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## Sweden Synoptic plan

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*By Gustaf Almqvist and Thomas Hjelm, see also “Swedish evaluation of RETROUT workshops\_ aggregated data” and “BSF-MarketingStrategy Thomas Hjelm”*

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- Description of the local preconditions

Just outside the city of Stockholm the vast archipelago, comprised of + 30 000 islands and skerries, begins. Rugged nature blends here with forested islands, flat and bare skerries, and occasional sandy beaches. And naturally, the waters of the archipelago, which have already allowed for several sportfishing records, documented here. Especially, when targeting the fast-growing brackish-water pike, sea trout and perch.

So, the natural preconditions for sportfishing tourism are favourable. However, during recent decade the fish populations are decreasing due to stressors connected with a multitude of human activities: eutrophication, commercial overfishing, loss of suitable fish habitats in rivers at coast and sea. Large numbers of seals and cormorants, which affect the coastal fish assembly. Dams and man-made obstacles cut off natural migration routes for coastal fish that reproduce in rivers. In the Stockholm Archipelago region, many actors are working to improve the preconditions for coastal fish. Amongst those are the Swedish Anglers Association, the County Administrative Board of Stockholm, and the Swedish Fishing guides Association as well as local foundations such as Utö Initiative. Within the RetROUT project, restoration activities in five seatrout rivers in the region has been performed.

Fishing varies depending on season and locality. Pike fishing is primarily performed in the inner and central parts of the archipelago. Perch occurs in large shoals during late summer/early autumn. Fishing for sea trout is mostly targeted during spring and autumn. Sea trout fishing is receiving more and more attention and is typically undertaken in the outer skerries, closer to the opened sea, where encounters with both seal and sea eagles are almost guaranteed.

Fishing guides are organised within the Swedish Fishing Guide Association (SOF), currently there are more than 50 guides associated. The association is not commercial (does not sell fishing tourism offers itself) but is a marketable brand that stands for high quality and a code of conduct warranting high class service, safety and ethical concerns. The ethical code agreed for withing the Baltic Sea Fishing cooperation is developed from the SOF code.

Today, more than 15 fishing guides are listed in BSF from the Stockholm Archipelago region, all certified with the Baltic Sea Fishing ethical code and hold all necessary licenses and insurances for driving boats with tourist. They are highly advanced in fishing skills and service, well respected and known to the Swedish sportfishing community and all are fluent in English and often master other languages as well. Most of these guides are the ones most dedicated to full time fishing guide tourism and are also well known to the wider Swedish sportfishing tribe.

At the BSF site, everything from full packages, including dinner and accommodation, to full daytrips, half day trips, and evening trips. Also, custom-made fishing trips after your requests can be arranged.



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Daytrips typically include lunches, and high-quality fishing gears, life jackets and warm flotation suits (if necessary) are always provided.

The project has had several meetings with the local network of visiting organisations and a few meetings with the local municipalities. Especially important has been the cooperation with Stockholm Archipelago, and the project aims to continue and intensify this cooperation.

Today, there are large discussions about who has the right to commercially fish in the sea outside the Stockholm archipelago. County Administrative Board of Stockholm has raised concerns that commercial fishing are too intense and negatively affect the coastal ecosystem, as well as the need to further include the management of fish with the broader environmental policy and management. The Swedish guides have also been a strong voice in this discussion and stress that sportfishing concerns (that is the importance of strong coastal fish stocks) needs further attention within this discussion.

As with the rest of the world, the pandemic situation has struck the sportfishing tourism associated businesses hard. Although perhaps somewhat less in Sweden due to less hard national restrictions. However, important requests and bookings from larger customers, such as from companies, has decreased to almost zero – which has struck some of the entrepreneurs very hard.

Today, there is a need to direct the marketing and adjust the sportfishing tourism offers more to a national market. At least until the international market has recovered, which by many not will happen until at the earliest 2023.

The national market is lucrative: at least 1.6 million Swedish people fish annually; in 2019 the total sum expended on sportfishing is estimated to 10.6 billion SEK; and the general interest for outdoor activities has increased during the pandemic period.

- Identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and limitations.

Strengths: A significant strength is that every destination within the RetROUT project has made its own SWAT analyses, which in turn has provided information about how to move ahead and perhaps equally important specify its offers within the BSF cooperation.

For Stockholm Archipelago, the strengths are that experienced and dedicated guides have joined the cooperation. Their feedback about the workshops is very positive (mean 4.2, max 5) when they have evaluated questions about contents, organization of trainings, relevance, competence, methods, and general evaluation.

Weaknesses: However, to find the balance between competition and cooperation among the guides has been problematic. The workshop coordinators have thus tried to find the most important common denominators, which were identified to be [ablticseafishing.com](http://ablticseafishing.com) and the ethical code. Due to vast numbers of guides (and also their restricted times to devote to other things than their work) a steering group was appointed among and for all the SOF associated guides. Regular meetings with this group was mixed with broader briefing meetings and meetings with the coastal municipalities and other visit organizations.

Limitations. As explained above, the fish resources which these businesses depend on can be improved. Yet, the kind of fishing performed by the guides within the region is considering this as much as is possible, as e.g. is specified within the BSF ethical code.



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Traveling limitations due to the pandemic has hindered the sought after increase of international fishing tourists coming to the destination, and hence their contribution to the local businesses.

The hosting and management of the BSF website is not really sorted out yet. SOF are asked but need funding to take on that responsibility.

Another limitation, that is connected with the multi-country cooperation within the project, is the lack of will /possibilities of the Swedish Visit organisation (Visit Sweden) to interact and cooperate with other countries visit organisations.

Opportunities: The project has played an important role of including the fishing guides in the general discussion about how to manage the Baltic Sea, and the Stockholm Archipelago in particular. As well as connecting their work field with associated fish conservation and environmental work. On a more general level the discussion about how to improve fish/fishing management and how to recognise the need to include other values besides commercial fishing for food, has strengthen during the recent years.

As mentioned before, the interest for sportfishing and outdoor activities in Sweden is strong and increasing, also during the pandemic period.

- Identification of strategic actions, both physical investments and institutional actions

Action 1: To find the exact role and position within the existing (or adjusted) chain of different visiting and tourism organisations on both Swedish local and regional levels. This is crucial to find the right level of funding and how to fund it.

Action 2: To find the long-term strategy of funding the local destination management. To be able to attract engagement and funding from the guides themselves or local businesses associated with the business, the BSF website must be proven to increase bookings and fishing packages sold on the international market. This has not been possible during the last year due to the pandemic situation, and the site were only launched a couple of weeks before the outbreak in northern Italy.

Action 3: To apply for national funding to support the local DMO, which i.e. means to support hosting of the BSF website, and to adjust marketing and offers to the national market – and at the same time uphold the cooperation with the other BSF destination (in the other countries).

Action 4. Follow up the ethical code and revise it continuously.

- Definition of implementation approach – roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder –at local and transnational level

Entrepreneurs; fishing guides, hotels, restaurants, etc. Role: to offer the products to the costumers

SOF: to participate in the BSF cooperation, maybe take on the responsibility for the Stockholm Archipelago destination part of the site, control and revise the ethical code.

Visit organisations on different levels, local (municipality), regional (Stockholm Archipelago) and national (Visit Sweden): to recognise the strength and possibilities of fishing tourism and include it in their communication.



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County Administrative Board of Stockholm: to continue to be engaged within the BSF cooperation. Cooperating with the local fishing guides is considered to be important from both aspects of supporting local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and to promote modern and sustainable utilisation of coastal fishing resources.

- Implementation time plan

The BSF website was up and running feb 2020. It must be functioning until 2025 at least to fulfil the commitments of the project to the EU funders and Interreg secretariate. Naturally the ambition is much higher than that and the project management wants the site and cooperation to grow and to include other Baltic Sea fishing destinations. However, the pandemic situation has as explained earlier hampered this work severely.

For that reason, the Retrout project partners engaged in WP 2 has agree to look for further funding after the end of the project.

- Estimated budget

An annual cost of 20-30 000 Euro is estimated to be needed to support the BSF DMO (including the Swedish part of it if a Swedish organisation, such as SOF, is appointed to manage it).

- Communication and marketing strategy

A joint communication plan for the BSF cooperation was made by the Swedish workshop coordinator Thomas Hjelm, which included digital marketing on social media (FB especially) and exhibitions on fairs. In combination with publishing digital posts and in newspapers /videos before, during and after the fairs. Unfortunately, we only had the opportunity to exhibit on one fair, in Northern Italy, before the pandemic struck us all.

The FB-activities has continued but adjustments to local markets has to be made.

Instead of the exhibiting the fairs, a film about the Retrout cooperation, including the BSF website and the ethical code, was produced and launched on the Retrout Final Conference.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgJmBaxVSsk>

- Monitoring and evaluation framework

As mentioned, we are now both within the Stockholm Archipelago destination and within the BSF cooperation adjusting and revising the framework to the pandemic situation; that is, local and national marketing and fishing tourism offers.

- Creation of a Destination Management Service

This task has proven to be the most challenging task of them all, as there is difficult to attract investors and finding people to commit financially before the BSF cooperation has proven to work. Which has been impossible during the pandemic, considering the in many cases harsh restrictions



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and travelling limitations. Yet, we have had many meetings (appr 20) about it within the project, below our original idea is presented:

### **Background document; establishment of an international pan-Baltic DMO**

(earlier discussions)

#### **Responsibilities of a future DMO:**

##### Strategic directions/responsibilities:

1. Brand management & marketing (copyright and legal issues,)
2. Harmonizing product material for international market (quality/service)
3. Policy issues. How to influence coastal fish management etc.
4. Membership and extension of networking. (Who/what destination should be able to join?  
How to attract and ensure quality of new destinations)

##### Operational Management:

1. Coordination and dividing responsibilities among destinations
  - a. Coordinating/updating home page
  - b. Contact with the Baltic Sea Fishing network, clusters
  - c. Branding & Marketing (common promotion materials etc.)
2. Handle financial issues
3. Secure funding
4. Team building
5. Contact point for consumers, feedback and possible complaints (service, quality or ecolabel compliance)

##### Eco label

1. Qualification of fishing guides (certification: basic requirements to be met on safety, business legal requirements etc.)
  2. Main responsible for content and programme outline of national certification courses. These courses are given periodically in each participating country and are mandatory for being certified with the ecolabel (participation in the workshops should be considered as completion of a course).
  3. Revising ethical codes
    - a. to follow legal requirements
    - b. adjust to recent scientific knowledge
    - c. to be in the forefront of ethical concern (primary part of USP), stepwise increased ambitions?
  4. Directing financial resources derived from DMO members to restoration projects through a fund-raising foundation.
  5. Certification/evaluation of fishing guides (Licencing body – external or internal reviewers?  
Could it be the existing partners from each country/destination?)
- Different kinds of set up/structure of the DMO



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### **Proposed setup of DMO (Sweden: Håkan, Gustaf, Thomas & Helen)**

- DMO: legal body with bank guarantee.
- Economic Association: Each guide/hotel/company is a member
- There is a hub in each country represented by e.g. a network of fishing guides (SOF etc.), tourism organisation, Local cluster etc.
- All guides/hotels/service providers are granted a free membership for the first number of years (how many?)
- After these first years, all members (companies/guides/hotels etc) pay yearly fees. Fees may be adjusted to different countries by using standardised index/keys (Consumer Price Index, BNP, something else?)
- Work tasks and responsibilities divided between two persons: one strategic work and the other operational/administrative work.
- All contacts with the end client (tourists) are done by individual guides/ hotels/service provider.

### **Proposed setup of DMO (Lithuania: Edmundas)**

“Soft approach without funding” a so called “virtual organization”. Important functions (as listed above) distributed among project members, in this case the unique networks/hubs at each destination. One leading person – important! Coordinating all thing.

Funding derived from percentage of value of each confirmed booking through the system. Depends on the set up of the confirmation system made by Inero software if this is traceable or not.

Daumantas comment: Funding must originally be through national DMOs, depending on the respective set up (clusters, tourism organization etc.)

Andris comment: Every member pays an annual fee that should be reasonable and based on turnover traffic an proportional to country indexes etc.

Gustaf also suggested private anglers as members (in the future) who pays annual lower fees, receive newsletter or similar...