

Results of the Capitalisation Input Seminar



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- Romantischer Rhein Tourismus GmbH
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- Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Verkehr und Landentwicklung Rheinland-Pfalz
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- Ministerium für Wirtschaft, Energie, Bauen, Wohnen und Verkehr Nordrhein-Westfalen
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- Tourismus Marketing GmbH Baden-Württemberg
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- Wirtschaftsministerium Baden-Württemberg
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France

- Agence de Développement Touristique du Bas-Rhin
www.tourisme67.com
- Agence de Développement Touristique — Haut-Alsace
www.tourisme68.com
- Conseil Général du Bas-Rhin
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- Conseil Général du Haut-Rhin
www.cg68.fr

Switzerland

- Stiftung SchweizMobil
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Belgium

- European Cyclist's Federation
www.ecf.com

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Imprint

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Introduction

The INTERREG IV B project DEMARRAGE bundles all kinds of different single initiatives and experiences in the area of cross-border cooperation along the river Rhine (e.g. DE-CH, NL-DE, FR-DE) into an overall transnational initiative.



Developing the transnational economic potential embedded in the territorial assets of the Rhine corridor by creating the necessary organisational framework, implementing a joint marketing program and initiating business cooperation on transnational scale is the overall aim of the project. For this purpose the partnership covers the corridor's full geography and all relevant stakeholder disciplines in order to activate the "sleeping" potential of the Rhine by means of a transnational cooperation. About 18 partners from five different nations (NL – D – FR – CH – BE) are participating in the project.

The growing market of long-distance cycling opens up new opportunities for a build-up of capabilities in the regions along the Rhine corridor on a transnational scale, particularly in tourism and the hotel industry. So far, there has not been a common market cultivation by the regions of the Rhine corridor. That is where the motivation for DEMARRAGE accrued from, intending to promote transnational cooperation and generate added value for regional entrepreneurs and cyclists. However, DEMARRAGE will not start from scratch as there have been earlier INTERREG projects, that worked on creating and marketing long-distance cycling routes. Specifically two INTERREG III B projects, EuroVelo 6 and North Sea Cycle Route, were identified, that, due to similar fields of activity, serve well for exchanging experiences which can be considered throughout the implementation of the DEMARRAGE project activities. Their specific know-how regarding "DO's and DON'Ts" such as possible pitfalls and recommended solutions are worthwhile to be incorporated in order to prevent a waste of time and money. Therefore a Capitalisation Input Seminar took place on June 28, 2010 in Bingen, Germany, where responsible representatives of the above mentioned cycle route projects gathered with the DEMARRAGE project partners to discuss the relevant information, focusing on organisation, infrastructure, marketing and services. Furthermore, the relevant outputs of the projects 2-LAND (INTERREG III A) and STIMUTRAN-SME (INTERREG III B) will be taken into account for the development of transnational business cooperation of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) in the regions along the river Rhine.

EuroVelo 6, represented by Mr. Marc Linsig, was developed from 2003 until 2007. It covered 2 400 km of the "Atlantic – Black Sea Cycle Route", in particular the part from Nantes to Budapest, along the Rhine, Danube and Loire rivers. Overall, 18 partners from 4 different countries (FR – BE – DE – CH) were involved in the project with a budget of 12 000 000 € (50 % EU-funding). Further Information: www.eurovelo6.org



The **North Sea Cycle Route**, represented by Ms. Eli Viten, is considered to be the "World's longest Cycle Route", covering a distance of about 6 000 km through the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Scotland and England. From 2003 until 2006 it was developed with a total of 66 partners from 8 countries (the aforesaid plus Belgium). The budget was 5 000 000 €. www.northsea-cycle.com



1. Organisation

On the one hand, the topic “Organisation” covers the organisational structure within the project partnership, which means during the project lifetime itself. The approach to the internal organisational structure used in the project EuroVelo 6 (subsequently referred to as EV 6) serves well to give insight on how this was handled in their cooperation. Furthermore, the topic includes the lasting organisational structure, after project closure. This will be depicted in the proceedings of the project North Sea Cycle Route (subsequently referred to as NSCR).

1.1 Project Organisation

Throughout the project lifetime of EV 6 the project organisation was mainly divided into two types of responsibility: The lead partner, Conseil Général du Centre (FR), was in charge of the overall coordination, whereas certain project partners took on responsibility for specific topics. In addition, the consulting firm Indiggo-Altermodal (FR) was chosen to provide technical support. Once per year a transnational project meeting was held in order to exchange information regarding the project status.

Altogether, the above described project organisation was quite effective during the project lifetime, due to a clear distribution of roles and the great motivation of the involved project partners. Especially the assistance provided by the consulting firm turned out to be very helpful in terms of expertise and knowledge of the European cycle network partners. Yet, it has not been possible to establish a reliable and enduring partnership which was the reason for the dissolution of the organisational structure after project closure. It would have been essential to keep up the working relationships with the project partners in order to ensure further development of the project results.

So far, the internal organisational structure of DEMARRAGE bears resemblance with the one EV 6 had during its project lifetime: The lead partner, Euregio Rhein-Waal (D), is responsible for the overall project coordination, in addition the work package leaders are in charge of their work packages. Nevertheless, every partner is involved in shaping all project activities, and that already since the beginning of the project preparation phase, because the partnership seeks to follow the consent principle. Due to the fact that the DEMARRAGE project team partly consists of experts in the fields of cycle tourism and marketing, a permanent assistance from external consultants has not been considered.

DO

- Develop clear management structure

DON'T

- End partnership and organisation after project closure

1.2 Lasting Organisation

At the end of the project, the “North Sea Cycle Route Network” (NSCRN) was established in order to market the NSCR as a whole with two representatives from each of the participating countries: One person representing the regions, whereas the other person represents the body responsible for infrastructure, such as the road authorities. An international meeting with all representatives was convened and still takes place twice a year, in addition two na-

tional meetings were being held yearly to discuss issues regarding the quality of the route. The partners elaborated two reports per year and country in a standard format and used a so called “roadbook” (detailed agenda with proposals) for every transnational and national meeting. They regularly organised best practice exchanges and seminars.

Furthermore, public and private stakeholders were invited to create lasting, regional networks. One of the main goals was to find out the expectations and requests of the stakeholders. Established organisations, such as road authorities and tourist offices, were part of the invited stakeholders as well as regional businesses. Another aim was to encourage new business start ups in the respective fields of work which was promoted by seminars that were organised for interested entrepreneurs.

All in all, the route maintenance works quite well due to the fact that the tasks and responsibilities are clearly defined. Moreover, creating regional networks has proven to be an effective way to keep up an efficient and lasting organisational structure. However, the fact that the NSCRN was only based on a gentlemen’s agreement was rather unfavourable, since there was never any written contract setting out the rights and responsibilities for the future management structure. Rogeland County is still responsible for the transnational coordination, they are the secretariat for the whole route, but the task is challenging for an organisation, which is officially limited to act in its own region.

Regarding the set-up of a lasting organisational structure, the DEMARRAGE project team should establish a written agreement, that shall become effective after project closure. It ought to clearly define the responsibilities of the long-term management structure, which in accordance to the example depicted above, takes on responsibility for the marketing of the Rhine cycle route (subsequently referred to as RCR) as a whole, including the maintenance of the website. The agreement needs to be supported and signed by all project partners, as it serves to ensure the lasting success of the project results. Furthermore, a general assembly with at least one representative from each participating partner region should be formed, which would meet on an annual basis to exchange information and agree on possible actions that might have to be carried out to keep up the quality. To steer the implementation of the tasks a board has to be formed with at least one representative from each participating country, which should meet at least twice per year. One of the partners has to take responsibility for the coordination on transnational level as secretariat after the project closure.

DO

- Define responsibilities clearly (secretariat)
- Create network between public & private organisations

DON'T

- Finish the project without establishing a future management structure agreed by contract in written form

2. Infrastructure

The passage “Infrastructure” focuses on the quality criteria set out for infrastructure measures in the projects, as well as on the signposting along the cycle routes.

In both projects, a study on the status quo of the cycle routes was done, which served as a basis for further development of infrastructure measures. At the beginning of the project EV 6, there was no criteria set out regarding the quality of infrastructure. Therefore, the partners

responsible for infrastructure were free in the course of action. The project team analysed the infrastructure of the cycle route and thereby identified the necessary improvements. Especially the promotion of greenways was considered to be a good way to improve mobility and safety for cyclists. The fact that it turned out to be difficult to receive EU-funds for measures in the field of cycling infrastructure was a big challenge. Finally, the project team was able to convince the respective authorities of the importance to take care of the missing links between the regions. This was mainly achieved by supporting their arguments with studies and figures on the environmental, economic and health benefits of cycling. During the project lifetime of the NSCR, a strategy of access was developed based on the evaluation of weaknesses along the cycle route using a common methodology. National standards, which were quite strict on infrastructure, had to be taken into account. The results of the evaluation lead to the definition of several infrastructural measures, such as improving the road surface on the cycle route, e.g. by creating a solution for erosion problems, and promoting traffic calming measures. In addition, urban and rural bike parking facilities, bad weather shelters and stopping points at attractions were established.

Signposting was an essential project activity in both cycle route projects, although the conditions were quite different. The Swiss partner in the EV 6-project worked out a proposal on how the signposting could be carried out and presented it to the partners in charge of infrastructure, so that they could make a decision. The proposal was also handed out to the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) who agreed to it and acknowledged the EV 6-signpost as the prototype for signposting of Eurovelo Cycle Routes. EU-funds were available for signposting in the EV 6-project. In contrast, there were no EU-funds on hand for such measures in the NSCR-project, but rather national funds were used. In order to limit the costs for signposting the solution was to attach the NSCR-sign underneath the already existing national signposts along the route to facilitate recognition. Furthermore, signposts were set up to inform about cycle-friendly establishments, services and special points of interest. Signposts were also installed at border crossings, providing information on the neighbouring country's signposting.

An examination of the infrastructure, including the different national requirements, will be done in the framework of the DEMARRAGE European Certification Standard and the Quality Assurance. Both project actions will serve to provide information on the current situation and identify drawbacks, which then can be corrected, as well as to ensure a certain level of quality, amongst others in the field of infrastructure.

Furthermore, a corporate design manual which includes suggestions on the signposting of the RCR will be created in the framework of the project. But the realisation of its content will depend on the project partners themselves, since there are no EU-funds available for signposting within DEMARRAGE. The manual serves as a proposal, aiming to establish a corporate identity along the RCR in the long run. For instance, when it comes to replacing "old" signposts the proposed measures should be considered.

DO

- Survey on existing routes & its conditions based on unitary methodology
- Facilitate recognition by similar signposting

DON'T

- Develop a cycle route without nation and/or EU-funds for infrastructure
- Define criteria for quality control loosely

3. Marketing

The topic “Marketing” depicts the web strategy, corporate design and further marketing tools that were used in the EV 6 and NSCR projects and its current status.

Creating a website was an important activity within both projects. The EV 6-team developed a concept for their website and presented it to local and regional tourism organisations. Their proposal was to build a website with general information on the project and a map of the cycle route, which is linked to the websites of regional and local service providers, such as bike rentals, accommodation facilities, transportation and cultural establishments. Due to lack of a commonly shared European vision of the Eurovelo Cycle Network the website was not sustainable in the originally planned manner. Currently the contents are updated by one of the former project partners, the Region Franche-Comté, who in exchange receive financial contribution from the French partners. The information for the respective updates is being produced by the partners and the European Cyclists’ Federation (ECF). The website of the NSCR was also created on behalf of the entire partnership and is currently maintained and updated by the former lead partner, Rogaland County Council. One of the special features on the website is the function “My Guide”, which allows the user to create an individual guide based on the choice of articles. A search engine lists the different topics and countries from which the user can choose, after submission the respective articles are shown and can be added to “My Guide”. Whenever the user is finished, the individual combination of articles can be accessed by clicking on “My Guide” and is shown as printable PDF-document. After project closure the option to advertise on the website was introduced.

In both projects a corporate design was set up for the cycle routes. When the team got together to develop the corporate design for EV 6, the aim was to create a sense of joy about the adventure of cycling from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea, following some of Europe’s major rivers, Loire, Rhine and Danube. A manual with a description of the corporate design was generated for the use of local and regional tourism organisations. In order to provide a proper and continuous application of the logo, an organisation for the management of the corporate design was issued, clearly appointing the responsible organisation. The NSCR-project team also established a logo in order to create a common market appearance by combining regional cycle routes under an umbrella brand. Thereby they focused on making use of the already existing recognition and awareness.

Additionally, a number of further marketing tools were used in the projects. During the project lifetime of the NSCR flyers, brochures and cycling maps, such as the “bikeline Cycling Guide” (by the German publisher Verlag Esterbauer), were published in different languages, various events were organised, as well as cycle tours for the different groups of stakeholders, such as cyclists, local businesses, public organisations and journalists.

In 2005 the NSCR was listed in the Guinness Book of World Records for being the world’s longest unbroken, signposted cycling route, which contributed to added-value. The marketing measures were implemented on three levels: For local stakeholders and politicians, regionally and nationally, as well as on an international level. Currently, the tourism organisations are responsible for actively marketing the cycle route, but some ferry companies are involved in the promotion, too. Another achievement was the elaboration of a baseline for monitoring the economic impact of the marketing activities, which is still used. Further marketing techniques implemented by the EV 6 project team were the organisation of public events, such

as an inaugural trip with cyclists and journalists, as well as publishing flyers and a Z-Card, which is a pocket-sized leaflet. Nowadays, the marketing is mainly done by the former lead partner Region Centre, but others contribute to it, as well.

The DEMARRAGE partnership will elaborate a market analysis report in order to determine and position the RCR in the international market. It will deliver the key-information on market trends in cycle related tourism, market size and growth potential, the differentiation and analysis of target groups and their specific needs and expectations. It will also identify the most suitable distribution channels and marketing instruments to reach these target groups. Among other things, the already existing studies of the project partners will be evaluated and compared, in order to create up-to-date information focusing on transnational aspects of the RCR. The outcomes will lay the foundation for the transnational marketing programme.

The already existing website of the RCR (www.rheinradweg.eu) will be improved and extended in the framework of DEMARRAGE, as well. The aim is to create a 4-lingual website with the option for users to plan their route interactively, get information on relevant local service providers and bookable offers. The “My Guide” function used on the NSCR’ website could also be an interesting item for DEMARRAGE.

Furthermore a corporate design, including a logo for the transnational marketing of the RCR, will be set up and a respective 4-lingual manual will be provided to the organisations and establishments in the regions along the Rhine corridor.

DO

- Identify and promote special, unique assets of the route
- Involve the public with events, tours, etc.

DON'T

- Limit the edition of detailed leaflets to such a small amount that only a few departments receive a copy

4. Services

The “Services” section gives insight on the kinds of services that have been build up in both projects as well as on the long-term effectiveness and current ways of communication.

Some measures in the field of services have been applied in both projects, such as focusing on cycle-friendly accommodation along the cycle routes. The project team of EV 6 elaborated a manual in which the criteria for accommodation facilities has been defined.

Furthermore, within the framework of the NSCR a phone guide and some package tours were created. An analysis of the public transportation along the EV 6 Cycle Route was also part of the project activities and lead to editing a good practices manual on how to cooperate with national and regional railway companies in order to develop an effective transportation system for long-distance cyclists.

With regard to lasting effectiveness and the communication of the established services, the outcomes are not alike for both projects. Currently, a part of the produced maps is available on the market for the two cycle routes, EV 6 and the NSCR, and is being distributed through different channels, such as bookstores and online retailers. The communication and marketing of the maps therefore lies in the hands of private publishing companies, which so far has ensured a certain long-term effectiveness. Whereas the development of cycle-friendly ac-

commodation systems has lead to different results in both projects: The NSCR - team set up a minimum of common standards, which were incorporated into already existing national cycle-friendly accommodation systems. As a consequence, there are different national brands with a few common standards, which were determined by the project partners. Due to the fact that the partnership did not aim to substitute well-established systems but rather to improve the existing ones and to give them a common tendency, lasting success has been achieved. In contrast, the criteria for cycle-friendly accommodation set up in the framework of the EV 6 project was not applicable for all of the participating regions, mainly because the standards were set too high and could therefore not be fulfilled in equal measure.

Several package tours for the NSCR are still available at the responsible tourism organisations. As well, links to national railway companies are available on the EV 6 website. Trying to create an overall communication system for various different regions and/ or nations has proven to be difficult, as the experiences of EV 6 demonstrate. The reasons are mainly a general fear of a decline in the number of cycle tourists visiting the respective regions, therefore local and regional organisations prefer to present communication on their own behalf.

Several maps of the RCR are already available, therefore this will not be a project activity in the framework of DEMARRAGE. It is essential for the long-term success of the services that will be established to compare the different service brands in the partner's regions and countries and to find a solution that is applicable and appropriate for the entire partnership, also in terms of cycle-friendly accommodation standards. According to the above mentioned experiences of former projects, it seems to have proven better to set only a few but essential common standards instead of a whole system of theoretically excellent criteria which cannot be realised. It should not be a goal of the project to invent a completely new system if there are already well-established cycle-friendly accommodation standards in the partner's regions.

An analysis of already existing services, such as bookable packages and public transportation services in the regions along the Rhine corridor, will be part of the market analysis report. Further measures in the field of services will be planned and implemented by the DEMARRAGE-team based on the results of the report.

DO

- Analyse public transport
- Use already existing cycle-friendly service brands, if possible
- Use modern tools (phone guiding etc.)

DON'T

- Push a single, common cycle-friendly service brand (national requirements differ!)

5. Transnational Business Cooperation

The INTERREG III A project 2-LAND (subsequently referred to as 2-L) was implemented by the Wirtschaftsförderungsgesellschaft für den Kreis Viersen (D), one of the DEMARRAGE project partners, in cooperation with the Regionaal Bureau voor toerisme (NL) between 2005 and 2008. During the project lifetime a collaboration between approximately 120 Dutch and German providers of tourism and hospitality services was established, additionally a central booking platform for the Dutch and German Lower Rhine area was created.

Nowadays the outputs of the project are frequently used as major marketing tools by the Dutch and German tourism organisations responsible for the Lower Rhine area. Especially

important are the catalogue depicting the several arrangements; the customer service numbers for making reservations by phone as well as the websites in Dutch, German and English with an online reservation system (see www.2-land-reisen.de; www.2-land-reizen.nl and www.lower-rhine.com for further information).

The business cooperation between Dutch and German Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) was mainly achieved by directly approaching tourism service providers in the Lower Rhine area and opening up possibilities to them for engaging in the activities of 2-L. Furthermore, the tourism sector was given the opportunity to gather information about the project aims and its measures by means of presentations that took place in several communities in the Lower Rhine area.

A number of valuable tools for stimulating transnational business cooperation were developed in the framework of the INTERREG III B project STIMUTRAN-SME (subsequently referred to as STSM). The Irish Exporters Association led the project which was implemented between 2006 and 2008. Especially the “basic training manual for seminars which prepare SMEs before and after transnational business activities” and the “Transnational Business Cooperation Checklist” will be considered throughout the implementation of those project activities within DEMARRAGE that are related to establishing business cooperation.

Business panels will be established in the course of promoting transnational business cooperation between SMEs belonging to the tertiary sector of economy along the Rhine corridor. On occasion of those meetings the concept for building such collaborations as applied by the 2-L project team will be presented at the very beginning of the regional business panel meetings in order to provide a best practice. Another significant measure will be the implementation of joint communication tools based on the DEMARRAGE corporate design. This is important to give the cooperating SMEs a consistent appearance, while still allowing for individual differences. Furthermore, DEMARRAGE aims to enable the relevant SMEs along the Rhine corridor to identify and make use of synergies by providing trainings and seminars on these specific topics. As mentioned before, the manual and checklist developed within the project STSM will be taken into account in these processes.

For the success of the transnational business cooperation that will be established within DEMARRAGE, it is crucial that all the developed and implemented tools, such as the “Quality Assurance”, “Transnational Marketing Programme”, “Website” and “Corporate Design”, are useful and applicable for the relevant businesses. Those measures are supposed to facilitate the joint, transnational marketing of the RCR and thereby add value to the regions along the Rhine corridor.

DO

- Involve regional tourism organisations to get in touch with local service providers
- Communicate results to the press and organise workshops to inform target groups

DON'T

- Compromise too much for political reasons at the expense of customer satisfaction
- Set too high standards which can only be fulfilled by larger businesses



Conclusion

All in all, a lot of the before mentioned measures in the fields of organisation, infrastructure, marketing, services and transnational business cooperation that were undertaken in the projects EV 6, NSCR and 2-L show similarities to the project activities of DEMARRAGE. Furthermore, some important key factors, that should be considered, as well as a few pitfalls have been identified, which need to be avoided.

Regarding the key factors for project success, consensus decision making has proven to be essential. Only if the contents and approaches are supported by all project partners they will strongly engage in the activities without resistance, which will lay the foundation for project success. Another important measure to plan highly effective project activities is to provide an in-depth overview of the current situation in the specific fields of work. Being well enough informed about the conditions and the existing services will avoid a waste of time, money, and even a loss of motivation. Finally, it is necessary to involve stakeholders, such as local entrepreneurs, organisations and the public, in project activities in order to promote the aims at an early stage. The more stakeholders gain knowledge of the project, the more support can be obtained. This is crucial for the sustainability of the project results.

In terms of pitfalls, it should be avoided to reinvent the wheel by establishing new concepts without considering the well established, already existing systems in the respective fields of work. Trying to compete with renowned and well-working systems would probably turn out to be a waste of time, money and energy. It is equally important to take note of national differences, such as legally or regarding the actual state of the cycle routes, and to keep them in mind while planning project activities. The main objective should be to make all measures applicable for all involved partners. This is what transnational projects are about: finding a solution for different systems and nations in order to achieve a common result. Furthermore, it should be clear to all involved partners, that the project results have to be sustainable and future-oriented, since the project activities only lead to the development of a new product, which needs support and management after project closure in order to survive on the market.

Bearing these factors in mind, the realisation of transnational projects will very likely turn out to be a success for all, not only in terms of physically improving and establishing cycle routes throughout Europe, but also with regard to bringing the different European nations together for the exchange of experiences and know-how, as well as the build-up of networks.

 KEY FACTORS	 PITFALLS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek to make all project related decisions in consensus• Get an in-depth overview of the current situation in the respective areas of work before planning the project activities in detail• Involve and motivate stakeholders, such as businesses, organisations, the public• Develop high-quality and customer-oriented tools (e.g. website) to facilitate business cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reinventing the wheel by setting up new concepts without considering already well established systems in the respective fields• Not considering national differences• Only focusing on project results without keeping in mind the sustainability of the implemented activities• Not allowing room to the SMEs for developing own ideas for collaboration.