

TOURage

Every age is tour age

TOURAGE FINAL CONFERENCE

SUMMARY

“Developing Senior Tourism in Remote Regions – Experiences and the Way Forward”

September 18, 2014
Committee of the Regions
Brussels, Belgium



Organized by

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We thank all of the speakers, moderators and interpreters for their excellent, informative and investigatory presentations and contributions to the event.

All the presentations are available online at the TOURAGE site at: www.tourage.eu

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OPENING PLENARY SESSION - SPEAKERS AND PRESENTATIONS

Moderated by Mr. Zoltán Balogh, Head of Unit, Észak-Alföld Regional Development Agency (HUNGARY)



Mr. Zoltán Balogh opened the Final Conference of the TOURAGE saying we can be happy to be in Brussels after 3 years' work of 11 partners from 9 different regions in European Union. During the first plenary session a

current state of play relating to senior tourism in Europe was given. On second panel participants of the conference experienced results of TOURAGE achieved in last 3 years. Mr Balogh also invited everybody to explore the exhibition in the hall where all 55 collected good practices of this project were presented.



Welcoming words by Mr. Edvīns Bartkevičs, Alternate Member, Latvian delegation to the Committee of the Regions, Latvia

Mr. Bartkevičs started his presentation by pointing out that TOURAGE project was selected among 20 best European tourism projects enhancing sustainable tourism development and the selection was made by PESTO project from altogether 200 projects.

After getting acquainted with the results of the TOURAGE project, Mr. Bartkevičs was positively surprised to discover, that demographic change can also be regarded as a possibility and not as an unsolvable burden! Senior tourism can be regarded as an opportunity for local seniors with average or below-average income. They can provide guiding services for tourists interested in listening to unique local stories, as well as in attending interesting local places not included in touristic guides, says Mr. Bartkevičs.

By activating seniors and involving them in local life of our municipalities, this would be mutually beneficial process for both sides: seniors and municipalities. On the one hand, senior tourism can give its input into regional economy, which is of special importance in remote regions often struggling with the consequences of demographic changes putting burden on the social budgets of municipalities. The challenge might be to provide affordable tourist products for seniors with average or below-average income, that is why it would be very important to involve the representatives of seniors already in generation of ideas on tourism activities, involving in this process great range of stakeholders from public and private sector – national and regional tourism organizations, ministries, regional and local authorities and NGOs.

Mr. Bartkevičs reminded that seniors are not a uniform, but diverse group of individuals. This all have to be taken into account when searching for the best tourism products and services. The speech can be downloaded [here](#)



**“Developing Senior Tourism in Remote Regions”,
Mr. Pentti Hyttinen, Region Mayor, Regional
Council of North Karelia, Finland**

On behalf of the Lead Partner, Mr. Hyttinen greeted the audience and gave a brief overview on the project TOURAGE – why it was initiated, how it was implemented and what kinds of achievements were made. Additionally Mr. Hyttinen gave background information about the region of North Karelia in

respect to demographic change.

During the recent years Europe has experienced economic recession and the number of tourists dropped down in all age groups except for seniors who travelled even more than before. Mr. Hyttinen said that seniors are diverse group of people. Studies on the needs of seniors are needed in order to be able to develop services and products for various segments. It is also important not to forget how to fit in the possibilities of the regions during the development process. Now it is possible to disseminate the results to the whole Europe to help all the other regions to develop senior tourism in their own regions and Mr. Hyttinen hoped that the model or TOURAGE will be copied and developed further. Mr. Hyttinen told about all activities done during the project implementation period saying that the project has been successful in achieving all the objectives.

At the end of his presentation, Mr. Hyttinen presented some arguments for the importance of social tourism and justified why it is important to develop senior tourism. He said that there are two aspects –social aspect from the viewpoint of seniors (promoting health and wellbeing, active ageing, offering equal opportunities to all, also reducing overall health and social costs) and regional aspect – senior tourism promotes low-season tourism and generates income for enterprises throughout the year decreasing unemployment and being good especially for rural areas by improving life there. And it also helps to attract more tourists to the less known tourism areas.

By developing senior tourism market regions can announce themselves as age friendly which is a good advertisement itself.

The presentation can be downloaded [here](#)





Keynote speech “Europe, the Best Destination for Seniors: The Role and Participation of the Regions in the EU Senior Tourism Initiative”, Mr. Pedro Ortún, Director for Service Industries, European Commission, DG Enterprise and Industry

A key element for the European Union should be rising up the senior market, by promoting it in different sectors, including tourism. According to Maastricht Treaty in 1992, it is stated that European Union can take measures to promote tourism but there are no additional explanation toward that, so any type of initiatives are accepted. In Treaty of Lisbon some formal legal

basis was taken to develop initiatives in tourism which are qualified by majority of EU member states and this is a change compared to the previous statements.

Mr. Ortún explained three main issues in tourism in the next 5-6 years. First of all – during the next planning period tourism has great accessibility to EU funds, a guidebook will be published to explain all possibilities with examples and tips useful both for private and public stakeholders.

As he underlined, this is a great possibility to create better image and better promotion demonstrated by tourism industry to increase demand of tourism and invite tourists in the EU countries. Secondly, tourism industries and government have to think how to increase the proportion of tourism flows of internal EU tourists to remote low developed regions and increase the tourism flow in the low and medium seasons. And thirdly the quality of tourism has to be diversified and improved. New types of tourism should always have transnational, international dimension, Mr. Ortún underlined. Additionally he pointed out that provision of training for new tourism providers, improvement of language skills and IT issues are absolutely necessary.

Mr. Ortún also gave an overview on the new European Commission initiative that has been worked on for the last 18 months “Europe – the best destination for seniors” (further information available on the website). Main elements of the initiative are digitalization of tourism, open consultation and branding Europe as an attractive destination. These elements according Mr. Ortún are compulsory in all levels of tourism industry. In conclusion Ms. Ortún also admitted about management of tourism industries as complex mechanism necessary to be constantly improved.





“Seniors’ Point of View”, Mrs. Julia Wadoux, AFE-INNOVNET coordinator, AGE Platform Europe

Mrs. Wadoux in her presentation introduced the Social NGO AGE Platform Europe. This is a wide network in Europe with about 165 Member organisations and the main aim of this organisation, according Mrs. Wadoux, is to voice and defend the interests of older people and to raise awareness on the issues that concern them. Age Platform Europe focused on broad range of topics essentially important for seniors such as life-long learning, health, social inclusion, accessibility, new technologies, transport etc. Concerning tourism sector Mrs. Wadoux came forward with a suggestion to divide seniors in smaller groups taking into account age, health problems, socio-economic status and other important aspects concentrating on the different needs and habits of each group. And on the other hand Mrs. Wadoux encouraged to avoid stigmatisation of senior groups and to make more intergenerational tourism proposals for two or more generations together. Inclusive design and accessibility are important parts of it. Mrs. Wadoux reminded that it is important to invite seniors, disabled persons and other active citizens to evaluate such tourism places to make tourism process participative and socially inclusive. Besides other project examples implemented by communities and regional authorities in Europe Mrs. Wadoux gave an overview of AGE campaign “Towards an age-friendly EU by 2020” launched by the AGE Platform Europe with the goal to shape a fair and sustainable society for all ages and to empower older people giving them the possibility to be more independent thanks to an enabling environment. Mrs. Wadoux emphasized that there is a great synergy between the ideas of TOURAGE project and the goals of AGE campaign.

The presentation can be downloaded [here](#)



“INTERREG IVC – State of Play and Perspectives”, Mr. Akos Szabo, Project Officer, INTERREG IVC Joint Technical Secretariat

Mr. Akos Szabo in his presentation informed that 204 projects are implemented, altogether 2274 partners are involved and 90% of 271 NUTS2 regions are covered within the ongoing INTERREG IVC programme. Mr. Akos Szabo also reminded about priorities of this programme and main achievements up to date. Mr. Szabo singled out TOURAGE project having unique topic and intense interregional exchange process and dissemination activities. Mr. Szabo also touched next planning period in particular INTERREG EUROPE programme as part of the Cohesion policy for the next planning period in Europe. He gave an overview of the available budget, eligibility criteria and co-financing rates for the INTERREG EUROPE programme. Also basic principles of implementation,

overall and specific objectives were described. He underlined that enrichment of interregional cooperation and contribution of policy learning in all EU regions are two main interrelated actions running through the whole INTERREG EUROPE programme. According to Mr. Szabo, the programme is in the approval stage and the first call for project proposals is expected to open in early 2015.

The presentation can be downloaded [here](#)



GOOD PRACTICE TRANSFERS AND POLICY IMPROVEMENTS

Moderated by Mr. Luc Gobin, Director, ISTO Europe



The moderator of the second panel, Mr. Luc Gobin from the ISTO Europe, introduced the theme and speakers of the second panel. In this panel, the representatives of TOURAGE partner regions spoke about the good practice transfers that have been carried out in their regions. Also some policy improvements were introduced and the project's joint policy recommendations discussed.



“Experiences and the Way Forward”, Ms. Ulla Äänismaa, Project Manager, Regional Council of North Karelia, Finland

Ms. Ulla Äänismaa presented the overall results of TOURAGE project. During the project implementation, project partners have studied trends and current status of demographic change and tourism in partner regions. To complement this regional analysis partners have also conducted feedback surveys for seniors with an aim to reveal the needs and challenges of the target group. The project has organized altogether 11 study visits, one in each partner region, where partners have learned about practices that deal with senior tourism development. All of these practices are presented in the [Good Practices for Senior Tourism brochure](#). One of the project's aims is to transfer good practices between partner regions. Ms. Äänismaa gave an overview of the practices that have been transferred or are in progress of being transferred. Ms. Äänismaa pointed out that due to the project the importance of senior tourism development has been realized on policy level in several participating regions. Some partner regions have been able to impact on the regional tourism policies that will take seniors better into account in the future. In addition to the above mentioned activities, the project has organized and participated in several dissemination events in different parts of Europe and PESTO project has chosen it as one of the 20 best European tourism projects dealing with sustainable development.

The presentation can be downloaded [here](#)



“Good Practice Transfer to Motivate Sports Activity of Elderly Generation”, Mr. István Hegedűs, Head of international cooperation unit, Lake Balaton Development Coordination Agency, Hungary

The Lake Balaton Development Coordination Agency has started to transfer a good practice from the Warmia-Mazury region (Poland) to the Lake Balaton area (Hungary). The transferred practice is Warmia Mazury Senior Games that has been organised twice in Poland. Mr. István Hegedűs explained that the first Warmia Mazury Senior Games attracted over 1000 participants from 14 countries. The main objective of the games is to promote sports and healthy life style among people over the age of 45. According to Ms. Hegedűs, their region chose to transfer this practice because active tourism is an important part of tourism in their region. Lake Balaton region has its own sport programme (Move Balaton) that began in 2004, but the participants are mainly young people. The Warmia Mazury Senior Games practice has been presented to the Move Balaton organisation and they were willing to incorporate activities for seniors into the programme. In August 2014 the organisation and representative of Lake Balaton Coordination Agency made a study visit to Poland where they met the organizers of the senior games and received useful information on financial conditions and marketing tools. After the visit, Move Balaton received more senior participants and the organisation has planned to hold an independent senior day or increase sport disciplines in different regions.

The presentation can be downloaded [here](#)



“Project Experiences in Podkarpackie Region”, Mr. Jarosław Reczek, Project Coordinator, Podkarpackie Region, Poland

The Podkarpackie Region has started to transfer some good practices from other project regions to Podkarpackie (Poland). They have been inspired by the good practice Alhambra for the Elderly from Granada (Spain). They will start organising thematic Thursdays in Łańcut residence for 3rd age universities in October 2014. During these thematic Thursdays seniors have meetings with expert; they visit the residence and learn about special topics (e.g. textiles, china). Mr. Reczek informed that they have made a „Rzeszów for everyone“ guidebook that contains useful information about the city for disabled people and senior citizens. They have learned from the example of Warmia Mazury (Poland) region that has made a similar city guide. In addition to these activities, Podkarpackie region has disseminated TOURAGE project’s results in several events. These events have shown that regional service providers and industries have real interest in senior tourism. The region is also

planning to make a Polish guidebook of TOURAGE project's good practices for tour operators, cultural institutions and media. Inspired by the Warmia Mazury region (Poland), the Podkarpackie region is planning to organise its own Senior Games in 2015. Mr. Reczek explained that due to the TOURAGE project the awareness of senior tourism has risen in the region.

The presentation can be downloaded [here](#)



“Sustainable Senior Tourism Development as the Result of Implementation of TOURAGE Project”, Ms. Aija Ruse, Project Manager, Vidzeme Planning Region, Latvia

Ms. Aija Ruse gave an overview on TOURAGE activities in Vidzeme Planning region (Latvia). During the project implementation they have transferred a good practice called Cultural volunteers programme of Parque de las Ciencias from Granada (Spain) to Vidzeme. In this practice senior citizens act as cultural guides in an interactive museum after they have received proper training for the task. The aim of the practice is, among others, to improve the quality of life of seniors and make use of their competences. As a result of this activity, the number of visitors in the Parque de las Ciencias museum has increased. The Vidzeme Planning region has organised a training course for the seniors of Amata county who are interested in the activity. During this training, seniors learned different skills that are needed in the work of a tour guide. Currently there are 14 qualified volunteer senior guides in Amata county. The activity is coordinated by Amata tourism center. In addition, Vidzeme Planning region has transferred a Finnish good practice Accessible Nature Tourism to their region. The aim is to improve the accessibility of tourism attractions in Vidzeme region. In August 2014, Vidzeme Planning region organised a seminar where they invited the representative of the good practice, Mr. Timo Ekroos from Centre for Innovations for Independent Living. The seminar included a test walk in Līgatne nature trails after which Mr. Ekroos gave recommendations on how to improve the accessibility of the trails.

The presentation can be downloaded [here](#)





“TOURAGE Project in Warmia Mazury Region – Results”, Ms. Małgorzata Samusjew, Head of Programmes, Association of Polish Communes of Euroregion Baltic, Poland

Ms. Małgorzata Samusjew presented the benefits and results of TOURAGE project in Warmia Mazury region (Poland). The project partner, Association of Polish Communes of Euroregion Baltic, has been actively involved in the improvement of the Regional Program for Ageing Society 2014-2020 in Warmia Mazury Region. The programme specifies different types of activities for seniors in all spheres of social life. One of the areas of support in the programme is tourism, sports and recreation. The programme was adopted on 20th January 2014 and it serves as a basis for similar local programmes for seniors implemented in municipalities across the region. According to Ms. Samusjew, there are several suitable good practices that could be transferred to Warmia Mazury region. The region is interested in the good practice Age Friendly Cities and Counties Programme presented by the Irish partner. The aim of this practice is to create communities where people can enjoy a good quality of life, even as they age. They have also started to transfer the cultural volunteer programme from Spain to their region. This good practice will be implemented by two institutions: Archaeological Museum and Galeria El. In addition to these activities, the project partner has presented a new idea called „Silver Sharing” to other partners. This initiative aims to increase international exchanges between senior organisations.

The presentation can be downloaded [here](#)



“Joint Policy Recommendations”, Mr. Dávid Bartók, Project manager, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Regional Development and Environmental Management Agency Nonprofit Ltd., Hungary

Mr. Dávid Bartók presented the joint policy recommendation document that has been prepared by the TOURAGE partnership. The recommendations for developing senior tourism in remote regions have been divided into 6 different themes dealing with seniors as a target group in tourism, organisation of senior tourism development, development and marketing of tourism products for seniors, possibilities for senior tourism and different funds that could be used in the development of senior tourism. All of the recommendations are listed in the project’s brochure “Good Practices on Senior Tourism” and on [project’s homepage](#).

Appendix A – Conference programme



Programme

TOURAGE Final Conference

„Developing Senior Tourism in Remote Regions – Experiences and the Way Forward“

Date: 18 September, 2014

Venue: Committee of the Regions, JDE 51
Rue Belliard 99–101, B - 1040 Brussels, Belgium

Organisers:

Vidzeme Planning Region (Latvia)
Regional Council of North Karelia (Finland)
TOURAGE project

Good Practice exhibition during the conference day

9:00-9:30 Registration

9:30 –11:30 Plenary Session

Moderator Mr. Zoltán Balogh, Head of Unit, Észak-Alföld Regional Development Agency

Welcoming words, Mr. Edvīns Bartkevičs, Alternate Member, Latvian delegation to the CoR, Councillor of Ogre municipality

“Developing Senior Tourism in Remote Regions”, Mr. Pentti Hyttinen, Region Mayor, Regional Council of North Karelia

Keynote speech “Europe, the Best Destination for Seniors: The Role and Participation of the Regions in the EU Senior Tourism Initiative”, Mr. Pedro Ortún, Director for Service Industries, European Commission, DG Enterprise and Industry

“Seniors’ Point of View”, Mrs. Julia Wadoux, AFE-INNOVNET coordinator, AGE Platform Europe

“INTERREG IVC – State of Play and Perspectives”, Mr. Akos Szabo, Project

11:30-12:00 Coffee break

12:00 -14:00 Good Practice Transfers and Policy Improvements

Moderator Mr. Luc Gobin, Director, ISTO Europe

“Experiences and the Way Forward”, Ms. Ulla Äänismaa, Project Manager, Regional Council of North Karelia, Finland

“Good Practice Transfer to Motivate Sports Activity of Elderly Generation”, Mr. István Hegedűs, Head of international cooperation unit, Lake Balaton Development Coordination Agency, Hungary

“Project Experiences in Podkarpackie Region”, Mr. Jarosław Reczek, Project Coordinator, Podkarpackie Region, Poland

“Sustainable Senior Tourism Development as the Result of Implementation of TOURAGE Project”, Ms. Aija Ruse, Project Manager, Vidzeme Planning Region, Latvia

“TOURAGE Project in Warmia Mazury Region – Results”, Ms. Małgorzata Samusjew, Head of Programmes, Association of Polish Communes of Euroregion Baltic, Poland

14:00-15:00 Networking reception and light lunch