



AMAZON OF EUROPE BIKE TRAIL

Output 4.2 Training on nature-oriented bike visitor concept

Deliverable 4.3.2 Report on nature-oriented bike trail implementation steering

Project	AoE Bike Trail, DTP2-002-2.2
Work package	WP4: Nature oriented trail
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Deliverable	steering, containing summarised information on activity implementation
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1. INTRODUCTION

In the framework of project DTP2-002-2.2-AoE Bike trail, partner WWF Austria, along with all implementing partners, has worked on the development of a nature-oriented bike trail (Work package 4). The present document is a documented learning interaction of the trainings for target groups (organisations supporting regional development, protected areas) to educate them about the standards and nature-oriented bike visitor concept, joint under the umbrella of Output 4.2 Training on nature-oriented bike visitor concept. Thus, the report summarizes all activities of the Work Package with a focus on the Activity 4.3 Overall nature-oriented implementation supporting and steering and Deliverable 4.3.1 Trainings for target groups to educate them about the standards and nature-oriented bike visitor concept (2 per each region), through which the second and third objectives of the project will be reached. The second objective refers to improvement of skills and knowledge of target groups in the wide spectrum of sustainable tourism, whereas the third objective of the project is to ensure valorisation of protected areas through sustainable tourism in the Amazon of Europe.

This activity (A 4.3) builds on Activity 4.1 Trail implementation standards, and Activity 4.2 Nature oriented visitor guidance and mapping, both of which aimed at elaborating a nature-oriented visitor guidance for the trail and its visitors, as well as a mapping of the area before the bike trail implementation and in parallel to the trail elaboration. The result of these was Output 4.1 Nature oriented visitor guidance and mapping, which summarizes both the mapping and the standards for implementation. After elaboration of the standards and the first stage of the mapping, Activity 4.3 Overall nature implementation supporting and steering commenced, with the first series of trainings targeting mainly the implementing partners (regional coordinators). The trainings were followed by a workshop to collect input and feedback based on local knowledge and these, in turn, were used to improve and finalize both the standards and the nature-oriented visitor guidance concept. After completion of the Visitor guidance concept, a second series of trainings were held, this time for potential future service providers, together with partners Iskriva and Trail Angels, to support on the field implementation by sharing knowledge of the bike trail and nature-oriented visitor guidance, as well as to inform on the outcomes of the work package.

2. NATURE ORIENTED BIKE TRAIL

Work package 4 Nature oriented bike trail has yielded one major output: the **Nature oriented visitor guidance and mapping** (Output 4.1), which contained two main parts: a set of **Transboundary standards for nature oriented trail implementation** (Standards and infrastructure) on the one hand, and, a **Nature oriented visitor guidance and mapping**, on the other hand. These two elements outline visitor guidance principles with a focus on nature protection, and wise sharing of nature highlights and they include a zonation for implementation according to nature protection principles. As a follow-up element, **Trainings for target groups to educate them about the standards of nature-oriented bike visitor concept** (Deliverable D. 4.3.1) have been conducted in two stages, with the aim of sharing the knowledge gained within the guidance concept elaboration phase, in order to achieve a nature friendly implementation of the trails.

1.1 The Process

The implementation process for WP 4 started in autumn 2018 and is being finalized until end of April 2021.

1.1.1 Bike Trail Visitor Guidance (Output 4.1: Nature oriented visitor guidance and mapping)

As a first step the methodology, data research and first mappings have been done. On 12th of November 2018 a first draft of the sensitivity map was sent to the project partners and relevant contacts (e.g. protected area administrations, NGOs) in the form of an online map. The feedback received was used as basis for the first workshop on nature-oriented visitor guidance in January 2019.

- 2nd Steering Committee Meeting, 24th January 2019, Nagyatád, Hungary: Presentation of visitor guidance concept, methodology, goals and first draft. Working on visitor areas and stop overs within a group work session. (**Deliverable 4.1 Workshops for project partner on nature-oriented trail implementation standards** – Workshop 1)

After the workshop feedback and input given by the participants was incorporated into the online map as part of the visitor guidance concept. The first written draft of the Amazon of Europe visitor guidance concept was sent to the partnership on 1st of March 2019, asking for input and feedback. The received feedback was incorporated into the document and used for preparation of the second workshop in June 2019. Prior to the meeting, partners received the second draft of the document via e-mail.

- 3rd Steering Committee Meeting, 5th- 7th June 2019, Osijek, Croatia: The feedback of the trail implementation standards (Standards and infrastructure) as well as the nature-oriented visitor guidance concept and the plan for the trainings on nature oriented implementation were presented. (**Deliverable 4.1 Workshops for project partner on nature-oriented trail implementation standards** – Workshop 2)

In the period between the 3rd SCOM in Osijek and December 2019, no further development of the visitor guidance document was done. The standards had been presented within a set of trainings to all regional

partners and their stakeholders, in a set of workshops, as well as the elaborated nature zones and proposed visitor zones. Regional partners were asked to keep those results in mind in the elaboration of the proposed bike route and its elements. No new relevant topics for nature-oriented trail implementation were covered. December 2019 – February 2020: regional partners reviewed the most up-to-date version of the route and highlighted the final stopover points (including river view and resting places on existing infrastructure) as well as the spots planned to be equipped with further infrastructure elements for resting or information, within the Amazon of Europe project. Proposed locations were reviewed together with WWF Austria, responsible for nature-oriented implementation, and adjusted to accommodate the previously delimited nature areas.

- 5th Steering Committee Meeting, Sveti Martin na Muri, Croatia. During the 5th SCOM in Sveti Martin na Muri side meetings with the regional partners took place to finalize the online map of the nature-oriented visitor guidance of the trail and once again highlight conflicting points between highly sensitive nature areas and planned visitor areas as well as proposed river access points or detours. (Deliverable 4.2.1 Workshops with all partners on nature-oriented visitor guidance and mapping, organized aside SCOM meetings – Workshop)

In March 2020 the planned route of the bike trail was finalized by WestPannon and a final alignment of the proposed visitor areas and stop-overs was done, documenting all potential future extensions of such facilities, as well as decisions regarding certain points, to be excluded. The final output is the result of this process.

1.1.2 Overall nature-oriented implementation supporting and steering (Activity 4.3. and Deliverable 4.3.1, Output 4.2 Training on nature-oriented bike visitor concept)

This output, as well as the process within this activity is based entirely on the output of Activity 4.1. and 4.2, i.e. Output 4.1 Nature oriented visitor guidance and mapping, and started in June 2019, in parallel with and supporting its elaboration process. The first series of trainings conducted by WWF together with contractor Revital aimed to educate implementing partners on the first recognitions of the mapping process, by presenting the elaborated standards for a nature-oriented visitor guidance and also to show the elaborated infrastructure. In an effort to use the synergies between work packages 3, 4 and 5, this set of trainings was brought forward in time to Period 4, when the Amazon of Europe Bike Trail route plan (Output 5.1) was still being developed.

- **Between June 2019 and November 2019**, 10 trainings took place. Each of the trainings was followed by a participative workshop on the visitor guidance mapping, based on an online map of the TBR MDD and the planned route, that was adjusted based on local implementing partners' and stakeholders' knowledge. (D 4.3.1 Trainings for target groups to educate them about the standards and nature-oriented bike visitor concept – 1st workshops series)

Based on the information collected during the workshops, the online map was adjusted and regional coordinators implementing the route received recommendations for implementation, that were adapted into the final route plan version.

- Between Dec 2019-March 2020 bilateral calls were conducted with each of the regional coordinators, focused on the mapping and their final proposal for route implementation.

- Between March 2020 – June 2020 the visitor guidance concept (Output 4.2) was finalized based on the collected inputs.
- Between the months **December 2020 and February 2021**, further 9 trainings took place, (D 4.3.1 Trainings for target groups to educate them about the standards and nature-oriented bike visitor concept – 2nd workshops series)
- Two additional trainings took place: one in November 2020 and one in April 2021, with slightly more specialized focus in terms of participants' selection, but also including the central topic of nature-oriented visitor guidance (D 4.3.1 Trainings for target groups to educate them about the standards and nature-oriented bike visitor concept – workshops series)

2 OVERALL NATURE ORIENTED IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT AND STEERING

The aim of this activity was to provide an **overall support and steering for the detailed planning and implementation of the trail**. This activity supported the **regional coordinators** while planning in detail and implementing the trail along the rivers Mura, Drava and Danube in the planned TBR. The independent unit responsible for this activity ensured that the implementation standards from **activity 4.1** and the Nature oriented visitor guidance for bike from **activity 4.2** are fulfilled. When questions arose, these were edited and answered centrally by the responsible of this activity and the answers were shared with all partners to ensure the consistent implementation of all standards.

In order to ensure that the implementation follows the overall philosophy of the bike trail and the TBR MDD it was important to install one independent unit, which was responsible for this activity, consisting of representatives of WP leaders and other partners with suitable competence for nature-oriented trail planning.

Based on activities 4.1 and 4.2 trainings were organized by regional coordinators for the target groups in each region, representing a documented learning interaction for increasing skills of target groups on Bike Trail implementation standards and visitor management. The aim of 2 trainings per region was mostly kept, i.e. 22 trainings, in a mixed format with workshop in the first series and, in a hybrid (online and on site) format in the second series were organized in total. The aim was to educate about the standards from activity 4.1. and the nature-oriented bike visitor concept from activity 4.2. those who participate in the trail implementation.

As part of

2.1 First Training Series

The first series of training took place between June and November 2019, each of the ten trainings being organized by one of the regional coordinators. The aims of the trainings were defined as follows:

- Stakeholders are informed about project (status quo at the time of the trainings)
- Standards are accepted and respected during route implementation
- Visitor guidance concept is improved (based on discussions)
- Knowledge about construction of Infrastructure is given and infrastructure will be built with common design

Aims and goals specifically excluded from the scope of the trainings were:

- Discussions about detailed content and methodology of other WPs (e.g. details about booking infrastructure, etc.)
- Basic discussion about the framework (standards and visitor guidance) as such; Feedback was incorporated and basic documents had been agreed ahead of the first round of trainings
- Route planning as such; regional coordinators were invited to present their status quo; it was not aimed to plan the route together at these trainings

Each training was made up of an introduction (project and work packages' presentation – by the Lead partner and WP leaders) and a discussion part. The discussion part contained a presentation, by the regional coordinators, of the stages and sections of the route which is in their responsibility, including planned resting areas¹, stop-overs and other highlights. Work package lead WWF AT together with the contractor Revital presented the aims of the visitor guidance concept (in the map with zonation), the aims of the standards and the proposed infrastructure design.

Within the discussion part, training participants were invited to give their feedback to the **visitor guidance concept**. This meant they could actively comment it, whether it matches the reality on the field, whether more stop-overs should have been included or changes were needed for the visitor areas or cultural heritage sites should have been added to the route.

Feedback was also expected to the **standards** in the form of comments and explanations regarding incorporation of standards in the route. It was reviewed, whether at least two river view/river access points had been implemented; where and which infrastructure would be added and in general, comments regarding the adequacy of infrastructure to the overall stage location and conditions.

Table 1: WP 4 1st training series

PP	Location	Date
ERDF PP4 TVRBR	Bad Radkersburg	24.09.2019.
ERDF PP5 TZMZ+ ASP Varaždin	Čakovec/Prelog	04.06.2019
IPA PP1 COS	Sombor	11.06.2019
IPA PP2 MOA	Apatin	12.06.2019
ERDF PP6 PIVPC	Noskovci	21.08.2019
ERDF PP 13 CDA OBC / RRA SiB	Osijek	22.08.2019
ERDF PP8 KKZ	Molve	13.06.2019
ERDF PP10 WestPannon	Lenti	06.09.2019
ERDF PP11 BfNPI	Letenye	06.09.2019
ERDF PP12 SMVKA	Siklós	19.11.2019

2.2 Second Training Series

¹ The terms **resting areas** and **stop-overs** were developed within the Nature-oriented bike visitor concept. The difference is in the size of the designated area and the length of planned stop as well as the infrastructure. Whereas stop-overs have been defined as point-like spots along the route and have not received any new infrastructure within the project, so-called resting areas are larger areas along the route, mostly around already well-known points of interest, and have received AoE-branded infrastructure, inviting bike visitors for slightly more extended stops.

The second series of trainings took place between November 2020 and February 2021, each of the ten trainings being organized by one of the regional coordinators. As agreed with the Lead Partner Iskriva and WP 3 Product development responsible Trail Angels, the second set of trainings would be organized in cooperation with the Lead Partner to present the finalized trail and the developed booking system. Additionally, synergies with the WP 5 Bike Trail Academy (Output O 5.2) first round of trainings was recognized and the trainings were organized and conducted together with Academy coordinator Trail Angels.

Due to the Covid-19 related situation, the initial time schedule involving the trainings being held on site, in each of the stages, as was done for the first training series, in spring and early summer 2020, could not be held. After it became clear, that live meeting on location, with transboundary participation of partners will not be possible for a longer time, the trainings were organized starting from November 2020 onwards, finishing in February 2021.

The aims of the trainings were defined as follows:

- Stakeholders, including potential service partners are informed about the project (status quo at the time of the trainings)
- AoE Bike Trail route and AoE Bike Trail Structure presentation (Lead partner: D.3.1.1 Stakeholder consultation workshops for preparing the socio-economic analysis)
- Short overview of bike visitor guidance and sustainable tourism concept (WWF AT: D. 4.3.1 Trainings for target groups to educate them about the standards and nature oriented bike visitor concept)
- Options to participate and benefits of participation (O. 5.2 Bike Trail Academy)
- Conditions of participation
- Present letter of interest and booking centre implementation schedule for potential service partners

Conditions and legal framework in the context of COVID-19 related measures was different and constantly changing during the period these trainings took place, therefore none of the presenting international partners could participate in the events on site. In case of some of the partners, locally an event could be additionally organized. Such were the events in Koprivnica-Krizevci County, in the Municipality of Apatin and in Virovitica-Podravina County, where the regional coordinators could organize a larger on-site event with stakeholders, with a more extended version of the local tourism implementation concept and a direct contact alignment with potential service partners regarding their participation options.

Each of the trainings has been documented in an event report created by the implementing regional coordinator. The table below summarizes the timeline and setup of each of the meetings. The description *hybrid (on-site + online)* refers to those events that had, additionally to the online training by the LP, WWF AT, and Trail Angels, also a live event, at the location of the regional implementing partner.

Table 2: WP4 2nd training series

PP	Location	Date
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ERDF PP4 TVRBR	Online	2021.01.12
ERDF PP5 TZMZ	Online	2021.02.03
ASP Varaždin County	Online	2020.12.09
ERDF PP6 PIVPC	Hybrid (on-site + online)	2021.01.19
ERDF PP8 KKZ	Hybrid (on-site + online)	2020.11.20
ERDF PP13 CDA OBC	Online	2020.12.16.
ERDF PP10 WestPannon	Online	2021.01.13
ERDF PP11 BfNPI	Online	2021.01.20
ERDF PP12 SMVKA	Online	2021.01.20.
IPA PP1 COS	Online	2021.01.29.
IPA PP2 MOA	Hybrid (on-site + online)	2021.02.12

2.3 Additional Trainings

In November 2020 and April 2021, implementing partners BfNPI and SMVKA (together with their contractor Logframe) organized two workshops specifically focusing on selected stakeholders and regional partners. The training/workshop in November 2020 was targeting specifically the Directorate representatives and rangers of the Danube-Drava National Park and Balaton-felvidéki National Park in Hungary, with the aim to inform them on the final route proposed for implementation, the bike visitor steering concept and realign regarding potential further development in the area of the two national parks that are intersected with the bike trail. After the presentation and training part, some detailed region-specific topics were discussed. For example, certain resting areas and stop-overs that had been proposed within the bike trail and that are already working as visitor and information centres or other points of interest under the management of the National Park require an adjustment in their visitor hours.

The training workshop in April 2021 was aimed, again, at the two Hungarian national parks' directorates and further relevant managers of protected areas along the route (forestry company, water management, county government administrators) within Somogy, Baranya and Zala counties. Partner SMVKA has created event reports for both of these workshops.

Table 3: WP4 Additional trainings

PP	Foreseen location	Proposed date
ERDF PP11 BfNPI	Online	2020.11.30.
ERDF PP12 SMVKA	Online	2021.04.21.

2.4 Support for Implementing Partners

Over the period June 2019 – April 2021 and planned until end of May 2021, until the final trail implementation actions will be completed, WWF Austria has been supporting implementing regional

partners in several ways. Questions regarding bike trail infrastructure were answered (material, design, flexibility in execution) and repeated changes of resting area or stop-over locations came under discussion – some of them due to the reality on field (e.g. site or area ownership, missing permits or impossibility to install the planned elements due to soil conditions) or legal or local requirements, such as in some of the cities or municipalities, where local urban planning requirements had to be considered and the planned bike trail branding and image of the infrastructure adjusted. Some of the signposts have been aligned and checked by WWF Austria, but most of them were aligned with local authorities responsible for road sign implementation standards.

All large info boards' appearance and content has been checked, improved and upon correction approved by WWF Austria before final designs were submitted for printing. For small info boards content consultation and support in cross-partner alignment was offered.

3 CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOK

Output 4.2. Training on nature-oriented bike visitor concept and Deliverable D.4.3.1 Trainings for target groups to educate them about the standards and nature oriented bike visitor concept have been conducted and fulfilled in a way that should ensure sustainability of the outcomes and long-term use even after implementation of the project. The Nature-oriented bike visitor concept contains information that was important for the trail implementation, however, also outlook on potential future development. The trainings were meant to share the knowledge basis that was used for the visitor concept elaboration and allow for users of the information to apply it in the bike trail after-project life, as well as for future bike trail or other activities-related tourism development within the TBR MDD. Synergies with WP 3 Product development and WP 5 Implementation were meant to ensure this long-term effect. Further planned synergies involve contribution to content of the WP 5 Bike Trail Academy and the visitor guidance (Output 4.2) communication in a service partner compatible format as a communication brochure.