

# QualityCoast Programme: Pilot studies in two mature sun and beach destinations

***Yaiza Fernández-Palacios<sup>(1)</sup>, Eduardo Cózar<sup>(2)</sup>, Maria Ferreira<sup>(3)</sup>, Candelaria Cecilia-Ruano<sup>(1)</sup>, Pablo de la Peña<sup>(2)</sup>, Alan Pickaver<sup>(3)</sup>, Albert Salman<sup>(3)</sup> & Ricardo J. Haroun<sup>(1)</sup>***

<sup>(1)</sup> Instituto Canario de Ciencias Marinas, Las Palmas, Spain

<sup>(2)</sup> Ayuntamiento de Calvià, Calvià, Mallorca, Spain

<sup>(3)</sup> EUCC – The Coastal Union, Leiden, The Netherlands

## Abstract

■ Within the international regional cooperation activities of the Coastal Practice Network (CoPraNet), an INTERREG IIIC network project, the development of a transparent international quality programme for sustainable coastal tourism destinations – QualityCoast – has been achieved.

QualityCoast Programme for coastal tourism destinations certifies a municipality, county or region that proves to be actively working towards more responsible and sustainable management. The implementation of the QualityCoast Programme is determined using a series of QualityCoast Milestones (QCMs), which indicate the quality of information available to visitors. The QCMs are grouped into the thematic areas of nature, carrying capacity, water and environmental quality and socio-economics. A category entitled ‘other’ is also incorporated to allow the inclusion of criteria relevant to particular areas, which are not covered by the four primary themes.

This paper presents the QualityCoast Programme, one of the key contributions and results of the CoPraNet project and, in particular, the results of pilot activities undertaken in different areas of Fuerteventura Island, Canary Islands and in Calvià Municipality, Balearic Islands, both mature sun and beach destinations in Spain. It has been found that the implementation of this certification scheme can be of interest for this type of destination.

### *Key words:*

information programme, labelling, indicators, coastal destination, QualityCoast, sustainable tourism

## Resumen

■ En el marco de las actividades de cooperación internacional de la Red de Prácticas Costeras (CoPraNet), una red INTERREG IIIC, se ha logrado el desarrollo de un programa de calidad internacional para destinos turísticos costeros – QualityCoast –.

El Programa QualityCoast para destinos costeros certifica a un municipio, condado o región que demuestre un trabajo activo por una gestión más responsable y sostenible. La implementación del Programa QualityCoast se determina mediante una serie de indicadores denominados Hitos QualityCoast (QCMs), que señalan la calidad de la información disponible a los usuarios. Los QCMs se agrupan en las áreas temáticas de naturaleza, capacidad de carga, calidad ambiental y del agua y socio-economía. Se ha incorporado una categoría denominada ‘Otros’, con el fin de permitir la inclusión de criterios relevantes a áreas particulares no incluidas en los cuatro grupos principales.

Este trabajo presenta el Programa QualityCoast, una de las contribuciones y resultados principales de CoPraNet y, en particular, los resultados de las actividades piloto desarrolladas en distintas áreas de la Isla de Fuerteventura (Islas Canarias) y en el Municipio de Calvià (Islas Baleares), destinos maduros de sol y playa en España. Se ha hallado que este sistema de certificación puede ser de interés para este tipo de destinos.

### *Palabras clave:*

programa de información, certificación, indicadores, destino costero, QualityCoast, turismo sostenible

## Introduction

■ There are many different definitions of sustainable tourism that have been developed over the last decade. Sustainability principles in tourism development refer to environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability (World Tourism Organization, 2004).

As one of the world's largest and fastest growing economic activities, international tourism continues to grow and place increasing stress on remaining natural habitats,

which are often used to support mass tourism. Sustainable tourist destinations face many responsibilities to reduce tourism impact on their communities. Sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments (World Tourism Organization, 2004).

In this sense, it has been recognized that efforts can be made to provide the tourists with better information about their destination.

## Background: Contributions of the Coastal Practice Network to sustainable tourism.

■ The Coastal Practice Network (CoPraNet) is an INTERREG IIIC initiative that has been operative for three years (January 2004 – December 2006).

INTERREG IIIC is an European Union programme that helps Europe's regions form partnerships to work together on common projects. By sharing knowledge and experience, these partnerships enable the regions involved to develop new solutions to economic, social and environmental challenges.

CoPraNet has two main objectives (Ferreira et al., 2006, Salman et al., 2004). Firstly, to develop a network of coastal stakeholders to exchange information and examples of best practice, which will support local and regional efforts for an integrated planning of coastal areas. This network must bridge the gap between planners, managers and the research community throughout Europe (European Parliament and the European Council 2002). Secondly, to support interregional exchange of best practice information on (a) sustainable tourism and (b) coastal erosion and beach management through an integrated approach.

Regarding the sustainable tourism component, the network activities aimed to:

- Support the inter-regional exchange and sharing of good practices in developing guidelines for quality coast milestones (QCMs) and sustainability in coastal regions and towns, including islands and seaside resorts;
- Identify principles, guidelines and operational milestones for quality and sustainability of tourism and recreation in coastal regions and towns;
- Develop an inter-regional and transparent benchmarking programme based upon the above milestones; and
- Prepare the introduction of a transparent international QualityCoast programme for tourism destinations and sustainability of coastal destinations.

Making use of existing achievements and ongoing international work within the INTERREG IIIC CoPraNet activities, the project partnership agreed to collaborate and exchange views to develop a transparent, international quality information scheme for tourism destinations. Such collaboration resulted in the QualityCoast Programme (Ferreira et al., 2007), one of the key contributions and results of the CoPraNet project.

## QualityCoast Programme

### Definition and objectives of the QualityCoast Programme

■ The QualityCoast Programme for coastal tourism destinations certifies a municipality, county, or region that can demonstrate it is actively working towards more responsible and sustainable management.

The commitment to highlight nature and landscape, carrying capacity, cultural heritage and aspects of sustainable development of tourism in its marketing programme

targeting domestic (non-local) or international visitors will be recognized by the attribution of the QualityCoast label.

The main objective of the QualityCoast programme is to recognize destinations that make valuable efforts towards sustainability and are willing to inform their visitors through a marketing programme containing information about nature, carrying capacity, environmental

quality and socio-economic, as well as other relevant issues of their destination.

The QualityCoast programme will promote practices that ensure tourists visiting the coast will:

- Be well informed about the social, natural and economic aspects of the coastal communities they visit;
- Support and value the local biodiversity and culture by encouraging businesses that conserve natural and cultural heritage;
- Support the local economy by purchasing local goods and using small, local businesses;
- Conserve resources by seeking out businesses that are environmentally conscious, and by using the lowest possible amount of non-renewable resources.

By participating in the QualityCoast programme, a municipality, county or region is committing to offer objective and actual information on selected issues (milestones) to its potential visitors and interested parties on a number of issues. Also the participating entity must agree to prepare a policy plan to improve and/or reinforce the

quality or performance of less well scoring aspects (milestones) over a period of time.

By joining the QualityCoast programme, a municipality, county or region will achieve international recognition for striving towards the highest quality in human and environment friendly tourism. This recognition can be used through their own municipal communication and marketing mechanisms for tourism in the area.

Therefore, in order to participate in the QualityCoast programme, a municipality/county/region commits and is obliged to:

- Provide basic quality for recreation and tourism in order to ensure human and environment sustainability;
- Develop and adopt an improvement policy plan (5 years) in order to maintain and improve the quality of the destination, as part of their municipal policy programme;
- Evaluate the implementation of the policy programme every 2 years;
- Provide objective and transparent information to visitors about important aspects of the tourism destination.

### Added Value of the QualityCoast Programme

■ Several efforts have been made to develop indicators for sustainable development in coastal management during the last ten years, e.g. the Blue Flag programme, EcoTrans and the World Tourism Organisation Network on sustainable tourism which is developing indicators and “eco-labels” for tourism accommodations and facilities. The EU-funded EcoLab project (now VISIT) has contributed to the harmonization of these labels and to a new development of tourism destination indicators. However, common standards to monitor performance in sustainable tourism developments in coastal destinations are still lacking.

These labels have in common the aim of improving and supporting sustainable tourism. The labels often have a different scope and different ways to reach this common ground; therefore they tend to complement one another rather than to interfere with each other. Another important factor that needs to be kept in mind is that eco-labels are a good way of marketing a product and therefore, they can present an economic advantage. This potential for

added value/benefit is often a key reason for a region to obtain or participate in such a label initiative.

The QualityCoast Programme aims to support the implementation of a sustainability information strategy for visitors to coastal destinations. The label is unique in that it covers the entire coastal destination, which means a municipality, county or region. Other coastal destination labels tend not to have such a broad focus. Most merely focus on the beach area and their main objectives are, for example, beach cleanliness and water quality. One key aspect of sustainable tourism is to provide objective and truthful information to visitors and inhabitants on a broad range of issues so that these people can make more sustainable choices.

The QualityCoast Programme label certifies the quality and objectiveness of information, especially concerning sustainable development aspects, and the label also certifies the quality of product improvement and monitoring.

### Design process

■ Within the CoPraNet initiative, partners have agreed to actively discuss and exchange views to support the developments of the programme. Since the early stages,

it has been recognized that the development of a label is a very ambitious task and many issues would have to be taken into account to achieve it successfully. Therefore,

the challenge that has been made to partners, and especially to the regional and municipal representatives resulted in their active involvement during the design process, and in doing so, ensured their interests, concerns and aspirations would be reflected in the consolidated version of the QualityCoast programme (CoPraNet Network Partnership, January 2007).

The development of the QualityCoast Programme, has progressed on the basis of the validation and testing of the core list of QualityCoast Milestones (QCMs) – a set of key high level conditions for which information will be made available and operational in terms of measurements and quantification.

Original attempts to identify and select these milestones, which were originally designated as Tourism Quality Milestones (TQMs), were undertaken at the CoPraNet workshop at Fuerteventura Island in February 2005. At this workshop the participants were divided into seven groups; all groups were given the task to identify the 10 most important milestones or indicators on the basis of a particular viewpoint. This exercise provided the basis

to create a first list of milestones, which set the start of the pilot activities. Nine months later, in November 2005, the partnership met again in the Canary Islands during “Sustainable Tourism and Coastal Management Week”. Following discussions on Nature Quality in Sustainable Tourism, the partners agreed to use the list of QCMs as a core set of milestones and to test them for their respective destinations, as well as suggesting optional ones for relevant and specific issues of their particular destinations.

The core list of QCMs has been selected to cover the thematic areas of nature, carrying capacity, water and environmental quality, and socio-economics. A final category entitled “other” is also incorporated to allow the inclusion of criteria relevant to particular areas, which are not covered by the four primary themes.

The selection of quality milestones was based on the following criteria:

- High efficiency in relation to sustainable development;
- High impact on consumer perception;
- Data availability; and
- Comparability.

### Assessment of the QualityCoast Programme: pilot activities in mature sun and beach destinations.

■ Pilot activities were designed and undertaken by the participating partners and took place in 10 regions in 9 countries in Europe. A wide range of coastal tourism destination types was covered. The aim was to make a consensual definition of the milestones, provide ways of

quantification, identify data sources and propose corrections and final improvements for a final core list (as presented in Table 1) and to make an preliminary assessment of the needs for the implementation of the QualityCoast Programme.

**Table 1. Final List of Core QualityCoast Milestones**

| Thematic Area         | QCM  |
|-----------------------|--|
| Nature                | Information on Nature Experience               |
|                       | Biodiversity                                   |
|                       | Accessibility of Natural Areas                 |
| Carrying Capacity     | Tourism Pressure                               |
|                       | Balance Between Unbuilt Vs. Built Conservation |
| Environmental Quality | Availability of Quiet Areas and Towns          |
|                       | Safety and Security                            |
|                       | Bathing Water Quality                          |
|                       | Water Management                               |
| Socio-Economic        | Waste Collection, Management and Recycling     |
|                       | Traditional Activities, Accommodation and Food |
|                       | Cultural Authenticity and Local Identity       |
|                       | Tourist and Local Satisfaction                 |
| Others                | Local Participation, Training and Education    |
|                       | Leisure and Recreational Activities            |
|                       | Eco-Label Accommodation                        |
|                       | Sustainable Mobility                           |
|                       | Integrated Management                          |

The activities aimed at validation and testing comprised: a) use of visitor surveys to identify what information visitors are interested in; b) development of operational definitions for the milestones at the level of coastal destinations; c) collection of information to make milestones operational; and d) consideration of the development of a communication and dissemination tool (e.g. via internet).

The pilot studies developed at Fuerteventura (Canary Islands, Spain) and Calvià (Balearic Islands, Spain), briefly presented in this paper, are the only ones related to mature sun and beach destinations. Additional testing and implementation of the QualityCoast programme took place

in Cork Harbour (Ireland) and Sefton (England), Zandvoort (the Netherlands), Aveiro (Portugal), Down (Northern Ireland), Stepnica (Poland), Island of Usedom, Schleswig-Holstein (Germany), and Ekoparken (Sweden). The pilot experiences, as well as the overall development of the QualityCoast programme, were co-ordinated by CoPraNet's lead partner, EUCC – The Coastal Union.

Further information regarding all pilot activities can be found at the project website (Coastal Practice Network Homepage, URL: <http://www.coastalpractice.net> and QualityCoast Programme Homepage, URL: <http://www.qualitycoast.info>).

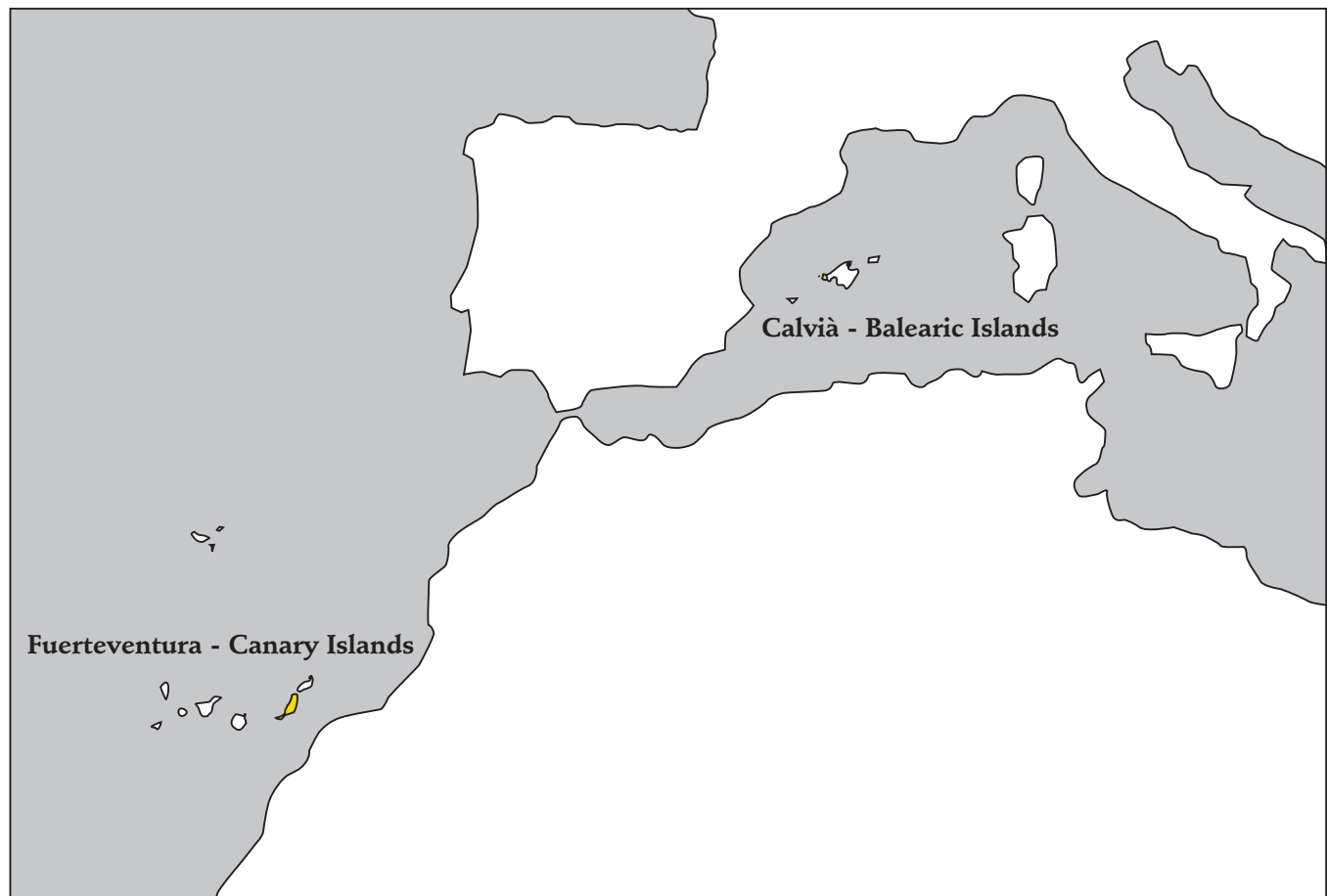
### Fuerteventura pilot activity

■ The Fuerteventura pilot study on the implementation of the QualityCoast Programme has been developed by the Canarian Institute of Marine Science (ICCM), belonging to the Canary Islands Regional Government, in three different pilot areas in Fuerteventura Island (Canary Islands, Spain): Tuineje Municipality, Pájara Municipality and Lobos Islet (part of La Oliva Municipality).

It can be noticed that two types of areas have been selected: two municipalities and a protected area smaller than a

municipality that is not a specific administrative unit. The aim is to test if it would be of interest to apply the QualityCoast Programme to local level or also to areas not related to an administrative level, as parks or protected areas.

Fuerteventura Island (Central-East Atlantic) is the closest to the African continent and has a very arid climate, generally distinguished by poor and irregular rainfalls, large sandy beaches and by warm temperatures (22-24°C) all around the year.





## Description of the pilot areas

### Tuineje Municipality

It is located in the SE of Fuerteventura Island, with 276 Km<sup>2</sup> surface and 27 Km of coastline. With a local population of 12.517 inhabitants (Instituto Canario de Estadística, 2005) it is one of the biggest population centres of the island. Its main localities are Gran Tarajal, Tarajalejo, Tesejerage and Tuineje.

The area has a very important historic value, closely related to the conquest of the island (roughly 500 years ago). One of its most important characteristics is the hereditary richness, specially linked to architecture, nature (with large natural protected areas) and numerous cultural goods (gastronomy, folklore, ethnography...).

The economy in Tuineje is based on tomato and forage crops (the first producer in the island) and also on the cattle raising (goat meat and cheese), though tourism is a growing sector all around the year.

### Pájara Municipality

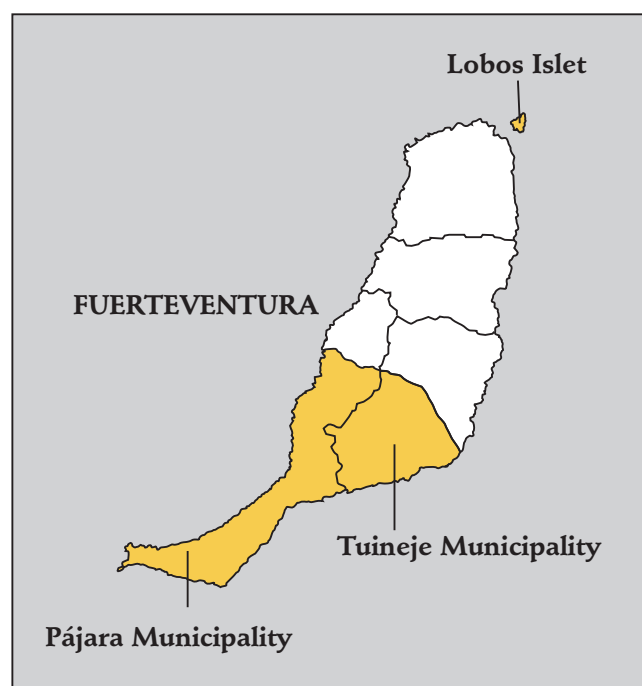
Located in the S of Fuerteventura, Pájara has a surface of 383 Km<sup>2</sup> and 136 Km of coastline, being the largest municipality in the island. The population of 18.173 inhabitants (Instituto Canario de Estadística, 2005) lives mainly in the localities of Morro Jable, Costa Calma and Solana Matorral.

The same as Tuineje, Pájara has a relevant natural heritage, with a large extension of protected areas (specially linked to the coast) and a great variety of native and endemic species. In this sense, the area deserves serious consideration for the presence of large numbers of endemic plants and migratory birds, most of them threatened and under protection.

Although the municipality has a great fishery tradition, the economy of Pájara is currently based on sun and beach tourism. The hotel trade is well developed in this municipality, offering more than 18.000 bed spaces, including the extra-hotel supply. Also, the tourist activity has increased significantly the employment (almost 5.300 people). In addition, Pájara has the longest beaches in the Canary Islands, being a venue for important windsurfing champion-ships at the international level.

### Lobos Island

It is an islet that belongs to La Oliva Municipality. It has a surface area of around 5 Km<sup>2</sup> and a coastline of 13,7



Km long. It is two kilometres distant from the NE coast of Fuerteventura and 8 Km from Lanzarote Island's southern coast.

Distinctive geomorphology and endemic flora compose a unique landscape in this island where human development is not present. The area is under several types of environmental regulations.

Lobos Islet and Corralejo Dunes was one of the first nature reserves in the Canary Islands. Currently, Lobos is regulated by a Special Plan of Use and Management developed by Canarian Government in 2000.

The European Commission, designated the marine area to the S of Lobos Island as 'Sebadales de Corralejo' SAC, for the presence of seagrass meadows. The island itself was declared as SPA (Special Protected Area) for the presence of several species of birds considered under Directive 79/409/ECC.

This islet has no residents. The tourists in Lobos are mostly one day visitors though there is also a camping area for a maximum of 75-80 people per day. The visitors carrying capacity in Lobos is estimated at maximum of 200 people per day, according to the Management Plan of the area. The infrastructures in the island are mainly the small port (60 m long), few houses and a small restaurant, a lighthouse and the delimited camping area. There are ferry connections from Fuerteventura and Lanzarote islands to Lobos everyday, being this the only way of getting to Lobos.

## *Tourism in the destination*

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■ Tourism is the main economic activity in the island. In the last years Fuerteventura has been provided with new hotel developments and tourist areas (especially on coastal areas), giving a significant boost to services sector. The island has also an important fishery tradition and in some areas the agriculture (cereals, vegetables...) and cattle raising (goats, mainly for local cheese production and for their meat) are developed.

Fuerteventura Island, with thirteen protected natural areas, is a very interesting enclave from the point of view of its flora and fauna, with a high number of endemisms, threatened and protected species and also outstanding landscapes that are closely related to the island history and the life of their inhabitants. In addition, this island has innumerable ethnographic gastronomic and, in general terms, other cultural values involving an essential part of local authenticity.

However, Fuerteventura Island offers a wide range of possibilities for tourism not exclusively linked to the coast but to other areas with important values related to tangible and intangible heritage.

Nearly 30% of Fuerteventura's surface is protected under different designations. The pilot areas contain important marine and terrestrial nature conservation areas, designated under the Regional Network of Protected Areas, the EU Natura 2000 Network (as SACs and SPAs) and also

a RAMSAR site. The Environment Department at Fuerteventura Island Government is working actively to promote the diversification of recreational activities often linked to protected areas, promoting nature-based activities developed in a responsible way.

Pájara Municipality is characterized as being a highly tourist area in the island, offering mainly sun and beach tourism. The number of hotel beds is over 15.000 and other bed places (e.g. apartments) number more than 8.500.

La Oliva Municipality offers 3.400 hotel beds and 8.500 bed places in other type of accommodations. This is a municipality with well-developed tourism infrastructure, though the pilot area, Lobos Islet, has very little development and no accommodation facilities apart from the aforementioned camping area.

Parallel to these destinations, Tuineje is a municipality much less developed in terms of tourism but with important natural and cultural heritage and a great tourist potential for cultural and rural activities. In addition to traditional agriculture and livestock, the tourist activity, that began its development on coastal areas, begins to have some relevance. The total number of hotel beds is over 700. At the moment, Tuineje offers several theme products in order to give a new focus on sustainable tourism.

## *QCMs assessment*

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■ The pilot activities developed by the ICCM have investigated the validation of selected milestones and for this purpose a collection of data and information took place with guidance from the local municipalities and Fuerteventura Island Government.

It was found that, in most cases, the data needed for the construction of the QCMs was only available after the request of data compiled for management purposes to the public institutions, in particular municipalities, island government or regional government.

For the pilot study of Lobos Islet, a nature reserve area, information on biodiversity and nature management was accessible, but not on waste management, mobility or traditional activities. This information, needed for certain

QCMs, was only available by interviews with the managers of the protected area.

In relation to the geographical scope, for most of the QCMs available data was not referred to the municipal and islet units chosen as pilot areas. The island ambit had to be used instead. In the Spanish region of the Canary Islands, each island constitutes a local unit, which integrates municipalities (smaller local units).

The results are presented in a comprehensive report (Fernández-Palacios et al., 2006 downloadable at the CoPraNet project website), which includes the better definition of some QCMs and the proposal of some new ones (e.g., the ratio of tourists to locals as a measure of tourism pressure).

## *Pilot activity in Calvià Municipality*

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The Environment Department at Calvià Municipality (Mallorca Island, Balearic Islands, Spain) developed this

exercise for the QCMs and QualityCoast Programme evaluation.

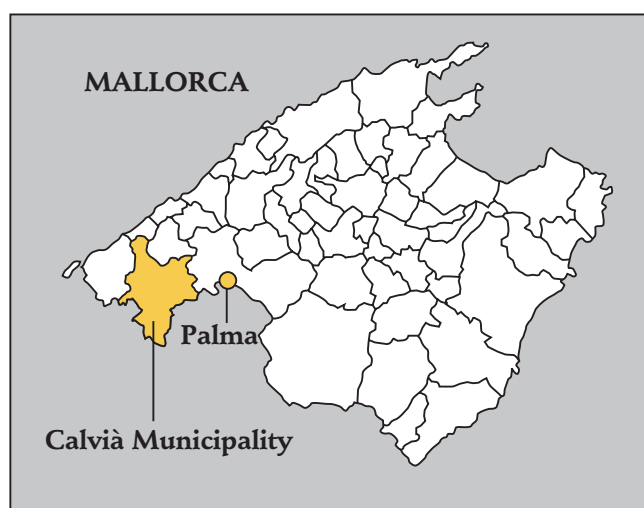
## Description of the pilot area

■ The selected pilot area was the coast of the Municipality of Calvià on the SW of Mallorca Island (West Mediterranean). It comprises a length of 54 Km of coastline and its surrounding marine and terrestrial areas, part of which are protected for nature conservation purposes.

Most population (around 90%) lives in residential areas close to the coast. Only two villages are located in the interior, involving a big human pressure on the coast. Local population of Calvià's was of 47.479 in 2006. Local population is young, (50% of population is between 0 and 34 years old) and integrated by different nationalities (34% of population are foreigners from 110 different nationalities).

Calvià is an excellent example of the best scenic resources in the Balearic Islands. From the top of Galatzó's (1.000 m. to the West of the Serra Tramuntana) to the coastal area, Calvià's landscapes include mountains, pinewoods, valleys, villages, farm crops and dry land (the Pariatge) as well as numerous capes and bays, creeks and coves, the Rafeubeitx Peninsula and Cala Figuera's Cape, Majorca's largest lowland forest.

In the Municipality of Calvià 83% of the territory is inbuilt, regulated and protected by legislation with different protection levels. From this percentage, 68,53 % is protected by regional and local legislation, meaning that



all urban development and economic activities are extremely controlled and only allowed in case environmental and sustainability development is guaranteed.

Recently, Calvià Council has purchased a private estate with very important natural values named "Finca Galatzó". In total, the 11% of territory owned by the Council is nature areas with a maximum level of protection.

Despite excessive building in certain resorts, Calvià's natural and cultural resources still constitute valuable components of the area.

## Tourism in the destination

■ Calvià is a traditional sun and beach tourism destination. It is the most important tourist municipality in the Balearic Islands and one of the most visited Mediterranean destinations, with over 1.600.000 visitors per year. Around 95% of the local Gross Domestic Product of the municipality comes from tourism. This means that local economy is focused on the tourism industry. Seasonality is a strong characteristic in the area, having a high season that runs from April to October and has a maximum in July and August. Population peaks in this period reach 180.000 inhabitants.

In the last few years there has been some development in rural tourism and some traditional houses (named possessions) have been converted into rural Hotels.

Calvià presents several flora and fauna endemisms which are protected by regional and European regulations. Two Natura 2000 sites, in the mountainous area of Galatzó and the coastal zone of Cala Figuera (CODES), designated as SPAs for their value as birds nesting and breeding areas. These are components for the development of a tourism offer alternative to sun and beach.

In the municipality numerous coastal and nature-based sports and cultural activities can be developed. In particular: scuba diving, snorkelling, sailing, trekking (with more than 100 natural paths), cycling (route of 158 Km), archaeological route (85 registered sites), European Winter Cultural Programme, etc. They contribute to the diversification of the recreational offer in this sun and beach destination.

## QCMs assessment

■ Data availability was not an insurmountable obstacle as most of the information existed in the different departments of Calvià Municipality. Information had to be

elaborated from data, showing unavailability of many of the milestone's information for the general public and visitors.



The geographical ambit of needed data was not an inconvenient, as the municipality had available data for most of the analyzed QCMs for its administrative area. There was no dependence on other administrative units, as in the case of Fuerteventura pilot experiences.

This pilot study found interesting to include a quantification measure (QCM) for the evaluation of available information on milestones to visitors, mainly on-line, in order to ensure proper availability of information on the destination and guarantee the objectives of the QualityCoast Programme. After the development of CoPraNet's activities and Quali-

tyCoast pilot study, several actions have been taken in Calvià Municipality. Particular, the Marine Reserve of Malgrats and El Toro has been established (with a protected area of 1017,45 Has.), information leaflets and panels for tourist and citizens about the Marine Reserves, connexion of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) projects in Calvià with COPRANET project, environmental and sustainable tourism information leaflets for tourists (in German, English and Spanish).

Further findings arising from the pilot exercise are detailed in the report (Cózar et al., 2005) available for download from the project website.

## Results and discussion

■ It was confirmed that the data needed for the evaluation of many of the QCMs was only available by specific requested to the public institutions. Data dissemination in different institutions and storage forms (paper or digital, text or databases, on the internet or not) was very common. Data needed to be re-elaborated for the completion of the QCMs. This shows that the objectives of the QualityCoast Programme are appropriate, as data is usually not available and/or not presented to visitors or to the local population in suitable formats.

For some of the QCMs the needed data sources were not found, showing they either had not been complied previously or are not available. The main data gaps related to the following QCMs: Tourism pressure in the municipality (data only available in the island or regional ambits).

Nevertheless, data was found for the assessment of most QCMs. The main reason is that the presented pilot sites are mature tourism destinations and well-developed areas where data collection has already been in place for years or even decades mainly with management and statistical analyses purposes.

Further developments of the QualityCoast programme label must consider that an evaluation of the geographical ambit to be chosen for the application of a destination must be carefully evaluated, in order to ensure data

availability in the appropriate geographical ambit. The presented pilot activities show that in order to ensure data availability, the applying destination should be an administrative unit (local or regional). Nature areas and parks don't seem to have the needed data sets.

The results of the pilot activities and assessment done per milestone contributed to the consolidation of the programme. It became clear through the process of practical tests and validation undertaken by the municipalities/regional authorities that some of the original QCMs were superseded or misplaced and needed to be clarified and better explained.

Both Fuerteventura and Calvià pilot activities concluded the interest to include QCMs to reflect the pressure of tourism related to the local population, one of the characteristics of mass sun and beach tourism. Mass tourism destinations require responsible management as much as (or even more than) other less impacting types of destination. This is the case of Calvià and Fuerteventura, mature sun and beach destinations that at present promote the diversification of their offer. In particular, they promote sports and nature-based activities as scuba diving, boating, trekking, whale and bird watching, ... For the maintenance of responsibility in this type of destination, it is necessary to implement all sustainability measures.

## Conclusions

■ The development of the QualityCoast Programme, one of the key contributions and results of the Coastal Practice Network project, partly financed by INTERREG IIC programme, has been achieved over the past three years. This initiative has been built upon the inter-regional exchange of network partners experiences, and collaboration towards the development of a transparent, international quality programme label for tourism destinations.

The main objective of the QualityCoast programme is to recognize destinations that make valuable efforts towards sustainability and are willing to inform their visitors through a marketing programme about nature, carrying capacity, environmental quality and socio-economic, as well as other relevant issues of their destination.

Benefits of QualityCoast Programme for mass sun and beach destinations have been highlighted through the

implementation of two pilot studies presented in this paper, namely in Fuerteventura Islands (Canary Islands, Spain) and Calvià Municipality (Balearic Islands, Spain):

- Provide objective and truthful information to tourists, in order to allow them to make more sustainable choices when selecting the tourist destination.
- Help institutions realize of the importance of making available to visitors truthful and best quality information on sustainability.
- Encourage institutions to implement more sustainable management and inform about them, supporting the

destination's competitiveness in short and long term.

- Define and Control the real Carrying Capacity of the tourist destination.
- Promote local participation of citizens and stakeholders reaching consensus in decision-making on responsible and sustainable development of the tourist destination.

Further information regarding all pilot activities can be found at the project website (Coastal Practice Network Homepage, URL: <http://www.coastalpractice.net> and QualityCoast Programme Homepage, URL: <http://www.qualitycoast.info>)

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## Biographical notes

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■ Yaiza Fernández-Palacios Vallejo received her MSc degree in Marine Science from Las Palmas de Gran Canaria University in 2001. She develops her activity at the Canarian Institute of Marine Science, being involved in several projects and initiatives related to integrated coastal zone management and sustainable tourism.

■ Eduardo Cózar Chillerón is the Chief of the Environmental Management Department at Calvià Municipality. Master degree in Environmental Management and PhD in Biology he has more than 20 years experience in environmental management in public institutions, mainly in ICZM and sustainable tourism.

■ Maria Ferreira received her MSc degree in Physical Geography and Environmental Studies from the University of Coimbra, Portugal, in 1999 (academic part). Presently, she is Deputy of EUCC's Policy and Project unit, and has been working in various international projects dealing with the field of integrated management of coastal areas.

■ Candelaria Cecilia Ruano took her university degree in Tourism and her Master in Tourism from the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. During the last years, she has been involved as a researcher in several projects in the field of tourism management and sustainable development of coastal areas.

■ Pablo de la Peña has a Law Degree by the Balearic Island University (Mallorca) and a Master in Environmental Management by the Carlos III University (Madrid). He is specialized in Sustainable Tourism Development and Local Agenda 21 and at present develops his career in the local ambit, at the Municipality of Calvià.

■ Alan Pickaver is a senior executive with a total of twenty-five years international management experience and currently working as Head of EUCC's Policy and Project unit. Through his research and outreach activities, Alan is directly involved in meeting EUCC objective of promoting coastal conservation by bridging the gap between scientists, environmentalists, planners and policy makers.

■ Albert Salman, the Director General of EUCC – The Coastal Union, is an experienced senior executive with fifteen years international management experience. He is a senior expert with a broad orientation in coastal matters, specialising in Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM, ICM), spatial planning, coastal erosion management and coastal ecology.

■ Ricardo J. Haroun Tabraue is a professor and a senior researcher at Las Palmas de Gran Canaria University. He is the Director of the Biodiversity and Environmental Management research group. He has coordinated various regional, national and international projects in the fields of marine ecology, environmental management or awareness raising.

## Contact details:

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Yaiza Fernández-Palacios<sup>(1)</sup>  
Candelaria Cecilia-Ruano<sup>(2)</sup>  
Ricardo J. Haroun<sup>(3)</sup>  
Instituto Canario de Ciencias Marinas  
Las Palmas, Spain  
Email<sup>(1)</sup>: yaizafv@iccm.rcanaria.es  
Email<sup>(2)</sup>: candycr@iccm.rcanaria.es  
Email<sup>(3)</sup>: rharoun@dbio.ulpgc.es

Eduardo Cózar<sup>(4)</sup>  
Pablo de la Peña<sup>(5)</sup>  
Ayuntamiento de Calvià  
Calvià, Mallorca, Spain  
Email<sup>(4)</sup>: ecozar@calvia.com  
Email<sup>(5)</sup>: ppena@calvia.com

Maria Ferreira<sup>(6)</sup>  
Alan Pickaver<sup>(7)</sup>  
Albert Salman  
EUCC – The Coastal Union  
Leiden, The Netherlands  
Email<sup>(6)</sup>: m.ferreira@eucc.net  
Email<sup>(7)</sup>: a.pickaver@eucc.net