

Integrating Activities for Advanced Communities



D9.1- Educating the tourists and tourist operators

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Dissemination Level		
PU	Public	X
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the Consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the Consortium (including the Commission Services)	

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Publishable Executive Summary

In order to build effective guidelines to ensure sustainable tourism in the Arctic, a survey of station managers regarding tourist activity and associated benefits and challenges was conducted in spring 2021. The results of the survey were used to develop the draft guidelines. The survey results and the draft guidelines were presented at the Station Managers Forum in May 2021. At this Forum, Station Managers were encouraged to volunteer to develop tourism guidelines as part of the pilot guidelines to populate the template. The Kobbefjorden Research Station manager volunteered to develop pilot guidelines. Using the experience gained through the development of pilot guidelines, the template for Station Specific Tourism Guidelines were revised and finalized and made available to all station managers to aid the process of ensuring sustainable tourism around the INTERACT research stations.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The INTERACT III Work Package *Educating the tourists and tourist operators* (D9.1) aims to enhance education of tour operators and tourists on the Arctic environment, its ecosystems and peoples, to generate greater awareness of the sensitivity of the Arctic to disturbance and ensure sustainable tourism. This work was led by the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO), an international association for expedition cruise operators operating in the Arctic and others with interests in the industry. The association was founded in 2003 and has since become an important organization representing the concerns and views of Arctic expedition cruise operators. It has 61 members, of which 47 are cruise operators, vessel owners, or vessel management companies. AECO works to ensure that cruise tourism in the Arctic is carried out with the utmost consideration of the natural environment, local cultures, as well as challenging safety hazards at sea and on land. The backbone of AECO is the generation of sustainable tourism guidelines and standards that all its members must follow. Therefore, AECO was in an ideal position to complete this INTERACT Work Package aimed at interfacing education for tourism with station management to ensure sustainable development and minimal environmental impact of the increasing tourism in the Arctic.

For the purposes of this project, a tourist is defined as “a person traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for leisure, business or other purposes for not more than one consecutive year”. Researchers working at stations are not considered tourists.

1.2. A template for INTERACT Station Specific Tourism Guidelines

The main output of this Work Package is the development of a template for INTERACT Station Specific Tourism Guidelines; a tool which allows the station and the surrounding area to present themselves to tourists and outline what considerations visitors should take when visiting. INTERACT Station Specific Tourism Guidelines allow station management to convey information that visitors should be aware of in an easy to-understand way. The Guidelines can be used to enhance the general knowledge of the area. Guidelines include the types of research conducted at the Station, the importance of this research and the history of the station, along with specifics on fauna and flora inhabiting the area.

Prior to the development of guidelines, the first step is to conduct a vulnerability assessment, including impact to the natural environment and the research infrastructure. Following this, having an open dialogue with representatives of visitors, such as local tourist agencies and/or tourist development organizations, is advised. These organizations can advise on development opportunities to create mutual benefits. This work should be led by the station management.

Guidelines that are developed will be communicated and made recommendatory for all AECO members. For stations visited by AECO members, if guidelines are to be considered mandatory for all AECO members,

AECO should be consulted and included in the development of the guidelines. Within these guidelines is a template for tourists visiting INTERACT Field Stations.

1.3.Method

In order to develop INTERACT Station Specific Tourism Guidelines, AECO followed the below method:

1. Conducted a survey of station management to gain an overview of tourism activity, benefits, and challenges at INTERACT stations.
2. Develop draft INTERACT Station Specific Tourism Guidelines (building on the survey results).
3. Develop pilot INTERACT Station Specific Tourism Guidelines to inform the template.
4. Revise the INTERACT Station Specific Tourism Guidelines based on feedback and experience gained from the development of the pilot INTERACT Station Specific Tourism Guidelines.
5. Invite all interested stations to use the template to develop their own INTERACT Station Specific Tourism Guidelines.

Details regarding each process listed above will be provided in section 2 of this report.

2. Development of INTERACT Station Specific Tourism Guidelines

The following section provides a detailed overview of the work undertaken within the INTERACT Work Package *Educating the tourists and tourist operators* (D9.1) with the goal of developing INTERACT Station Specific Tourism Guidelines.

2.1. Survey of station management

To build effective guidelines, a survey of station managers regarding tourist activity and associated benefits and challenges was conducted, where the results will be used to inform the guidelines template. This survey was the major focus of the period 01.01.2020 to 30.06.2021. The survey was developed in collaboration with WP2.6 and sent to Station Managers in September 2020. At the Station Managers Forum in September 2020, Station Managers were encouraged to participate in the survey in a presentation and the survey was sent to Station Managers after the Forum to allow Station Managers who could not participate in the meeting to participate in the survey.

The below figure (Figure 1) demonstrates the flow of questions in the survey depending on the answers (yes/no).

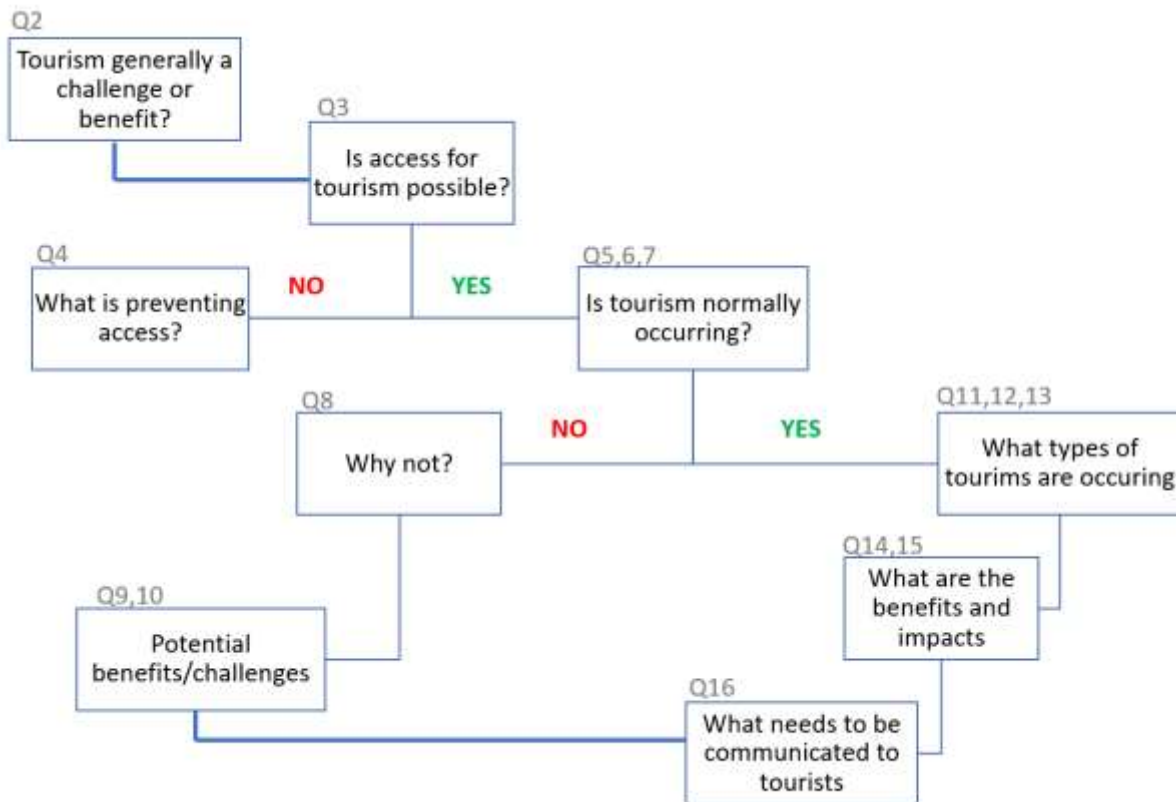


Figure 1. Flow of questions in INTERACT survey of station management.

In total, 33 stations responded to the survey. In summary, tourism is generally seen as a challenge more than a benefit. Most stations are accessible to tourists. Location/inaccessibility and protected areas are the main reasons for stations not being accessible to tourists. Of the stations that are accessible, 75% said that tourism normally occurs and typically consists of independent groups and individuals in the summer months. Education and creating awareness are the biggest benefits while tourist pollution (e.g. littering) and station resources needed to handle tourism are the biggest challenges. At the stations where tourism is possible but not normally occurring, the main reasons given for tourism not occurring are a lack of tourism infrastructure and an unwillingness to have tourists. Education and creating awareness are the biggest perceived benefit while the interruption of research activities and/or scientific instruments is the biggest perceived challenge.

When asked what information is important to communicate to tourists, general information about the station and surrounding area was listed as the most important thing to communicate. Safety information, rules, and regulations, as well as a map over the area with restricted areas, attractions, tourism infrastructure, etc. are also listed as important to communicate.

2.2. Draft guidelines

The results of the survey were used to inform a draft template for station specific tourism guidelines. These draft guidelines (Figure 2) were presented at the Station Managers Forum in May 2021.

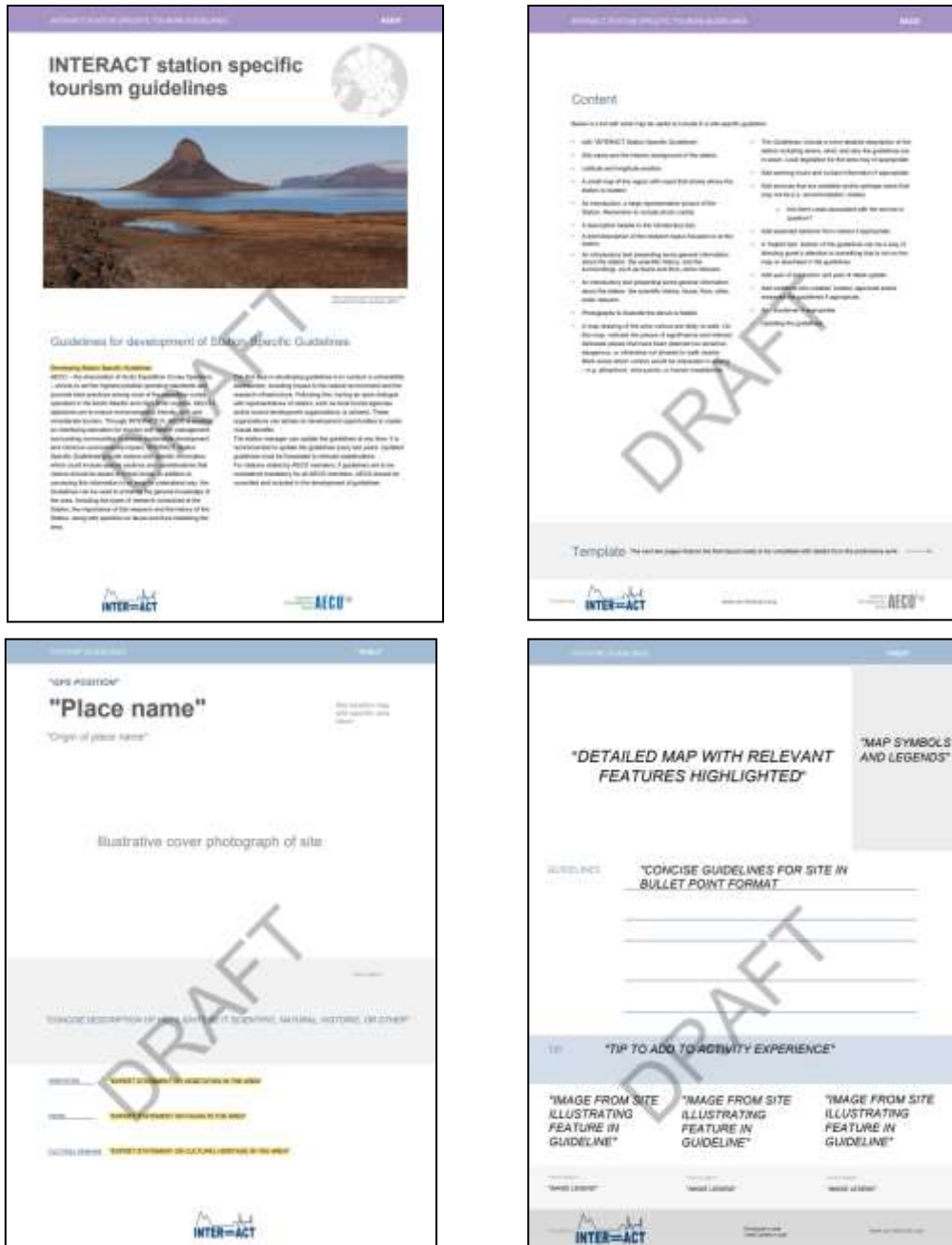


Figure 2. Draft INTERACT station specific tourism guidelines.

2.3. Pilot guidelines

At the Station Managers Forum in May 2021, the survey results and the draft guidelines template were presented. At this Forum, station managers were encouraged to volunteer to develop tourism guidelines as part of the pilot guidelines to inform the template. Two station managers volunteered to develop pilot guidelines and follow up meetings with those station managers took place: Greenland Institute of Natural Resources - Kobbefjorden Station, Greenland, and Aktru Research Station, Russia. Virtual start up meetings were held with the respective station managers Katrine Raundrup and Olga Morozova. The situation in Ukraine resulted in Station Specific Guidelines for Kobbefjorden Research Station only.

The station specific guidelines template was populated with content delivered by Katrine Raundrup. The layout and design were facilitated by AECO. After an initial process of proof-reading and adjusting, the Kobbefjorden Station Specific Guidelines were presented (Figure 3) alongside an AECO status report in person at the INTERACT Station Managers Forum in Keflavik, Iceland in September 2022.

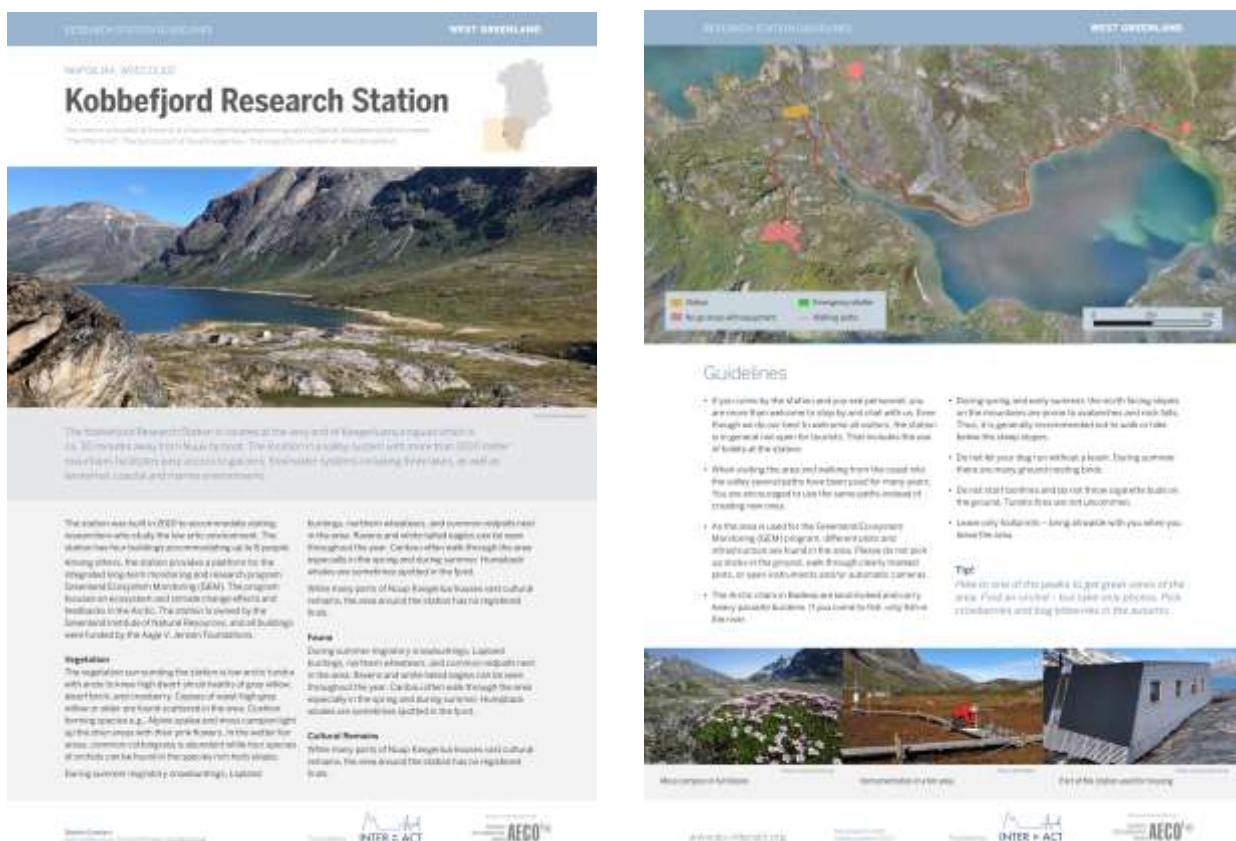
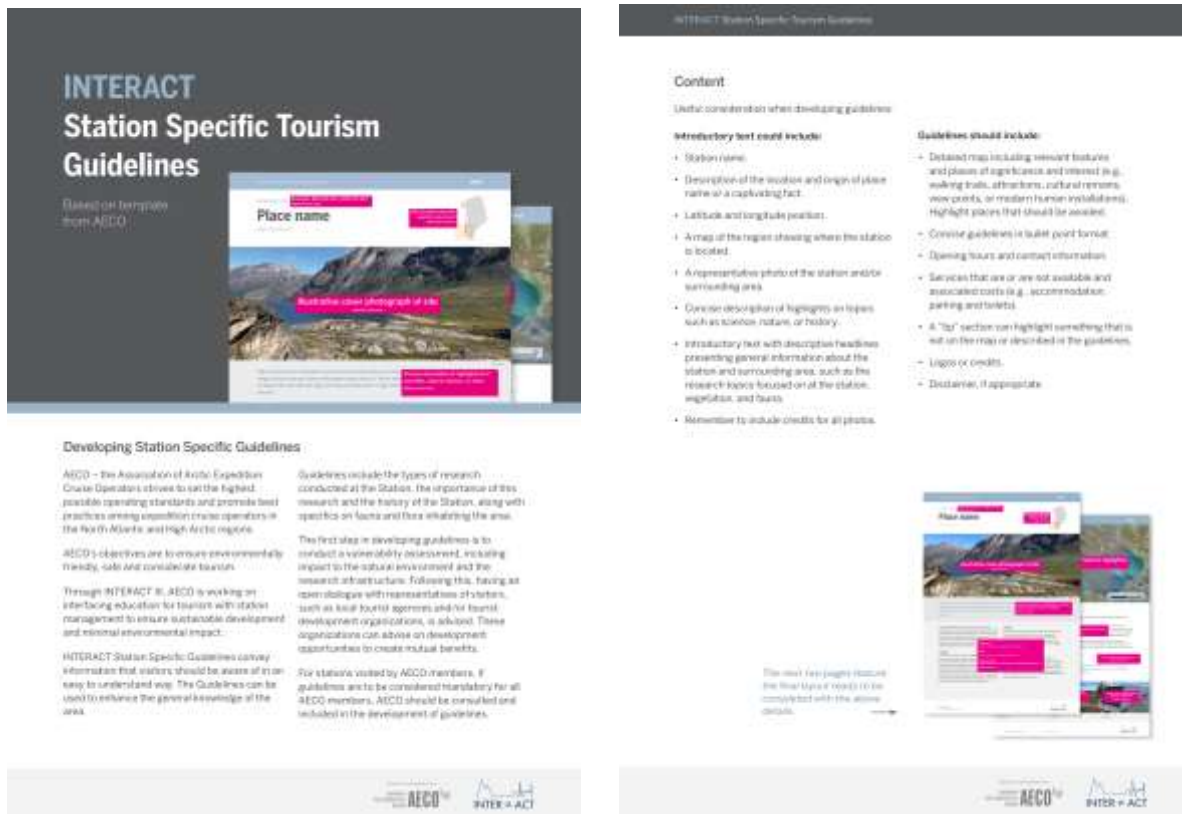


Figure 3. INTERACT Station Specific Tourism Guidelines for Kobbefjorden Research Station.

2.4. Revise the guidelines

The process of developing station specific guidelines for Kobbefjorden Research Station resulted in an evaluation of the station specific guidelines template by AECO. The final version of the Guidelines is shown in Figure 4.



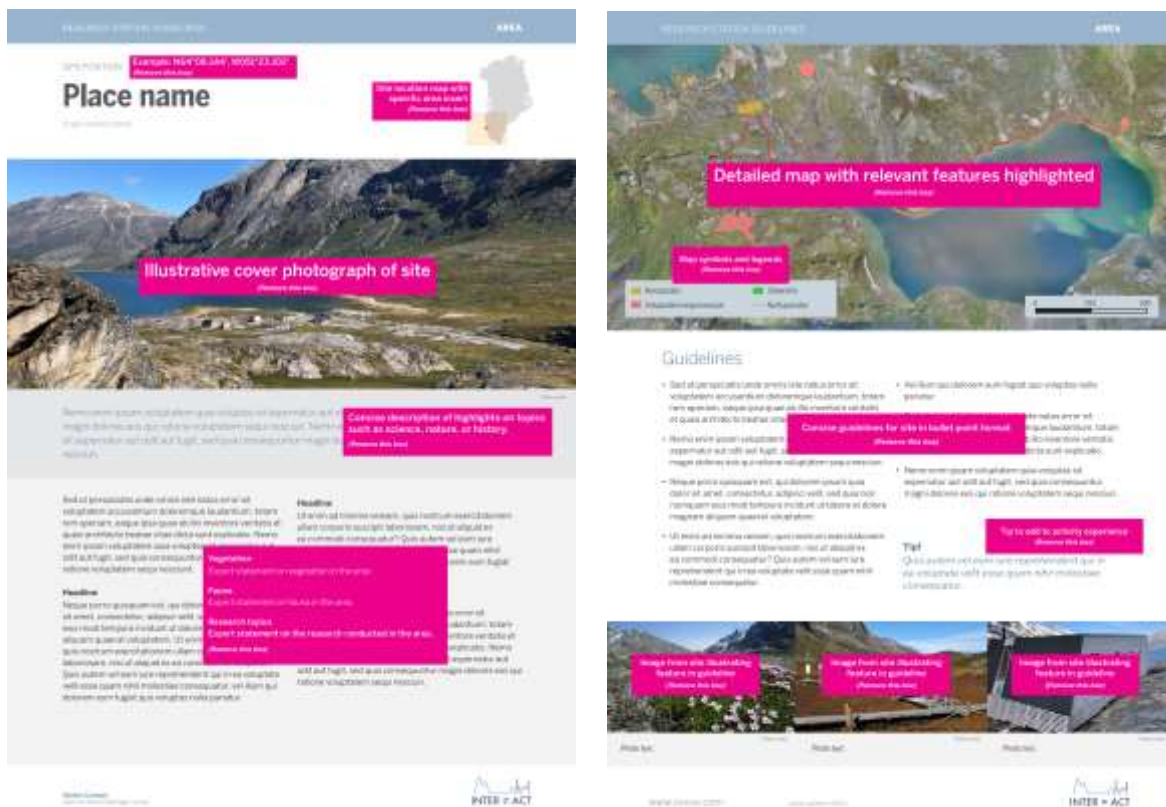


Figure 4. The final version of templates for INTERACT station specific tourism guidelines.

2.5. Invite stations to develop their own guidelines

At the INTERACT Station Managers Forum in September 2022 in Iceland, all station managers were invited to use the Station Specific Tourism Guidelines and template to develop their own specific tourism guidelines. This document will also be available for download on the INTERACT webpage <https://eu-interact.org/tourism/>.