

## European Expert Conference “Environmentally Friendly Travelling in Europe – Challenges and Innovations Facing Environment, Transport and Tourism.”

### Final document (31 January 2006)

The European Expert Conference, “Environmentally Friendly Travelling in Europe. Challenges and Innovations Facing Environment, Transport and Tourism“, took place on 30 and 31 January 2006 in Vienna, mounted by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, the Federal Ministry for Transport, Innovation and Technology and the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour within the framework of the Austrian EU-Presidency and the Austrian Presidency of the Alpine Convention.

The conference focussed on good practice examples of soft mobility measures in the fields of environment, transport and tourism, including the EU projects, Alps Mobility II – Alpine Pearls, Alpine Awareness, Mobilalp, and Environmentally Sustainable Transport and Tourism in Sensitive Areas –Lake Neusiedl/Fertő-tó Region. As demonstrated by the award-winning projects in the European Contest held in conjunction with the Conference a number of local and regional entrepreneurial initiatives are already under way in Europe; the range extends from trans-sectoral traffic calming measures, the improvement of travel to and mobility in the holiday region by public transport, to the use of innovative transport technologies, awareness raising and mobility management.

The recommendations derived from the above-mentioned projects, the contest and the results of the conference need to be seen against the backdrop of the following political objectives in Europe:

- The March 2000 EU Lisbon Strategy of the European Council, targeting employment, economic reform and social cohesion;
- the “European Sustainable Development Strategy” (EU-SDS), June 2001;
- the “Kyoto-Protocol”, which came into force in February 2005;
- the Transport White Paper “European Transport Policy for 2010: Time to decide” of the European Commission, September 2001;



- the Communication of the European Commission, “Basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism”, November 2003;
- the Sixth Environment Action Programme of the European Union
- the technology platforms ERRAC (European Rail Research Advisory Council) and ERTRAC (European Road Transport Research Advisory Council) set up at the initiative of the European Commission, 2001 and 2002;
- the Alpine Convention and its protocols.

### **Recommendations issued by the European Expert Conference**

The principles of sustainable mobility and sustainable tourism need to be integrated into as many tourism products as possible, taking account of all the three pillars of sustainability, i.e. economy, ecology and social aspects.

In the implementation of the following proposals, close cooperation between stakeholders in the sectors of environment, transport, tourism and regional policy at destinations is a precondition for attaining improved products and problem solutions.

#### **Recommendations to the transport sector:**

- Guarantee the provision and funding of public transport in the regions for both the local population and for tourists.
- Guarantee easy accessibility of tourism destinations by public transport (railway, bus and ship) in all seasons.
- Upgrade and extend cross-border passenger transport through direct connections (railway – also considering the options offered by the liberalisation foreseen in the Third Railway Package – and bus) to scheduled transport, including attractive special package offers combining public transport with cycling.
- Create consumer-friendly products and integrated tariff-systems, including all means of public transport, to give better access to the entire environmentally friendly transport system.
- Create consumer-friendly logistic chains for smoother intermodal travel to and from destinations (including provisions for luggage transport).
- Eliminate consumer-unfriendly institutional and technical barriers to cross-border rail and bus passenger transport.
- Promote increased use of new transport technologies, such as efficient alternative propulsion, eco-friendly fuels and vehicle technologies.
- Use new information and communication technologies in public transport for optimum customer information, with a view to stimulating demand.

**Recommendations to the tourism industry:**

- Enhance integration and consider environmentally friendly mobility solutions when designing tourism products.
- Integrate environmentally friendly mobility into existing product labels – ecolabels.
- Develop attractive offerings and enhance implementation of measures with a view to extending the length of stay – thus counter-acting current trends and increasing year-round-tourism as far as possible.
- Promote initiatives that raise awareness of sustainable tourism and sustainable mobility.
- Consider soft mobility as a USP (Unique Selling Proposition) in the marketing of tourism products.

**Recommendations to destinations:**

- Develop strategies for regional sustainable development (e.g. Local Agenda 21) and sustainable tourism as well as measures for their implementation.
- Develop an easy-to-apply system for monitoring the status-quo and the ongoing process of sustainable development.
- Conduct research designed to improve socio-economic market surveys with a view to developing target-group-specific tourism products.
- Integrate ecological requirements and criteria of sustainable tourism as well as the promotion of environmentally friendly transport modes in the regions and in the origin/destination transport chain into the tourism and travel concepts, policies and marketing strategies of all destinations.
- Develop and promote cooperation between destinations specially dedicated to sustainable development with a focus on soft mobility and sustainable lifestyle values, such as the Alpine Pearls initiative.
- Mobility management for destinations (e.g. traffic-calming and car-free zones, local demand-oriented public transport systems as well as human-powered mobility).
- Establish an origin/destination service chain and create special products, taking into account car-free travel to and car-free stays at resorts.
- Sensitise visitors and create incentives for the increased use of public transport.
- Create strategic partnerships between tourism industry and transport enterprises, tourism destinations and places of origin, with a view to jointly launching attractive, environmentally friendly products, which give tourists a door-to-door mobility guarantee.
- Take account of soft-mobility issues in tourism marketing and in the marketing of destinations (quality of travel experience, event-character or advantages of soft mobility ...).

### **Recommendations to policy-makers and the administration:**

- Take into account the principle of fair pricing in transport and internalise external costs as a contribution to fair competition between the different transport modes (road, rail, aviation).
- Set up a framework for enhancing the harmonisation and integration (e.g. technical standards, cross-border licences, user-friendly equipment and guiding systems, ...) of European public transport, in particular for railway systems, with a view to improving cross-border railway connections.
- Promote efforts with the objective of a Europe-wide, coordinated staggering of holiday periods.
- Gain reliable data on travel behaviour through appropriate amendments of tourism statistics.
- Consider environmentally friendly mobility in the forthcoming “Agenda 21 for European Tourism”.
- Support environmentally friendly mobility management in tourism and leisure, to promote the use of environmentally sound vehicle technologies and fuels, particularly fuels derived from renewable energies (e.g. bio fuels and biogas) and further tighten the emission standards for vehicles powered by combustion engines (e.g. EURO 5, 6).
- Create an appropriate instrument which enables the limitation of greenhouse gas emissions from air transport within the EU and between EU and third countries, taking into account the conclusions of the Environment Council of 02/12/2005; further enforce, at the international level the integration of climate-damaging emissions of international aviation into the Kyoto-Protocol.
- Promote innovative, application-oriented projects for the implementation of environmentally friendly transport concepts for leisure and tourism as well as targeted cooperation between the environment, transport and tourism sectors under the programmes of the Structural Funds (Interreg, Urban, Leader, Equal) and under national development programmes.
- Increase investment into research and development of innovative transport technologies under the 7th European Union Framework Programme for Research and Development, as well as into national research programmes, in order to pave the way for innovations and to realise an integrated, more environmentally friendly and more intelligent Europe-wide transport system.
- Develop and promote an award and a labelling system for destinations that is oriented towards sustainable development, including soft mobility and lifestyle values, such as the Alpine Pearls initiative, and examine the options of Europe-wide application.
- Promote existing labels for the successful placement of destinations on the tourism market and integrate criteria of sustainable tourism into the day-to-day business of successfully positioned destinations. Support the regular monitoring of destination branding and labelling and create the required databases.
- Integrate sustainable tourism and soft mobility issues into all forms of tourism-related education and life-long learning initiatives.

## **Recommendations to destinations facing special challenges**

Many European countries, in particular the new member states and candidate countries as well as the South-East European and Balkan countries, still have untouched and ecologically sensitive areas which could provide a good starting point for the development of sustainable tourism.

Effective solutions in ecologically sensitive areas require cross-sectoral approaches.

In destinations facing special challenges the external costs of environmental impacts should be considered in pricing (e.g. surcharges), in order to allow cross-funding of sustainable mobility in these areas.

National and European funding instruments, such as the Structural Funds, should focus on the requirements of destinations facing special challenges and include soft mobility measures as well as support cross-border and transnational activities.

The special challenges posed by the sensitivity of these areas should be communicated to tourists and to the local population in order to raise acceptance of specific protective measures.

### Mountains:

- Due to the fact that environmental impacts are enhanced by the special topography, the climate conditions and the restricted living space, specific measures are required, particularly in transport. As measures at the destination alone may not be sufficient to reduce the environmental impact of transport, sustainable transport has to be promoted also in the source countries.
- Instruments such as the Alpine Convention and the Carpathian Convention have already highlighted the specific needs and proposed measures for sustainable development. The pertinent implementation procedures could serve as a model at international and global level. However, each mountain region must work out its own type of political contract based on the prevailing conditions and making a special allowance for an integrated approach to transport/tourism.
- Signing and ratification of the Transport Protocol of the Alpine Convention and subsequent increased efforts to ensure its implementation by the European Community and its Member States.

### Wetlands:

- Since rivers and lakes divide as well as connect countries, a cross-country approach is called for.
- As the shores of rivers and lakes are usually flat areas, they have good potential for cycling; therefore package tours combining cycling with public transport (bus, rail, ship) should be promoted.
- Rivers and lakes need also to be considered as waterways. Therefore environmentally sustainable solutions for inland shipping and leisure and sport boating should be implemented, includ-

ing the use of cleaner fuels and the renewal of the boat fleets as well as traffic restrictions in sensitive sections of lakes and rivers.

Urban areas:

- Leisure and tourism transport should be considered in the EU thematic strategy on urban environment and in its implementation.
- The EU thematic strategy on urban environment and its implementation should take into account the interaction between urban areas and their hinterland, focusing on leisure traffic flows of residents to recreation areas and the requirements for an environmentally sustainable origin/destination transport chain. Cooperation between urban areas and the recreation areas of their residents should be promoted in order to enforce sustainable leisure mobility.

Coastal areas:

- Induce a modal shift to coastal shipping, especially in areas with land use constraints and conflicts.
- Promote and increase the use of cleaner fuels for vessels as well as alternative propulsion and renewal of fleets.
- Adapt land use planning in coastal areas in order to protect these zones and prevent new heavy infrastructure.

The participants in the European Expert Conference, “Environmentally Friendly Travelling in Europe. Challenges and Innovations Facing Environment, Transport and Tourism”.

Vienna, January 2006