

AUSTRIA

Resilient futures

Location

Kaindorf

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local development

Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 120 000

EAFRD 76 800

National/Regional 19 200

Private/own funds 24 000

Project duration

2018 – 2022

Project promoter

ARGE CultTrips & Slow Travel
Regionalentwicklungsagentur
Oststeirisches Kernland
& Oststeiermark Tourismus

Contact

barbara.stumpf@zeitkultur.at

Website

www.slowtrips.eu

Slow Trips unites partners from six EU Member States to communicate and market innovative tourism products characterised by sustainability and participation and to attract new target groups of tourists who are dissatisfied with superficial sightseeing.

Summary

Slow Trips – European Slow Travel Experiences is a LEADER transnational cooperation (TNC) project that draws on a trend toward participative and sustainable tourism, focusing on discovering and experiencing local everyday culture in Europe.



EXPERIENCE
PEOPLE AND CULTURE.

Slow Trips enables regional networks of small rural businesses to create innovative and sustainable tourism products. Emphasising regional identity and immersive experience, the project draws on an unconventional definition of 'slow travel' to redefine what tourists experience as beautiful - emphasising substance rather than appearance. Slow Trips products across nine European destinations are experiences, ranging from the unconventional to the highly eccentric. The project involves three stages: idea-finding, piloting and promoting.

Results

At least 15 new tourism products have been developed in each of nine partner regions.

New, themed uses for previously empty buildings have been created, such as a railway carriage and dock hotels.

Umbrella narratives draw on each region's cultural and historical heritage. Narratives, often shared with the media, may emphasise geocaching or nostalgic places such as ports, train stations and corner stores, for example.

Slow Trips are making travel and tourism near tourists' homes more attractive.

The new Slow Trips bilingual presentation and booking platform supports the internationalisation of participating rural businesses, enhancing the revenue of supplier and host groups.

Demand has been high throughout Europe.

Context

Slow Trips unites partners from six EU Member States to communicate and market innovative tourism products characterised by sustainability and participation and to attract new target groups dissatisfied with superficial sightseeing.

The focus of the project is on creating tourism products through the involvement of new supplier and host groups, including farmers, craftspeople and those active in presenting and creating culture. The need for many small rural family businesses to diversify their offer is achieving particular prominence due to challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to realigning existing tourism products with business goals, rural regions in Europe need to present new umbrella narratives. Options include 'geocaching routes' to encourage visitors to experience a region along unfamiliar paths, presenting destinations historically as 'lost places' or 'hidden treasures', or a volunteer 'greeter network' which gives visitors a personal local perspective.

Sustainable tourism needs to have a European perspective (social aspect), offer innovation (economic aspect) and be environment-friendly (ecological aspect).

Objectives

The project aimed to redefine slow travel for rural areas by setting-up model regions for sustainable, participative tourism across Europe.

New products have been developed and piloted through transnational cooperation and then mutually evaluated across regions.

Slow Trips are all designed to utilise hidden places and nearby back-alleys, to share everyday culture with local people from the region. Visitors are encouraged to immerse themselves in locals' narratives, from everyday anecdotes to regional legends.

Authenticity is key as opposed to 'staging' events for tourists. Travellers learn from hosts, and vice versa. Trips are designed with the utmost respect for the environment.

Activities

Activities involve nine LAG project partners from six EU Member States (Austria – LAG Zeitkultur Oststeirisches Kenland & LAG Urfahr West, Germany – LAG Markische Seen, Italy – LAG Valle Umbra e Sibillini, LAG La Cittadella del Sapere & LAG Start 2020, Lithuania – LAG Alytaus rajono, Luxembourg – LAG Atert-Wark and LAG Letzebuerg West and Sweden – LAG Nedre Dalalven).



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As lead partner among the nine regions, LAG Zeitkultur Oststeirisches Kernland contributes professional communication skills and provides an umbrella narrative for the project. Transnational project management is the task of ARGE CultTrips & Slow Travel in cooperation with Tourismusregionalverband Oststeiermark.

The project encompasses three phases: idea-finding, piloting and implementation. The project has emphasised the implementation phase, i.e., popularising and communicating products in line with target-group needs, specifically through user-friendly online booking and professional marketing.

1. Idea-finding phase

Within the participating EU regions, six working meetings and three train-the-trainer workshops are being held, as well as knowledge transfer and periodic online meetings of project partners. This enables a transfer to local providers of lessons learned elsewhere in Europe.

2. Pilot phase

Slow Trips are mostly developed locally. Findings from partner regions are discussed and evaluated at transnational meetings. Products developed by the project partners in accordance with the Slow Trips definition, are captured as process diagrams in storyboard form to ensure consistency in quality when replicated in other participating regions. The process is tested in terms of effectiveness, uniqueness, profitability and marketability, and adjusted if necessary. For each destination, a minimum of 15 new tourism products based on the Slow Trips definition are being developed and piloted.

3. Implementation phase

A Europe-wide bilingual (German/English) [website](#) presents the various Slow Trips products (B2C) and supports bookings.

Linked to established experience-marketing platforms such as mydays, jollydays, Jochen Schweizer, viator and tripadvisor, the booking system also offers optional voucher-marketing, to consolidate existing business-client relationships. The products can also be booked directly to generate additional local income.

To ensure a language appropriate to the target group, a public relations and corporate identity plan was created to support a common Slow Trips identity in graphics, captions and images. Journalists, bloggers and micro-influencers (5K to 10K followers) were invited on the virtual and physical press trips planned to the participating regions. An EU trademark, 'Slow Trips' is registered under patent law. Slow Trips are advertised with the specified content in Member States and targeted markets. Tourism associations communicate and market their regional Slow Trips as core products among environment-friendly offers.

Main Results

New provider and host groups have developed at least 15 new tourism products in each participating region, such as a 'Dream-engineer job', a fun educational experience at the Eastern Styrian railway.

New, themed uses for empty buildings have been developed, resulting in unusual accommodation options such as a railway carriage hotel. There is high demand and booking volume for this throughout Europe.

Developed umbrella narratives, depicting the regions in unconventional ways, draw on each region's cultural and historical heritage. Narratives, often shared with the media, may emphasise geocaching, 'lost' or nostalgic places such as ports, train stations and corner stores, for example.

Slow Trips can make travel and tourism near tourists' homes more attractive.

The new Slow Trips bilingual presentation and booking platform supports internationalisation of participating rural businesses, enhancing the revenue of new supplier and host groups.

Key lessons

TNC project partners established a network operating at regional, national and transnational levels. Regional multiplier meetings by local suppliers and hosts encourage the sharing of initial experiences with online

booking and innovative business models. National cooperation takes place with the province of Upper Austria and with the Urfahr West region. Cooperation is being established between local tourism associations and travel providers, tourism providers and businesses, and regions.



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The project has already shown it can transfer this focused form of tourism by ensuring that Slow Trips products across Europe are structured similarly, despite substantial local or regional variability across partner regions. Resilience is enhanced through new uses of local resources such as folk culture, landscape and building traditions, and features local specialties and hidden treasures.

'Forget humdrum mass tourism packages and experience the region through the eyes of locals. Slow Trips lets you book your individual, personal holiday experience online.'
- Barbara Stumpf, project management (Eastern Styria, Austria)

'We call it 'localhood'. This responds to our longing for authenticity, grounding and a feeling of being at home away from home.' - Fons Jacques, project partner (Guttland, Luxembourg)

'Slow Trips is a new way of travelling. It stands for travel inspired by a sense of serendipity or happy coincidence, alternating between a feeling of adventure and shelter.' - Henrik Thomke, project partner (Nedre Dalälven, Sweden)

'The ranks of dedicated Slow Trips fans include explorers, the actively creatives, cultural purists and slow-culture explorers. Check out the new booking platform to discover what kind of Slow Trip guest you are.' - Henrieta Miliauskienė, project partner (Alytus Region, Lithuania)

'Allowing yourself to be "entertained" takes a back seat to experiencing everyday culture where it's at home. Authenticity, as understood here, means ongoing interaction with opposite-pairs – being and appearance, replica and original.' - Wolfgang Berger, managing director, (LAG Zeitkultur Oststeirisches Kernland, Austria)

Additional sources of information

<http://slowtrips.eu.fcgiweb2.profi-server.net/>

www.slowtrips.eu/contact-service/download-area/

www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOXTumsInDQ