

Added Value of Networking



Mobility in Rural Areas: a platform of local mobility centers

Basic information	
NRN:	Austria
Theme:	Success story
Coordinator:	Karl Reiner
Partners:	Several regional mobility centres, Regional Management Austria (umbrella organisation of regional management), Local Action Groups
Beneficiaries:	Mobility centres, rural municipalities, providers of public transport
Resources:	€ 15,000
Period:	2012
Main element of networking:	Support for cooperation and joint actions
Other elements of networking:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collection, analysis and dissemination of good practice, success stories and relevant experience• Exchange of relevant experience and know-how• Capacity building and training

Background

Mobility centres were first developed in Austria in the late 1990s. Despite regional differences in their functions they all act as service units providing information and services on regional and local public transport. They also act as a node for customers, transport companies and governmental structures. Depending on the needs of the region some mobility centres also provide additional ticketing services, while others run an e-bike rental.

To date there are fifteen mobility centres actively working throughout Austria but none are really connected. This means that the potential for mutual learning and the opportunity for working together to develop “mobility in rural areas” have not been fully captured. This, as well as the on-going need for better solutions in sustainable rural mobility, motivated them to take a step toward cooperation.

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Main activities

In 2011 the Austrian network support unit (NSU) organised a large conference to discuss the relevance and practical implementation of inter-municipal co-operation. Although the topics were very heterogeneous including location development, procurement and youth, the discussions around mobility gained great momentum. The participants encouraged the NSU to organise a second conference with a special focus on rural mobility and develop the opportunity for further networking activities among the existing regional/local mobility centres.

In 2012 a **workshop** for all Austrian mobility centres was designed where

- they got to know each other (staff, strategies, focus areas, etc.)
- aims of a common platform were discussed
- processes and structures for this platform were designed.

This workshop was **combined with a conference**, where mobility centres, LAGs and other actors presented relevant approaches on rural and sustainable mobility concepts and solutions.

Main results/benefits

After the workshop a cooperation memorandum was signed by all Austrian mobility centres. There they affirmed their intention to build a common network for information exchange and mutual learning. All participants agreed not to establish a new organisational structure for the platform (e.g. a formal association) but rather keep it as a simple network-type structure using the support of existing LAGs and regional management institutions. They declared that they will meet once a year and every year one organisation will host the meeting.

Success factors

A member of the NSU focused on the topic for several years and carried out a lot of communication work to ensure a wide understanding of co-operation among the mobility centres. They contacted all the mobility centres to collect information about their needs and expectations in relation to a common platform. One of the mobility centre managers is also manager of the LAG Pongau and thus highly involved in other networking activities. He acted as a 'go between' for the mobility centres and the Leader-branch of the NRN. Those two were the "faces" behind the initiative and moved it forward.

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The Austrian NRN doesn't require formal network membership. Besides the NSU the only structure-like elements of the NRN are thematic support groups. These were established for every thematic field in which the NRN is active. The Leader support group, consisting of a selection of LAG managers, contributed effectively to the planning of the workshop and distributed the invitations and messages concerning the workshop and conference.

"Regional management" are a regional development organisation in Austria. They mainly work on a larger geographical scale and often focus on more economic topics in the context of EFRD. These regional management bodies are also supported by a network which maintains close contact with the LAG network. Since mobility is a cross-cutting issue between LAGs and regional management the workshop and conference were planned in co-operation. The regional management network also distributed information amongst its members.

The activities of both networks provided a high level of publicity and so to a well-attended conference.

The fact that these two well-known and trusted networks supported this initiative might have been a reason for the smooth running of the workshop and the development of a long lasting co-operation.

Contribution of the NSU

The NSU was the engine behind the initiative. It ensured the involvement of the relevant actors, the planning and the organisation of the conference, the preparation of the memorandum as well as information and PR activities.

Contribution of the partners

The regional management network brought in the views of its members, ideas for the workshop and conference as well as financial resources to document the results of the event.

The above mentioned LAG manager contributed several hours work to develop the concept and support the operational elements.

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Additional information

The results of the thematic conference are published in a brochure (only available in German) available in:

<http://www.netzwerk-land.at/leader/veranstaltungen/downloads-veranstaltung/iw-mobilitaet/tagungsband>

Pictures



Source: Austrian Rural Network

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