

Sports, Tourism, and Nature Conservation – Together for Biodiversity



Duration: 01.05.2015 – 15.02.2017
Contractor: Ökologischer Tourismus in Europa (Ö.T.E.) e.V., Bonn
(Ecological Tourism in Europe, ETE)
In cooperation with the “Working Group on Sustainable Tourism”

1 Project description (short)

As a contribution to the implementation of the National Strategy on Biological Diversity in the field of "Tourism and nature-based recreation", the project covered a variety of topics, including the development of tourism in rural areas, the development of offers in nature-based tourism, sustainable sports and recreational use, environmentally friendly mobility, as well as climate change. The project was organized by the “Working Group on Sustainable Tourism on Sustainable Tourism” which is representing nationwide organisations from different sectors such as tourism, nature conservation, sports, leisure and mobility. The project focused on the following three aspects:

1. Tourism financing in rural areas: financial contributions from tourism to the preservation of natural and cultural landscapes,
2. Promoting sustainable tourism in rural areas, including sustainable mobility,
3. Tourism and climate change: sustainable winter sports and alternatives to ski tourism.

Four thematic workshops were held with additional experts from the tourism and environmental protection sector to discuss these topics and find suitable solutions. An implementation concept and two basic documents were developed, which reflect the results of the final discussions in the working group and which contain suggestions for solutions.

1.1 Tourism financing in rural areas: financial contributions from tourism to the preservation of natural and cultural landscapes

In the course of agricultural development, the landscape is constantly changing: large-scale cultivations and monocultures are replacing small-scale agriculture. However, the attractiveness of rural areas for tourism is based on a varied and diverse natural and cultural landscape. It is important to explore the possibilities of tourism to financially support (directly or indirectly) the preservation of natural and cultural landscape.

In a regional dialogue forum and a special expert workshop, which were carried out to discuss these issues, stakeholders agreed that tourism should financially support the protection of natural and cultural landscapes as they are the very essence of tourism in rural regions. Stakeholders also welcomed necessary extensions to the legal framework as well as new possibilities for financing. Furthermore, it was agreed upon expanding and exploiting existing instruments and find new ways for voluntary contributions. Moreover, contributions from day-trip tourism should be increased. At the same time it became obvious that rural regions are often lacking suitable structures for cooperation and thus also the understanding of financial means. Unfortunately,

often the legal basis is also missing for appropriate measures in case of problems concerning tourism- and leisure activities.

The document, developed by the working group, summarizes the problem once more, comments on current binding and voluntary forms of contributions from tourism with regard to their suitability, and offers solutions.

1.2 Promoting sustainable tourism in rural areas, incl. sustainable mobility

Rural tourism still has significant potential. It is crucial to qualitatively improve offers based on nature experience and improve their representation and visibility on the market. However, this can only be achieved through networking and closer cooperation among regional actors. An implementation concept has been developed for this purpose which shall be tested in selected model regions.

In order to strengthen sustainable ways of mobility in rural areas, a continuous network of public transport is required, also within the holiday region. During this workshop future scenarios for the development of sustainable means of transportation as well as successful practical examples were presented and discussed. However, future scenarios continue to see cars as a central means of transportation, even if its way of utilization will be continuously changing. But fortunately it has been noted too that the conjunction between public transport sector and the needs of the tourism in many regions always better succeeds and co-operations between transport service providers and tourism operators become more and more self-evident.

1.3 Tourism and climate change: sustainable winter sports and alternatives to ski tourism

Snow-dependent winter sports in the Alpine region and in German mid-range mountains is facing enormous challenges due to climate change. As a result of the projected increase in temperature, the probability for snowfall will decrease in the future. The affected regions must consider possible consequences at an early stage and must develop alternative sustainable tourism offers. This problem proved to be less serious in the Central German Uplands.

One result of the workshop was that tourism managers in general do not see themselves having much influence on artificial snow-making. As long as private investors evaluate their financial risk positively, these offers will be advertised. As far as climate change is concerned, tourism managers seem to be "more relaxed", since they have to react constantly to changes in tourism. A necessary adjustment to sustainable winter sports does not happen overnight but rather in a fluent transition from traditional winter sports to new offers. However, every region has to find their own individual solution, since general recommendations are not always suitable. What remains problematic is, when skiing grounds shall be expanded or new ones shall be built, as they pose a considerable intervention in nature and the landscape.

The developed document briefly describes the fundamental problem, summarizes key findings, and suggests suitable measures and possible solutions.

All results (documents, implementation concept) and presentations of the workshops are available under [project results](#) (only in German).