and visitors (partly through our communication campaigns);
- ❖ Plans for improvement (according to the Recommendations of the International Award Jury).

The Award Standard is publicly available on www.qualitycoast.info.

The Award programme considers 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 2016 Award criteria on page 8.

Definitions of the criteria and a complete list of indicators can be found on the QualityCoast Assessment Platform.

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 online (self) assessment & reporting system. The system consists of criteria on policy issues following the Green Destinations standard¹, and indicators to measure quality and performance. For the Policy criteria, destinations are asked to tick 'yes' or 'no' for each criterion following detailed guidance, and to provide more motivation or upload evidence files as requested.

In addition to the Policy criteria, a detailed Indicator Report is part of the assessment, containing around 100 quantitative indicators on destination quality and sustainability issues. Some indicators are already given by the system based on existing databases and GIS data, and some of these can be reviewed by the applicant. Reviewed values need to be accepted by an auditor before they become effective as input to the destination's ratings.

Evaluation

All information provided through the Online Assessment System (criteria and indicators rates) is evaluated and assessed by the QC Secretariat. The Secretariat involves (or hires the services of) a local expert, as a 3rd 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.

Scoring and Rating

The Secretariat and the Jury assign scores to all Policy (Green Destinations Standard) criteria, ranging from 0 to 2:

- "0" meaning non-compliance (or not sufficient motivation/information/evidence provided)
- "1" meaning partial compliance, or compliance expected in the very near future (e.g. policy is being drafted, there is evidence that this is being executed) of any quality (or no information provided for an indicator);
- "2" indicating full compliance for a criterion.

For the Policy Criteria, a (1-10) score per theme (Nature, Environment, Culture etc.) is calculated based on the scores and weight factors of its criteria. The total of these scores gives the Sustainability Policy Compliance Score (A).

¹ This standard is recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) to comply with globally agreed requirements for destination sustainability (GSTC-D).

The indicator values are scaled (linear or non-linear) to a 1-10 score, where the best performing destination in the database scores a 10, and the worst a 1. Aggregated indicator scores give thematic ratings for Sustainability Evidence (B1) and Destination Quality (B2).

To the above mentioned Scores (A), (B1) and (B2), a Certification Status score² (4) is added, which combined form the Total Rating (1-10).

Assessment Results

The Jury issues this Jury Report with a complete list of criteria scores and with suggestions for further improvement. For successful applicants, the Jury report as well as the above-mentioned ratings will be published. No public reference will be made about unsuccessful applications.

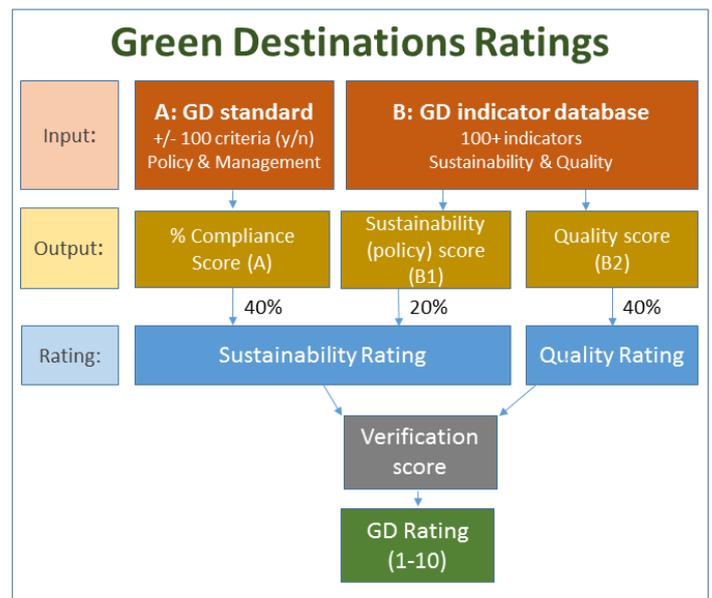


Figure 1. Green Destinations / QualityCoast Ratings

Successful applicants become QualityCoast Destinations

Applicants who meet the score threshold will be invited to an international event, 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 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.

The QualityCoast Team, in close collaboration with Green Destinations, 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 themes can change compared to two years ago even though the situation has not changed.

² Certification Status score defines the level of verification the Policy Standard criteria assessment. 15 core criteria expert-verified = 4 points; all criteria expert-verified = 8 points; on-site audit = 10 points. QualityCoast on-site assessed applicants receive thus 10 points.

GENERAL ASSESSMENT & COMMENTS

Overall Remark

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

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

QualityCoast Award: validity and promotion

The validity of this QualityCoast Award is two years (24 months), from the date indicated in the Award Certificate. 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 "green" 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:

Stakeholder Committee

The Jury recommends to establish a local Stakeholder Committee on order to provide a think-tank and discussion platform for sustainable tourism on the implementation of the QualityCoast Jury Recommendations. A local Stakeholder 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.

SCORE CARD ST EUSTATIUS

	Overall (max. 10)	Sustainability Policy (max. 10)	Visible Sustainability (max. 10)
NATURE	7.7	7.4	8.2
1. NATURE & CONSERVATION	7.4	6.3	7.8
2. ACCESS, INFORMATION & EDUCATION	7.1	6.8	8.0
3. GREEN POLICIES	7.4	7.4	-
4. OPEN LANDSCAPES	9.3	10.0	9.0
ENVIRONMENT	5.0	4.5	6.4
5. ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT	6.8	6.2	9.5
6. BLUE FLAGS & BEACHES	8.7	-	8.7
7. WATER MANAGEMENT	4.9	5.3	2.0
8. SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY	2.0	2.0	2.0
9. WASTE & RECYCLING	4.4	4.9	2.6
10. ENERGY & CLIMATE MITIGATION	2.9	3.5	0.6
11. CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION	5.8	3.3	8.8
IDENTITY & CULTURE	7.9	7.0	8.7
12. CULTURAL HERITAGE	7.9	7.0	9.0
13. TERRITORY & TRADITION	7.5	7.0	8.0
14. LOCAL IDENTITY	8.7	-	8.7
TOURISM & BUSINESS	5.8	5.6	6.8
15. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT	6.1	5.8	10.0
16. BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT	5.5	6.1	3.0
17. HOSPITALITY & SATISFACTION	5.6	3.3	9.0
HOST COMMUNITY & SAFETY	8.4	7.9	9.7
18. FREEDOM & JUSTICE	8.9	8.9	-
19. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	7.8	5.2	10.0
20. HEALTH & SAFETY	8.4	7.8	9.0
FINAL POINTS & SCORE 2016	6.8	6.3	7.9
Number of categories score 8 or more	1		
QualityCoast Award type	Bronze		

DETAILED COMMENTS & OPINIONS

NATURE & LANDSCAPE

Considerations of weak and strong points

- **Strong points**

- Statia's national parks provide for adequately protected marine & terrestrial areas: the reefs remain largely intact; the Quill (crater) contains an impressive tropical and elfin forest and species are well protected and thriving (e.g. turtles, sharks, conch and Lesser Antillean Iguana). Export of natural heritage is regulated by law.
- The marine and terrestrial parks use a tag system to collect the user fees from tourists, which is working quite well. Diving is only allowed with one of the island's dive schools allowing a large degree of control on visitor behaviour.
- STENAPA works closely together with the 3 dive schools – being in close proximity from each other is conducive to close cooperation.
- STENAPA organises local education and awareness activities (e.g. Junior Ranger programme), and the local population seems relatively conducive to nature conservation (little illegal harvesting of protected species going on).
- Wageningen University provides detailed in-depth research and monitoring – stored at an easily accessible place: Dutch Caribbean Biodiversity Database - www.dcbd.nl .
- Invasive Exotic Species such as the Green Iguana, Lionfish and seagrass variety are a threat but this is relatively controlled.
- Use and conservation of the (open) landscape is regulated in the island's spatial plan and Oranjestad's cliff is protected per ordinance.
- STENAPA organises programmes for schools, a Summer School Programme, and a Junior Ranger Programme – contributing to local awareness on environmental and ecological sustainability.

- **Issues for improvement**

- STENAPA has the mandate to enforce conservation regulations (terrestrial, marine), but (currently) no capacity to execute enforcement (although training of a special law enforcer (BOA) is planned).
- The oil terminal with continuous anchoring of tankers within the park boundaries is in stark contrast with the natural environment of the island (elsewhere tankers usually have to 'drift').
- Roaming animals are impacting the terrestrial and marine ecosystems. Ordinances and measures have been taken to combat the problem but they have been of limited effect keep posing a threat to biodiversity, marine health (soil degradation, runoff of nutrients and sediments), and public safety (cliff erosion and road safety).
- The issue of 'Invasive exotic species' is currently not a point of attention during immigration at the airport, and to a lesser extent at the harbour. The invasive Colorita plant is not well controlled.
- Although research and monitoring is regularly done by several institutes such as Imares and WUR, CNSI there is a need for common dialogue with STENAPA about a concerted research agenda that serves research needs of both STENAPA and the institutes.
- There are signs of uncared property (both farmland and land designated for housing) and undivided property both inside and outside the town's historic centre. These spatial planning issues-should be solved and applicable rules and regulations to this issue should be applied.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE JURY

- Implement the planned training of park rangers to carry out enforcement tasks.
- Develop (preferably in collaboration with Saba and Bonaire) a code of conduct for tourists and (dive) operators to minimise their effect on nature and environment.
- Develop a monitoring system to adequately keep track of tourism impacts on nature in the Marine Park and in the terrestrial parks (The Quill, Northern Hills). Even though numbers are low, current baseline data is vital to measure impact of future growth in tourist numbers.
- Endeavour that STENAPA and research institutes collaboratively agree on a concerted research agenda – especially for marine conservation issues.
- On such a small island, (open) space is a scarce resource. Therefore, it is advised to be vigilant for unnecessary urban sprawl. Signals that land assigned for agriculture or housing, but not used as such by the owners (or uncared for), should be adequately followed up upon. Undivided property – leaving land and any structures uncared for both in and outside the historic centre, should be solved and relevant rules and regulations to this issue should be applied.
- Ecological degradation by feral animals is a pressing issue. Regulations have been developed but it should be carefully monitored whether these, and their enforcement, are adequate and effective in combatting the issue and truly reduce the negative ecological effects (such as erosion, run-off and the impact on flora and fauna). Collaborate with Bonaire and other destinations with similar issues to share experiences and collaboratively develop (education / awareness) projects.
- The introduction of exotic invasive species is not actively prevented; it is recommended to develop guidelines and place at airport and port signs about what should be done to prevent potentially invasive species. QualityCoast will be able to provide tools in collaboration with the International Institute of Animal Ethics.

ENVIRONMENT

Considerations of weak and strong points

- **Strong points**

- The newly created waste separation facility has paved the way for effective waste management in the near future.
- Both recreational and drinking water are in general of high quality standards.
- The current solar plant is generating 25-45% of the island's energy needs, and an extra planned 2nd phase has the potential to have the island run entirely on solar energy.
- Environmental risks from the oil company NuStar are well monitored and inspected.
- Statia is a very quiet island with little contamination of noise and light.
- Several initiatives e.g from STENAPA and Mega D Youth Foundation provide environmental education programmes.

- **Issues for improvement**

- Communication
 - o Little information towards the community on environmental issues
 - How to save energy
 - How to save water
 - How to reduce waste.
 - o Contradictory interests in resource consumption (Statia's power and water company needs *more* consumption in order to break-even financially, campaigns to *reduce* consumption are not in their interest.
- Water
 - o There is a significant discharge / runoff of nutrients (ammonium, phosphate, nitrate, nitrate) measured by CNSI in the island's coastal waters. Causes are likely to be related to:
 - The absence of a sewage system and treatment plant (all household sewage is contained in septic tanks and drains into the soil); some hotels discharge directly to the sea: STENAPA reports on it and Health department talks with the hotels but no real change is happening at the moment.
 - The desalination plant (which filters the nutrients out of nutrient-rich ground water just in-land; and discharges filtered residues into sea) and the
 - Stock animals (much feed is imported).
- Waste & Recycling
 - o Up till now all the island's waste has been buried in landfills. The current landfill is located in close proximity of a turtle nesting beach. Even when the waste management facility is operational, this is likely to continue straining the local environment of these landfills.
 - o Continuous use of plastic bottles whereas alternatives (good tap water, filters) are available.
- Climate resilience
 - o According to Alterra Report 2081 Climate change effects on the biodiversity of the BES islands (2010), the elfin forests of both Saba and St. Eustatius will mainly suffer from the general increase in temperature that will drive them uphill, but will also be threatened by higher occurrence of weather extremes like droughts and hurricanes, invasive species and probably by a higher fire risk in the lower regions. The combination of these factors will make the forest extremely vulnerable.
- Mobility
 - o Although the island is relatively suitable for electric driving (short distances, little, few hills), and low-impact mobility was incentivised by the local government with an import tax exemption for low-emission cars, this did not have the desired effect and was abandoned. Hence currently there is no policy to support electric mobility (cars, scooters, bicycles).

RECOMMENDATION OF THE JURY

- Address small-scale environmental risks e.g. by implementing / enforcing regulations on car wrecks.
- Water supply and discharge
 - Implement the planned solution (CNSI) for erosion and top-soil runoff onto the reefs.
 - Develop solution for waste water. E.g. require any new (tourism) development to treat its waste water (<http://www.wageningenur.nl/en/show/Zero-nutrient-discharge-and-total-reuse-of-nutrients.htm>).
 - Monitor water quality in the Bay (collaborate with CNSI who already initiated this) especially to identify and address human / tourism induced contamination.
 - Water supply: take measures to capture the fresh water and prevent it from running into the sea (infiltration systems – project lined up, follow through!).
- Develop stronger mechanisms to avoid, reduce, re-use and recycle waste, for example ban on plastic bags and cups, styrofoam food packaging etc. and campaign to drink (filtered) tap water in stead of bottled water.
- Educate community and tourists to conserve resources and reduce/separate waste.
- Following the 2nd phase of Solar plant; research more alternative energy sources (ocean heat; airport runway) and strive for 100% green energy production.
- Green mobility can be promoted by
 - facilitating electric driving (charging network); electric cycling
 - stimulate sales of clean cars with tax benefits
- Give the good example as government and Tourism Department:
 - Use clean(er) modes of transport
 - Apply energy efficient street lighting, starting at tourist sites (boulevard etc)
 - Use energy efficient approaches to construction and maintenance of buildings
 - For example in a new projected airport terminal, apply all the concepts of sustainable constructions regarding e.g.
 - Cooling (design, building materials)
 - Energy (solar powered?)
 - Water usage (e.g. waterless urinoirs – see airport Curacao)
 - Waste water (connection with Kloaka system?)
 - Waste recycling and reduction of plastic waste (no plastic bags, food packaging etc)
- Study local effects of climate change and develop policy/strategy towards possible solutions such as managing the free roaming animals, let natural vegetation regenerate and/or actively work on reforestation, and manage run-off of sediments (and nutrients) towards coastal coral reefs. What are the implications of climate change for continuing to develop the Lower town Area?

IDENTITY & CULTURE

Considerations of weak and strong points

- **Strong points**

- Statia has a very strong 'sense of place' to it, thanks to its evocative history and the beautifully restored town centre, museum and many monuments (Fort Oranje) on the island. Also under water the archaeological resources (ship wrecks) are of high quality.
- The built cultural heritage is relatively well protected in the island's spatial plan and ordinances.
- All archeological sites are marked and protected in the Spatial Development Plan.
- The spatial plan has a documented inventory of monumental buildings.
- Oranjestad's historic core has official status of protected city view (beschermd stadsgezicht)
- There is increased attention to the island's living heritage in the frame of the UNESCO inventory of intangible heritage.
- Tourism impact on culture is positive: tourists value the culture highly which has a positive effect on the protection of the island's cultural heritage. For cruise ship groups traditional performances are staged to the tourists, invigorating the local awareness.
- Initiatives such as New Challenges Foundation and Community Tourism project have created 6 new tours, including community training; Mega D Youth Foundation provides living culture (music) programmes and cultural education programmes for the youth.

- **Issues for improvement**

- The regulations laid down in the Spatial Development Plan to protect built heritage and archaeological sites have limited enforcement – the planning office is not always adequately consulted/informed in about spatial development (plans) and there is not always sufficient capacity to enforce the regulations and go after offenders.
- There is no regulation in the WOL-BES (law for Bonaire, St Eustatius and Saba) to protect export of cultural/archaeological heritage and artefacts. Tourists are actually motivated to take blue beads home as souvenirs.
- Some of the historic buildings owned by government require more maintenance.
- Sufficient (young) trained and motivated people to do the interpretation of cultural heritage and run the developed community tours at a sufficiently high level.
- Although initiatives are set up to keep intangible heritage (music, dance, crafts) alive, it is not part of a structured programme
- Undivided property – in the old town many lots remain uncared for because it is owned by many family members, who do not want to sell. Regulations for expropriation are in place but rarely applied.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE JURY

- Increasing the capacity of the Planning Bureau and law enforcers to address spatial development issues that affect recognised cultural heritage would enable more effective implementation of the regulations that are in place.
- Addressing the issue of undivided abandoned property (by law enforcement) will (further) enhance the quality and (touristic) value of the historic town.
- Cultural and archaeological artifacts (such as blue beads) can be better protected e.g. in a local ordinance if BES law does not provide sufficient protection.
- Since culture is one of the island's main comparative advantages, it would be sensible to continue building on the existing initiatives and put together a (strong) coordinated programme around cultural tourism product, for example:
 - Promote intangible heritage (Mascarades, Kili Kili Brass band, traditional sports)
 - Promote the production of local, authentic handcraft souvenirs
 - Collaborate with STENAPA to engage the public also in the cultural aspects of natural sites, such as the Northern Hills (which is rather a cultural landscape)
 - Marketing towards existing (diving) tourists
- More awareness and education and general awareness raising about the relevance and importance of Stavian culture (tangible and intangible) is likely to increase the islander's interest in engaging in cultural tourism.

TOURISM & BUSINESS

Considerations of weak and strong points

- **Strong points**

- A process has been initiated to develop a Tourism Masterplan in collaboration with Wageningen University.
- With the Green Destinations assessment, a sustainability management system has been initiated allowing St Eustatius to monitor and improve on key sustainability issues.
- Involvement of stakeholders in tourism development matters is naturally quite strong in such small communities and an (unofficial) group composed of a range of stakeholders is already put together to support implementing the Green Destinations Sustainability Management System.
- The island's 'green destination' branding is well developed.
- Tourism on Statia knows hardly any seasonality, making tourism a relatively steady economic activity throughout the year.

- **Issues for improvement**

- Although there is communication with, and involvement of stakeholders; there is no structural dialogue on tourism development and management with a complete group of stakeholders.
- Financing Destination Management through the current practice of collecting room tax through the accommodation providers is not yet optimised.
- Basic tourism data such as leisure arrivals and occupancy rates from the accommodations is not available.
- Government general interest in 'green' issues is not present yet on all levels, and government procedures regarding e.g. requests for permits and investments are reported to be (unnecessarily) lengthy. This provides for a limited 'enabling environment' for (private sector) tourism development; while transport (airlift) and accommodation (room capacity) require much needed investment if tourism in the destination is to become a more important economic pillar of the Statian economy.
- There are limited incentives and support towards the tourism sector on environmental issues, for example regarding saving energy; reducing greenhouse gas emissions, saving water consumption, reducing and recycling waste (water).
- There is limited data available on visitor characteristics and motivation; but the exit survey currently in development together with the other BES islands and CBS will respond to this need.
- Accessibility of the island and its attractions for disabled residents and visitors is limited.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE JURY

- Establish a structural tourism stakeholder platform or feedback group, with representation of all stakeholder groups (including the Stavian community at large), which regularly comes together to discuss issues such; and let this serve as input for strategic planning and decision making whilst increasing local support for these decisions.
- Adequately assess the environmental impact of projected growth in tourism arrivals and take the required measures to avoid negative impacts on nature, environment, cultural and social fabric of the the island.
- Particularly, thoroughly review cruise tourism cost-benefits on St Eustatius, before promoting more cruise boat arrivals. Take into account the perspective of residents, shop owners, dive operators and stay-over tourists: will they come back if cruise boats (even small) regularly call at Statia? Take into account infrastructure development needed (e.g the current pier is not suited to serve mid-sized ships).
- If tourism growth is concluded to be a sustainable solution for the island's development goals, address the recurring issue of (lack of) airlift, accommodation capacity and service quality. Promote more sustainable modes of transport to reach the island (e.g. ferry service to St Maarten, Puerto Rico, St Kitts).
- More efficient application of the tax regime would consolidate the (financial) position of the Tourism Development Foundation and greatly enhance their (sustainability) investment opportunities.
- It is recommended that STDF initiates a process to promote and support the sector in adopting sustainability standards for their operations (technical and financial) – e.g. using more resource-efficient installations and appliances, or develop a code of practice for tour operators and guides to minimise negative, and maximise positive impacts of the business conduct.
- Improve tourism monitoring by operating the planned tourist exit survey as soon as possible.

HOST COMMUNITY & SAFETY

Considerations of weak and strong points

- **Strong points:**

- Regarding respect for human rights and 'equal opportunities' Statia scores well.
- The Statian population has been well-involved in the development of the Strategic Development Plan.
- Several initiatives have promoted the tourism to benefit / empower the local community. For example STDF and New Challenges Foundations developed:
 - o Tour guide trainings
 - o Homestay programme (now 2 active homestays)
 - o Community Tourism programme (6 new tours in various fields – agriculture, culinary, historical)
 - o Tour directors (organise trips and tours; outbound/inbound)
 - o Arts & Crafts training
- Mega D Youth Foundation is involving youth in community project and training in customer service, agriculture, care, environmental education, cultural education.
- There is adequate health and safety policy e.g. in relation to food safety, crises and disaster management.

- **Issues for improvement**

- The established tourism services (homestay, community tours) are not yet of adequate and continuous level – more (entrepreneurship) training is needed.
- General customer service level on Statia is not yet of sufficient level, e.g. compared to Saba.
- The local economy is heavily reliant on imports; and in the tourism supply chain key products such as food & beverages; arts & crafts are very hard to source locally as there is hardly any local production of F&B and crafts.
- There is no structural or coordinated discussion between producers and the tourist industry about exactly what could be beneficial to produce for the tourists.
- Although some incidental research has been done, there is no structural measuring or monitoring of impacts from tourism towards the Statian community.
- Measuring and monitoring key data such as community participation in the private sector is hard because people are very reluctant to share information such as turnover, arrivals etc.
- The prevention of plagues and mosquito transmitted diseases such as dengue, Chikungunya and Zika remains a challenge with the many car wrecks along the roads and in gardens, uncared for structures and buildings, and other sources such as car tyres.
- Currently there is no policy on hazardous waste. After the waste management plan and incineration plant is operational this will be better structured.
- Workers are not always aware of their rights can be better promoted and LGBT rights are not yet fully integrated in school curricula.

RECOMMENDATION OF THE JURY

- Although some economic impact studies have been carried out, more structural research about the economic effects of tourism on the local economy, and how to maximise them, should be carried out in order to ensure tourism's contribution to the islanders is optimised.
- Continue entrepreneurship / tourism service training to increase quality of the community tours products to a level that they can be adequately offered to the market.
- Promising projects to revitalise the agricultural sector using new innovative approaches ('aquaponics' for example) deserve attention and adequate follow-up.
- Empower Statians to become producers of local goods (agriculture- meat, fruits & vegetables; handcrafts) and services (hospitality- accommodation, restaurant, guiding etc.).
- STDF can help promoting (more) locally made souvenirs, e.g. to visitors of the tourist office.
- Improve the connection between educational programmes and labour market needs, as already initiated with ROA and the tourism sector.
- Improve employees' awareness on their rights and include LGBT rights in curricula at schools.
- Monitor Statians' satisfaction with destination management and the direction tourism is planned to go.

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