



# **NATURE-BASED WELLNESS TOURISM**

Discover nature for health and well-being

## **D2.1. Report on Sustainable N-B-Well concept, organisation/destination profile and good practices**



**Title:**

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“The aim of the project is to boost the sustainability of South Baltic tourism by connecting SMEs to innovative nature-based wellness routes for health enhancement.”

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## 1 Background and Rationale of the N-B-Well Project

The South Baltic Area (SBA) is characterised by a rich combination of natural landscapes, coastal environments, forests, cultural heritage and small-scale communities [1]. These blue and green assets represent a significant yet still underutilised potential for the development of sustainable tourism. At the same time, the tourism sector in the SBA faces several structural challenges, including seasonality, fragmented service offerings, pressure on natural resources, and the need for stronger resilience following the Covid-19 pandemic. These challenges call for new tourism concepts that balance economic viability with environmental responsibility and social wellbeing.

In recent years, growing attention has been given to nature-based wellness tourism as a response to changing tourist demands. Visitors increasingly seek experiences that support physical, mental and emotional wellbeing, are rooted in authentic local contexts, and contribute positively to nature and local communities. This trend has been further accelerated by post-Covid tourism patterns, where health, safety, meaningful experiences and proximity to nature have become central travel motivations. For the South Baltic Area, this development represents an opportunity to reposition the region as a coherent destination for nature-based wellness, while at the same time strengthening local SMEs and destinations.

The N-B-Well (Nature-Based Wellness Tourism) project builds on this context [2]. The project aims to develop a common framework for nature-based wellness tourism across the SBA by integrating natural and cultural assets, sustainable business practices and collaborative destination development [3].

N-B-Well seeks to move beyond isolated tourism products and instead support the creation of cross-border thematic routes, experiences and networks that enhance wellbeing while respecting ecological limits and local values.

The rationale for the N-B-Well project is threefold:

**First**, there is a clear need for a shared conceptual understanding of nature-based wellness tourism that can be applied consistently across different countries, destinations and types of SMEs. Previous initiatives, such as the SB-Well project [4], have demonstrated the value of a common language and framework for wellbeing tourism, but also highlighted the need for further development with a stronger focus on sustainability, business models and long-term implementation.

**Second**, SMEs play a central role in delivering nature-based wellness experiences, yet many lack the tools and frameworks needed to systematically integrate sustainability, wellbeing and market demand into their service offerings.



The N-B-Well project addresses this gap by developing clear criteria, profiles and guidance that support SMEs and destinations in assessing their readiness, strengthening their business models and aligning their services with nature-based wellness principles.

**Third**, the project responds to the strategic objectives of the Interreg South Baltic Programme by promoting sustainable regional development, cross-border cooperation and innovation in tourism. By linking concept development (WP2) with piloting of routes (WP3), networking (WP4) and branding and promotion (WP5), N-B-Well aims to create lasting value beyond the project period. The development of a shared N-B-Well concept and associated profiles is a key prerequisite for subsequent activities related to certification, branding, marketing and the implementation of thematic routes.

This report, Deliverable 2.1 – Final Concept and Good Practices Report, contributes to this overall ambition by consolidating the results of the analytical and co-creative work carried out in Work Package 2. It provides a common foundation for understanding what N-B-Well stands for, how it can be applied in practice by SMEs and destinations, and how it supports the broader goals of sustainable, resilient and wellbeing-oriented tourism development in the South Baltic Area.









## 1.1 Link to Interreg South Baltic Programme priorities and project objectives

The N-B-Well project is closely aligned with the strategic priorities and objectives of the Interreg South Baltic Programme, which aims to strengthen sustainable regional development, cross-border cooperation and innovation across the South Baltic Area. The programme emphasises the need to support economic resilience, environmental sustainability and social wellbeing, particularly in sectors such as tourism, where regional cooperation and shared natural assets play a decisive role.

Tourism in the South Baltic Area is characterised by a high proportion of small and medium-sized enterprises, strong seasonal patterns and a close dependency on natural and cultural resources. These characteristics make the sector both vulnerable and well suited for targeted innovation. Within this context, the Interreg South Baltic Programme highlights the importance of developing new, sustainable tourism models that contribute to balanced regional growth, reduce pressure on sensitive environments and create value for local communities throughout the year.

The N-B-Well project directly addresses these priorities by promoting nature-based wellness tourism as a strategic development pathway for the region. By building on the South Baltic Area's blue and green assets, the project supports tourism development that is environmentally responsible, socially embedded and economically viable. The focus on nature-based wellness aligns with the programme's ambition to foster sustainable use of natural resources while enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of the region as a tourism destination.





From a programme perspective, N-B-Well contributes to the objective of strengthening cross-border cooperation by establishing a shared conceptual framework for nature-based wellness tourism across participating countries. Rather than developing isolated national approaches, the project aims to create a common understanding of principles, criteria and quality standards that can be applied consistently by SMEs and destinations throughout the South Baltic Area. This common framework is a key prerequisite for joint branding, coordinated marketing and the development of cross-border thematic routes in later work packages.

The structure of the N-B-Well project reflects this logic:

Work Package 2 focuses on developing the conceptual and analytical foundation, including a shared definition of nature-based wellness, SME and destination profiles, and the identification of good practices.

These outputs provide the knowledge base required to ensure that subsequent activities in Work Packages 3, 4 and 5 are coherent, targeted and aligned with both market realities and sustainability objectives. In this way, this report serves as a strategic bridge between analysis and implementation within the overall project design.

The project objectives are further aligned with the Interreg South Baltic Programme's emphasis on innovation and capacity building. N-B-Well does not introduce a completely new tourism product, but rather supports SMEs and destinations in rethinking and enhancing existing services through the lens of nature-based wellness and sustainability. By integrating a sustainable business model perspectives and practical criteria, the project aims to strengthen the long-term viability of tourism businesses and reduce dependency on short-term or purely volume-based tourism strategies.

In addition, the project responds to the programme's focus on resilience and post-crisis recovery. By encouraging tourism offers that are rooted in nature, wellbeing and authenticity, N-B-Well supports diversification of tourism products and contributes to extending the tourism season, particularly in less visited areas. This approach is consistent with the programme's goal of fostering more robust and adaptable regional economies that can better respond to external shocks and changing visitor expectations.

Overall, the N-B-Well project contributes to the Interreg South Baltic Programme by translating strategic priorities into a concrete, regionally adapted tourism concept. Deliverable 2.1 plays a central role in this process by defining the conceptual and organisational foundations needed to ensure that nature-based wellness tourism in the South Baltic Area develops in a coordinated, sustainable and programme-aligned manner.





## 1.2 Purpose, scope and delimitations of Deliverable 2.1

Work Package 2, N-B-Well Concept and Certification, provides the analytical and conceptual foundation for the N-B-Well project. The overall objective of WP2 is to develop a shared understanding of nature-based wellness tourism in the South Baltic Area and to define the key elements required to support sustainable implementation across SMEs and destinations. WP2 establishes the conceptual, organisational and methodological basis upon which subsequent work packages build, including route development, networking, branding and educational activities.

Deliverable 2.1, Report on Sustainable N-B-Well concept, organisation/destination profile and good practices, constitutes a core output of Work Package 2 and provides the conceptual and analytical foundation for the subsequent work packages of the N-B-Well project. The primary purpose of this deliverable is to establish a shared understanding of nature-based wellness tourism in the South Baltic Area and to translate this understanding into a structured and applicable framework for SMEs and destinations.

The report serves three interrelated purposes.

**First**, it defines and operationalises the N-B-Well concept by clarifying its key characteristics, principles and sustainability dimensions. This includes integrating insights from surveys and qualitative interviews, as well as linking the concept to sustainable business thinking. By doing so, Deliverable 2.1 ensures that nature-based wellness tourism is not treated as a vague or purely experiential idea, but as a concrete and applicable tourism concept aligned with sustainability objectives.

**Second**, the deliverable provides an overview of SME and destination profiles relevant to nature-based wellness tourism in the South Baltic Area. This profiling contributes to a better understanding of the organisational context in which the N-B-Well concept is expected to be implemented, including typical business structures, capacities and development conditions. The focus is on identifying common patterns and characteristics rather than on evaluating individual businesses.

**Third**, Deliverable 2.1 compiles and analyses selected good practices in nature-based wellness tourism across the participating countries. These good practices are informed by selected findings from the RAIT survey and secondary data analysis and are intended to illustrate how the N-B-Well concept may be reflected in practice, as well as to highlight transferable elements that can inspire other SMEs and destinations.

The scope of Deliverable 2.1 is explicitly limited to conceptual development, profiling and analysis. While the report provides strategic insights and practice-based examples, it does not include a detailed market and visitor profile analysis, which is addressed in a separate deliverable led by the Lead Partner. Similarly, the report does not develop certification systems or branding guidelines, which are covered in other work packages. Instead, Deliverable 2.1 functions as a knowledge base that informs and supports subsequent activities, including route development, networking, branding and educational materials.

Overall, Deliverable 2.1 acts as a bridging document between analysis and implementation. It establishes a common conceptual language and evidence base that enables coherent cross-border cooperation and ensures alignment between the project's analytical work and its practical outputs in later stages of the N-B-Well project.





### 1.3 Methodological approach and data basis

Deliverable 2.1 is based on a combination of desk research, project documentation, stakeholder input and selected results from the N-B-Well tourism market analysis. The methodological approach is primarily exploratory and concept-building, with the purpose of developing a shared understanding of Sustainable N-B-Well tourism and translating this into a framework relevant for SMEs and destinations in the South Baltic Area.

The report draws on four main sources of input.

**First**, it builds on project-internal documents, including the N-B-Well application and work package descriptions, which define the objectives, scope and expected outputs of Work Package 2. These documents provide the formal basis for the conceptual and analytical framing of Deliverable 2.1.

**Second**, the report uses desk research and selected literature on wellness tourism, nature-based tourism, sustainable tourism and relevant policy frameworks, including SDGs, IDGs and EU sustainability perspectives. This material supports the conceptual clarification of N-B-Well and the discussion of sustainability dimensions.

**Third**, the report incorporates selected findings from the RAIT survey report, N-B-WELL: Nature-Based Wellness Tourism Survey. The survey was conducted in spring 2025 as an online survey among adults in Lithuania, Poland, Germany, Denmark and Sweden who are interested in or engaged in nature-based wellness tourism. The total sample comprised 2,789 respondents, with more than 500 respondents in each country. According to the survey report, the sample is representative and allows for statistically significant conclusions.

**Fourth**, the report is informed by stakeholder engagement within the project, including workshops and dialogue with SMEs and other relevant actors. These inputs have been used to qualify the conceptual relevance and practical applicability of the N-B-Well framework.

The role of RAIT in this deliverable is supportive and selective. Detailed market analysis, visitor segmentation and country-level market insights belong primarily to Deliverable 2.2. In D2.1, RAIT findings are used only where they contribute directly to concept development, organisation/destination profiling and the broader analytical foundation for later project activities.

## 2. The Sustainable N-B-Well Concept

This chapter presents the conceptual foundation of Sustainable N-B-Well tourism in the South Baltic Area. Its purpose is to clarify what N-B-Well means in the context of this project and to establish a shared understanding that can support subsequent activities related to SME profiling, route development, networking, branding and educational materials.

The chapter first defines the Sustainable N-B-Well concept and then situates it within relevant sustainability perspectives.

Finally, it introduces sustainable business models, including the Sustainable Business Model Canvas (SBMC), as a practical reference framework for SMEs and destinations working with nature-based wellness tourism.

In this way, the chapter functions as a bridge between conceptual clarification and practical implementation in later work packages.





## 2.1 Definition of the Sustainable N-B-Well Tourism concept

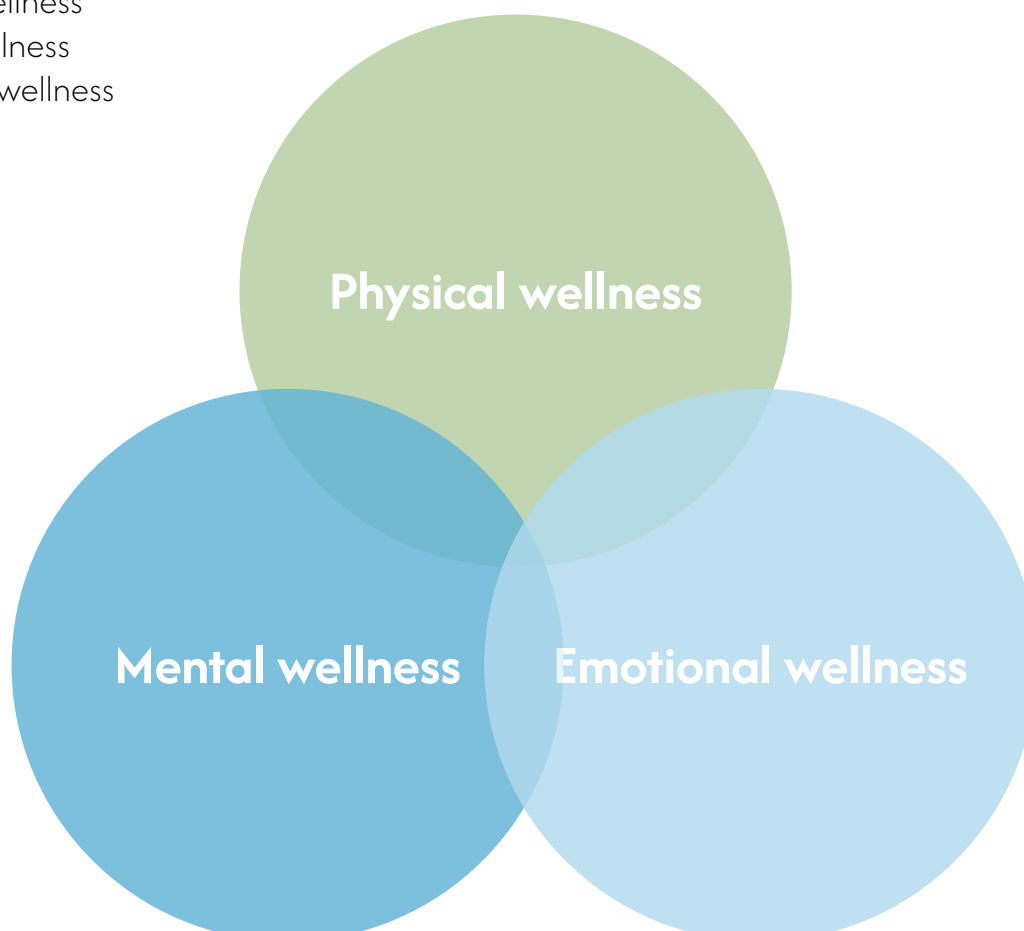
Nature-based wellness tourism is often used as a broad and flexible term. In the context of the N-B-Well project, however, there is a need for a more precise and operational definition that can be applied across countries, destinations and SMEs in the South Baltic Area. The purpose of this section is therefore to define the Sustainable N-B-Well concept in a way that is both conceptually clear and practically useful for subsequent project activities.

The examples below are intended to illustrate how the N-B-Well concept may be translated into concrete tourism experiences. They are indicative rather than exhaustive and are included to clarify the practical distinction between N-B-Well and more general tourism or wellness offers.

The Global Wellness Institute [5] defines wellness tourism as travel associated with the pursuit of maintaining or enhancing one's personal well-being. Wellness is not understood as a passive or static state, but rather as the active pursuit of activities, choices and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health [6]. Such a perspective is reflected in the broad definition of health introduced by the Constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO), where health is understood as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. [7]

Wellness comprises multiple dimensions. Within the N-B-Well project, the focus is placed on the following three dimensions:

- Physical wellness
- Mental wellness
- Emotional wellness



In order to develop a sustainable, nature-based wellness tourism concept, it is necessary to further clarify the notion of sustainable tourism in relation to nature-based wellness.

In its glossary, the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) states that:

“Sustainable tourism takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities. Sustainable tourism should make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity; respect the sociocultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to intercultural understanding and tolerance; ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socioeconomic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.”[8]



Furthermore, sustainable tourism should make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintain essential ecological processes, help conserve natural heritage and biodiversity, respect the sociocultural authenticity of host communities, and ensure viable, long-term economic operations that provide fairly distributed socio-economic benefits.

The N-B-Well concept emphasises the fundamental role of nature in both wellness and sustainability. The project draws on existing literature highlighting how nature-based activities connect individuals with nature and contribute to improved health and well-being. In addition, strong indications can be found in the UN Sustainable Development Goals and in relevant research showing that nature-based wellness can support sustainability through activities such as forest therapy, nature-integrated accommodation and eco-friendly wellness products. Consequently, the environmental and societal benefits of choosing nature-based activities are also addressed. These insights are derived from scientific literature as well as studies conducted by recognised organisations such as The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) has highlighted environmental stewardship as a key element of sustainable tourism development, with a focus on minimising negative environmental impacts while maximising local benefits through sustainable practices. [9].

The World Health Organization has published reports demonstrating how natural environments support physical and mental health, including stress reduction, increased physical activity, improved social cohesion and mitigation of pollution and heat.

Other studies referred to in this report also point to positive effects of nature connection on well-being, emotional balance and pro-nature behaviour. Together, these perspectives support the view that nature-based wellness tourism is not only about individual restoration, but can also be linked to broader environmental and social value.

Against this background, the N-B-Well project does not simply adopt a general definition of wellness tourism. Instead, it translates and operationalises that broader understanding within a specific South Baltic context. This means that the concept must be rooted more explicitly in natural environments, linked to local resources and communities, and aligned with sustainability principles relevant to SMEs, destinations and cross-border tourism development. In this way, the report moves from the broad wellness tourism field toward a more specific project definition of Sustainable N-B-Well.



In this report, Sustainable N-B-Well tourism is understood as a structured approach to tourism development that combines nature, well-being and sustainability.

This definition implies that N-B-Well is not limited to traditional wellness services, nor is it equivalent to general nature tourism. What distinguishes N-B-Well is the intentional integration of three dimensions:

### **A. Nature as a core resource, not just a backdrop**

Nature is not merely the setting for the tourism experience, but an active and meaningful part of the value proposition. This may include forests, coastlines, lakes, landscapes, biodiversity, local natural materials, seasonal rhythms and outdoor environments that support restoration, activation, reflection or recovery.

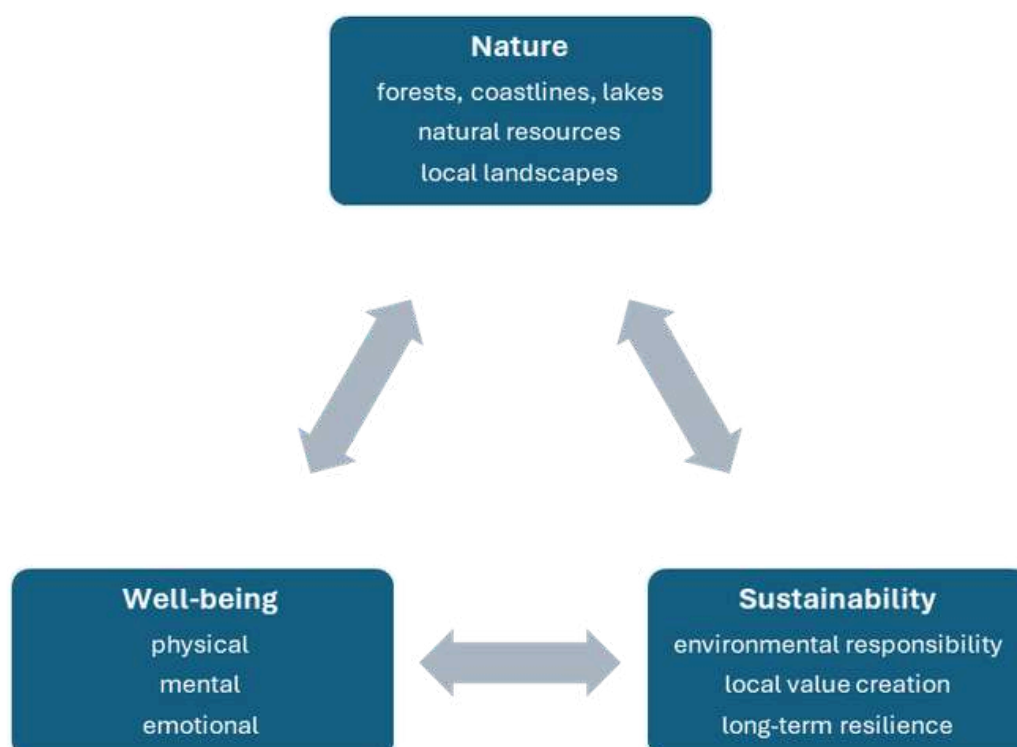
### **B. Well-being as the central purpose**

The experience should in a meaningful way support one or more dimensions of well-being. In the N-B-Well project, particular attention is given to:

- Physical well-being
- Mental well-being
- Emotional well-being

### **C. Sustainability as an integrated principle**

N-B-Well tourism should not only generate attractive visitor experiences; it should also be developed and delivered in ways that respect ecological limits, strengthen local value creation and support responsible business and destination development. This includes attention to environmental impact, social embeddedness and long-term viability for SMEs and destinations.





The concept can be further illustrated through the three route logics currently being developed in the project.

- **Fit by Nature** reflects the physical and activation-oriented dimension of N-B-Well, with examples such as guided hiking, kayaking, cycling, open-water swimming and other movement-based activities in nature.
- **Relax by Nature** reflects the restorative and comfort-oriented dimension, including sauna, mineral water bathing, massage, mud or peat rituals and other experiences based on calm, warmth and recovery.
- **Zen by Nature** reflects the reflective and inward-oriented dimension, including mindfulness walks, forest bathing, meditation, silence experiences, nature-based yoga and other activities that support presence, self-awareness and emotional balance.

Together, these route types show that N-B-Well is broad enough to include different types of tourism experiences, yet coherent because they all combine nature, well-being and sustainability in a structured way.

Based on this, N-B-Well should be understood both as a tourism concept and as a development framework. As a tourism concept, it helps describe and position a distinct category of experiences in the South Baltic Area. As a development framework, it helps SMEs, destinations and project partners assess whether an offer, a route element or a cooperation structure is aligned with the overall aims of the project.

To make the concept more concrete, N-B-Well experiences may include examples such as guided forest walks with reflection and local storytelling, coastal sauna and sea bathing with a wellness focus, eco-accommodation combined with slow food and nature immersion, mindfulness by the sea, herbal or natural treatment rituals, or nature-based retreats combining movement, relaxation and contemplation. By contrast, a standard hotel stay without a clear connection to nature, well-being or sustainability, or a high-impact activity focused only on adrenaline and entertainment, would not in itself qualify as N-B-Well.

The examples below are intended to illustrate how the N-B-Well concept may be translated into concrete tourism experiences. They are indicative rather than exhaustive and are included to clarify the practical distinction between N-B-Well and more general tourism or wellness offers.

### **Examples of N-B-Well experiences**

- Guided forest walk with reflection and local storytelling
- Coastal sauna and sea-bathing with wellness focus
- Eco-accommodation combined with slow food and nature immersion
- Guided kayaking or canoe experience combined with silence, wildlife observation and mindful presence
- Nature-based retreat with outdoor yoga, breathing exercises and locally rooted wellness rituals

### **Non-examples**

- A standard hotel stay with no clear link to nature, well-being or sustainability
- A high-impact outdoor activity focused only on adrenaline or entertainment
- A generic spa\* or wellness service delivered entirely indoors without connection to local natural assets
- A tourism offer that uses nature as a backdrop only, without integrating it into the experience or value proposition

\* “generic spa” refers to a standardised indoor wellness offer that is not explicitly rooted in local natural assets or in the integrated N-B-Well logic of nature, well-being and sustainability

The concept is intentionally broader than certification criteria and more specific than a general vision statement. It is meant to provide a common language for the project and a foundation for later activities in WP2, WP3, WP4 and WP5.

In this sense, the Sustainable N-B-Well concept is not the final operational tool, but the conceptual basis upon which profiling, good practices, route design, SME development and communication can build.



### **Practical example: a small N-B-Well tourism offer**

A small tourism business may apply the N-B-Well concept by combining local natural assets, well-being and sustainability in one coherent offer.

For example, a coastal accommodation provider could develop a two-day wellness package including a guided sunrise walk by the sea, a sauna and cold-water bathing experience, locally sourced healthy meals, and a digital detox element.

In this case, nature is not only a backdrop, but the core of the experience; well-being is supported through physical, mental and emotional restoration; and sustainability is reflected through local sourcing, small-scale operation and low-impact design.





### **The N-B-Well definition**

Sustainable N-B-Well refers to a structured approach to tourism development that combines nature, well-being and sustainability. It encompasses tourism experiences and services rooted in natural environments and local resources, designed to support physical, mental and emotional well-being, while contributing positively to environmental responsibility, social value creation and long-term economic resilience.



## **2.2 UN Sustainable Development Goals and Nature-Based Wellness**

The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals[10] (SDGs) were adopted in 2015 and officially came into force on 1 January 2016. They were unanimously endorsed by all 193 UN Member States, representing a global commitment to sustainable development. Tourism plays a significant role in this agenda, as the sector both impacts and contributes to multiple SDGs. From the perspective of the N-B-Well tourism concept, the following SDGs are considered particularly relevant.

### **SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being**

Nature-based wellness directly supports SDG 3, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all. Activities such as forest therapy, eco-spas and nature-based meditation support both mental and physical health, reduce stress and contribute to overall well-being.

### **SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth**

Tourism is one of the world's fastest-growing industries and a key driver of employment and economic activity. It promotes entrepreneurship and supports small and medium-sized enterprises. In alignment with SDG 8, a sustainable tourism concept should aim to create stable and decent employment, support local economies, promote locally produced goods and services, and respect local traditions and working conditions.

### **SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production**

Tourism can be resource-intensive, consuming water, energy and food while generating waste and emissions. In contrast, responsibly practiced wellness tourism often has a lower environmental footprint due to its focus on smaller-scale, low-impact activities. A sustainable tourism concept should therefore promote eco-friendly accommodation, energy efficiency, water conservation and reuse, waste reduction, recycling and responsible sourcing. Local food and product sourcing can further reduce carbon footprints while strengthening local economies and cultural traditions. Moreover, nature-based wellness tourism can raise awareness among visitors by embedding sustainable practices into the tourism experience and encouraging more responsible consumption patterns.

### **SDG 13 – Climate Action**

Tourism contributes to climate change through transport-related emissions and energy-intensive facilities. To address these impacts, a sustainable tourism concept should focus on low-carbon transport solutions, climate-friendly infrastructure and increased awareness among tourists regarding their environmental footprint.

### **SDG 14 – Life Below Water**

Tourism activities in coastal and marine environments, which are highly relevant for N-B-Well, can significantly affect marine ecosystems. Sustainable practices are therefore essential to preserve marine biodiversity. The N-B-Well concept aims to support marine conservation efforts, sustainable fishing practices and eco-tourism initiatives that educate visitors about ocean protection.





### SDG 15 – Life on Land

Many tourism activities take place in natural landscapes, which may face risks such as habitat degradation or biodiversity loss if not managed responsibly. The N-B-Well concept aligns with SDG 15 by emphasising respect for protected areas and promoting sustainable practices that prioritise biodiversity conservation.

### SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals

Achieving sustainable tourism development requires collaboration between public authorities, private businesses and local communities. The N-B-Well concept promotes cross-sector and cross-border partnerships, including cooperation between SMEs, DMOs, regional authorities and municipalities. The development of cross-border routes can be understood as practical manifestations of SDG 17.

Overall, the selected SDGs illustrate how tourism can contribute to sustainability by balancing economic benefits with environmental protection and social equity. The N-B-Well concept contributes to these goals primarily in an indirect manner, by supporting practices and business models that align with broader sustainability objectives.

At the operational level, the project relies on European Union sustainability requirements for SMEs, which are themselves rooted in the SDGs. For this reason, a mapping between the SDGs and relevant reporting frameworks is necessary, particularly in relation to voluntary sustainability reporting for SMEs (VSME), when assessing potential SMEs or formulating recommendations for DMOs.



Different sustainability frameworks must therefore be considered. Many SMEs are familiar with the concept of the triple bottom line based on the three Ps (people, planet, profit), while the SDGs are structured around five Ps (people, prosperity, planet, peace and partnership) and primarily address national and governmental levels. In contrast, European sustainability reporting standards, including the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) and the VSME framework, are structured around the ESG concept, focusing on Environmental, Social and Governance dimensions. The basic VSME module includes disclosure requirements related to environmental issues (e.g. energy use, greenhouse gas emissions, water consumption), social aspects (e.g. working conditions and social practices) and governance (e.g. ethics and corporate governance). These requirements are designed to be practical and feasible for SMEs. Consequently, the N-B-Well project uses an ESG-based reference framework tailored to SMEs rather than a pure 3P or 5P approach.





### 2.2.1 UN Inner Development Goals and Nature-Based Wellness

While the SDGs provide a widely recognized global framework for sustainable development, they do not explicitly address the personal abilities, qualities and skills required by individuals and organisations to contribute to these goals. This gap has led to the development of the Inner Development Goals[11](IDGs), an initiative that focuses on the internal capacities needed to navigate complexity, collaborate across differences and support sustainable action.

In the context of the N-B-Well project, the IDGs should be understood as a complementary perspective rather than as a formal operational framework for the project. They do not define N-B-Well in institutional or regulatory terms, but they help illuminate the more human and experiential dimensions of nature-based wellness tourism. In this sense, the IDGs are relevant because they offer a language for describing the inner capacities, attitudes and forms of awareness that many nature-based wellness experiences may support.

From the perspective of nature-based wellness, several IDG dimensions appear particularly relevant. Mindfulness and presence are closely related to activities such as forest bathing, meditation in nature and other slow, attentive forms of engagement with natural environments. Interconnectedness and compassion resonate with the idea that nature-based wellness is not only about individual recovery, but also about a deeper sense of connection to place, community and the natural world. Likewise, collaboration and community reflect the social dimension of many N-B-Well experiences, especially where local actors, hosts and visitors co-create meaningful and place-based experiences.

Seen in this light, the IDGs may be relevant on both the supply side and the demand side of N-B-Well. For SMEs and destinations, they can serve as an interpretive lens for designing experiences that support reflection, presence, authenticity and meaningful engagement with nature. For visitors, they may also help explain some of the deeper outcomes associated with nature-based wellness experiences, such as emotional balance, self-awareness, calmness and renewed connection. This is particularly relevant for offers that go beyond physical activity or passive relaxation and instead support more reflective or inward-oriented forms of well-being.

At the same time, it is important to keep the role of the IDGs proportionate within this report. The N-B-Well project is not built on the IDGs as a formal requirement, and the concept should not depend on familiarity with this framework.

Rather, the IDGs are included here because they add a useful conceptual layer to the understanding of how nature-based wellness may contribute not only to external sustainability goals, but also to inner capacities and forms of human development that support more sustainable behaviour over time.





### 2.2.2. Synergistic Impact – SDGs and IDGs

The SDGs and IDGs together provide a broader perspective on Sustainable N-B-Well. While the SDGs offer a framework for understanding the external sustainability dimensions of nature-based wellness tourism, the IDGs add a complementary perspective by highlighting the internal capacities and qualities that may support more sustainable behaviour and more meaningful tourism experiences.

In the context of N-B-Well, this combination helps connect outer and inner dimensions of sustainability. On the one hand, N-B-Well may contribute to broader goals related to health, responsible tourism, local value creation, partnerships and environmental responsibility. On the other hand, nature-based wellness experiences may also support qualities such as presence, reflection, connectedness and emotional balance, which are relevant for both visitors and providers.

“Taken together, the SDGs and IDGs supports a more holistic understanding of nature-based wellness tourism.”

However, within this report their role is primarily conceptual.

They are included to strengthen the understanding of N-B-Well as a sustainability-oriented tourism concept, not to establish a separate assessment framework.

The more operational SME-oriented perspective is addressed later through the European Union sustainability context and the use of ESG- and VSME-related reference points.

### 2.2.3 Definition from the European Union

The European Union defines sustainability as the capacity to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

“Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”[12]

Sustainability has been integrated into the EU’s legal framework and policy initiatives, closely aligned with the UN SDGs and the 1.5-degree Celsius target of the Paris Agreement (COP21). Relevant policy instruments include the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and the European Green Deal.





Within the EU context, sustainability is typically structured around three main dimensions, often expressed through the ESG framework[13]:

- **Environmental perspective** - protecting, preserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- **Social perspective** - promoting social well-being, reducing inequalities, fostering inclusiveness, and ensuring health, education and decent working conditions.
- **Governance/Economic perspective** - supporting long-term economic sustainability, financial stability and innovation.

Rooted in this balanced understanding of economic, environmental and social responsibility, Nature-Based Wellness aligns closely with the principles set out in the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD)[14]. This directive emphasises the responsibility of businesses, including those operating within tourism, to address climate change, biodiversity protection and social equity in both operations and reporting.

Nature-Based Wellness tourism represents a comparatively sustainable segment of the tourism sector by:

- **Environmental Responsibility:** Encouraging low-impact, eco-conscious activities that protect natural ecosystems, in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, which aims to restore and conserve Europe's natural heritage.
- **Social Responsibility:** Providing equitable access to wellness opportunities, benefiting local communities through sustainable tourism and respecting cultural traditions.
- **Governance/Economic Viability:** Supporting local economies through sustainable tourism models that minimise environmental impact while creating meaningful and stable employment opportunities.

Through this alignment, the N-B-Well concept positions itself within both global and European sustainability frameworks, ensuring coherence between international goals and practical implementation at SME and destination level.

## 2.3 Sustainable Business Models in N-B-Well

The N-B-Well concept is not limited to defining nature-based wellness in theoretical terms; it also requires a practical framework for how such services can be developed, delivered and scaled in a sustainable way. For this reason, sustainable business models play a central role in the N-B-Well project.

As highlighted by the project partners, a business model describes what a company does, how it does it and why it creates value. In the context of N-B-Well, this includes how SMEs design their value proposition, organize their activities and partnerships, reach their customer segments, and ensure long-term economic viability while taking environmental and social impacts into account.

The N-B-Well project operates at three interconnected levels:

- Identification of relevant SMEs
- Assessment of their sustainability profile
- Creation of cross-border routes and networks

A structured business model perspective is therefore relevant both for evaluating potential SMEs offering N-B-Well activities and for assessing the overall success and coherence of the N-B-Well routes.

In sustainable tourism, business models must go beyond traditional revenue logic. They must consider environmental impacts (e.g. resource use, biodiversity, carbon footprint), social aspects (e.g. working conditions, local value creation) and governance issues (e.g. transparency and compliance). Sustainable business models in N-B-Well therefore aim to combine:

- A clear and credible value proposition rooted in nature-based wellness
- Long-term profitability and resilience
- Responsible resource use and circular principles
- Broad stakeholder orientation (including local communities and ecosystems)

By embedding sustainability directly into the core business logic, N-B-Well supports SMEs in positioning themselves not only as tourism providers, but as responsible actors contributing to regional development and environmental stewardship.



### 2.3.1 Sustainable Business Model Canvas (SBMC) as Reference Framework

To operationalize the sustainable business perspective within the N-B-Well project, the Sustainable Business Model Canvas (SBMC) [15] has been selected as a reference framework.

The SBMC builds upon the traditional Business Model Canvas by integrating environmental and social dimensions into all core elements of the business model. As presented by the German project partners from Rostock University, the SBMC explicitly incorporates ESG perspectives, broader stakeholder orientation, circular economy principles, and consideration of eco-social costs and benefits. In this way, it aligns with both EU sustainability requirements (including CSRD/VSME) and the strategic objectives of N-B-Well.

The SBMC serves two main purposes within the project:

- **Analytical framework** – supporting the assessment and description of SMEs that wish to be part of the N-B-Well network and routes.
- **Development tool** – helping SMEs reflect on and refine their own business model in line with sustainable and regenerative principles.

Importantly, the SBMC is not included in this report as a purely academic model. It will be actively integrated into **Activity A5.1 – Creating Digital Educational Materials and Self-study Courses**, where it will function as a practical management and business development tool. Through blended learning formats (digital modules, templates, examples and possibly guided exercises), SMEs and stakeholders will be introduced to the SBMC as a concrete instrument to:

- Clarify and communicate their value proposition within N-B-Well
- Strengthen their sustainability profile
- Identify partnerships and distribution channels
- Align marketing messages with verified sustainability practices
- Position themselves strategically within cross-border N-B-Well routes

| N-B-Well Project – exemplary application of a SBMC                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Key Partners                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Key Activities                                                                                                                                                                                   | Value Propositions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Customer Relationships                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Customer Segments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DMO's</li> <li>Hotels/Guest houses/Pensions/Camping sites/Hostels</li> <li>Property owners</li> <li>Bike or car rental companies</li> <li>Activities provider (Massages, guided tours etc.)</li> <li>Suppliers</li> <li>Affected communities</li> <li>Authorities</li> <li>Nature as silent stakeholder</li> <li>Insurance</li> <li>Lobbyists</li> <li>Investors/venture capitalists</li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wellness offerings</li> <li>Manage network effects</li> <li>Customer experience</li> <li>Customer support</li> <li>Grow platform</li> <li>Etc.</li> </ul> | <p><b>For travellers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lower costs</li> <li>Amount of choice</li> <li>Reduction of risk</li> <li>Health enhancement</li> <li>Authentic local experience</li> <li>Transparent ratings</li> <li>Meeting new people</li> </ul> <p><b>For hosts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revenue generation</li> <li>Ease of transactions</li> <li>Meeting new people</li> <li>Ease of getting verified guests</li> <li>Calendar, booking management</li> </ul>                                                    | <p><b>Hosts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free Marketing possibility</li> <li>Ease of joining network</li> <li>Knowledge transfer and exchange</li> </ul> <p><b>Travellers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer service</li> </ul> | <p><b>Hosts:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Property types</li> <li>Room types</li> <li>Star &amp; user ratings</li> <li>Amenities, facilities</li> </ul> <p><b>Travellers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Travel motivation</li> <li>Demographics</li> <li>Booking details</li> <li>Geographic</li> <li>Employment</li> <li>Language preferences</li> <li>Health needs</li> </ul> |
| Cost structure                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Revenue Streams                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Performance advertising</li> <li>Cost of revenue</li> <li>Development &amp; expansion</li> <li>Transportation costs</li> <li>Tech &amp; content</li> <li>Capitalised costs</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EU co-funding</li> <li>Own funds</li> <li>Funds and service work from associated partners</li> <li>Possibly potential for funds/work from motivated participants</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Eco-social costs                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Eco-social benefits                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carbon footprint from digital infrastructure</li> <li>Carbon footprint from travelling</li> <li>Costs of ensuring eco-friendly operations</li> <li>Potential degradation of natural sites due to increased visitor traffic</li> <li>Costs associated with sustainable practices (e.g., organic materials, eco-friendly products) during workshops</li> </ul>                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved mental health outcomes for testing project partners through nature exposure</li> <li>Promotion of local biodiversity conservation efforts through awareness program</li> <li>Economic benefits to local communities through unpaid tourism marketing</li> <li>Raise of public awareness for local and regional culture and habits</li> <li>Stress reduction and health improvement for participants</li> <li>Preservation of local ecosystems</li> <li>Economic boost in rural areas through eco-tourism</li> </ul> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |



In this respect, the SBMC also supports the marketing dimension of the project. A clear and structured business model enhances credibility, reduces the risk of greenwashing, and provides a transparent basis for communicating sustainability efforts to customers, DMOs and other stakeholders.

By adopting the SBMC as a reference framework, the N-B-Well project ensures coherence between concept development (WP2), capacity building (A5.1), and future branding and route promotion activities (WP5). The canvas thus functions as a bridge between sustainability requirements, business development and market positioning.

### **Practical example: using SBMC in an N-B-Well SME**

For an SME, the Sustainable Business Model Canvas can be used to translate the N-B-Well concept into a clearer business model.

For example, a rural farm stay could define its value proposition as slow, nature-based recovery through simple accommodation, outdoor mindfulness, local food and seasonal activities.

Key partners could include local guides, food producers and destination actors.

Customer segments could include visitors seeking stress reduction, quiet nature experiences and preventive health-oriented travel. In this way, the SBMC helps connect sustainability, local value creation and market positioning in a structured and practical format.







### 3. Organization and Destination Profiles

This chapter provides a brief profile of the organisational landscape and destination characteristics relevant to nature-based wellness tourism in the South Baltic Area. It builds primarily on the analysis of stakeholders and good practice cases carried out in Activity 2.2 and is complemented, where relevant, by selected findings from the RAIT visitor survey.

In this context, RAIT refers to the external survey-based input used selectively in D2.1 to support the broader analytical understanding of N-B-Well demand, destination characteristics and regional context. The purpose of this chapter is not to provide a full market or visitor analysis, but to summarise the main structural characteristics, common patterns and development conditions relevant for SMEs and destinations working with N-B-Well.

View full reports here:

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#### Key profile messages for N-B-Well SMEs and destinations

A brief summary of the main organisational and destination characteristics identified in Chapter 3.



**Organisations**

**SME-driven, small-scale,  
experience-based**



**Destinations**

**cool-climate, nature-rich,  
low-density, authentic**



**Main challenge**

**fragmentation and low visibility**



**Main opportunity**

**stronger cross-border positioning and routes**



### 3.1 Typologies of N-B-Well relevant organisations

The N-B-Well field in the South Baltic Area is characterised by a diverse but relatively small-scale stakeholder landscape. Across the analysed material, four broad categories of organisations appear particularly relevant:

- Wellness service providers
- Nature-based experience providers
- Accommodation providers
- Tourism organisations or public-support actors

Together, these form a decentralised ecosystem rather than a single clearly bounded industry.

**Wellness service providers** include actors such as spas, saunas, therapy-based operators and other businesses offering services linked to relaxation, recovery and wellbeing.

**Nature-based experience providers** include guides, forest therapy practitioners and other actors who create value through direct engagement with landscapes, forests, coastlines or other natural settings.

**Accommodation providers** include eco-farms, rural lodges and similar businesses that combine hosting with nature-based or wellness-oriented experiences.

In addition, **tourism organisations, NGOs and public-sector** actors play an important enabling role by supporting coordination, visibility and destination development.

A common characteristic across these organisation types is that the sector is dominated by SMEs, often operating at micro-scale and strongly embedded in local contexts. The analysed businesses are typically not infrastructure-heavy. Instead, they rely on natural resources, local traditions and personalised, experience-based service delivery.

This suggests that value creation in N-B-Well depends less on scale and standardisation and more on authenticity, local anchoring and the depth of the experience offered.

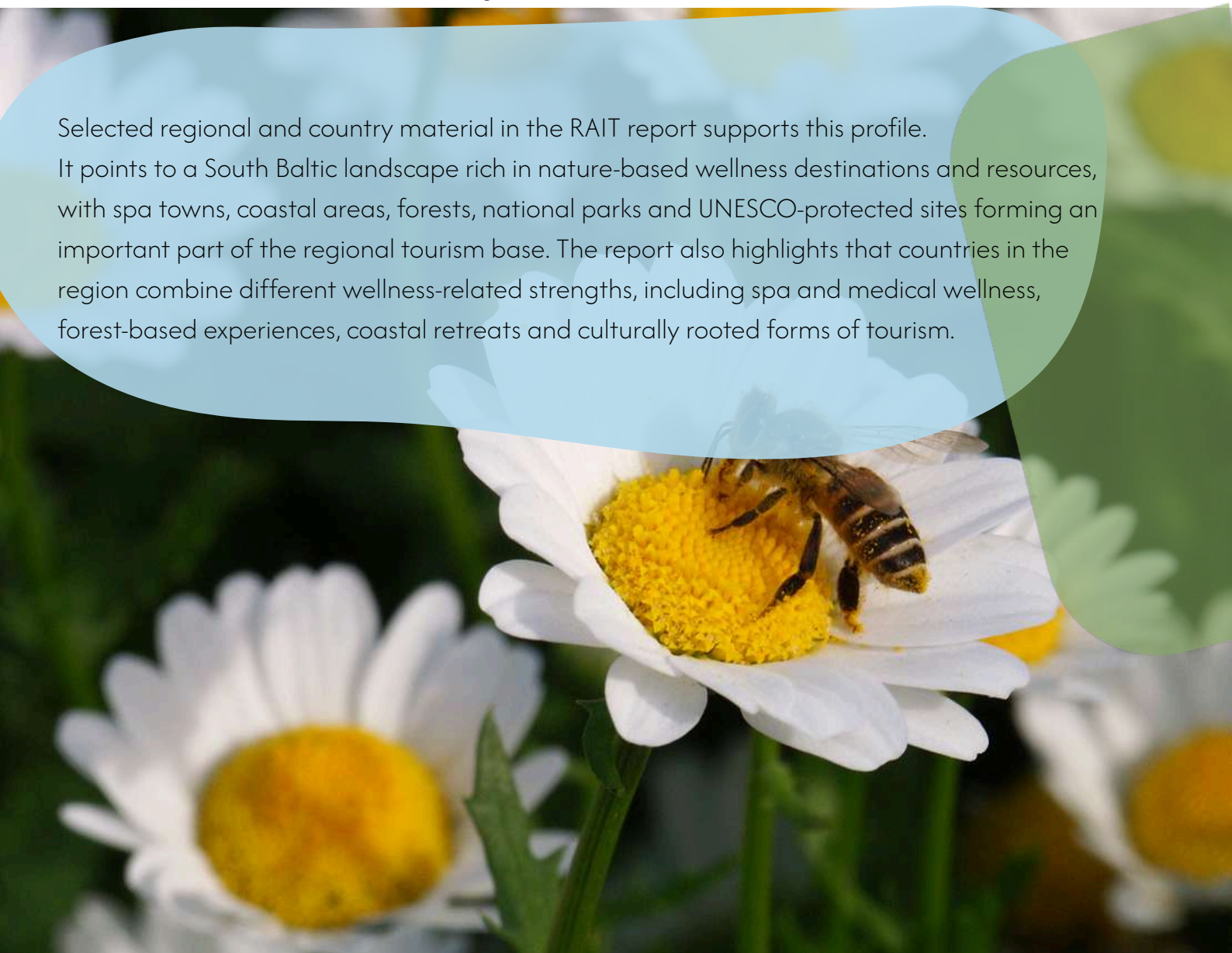
### 3.2 Destination profile of the South Baltic Area

Taken together, the South Baltic Area presents a coherent destination profile for nature-based wellness tourism. Across the region, the most recurring destination characteristics are cool-climate natural environments, including forests, coastlines, lakes, biodiversity-rich landscapes and low-density rural or semi-rural settings that support calm, disconnection and immersion in nature. These features give the region a distinct profile compared with more conventional sun-and-mass-tourism destinations.

The region can therefore be described as an emerging nature-based wellness destination built around authenticity, preventive health and reconnection with nature and self. This is also reflected in the variation of strengths identified across selected areas and sites within the partner countries. In some Lithuanian locations, resource-based and therapeutic nature assets such as mineral water, forests and herbs are particularly visible. In selected German areas, more structured mental wellbeing and nature-based therapeutic approaches appear prominent. In parts of Poland, lifestyle- and biodiversity-based models linked to rural settings, slow living and wellness-oriented tourism are evident. In selected Danish contexts, there is a stronger integration of nature, cultural heritage and accessible low-threshold experiences. These differences suggest complementarity rather than contradiction across the region.

Selected regional and country material in the RAIT report supports this profile.

It points to a South Baltic landscape rich in nature-based wellness destinations and resources, with spa towns, coastal areas, forests, national parks and UNESCO-protected sites forming an important part of the regional tourism base. The report also highlights that countries in the region combine different wellness-related strengths, including spa and medical wellness, forest-based experiences, coastal retreats and culturally rooted forms of tourism.

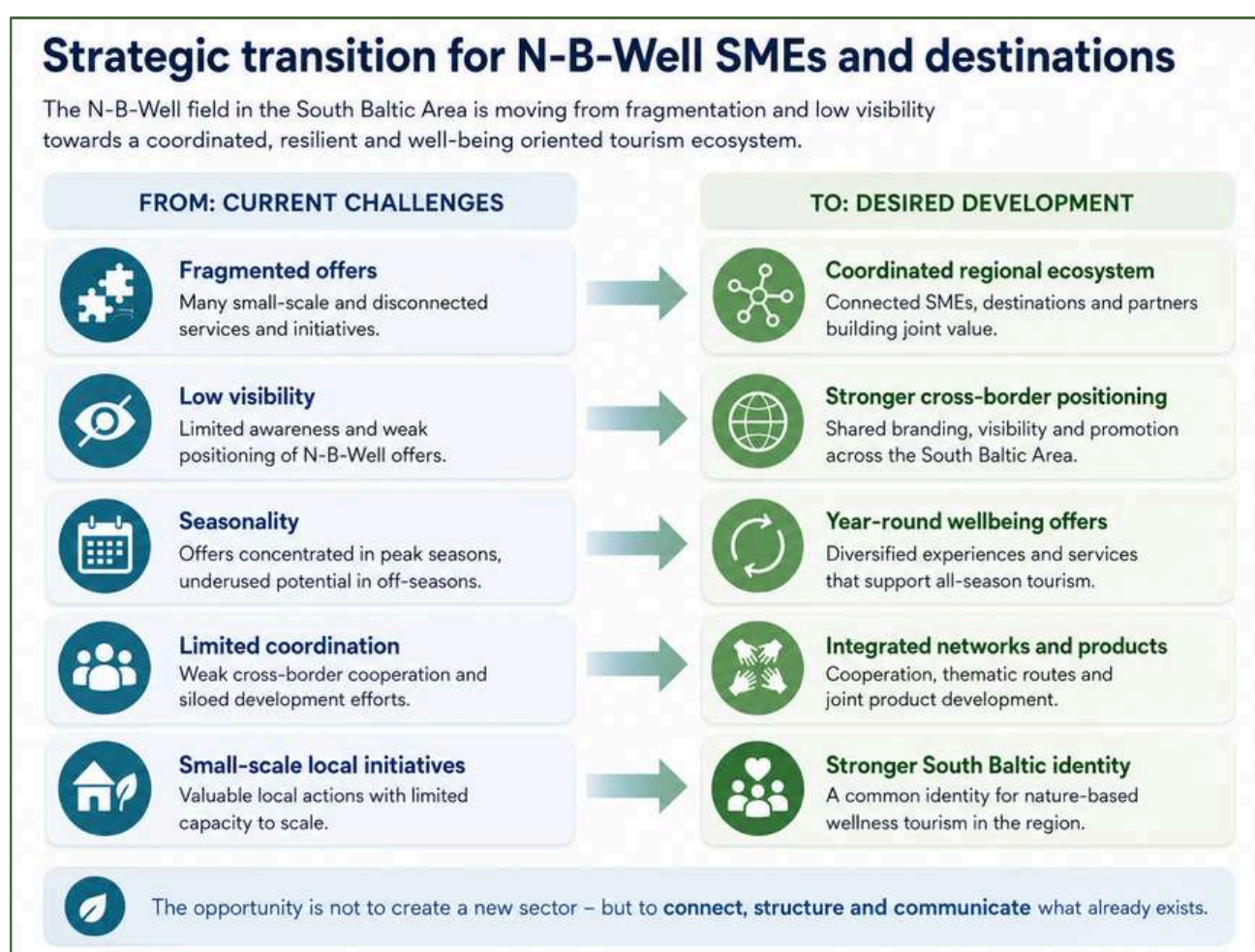




### 3.3 Barriers and opportunities for SMEs and destinations

Despite its strong resource base and the existence of many relevant practices, the N-B-Well field in the South Baltic Area remains fragmented and insufficiently structured. According to the analysed material, the main barriers include limited market awareness and visibility, seasonality, financial and staffing constraints, regulatory and administrative barriers, and weak cross-border coordination. The most important overarching challenge is the lack of structure, visibility and cooperation across the field.

For SMEs, this means that many promising offers remain local, small-scale and relatively difficult to scale or connect to broader destination development. For destinations, it means that the region's N-B-Well potential is not yet fully translated into integrated products, stronger common positioning or coordinated cross-border visibility. In this sense, the challenge is less about creating a completely new sector and more about connecting, structuring and communicating what already exists.



At the same time, the material points to clear opportunities. The region already has a functioning base of authentic, nature-rooted and health-relevant offers. Its country-specific strengths appear complementary and could support cross-border product development, thematic routes and stronger joint positioning. The identified development direction is therefore a transition from individual services to a more coordinated regional ecosystem, from seasonal offers to year-round wellbeing solutions, and from fragmented local initiatives to more integrated networks and products. For SMEs and destinations alike, this creates a strategic opportunity to build a stronger South Baltic identity around nature-based wellness.







## 4 Good Practices in N-B-Well Tourism

This chapter provides a summary of selected findings related to good practices in nature-based wellness tourism in the South Baltic Area. It builds primarily on the analysis carried out in Activity 2.2, including stakeholder survey results, case studies and thematic synthesis. The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the main criteria, typologies and cross-country insights that are most relevant for Deliverable 2.1.

### View full reports here:

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### 4.1 Criteria for identification of good practices

The material from Activity 2.2 points to a relatively consistent set of criteria for identifying good N-B-Well practices across the South Baltic Area. Good practices are strongly connected to authentic natural settings and are centred on relaxation, recreation and holistic wellbeing. They typically integrate forest, water and outdoor experiences, while also demonstrating environmental responsibility and a close relationship to local culture, food and community. In addition, they tend to provide high-quality yet accessible experiences and respond to concrete market needs or gaps.

## Good N-B-Well practice typically includes



authentic natural setting



focus on wellbeing



forest / water / outdoor elements



environmental responsibility



local culture / community



accessible and high-quality experience

## 4.2 Strategic typology of good practices

Based on the qualitative synthesis, four broad strategic types of good N-B-Well practices can be identified in the region.

The first type is **nature-therapy based** practices, such as forest bathing and mindfulness in nature.

The second is **resource-based** practices, which build on local natural assets such as mineral water, sauna traditions and herbal therapies.

The third is **lifestyle-based** practices, including eco-farms, vineyard wellness and slow-living concepts.

The fourth is **culture-integrated** practices, where heritage landscapes and traditional practices are combined with wellness-oriented experiences.



This typology is useful because it shows that good practices in N-B-Well do not follow a single model. Instead, the field includes different but related approaches, all of which combine nature and wellbeing in ways that are locally rooted and experience-based.

The typology also highlights that the South Baltic Area already contains a diverse base of practices that can support future route development, SME cooperation and joint positioning.







### 4.3 Overview of selected good practice cases across the South Baltic Area

The analysed cases indicate both common patterns and country-specific strengths across the South Baltic Area. Across countries, the most consistent common features are the use of nature as a core element, a holistic wellbeing perspective, small-scale business models, strong authenticity and a preventive health orientation. These commonalities suggest that the region already shares a recognisable N-B-Well profile, even though the specific expressions differ from place to place.

At the same time, the case material points to distinct regional specialisations. **Lithuania** stands out through strong use of natural healing resources and a broad diversity of services and may be described as a therapeutic resource hub. **Germany** shows particular strength in structured mental wellbeing concepts and the integration of psychology with nature-based methods. **Poland** contributes lifestyle- and biodiversity-based models, including rural, vineyard and slow-living approaches. **Denmark** is characterised by stronger links between nature and cultural heritage, often expressed through accessible and low-threshold experiences. Together, these different strengths suggest a high degree of complementarity across the region and a solid basis for future cross-border cooperation and product development.

The overall conclusion from the 2.2 material is that good N-B-Well practices are already present and functioning across the South Baltic Area, but that they remain fragmented and insufficiently visible as a coherent field. In this sense, the main development task is not to invent an entirely new sector, but to connect, structure and communicate existing practices more clearly.





## 5. Workshops and Stakeholder Engagement

Workshops and stakeholder engagement activities play a central role in the development and validation of the N-B-Well concept. Rather than being limited to theoretical analysis, the project has actively involved relevant actors from the tourism ecosystem to ensure practical relevance, feasibility and regional anchoring.

The workshops serve as structured dialogue platforms bringing together small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), destination management organizations (DMOs), local authorities, nature-based operators and other stakeholders. Through facilitated discussions, group reflections and exchange of experiences, participants have contributed insights into current practices, challenges and opportunities related to nature-based wellness and sustainable tourism development. Stakeholder engagement supports the project in three main ways.

**First**, it provides empirical input to the refinement of the N-B-Well concept and the identification of good practices.

**Second**, it strengthens cross-sector understanding between tourism providers, destination actors and public stakeholders.

**Third**, it helps build early ownership and awareness of the N-B-Well initiative within the regions involved.

A recurring theme in stakeholder dialogues has so far been the need to balance environmental protection, economic viability and authentic visitor experiences. Discussions have highlighted both the potential of nature-based wellness as a distinct positioning strategy and the importance of practical tools, partnerships and knowledge-sharing to make sustainable transition manageable for SMEs.

Overall, the engagement activities have confirmed that there is a growing interest in structured approaches to sustainable and regenerative tourism. The workshops have therefore not only functioned as consultation activities but also as capacity-building arenas that support the long-term implementation of the N-B-Well concept.



## 5.1 SME interest in participation and future potential

Within the N-B-Well project, interest from SMEs and other stakeholders has been consistently strong. Across multiple engagement channels — including surveys, workshops and stakeholder dialogues — tourism businesses have expressed clear enthusiasm for themes related to nature-based wellness and sustainable tourism development. This interest reflects not only immediate business motivation but also anticipation of broader market trends and opportunities.

Many tourism SMEs have articulated a desire to deepen their engagement with nature-based wellness offerings, both to diversify their service portfolio and to appeal to evolving visitor preferences. Across Europe and globally, research indicates that wellness tourism is a rapidly growing segment of the broader tourism economy, with nature-oriented activities such as forest bathing, eco-tours and outdoor recreation gaining traction among travelers seeking sustainable, health-enhancing experiences. These trends are driven by heightened health consciousness, a desire for meaningful and restorative travel, and an increasing focus on sustainability and low-impact tourism experiences[16].

The strong interest from SMEs aligns with broader evidence that nature-based and wellness tourism carries considerable commercial potential. Studies of nature-based tourism sectors have identified health, sustainability, soft adventure and digitalization as key drivers with significant business opportunities over the next decade[17]. In this context, the N-B-Well project's focus on structured collaboration and thematic routes appears well positioned to tap into emerging demand and to support SMEs in developing competitive and sustainable offerings.

Stakeholders have also underscored the value of capacity-building support, business development frameworks and marketing tools that enable them to position themselves effectively within evolving tourism markets. This is reflected in feedback from SMEs who have participated in project engagements and indicated that they see clear benefits in platforms for knowledge exchange, practical tools for business model development, and visibility through coordinated promotion of nature-based wellness experiences. Such expressions of interest suggest that N-B-Well activities are resonating with the sector's strategic priorities and with broader shifts in traveler behavior.

Looking forward, the potential for nature-based wellness tourism to contribute to regional economic resilience and diversification appears significant. As SMEs increasingly seek to align with sustainable development objectives and to differentiate their offerings in a competitive landscape, nature-based wellness — underpinned by collaboration, shared branding and supportive digital materials — offers a promising avenue for innovation and growth.









## Authors and credits

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