ACCESS2MOUNTAIN

Sustainable Mobility and Tourism in Sensitive Areas of the Alps and the Carpathians:

"THE ACCESS2MOUNTAIN SUCCESS STORY"
FINAL SYNTHESIS

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Jointly for our common future

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TABLE OF CONTENT

1   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sustainable tourism and mobility – a challenge for mountain regions

Sustainable tourism represents a major challenge for today's rural and urban environments – particularly in mountain regions. Underdeveloped and insufficient sustainable transport facilities, paired with growing motorization, are having a significant negative impact on ecologically sensitive areas. Approximately five percent of current global CO_2 emissions are caused by tourism. Of that five percent, transport accounts for 75 percent, and motor vehicles alone are responsible for 32 percent[1].

The European Commission considers mountain regions to be among the areas most sensitive to environmental change. Due to their territorial morphology and their diversity in landscape and wildlife, such regions are particularly vulnerable to and thus highly affected by the impact which transport and tourism have on the environment (e.g. noise and air pollution, barrier effects, etc.). Structural funds like the ERDF[2] aim to counterbalance these handicaps and thus promote the full integration of mountain areas. Such funding helps regions implement measures to reduce traffic loads, to improve conditions for public transport, especially railways, to develop flexible transport systems capable of covering the "last mile", and, not least, to rediscover non-motorized mobility.

ACCESS2MOUNTAIN was a transnational project with 32 partners and observers from 17 countries located in the Alps and Carpathians. Funded by the South East Europe Programme, it aimed to improve sustainable accessibility to and within sensitive mountain regions, for the benefit of both tourist traffic and local populations. Project activities aimed to raise awareness, promote knowledge, provide regions with solutions for sustainable mobility development, to integrate peripheral regions through attractive offers to visitors, and improve the quality of the environment. It equally aimed to strengthen policy dialogue at the transnational and EU levels, as well as between the Alpine and Carpathian regions and their respective conventions.

Concrete results and outputs were:

- seven pilot regions committed to sustainable mobility management (incl. improved small-scale infrastructure and pre-investment measures) with the commitment to future cooperation in this field
- Decision support tool for regional mobility management
- Transnational exchange of best practices in the areas of regional railways and multimodal transport
- Policy dialogue at transnational level involving the Alpine and the Carpathian Convention, resulting in a contribution to the Transport Protocol of the Carpathian Convention
- Final common charter including policy recommendations for the promotion of environmentally and socially sustainable tourism and mobility at regional, national, and transnational/EU levels

Learning from Best Practice: Regional and narrow gauge railways in Tourism

The analysis of 20 renowned regional and narrow gauge railways operating in mountain regions was aimed to identify core factors of success in developing and maintaining a high level of service for different target groups including tourists.

- **Professional market presence and high quality of services:** It is evident that the most successful railways (Rhaetische Bahn, Vinschgerbahn, Usedomer Bäderbahn, Zillertalbahn, Harzer

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[1] UNWTO-UNEP-WMO 2008

[2] European Regional Development Fund

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Schmalspurbahnen...) have become high quality brand names themselves. As successful transport systems they influence the image of their region positively. This does not happen automatically but is achieved by a variety of elements that are adapted to each other strategically.

- **Support by all relevant partners (regional and community policy, tourist associations and population):** The success of regional railways has almost always been dependent on the support from the region, the provinces, municipalities, tourist associations and, of course, the population. Developments therefore require the commitments of several actors in charge since a successful and sustainable railway operation neither is concern of individual persons nor single communities along the track.

Learning from Best Practice: Multimodal Mobility in Tourism

In order to learn how to successfully implement multimodal mobility concepts in mountainous areas, 51 existing best practice examples were analyzed. The collection presents examples in six categories[3] depicting different strategic focuses:

- **Accessibility by public transport:** How to get to and around environmentally sensitive destinations using different modes of transport.
- **Regional and local soft mobility offers:** How users of public transport can get around in the region with a feelingof being well informed and looked after for a car-free holiday.
- **Intermodality:** How public and tourist transport are coordinated and synchronized to provide intermodal links between railway stations and the final destination/accommodation.
- **Pricing and ticketing:** How to combine transport and tourism sights through a coordinated pricing and ticketing system and attractive special offers.
- **Cooperation and coordination in transport and tourism:** How to improve the system of integrated/all-inclusive packages, providing a combination of public transport and tourist offers at destinations.
- **Information/marketing and awareness raising activities:** How to inform tourists and motivate them to choose existing public transport over private motor vehicles.

From the three year transnational cooperation and regional pilot activities implementation, conclusions for Regional Multimodal Mobility Projects could be derived:

It takes several steps to realize a potential project idea. Analyzing framework conditions, considering possible limitations of authority and financial constraints, and creating a **roadmap** for all further action is necessary to reach the desired target state. That also means defining milestones, work packages, budget plans and various co-financing sources, including a concept for stakeholder involvement, target group specific promotion, and public awareness building. Importantly, a monitoring and evaluation method should also be chosen right from the start.

A clear conceptual design is also indispensable for success. In ACCESS2MOUNTAIN, the following lessons that are described in the Synthesis in more details were taken:

- Learning from Best Practice: Though 100% transferability is rare, best practice examples provide project ideas and know-how about operations or technologies.
- Feasibility Studies are a Good Starting point: Feasibility makes it possible to weigh the pros and cons of multiple scenarios and single out risk factors in advance.
- Mountain Areas require Flexibility: The main challenge presented by peripheral mountain regions is – beside topographic or socio-economic factors - managing the varying demand from low to

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[3] Molitor, R. et al. (2008)

high seasons. Flexible demand-responsive systems are necessary to overcome the "last-mile" bottleneck on the last leg of the journey.

Conclusions for Awareness Raising & Stakeholder Involvement

Various communication measures, at various levels and among different target groups, have been aimed at raising awareness about sustainable mobility and tourism and promoting regional ACCESS2MOUNTAIN *products*. Project partners have made use of local media to spread the word and taken advantage of any and every opportunity to gather support for their projects, both at tourism fairs and scientific workshops.

Recommendations are given in two fields of action:

- Alliances and Confidence-Building for Strong Stakeholder Commitment
- Public Awareness – Informing Your Potential Customers

Decision Support System (DSS) for Regional Mobility Management

Applying scientific models, the University of Camerino has developed a user-friendly tool to support regional practitioners and policy makers during the decision-making process for the sustainable development of their regional transport systems.

Best practices provide decision-makers with options for improving regional transport systems. Application, however, requires these practices to be integrated into a strategic vision. DSS supports decision-makers in building a strategic vision by allowing them to choose from alternative scenarios. Based on the refined strategic vision, decision-makers are able to draft various project proposals which subsequently become the object of analytical evaluation.

Policy Dialogue & Recommendations

Apart from providing pilot regions with political support at the national level, ministries and other political partners have been participating in a policy dialogue geared toward the political anchoring of sustainable mobility and tourism at the EU and transnational level as well. The ACCESS2MOUNTAIN participation on the part of numerous ministries from the various Alpine and Carpathian countries as (observing) partners has greatly facilitated the involvement of the national representatives from the Alpine and Carpathian Conventions.

A multi-level policy dialogue with the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention (AC) and the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (ISCC) aimed to offer recommendations for the development of the Transport Protocol of the Carpathian Convention. Joint efforts have resulted in a synchronized draft of the transport protocol text, ready for its submission and adoption at the forthcoming 4th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP4) in September 2014. An adoption of the protocol text at the upcoming COP4 would be of singular strategic importance for the future development of sustainable transport in the Carpathian region.

ACCESS2MOUNTAIN Charter

From its three years of experience in implementing sustainable tourism and mobility at both the regional and transnational level, the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN partnership has developed a clear policy statement.

Its recommendations are geared primarily toward policy makers at every level and are summarized in a common charter, officially adopted at the closing conference.

2   INTRODUCTION

The present synthesis report summarizes the outputs and results of the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project, a three-year transnational project (5/2011–4/2014) in the frame of the South East Europe Programme, aiming to promote "Sustainable Mobility and Tourism in Sensitive Areas of the Alps and the Carpathians". Aim of this synthesis is on the one hand to highlight achievements but also evaluate the project in regard to possible follow-up activities. On the other hand, it shall provide potential project holders recommendations for regional, cross-border or transnational projects in the field of sustainable mobility based on the lessons learned from the project.

The European Commission considers mountain regions to be among the areas most sensitive to environmental change. Due to their territorial morphology and their diversity in landscape and wildlife, such regions are particularly vulnerable to and thus highly affected by the impact which transport and tourism have on the environment (e.g. noise and air pollution, barrier effects, etc.). Structural funds like the ERDF[4] aim to counterbalance these handicaps and thus promote the full integration of mountain areas.

2.1   Organisation of the report

2.1.1   Purpose and target audience of this report

In the last stage of the three-year project implementation, experiences from the project implementation have been gathered and analysed. Lessons learned have been identified and further processed to recommendations for different target groups and political levels. In this way, the "Final synthesis report" synthesizes extensive discussions and feedback loops with the participating project partners as well as observing and associated strategic partners.

Last but not least, the present synthesis is deemed to demonstrate solutions for sustainable mobility in different mountain regions and highlight the added value from the transnational cooperation.

The addressees of this report include potential project holders at different administrative and political levels, regions, ministries, tourist associations, transport operators and any other stakeholders who aim to promote sustainable measures in the field of transport and tourism.

2.1.2   Methodology

The initial data collection for the synthesis report compilation included the screening of progress reports, additional internal documentation of activities, written project outputs, promotion and dissemination material including web-appearance. Special attention was paid to the thematic synthesis reports and thematic recommendations (within WP 4 and WP 5).

In an accompanying participation process with the project partnership, experiences and lessons learned from the project partners but also valuable inputs from observing and associated strategic partners as well as other external experts were gathered. Thereupon, the participation process sought to obtain clear and adaptable recommendations in regard to sustainable follow-up activities.

For this purpose, two capitalization workshops have been implemented. In the frame of the sixth partner meeting in October 2013, parallel workshops with the aim to discuss thematic recommendations within

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[4] European Regional Development Fund

the Work Packages 4, 5 and 6 were held. A workshop during the 7th partner meeting in January was used to refine the recommendations and identify possible fields for follow-up activities.

Documents related to the overall synthesis report (available on the website www.access2mountain.eu):

- **Final Project Brochure** summarizing the highlights of the synthesis report.
- As a final output at project level, a **Common Charter** will be adopted at the final conference in April 2014.
- **Thematic synthesis reports**/final best practice collection in the field of "Railways in tourism" and "Multimodal Transport".

2.2 Sustainable mobility and tourism in sensitive mountain areas

Tourism increasingly involves the use of private cars which cause negative ecological effects – especially in sensitive mountain areas. Accessibility to and within these areas by sustainable public transport and non-motorized mobility is often limited. Therefore, there is room for further enhancing the tourist quantitative and qualitative potential of these regions by improving sustainable accessibility to mountain destinations.

2.2.1 Thematic background

Sustainable tourism represents a major challenge for today's rural and urban environments – particularly in mountain regions. Underdeveloped and insufficient sustainable transport facilities, paired with growing motorization, are having a significant negative impact on ecologically sensitive areas.

The growing number of privately owned cars introduces dependency on this mode of transport. Cars fill our streets, green areas, newly developed suburban shopping districts, as well as rural and recreational areas.

Why are mountain regions so sensitive?

Mountain regions belong to what the European Commission considers sensitive spaces in regard to transport[5]. They are particularly vulnerable to and thus highly affected by environmental impacts from transport and tourism (e.g. noise, air pollution, barrier effects, etc.) due to their territorial morphology, biological and landscape diversity.

Several parameters reinforce the vulnerability of mountain regions. Transport infrastructure is very limited to topographic characteristics like narrow valleys or steep slopes. Hence, traffic flows are highly concentrated on a limited number of trunk links (road and rail), which easily overload. Effects of air pollution have a higher impact due to specific morphological conditions and due to topography. Noise spread is intensified due to specific morphological conditions in mountain regions (valleys, peaks) compared to lowlands. The amphitheatre shape of valleys and their narrowness hinder emissions from diffusing and let them remain in the valley. This causes a similarly bad air quality in these valleys as in an urban area. The same traffic load can thereby *"contribute to a three-times higher concentration of NO_x in the ambient air in mountainous areas than in lowland areas"*.[6]

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[5] European Commission 2003

[6] EEA, Copenhagen 2001, p.20

fig. 1 Pollution (1. and 2.) and noise spread (3.) in mountain valleys compared to flat lands
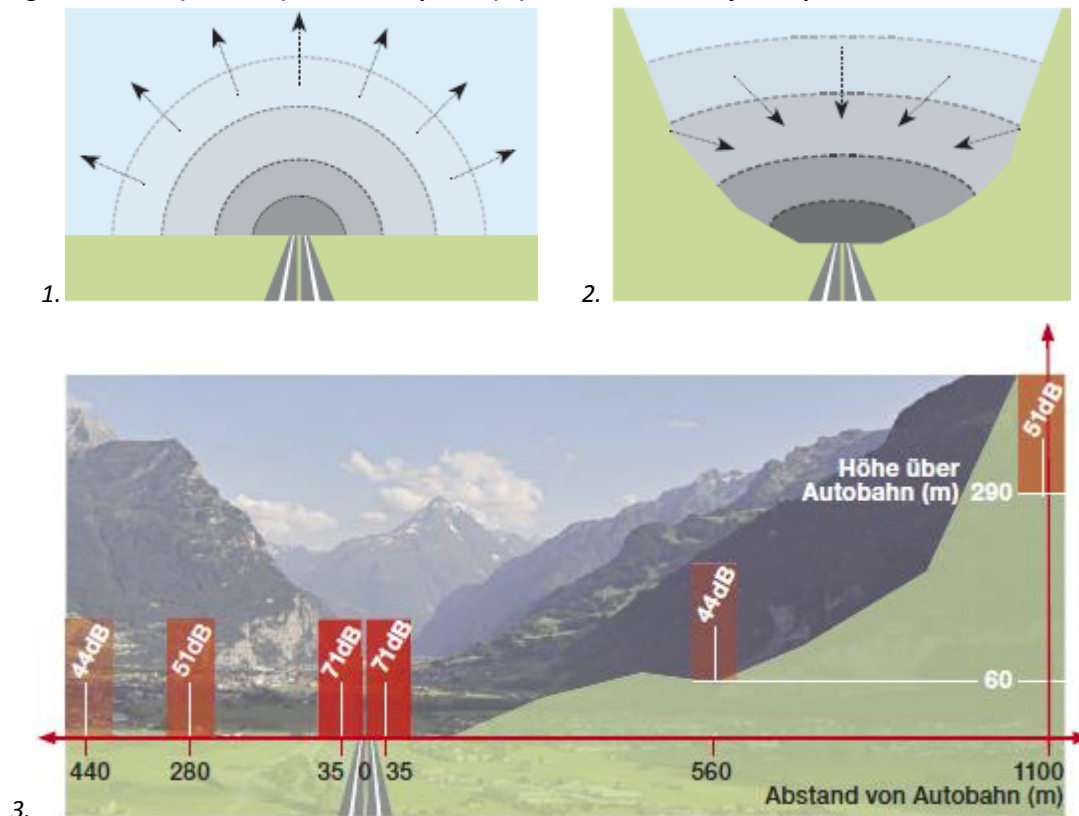
source: Alpen-Initiative, 2010

Why sustainable mobility in tourism?

The OECD defines tourism as the *"activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited"*.[7] Tourism therefore stands for a range of activities with different travel motives and is not limited to holidaymakers. However, tourism of necessity involves transport. This is better expressed for instance by the German Word "Fremdenverkehr" for "Tourism" which already includes the word "Verkehr"/"Transport"). Thus, in discussions about sustainable tourism, transport and its negative environmental effects have to be equally considered.

Actual and comparable information on modal shares in tourism mobility is hardly available; however, the few data at hand is nonetheless significant and alarming. According to an intermediary update on tourism statistics by the "Deutsche Reiseanalyse" for the year 2012, 47 percent of holiday trips (more than 5 days) of the resident population in Germany are made by car, 37 percent by plane, eight percent by coach and only five percent by train. In comparison, in the year 2000 the shares had been: 49 percent by car, 37 percent by plane, nine percent by coach and six percent by train – an unsatisfying development.[8] Surely, this statistic cannot equally speak for the development in the South East Europe region, however, it is an efficy of the general success or failure of efforts in promoting sustainable mobility.

The identification of emissions from tourism-related transport is based on multiplying transport distances with average emission factors (e.g. averaged amount of CO_2 emitted for transporting one person over

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[7] Eurostat, OECD, WTO, UNSD 2001

[8] FUR, Kiel 2013

one kilometre).[9] The average CO_2 emission factors vary considerably among transport modes. While cars emit 0,133 kg CO_2 per pkm, the average factor for rail is only 0,027 and for coach only 0,022 kg CO_2 per pkm, which is mainly due to the higher occupancy rates of rail and coach.[10]

Conventional modes of transportation involve emissions which can have negative effects on the environment and climate. Approximately five percent of current global CO_2 emissions are caused by tourism, which is 1.285 MT CO_2. 75 percent of those CO_2 emissions caused by tourism are **due to transportation** in general. Among emissions from transport, 32 percent are caused by car, 40 percent by air transport and three percent by other transport. Beside transport, energy consumption for accomodation accounts for 21 percent and tourism activities account for four percent.[11]

But it is not only the impact from CO_2 emissions, that worries experts in the field of sustainable tourism and mobility, but also a range of other pollutants that affect the micro climate. While air transport causes global problems, road transportation accounts for the local ones. According to an analysis by Paul Peeters et al., air transport has the largest impact on climate change (GHG) per passenger-kilometre, while the car causes the largest impacts on air quality (PM).[12]

Apart from the environmental effect of transport, there is also an economic aspect of transport in mountain regions. The mountain morphology significantly increases the costs of constructing and maintaining transport infrastructure.[13] Existing roads and railway tracks shall therefore be better used instead of building new infrastructure.

Taking the above described negative effects of tourism and tourism-related transport into account, we still cannot deny that tourism is important for mountain regions as a source of income. Hence it is all the more important to reduce transport loads and make unavoidable transport as efficient and environmentally friendly as possible in order to maintain functioning ecosystems in mountain regions. This becomes last but not least important due to the fact that a protected natural landscape is an essential asset for tourism attractiveness.

Development opportunities for sensitive mountain regions shall therefore be based on scenarios for sustainable growth which respect a balance between tourism development and environmental, social and economic sustainability.

In the field of tourism mobility, in order to reduce the negative impacts of tourism mobility, these scenarios shall involve measures

- to improve access by railways and public transport;
- to combine long distance travelling with regional and local services for the last mile in the region and municipality;
- to improve access for cyclists and pedestrians;
- to create high quality packages of soft mobility and tourism offers;
- to promote alternative vehicles and technologies (e.g. e-mobility) and
- to raise awareness for environmentally friendly tourism and mobility.

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[9] Gössling 2010, p.68

[10] Peeters et al. 2007 (in: Gössling, 2010, p.69)

[11] UNWTO/Gössling 2008/2010

[12] Peters et al. 2004 (in: BMLFUW, 2006, p.20)

[13] European Commission 2004

2.2.2 Political and strategic framework

Acknowledgements by the European Union in terms of transport in mountain regions

In the "White Paper" [14] describing the foundations of a future **EU transport policy**, objectives are set for specific fields in transport, as urban or regional transport, passenger or freight transport. To pick some examples, which are deemed relevant in this context, the targets involve among others:

- a reduction of Greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) in transport by minus 60 percent compared to 1990 by the year 2050 including aviation
- a reduction of conventionally fuelled cars in urban transport (cars with internal combustion engine) by minus 50 percent until 2030 and minus 100 percent by 2050
- a shift of medium-distance passenger transport to rail up to 2050
- a reduction of the number of people exposed to and disturbed by traffic noise levels which endanger health and quality of life

Aside from general objectives in regard to sustainable transport development, the White Paper also highlights mountain areas as one of the **most sensitive areas** which often suffer from transit, be it by tunnel or by mountain passes. Therefore it is deemed necessary to give priority to rail transport but also to transport by waterways.[15] Mountain regions are furthermore considered to have limited development potential (e.g. due to protected areas, natural disasters and the effects of climate change) - a so called important "sensor for Europe"[16] - and shall therefore be particularly supported by structural funds. Transnational and cross-border programmes are in particular appropriate in these cases, since mountain areas can often show traditional cross-border cooperation due to the historical development.

The challenge is among others to maintain a certain quality and proximity of services of general interest in mountain areas, which is important for the retention of the local (particularly younger) population. Considering the settlement structure and topography, social infrastructure but also public transport services are difficult to develop and maintain. As a result, the individual transport prevails. This applies to the local mobility pattern but also to tourists visiting the regions mainly by car. Even if rail connections exist, the missing link is in the most cases the "last mile" from the regional railway station to the final destination. According to the European Commission, the Structural Funds policy is obliged to provide assistance to those "handicapped" mountain territories and their populations in order to integrate them into the Community space and "so prevent their being marginalized".[17]

It is up to the individual member states and regions to take advantage of funding opportunities promoting a shift to more environmentally friendly modes of transport. Such funding helps regions implement measures to reduce traffic loads, to improve conditions for public transport, especially railways, to develop flexible transport systems capable of covering the "last mile", and, not least, to rediscover non-motorized mobility.

Benefitting the regional development by supporting actions like these helps to reduce regional disparities within the European space; this is defined as the main task of the European Regional Develpment Fund (ERDF)[18]. In terms of transnational cooperation programms, like the South East Europe Programme, the

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[14] European Commission 2011

[15] European Commission 2003, p.44

[16] European Commission 2003, p.23

[17] European Commission 2003,p.30

[18] European Commission 2006

ERDF particularly assits the "European territorial cooperation" objective of the European cohesion policy 2007-2013.

This objective is further defined by three key target areas:

- **The development of cross-border economic, social and environmental activities through joint strategies for sustainable territorial development.** This involves, for example, encouraging entrepreneurship, protection and management of natural and cultural resources, and the development of collaboration, capacities and the joint use of infrastructures;

- **Establishing and developing transnational cooperation,** including bilateral cooperation between maritime regions. The priorities are innovation, the environment, better accessibility and sustainable urban development;

- **Reinforcing the effectiveness of regional policy** by encouraging regional and local authorities to form networks and exchange experience.

Alpine and Carpathian Convention

On a more regional level especially in regard to ecologically sensitive areas, the need for action in the field of transport has been similarly aknowledged taking into account the overall objectives at EU level. Both the major European regional mountain agreements, **the Alpine Convention** (founded in 1995) **and the Carpathian Convention** (founded in 2003), recognize that sustainable tourism, growing together with sustainable mobility services, is a key-element for regional economic development and a source of income and wellbeing.

The Alpine Convention (AC) (in the Tourism and Transport Protocols) and the Carpathian Convention (CC) state sustainable transport in the context of tourism as an important issue and call for cooperation in this field. In the framework of the AC-Transport Group (subgroup "Sustainable Mobility") a report was elaborated on "Public Transport accessibility of alpine tourist resorts from major European origin regions and cities of tourists" in March 2009.

Based on results of the INTERREG IIIB CADSES "Carpathian Project", the Second Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention adopted recommendations directed at improving tourist accessibility in the Carpathians, at adopting management systems for sustainable transport, and at seeking Working Groups for drafting a Protocol on "Sustainable Transport" and "Tourism" which shall pursue a sustainable transport policy at transnational level to be concretely implemented on national and regional scale.

The ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project made a significant contribution to this target by strengthening the exchange between the Alpine and the Carpathian Convention and facilitating the development of a Transport Protocol to the Carpathian Convention. Project results are further being integrated into the work of the Alpine and Carpathian Convention.

Excursus: The Transport Protocol to the Alpine Convention

The main objective of the Transport Protocol of the Alpine Convention is to pursue a sustainable transport policy which will reduce the negative effects of and risks posed by intra-Alpine and transalpine transport to a level which is not harmful to people, flora and fauna and their environments and habitats; inter alia, by transferring an increasing amount of transport, especially freight transport, to the railways, in particular by creating appropriate infrastructures and incentives in line with market principle.[19]

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[19] Alpine Convention website, 2014b

2.3 The ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project

Previous projects and initiatives in the field of sustsainable transport and tourism have paved the way for the creation of the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project. The INTERREG IIIB Alpine Space project "Alps Mobility II" developed the "Alpine Pearls"-tourism destinations[20] with soft mobility guarantee. Based on that and on activities in the framework of the climate protection-initiative "klimaaktiv mobil", the Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management initiated the idea for a transnational project on improving sustainable accessibility of (potential) tourism regions in (peripheral) mountain regions having natural assets.

In May 2011, the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project started as a transnational collaboration between 32 partners and observers from 17 countries located in the Alps and Carpathians. Funded by the South East Europe Programme, it aims to improve sustainable accessibility to and within sensitive mountain regions, for the benefit of both tourist traffic and local populations. Project activities aim to raise awareness, promote knowledge, provide regions with solutions for sustainable mobility development, to integrate peripheral regions through attractive offers to visitors, and improve the quality of the environment. It equally aims to strengthen policy dialogue at the transnational and EU levels, as well as between the Alpine and Carpathian regions and their respective conventions.

2.3.1 Strategic framework - South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Programme

Financed from the European Regional Development Fund, the South East Europe programme was one of 13 transnational cooperation programmes pursuing the "European Territorial Cooperation" Objective during the period 2007-2013. Four Priority Axes - in line with the Lisbon and Gothenburg priorities and contributing to the integration process of the non-EU member states - were building the framework for the thematic orientation of the concrete projects to be funded: Innovation, Environment, Accessibility, and Sustainable Growth Areas. The ACCESS2MOUNTAIN operates in the framework of the priority axis 3: "Improvement of the accessibility" of the programme. Within that, accessibility is considered as one of the prime requirements for economic development and growth and finally for territorial cohesion.

In order to exchange goods and ideas between the regions, the programme facilitates new networks or revitalizes existing networks that have become fragmented or have lost their connection beyond the national borders. This applies to physical and virtual networks that shall be promoted within this priority axis.

The following Areas of Intervention (AoI) were identified to contribute to the priority axis 3:

AoI 3.1: Improve co-ordination in promoting, planning and operation for primary and secondary transportation networks

AoI 3.2: Develop strategies to tackle the "digital divide"

AoI 3.3: Improve framework conditions for multi-modal platforms

The ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project is supposed to operate especially in the first Area of Intervention (AoI 3.1 "Improve co-ordination in promoting, planning and operation for primary and secondary transportation networks") in this field. Thereunder, it tackles the issues of "Railways" (Thematic code no. 16) and "Urban Transport" (Thematic code no.25).

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[20] See http://www.alpine-pearls.com/en/home.html for further information.

Within this priority, the SEE Programme aims at improving accessibility to/from/across the partner countries with a transnatinoal approach. Thereby each approved project was supposed to ensure a benefit to the accessibility of a large part of the SEE Programme area. It has to be emphasized, that still the programme does not finance infrastructures, but only small-scale investments. In fact, it concentrates on the development of the existing situation to ensure the improvement of accessibility with limited resources.[21]

However, the impact of the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project is not limited to "Accessibility". In this regard, also the AoI 2.4 "Promote energy and resource efficiency'" within priority axis 2: "Protection and improvement of the environment", thereunder thematic code no. 52 "Promotion of clean urban transport" is addressed.

2.3.2 ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project area

The ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project is based on the cooperation of twelve project partners (therefrom ten financing partners), two associated strategic partners and 18 observing partners, all coming from regions covered by the Alpine or the Carpathian Convention.

The consortium benefits from a mixed partnership structure encompassing tourist associations (2), regional development agencies (2), national parks (1), research institutions (1), universities (1), as well as ministries (1) and other public institutions (1) involved in the areas of transport, environment, and tourism. The project is closely linked to a number of very distinct territories where tourism is present to a greater or lesser degree. The project implements demonstration projects adapted to the needs of these pilot regions.

fig. 2 Project partners

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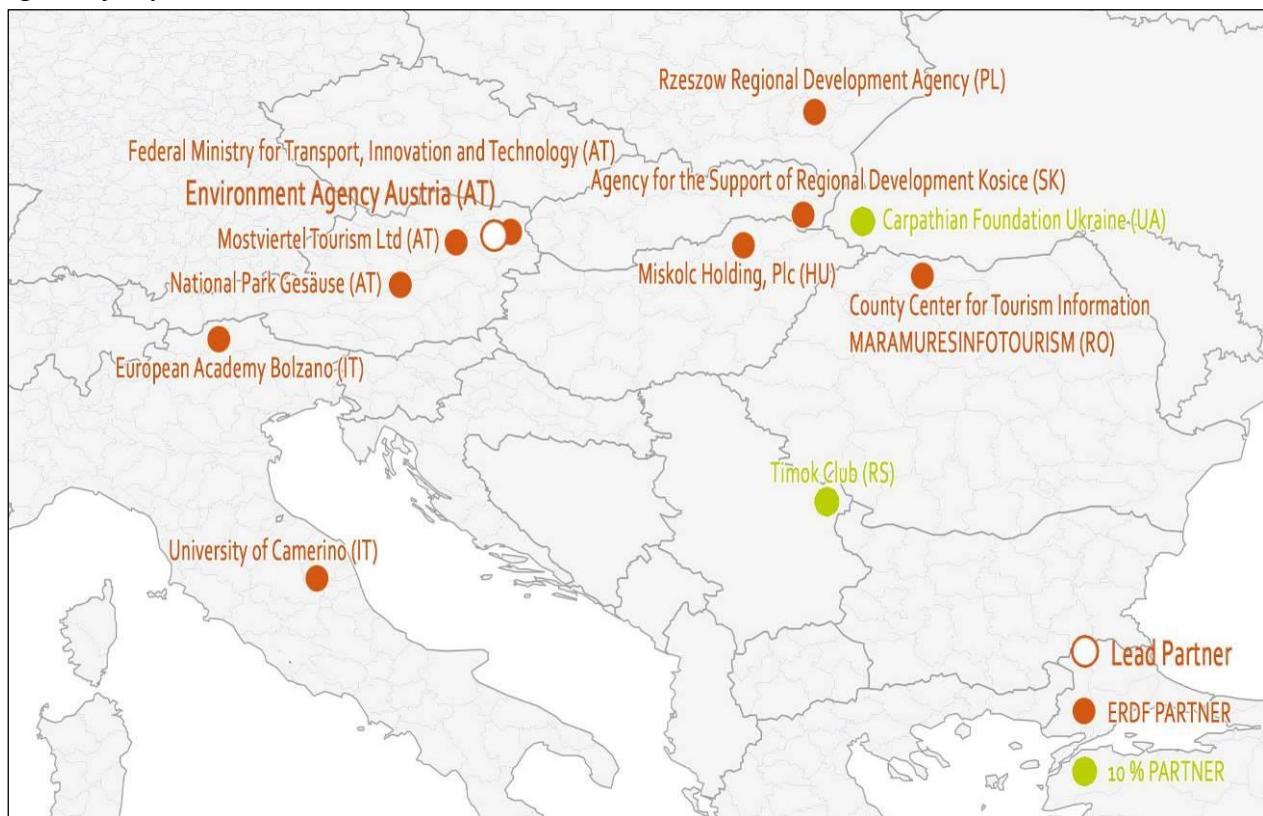
[21] South East Europe Programme website

In ACCESS2MOUNTAIN, seven pilot regions spread over the Alps and Carpathians committed themselves to sustainable mobility management.

The Carpathians are Europe's largest mountain range, a unique natural treasure of great beauty and ecological value and home to the headwaters of several major rivers. The range constitutes a major ecological, economic, cultural, recreational, and residential environment in the heart of Europe. It is home to about 18 million people and hosts approximately 31 million guests a year.[22]

The Alps are among the most ecologically sensitive areas in Europe and are the natural, cultural, economic and residential environment for nearly 14 million people. The Alps are also Europe's most important recreational area, with about 95 million long-stay visitors and an additional 60 million same-day visitors per year.[23] Tourism, and in particular the motorized transport associated with it, is having an increasingly negative impact on the Alps.

fig. 3 Pilot regions
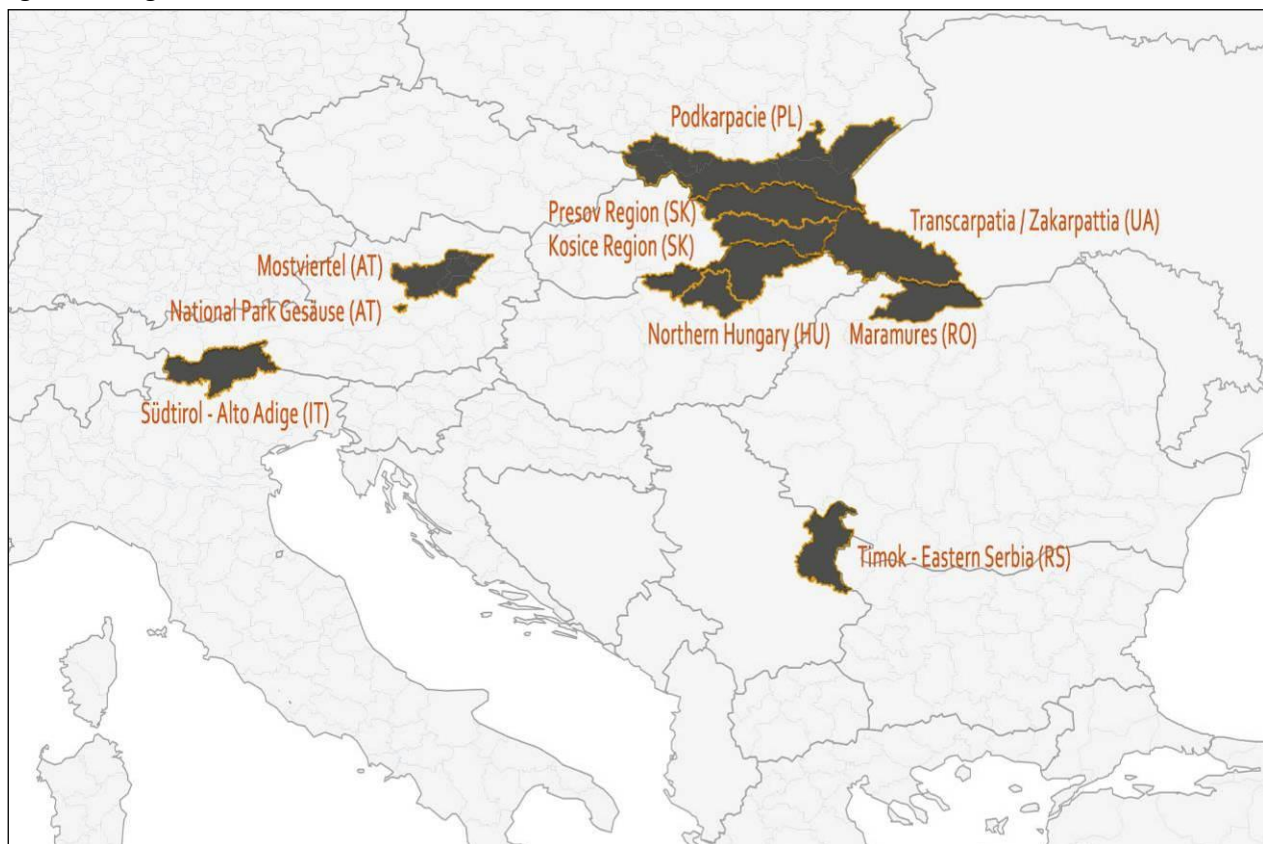
The diversity of the pilot regions reveals different challenges related to the principal aim of sustainable transport and tourism.

Among the regions, there are vastly disparate levels of tourist traffic, from highly frequented areas such as South Tyrol to less popular ones where tourism is only slowly emerging, as in Maramures. While some regions are in transition to green mobility along a pre-existing network of robust transportation routes, in other regions there is little viable infrastructure, to serve as a precondition. The pilot regions are located in eight different countries across the Alps and Carpathians; that being said, the question is not always "how" a region can be made accessible, but "if". Eager for new development opportunities, these regions wish to promote sustainable growth scenarios implying a balance between emerging tourism and

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[22] Ruffini, F., Ptácek, P., 2009

[23] Alpine Convention Website, 2014a

environmental protection. Protected landscapes are seen as an essential asset for tourism attractiveness and, at the same time, benefit the local economy.

2.3.3 Objectives of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN

The overall objective of the project is to increase sustainable accessibility and connections to, between and within sensitive mountain regions, which should benefit all users. Specific objectives include:

KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVE

- Not only at policy level, but for the wider public audience, it is important to **raise awareness** for transport problems especially in highly sensitive region like mountain areas and highlight the importance of sustainable transport and tourism. **Promotion and marketing strategies** making use of various communication channels are being developed within the project to raise knowledge and awareness for the topic among different target groups in order to make a real impact among the actual end-users.

INFRASTRUCTURE/CONNECTION OBJECTIVE

- Feasibility to increase soft tourist mobility in sensitive mountain regions exemplified in pilot regions; efficient, attractive, and competitive small **railways** and **intermodal transport** for tourism development in Alpine and Carpathian areas with similar problems but different backgrounds. Additional benefits for public everyday mobility and in some areas also for environmentally sustainable freight transport.

TRANSNATIONAL MOUNTAIN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE

- Strengthened peripheral mountain regions through **innovative, competitive offers** for – and raised income by – tourism, new accessibility possibilities and follow-up investment.

ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVE

- The project promotes the use of **existing railway infrastructure** and aims to close missing links at regional and local level by additional sustainable mobility offers. Regional and cross-border mobility concepts are aiming to enable **multimodal transport including non-motorized mobility** (e.g. cycling) and public transport in order to facilitate longer multimodal transport chains. Thereby, modal shifts from individual car traffic to sustainable means of transport can be promoted. This helps to improve the quality of the environment, reducing greenhouse gases and pollutants from transport in sensitive areas.

MULTI-LEVEL POLICY OBJECTIVE

- The involvement of the Alpine and Carpathian Convention ensures the integration of project results in the **transnational policy development process**, which facilitates a broad transfer also after the project duration. Through the participation of project partners in meetings of the working group on transport to the Carpathian Convention, lessons learned from the project can influence the elaboration process of the protocol on transport of the Carpathian Convention.

2.3.4 Overview of project activities

Structured in seven Work Packages (fig. 4), the project embraced activities in the field of mobility management, awareness raising and policy development.

- Collection of best practices in railway operations and multi-modal transport in tourist regions
- Studies on the feasibility of intermodal routes, possible new offers and ticketing services, new integrated transport-tourist packages in model-regions
- Development of soft mobility measures and first steps towards implementation in seven pilot regions
- Small scale infrastructure projects for demonstration and testing
- Development of communication strategies, marketing and awareness raising activities for sustainable tourist & mobility offers
- Policy support for the definition of a Protocol on Transport to the Carpathian Convention

fig. 4 Work scheme
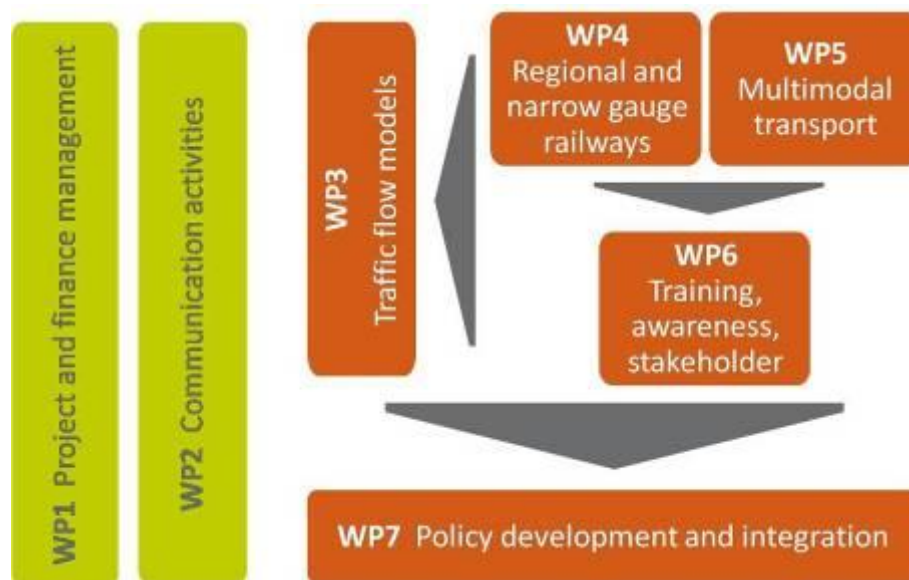
These activities leaded to concrete outputs and results on different levels:

- Seven pilot regions with raised awareness engaged in sustainable mobility management (incl. improved small-scale infrastructure and pre-investment measures) with the commitment to future cooperation in this field.
- Decision support tool for regional mobility management
- Transnational exchange of best practices in the thematic fields of regional railways and multimodal transport
- Policy dialogue at transnational level involving the Alpine and the Carpathian Convention, resulting in a contribution to the Transport Protocol to the Carpathian Convention
- Final common charter including policy recommendations for the promotion of environmentally and socially sustainable tourism and mobility at regional, national, and transnational/EU levels

3 MOBILITY MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS IN MOUNTAIN TOURISM USING RAILWAYS AND MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT

The present chapter is highlighting project achievements through regional pilot activities in the thematic fields of „Multimodal transport" and „Regional and narrow gauge railways".
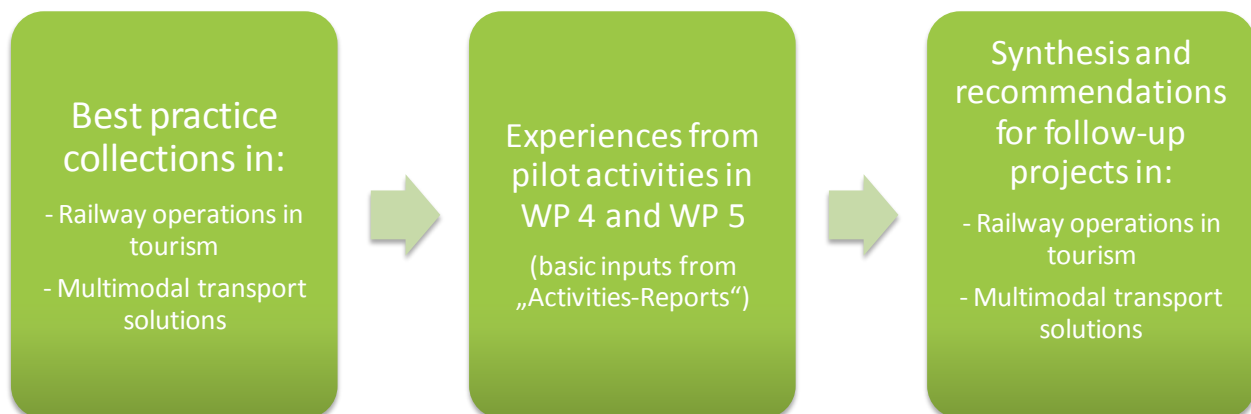
In order to capitalise on existing experiences and best practices in other regions with similar or different framework conditions, best practice collections have been developed at first to provide the partners a reference work for their regional and cross-border pilot activities. Research and evaluation resulted in two thematic best practice studies, whereas one is focusing on regional and narrow gauge railways and the other about multimodal transport for regional tourism.

The results of the best practice analyses were not only discussed among the project partners but spread over a wider audience of stakeholders, experts and politicians. A best practice brochure, developed primarily on occasion of the SWOMM (Vienna, 11th December 2013) presented the main highlights of the two studies including selected best practice examples.

The ACCESS2MOUNTAIN Project partners took advantage of best practice examples and used them as a reference for their own regional activities. In the last phase of the project, after the pilot implementation of mobility measures, the project partners capitalized on their experiences and lessons learned and identified recommendations for future project holders and regional stakeholders.

In the end, the two thematic best practice collections, could be enriched with agreed recommendations from the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project implementation. Last but not least, the transferability of before formulated recommendations and success factors was trying to be verified.

fig. 5 The ACCESS2MOUNTAIN approach

Best practice collections in:
- Railway operations in tourism
- Multimodal transport solutions

Experiences from pilot activities in WP 4 and WP 5
(basic inputs from „Activities-Reports")

Synthesis and recommendations for follow-up projects in:
- Railway operations in tourism
- Multimodal transport solutions

3.1 Thematic focuses of the pilot activities

3.1.1 Regional and narrow gauge Railways

In line with the SEE programme`s AoI 3.1 "Improve co-ordination in promoting, planning and operation for primary and secondary transportation", thereunder thematic code 16 "Railways", one thematic focus of the project was the improvement of the existing railway net in the Alps and Carpathians and the awareness for railways as an asset for regional tourism. Railways can be both – simple connection from A to B or a tourist attraction in itself. Hence, under certain circumstances, railways in combination with

additional mobility services for the "last mile" can fully replace touristic car traffic, covering the access to the region but also on-site mobility.

Drawing attention to existing railway connections enriched with new services for specific target groups shall attract more tourists and locals to abstain from individual car use and prefer the sustainable transport chain. Regional inventories, being developed within ACCESS2MOUNTAIN, aim to identify abandoned and neglected railways with a potential to be reused for tourism and provide an important basis for follow-up projects. Cooperation between tourist associations, regional authorities and railway operators promoted by the project partners shall foster a joint development in the future. A common understanding followed by a joint commitment is a precondition for a well-founded cooperation in the long run.

A thematic focus of the pilot activities was set on the combination of railways and cycling, which can be facilitated by the installation of bike racks on trains and an integrated guidance system on the one hand as well as the development of attractive visitor packages on the other hand.

3.1.2 Multimodal transport

Not for all regions train infrastructure exists; often there are missing links in the connection between major rail links on the one hand and on the "last mile" on the other hand. Additional services involving different sustainable means of transport, thereunder local busses and demand-oriented systems as well as non-motorized means such as (e-)bikes are needed to fill these gaps.

In the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN pilot regions, where preconditions for installing a regular public transport system were limited, particularly cycling shall be promoted as a competitive alternative choice for tourist mobility within the region. Especially in this field, the multimodal transport[24] is indispensable. Cycling gains attractiveness if combinable with a bus or railway ride that allows covering longer distances.

The newly created mobility offers shall benefit all potential users, tourists as well as the local population. Last but not least, making the regions better accessible and thereby attracting visitors benefits the regional economic development with tourism as a source of income and wellbeing.

The project facilitated the development of (cross-border) feasibility studies for intermodal routes resulting in joint action plans for the concrete future cooperation in the field of sustainable multimodal transport. In order to raise awareness for the topic among the wider public audience, these technical and political concepts were accompanied by marketing strategies.

Similar to the specific thematic focus on railways, another best practice collection was developed in the field of multimodal transport which provides the project partners useful incentives for their regional projects. In developing sustainable multimodal mobility offers/packages the partners are following a jointly developed vision for the implementation of sustainable mobility in tourism.

3.2 Regional pilot projects: Multimodal transport, narrow gauge railways and cycling

The following abstracts shall shortly present the regional pilot projects, which were prepared in accordance to the approved project application form and further developed in consideration of actual needs and framework conditions of the pilot regions. Last but not least, the final specification was inspired by examples from the best practice collections.

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[24] "Multimodal transport" here refers to the use of two or more modes of transport. In this context, it is primarily referring to passenger, although in general applicable to freight transport as well.

A thematic focus is set on the combination of railways or busses with cycling, which can be facilitated by the installation of bike racks on trains or busses and an integrated guidance system on the one hand as well as the development of attractive visitor packages on the other hand.

3.2.1 The GSEISPUR (Gesäuse Nationalpark)

"…Never walk alone! Transnational cooperation helps to better understand the underlying challenges and find solutions which go above and beyond regional limitations." David Osebik, National Park Gesäuse

Regional key data	
NUTS Identification number	AT222 Liezen
Population	650
Surface	110 km²
GDP per inhabitant, in purchasing power standard by Nuts3 relating to EU-27 average (100%)	105%
Agricultural land	3%
Settlement structure	no cities, no towns, 1 village
Number of tourist establishments (NUTS3 Level)	806
Net occupancy rate of bed places in hotels and similar	12,2%

The pilot region „Alpenregion National Park Gesäuse" comprises parts of the Gesäuse National Park and the Nature Park Eisenwurzen in northern Styria. The focal points of local tourism vary by locale, with adventure sports on the Salza river, mountaineering in the Gesäuse mountains, and culture in Admont. Sustainable public transport currently exists in the form of a regional railway and bus lines to important regional centres. There are railway connections from Vienna, Linz and Graz stopping at Selzthal, Liezen, Ardning, Kleinreifling and Weißenbach an der Enns.

Nevertheless, in the last year the region had to suffer a strong depletion of the regional connections (Graz, Salzburg and Linz). Just at the weekend only one pair of trains runs from Amstetten to Gesäuse and back. Overall, the accessibility by public transport for the guests is very limited, it is easier to arrive there then to leave again and very difficult to plan for not local guests. Even for the local people the public transport system in the region is confusing and it is difficult to plan a travel. Mainly because there are different traffic suppliers and no overall connection or connected information platform. Thus the public transport system has a bad reputation amongst the locals which is a problem for future development. For guests it is even worse, because there is a major lack of information and possibilities.

Project description

Despite massive reductions in the regional public transport offers at the project start of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN, the project partner *National Park Gesäuse* took up this big challenge and developed a concept for an **integrative mobility platform** driven by regional stakeholders.

The GSEISPUR mobility platform offers flexible mobility for local and visiting outdoorsmen, thereunder mainly hikers and bikers, from May to October. Since its launch in June 2013, the GSEISPUR consists of a shuttle service to/from the railway station "Selzthal" (GSEISHUTTLESPUR), a door-to-door taxi service (GSEISTAXISPUR) and an e-scooter rental (GSEISMOPEDSPUR). These products will be completed step by

step with several regional initiatives fulfilling the principles of soft-mobility. As an additional offer among the core GSEIS-services, a car rental is planned to be started probably in summer 2014. In order to make services and tourism packages more generally accessible, a website and smart phone app for Android and iOS ("Nationalpark Gesäuse App") with an order and dispatch system have been introduced. Tablets with dispatch and information functions used by rangers, visitor offices and in the taxi businesses facilitate the daily work with guests.

The response after just one season has been very positive. Despite the initial lack of web and marketing support, 1638 passengers took advantage of the shuttle from June to October 2013, averaging nearly 3.5 passengers per trip. This is a good performance in terms of economic and ecologic efficiency.

Core outputs

Mobility platform including new sustainable mobility services in the region (GSEISPUR) **Guest card**	• Shuttle service at the supraregional railway station Selzthal (GSEISHUTTLESPUR) • Door2door taxi system (GSEISTAXISPUR) • E-Scooter rental (GSEISMOPEDSPUR) • Ski-shuttle on the regional skiing resort (GSEISKISPUR) • Several fun packages (biking, rafting, riding etc.)
Software development: GSEISPUR website **www.gseispur.at** and mobile application	
Soft mobility packages – integrated in yearly programmes of National Park Gesäuse 2012, 2013 and 2014	
	E-scooter rental (GSEISMOPEDSPUR) Shuttle services (GSEISPUR)

Next steps

It became apparent that these car-free offers might activate a new target group.

The next three years have several challenges in store: logistic and financial maintenance, enhancement of mobility services, and the increase of passenger frequency. The National Park also has long-term plans to develop a year-round flexible transport system in cooperation with local municipalities. In detail, these plans are:

- Raising passenger numbers together with ecological and economic performance (passengers/travel)
- Further package development together with stakeholders
- Additional marketing efforts in urban areas (Vienna and Graz)
- Integration of municipalities in mobility system in order to perform an all year round community bus system
- Step by step legal push towards soft means of transport (e.g. parking lot management)

3.2.2 " Ötscher:reich" - Mobility Management in the Heart of Nature" (Mostviertel Tourism)

"This project has clearly shown that despite the different member states with their different historic and cultural backgrounds, the project partners are facing very similar challenges when it comes to small and narrow gauge railways. In this sense, the best practice collection proved very helpful, since many success factors can be applied by the different project partners as well." Michael Gansch, Mostviertel Tourism GmbH

Regional key data	
NUTS Identification number	AT121 Mostviertel-Eisenwurzen
Population	260.683
Surface	3.355 km²
GDP per inhabitant, in purchasing power standard by Nuts3 relating to EU-27 average (100%)	94%
Agricultural land	64%
Settlement structure	no cities, 9 towns, 767 villages
Number of tourist establishments (NUTS3 Level)	309
Net occupancy rate of bed places in hotels and similar	9,4%

The Mostviertel region of Lower Austria, with its gently rolling landscape in the north and its rugged mountains in the south, offers a wide range of outdoor activities, catering to adventurers and families alike. Conscious of its responsibility to preserve its natural heritage, the Mostviertel has acknowledged sustainability as an essential principle of its regional development and planning.

Accordingly, three nature parks and a wilderness zone have been established and every year in September, a high-level conference on sustainable tourism takes place in the region. Despite of the relatively high awareness for sustainable development, the regional transport system still has problems to provide attractive sustainable mobility offers.

Project description

The *Mostviertel-Tourism Ltd.* has joined ACCESS2MOUNTAIN in order to identify possibilities for regional public transport systems within and in the area around the nature park Ötscher-Tormäuer. This ecologically sensitive area which is, however, exposed to a high tourist frequentation, has an eminent need for transport between the two valleys divided by the Ötscher. In the sense of sustainable mobility, the **narrow-gauge railway "Mariazellerbahn",** the oldest electrified narrow-gauge railway line in Austria, which runs through the nature park, plays a crucial role.

Thus one task to be dealt with in the frame of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN, was the evaluation and **pilot testing of possible measures to improve the service offered by the railway**. Measures tested included seat reservation systems for guests, organizing luggage and passenger transportation for cyclists visiting the town of Mariazell and offering e-bike rental as part of new multimodal transport options. These rental facilities were installed on the Traisental bike path as well as in an around the town of Mariazell.

In regard to the **optimization of organisational structures of the railway**, a working group with representatives from the Mariazell railway and local municipalities has been established. Within this group, concepts for handling traffic peaks on the Mariazell railway were developed with special regard to

the Regional Exhibition of Lower Austria in 2015 in which the railway and its newly introduced central station "Laubenbachmühle/Pielachtal" is to figure prominently.

That focus on the railway was part of an overall process of **mobility concept development**, carried out in cooperation with local municipalities and other regional players, such as ski lifts operators or the Nature Park "Ötscher-Tormäuer". An improved **ski bus system for the regional skiing areas "Ötscher" and "Hochkar"** was pilot-tested during the winter season 2012/2013 and followed by an evaluation and optimization process. The bus system includes two lines: Gaming – Lackenhof – Lunz – Göstling and Mariazell – Mitterbach – Annaberg.

Next steps

In the same manner as for the winter season, the detailed identification of mobility services for the summer hiking season including bus connections based on the grounding concept will be on the agenda of following stakeholder meetings beyond the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project. Follow-up activities will present the new challenge of setting up financial plans and gaining funds for the establishment of new offers, making new services more widely known and necessitating professional market strategies

This involves motivating regional partners (ski lift operators or local information offices) to proactively promote the ski busses. So far they appeared rather reserved.

In terms of the e-bike rental, the Mostviertel Tourism Ltd. is currently on the lookout for further partners in the Pielach valley who are willing to operate the e-bike rental. Furthermore, a closer cooperation with the Mariazellerbahn is sought in order to provide the guests a higher flexibility. The idea is to create an integrative visitor package that allows guests free choice to decide at which station they switch from bike to train with the train ride included in the package already.

Core outputs

Tourist transfer from Alpine towns to skiing areas	

Bike & hike packages in Mostviertel • incl. seat reservation for guests travelling by the Mariazellerbahn, organization of luggage and passenger transportation for people cycling to Mariazell or vice versa • Bike offers on the Traisental bike path	 **Mit dem E-Bike auf dem Traisental-Radweg** Genießen Sie entspannende Stunden beim Genussradeln am Traisental-Radweg! **Unser Angebot inkludiert:** • 2 Übernachtungen mit Frühstück in ausgewählten Unterkünften • E-Bike Nutzung für 2 Tage • Fahrt mit der Mariazellerbahn von Mariazell nach St. Pölten oder umgekehrt • Rücktransport E-Bike zum Abholungsort • Karten- und Infomaterial **Preis pro Person** im Doppelzimmer ab **EUR 191,-**
Optimization of organisational structure of the Mariazell railway More details on project activities concerning the Mariazell railway: **"Final synthesis report on regional railways in tourism"**, available at www.access2mountain.eu	
Concept for regional mobility management in summer season	

3.2.3 E-Mobility as a Mobility Alternative in Mountain Areas (South Tyrol)

"Mobility and environmental challenges do not stop at municipal, regional or national borders – that is why they should be met by joint efforts and actions." Miriam Weiß, EURAC research

Regional key data	
NUTS Identification number	ITH10 Bolzano-Bozen
Population	509.860
Surface	7.400 km²
GDP per inhabitant, in purchasing power standard by Nuts3 relating to EU-27 average (100%)	146%
Agricultural land	44%
Settlement structure	1 city, 5 towns, 116 villages
Number of tourist establishments (NUTS3 Level)	10.266
Net occupancy rate of bed places in hotels and similar	61%

The autonomous province of Bolzano/South Tyrol, Italy's northernmost province, combines the Alpine with the Mediterranean way of life, as well as their landscapes. With its high cultural diversity and broad variety of leisure time activities, it attracts numerous tourists every summer and winter. Situated at the starting point of four touristically important mountain passes, the region experiences high transit traffic volumes.

Bolzano, the province's capital, is an important meeting point for German-Austrian and Italian culture and their economies. The city is also known as the Gate to the Dolomites, the massive mountain range of north-eastern Italy which was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2009.

The Institute for Regional Development and Location Management of the *European Academy of Bolzano (EURAC research)* focuses on the sustainable development of mountain regions. In ACCESS2MOUNTAIN EURAC analyzes the possibilities and limits of innovative sustainable offers in mountain tourism using the municipality of Corvara and its surroundings as example. For this area, a strongly frequented tourism resort in the Dolomites, EURAC is developing strategies for sustainable mobility.

Project description

In order to better integrate existing means of transportation (public transport, ski lifts, bikes etc.) with mobility and leisure offers for both visitors and locals, the project sought to analyze the **feasibility of innovative sustainable transport services in alpine tourism**. As a high frequency tourist area in the Dolomites, the municipality of Corvara and environs in the Autonomous Province of Bolzano/South Tyrol were considered an exemplary point of departure.

In close cooperation with municipalities and other regional stakeholders in tourism, transport, and environment, particular emphasis was given to the integration of **e-mountain bikes** in an overall concept for sustainable tourist mobility in the region. An impulsion for this focus was the fact that e-mountain bikes including charging stations had been introduced in August 2012. Partly covering UNESCO Natural

Heritage territory, Corvara was viewed in relation to its surrounding environment, which, as the UNESCO title suggests, warrants continual efforts in implementing measures for sustainable tourism.

The analyses resulted in a **sustainable mobility concept** for the mid and long-term development of the region, including specific recommendations relating to Corvara's accessibility, local micro-mobility and awareness raising activities in Corvara and its environs.

The process comprised intensive interviews and discussions with the most central actors (municipal administrative, department for nature parks of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano - South Tyrol, tourism association representative, provider of bike rental service, lift operator, environmental association representatives).

Next steps

A task for the future will be to share experiences gained in ACCESS2MOUNTAIN also with other (affected) regions, which will lead to further dissemination of project results and possible follow-up activities.The elaborated concept will be further developed also in the light of the ongoing studies and analyses for the UNESCO-tourism strategies. Of course maintenance of the e-mountain bike offer also in the next season (summer 2014) is aspired.

Core outputs

Access to mountain by e-mountain bike and cable car	**Proposed vision of integrated mobility for Corvara**

3.2.4 "Joy on two wheels" (Maramures)

"The trails in Maramureș are an open invitation to cycling. Therefore we were pleased to offer better options to those who want to explore the region on two wheels." Rada Pavel, MaramureșInfoTurism

Regional key data	
NUTS Identification number	RO114 Maramures
Population	513.776
Surface	6.304 km²
GDP per inhabitant, in purchasing power standard by Nuts3 relating to EU-27 average (100%)	32%
Agricultural land	49%
Settlement structure	1 city, 6 towns, 64 villages
Number of tourist establishments (NUTS3 Level)	172
Net occupancy rate of bed places in hotels and similar	27,2%

Located in north western Romania, the Maramureș region is renowned for having preserved its idyllic peasant culture. In spite of its rural charm, access to and mobility within the area can be challenging due to underdeveloped infrastructure for rail, bike, or public transport. Progress is being made, however, as local authorities have begun prioritizing sustainable development in mobility, tourism, and protected natural and cultural heritage sites.

Project description

Through ACCESS2MOUNTAIN, the *CJIT Maramures* could make a significant contribution to the sustainable development of accessibility to and within Maramures.

In preparation for following project activities, an in-depth **study on traffic flows, their environmental impacts and potential transportation solutions** was carried out considering the North of the Eastern/Oriental Carpathians area that covers Maramures county, part of Satu Mare county, part of Suceava county and part of Bistrita Nasaud county. The study identifies the area's vulnerable points and evaluates various transport modes and their environmental impacts, and analyses main points of interests in tourism including tourists` profiles.

On this basis, it was possible to initiate awareness raising activities and secure stakeholder involvement, ultimately resulting in a **strategy and action plan** to improve sustainable mobility for the benefit of local tourism and the regional economy. The action plan entails further engaging the public and appealing to political decision makers in order to have a voice in further regional planning. It is considered as a grounding document for strategic decisions towards the elaboration of the county plans for sectoral development in terms of mobility, tourism and protected natural and cultural heritage, which are relevant for a sustainable SMART development of the Maramures County 2014-2020.

Initial steps toward producing visibility and raising awareness among locals and tourists about the advantages of sustainable mobility are of utmost importance. To this end, small-scale investments were implemented to **improve cycling infrastructure and multimodal links**. Although in Maramureș there is

demand and potential for the development of cycling tourism, tourists initially were not aware of *where* and if they could rent bikes, of *how* they could transport bikes on public means of transport from one point to another and of *which* would be the recommended tracks. The measures hence included the purchase of bikes for installing simple rental systems, equipping minibuses and wagons of the popular narrow gauge train in Vişeu de Sus with racks for bicycle carriage as well as introducing a guidance system for a beforehand defined network of bike routes.

In cooperation with the Romanian Ecotourism Association, five **visitor packages** for different target groups have been developed to integrate new mobility services into pre-existing ecotourism offers in the Maramures region. All these measures were supported by **marketing campaigns** including brochures and promotional films that have been produced and spread among tourists, locals and experts.

Next steps

The strategy and action plan will be submitted to public debates and shared with regional decision makers in order to be seriously taken into consideration for following regional planning.

Future activities will focus on innovative measures in the promotional campaign embracing for example info trips targeted at travel agencies or journalists and specialized bloggers. More in-depth involvement of stakeholders (mainly those who administrate rural pensions) in promoting the new offer is aspired in the future. Further steps will include the development of new and improved bicycle carriage offers but also an extension of the bike routes network. Taking into account the increasing market segment looking for mountain biking opportunities in the mountain countryside, it is highly expected that the new sustainable mobility services will be used by a growing number of tourists in the near future.

Core outputs

Multimodal transport connections through Maramures Bike racks on mini-busses; at the station as well as on wagons of the Vaser valley railway	
Cycling guidance system (info boards, 100 km marked bike trails) By following the **red C signs**, the tracks **connect green areas, tourist sights and many river valleys** of Historical Maramureş: Mara, Cosău, Iza, Vişeu and Vaser. Some of these trails follow the route of former railway beds, used in the past for exploiting the rich forestry and salt resources of the area.	

Bike rental

at rural tourism guest houses

Study on traffic flows in Maramures

Traffic flows, their environmental impacts and potential transportation solutions. Tourists' profiles.

Visitor Packages

for different target groups (according to identified tourists` profiles)

Strategy and action plan to improve sustainable accessibility

Grounding document for regional strategic decisions.

3.2.5 "Bike and ride" – multimodal corridor development in the crossborder region Kosice-Miskolc

"The ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project means for Miskolc Holding Plc a cross-border and cross cultural cooperation that supports sustainable development along both sides of the border. This is definitely a value adding factor, strengthening further the partnership of Miskolc and Kosice." Judit Fodor, Miskolc Holding Plc

Regional key data: Northern Hungary/Miskolc	
NUTS Identification number	HU311 Borsod, HU312 Heves, HU313 Nógrád
Population	1.150.518
Surface	13.340 km²
GDP per inhabitant, in purchasing power standard by Nuts3 relating to EU-27 average (100%)	38%
Agricultural land	67%
Settlement structure	2 cities, 37 towns, 406 villages
Number of tourist establishments (NUTS3 Level)	309
Net occupancy rate of bed places in hotels and similar	9,4%

Northern Hungary is a unique region of three-counties with diverse landscapes, medieval castles, exquisite wines and fruit brandies, and is home to several World Heritage sites. The regional capital Miskolc is located at the confluence of different geographical regions, including the foothills of the Bükk Mountains, the valley of the river Sajó and the streams Szinva and Hejő. The region is characterized by a high level of geographic diversity in general, comprising some areas of the Great Hungarian Plain and the Northern Hungarian Mountains.

After one year of cooperation, the initially nominated North Hungarian project partner, the *Regional Development Agency of North-Hungary LLC (NORDA)*, left the project consortium and its project activities were undertaken by *Miskolc Holding Plc* who continued them until the end of the project.

"Transnational cooperation has given us examples of functioning sustainable tourism offers in other countries, inspired us to prepare useful small scale investments and helped to foster cooperation with cross-border partner." Henrieta Kirarlvargova, Agency for the Support of Regional Development Kosice

Regional key data: Kosice region	
NUTS Identification number	SK042 Kosickýkraj
Population	791.569
Surface	6.755 km²
GDP per inhabitant, in purchasing power standard by Nuts3 relating to EU-27 average (100%)	58%
Agricultural land	51%
Settlement structure	1 city, 16 towns, 423 villages
Number of tourist establishments (NUTS3 Level)	295
Net occupancy rate of bed places in hotels and similar	26,8%

The **area around Kosice** is situated in the South East of Slovakia and borders Ukraine to the East and Hungary to the South. As a national park listed also among the UNESCO International Biosphere Reserve, it is marked by deep gorges, long canyons, wild ravines and roaring waterfalls, and flanks the Slovak Karst Mountains to the Southwest. The region`s interests were represented by the *Agency for Regional Devopment Kosice (ARR-KE)* represented the region as a project partner of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN.

The two regions jointly investigated the potentials for multimodal corridor development in the crossborder region between the two regional capitals Miskolc and Kosice. Both regions share a tradition of industrialization on their peripheries and a low inflow of investments. The progressive deflection of the centre of economic gravity to western and metropolitan areas of Hungary and Slovakia has had a negative impact on the Košice -Miskolc region. Since heavy industry is declining, the border railway connections – primarily used for freight transport – have lost their meaning and railway stations have fallen into neglect. Motivation to join the project came from the wish to establish a basis for the joint development of cross-border tourist routes between the neighbouring territories of Northern Hungary and the Košice region and for improving accessibility within both regions.

Project description

A **feasibility study** analyses the framework conditions in the cross-border region of Northern Hungary-Košice in terms of multimodal transport and proposes measures within three cross-border multimodal corridors in the area between the cities of Košice and Miskolc. The study outlines key recommendations for action plan developers. The elaboration of a joint action plan is to be continued after project completion. The activities carried out during the project, including feasibility study and stakeholder involvement, helped to foster stakeholder commitment to current and future (cross-border) cooperation in the field of sustainable transport and tourism.

The cross-border multimodal corridors describe the following areas:

1. **the Slovak Karst/Aggtelek (Slovenský kras)**: Hrušov - Jablonov nad Turňou - Silická Jablonica (SK) / Szögliget- Bódvaszilas (HU)

2. **the Slanské Hills (Slanské vrchy)**: Slanec - Slánska Huta – Izra – Byšta and Skároš - Vyšná Myšľa (SK) /Pusztafalu - Fűzér (HU)

3. **Kosice (SK) - Miskolc (HU)**

fig. 6 Cross-border multimodal corridors

Railway	20	Moldava nad Bodvou
Cycling routes	21	Košice
10 Kéked	22	Trstené pri Hornáde
11 Füzér	23	Vyšná Myšľa
12 Pusztafalu	24	Slanec
13 Szögliget	25	Veľký Milič
14 Tornanádaska	26	Izra
15 Hrušov	27	Slánska Huta
16 Rožňava	28	Novy Salas
17 Jablonov nad Turňou	29	Sečove
18 Hrhov	30	Trebišov
19 Turňa nad Bodvou	31	Královsky Chlmec
	32	Michalovce

1 Miskolc
2 Sajószentpéter
3 Ózd
4 Szerencs
5 Encs
6 Sárospatak
7 Sátoraljaújhely
8 Bódvaszilas
9 Hidasnémeti

33 Slovak Karst National Park
34 Aggtelek National Park

Key recommendations for improving the accessibility to the mountainous border areas on the Slovakian side are:

1. Complete the information system in all areas
2. Complete building of missing parts of infrastructure
3. Promote development and expansion of complementary services
4. Add complementary tourist amenities

Concurrent with the process of the feasibility study development, **small-scale pilot investments** were implemented to set first visible signs towards the improvement of bike infrastructure and to test possible multimodal connections (e.g. by combining bike and train routes). The introduction of bikes racks, guidance systems for multimodal connections, rest areas, and interactive info boards helped to raise awareness among the local population.

Results of a **regional inventory and analysis of existing, operating and abandoned railways** in the Košice-Northern Hungary region, and their potential use for the development of sustainable tourism in the region were also taken into account in the feasibility assessment. It has been shown that there is great potential in developing cross-border tourism products by involving and revitalizing historic railways. The existing historic railway lines could be perceived as magnets for tourists.

Next steps

Next steps beyond the project are some small scale investments which will be implemented on intermodal routes by the end of the project. As the action plan development involved meetings with local stakeholders the plans have their commitment.

It has been demonstrated that there is a great potential to develop cross-border cooperation in the creation of tourism products between Slovakia and Hungary. The existing historic railway lines have been perceived as magnets for tourists.

Core outputs

Guidance system for multimodal routes (Hungarian side) including information signs and rain protected rest areas for cyclists	
Bikes racks on trains for bicycle carriage: Narrow gauge forest train (Miskolc) Kosice Children`s railway (Kosice)	
Feasibility study on multimodal corridor development	
Inventory of existing, operating and abandoned railways in the Kosice region and Northern Hungary	

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3.2.6   Getting on the tracks (Rzeszow)

"ACCESS2MOUNTAIN has given us the opportunity to see how much cross-border collaboration matters. It's worth fighting for sustainable tourism in the name of future generations – let's do it together!" Michal Rzucidlo, Rzeszow Regional Development Agency

	RARR RZESZOWSKA AGENCJA ROZWOJU REGIONALNEGO
Regional key data	
NUTS Identification number	PL215 Now., PL216 Osw., PL225 Bielski, PL323 Krosn., PL324 Przemyski, PL325 Rzeszowski
Population	3.379.288
Surface	22.251 km²
GDP per inhabitant, in purchasing power standard by Nuts3 relating to EU-27 average (100%)	44%
Agricultural land	66%
Settlement structure	3 cities, 36 towns, 814 villages
Number of tourist establishments (NUTS3 Level)	1.083
Net occupancy rate of bed places in hotels and similar	32,1%

Situated in the South East of Poland, the Podkarpackie region borders the Ukraine to the east and Slovakia to the south. The regional capital Rzeszow is situated on the Wislok River, where the northern borders of the Carpathian Mountains and the Sandomierska Basin meet. The region is home to numerous national parks and reserves, including part of the UNESCO East Carpathian Biosphere Reserve.

In spite of its natural capital and the wide range of recreational activities it offers, the scarcely populated Podkarpackie Region does not yet belong to the widely known tourist destinations in Europe.

Project description

The project aims to identify new possibilities for soft mobility in the region and to improve accessibility to tourist attractions, especially from the perspective of cross-border cooperation between Poland and Slovakia. The integration of railways between the two countries was one of the key challenges. To this purpose, a study was carried out to identify the **possibilities for combining narrow gauge railways, standard gauge railway lines, and alternative transport routes** on the Polish-Slovak border in an integrated system of multimodal transport. The study revealed that, thanks to existing infrastructure, the development of such a system would not entail excessive costs. A promotional campaign should aim for the introduction of a shared tariff policy for carriers in order to facilitate cross-border travel. The analysis also calls for increased cooperation and partnerships between carriers and local authorities. The analysis process is an important basis for the realization of specific measures in the near future, such as the implementation of a transnational ticketing system as described.

Further activities to be developed in the wake of the project include, among other things, the development of **cross-border visitor packages** and a **map for tourists integrating points of interest and transport offers.**
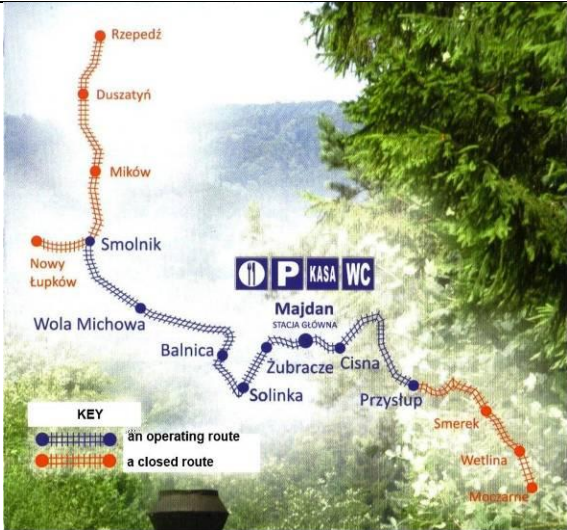
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Next steps

The introduction of a common ticketing system seems to be most beneficial for the people of Podkarpackie Region. Commuting associated with work, school, or other activities in a larger city is often connected with a change from village to larger towns. In this way, the joint ticket could be used also by tourists. An interesting issue is the creation of a joint ticket addressed mainly to tourists, which would include the arrival and return journey and destinations within the region. An important issue for the use of a joint ticket is also revenue sharing by clearly defining tariffs. In order to discuss these questions in more detail, the Rzeszow Regional Development Agency plans further meetings with local authorities, carriers and people acting in the field of tourism this summer (2014).

Apart from the activities connected with the development of a common ticketing system, the Agency will disseminate the results of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN in the Podkarpackie Region, which shall support the argumentation in favor of sustainable transport, for example in regard to the development of integrative visitor packages.

Core outputs

Feasibility study on potentials for an integrated system of sustainable multimodal transport in the cross-border area of Poland and Slovakia Possibilities for combining narrow gauge railways, standard gauge railway lines, and alternative transport routes.	
Feasibility study for cross-border ticketing system of public transport in the cross-border area of Poland and Slovakia	
Map for tourism and multimodal transport offers of the cross-border area between Slovakia and Poland	

3.2.7 Activities of 10% project partner Timok Club

Regional key data: Timok region

NUTS Identification number	-
Population	250.500
Surface	7.131 km²
GDP per inhabitant, in purchasing power standard by Nuts3 relating to EU-27 average (100%)	no data
Agricultural land	no data
Settlement structure	no cities, 4 towns, 9 villages
Number of tourist establishments (NUTS3 Level)	no data
Net occupancy rate of bed places in hotels and similar	no data

The Timok Club, one of two 10% partners[25] in the project, is a non-profit and non-political citizens' association with the mission of securing the sustainable and environmentally friendly development of the Timok region in Eastern Serbia.

In spite of its natural treasures, the Timok region of Eastern Serbia is one of the least developed regions in the country. Thanks to existing rail infrastructure, the region has much potential for multimodal transport development. Its use is, however, quite modest and does not accommodate tourism to any satisfactory or sustainable extent, especially in remote areas. Car traffic still prevails, accounting for the largest share of transportation in the region. In order to promote alternative, sustainable transportation, especially in valuable natural areas, significant investments in infrastructure reconstruction and environmental protection are needed.

In an analysis, regional transport systems and traffic flows and existing and potential capacities in the region were investigated and their deficiencies analyzed, which is an important basis for future measures to be taken.

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[25] sponsored by EURAC research

3.2.8 Activities of 10% project partner Carpathain Foundation Ukraine

Regional key data: Transcarpathian Region

NUTS Identification number	-
Population	1.254.000
Surface	12.800 km²
GDP per inhabitant, in purchasing power standard by Nuts3 relating to EU-27 average (100%)	no data
Agricultural land	no data
Settlement structure	1 city, 40 towns, 571 villages
Number of tourist establishments (NUTS3 Level)	146
Net occupancy rate of bed places in hotels and similar	no data

The Carpathian Foundation Ukraine (CFUA) is the second 10% partner in ACCESS2MOUNTAIN and one of five member organizations of the cross-border Carpathian Foundation Network promoting good relations, social stability, and economic progress in four provinces of Western Ukraine.

Due to a growing number of tourism-related projects, the Ukrainian Carpathians have recently become a popular tourist destination. Important issues remain however. Public transport infrastructure is underdeveloped. Eco-friendly modes of transport, such as narrow gauge railways have become a thing of the past, while large capacity tourist coaches and ecologically friendly motors remain inaccessibly expensive.

The CFUA supports the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN partnership in building a trans-European network, drawing public attention to the issues raised by the project, learning from European experience and disseminating best practices in the Carpathian region, demonstrating the benefits of ecologically friendly modes of transport to regional authorities.

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3.3 The decision support system (DSS) for regional mobility management

Best practices provide decision-makers with options for improving regional transport systems. Application, however, requires these practices to be integrated into a strategic vision taking into account the regional framework conditions and further translate it in action plans. Applying scientific models, the University of Camerino has developed a user-friendly tool to support regional practitioners and policy makers during the decision making process for the sustainable development of their regional transport systems.

What is a Decision Support System?

System Dynamics is a mathematical modeling approach to understand the behavior of complex systems and to design and analyze policies. The ability of System Dynamics to model intricate situations has proven particularly effective in tourism studies, for example by evaluating the sustainability of tourism in mountain and rural areas with specific attention on how the tourism attraction areas are reached.

The Decision Support System was developed for each pilot region, taking into account their belonging to the transnational Carpathian and Eastern Alpine basin, the entire system of infrastructures and accessibility, the different level of attractiveness of destinations, and the close interrelationship between territorial dynamics, landscape characteristics and the rules of tourist fruition.

The objectives of this Work Package (WP 3) were defined within a general overview of lacking accessibility in the face of a diffusion of attractiveness and tourist destinations. Obviously this situation is not homogeneous in all pilot regions, as it is particularly evident in some regions (such as Ukraine or Maramures), and less evident in others (such as South Tyrol or Gesaeuse). Against this background, general objectives of this exercise were:

- the **redefinition of the meaning and role of landscapes affected by the project**. It is not only about remote mountain areas (isolated from the large flows of logistics, commerce and transport). On the contrary, very often, vernacular and traditional environments are juxtaposed and placed in the immediate proximity of massive and widespread contemporary urbanizations, more or less densified.
- the **reconstruction of functional, biological and cultural connectivities**. This theme whose contemporary relevance at the international level is well known - just think of the problems of fragmentation in ecology or the problems of networking resources in urban planning - should be dealt in a trans-scale approach. In particular, it needs to be addressed at three levels:
  1. with general economic and social policies, related to entire regions or entire countries
  2. with wide policies and plans, covering infrastructure systems, transport and mobility of mountain territories and their relations with their regional or supra-regional contexts
  3. with intervention plans and projects focused on individual infrastructures, road system connections, nodes of transport, particularly in relation to tourist resorts or destinations of current or potential interest.

The need of a decision support system (DSS)

To meet the needs of decision-making processes related to infrastructure planning systems there are no models that automatically and mechanistically are able to provide solutions. It is necessary to support the decision maker with a path of strategic alternatives and subsequent analytical evaluations of the proposals that emerge from the chosen vision. This Work Package generates a Decision Support System (DSS) able to support the policy maker during the decision-making process for the sustainable

development of the transport system as a whole.

The Decision Support System is composed and constructed on four different parts:

1. the **analysis of the current transport system** related to the landscape characteristics of the model regions and evaluation of the conflicts between landscape characteristics and transport modes

2. the **definition of guidelines and orientations** (through alternative scenarios) for the construction of strategic visions related to the reorganization of the transport system

3. the **refinement of different project proposals** for the improvement of the transport system

4. the **evaluation of the different proposals**, in order to define the more sustainable solution.

3.3.1 Guidelines and orientations through scenarios

A list of best practices may be a good way to provide the planner/decision-maker options for the improvement of the regional transport system, but the best practices have to be included in a strategic vision in order to become governance activities. Otherwise they are not able to influence the local, regional and national planning. *So how can we help the decision-maker in the designing of the strategic vision?* The answer is that we cannot provide a strategic vision to the decision-maker. However, we can offer the decision-maker a methodology for the construction of the strategic vision, which is a part of the DSS. The methodology supplies, for each of the pilot areas, the production of alternative scenarios that make the end-users of the tool able to question themselves on the development strategy for the territory.

fig. 7 Example of scenario for tourism-sector in South Tirol

Sector (Drivers)	Gather scenario	Diffusion scenario
Tourism	• *focusing on the major centers of tourism in which the final user can reach the highest and most varied range of services and tourist offer;* • *implementation of the major centers of tourist attraction on the development of infrastructure in such a way that the tourist uses the shortest possible time to reach the selected locations;* • *identification of intermodal connections (flight + bus) from airports close to major ski resorts and places of interest.*	• *interaction between tourism and agriculture in order to offer the tourist, in addition to classic destinations and major ski areas also offer integrated and comprehensive itineraries and activities to be carried out in the secondary valleys and in the smaller towns;* • *innovation of mountain tourism classically understood (summer or winter) through the introduction of new tourist practices in order to seasonally adjust and relocate the arrival of users;* • *diversification of tourism through the creation of new forms of use and innovative mode of transport and tour (bus, train, skiing, horses, bicycles).*

After selecting the actions within the different scenarios, the decision-maker designs a shared strategic vision, which is the expression of the responses to the needs and requirements of each single region.

fig. 8 Example of a strategic vision for South Tirol
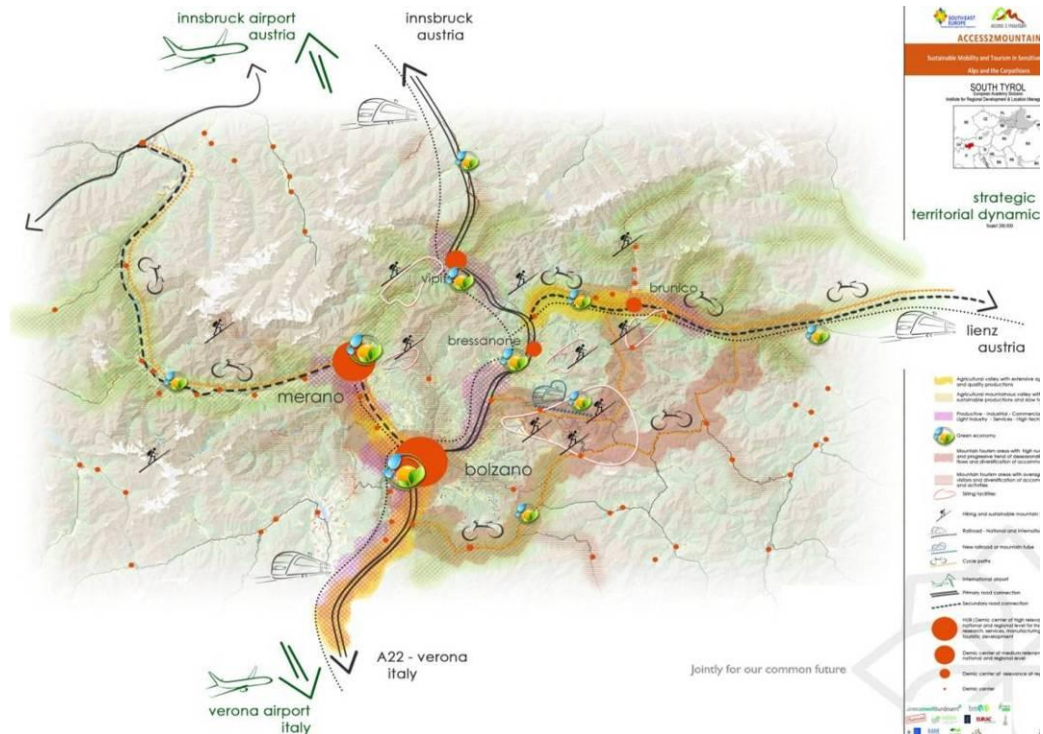
Within the strategic vision, the decision-maker can design different transport project proposals, in coherence with the functionality and rules of the whole transport system.

3.3.2   Evaluation (Tool)

Decision supporting passes through different steps and finally results in the definition of a strategic vision. Within the strategic vision the decision-maker can design different transport project proposals, in coherence with the functionality and rules of the whole transport system. The different proposals are analytically evaluated by the evaluation tool as a part of the DSS, which provides for:

- the analytical evaluation of the different solutions, according to the strategic visions
- the refinement of the most sustainable solution.

The responses of the evaluation tool are nothing more than the various analyses of the proposals that the decision maker verifies in a context of comparative evaluation with the current state of the territory and the other proposals.

fig. 9 Steps to an individual most sustainable solution

Functionality of the tool

System Dynamics (SD) is a mathematical modelling approach to understand the behaviour of complex systems and to design and analyze policies. System Dynamics has its foundation in System Thinking, and, in the most general terms, it is defined as a way of looking at a system as a whole, taking into account all components and their interactions. System Thinking can be considered as a specific approach to problem solving where the problem is seen as a part of an overall system. It can be efficiently used within a Decision Support System (DSS) in order to help the decision–maker during the planning process to select among various alternatives in a complex environment. The proposed tool aims at representing an original approach to sustainable mobility in a mountain context where sustainability is to be measured according to a composite set of indicators, covering the economic, social, landscape/environmental, technical-operational, and institutional thematic domains. The main function of the Evaluation Tool is described in the ability of extracting in a short time useful information for the decision-making process from the analysis of a significant amount of data and providing answers for those who must take decisions of a project or, more broadly, of governance. The data base is quite extensive and based particularly on the knowledge available in the literature review, the information received from the project partners, the SWOT[26] analysis and territorial analysis performed for each of the pilot region. The most appropriate instrument used to describe the complex set of relationships among variable data in the system is represented by the parts of the systems known as "loop diagrams", which (when implying both the transmission and the return of information) can be called feedback or causal loops. These diagrams help to represent circular chains of cause and effect that create closed loops within an actual system. Through this model the infrastructure and transport systems can be analyzed and evaluated, both in place and in project. In both cases the model can be applied on small stretches of infrastructure of variable geometry. The end-user of the model will act on three levers to achieve the best level of sustainability, which are the number of users, different modes of transport and the spatial distribution of the flows.
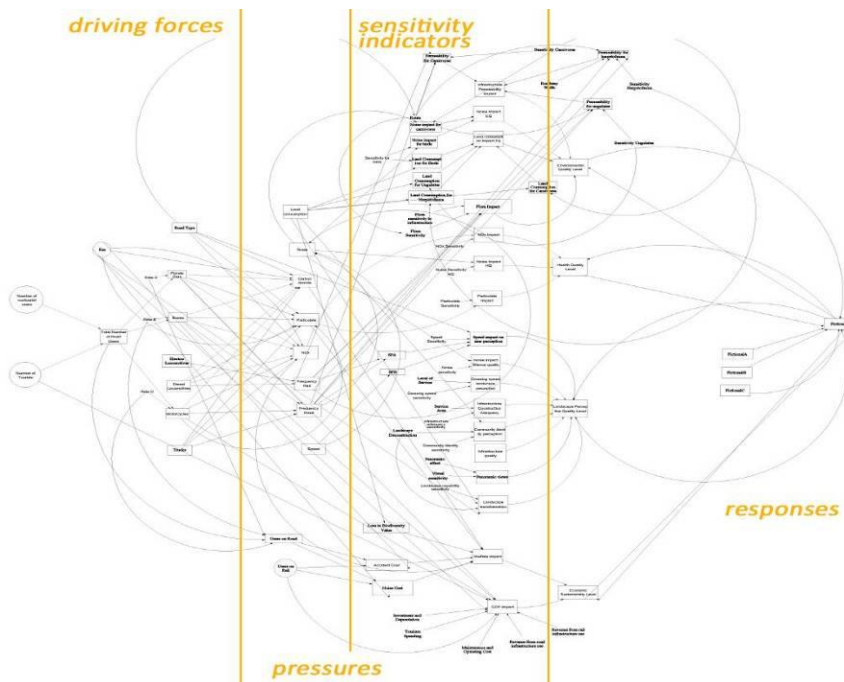
The response of the evaluation is a measurable impact coefficient of the proposal in regard to the landscape.

The evaluation process within the DSS is developed in the following steps: 1. Driving forces, 2. Pressures, 3. Sensitivity Indicators of the territory to the pressures, 4. Impacts on the territory.

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[26] Analysis of strengths – weaknesses – opportunities – threats

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fig. 10 The evaluation process within the Decision Support System

In its final version, the system is configured as a ***tool***, able to interact at different design scales:

- wide area (region or sub-region);
- component (wide agricultural areas, tourist areas, mining areas, etc.);
- sites or structures (bridges, tunnels, etc.), specifically interesting for the Project.

Regional project partners were taught to use the tool in multiple interactive training sessions during the last partner meetings, in which was also presented the whole structure of the Decision Support System that holds together the strategic approach and the analytical evaluations of the evaluation tool.

Related material, available on www.ACCESS2MOUNTAIN.eu:

- The Model Interface Documentation
- The GLOSSARY and Calculation method
- The user manual for the practical implementation of the model
- A user-friendly tool for the evaluation of the sustainability of project proposals for the transport system

3.4 Conclusions for regional mobility projects

From the investigation of existing best practices in tourism and from a review of regional project implementation, the project partners derived valuable conclusions for regional mobility projects. Different challenges have been overcome, wherefrom project partners took considerable lessons. After the project implementation, these lessons shall be shared with others who are aiming to promote sustainable mobility and tourism in a similar way.
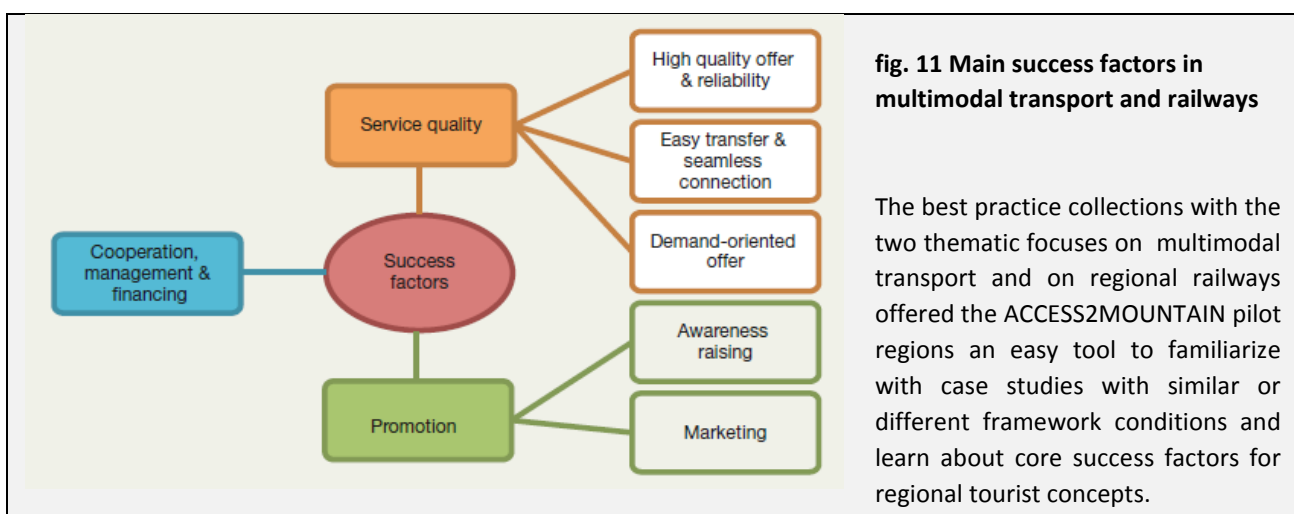
3.4.1 Transferability of best practices

As described in the introductory section, viewing the total project area, the quality of transport systems is not comparable among the participating regions. Among the pilot regions, there were vastly disparate levels of tourist traffic, from highly frequented areas such as South Tyrol to less popular ones where tourism is only slowly emerging, as in Maramures. Best practice examples for tourist mobility management, however, often come from highly frequented tourist areas, where effective measures were needed to restrict the high load of traffic. This affords a careful consideration.

Accessibility: Not how, but if! While some regions are making the transition to green mobility along a pre-existing network of robust transportation routes, in other regions there is little viable infrastructure, to serve as a precondition. The pilot regions are located in eight different countries across the Alps and Carpathians; that being said, the question is not always "how" a region can be made accessible, but "if".

Eager for new development opportunities, these regions wish to promote sustainable growth scenarios implying a balance between emerging tourism and environmental protection. Protected landscapes are seen as an essential asset for tourism attractiveness and, at the same time, benefit the local economy.

Though 100-percent transferability is rare, best practice examples provide in the most cases valuable incentives for other regions. These might be project ideas, know-how about operations or technologies. However, it is as well a motivation for regions who want to engage themselves in the field of sustainable mobility, to see how efforts lead to success and encourage a sustainable operation. Last but not least, it might as well be a challenge to eventually become a future best practice example, which other project holders will refer to.

fig. 11 Main success factors in multimodal transport and railways

The best practice collections with the two thematic focuses on multimodal transport and on regional railways offered the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN pilot regions an easy tool to familiarize with case studies with similar or different framework conditions and learn about core success factors for regional tourist concepts.

3.4.2 Need for flexible and easy-going mobility

Overcome the "last mile"! Restrictions due to topography or socio-economic factors like low population density are frequent reasons for a lack of regular public transport. A low population density does not justify regular public transport lines, so in many cases the challenge is to sustain a minimum level of service. If bearable, existing public transport offers need to be made easier accessible and better accustomed to the specific target groups in order to reach a certain basic utilization. The main challenge presented by peripheral mountain regions is hence managing the varying demand from low to high seasons. One solution may be a flexible, demand-responsive system.

In regard to sustainable transport in tourism, the crucial point is of course the accessibility by public transport. Only if the long distances during the arrival and departure of the guests are shifted from individual car traffic to bundled public transport, a positive measurable environmental impact can be attained. However, in terms of the full distance to cover between source and destination, there is often a bottleneck on the last leg of the journey, i.e. the distance between the regional railway station and accomodations, the "final destination". Especially in peripheral mountain areas where disperse settlements are the rule, this "last mile" is rarely covered by regular public transport. Without flexible transport – either offered by the accommodation itself or collectively organized by the municipality or the local tourism association – the sustainable travel remains theory. To make a real impact in the behaviour of tourists, destinations must offer and advertise their door-to-door accessibility.

> **Excursus – Information about sustainable mobility including the last mile:**
> The Alpine Space, a popular tourism destination, faces the problem that less than ten percent of tourists arrive by public transport. As a consequence destinations in the Alpine Space are burdened by individualized car traffic that threatens the attractiveness and a sustainable growth of the destinations. The Working Group Transport of the Alpine Convention identified a lack of information on sustainable mobility as a key element for not using such sustainable transport modes. The end-users need reliable information about the whole trip on a cross-border level before and during the journey. Both, information about sustainable transport modes for travelling to/from a destination (door-to-door information) and about sustainable mobility (e.g. for the last mile) at a destination, do not exist exhaustively on a transnational level. The Alpine Space project "AlpInfoNet" deals with this problem and aims to implement a transnational information system on sustainable mobility. More details can be found at
> www.alpinfonet.eu

Respect your target groups! In principal, it has to be considered that public transport in tourist areas is most efficient if tailored also to the needs of the local population in order to ensure a certain level of basic utilization.

Disregarding which kind of system fits best considering the regional framework conditions, an attractive and easy going handling is essential for the system to be accepted and appreciated by the customers. Mobility systems may be complex with an advanced technology behind, but must be sold to the potential users as simple as possible. Information needs to be simplified to a minium. (see also 4.3.2)

Don`t forget the fun factor! Besides that, sustainable mobility often needs specific incentives to attract a new group of potential users. For this purpose, "fun mobility"[27] seems to be a possible instrument. Providing an e-bike park on site has no direct environmental effects since there are no effects on the arrival and departure, it`s just an additional tourist attraction. However, it creates awareness for alternative and innovative means of transport that – last but not least – make real fun and thereby creates a positive atmosphere. Depending on the target group, such measures can have indirect effects on the daily mobility behavior in the long run.

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[27] This expression was defined by National Park Gesäuse referring to e-mobility.

Let them choose! Multimodal connections shall provide the potential users the flexibility to decide underway how to continue a trip. A journey can be started by bike and continued by train or bus if equipped for the carriage of bicycles. Such a multimodal chain can be made even more attractive if supported by a simple ticketing system or wrapped in visitor packages.

3.4.3 Extent and limitations of authority

Transport providers such as railways are in the most cases owned by public state, therefore the options for interventions are limited for regional project holders. A sustainable project builds on a multisectoral partnership among different key actors including torism actors, tour operators, public transport providers etc. The regional institution (such as tourism agencies or regional development agencies) can undertake the role of a concept developer and mediator between different interest groups.

A regional development agency or a tourist association trying to push forward a sustainable mobility project usually cannot operate transport services. Therefore they are in need to involve transport authorities from the very beginning and convince them about the advantage of cooperation with the tourist sector.

3.4.4 Dealing with financing constraints

In order to maintain a service after the phasing out of an initial co-funding (e.g. in the frame of an ETC programm), it is important to ensure a follow-up financing. EU funds may be a start-up aid, however, the programme in the framework of the ERDF[28] target an endogenous regional development which means that the region shall be enabled to further develop rather independently.

To overcome the phasing out of EU funds, it is advisable to activate other (co-)funding sources at national or regional level. The federal states usually provide overviews of nationally available subsidy programmes are provided.

To name Austria here as an example, guides in this veine are available by the chamber of commerce (www.wko.at) or by federal ministries. In Austria for example, there is a special funding programme for sustainable mobility measures in tourism, called "klimaaktivmobil" - The National Action Programme for Mobility Management. The programme undertaken by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Environment and Water Management provides free consultancy for potential project implementors in the field of tourism about individual solutions and funding opportunities in the frame of klimaaktivmobil for specific mobility measures. Excluding other national funds, this aid is combinable with other funding schemes at regional or EU-level. More details are available at www.klimaaktiv.at/english/mobility.

3.4.5 Feasibility studies – important preparatory work for future action plan development

Feasibility studies were considered important preparatory work for sustainable improvements in the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project. This could be demonstrated for instance in the joint feasibility study of the Kosice and Miskolc regions analyzing the feasibility of three cross-border corridors for multimodal transport connections (see chapter 3.2.5). In the usual process – and in this way also in the case of the Kosice-Miskolc region - a feasibility study is followed by an action plan that takes the study results into account.

By testing the viability of a project idea at an early stage before proceeding with the development of concrete measures, a lot of money and time can be saved in case the project idea turns out to be not

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[28] European Regional Development Fund

feasible. Depending on the size of the project, different scenarios can be examined in depth with the aim to identify the – according to previously defined criteria - most appropriate case. Depending on the complexity and the available finance, models such as the DSS (see chapter 3.3) can help to evaluate scenarios in depth.

With the conclusions on the investigated scenarios and their weaknesses and strengths, the feasibility analysis provides quality information for decision making. It is an important tool to convince stakeholders about the probability of success based on a professional analysis. Risk factors are known in the forefield and can be addressed and mitigated early. That helps to create confidence and gain commitments for (financial) support. As a conclusion, especially in a non decision-making position, feasibility studies may support your argumentation vis-a-vis the authorities.

With the scope of the project narrowed, an **action plan** can later build on the identified best scenario. Contrary to the feasibility study that provides an investigating function, an action plan has a planning function describing the measures needed to realize the project idea. It can be considered as a "roadmap" of how the project will be established and implemented. An action plan defines at least for each planned measure the responsibilities, the time horizon as well as the financing question (budget and funds).

Also in the unlikely event that a project fails in the end, having implemented a feasibility before provides documentation that the project proposal was utterly examined. [29]

3.4.6   Monitoring and evaluation

When setting up an implementation plan for new mobility offers, a monitoring and evaluation method shall be included in the "roadmap". By recording daily users of a ski/hiking bus for example, the utilization rate of the transport system can be assessed. A regular evaluation provides guidelines for the optimization through adapting the increasing intensity on peak days and during peak hours on the one hand and withdrawing the service in off-peak times on the other hand.

For monitoring and evaluation purposes also participatory methods may be useful in order for a qualitative assessment. This can be implemented through surveys among the users asking their contentness with the service or testing the level of awareness of the new services among the target groups. This helps to optimize the promotion and marketing of the information.

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[29] Reference is made to http://www.extension.iastate.edu/agdm/wholefarm/html/c5-65.html

4 COMMUNICATING SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY IN THE REGION – AWARENESS RAISING AND TRAINING

The promotion of an idea or a concept requires several levels of action. Regional projects are dependent on stakeholder commitments and public awareness. An idea can be much more easliy implemented if the regional population is convinced and willing to live this idea. Last but not least, in the most cases, politicial and financial support is crucial in order to initiate and maintain a new mobility service.

That being aware, the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project dedicated a separate workpackage to this multilayer communication and integration work. The scope of action within WP 6, titled "Training, awareness raising, stakeholder integration, communication, follow-up", comprises in short according to the project`s outlay:

Promotion and marketing: Elaboration of communication and marketing strategies, project presentation, distribution of marketing and promotion material etc. Promotion of regional and transnational outputs prepared within WP 4 and 5, e.g. visitor packages, new mobility services, new (bike) infrastructure,...

Transfer and dissemination: Dissemination and presentation of project results, such as the best practice analyses and pilot projects. e.g. results of feasibility studies, analyses, concepts, strategies, action plans

Awareness raising and training: Raise awareness among the public as well as specific target groups, cooperate with regional product providers in order to implement the spirit of sustainable mobility and train them to further spread information, trainings and awareness raising campaigns

Stakeholder involvement and follow-up: Integration of local, regional and (trans-)national stakeholders through direct visits, regional meetings etc. Cooperation with follow-up financing bodies for regional measures.

In the following chapters, "Communication activities" may be used as a generic term for the range of dissemination, promotion and awareness raising activities implemented on different levels.

4.1 Tools for communication at transnational level

Right from the beginning, it is necessary to ensure a coherent communication and dissemination strategy. The project`s communication plan included a corporate identity with guidelines and recommendations on every communication-related activitiy. It also sets the framework conditions for the common communication tools at project level (project website, newsletter, press releases and project events).

tab. 1 Communication tools at transnational project level

Kind	Idea	Evaluation
Initial project leaflet	A general brochure that presents the objectives and main fields of action of the project. The brochure was disseminated in the beginning of the project to raise awareness for the topic and to create curiosity for upcoming news. The leaflet is available in hard copy and e-format, in English as well as in all partner languages.	
Project website	The transnational project website www.ACCESS2MOUNTAIN.eu provides general information on the project activities and outputs; used to spread project results (e.g. studies, analyses,...) and informing about upcoming events. Project partners also took occasion to promote newly developed products (visitor packages, bike infrastructure etc.)	Visitors: 2.500 (average of hits per month)
Project	7 newsletters were edited in regular intervals; English language; electronic	basic mailing list: 90

newsletter	version for dissemination by e-mail (mailing list) and on the project website; An invitation in the e-mail to further spread the newsletter among other interested parties has probably multiplied the number of addressees. Additionally printed copies were provided to the project partners for further circulation among their regional stakeholders.	contacts, further distributed by each project partner
Press releases	before and after project events, general press releases were being drafted by the communication manager and spread on the project website respectively by the project partners in their regions. In total, 10 general press releases in English have been prepared. Typically, these press releases have been further processed by the project partners in the national languages.	10 (at overall project level)
Project events	Apart from seven partner meetings focusing on work sessions in the work packages and internal coordination tasks, two public project events took place. The midterm conference was organized by the Polish RARR in autumn 2012 (16-18 October) in Kosice. From 1-3 April 2014, the final conference took place in the Nationalpark Gesäuse region, starting from Vienna with a common train ride to Hieflau. This special arrangement should motivate the participants to arrive to the conference by 100% public transport including the last mile.	Participants midterm conference: 60 Participants final conference: 120
Press conferences	Invitation of media representatives to project events and implementation of press conferences. Beside 3 press conferences at overall project level related to project events, several press talks and conferences have taken place in connection with national or regional events in the pilot regions.	3 (at overall project level)
Final brochure	The final brochure based on the overall project synthesis highlights the main achievements of the project and general conclusions for the promotion of sustainable mobility in tourism.	

4.2 Tools for communication in the pilot regions

Each pilot region undertook significant efforts in involving stakeholders, gaining political and financial commitments and raising awareness among the regional population. For promoting and lobbying, a certain set of tools is needed as a basic equipment.

Those partners pursuing an integrative, more comprehensive approach, worked out regional communication strategies in the first place. In these specific communication strategies, the individual regional framework conditions could be better considered and individual approaches were developed in order to promote the regional "ACCESS2MOUNTAIN product".

4.2.1 Promotion and marketing

Promotion, in this context, aims to raise principal awareness for the positive effects of sustainable mobility (respectively for the negative impacts of conventional car traffic) on the one hand and for market specific products such as concrete innovative services on the other hand.

According to experiences that the actual use of sustainable transport modes often finds its limits at lacking awareness of mobility offers and information possibilities, the project put also a focus on the professional marketing and promotion of (existing and) new offers and services developed in the frame of other project activities. As a basis for further marketing and promotion activities, regional or cross-border communication strategies were set up at first to analyse the framework conditions and target groups.

Thereupon, professional marketing and promotion material was designed and spread at various events or other opportunities. In these times, online marketing is almost as important than conventional promotion material. To address all user groups, project partners presented their activities and outputs in the web, either within the websites of their association/enterprise or within a separate website, presenting the new product only.

Different kinds of promotion and marketing tools produced in the frame of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN, thereunder roll-ups and spider walls, professional photos for the topic, brochures, films (Maramures, Miskolc, Kosice), marketing websites (Gesäuse www.gseispur.at), interactive infoboards (Miskolc) and give-aways to raise the awareness. These items indeed aim at different target groups. Some materials were mainly distributed among stakeholders, potential users of innovative mobility services or visitor packages and the regional population in order to inform them about and attract them to the new offers. But also in a rather conceptual sense, for instance in the frame of expert meetings or conferences, these colourful self-explanatory items were introduced to highlight practical outputs.

ACCESS2MOUNTAIN PROJECT STORIES

Maramures – Joy on two wheels
After the realization of some small scale investments in the bike infrastructure, invluding cycle path sign posts, guidance system, bike rental, bike transport facilities on minibusses, the CJIT Maramures published a sound brochure with the title "The Joy on two wheels" that highlights the benefits of travelling around in Maramures by bike.
The brochures were distributed at several occasions – transnational project events or at the World Travel Market in London in 2013.

Film production "Travel green"
The promotional videos (Maramures. Travel Green) have been acclaimed so far by an unexpectedly large number of viewers. The stakeholders involved in the project have also done their best in promoting the new services they are offering.

The brochure and the film are available on www.ACCESS2MOUNTAIN.eu.
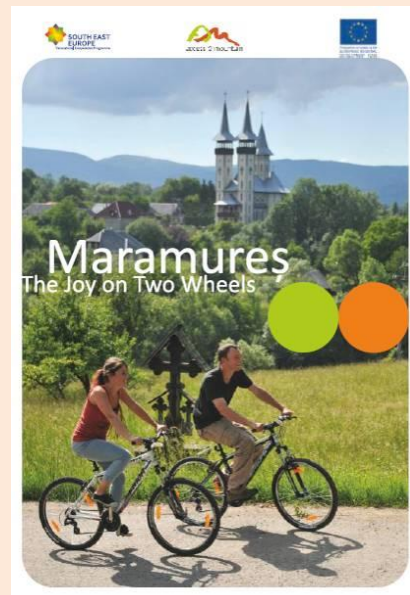
Promotion material related to the "GSEISPUR"
The regional communication strategy built the base for the promotion around the National Park Gesäuse`s mobility platform "GSEISPUR". The promotion package included among others a guest folder (DIN A5, 5.000 pieces in a first edition), posters but also guest cards and single tickets and brandings. An individual marketing website (www.gseispur.at) and the mobile application build the highlight of the promotion concept.

4.2.2 Dissemination and exchange

Apart from the closer circle of stakeholders within the region to be involved in order to gain the necessary financial and political support for the short-term project implementation (see chapter 4.3.1), it is also important to disseminate the project among a wider expert and political audience to make real impact at national and transnational policy level.

For dissemination of the project results and in order to facilitate an exchange with other experts and actors in the field of tourism and transport, the project consortium seeked to open up project events for a broader audience. This was achieved either by spreading the information about bigger/semi-public project events via multiple mailing lists and web announcements or by personally inviting certain regional stakeholders to participate in the partner meetings.

Beside dissemination events implemented in the frame of the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project itself, the project results were also communicated at several thematic relevant events organised by other bodies. The scope ranges from regional events, national conferences or tourism fairs to events at transnational or European level inside and outside the programme area. Of course all these categories assumed a certain thematic relevance. An exhaustive list of events, where ACCESS2MOUNTAIN had a certain function, is in the annex.

ACCESS2MOUNTAIN PROJECT STORIES

Best Practice Brochure for dissemination
In order to disseminate the results of the two thematic best practice studies on regional railways and on multimodal transport in tourism, EURAC Research consolidated the core messages in a handy-sized brochure.
The brochure was finished in November 2013 and could therefore be distributed in hard copy at a couple of forthcoming (transnational) project events (SWOMM, 7th partner meeting/public session, Final Conference). Besides, the e-version was multiplied via the website and mailing lists.

Multimodal Transport and Railways in Mountain Regions
Final Synthesis for Know-How on Awareness Raising and Training

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4.2.3 The role of media as a multiplier

Media is an important multiplier for project results and policy proposals. Therefore it is advisable to maintain good relationships with the local and regional press, with the radio and TV.

Having that in mind, the project partners drafted press releases and provided them mostly via their regional websites. Each time, a partner meeting took place in a region, an article was published in the regional press. Press releases were made also in relation to new mobility services or small scale investments in order to arise interest among the public. Some partners also made use of existing newsletters (e.g. of their institution or within their region) to report about ACCESS2MOUNTAIN. Additionally, the project was referred to in a couple of radio broadcasts. From experience, the following efforts proved to be reasonable in terms of a sound media appearance.

- Distributing press releases to local and regional newspapers on a regular basis, ensuring a common thread.

- Invitation of local media for press conferences at the regional partner meetings.

- Further distributing the project newsletter among regional contact list, eventually translating it.

- Distributing individual regional newsletters, highlighting own regional achievements in the context of the transnational project.

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- Pro-active contacting of newspapers, TV or radio providing interesting topics or concrete products (e.g. film) that could be broadcasted.

ACCESS2MOUNTAIN PROJECT STORIES

Press conference at the 7th partner meeting in Kosice

A press release was published in the forefield of the meeting and journalists were proactively invited to come for a press conference. Finally, the response was greater than expected and the press conference was held with regional television and regional newspapers. Apart from the regional project partner, ARR, also the Lead Partner (Environment Agency Austria) and other project partners were interviewed.

Photo credit: Gejza Legen

4.3 Conclusions for stakeholder involvement and awareness raising

A communication strategy, a set of eye-catching promotion material and first contacts with the regional media are the basic tools to pro-actively start engaging in awareness raising, stakeholder involvement and training. In the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project, a whole Work Package was dealing with this delicate task, which forcingly constitutes an inherent part in the implementation of a regional project.

From the three-year project experience, the multiple lessons learned can be consolidated to the following main conclusions. A differentiation was made between awareness raising among a broader public audience which constitutes potential users on the one hand and the involvement and training of stakeholders, whose support is needed for certain reasons (budget, political influence,...) to implement a project idea or a policy on the other hand. To give concrete examples, selected stories from the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project partners are added.

This essay makes no demands on an exhaustive investigation in the broad field of awareness raising from a scientific point of view. In literature, there are a couple of other sources that can be referred for an in-depth background on education and behavioural change in relation to tourism and transport, for instance Stefan Gössling`s "Carbon Management in Tourism. Mitigating the impacts on climate change" (GÖSSLING 2011). This synthesis, however, picks out some specific conclusions for awarenesss raising from the experience of the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN field work.

4.3.1 Stakeholder management: Alliances and confidence-building for strong commitments

From experience, projects aiming to improve sustainability in a region are often facing a lack of public awareness in the region and financial support from the public sector. Without financial and political support, it is rarely feasible to implement sustainable, within the meaning of long-lasting, measures in a region. A project manager therefore always seeks to increase support from regional stakeholders.

Depending on the framework condition and the size of the project, stakeholder management is very complex and requires diligent preparation, high motivation and a considerable budget.

Define your addressees

A stakeholder analysis is a reasonable first step within your field work and should be dedicated enough time and finance. It is essential to be aware of your environment, your potential supporters, allies and opponents in order to plan the next step in achieving your goal.

We understand stakeholders as actors (persons or organizations) who might have a vested interest in the policy or project being promoted[30] and who are worth to be involved in due to reasons of finance or political impact. Regarding a regional mobility project like in the pilot regions, these might be entrepreneurs (hotel busines, gastronomy, producers,...), transport authorities or local and regional politicians. An analysis in this vein, however, not only provides a clear picture of potential donors or political supporters to be addressed, it can also help to explore other initiatives or associations that are pursueing similar aims, such as environmental protection organizations. Ally with them, take the chance to give weight to your ideas jointly and use synergies in promotion.

Furthermore, actors at national, transnational and EU level lobbying in the thematic field of tourism and transport can be identified in a stakeholder analysis. Involve them in thematic discussions and exchange schemes.

ACCESS2MOUNTAIN PROJECT STORIES
CJIT Maramures: With the support of the Romanian Ecotourism Association, the Romanian project partner, CJIT Maramures, developed visitor packages, based on the new created bike tracks and services and of pre-existing ecotourism offers in Maramures.

Arouse interest

When regarding the closer circle of regional stakeholders, the following conclusions can be drawn from the experience in ACCESS2MOUNTAIN.

Bilateral meetings with stakeholders are necessary in the beginning in order to establish confidence and arouse interest about a project idea. These kinds of rather informal meetings are considered as an integral task of stakeholder involvement, to be strongly included in a project`s budget and implementation plan.

Sustainable mobility measures usually do not have a direct profit from implementation, thus project holders might encounter little willingness among stakeholders to work for "idealistic" project objectives only. When arguing for an idea, it has to be considered, that regional stakeholders and decision makers, such as entrepreneurs, operators in tourism and transport, seek for economic advantages or strong political reputation. The challenge for the project holder is to further motivate them and keep them in the loop.

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[30] see Schmeer, K., Online: http://www.eestum.eu/voorbeelden/Stakeholders_analysis_guidelines.pdf (04.02.2014)

ACCESS2MOUNTAIN PROJECT STORIES

Stakeholder event "Elektroschmankerl im Gseis"

This regional event was supposed to raise awareness among regional and supraregional journalists in regard to soft mobility topics, to establish constant media contacts for future publications/press articles and to arrange a "Get-together" for regional actors with e-motorcycles in order foster future cooperation (in particular regarding a joint rental system and joint tourism packages).

"Output of this initial procedure was a „menu" including different culinary stations along the planned route through the Nationalpark Gesäuse. Each partner was responsible for one course with typical regional products at one station. The additional motorcycles needed were delivered free of charge by the producer EMCO."

source (text and photo): Nationalpark Gesäuse, event documentation, 10th August 2013

"Another important outcome was that the regional politicians (mostly municipality-majors) could be convinced about the importance to invest in the future field of soft mobility. So a big step towards followup activities after the project could have been laid. All in all the success factor of this event was the "fun-factor" related to the e-motorcycles. Due to this the participants could have been reached at a high emotional level."

photo credit: Rzeszow Regional Development Agency

Regional Tourism Fairs-Crossborder Eco Tourism (RARR-PL)

The Rzeszow Regional Development Agency presented the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN at Regional Tourism Fairs. On this occasion, a wide audience could be sensitised for the importance of transport for sustainable tourism. The event was used by the project partner to establish contact with regional stakeholders for further consultation.

Cooperation between tourism, transport and environment: Bring them together!

After successful bilateral meetings with stakeholders and first acknowledgements, different stakeholders and decision makers need to be assembled. This integrative – and possibly intersectoral - approach aims to ensure a common understanding and avoid conflicts by exchanging demands and restrictions of each participating party.

It is advisable to seek cooperation with transport authorities at an early stage when planning integrative measures such as combined ticketing or visitor packages. Bringing key actors in the field of tourism (e.g. tourism accomodation, tour operators), transport (e.g. public transport providers) and environment (e.g. environment agencies, protected area management bodies) together helps to smooth the way for future cooperation and common sustainability projects.

To seek the understanding of and cooperation with protected area management bodies is important in terms of measures in ecologically sensitive areas like mountain regions in general or particularly protected areas, for instance when it comes to the identification of routes for cycling within these areas. Mutual understanding and respect are key factors for long-term and sustainable cooperation.
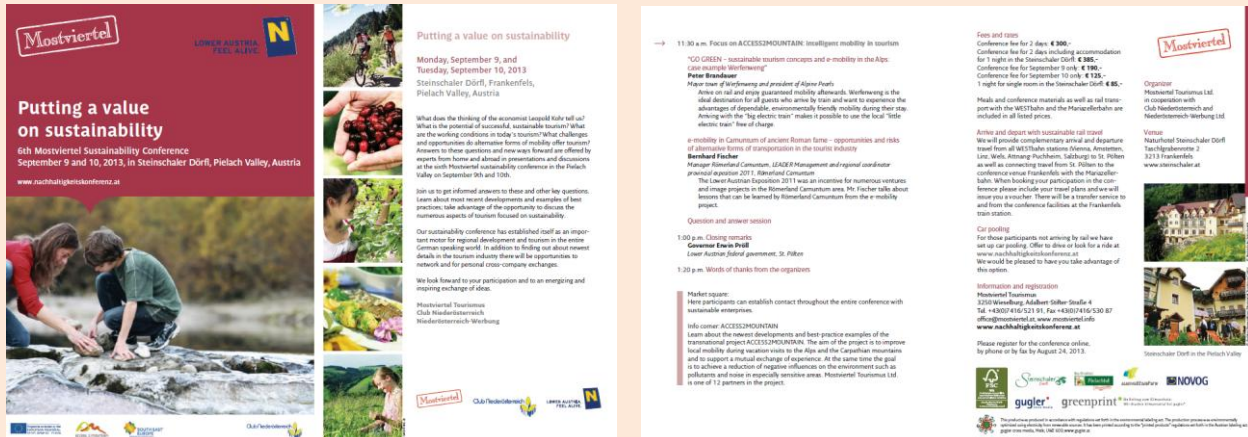
ACCESS2MOUNTAIN PROJECT STORIES

Among regional tourism actors (transport providers, accomocation, services etc.), awareness was raised through cooperative planning workshops and testing events. In these workshops, the problems about the current situation in terms of negative impacts of car traffic were addressed and solutions elaborated.

Conference on sustainable tourism in Mostviertel "Sustainability turned into value"

"Taking place on September 9-10 in the familiar surroundings of the Pielach Valley, the 6th Mostviertel Conference on Sustainable Tourism covers topics all around sustainable tourism projects, soft mobility, sustainable development of rural regions and the working conditions in the tourism industry."

source (text and picture): Mostviertel Tourism Ltd., Event Announcement www.nachhaltigkeitskonferenz.at

Conference on the Future of Transport in the city of Košice and the Košice Region

"To highlight the current state of transport, to name the trends of further development and to find solutions for user and environmentally improved transport infrastructure in the city of Košice, the Košice Region (KSK) and also throughout the entire region of eastern Slovakia, was the aim of an international conference held in Košice on 25-26 June 2013. The professional event with nearly 180 participants and 46 presentations was held under the auspices of the Slovak Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development, City Council of Košice, University of Žilina and Košice Technical University. With the help of partners and sponsors the conference was prepared by the Košice Self-governing Region in collaboration with the Agency for the Support of Regional Development Košice."

source (text and photo): Agency for the support of Regional Development Kosice

Sustainable mobility in tourist regions in Austria – National stakeholder event

How can attractive "soft mobility" offers, packages and modern travel information be created for guests within the framework of transnational projects? How are these offers used? And how can such measures be financed?
For the Holiday Fair in Vienna (16.1.2014), the Environment Agency Austria had organised a national stakeholder event in order to find an answer to all these questions. The event was organised in cooperation with the Austrian Ministries for the Environment, Transport and the Economy and with the Austrian Economic Chamber. At the event the results of the projects ACCESS2MOUNTAIN and TRANSDANUBE were presented, which are both under the leadership of the Environment Agency Austria and address sustainable mobility in tourist regions.

More than 200 stakeholders from tourism, transport, spatial planning and environmental organisations discussed the potentials of soft-mobililty offers in tourism and the success factors for soft mobility implementation. Inputs were provided by the lead partner and the other Austrian project partners, who presented their activities which had been implemented within the project ACCESS2MOUNTAIN in the last 3 years.

photo credit: Environment Agency Austria/Gröger

Institutionalize and sustain cooperation

Once having brought stakeholders and experts from different fields together, it is advisable to establish working groups to maintain and strengthen the cooperation. Nominating functions (e.g. chairman, reporter) among the members and keeping a regular schedule of meetings gives weight to the group. Continuity is important in this kind of institutionalization process.

The working group can be a starting point for a stronger form of cooperation to be built in order to jointly implement long-term projects. Depending on the members and the concrete purpose, the possible cooperation forms range from a (non legalised) consortium or joint venture with self-depending members to an association with legal capacity.

The development of cross-border action plans is a good opportunity to foster commitments for long-term cooperation also beyond a co-financed (EU) project. In this regard, it is indispensable to involve stakeholders and decision-makers early in an action plan development or already in a feasibility study to ensure the implementation of the project afterwards. In order to strengthen the obligatory character of an action plan, clear responsibilities for the measures should be defined.

Needless to say, the needs of the local population shall be considered at an early stage. In these days, participation has such a significant value, even influenced by the European Commission. The EC recently published a document titled "Concept for sustainable urban mobility plans"[31] with the subtitle "Together towards competitive and resource-efficient urban mobility" which includes guidelines for the intersectoral and participatory development of sustainable urban mobility plans (SUMP) to be implemented by all member states.

In terms of civil participation, however, it has to be considered that involving an "untrained" group of people entails the risk of slowing down the whole process. It is recommended to consider an appropriate way to involve the population. Inviting a representative to the working group meetings to speak for the locals could be a possible method. From case to case it can be sufficient to inform the population at an early stage and promote the project by highlighting the advantages for the potential users and the overall regional population (see chapter 4.3.2).

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[31] COM(2013) 913

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Roadmap to success

Taking the above conclusions into account, it is advisable to set up a roadmap for stakeholder management in the beginning of a project. One must be deeply aware that stakeholder work is expensive; therefore it should be considered as a separate budgetary item, of course potentially supported through co-financing sources, such as the ERDF. In this regard, it is recommended to draw on all available funding sources on different levels (see chapter 3.4.4).

4.3.2   Public awareness: Training your potential customers

Environmental sustainability proposals are gaining more and more attention among the public. Nowadays it is hard to elude the discussion about environmental sustainability, for instance in terms of energy efficiency in housing or specific topics like waste management. Hence, the awareness for environmental sustainability is rather high in general. As far as concerns mobility in this complex system, however, fewer people may already have concerned themselves with it. The share even decreases when it comes to sustainable mobility in tourism. Provocatively speaking, very few people care about the negative environmental impacts of transport during vacation.

The success and sustainability of a mobility project relies in the long term on how far the **local or regional population** identifies with the idea of sustainable mobility. Beside the touristic demand peaks, a basic utilization of the mobility services (e.g. busses, rental systems,...) through inhabitants is very important to make the system bearable. To facilitate this process, in a first step the target groups must be well known. In most cases, when talking about target groups, we mean the potential end-users of the mobility services, be it the local population or the tourists, a specific age class or gender etc.

Referring to the untrained audience, for instance the local population, it is important to present new mobility services in the light of personal advantages. It has to be taken into account that people in peripheral areas tend to consider it as normal to cover short distances by car, be it to bring the kids to school, to care for the daily shopping or to get to the soccer training. Positive arguments could involve saving mobility costs (e.g. in relation to car-sharing or public transport compared to the purchase and running costs of a car), an improved air quality (e.g. in relation to EEV[32]), a higher flexibility and self-dependance (e.g. for teenagers or elder people in relation to public transport or demand responsive systems) which all result in an improved life quality etc. Underlining these personal positive effects help to create self-identification with sustainable mobility means among the local population.

For all target groups: Highlight the positive effects on the environment but do not forget to demonstrate also the personal benefit!

Personal advantages are also questioned when it comes to convince visitors. In tourist regions, they are often the main target group for additional mobility services (such as for example ski/hiking busses). Therefore the viability of the service depends on the level of acceptance by the tourist.

Awareness raising without providing real alternatives is nearly useless. A good tourist concept is able to offer visitors an easy and comfortable alternative way to travel without caring about individual transport means. The challenge is to convince them with the help of attractive offers (visitor packages, integrative guest cards,...) to choose your offer instead of resorting to the conventional way to travel.

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[32] Enhanced Environmentally friendly Vehicle

Give the floor to the locals!

It`s not only about convincing the population of your project, also the other way round, you should be open-minded about other people`s ideas. It makes sense to involve specific target groups at an early stage in order to account for their specific needs. Als already described in chapter 4.3.1, it is recommended, however, to reflect carefully about the best participation method.

In this context, it shall further be mentioned, that it can be profitable to promote local bottom-up (sustainability) initiatives, brought up by citizens, and further support them or cooperate with them.

Demonstrate it!

Pilot demonstration projects (e.g. realized through small scale investments) are considered very important to create visible outputs from the beginning of the project and show the added value.

A successful awareness raising in a region will be even more successfull if the project stakeholders demonstrate the idea by their own and show the advantages of travelling green at first hand. *(Motto: "Live the idea!")*
Electric vehicles such as e-bikes, e-scooters or other "fun mobility" items can help to attract new user groups and make potential users familiar with environmentally friendly mobility. Special promotion days facilitate the introduction of new mobility services and create a positive atmosphere.

Simplify it!

Adapting to your audience is essential in order to reach them and exert influence on their attitude or mobility behavior. An important target group is children at the age of 6-14 years (primary school) building the next generation of active mobility, which is worth to be trained in an appropriate (e.g. playful) way. Thereby the attitude that sustainable mobility is trendy can be spread among young people.

In general, also for grown ups, it can be recommended to use an easy and visual language. Therefore, information about new mobility products needs to be simplified (no schedule, no stops, as few descriptions as possible) – Let the designs speak for themselves!

In this context, integrated visitor packages as described in chapter 3.4.2 are a good way to simplify information and facilitate access to the services.

Design for recognition!

Brand recognizition is a fundamental part of catching people`s attention. As such, it should be taken into account early on in the process, i.e. during budget allocations.

Once a recognizable market presence is established, multipliers such as the local news can be activated to further disseminate the information about the new products.

ACCESS2MOUNTAIN PROJECT STORIES

Within the pilot regions, guests and local people were being motivated to attend regional events and competitions. Such actions provide a relaxed atmosphere, which helps to understand the topic of sustainable transport.

Miskolc Holding – Family cycling party

"The family cycling party in the Factory Arena on 25th May also belongs to the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project. The program planned for here includes for instance trial- and unicycle trial competition, bicycle safari with a tour guide in the factory, pumptrack (MBT-competition on an earth-built track) and skateboarding competition, as well. There will be dirt jump presentation, gibbon slackline - i.e. balancing on tight ropes-, gold sprint (bicycle roller racing with Hungarian and world champions)." *(extract from regional newsletter article, original article from April 16 2013 Miskolci Napló, Edited by: Imre Horvath)*

Information day, primary school, photo credit: Miskolc Holding Plc.

Bike racks on children`s historic railway in Kosice

Opening ceremony: "New investment in Košice on the **Children´s historic railway** brought combination of the narrow gauge railway with a bike tourism and combination of history with new ideas."

Photo credit: Gejza Legen

5 POLICY IMPACT OF ACCESS2MOUNTAIN

Apart from providing pilot regions and their concrete implementation projects with political support at the national level, ministries and other political partners have been participating in a policy dialogue geared toward the political anchoring of sustainable mobility and tourism at the EU and transnational level as well.

Results and outcomes from the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project implementation have continuously been fed into the work of the Alpine and Carpathian Convention with regards to sustainable tourism and mobility. On the policy level, cooperation has in particular been established especially with the respective Secretariats of the Carpathian and Alpine Convention. The Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (ISCC) has been subcontracted in order to facilitate the success elaboration of the Transport protocol to the Carpathian Convention.

The strong interaction with the respective convention was imperative to ensure the institutional and policy anchor the project and necessary up-scaling on the policy level. This was also back-stopped by the fact that all Carpathian countries (competent Ministries for environment as well as transport-related issues, the former also serving in their capacity as the national focal points of the Carpathian Convention in their countries) were official observers to the project. The ACCESS2MOUNTAIN pilot regions, mainly represented by tourism associations or development agencies, had political endorsement from the respective national ministries in the field of transport and environment who had been involved in the project as project partners or observing partners.

The Working Group of the Carpathian Convention being tasked with the elaboration of the Transport Protocol benefitted in particular from the various results and outputs provided through the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN Project. Continuous exchange of information between stakeholders of the WG and the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN Partnership took place during the implementation of the project seeking also experience exchange with the Alpine region. Interaction with other bodies of the Carpathian Convention, such as the Implementation Committee or the Conference of the Parties (COP) provided multi-level policy dialogue and attention to the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project contributing to politicy and institutional sustainability and a broader dissemination of the results of the project. In addition, project results and developments were contextualized and translated into suitable formats for transfer to the Alps, the Carpathians and other mountain regions, such as the Balkans. The involvement of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) that is also providing the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention (ISCC) was important in this respect. Various dissemination activities undertaken aimed to strengthen the inter-mountain network and increase the awareness for the need for sustainable mobility and tourism especially sensitive mountain areas.

5.1 Input to the Transport protocol to the Carpathian Convention

While the Alpine Convention, which was founded in 1995, adopted its Transport Protocol in the year 2000 already, the younger Carpathian Convention (founded in 2003) did not have such a policy towards sustainable transport before the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project.

The Carpathian region faces two challenges in terms of accessibility. On the one hand, in line with the TEN-T objectives, international traffic flows shall be facilitated and East-West networks developed in which regard the Carpathians are a natural barrier. On the other hand, it is imperative to preserve the natural beauty and richness of the Carpathians.

With support provided by the ISCC, and the further involvement of the competent Ministries of the Carpathians the development of a Transport Protocol text to the Carpathian Convention was successfully facilitated.

The main output of the activities undertaken was a negotiated draft text of the Transport Protocol text that after the adoption of the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee (CCIC) will be submitted to the Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP4) in September 2014 (Mikulov) for its submission and adoption by the Ministers. The protocol will form the basis for future cooperation and activities in the context of sustainable transport development in the Carpathian area taking into account relevant legislation and policies of the European Union.

Inputs from the Carpathian Region

In order to reach the desired result (facilitated Transport Protocol text) a series of Respective meetings of the Carpathian Convention Working Group on Sustainable Industry, Energy, Transport and Infrastructure have been organized as well as various feedback loops with Ministries of the Carpathian region been undertaken. Throughout the consultation process, the European Academy of Bolzano (EURAC) and the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN partnership provided continuous inputs and feedback to the elaboraton of the draft text Protocol. Beside the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN Project, the Working Group also benefitted from other relevant projects and activities funded under EU programmes, e.g. the "Carpathian Project" (former CADSES Programme), a study on transport in the Carpathians carried out by EURAC, work of the IENE network Experiences and best-practices gained in the Alpine region were also fruitful to the discussions.

A final draft text version of the Protocol on Sustainable Transport (subject to further modifications) has been agreed in the context of the Working Group in autumn 2013. The proposal was presented by the ISCC to the recently held meeting of the Carpathian Convention Implementation Committee (CCIC) that considered and submitted the text for its adoption and signature to the the forthcoming fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP4) in the Czech Republic on 23-26 September 2014.

tab. 2 Overview of all relevant Carpathian Convention meetings in terms of the transport protocol development

Type	When	Where
3rd Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention	May 2011	Bratislava, Slovakia
1st Meeting WG Transport to the CC	18-19 October, 2012	Košice, Slovakia (back to back to the Midterm Conference)
2nd Meeting WG Transport to the CC	26-27 February, 2013	Vienna International Centre, Austria
3rd Meeting WG Transport to the CC	4-5 June, 2013	Vienna International Centre, Austria
4th Meeting WG Transport to the CC	1-2 October, 2013	Vienna International Centre, Austria
5th Meeting WG Transport to the CC and back-to-back meeting of the Carpathian and the Alpine Convention	11 December 122013	Vienna, Austria
5th Meeting of the Carpathian Convention Implementation committee (CCIC) During the meeting, the Carpathian Convention Secretariat presented to the National Focal Points all the activities carried out in 2013, among which the ones	18-20 February 2014	Prague, Czech Republic

related to ACCESS2MOUNTAIN Project and outputs.		
4th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (COP4)	24-26 September, 2014	Mikulov, Czech Republic
Adoption and Signature of the Transport Protocol text by Conference of the Parties		

Involvement of the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN partnership

EURAC in close cooperation with the ISCC encouraged further exchange of information with the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project partnership. Project partners provided their regular inputs/set of recommendations to the elaboration of the draft text Protocol, e.g. throughout participation and contribution to the meetings of the WG Transport (e.g. presentation of work/experiences gained in the designated pilot areas of the Carpathians as well as other related Accces2Mountain project developments and results). It was considered as a specific added value to mainstream inputs not only from a scientific and policy stakeholder but also from practitioners implementing mobility concepts in the regions into the process.

The ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project's results and developments have been presented at various other relevant events of the Carpathian Convention including the meeting of the Carpathian Convention implementation Committee (autumn 2012) or the Rio+20 Summit (Mountain Pavilion with support of Carpathian Convention). Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention, May 2011, in Bratislava.

Exchange with the Alpine Convention

Representatives of the Alpine Convention participated and provided inputs to the discussions of the WG Transport on a regular basis. The Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology (National Focal Point of Austria to the Alpine Convention WG Transport) provided regular inputs to the meetings of the CC WG Transport (submitting inputs to the draft Protocol and presentation of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project developments and results).

Towards the development of sustainable transport in the Carpathian region

The protocol provides guidance for the development and implementation of general transport related policies and strategies and establish the basis for concrete activities in the context of specific transport means, such as road, rail, water, air but also non-motorized transportation.

A general provision in the beginning of the (draft) protocol:

*"(…) development of sustainable freight and passenger transport and related infrastructure in the Carpathians for the benefit of present and future generations with the objective to contribute to the sustainable development of the region while avoiding, minimizing and, where necessary, **mitigating and compensating negative environmental and socio-economic impacts of transport** and related infrastructure development."*

Fields of cooperation shall therefore be:
- sustainable transport and related infrastructure planning and development

- sustainable multi-modal transport policies for access to urban, rural, remote areas and tourist destinations in the Carpathians
- reduction of negative impacts on human health and improvement of transportation safety
- avoiding fragmentation of natural and semi-natural habitats
- maintenance and improvement of ecological connectivity on the local, national and regional level
- development and promotion of environmentally friendly transport models and systems, in particular in environmentally sensitive areas
- sustainable transport planning and traffic management
- infrastructural functionality of the transport network
- improvement or maintenance of transport infrastructure in terms of efficiency, safety, security passenger and freight mobility and emissions of greenhouse gases. (…)

Based on these fields of cooperation, the protocol suggests furthermore specific measures for each transportation mode as well as in regard to transport infrastructure networks and their connectivity, traffic management systems and safety standards.

5.2   Policy exchange and cooperation with the Alpine Convention

With the view of identifying concrete fields of cooperation between the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project and the Alpine Convention, different stakeholders of the Alpine Convention were consulted prior and during the implementation of the project, among others: Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, Italian Presidency of the Alpine Convention and National Focal Points to the Alpine Convention.

The involvement of ministries in the field of transport and environment as project partners and observers in the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN partnership (AT: Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology, Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management) and Associated Strategic Partner (IT: Ministry for the Environment, Land and Sea) ensured the relevant needed linkages with the Alpine Convention (AC).

Regular exchange of communication was established with the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention as well as other relevant AC stakeholders Update on the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project results and developments have been, in particular, shared with stakeholders of the respective WG Transport/Mobility of the Alpine Convention.

Further, the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project encouraged contributions of stakeholders of the Alpine Convention to the meetings of the Carpathian Convention Working Group Transport & Infrastructure. At these occasions, lessons learned and experiences regarding the development of transport in the Alpine region could be shared with Carpathian stakeholders.

5.3   Policy dialogue and positioning toward EU-policy

EURAC in cooperation with UNEP Vienna on behalf of the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN partnership facilitated information exchange with relevant stakeholders at EU and regional level (Carpathian region). Through various channels, information on project results and developments was provided to these stakeholders as a measure to raise awareness for the activities and trigger necessary policy action.

Various consultations were held with stakeholders at the regional and transregional level in the Carpathians (e. g. stakeholders in the Carpathian region involved in transport issues such as the IENE network).

At EU level, relevant stakeholders were addressed, such as the Priority Area Coordinator 1B of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

Besides, other channels were used to spread information on project results and developments at European level, in particular, through the collaboration with the Interim Secretariat of the Carpathian Convention provided by UNEP. Among others, news on the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project and the organized WG Transport meetings were shared within the wider UNEP network, e.g. through inclusion in UNEP/Regional Office for Europe (ROE) Newsletters as well as relevant Websites.

The Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention (COP4) will be held in Czech Republic, September 2014. EURAC, through the involvement of the UNEP Vienna ISCC, will seek to provide inputs to this conference, in particular, with regards to the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project and transport related issues.

In addition, the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project was presented at various international events and policy fora, thereunder:

tab. 3 International Events for Dissemination and policy exchange

Name of the event and contribution	When	Where
Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Carpathian Convention	May 2011	Bratislava, Slovak Republic
"European projects - Development and Partnership for Maramureş" Conference Presentation of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN	9 May 2012	Baia Mare, Romania
United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - Rio+20 – Mountain Pavilion Presentation of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN/Poster	20-22 June 2012	Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
European Cooperation Day "Sharing borders growing closer" Presentation of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN	21 September 2012	Budapest/Hungary
Conference on "Sustainable Mobility from Bike to Train: An Opportunity for Regions and Destinations" Presentation of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN	18 October 2012	Bolzano, Italy
18th Meeting of the Extended Bureau of the Steering Committee of Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP) Presentation of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN	November 16, 2012	Geneva, Switzerland
"Move on Green"-Conference Presentation of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN	4-6 December 2012	Rzeszow, Poland
Sustainable Tourism in South Tyrol. Bolzano and surroundings: a success model for the Alpine region, Conference during the Alpine Spring Festival Presentation of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN	6 March 2013	Bolzano, Italy
Transdolomites – European Projects for sustainable mobility	8 March 2013	Trento, Italy

Presentation of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN		
International Conference on the Future of Transport in the city of Košice and the Košice Region Presentation of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN and its particular outputs on cross-border intermodal routes and pilot small scale investments in the Košice region (enabling bike carriage on rail wagons)	25-26 June 2013	Košice, Slovakia
Scientific Workshop "Transportation Infrastructure and Wildlife Corridors - learning from experience" Presentation of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN	16-18 October 2013	Luhačovice, Czech Republic
SWOMM 2013 – Scientific workshop on mountain mobility "Sustainable tourism and accessibility in mountains areas": Presentations of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN Pilot regions and Dissemination of the Results of two Best Practice Collections on multimodal transport and railways in tourism (Best Practice Brochure)	11 December 2013	Vienna, Austria
Green Mountain Conference "Cross-border solutions for sustainable growth in mountain and sensitive regions" Presentation of core results of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN	20 February 2014	Brussels, Belgium
ACCESS2MOUNTAIN Final Conference General project review, output bazar, panel discussion with regional project partners	1-3 April 2014	Admont, Austria
24th Meeting of the Extended Bureau of THE PEP Steering Committee Presentation of ACCESS2MOUNTAIN	16 April 2014	Paris, France
"The Alpine Convention and the Carpathian Convention: Sharing the experiences. The Apennines, a European mountain range" under the auspices of the Italian Presidency of the Alpine Convention 2013-2014 Overall project review and conclusions	23-24 April 2014	Sarnano, Italy

5.4   The ACCESS2MOUNTAIN Common Charter

In the final phase of the project, the experiences gained throughout three years of transnational and regional project implementation have been translated into recommendations to policy makers on transnational, national and regional level. They build the basis for the Common Charter of the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN partnership to be officially adopted and signed at the Final Conference on 1-3 April 2014.

The signing ceremony of the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN Common Charter constituted the official closure of of the final Conference. With their signatures, the project partners and observers gave their commitment to an ongoing sustainable mobility development for the benefit of the local population, the tourism sector and the environment. They further confirmed their willingness to further cooperate in this field at regional, cross-border and transnational level.

The Charter also contains some fundamental recommendations to policy makers as well as the private and public sectors, which determine and influence infrastructure, transport and tourism planning. The undersigned parties call upon the Alpine and Carpathian countries to further drive forward and support multimodal, transnational and carbon-neutral travelling across borders to making the mountain regions more sustainably accessible.

fig. 12 Group photo after the signing ceremony, Admont, 2 April 2014

photo credit: Nationalpark Gesäuse, Andreas Hollinger

6 GENERAL CONCLUSION ON THE ACCESS2MOUNTAIN PROJECT

Necessity and value of transnational cooperation in the field of tourism and transport

It is a prerequisite that tourism and tourism mobility are to a high degree transnational. To find sustainable solutions, a transnational view is therefore indispensable. Thus, apart from national initiatives (like for example the klimaaktiv mobil initiative in Austria), transnational cooperation programmes such as the South East Europe Programme are of important value for the sustainable development of mobility at Alpine, Carpathian, European and at global level as well.

The transnational operational level facilitates a broader view on successfully implemented solutions, so called "best practices", which can provide valuable know-how and incentives for each individual approach. ACCESS2MOUNTAIN is an example, where regions visibly profited from transnational exchange and cooperation at multiple levels:

- Exchange of best practices/ideas/innovative solutions

- Practical know-how support during the pilot implementation (through Lead Partner and project partners) and learning for the future

- Partnerships for long term cross-border or transnational cooperation

The project achievements are considered a good starting point for further efforts towards the improvement of cross-border and transnational multimodal transport systems including cycling as an alternative mode to travel from A to B. The project reached a high level of awareness for sustainable mobility even in those pilot regions in the Carpathians, where "sustainable development" had not yet been popularized. Supported with know-know and inspiration from existing success stories, the seven pilot regions took their own lessons through the implementation of regional mobility projects and awareness raising among the different target groups. In the project`s synthesis reports[33], they share their experiences with other project holders and other actors in tourism and transport who have a vested interested in improving sustainable regional mobility.

The scope of concrete action through the pilot projects was rather limited to the regional scale, including cross-border regions. It has to be considered, however, that despite the comparatively low overall budgets paired with limited project timeframes, important demonstration actions and preparations for a future implementation at a larger scale have been achieved so far. The pilot actions can be seen as a proof of feasibility of the selected measures, exhibiting the short-term effects and helping to understand the mechanism. Experiences and lessons learned from pilot activities can be invaluably applied on future projects at a larger scale.

Strengthening regional development

According to the aim of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), also the actions implemented in the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project, help to reduce regional disparities by benefitting the regional development in terms of living conditions, environmental qualities and economic prosperity.

Mountain areas are acknowledged as sensitive regions that need special consideration in regional policy. Structural funds, like the ERDF, can help to compensate unfavorable framework conditions due to

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[33] Aside from "The ACCESS2MOUNTAIN success story", two other thematic synthesis reports/final best practice collections are available. See www.access2mountain.eu

morphological, topographical or geographical factors and ensure a certain quality of living through the provision of infrastructure, the support of local businesses and others. Providing infrastructure for a divers target audience without excluding certain groups necessitates the provision of public transport services. Especially young residents without a driving license are dependent on grown-ups driving them; public transport can make them feel more independent and offers them opportunities to organize themselves. This applies to other less mobile user groups, like elderly people, as well. Due to the often disperse settlement pattern in peripheral mountain regions, a sound demand responsive transport service might better replace a regular public transport system. But not only busses carrying passengers are appropriate; these services can be complemented by sharing systems. In order to particularly attract young, well-educated residents (and guests), innovative solutions are requested. Young families, once having moved to the city to study and now returning with their children to the countryside, are used to find a variety of different services in their neighbourhood. This includes for example car-sharing facilities; sharing models have become more and more popular, particularly in metropolitan areas, during the last years. This implies also the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), which needs not stop at the city margins.

Implementing sustainable mobility plans in a region, involving public transport systems or demand responsive systems or promoting sharing and rental solutions, can have positive economic effects in the regions; be it the promotion of certain operations (e.g. regional transport operators) and enterprises (e.g. through the embedment of regional products in visitor packages) or be it employment effects in general (e.g. employment of permanently unemployed persons in social projects, for instance for the operation of community busses).

All these aspects, taking into account the local population, the regional economy including the tourism sector in particular and the environment, are essential to integrate mountain territories harmoniously in the community space and prevent their being marginalised. Structural funds, like the ERDF, can fundamentally support the initiation of actions like these.

Learning points through the transnational cooperation

Inherent part of the project was the building of a common understanding about sustainable mobility and tourism. This formulation involves among others the interpretation of cycling as a means of transportation, as a real alternative to non-sustainable means, instead of considering it just a tourist activity carried out on-site. Some important thematic achievements shall be highlighted here against the background of this commonly designed idea of sustainable mobility.

- *Cycling as an alternative mode of transport in tourism*

Already in the principal project idea towards a transnational project, many pilot activities were planned to be linked to cycling, especially in terms of multimodal transport. As it turned out, only few pilot regions could base their efforts on a functioning network of cycling infrastructure in the beginning. In these cases, investments, though implemented through a rather small budget and primarily for pilot demonstration only, became a great asset for the region.

A very good example is the Maramures region in Romania: In this originally rural region with tourism slowly emerging, correspondingly only soft measures shall be taken to develop tourism and tourism mobility without harming the characteristic landscape and culture. The regional partner therefore concentrated on cycling, which had been scarcey developed, but on the other side could benefit from ideal conditions in terms of landscape and topography. A comparatively small budget, co-financed by the ERDF, was used to support a regional cycle path network including an easy guidance system and to

facilitate multimodal transport connections through the installation of bike racks on minibusses. A sound brochure "The Joy on two wheels" promotes the new offers and services among the target groups which makes you wish for exploring Maramures by bike yourself. (see 3.2.4)

But also other pilot activities and analyses implemented within ACCESS2MOUNTAIN revealed that cycling is an important factor for sustainable tourism, not only as an on-site tourist activity but also as an alternative means of transport to get from point A to point B. (see 3.2.2, 3.2.5)

The project activities are considered a good starting point for further efforts towards the improvement of cross-border and transnational cycling infrastructure, facilitating multimodal transport and to raise the awareness for cycling (respectively cycling in combination with public transport) as an alternative means to travel. The combination with public transport was facilitated through easy technical modifications (e.g. bike racks) and modifications in the ticketing systems.

- *Demand responsive transport in peripheral tourist regions*

The problem of rural depopulation is manifested in many regions in South East European countries but also in peripheral areas in Central and Western Europe. In these scarcely populated regions, regular public transport systems are not sustainable and alternative mobility offers (e.g. rental systems, carsharing, flexible transport services etc.) are hardly introduced yet in SEE countries. These circumstances primarily affect the regional population and their daily mobility. However, in peripheral regions that are touristically relevant as well, providing such mobility offers can constitute an additional attraction for tourists on-site or for the "last-mile" in their arrival by public means of transport (apart from the positive environmental effects). Existing best practices in the Alps demonstrate good examples how to integrate flexible transport services (e.g. hiking/ski busses for tourists) together with regular public transport services in guest cards and highlight these mobility offers in regional marketing activities.

ACCESS2MOUNTAIN generated one pilot project which particularly concentrated on the development of a demand responsive system. Against the background of dramatic cutbacks in regular public transport connections (including railway), the Nationalpark Gesäuse made a virtue out of necessity and implemented an integrative mobility platform including new sustainable mobility services. The positive reponse after just one season of implementation proves that with this project the National Park has taken the right road.

- *Touristic package development*

Within ACCESS2MOUNTAIN, pilot regions started to promote newly developed soft mobility offers to the end user. Tourist packages with a special focus on soft mobility (arrival and on-site mobility) were and are still being further developed, either by creating new packages or by integrating soft mobility offers in existing tourist packages. An inherent part of this process is the coordination with relevant regional stakeholders in order to be able to provide different packages, focussing on specific target groups. Apart from accomodation and transport, also other aspects of sustainable tourism (e.g. promotion of regional products) can be included. The first package in this vein was realized by Mostviertel Tourism, offering an e-biking package including e-bike rental, overnight stays, a ride with the regional Mariazell railway and a return transport service for the e-bike. Besides, also other regions designed target group specific visitor packages (e.g. Maramures 3.2.4).

- *Regional railways*

Historical railways should not be reduced to their museal value. Similar to some bike offers, narrow gauge railways in tourist areas risk to remain on-site attractions with no incentive for tourists to arrive at the starting point without their car. Regional and narrow gauge railways, however, become really interesting,

as soon as they are integrated in the chain of transportation of tourists and in this way constitute an inherent part of their arrival and return journey. An example, where this was successfully implemented and currently being further promoted and enhanced, is the Mariazell railway. (see 3.2.2)

Through the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project, the project partners had the chance to experience what it means to use trains for business journeys. All partner meetings were organized in a way that their venues and times of beginning were well reachable by public transport. Even those, who had not been used to this kind of transportation for business trips before, soon started to be convinced about the train rides and enjoyed the obtained time for discussions, work and other activities.

- *Criteria for transnational project management and communication*

In a self-assessment process, facilitated through regular open discussions in the frame of partner meetings, the project consortium evaluated their internal collaboration and communication but also critically assessed the project structure and ongoing project management. In future projects, recollecting these lessons learned, shall help to mitigate misunderstanding and enhance efficiency in the project implementation.

The building of a common understanding of the project, the targets, the concrete outputs and the responsibilities in the very beginning was considered very important. A clear application form including a detailed roadmap may help to maintain consistency and avoid losing the thread. Furthermore, the discussion of possible kinds of approach to practical actions (e.g. procurement of servies etc.) turned out to be of important value especially for project partners which were less experienced with EU projects. A professional communication management, which under certain circumstances could be included in the overall project management, is essential and should foresee a proactive approach to potentially upcoming communication activities. Project communication generally could include more interactive elements of communication, such as regular phone cnoferences and online exchange schemes.

To put it in a nutshell...

Viewing the achievements at an overall project level, the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project delivered a wide range of results and recommendations for the development and promotion of sustainable mobility in tourism in mountain regions, which are worth to be taken into account in follow-up projects. Already within the project duration, feedback loops facilitated the identification of lessons learned and thereby launched a capitalization process. Based on an assessment of the main achievements of the projects, potential future fields of action and possible funding schemes have been identified as well. Last but not least, the common Charter is a valid proof of commitments by the project partners to further cooperate in the field of sustainable tourism and mobility.

7   INDEX OF FIGURES

8   INDEX OF TABLES

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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10 ANNEX

Common Charter of the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN Partnership

DECLARATION FOR SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY IN TOURISM

Tourism is inevitably linked to transport and mobility. Negative consequences of motorized transport affect mountain regions' ecosystems and diminish their recreational value. To mitigate environmental damages and health hazards caused by transport, **sustainable tourism needs sustainable transport and mobility:** environmentally friendly, energy efficient, smooth and flexible door-to-door transportation.

We, the undersigned partners of the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project and stakeholders – ministries, tourism and transport businesses, destination management and regional development organizations, NGOs and academia –, declare our commitment to sustainable tourism mobility development in the Alpine and the Carpathian Convention areas.

Mountain regions belong to what the European Commission considers **sensitive areas with regard to transport**. They are particularly vulnerable to and thus highly affected by environmental impacts from transport and tourism (e.g. noise, air pollution, barrier effects, etc.) due to their territorial morphology, biological and landscape diversity.

The **Alps** belong to the ecologically most sensitive areas in Europe and are the natural, cultural, living and economic environment for nearly 14 million people. They are Europe's most important recreation area with about 95 million long-stay tourists and additional 60 million same-day visitors per year.

The **Carpathians** are Europe's largest mountain range, a unique natural treasure of great beauty and ecological value, and home of the headwaters of major rivers. They are home to about 18 million people and host around 31 million guests a year.

Thus, we seize the opportunity offered by the Southeast Europe Programme and beyond this framework to improve sustainable accessibility and connection to, between and in sensitive mountain regions benefiting all (potential) users. We contribute to improving the sustainable accessibility of the **Alpine** and the **Carpathian Convention** areas and foster **cooperation among the two**. We do so by working together in **transnational partnerships** to plan and implement measures and projects for environmentally friendly, flexible and demand-oriented transport and mobility.

We seek to raise people's awareness for health issues since transport has harmful effects on our health through accidents, pollution, reduced physical activities and greenhouse gases. Thus, the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project is in line with the goals of the UNECE WHO **Transport, Health and Environment Pan European Programme (THE PEP)** and contributes to improve environmental and health issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend the following key aspects for sustainable mobility in the Alpine and Carpathian Convention areas to policy makers, the public and private sector determining and influencing infrastructure, transport and tourism planning, based on experiences gained in the ACCESS2MOUNTAIN project.

At transnational/EU-level, the European and national authorities must increase awareness of the mobility challenge in the Alpine and Carpathian Convention area in particular, and of the Alpine Convention and the Carpathian Convention in general.

The role of the Alpine and the Carpathian Convention areas as functional socio-economic, ecological and political entities needs to be strengthened with the aim to enhance cooperation within and between the mountain regions. Cooperation among authorities at EU, national and regional level should be fostered in planning and realizing measures for integrated, environmentally friendly transport networks and related mobility management on national and cross-border level.

At national level, political, tourism and transport authorities, as well as the tourism, transport and technology sectors must work on a comprehensive understanding of the mobility challenge and on vertically and horizontally integrated solutions.

It is crucial to strengthen cooperation of stakeholders and policy makers from the transport, environment, economic, technology, tourism and regional development sectors in the process of setting up policies and frameworks supportive of sustainable mobility. To foster the integration of transnational tourism and soft mobility objectives in national plans and strategies is indispensable. Likewise, transport infrastructure networks should be better adapted to the special needs of the mountain environment, its inhabitants and guests, considering also ecological connectivity in transport and spatial planning.

At the regional level, political authorities, regional development organizations, public transport service providers, and tourism destinations must cooperate on realizing sustainable mobility solutions.

For mobility initiatives to be successful and increase their viability, it is essential to initiate on time public participation procedures (empowerment of the local population). Transport infrastructure networks need to be adapted to the special needs of the mountain environment, its inhabitants as well as guests, considering also ecological connectivity in transport and spatial planning. Additionally, destinations must provide adequate connections to local and regional transport, enable easy arrivals and departures, guarantee environmentally friendly mobility including the ‚last mile' (public transport, flexible traffic systems, shuttle-services, rental of non- or low-polluting conveyances, footpaths, cycle tracks, horse carriages etc.).

Project Partners

Lead partner
U-AT - Environment Agency Austria, AT

ERDF partner
bmvit - Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology, AT

ERDF partner
Gesäuse - National Park Gesäuse, AT

ERDF partner
Mostviertel - Mostviertel-Tourism Ltd., AT

ERDF partner
NORDA – Regional Development Agency of North Hungary Non-Profit Ltd., HU (until June 2012)

ERDF partner
Miskolc Holding - Miskolc Holding Local Government Asset Management Corporation, HU (from June 2012)

ERDF partner
UNICAM - University of Camerino, IT

ERDF partner
EURAC research – European Academy of Bozen/Bolzano, IT

ERDF partner
CJIT Maramures - County Center for Tourism Information, RO

ERDF partner
ARR-KE - Agency for the Support of Regional Development Kosice, SK

20% ERDF partner
RARR-PL - Rzeszow Regional Development Agency, PL

10% partner
TIMOK -Timok Club, RS

10% partner
CFUA - Carpathian Foundation Ukraine, UA

The project enjoys widespread support at transnational, national and regional level: the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention, Focal Points of the Carpathian Convention, European Federation of Museum and Tourist Railways, Ministries of Environment (AT, IT), Ministries of Transport (SI, PL) and other observers at the regional level of the project partners.
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