

2010



QualityCoast

GUIDE FOR ENTRANTS

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Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC)

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QualityCoast is a programme of the Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC) and partly funded by the European Commission

What is QualityCoast?

QualityCoast aims to establish a world wide network of coastal communities that share the same values and practices on sustainable development, holistically integrating their nature and biodiversity, cultural and social values, at the same time maintaining high standards in the quality of their tourism. QualityCoast has been developed in a European Union project by 21 partners from 11 countries under the lead of the Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC) - one of the largest coastal expert networks in the world.

QualityCoast provides new ways of cooperation between coastal communities. The communities will join a network of like-minded communities and be able to share their experiences and exchange best practices in order to improve sustainability in the fields of biodiversity, environment and socio-economics. Furthermore, their performance in these fields can be connected to international tourism marketing through the QualityCoast Award.

QualityCoast has been developed by and for coastal communities: cities, towns and islands, at the level of municipalities, provinces and regions. Small adjacent communities can participate together in order to work more cost effectively; they can also apply for the QualityCoast Award together (e.g. islands with more than one municipality or a coherent group of municipalities considering and promoting themselves as a single unit). In such case the applicants need to show their common policies toward sustainable development of the territory.

QualityCoast supports both the Blue Flag and the Green Key Programme: the Blue Flag programme specifically applies to beaches and marinas whilst the Green Key applies to accommodation. QualityCoast is, therefore, complementary to these but it aims at recognising efforts toward sustainability in the whole territory of the coastal destination: towns, small regions and islands. Non-compliance to the Blue Flag and Green Key criteria does not rule out eligibility for QualityCoast.

What is the QualityCoast Award?

The **QualityCoast Award** is a recognition for coastal communities that are proving and presenting good overall performance in sustainable development; providing transparent information to residents and visitors; planning for future improvements. It is an independent certification of the coastal community and its services (including tourism) which makes use of **20 QualityCoast criteria**. Information about these criteria is provided by the community on its entire territory. In addition to the Award, communities can receive specific recognition in three categories: Nature, Environment and Socio-Economics. Communities that have received an Award have the status of QualityCoast Community (or Destination), a status which is reviewed every two years.

The QualityCoast Award will be attributed by the Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC) on the basis of an assessment that is reviewed by an international Jury. For each application, EUCC designates a jury composed of at least three members including 1 independent member who is aware of the applicant community and 1 permanent member from EUCC. In order to ensure its independence, the Jury will work anonymously. The Jury will review the assessment report and assign final scores for all 20 criteria, ranging from 0 to 5 points; '0' indicating very poor quality, or complete absence of information provided for a criterion; '5' indicating excellence for a criterion.

The average of points assigned for each criterion and the sum of all points scored for the complete set of 20 criteria will be calculated. This will be the final score. Applicants scoring '0' in two or more criteria will not be eligible for the QualityCoast Award, regardless the total points scored in the other criteria.

Communities collecting no less than 57 points will be granted a QualityCoast Award. This will be accompanied by suggestions for further improvement and/or recommendations to exchange information with other QualityCoast partners.

If the QualityCoast Award is granted, a **Certificate of Excellence** will also be attributed in those categories (Nature, Environment, and Socio-economics) in which the applicant gained $\geq 80\%$ of the maximum points available for the criteria within these categories. Such excellence will be symbolized by a starfish that will be integrated in the QualityCoast banners (that are available next to flags).

Successful applicants will receive an invitation to the next international QualityCoast Award Ceremony and Workshop, where they will receive the QualityCoast Award and the certifications. QualityCoast destinations will also be included in the joint marketing programme through internet, joint brochures and other publications. The awarded communities will be offered 1 QualityCoast flag and 1 QualityCoast banner, but they can also order extra flags and banners (at a cost basis), which can be displayed throughout the community territory during 24 months. One year after the application the QualityCoast destinations are requested to update their information for the public website and brochure(s). Two years after their application the QualityCoast destination will be requested to submit an updated

QualityCoast Application form to be reviewed again by the QualityCoast Jury. 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 notes indicated by the QualityCoast Jury.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive an Assessment Report with the findings of the QualityCoast Jury. This report will include suggestions on improvements on weak aspects encouraging the Partner to improve its performance. If the QualityCoast Award is not granted, a **Progress Certificate** may be given to the coastal communities that have shown clear efforts to improve, and consider improvements in the future. An application can be unsuccessful as a result of a lack of information provided by the applicant. Therefore, unsuccessful applicants are encouraged to improve their application file and resubmit; within six months after the first application there will be no additional cost for the applicant. And all registered applicants, whether successful or not, will be invited to the annual QualityCoast Workshop.

What are the QualityCoast criteria?

Twenty QualityCoast criteria have been adopted to provide a measure of the sustainability of coastal communities and of the quality of the information available.

Each criterion provides information on a distinctive aspect of sustainability.

The criteria are divided into three categories:

- ❖ **Nature & Biodiversity**
- ❖ **Environment**
- ❖ **Socio-Economics**

The criteria will themselves be the subject of periodic reviews, a process which will involve the QualityCoast destinations.

NATURE & BIODIVERSITY	
CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
1. NATURAL VALUES	Presence of internationally and nationally important habitats and species that occur within the territory
2. INFORMATION & EDUCATION	Information sources and facilities that promote inter-action with the natural values in and around the territory.
3. CONTACT WITH NATURE	Appropriate level of accessibility of natural areas for low pressure recreational access and nature experience.
4. GREEN POLICIES	The extent to which natural values are enhanced through cross-sectoral approaches
5. OPEN LANDSCAPES	Presence of open landscapes and existing trends in land use and land cover patterns.
6. QUIET PLACES	Presence of areas where people can escape from traffic, crowds and noise.

ENVIRONMENT	
CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
7. TOURISM PRESSURE	The pressure and the impacts of tourism on the territory and the way the applicant is controlling tourism pressure.
8. BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT	The extent to which the local business community is involved in efforts for environment, sustainable development and marine conservation.
9. BLUE FLAGS & BEACHES	Environmental beach management, meeting bathing water quality standards of Directive 2006/7/EC and Blue Flag.
10. WATER MANAGEMENT	Sources of water, environmental and efficient use of water, supply, waste water treatment and re-use of deperated water
11. SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION	Availability and promotion of sustainable transport modes.
12. WASTE & RECYCLING	Policies and structures for waste collection, recycling and re-use.
13. CLIMATE & ENERGY	Policy aimed at reducing greenhouse gases and promoting renewable energy.

SOCIO-ECONOMICS	
CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
14. CULTURAL HERITAGE	Presence and level of protection of elements that are connected to the history of the territory.
15. TERRITORY & TRADITION	Presence of valuable landscapes that are man-made or man formed and traditional use of the territory
16. LOCAL IDENTITY	Presence and attention for a distinct physical and/or social aspect that is considered typical for the territory.
17. LEISURE & RECREATION	The way sustainability aspects are taken into account in leisure and recreation activities and facilities in the territory.
18. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	Local initiatives to promote community participation and stakeholder involvement in planning and decision making.
19. SATISFACTION & HOSPITALITY	The appreciation level of residents and tourists and the efforts of the territory to be a good host.
20. HEALTH & SAFETY	Presence of a healthy, safe and secure environment and of preventive measures.

How to join QualityCoast?

Entrants to QualityCoast are expected to confirm their commitment to:

- a) provide a good quality of life for their citizens as well as for their visitors, ensuring a healthy environment for people and nature, and adopting the principles of sustainable development
- b) the development and implementation of policies that ensure the above quality of life, and improve the situation in the area in case of weak performance
- c) transparency in the provision of information (regarding their quality and of relevant policy initiatives) through the internet and appropriate other media, in close cooperation with other QualityCoast Communities (Destinations).

Communities who wish to join QualityCoast can register (for free) as follows:

- a) Download and complete the QualityCoast Registration form at www.qualitycoast.net, filling in all the fields required.
- b) Identify a contact person.

- c) Send the completed form by post to:
Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC)
P.O. Box 11232
NL-2301 EE Leiden
The Netherlands
or by e-mail to: admin@eucc.net, marked QualityCoast Registration

How to apply for a QualityCoast Award?

Once registered, applicants can apply for a QualityCoast Award.
For this, the following steps must be completed:

- a) Download the QualityCoast Award 2010 Application Form at www.qualitycoast.net. Make sure you check this website for the latest version.
- b) Please complete this Application Form electronically. For each of the 20 criteria you will see a number of items (indicators) to be completed. Normally it is not necessary to complete all these items, because some items may not apply to you or there may not be sufficient information for some of them. Please complete at least half the items, preferably those marked in colour. But the QualityCoast assessment team may ask you to add information if insufficient information is provided for certain criteria.
All this information will be used in the assessment and evaluation by the Jury.
And please be aware that part of this information will be presented in the QualityCoast public website.
- c) Please select 10 high quality digital pictures (some 2000 x 3000 pixels, some 1500 x 2000 pixels, free of copyright for us) that well illustrate the criteria. We need this selection for the brochure and the website. Please do not provide more than ten. We also need the digital logo of the applicant (300 dpi).
- d) Existing documents that you consider useful for the assessment are welcome. Please check whether the QualityCoast Team can read the language of the annexes.
- e) Please send the completed Application form, pictures (digital format on a CD/DVD or USB pen drive) and annexes by post to:
The QualityCoast Jury
Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC)
P.O. Box 11232
NL-2301 EE Leiden, The Netherlands
or by e-mail to: admin@eucc.net, indicating QualityCoast Application.
- f) Payment of the Application fee
After acceptance of the Application by EUCC, the non-reimbursable application fee, which amount depends on the size of the applicant (see table below), should be paid to:
EUCC / Kust & Zee
ING Arnhem, the Netherlands
IBAN NL 85 INGB 0001 025914
Swift/BIC Code INGBNL2A

This fee is to be paid once the application for the QualityCoast Award is presented.
Please note that the assessment process will only start after receipt of the payment.
The fee will cover the cost of the assessment and review process by the QualityCoast Jury and serve as a contribution to common international publicity. Each applicant receiving the QualityCoast Award will have a flag and a banner, a dedicated webpage in the www.qualitycoast.info website and the cost of the annual QualityCoast brochure.

Applicant's number of inhabitants	Fee – Year 1	Fee – Year 2
Less than 1.000	€ 800	€ 400
Less than 10.000	€ 1200	€ 600
Less than 50.000	€ 2000	€ 1000
Less than 100.000	€ 2600	€ 1300
Less than 250.000	€ 3400	€ 1700
Less than 500.000	€ 4000	€ 2000
Less than 1.000.000	€ 5100	€ 3100
More than 1.000.000	€ 6200	€ 3700

A coherent group of applicants (e.g. islands within the same archipelago, or towns within the same island) can decide to combine their information in a common page or pages in the QualityCoast brochure. In this case they will be discounted on the basis of the pages required.

Deadlines for Application

The QualityCoast Jury will meet four times during the year to evaluate the application presented. To be part of the QualityCoast Ceremony and workshop in the year of Application all the documents must be presented before the 1st of February. Applications received after such date will be considered for the next Jury meeting and successful applicants will be invited to the following year Ceremony. Dates for the other QualityCoast Jury meeting will be announced in the www.qualitycoast.net website. Documents must be received two months before the jury meeting.

DATES TO REMEMBER				
WHAT	JURY SESSIONS			
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Last date to register	1 Aug 2010	1 Nov 2010	1 Feb 2011	1 May 2011
Application submission and payment	1 Aug	1 Nov	1 Feb	1 May
Final jury evaluation	1 Oct	10 Jan	1 Apr	1 July
QualityCoast Award notification	15 Oct	20 Jan	15 Apr	15 July
QualityCoast Ceremony and Workshop	May 2011	May 2011	May 2011	May 2012
Publication of QualityCoast Brochure	Dec 2011	Dec 2011	Dec 2011	Dec 2011

Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC)

The Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC) is an association with 2700 members and member organisations in 40 countries. It is the largest network of coastal practitioners, planners and experts in Europe, with 14 National Branches and offices in seven countries.

EUCC's mission is to promote coastal and marine management that integrates biodiversity conservation with those forms of development that sustain the integrity of landscapes, the cultural heritage and the social fabric of our coasts taking into account the effects of climate change.

EUCC is a member of ECOTRANS and a partner to DestiNet, the Sustainable Tourism Information Portal of the European Union, <http://destinet.ew.eea.europa.eu/>.

From 2004 to 2006 EUCC led a network initiative within the EU INTERREG IIIC Project Coastal Practice Network (CoPraNet), in partnership with 20 coastal councils and institutes from 11 countries, who have taken up the challenge to develop an international information programme, resulting into a transparent quality label for tourism destinations. Since 2003, this programme and quality label are running under the name QualityCoast. QualityCoast has been registered by EUCC as a European Union trademark; the use of the name is restricted under European law.

Contact details:

For any information, please contact us at:

Coastal & Marine Union (EUCC)
c/o QualityCoast
P.O. Box 11232
NL-2301 EE Leiden
The Netherlands

www.eucc.net
E-mail: admin@eucc.net attn QualityCoast

Tel: +31 (0) 71 5122900
Fax: +31 (0) 71 5124069



Benefits of QualityCoast participation for local and regional authorities



One programme for the whole community territory

The QualityCoast Award recognises qualities and efforts toward sustainability in the whole territory of the community: a town, a small region or an island. The Award gives the right to display the QualityCoast flag, banner and other material throughout the community, not only on the beach. Some of the existing QualityCoast Awards winners are displaying the banners along all roads giving access to the town. The performance in the Blue Flag and Green Key programmes is positively taken into account in the QualityCoast Award.



Improved awareness of sustainability issues

Participation in the application and filling in the Application Form will already improve the awareness of the community's performance in important aspects of sustainability and local identity, within the local authority.



Monitoring strengths and weaknesses (SWOT)

The comparison with other QualityCoast communities through the Jury assessment and report provides the community with a good picture of its strengths and weaknesses in an international perspective.



Cooperation opportunities within a coastal region or island

Small adjacent communities can participate together in order to work more cost effectively; they can also apply for the QualityCoast Award together (e.g. islands with more than one municipality or a coherent group of municipalities considering and promoting themselves as a single unit).

Climate, environmental and sustainability issues are increasingly taken into account in the selection of holiday destinations. We believe that this creates opportunities for destinations in attracting visitors who are inclined to cut down on air travel.

However, when competing with the more "exotic" hotspots, destinations must improve and better communicate their attractiveness in terms of their identity, cultural and natural heritage, wildlife and landscape. This requires a regional approach and a regional collaboration in a tourism promotion, based upon the attractiveness of their region and not of one single town.



Learning from similar communities

Upon registration of the community for the QualityCoast programme, the community can participate in the QualityCoast exchange programme with other QualityCoast communities, in workshops and at the annual QualityCoast event.



Guidance for improvement

The international assessment and recommendations by the QualityCoast Jury provide the local authority with a guidance to be considered in an agenda for improvement.



Transparent information to residents and visitors

Award winning communities are assisted in supporting their identity and profile in communication through transparent information on the basis of the three categories (Nature, Environment and Socio-Economics) and the 20 criteria.



The best timing for local publicity

Award winning communities can choose the moment when they would like to launch their own local and national publicity for receiving the Award (including a local Award ceremony) at a date that suits them best, e.g. at a local festivity, opening of the bathing season. This is also facilitated through the possibility to enter the procedure four times a year.



PR opportunity for local Small and Medium Enterprises (SME)

Companies and shops in any QualityCoast Destination can display references to the Award for their community to their clients. Shops in Goedereede and Schouwen-Duiveland (NL) have set the first example of this.



Opportunity for marketing and promotion

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. Award winners can widely disseminate the international QualityCoast brochure and refer to the QualityCoast public website.



Inclusion in the joint international marketing campaign

The awards will be announced through an international press release and at the press conference at the annual international QualityCoast Award Ceremony and Workshop, to which all Award winners will be invited.

QualityCoast destinations will also be highlighted through:

- the QualityCoast public website: www.qualitycoast.info
- the annual QualityCoast brochure (circulation 25.000)
- the annual Kust&Zee Gids of the Netherlands (circulation 100.000)

Presence at major tourism events and fairs in the UK, the Netherlands and Germany*

* The QualityCoast secretariat promotes cooperation of Destinations to disseminate their own brochures at these fairs against limited additional cost.



Solid two year basis for marketing

The QualityCoast Award gives the right to display the QualityCoast flag, banner and other material for 24 months (subject to an approved update of public information); this right will not be suspended during this period.



A second chance for free

Unsuccessful applicants are encouraged to improve their application file and resubmit, because failure is often due to insufficient provision of information; within six months after the first application there will be no additional cost for the applicant.



Free services from the EUCC network

QualityCoast also gives benefit of the general services of EUCC:

- ❖ Communication opportunities in EUCC's media, including Coastal & Marine magazine, EUCC Coastal & Marine news, EUCC EuroMed News, and specific media for the Netherlands (Kust&Zee Gids, Kust&ZeE mail).
- ❖ Free subscription to the e-mail newsletters for staff and board members (five language editions).
- ❖ Up to 5 free subscriptions to EUCC's quarterly Coastal & Marine magazine
- ❖ Free online access to the Journal of Coastal Conservation, Planning and Management (published by Springer)
- ❖ Free copies of other EUCC publications, e.g. Coastline Reports
- ❖ Discounts to EUCC's Littoral conferences
- ❖ Participation in project partner search, joint project preparation and fund raising
- ❖ Collaboration in the representation at conferences.
- ❖ Access to information from EUCC projects and conferences.

Leiden (NL), June 2010