



Interreg



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COORDINATED COMMUNICATION AMONG PROJECTS

Advice and tips for project partners

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SI-HU PRO



INTRODUCTION

As part of the Cooperation Programme INTERREG V-A Slovenia – Hungary, the SI-HU PRO project included a fact-finding survey with regard to the projects that implemented sustainable tourism developments funded over the 2014-2020 programming period.

This survey was carried out in cooperation with the individual project partners responsible for and involved in the implementation of the developments that received a grant (1 partner organisation per project), covering issues such as the synergies identified by the projects, cooperation with other projects, and awareness of other projects.



Further key areas the survey focused on included the communication activities carried out by the projects, the analysis of the results achieved by them, as well as identifying and collecting the future plans and development needs determined by the organisations.

The comprehensive knowledge base created as a result of the survey can provide an outstanding starting point to compile tourism projects in the future both with regard to professional and communication aims.

In order to ensure that this amassed knowledge is available for those interested on a continuous basis, and to include current and updated information, and additional project results and project products, it is essential to manage and



coordinate the sharing of information among projects, and to create the necessary channels and tools to enable this.

Two of these aims were achieved as part of the SI-HU PRO project: a, a bilateral coordination working group was set up with the purpose to carry out the above activities in the future, and b, a common online platform accessible for this working group was created, including the results, documents, marketing materials and other relevant materials on the subject (including regional and sector-specific strategies, etc.) available at the moment, and the ones shared by the project partners asked during the survey.

THE AIM OF COORDINATED COMMUNICATION

What is actually the aim of coordinated communication among projects? If you want to answer this question with a single sentence, then you could say that the aim is to find out about one another's projects, about the activities, events and awareness raising campaigns planned in those projects in order to coordinate them, and to use them for the purpose of comprehensively promoting the entire programme area.

To support this definition of the aim, let us list the majority of the future plans defined by the subjects interviewed as part of the fact-finding survey of the SI-HU PRO project.



These plans are to be interpreted in the context of the tourism development of the programme area, we highlighted the ones improving coordinated communication, or presuming that there is coordinated communication:

- creating a common brand for the area,
- using common or coordinated regional advertising,
- building common sales chains for the tourism packages prepared/to be prepared,
- improving cooperation among service providers,
- creating local supply chains,
- connecting micro-destinations in the region,
- creating an organisation for regional destination management.

Designing and elaborating these future ideas requires providing information on a continuous and mutual basis, the coordination of activities, and that complementary measures aimed at further development are determined together.

Such coordinated and harmonised steps can result in a unified appearance for the projects, enabling their common presence, and, eventually, raising awareness of the region together.





THE BENEFITS OF COORDINATED COMMUNICATION

Why would projects benefit from coordinated communication? Take the implementation of projects running parallel, for example, you could avoid the conflict of event dates in a relatively small region over the short term, thus potentially maximizing the number of people attending each. This would apply in particular, if projects would raise awareness of, or advertise one another's events through their own communication channels in addition to checking the dates of events amongst themselves.

Coordinated communication in the short term could involve knowing about one another's projects,



providing and publishing up-to-date information in due time, and a better coordination of events raising awareness of the same programme area.

Over the medium term, the community building started by the SI-HU PRO project can bring the most substantial benefit, as it was this project that facilitated and helped tourism organisations establish contact with one another, also set up a working group to provide a channel and a framework for maintaining relations. This is how short term benefits can turn into institutionalised, informal professional cooperation, laid down in a strategic cooperation agreement and a jointly developed action plan. We need to refer again to the platform mentioned earlier that can be seen as

the platform for sharing knowledge, assisting organisations in designing their future projects and professional work, and coordinating their work with other organisations by continuously updating its knowledge base. It also contributes to enhancing the knowledge of the organisations on employment issues, as the information and knowledge of the trainings held as part of the projects was made available by sharing it on the platform. With regard to communication, the presentations of the online training and workshop series of the SI-HU PRO project are definitely useful for employees joining in later on.

Both in the long and the medium term it can be regarded as a benefit that a common knowledge



base will be created by sharing project results, which will make the results of the individual projects available in a thematic break-down, alongside with the professional materials and the main products prepared as part of the projects. Such a collection or library creates the opportunity that the planning of new projects can already start in a way that the partners connect to previous, existing results and developed products, thus ensuring their continuity, further development and capitalisation. 

Combined with the opportunity of capitalisation, coordinated communication brings financial benefits for the project partners, since using previously developed methods and solutions, and making use

of results achieved during earlier projects means that in the case of a new project 'all' you need to do is allocate costs to new activities. Assuming that there is a grant ceiling in a programme, just like in the Cooperation Programme INTERREG V-A Slovenia-Hungary in the programming period 2014-2020, project partners can use the maximum grant they can apply for more effectively.

In addition to financial planning, coordinated communication measures among projects, e.g. a project raises awareness of several other projects when it appears at a specialised fair, enable a more cost effective implementation, help avoiding overlaps and duplications. This means cost effectiveness both at project and at programme level.



EXAMPLES AND BEST PRACTICES

We describe two typical examples of coordinated cooperation in this Chapter. Type one is mandatory cooperation, prescribed and managed top-down by and from programme level, which is aimed primarily at ruling out duplications and overlaps with regard to the two projects in question, not at harmonising communication and other activities. One, however, cannot dispute the fact that this mandatory cooperation establishes communication between the two parties, even though it fails to present itself as an outward, information activity, implemented together to raise awareness.



The projects in question in the Cooperation Programme INTERREG V-A Slovenia-Hungary in the programming period 2014-2020 were the projects Green Exercise  and IronCurtainCycling . Although these projects were implemented as part of different partnerships, they focused on the same key topic: on the development of bicycle tourism offer, based on natural and cultural heritage. In order to avoid duplications, the activities of the partnerships and projects were discussed and harmonised as a rule to make sure that they meet the requirements of the programme authorities, and that their developments cover as large an area of the programme area as possible.

The second type, which we will describe with illustrative examples, is the best practice of bottom-up approach (starting from project partners), i.e. common, simultaneous appearance at different thematic events, arching over projects.

Among such best practices we can take the projects IronCurtainCycling  and Guide2-Visit  as the first examples. The partnership structure of the two initiatives is different at only a single point, their geographical impact areas are also nearly identical. Their topics, the development of sustainable tourism in rural, village areas are also similar. The projects expanded the cycling and the hiking trip offers, respectively, and both of them focused on the natural and cultural

heritage of the region. The considerably overlapping partnerships and the complementary nature of the project topics made it possible that their results could be presented to visitors in a harmonised way at tourism fairs and project events.

In presenting several projects at fairs and various events, the Dobronak Institute for Tourism created a particularly good practice, acting as a partner in three projects running parallel in the Cooperation Programme INTERREG V-A Slovenia-Hungary in the programming period 2014-2020. These were the projects TELE-KA-LAND , the GardEN  and the Wine Picnic , which, given the operating areas of the project partner organisations, cover nearly the entire tourism spectrum, complementing one another, of course. This way,



through the awareness raising activities presenting the immediate catchment areas of the project partners, all three projects were presented, covering a significant part of the programme area, therefore, presenting them in this way at fairs can be considered as outstanding promotion also at programme level. This type of activity fits in rather well also with the plans to harmonise advertising regionally, as laid down during the fact-finding survey, and to position the Slovenian-Hungarian border area as a common destination.



The third type of best practice is connected to the project Mura Raba Tour  as its presence at fairs raised awareness not only of the results achieved and the products created in the project, but also the services offered by the project partners outside the cooperation, as well as the sights and the services of other regional players operating in the project area but not participating in the project as a partner were presented.

A conscious use of either of the above three practices enables cost effective, harmonised and far-reaching promotion in future projects, both in terms of the impact areas of the individual projects and the entire programme area as well.



FURTHER POTENTIAL TOOLS OF COORDINATED COMMUNICATION

What are the tools that can facilitate your communication activities and a more effective implementation of your future projects? The bilateral coordination working group set up as part of the SI-HU PRO project is a forum to manage communication among projects, and provide strategic and operational management for a common, coordinated promotion. After completing the project, its members will work in accordance with the strategic cooperation agreement signed during the project, organising regular meetings to plan

future activities and monitor the implementation of the activities. Other organisations can also join in, for the details please consult the publication entitled *'Bilateral coordination working group'*.

The members of the working group can access the internal SI-HU PRO platform, the continuously enhancing contents of which can be used both to plan projects and for communication activities.

Given that membership in the working group is required to access the platform, it may be useful to create external (online groups) that can be equally beneficial fora of sharing knowledge and community building. Considering that there is a limited number of players in the region who

organise their work towards similar aims, it may be useful to create such groups, maybe even help from and involving members of the SI-HU PRO working group. These opportunities can all contribute to mutually broadening knowledge about one another's projects, to ensuring a timely and substantial flow of information, which can, ultimately, result in a better coordination of project activities and events.

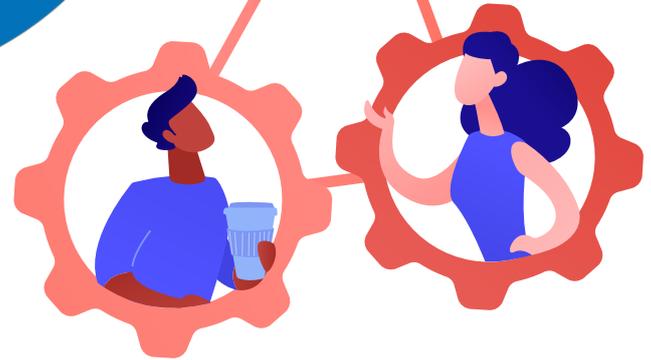
Whilst completing the SI-HU PRO project, the project partners and other members of the bilateral working group focused on common branding at workshops, which can be regarded as a forward looking, coordinated communication activity.



SUMMARY

On the whole, it can be said that coordinated communication goes beyond merely coordinating activities and events, and mutually informing one another, and points towards future development plans and ideas.

Shared results and information provide an excellent starting point for planning organisational activities and cross-border projects alike. It is the SI-HU PRO project that started, will maintain and make this extensive and continuously expanding database available for further stakeholders, primarily through its bilateral coordination working group, and its online platform, supporting the work of the group.



These central project elements can prove to be the channels that can facilitate the dissemination and regular use of the individual project practices and methods.

These fact-based tools responding to regional needs from stakeholders, completing real-life projects result in more efficient project planning and more successful project communication, which will eventually be translated into a common promotion of the programme area.

LITERATURE

CPR Regulation



Interreg Regulation



Cross-border fact-finding report prepared as part of the SI-HU PRO project



Minutes of the online bilateral coordination working group meeting (8 June 2021) as part of SI-HU PRO (SIHU232) project under the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Hungary

Minutes of the online bilateral coordination working group meeting (14 September 2021) as part of SI-HU PRO (SIHU232) project under the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Hungary

Minutes of the online bilateral coordination working group meeting (22 November 2021) as part of SI-HU PRO (SIHU232) project under the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Hungary

Draft strategic cooperation agreement including the action plan prepared as part of the SI-HU PRO (SIHU232) project

Project Communication Handbook



Communication Toolkit



Communication of capitalization
in Interreg



Communicating Cohesion Policy
in 2021–2027



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