



Destination SMEs project

Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme

Action plan 04/2019 – 03/2021

During Phase 1 of the Destination SMEs project (April 2016 – March 2019), all partners identified interesting practices and initiatives which could be inspiring enough to lead to an improvement of public policy, or to the duplication of this experience in their territory.

Following these three years, a two-year long second phase of the project is starting, when project partners will improve their policies and use the outcomes of the project. This document is the road map of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme during this second phase.

1 GENERAL INFORMATION

Partner organisation: Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme

Country: France

NUTS2 region: Auvergne

Contact person: Thomas Ducloutrier

- email address: t.ducloutrier@auvergnerhonealpes-tourisme.com
- phone number: +334 73 29 49 40

2 IMPROVEMENT OF THE TARGET POLICY

At the application stage of the project, all partners identified a public policy which needed improvement. This section is dedicated to this target policy only.

Name of the target policy:

Auvergne ERDF ESF regional operational programme 2014-2020;

Axis 3 SMEs competitiveness;

Investment priority 3d Support to the capacity of SMEs to participate in processes of innovation and growth;

Specific Objective: Strengthen the financing opportunities to cover all development steps of SMEs

Nature of the target policy: Investment for Growth and Jobs programme

Name of the managing authority of the target policy: Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Council

Action: Modification of factsheet 3.3 Tourism

a. Relevance to the project

Different practices observed in the framework of the Destination SMEs project have inspired changes in three main topics:

- The innovative nature of projects

Factsheet 3.3 emphasizes that supported projects are required to be innovative in nature. However, regional assessors have trouble with this criterion as is not clearly illustrated.

Three tourist products observed during study visits have been regarded as especially innovative and can serve as examples to illustrate this criterion:

- The "Park of Senses" in the city of Valmiera in Latvia features a barefoot walking path, a treetop adventure trail, a zipline over the Gauja River, race tracks, a spa and a beach. The park's sensory theme helps it stand out compared to the normal types of activities on offer in the sector.
- The biathlon track in Kontiolahti, Finland. A cooling system on the ground beneath this 2.2 km track significantly extends the biathlon and cross-country skiing season. Reducing the seasonal aspect of resorts is a major challenge in the sector. This innovative project deserves to be cited as an example to inspire potential project initiators.
- The RFID fountain in Žalec, Slovenia. Hops have historically been cultivated on this territory that has focused its tourism on the brewing tradition. In the centre of the village, visitors can taste different beers at a "beer fountain". Tourists can visit a local shop to buy a glass with a RFID chip that activates the fountain and controls the quantity of beer served. This is a very concrete example of innovative technology and illustrates the innovative nature required of projects.

- Complementarity of projects with existing offers and product specialisation

The territory of Podčetrtek in Slovenia is an example of cooperation among tourist businesses and complementarity among local tourist products. Olimje Spa, a large resort with several hotels and spas, is the economic driver of this rural territory. One might think that the large hotel capacity within the resort would make it difficult for competing accommodations to exist on the territory. This is not at all the case in Podčetrtek. Several smaller accommodations have opened nearby with high occupancy rates. The key to their success is specialisation: one has a small golf course for beginners and serves cuisine made with ingredients grown on site, while another has craft workshops and a farm with deer that are free to roam about the site. The successful specialisation and complementarity of this model is to be encouraged in Auvergne.

- Broadening the concept of destination management to other scenarios, such as joining networks or organised itineraries

Some of the observed models of territorial or professional organisation have been shown to be just as important for the success of SMEs as the existence of destination management strategies. This is the case for the two following models:

- o The "Enter Gauja" cluster in Latvia: Created in 2012, this cluster brings together more than 50 businesses, mostly tourism-related, as well as 9 municipalities, the Latvian Nature Conservation Agency, regional public transport companies and the University of Applied Sciences of Vidzeme. The success of this cluster is demonstrated by a significant increase in overnight stays by tourists in its members' areas, higher than the increase at the national level. It is therefore a relevant organisation model that could be encouraged.
- o The Wild Atlantic Way route in Ireland: This route and brand is used by destinations and companies located along the Atlantic coast. It is a thematic system of organisation, which is another interesting model to support.

b. Nature of the action

The action consists of an amendment to the drafting of factsheet 3.3 Tourism in order to:

- Specify the innovative nature required of selected projects by adding the examples cited above, to inspire project initiators and to improve the understanding of this criterion by regional assessors.
- Encourage selected projects to align themselves in complementarity of existing offers (thematic specialisation);
- Expand the territorial organisational models that factsheet 3.3 promotes to take into account clusters and thematic itineraries.

The Tourism Directorate of the Regional Council will submit to the EU Funds Directorate, according to the ERDF revision process agenda, a proposal for changes. The revision is expected to take place by mid-2019.

c. Stakeholders involved

The Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Council, managing authority of the relevant policy, is the main stakeholder affected by this amendment.

d. Timeframe

Estimated start date: October 2018 (advisory meetings organised by the Managing Authority)

Main milestones: 30/01/2019 (ERDF supervising committee)

Estimated Approval / enforcement date: June 2019

e. Indicative costs

The expected impact is qualitative and not quantitative. The changes made are therefore not expected to generate any specific costs.

3 OTHER RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

Thanks to the Destination SMEs project, many interesting practices, initiatives and policies were observed. Some of them offered inspiration to improve the main policy instrument tackled by the project as presented in part 2 of this action plan.

But these learnings can also benefit to other policy instruments or local and regional strategies. Destination SMEs partners intend to make use of as many interesting learnings from the project as possible, to make the most of this project.

This is the reason why, in addition to the actions presented in Part 2 dedicated to the main policy instrument target, we tried to identify all possible contributions from our project to improve other regional, national or EU policies in one hand (paragraph 3.1), and transfer effective practices in the other hand (part 3.2), of course always in relation to the main topic of the project: Destination management.

3.1 Other policy improvements

a. **"Outdoor Tourism Sector of Excellence" regional tourism policy voted by the standing committee of the Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Council on 9 February 2017**

- **Name of the managing authority:** Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Council - Tourism Directorate of the Regional Council.

- **Description of the policy:**

The Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes region has made outdoor activities a priority of the region's tourism policy. By assisting 21 "Outdoor Territories of Excellence" in implementing tourism development strategies based on outdoor sports and recreation, the region aims to:

- Establish tourist destinations and sites dedicated to outdoor sports and recreation by creating a network, making the outdoor tourism offerings of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes clearer and more accessible.
- Support private and public investment projects on the Outdoor Territories of Excellence, in accordance with the demands of the market and of tourists.
- Oversee the different structuring phases of each territory: in addition to financial and technical support, the Outdoor Territories of Excellence benefit from the services and tools of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme (marketing, coordination, promotion, certification, professionalisation, commercialisation and assessment of the territories and of the outdoor tourism professionals).

A call for expression of interest was published in 2017 to identify the Outdoor Territories of Excellence to assist.

One of the criteria of the call for expression of interest was the establishment of consistent coordination efforts of the outdoor tourism stakeholders on the territory, in order to ensure destination management, and more specifically a local network of professionals in outdoor sports and recreation.

This is a complex criterion to implement for the "leaders" of the Outdoor Territories of Excellence.

- **Source of inspiration from the project**
Good practices identified in destination management styles: territorial marketing strategies in macro-destinations of the Slovenian National Tourism Policy (Slovenia) and Eco Gozo (Malta), networks of tourism providers in Cogne (Italy), the Introd Network (Italy) and the Enter Gauja cluster (Latvia), the Wild Atlantic Way touring product (Ireland) and finally the event management approach of Joensuu (Finland).
- **Description of the expected improvement**
Improving and illustrating the selection criterion linked to the "establishment of consistent coordination efforts of outdoor tourism stakeholders / destination management" in a future call for expression of interest planned for 2020. In addition, examples of new types of outdoor projects and infrastructures identified in Destination SMEs will be emphasised in exchanges with the selected territories (the Park of Senses (Latvia) and the Nordic skiing / biathlon cooled track of Joensuu (Finland)). These types of projects will be eligible for financial support from the region.
The objective of this second call for expression of interest will be to review the map of the 21 Outdoor Territories of Excellence and to identify new ones.
- **Stakeholders involved**
Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Council,
Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme,
The 21 "leaders" in the Outdoor Territories of Excellence
- **Expected timeframe of the improvement**
2020: Improvement of the selection criterion linked to the "establishment of consistent coordination efforts of outdoor tourism stakeholders / destination management" in the framework document of a call for expression of interest.
- **Indicative costs**
The proposed amendments are intended to improve the quality of supported projects and not their quantity. No specific costs are expected.
- **Indicative funding sources**
Not applicable.

b. Supporting Outdoor Territories of Excellence

- **Name of the managing authority:** Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes-Tourisme
- **Description of the policy:**
The Outdoor Territories of Excellence are those selected in the framework of the regional policy cited in the previous section. They are beneficiaries of financial support from the region as well as assistance for tourism implementation from Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme. To do this, different teaching materials have been created, including a publication planned for 2019 entitled: "the journal of development". Territories can also locate the information on an online web platform that incorporates the good practices.

- **Source of inspiration from the project:**
 - o "Enter Gauja" Cluster: Beyond the operations of the cluster and the quality of its tourism business members, it is interesting to note how the members interact. Training sessions are organised so that all members can share their knowledge with the rest of the network. There is no sense of competition but rather a virtuous circle of competitiveness which makes this tourism cluster the most significant of the Baltic countries. This form of collaboration will be presented and proposed to the Outdoor Territories of Excellence
 - o ITER project: This project is a solution to mobility challenges in the Grand Paradis area. 105 electric bikes were purchased to facilitate the transport of tourists in the area. They are available at tourism service providers who can lend them to their customers. The project to be transferred on the Outdoor Territories of Excellence aims to purchase 16 electric mountain bikes. They can be rented in the centres of the national park for the low-cost of 8 euros per day and a deposit of 50 euros. However, customers are asked to purchase something on the territory and return with a receipt. This increases local consumption. This system could easily be transferred to French territories.
 - o The Nordic skiing / biathlon cooled track in Joensuu and snow storage: In addition to the cooling system of the track mentioned earlier, a technique for storing snow from one year to the next is used in Joensuu. The snow is compacted and stored under sawdust. The mild summer temperatures of Finland make this system possible. This could indeed be used in mountain resorts where the temperatures are not too hot in the summer and where snowfall is sometimes lacking at the beginning of the season. This would avoid artificial snow production and water consumption that has a negative impact on the environment.
- **Description of the expected improvement:**

These good practices will be included in the "journal of development" that will be published in 2019 and on the online informational platform.

Presenting these experiences to the territories can help them find new solutions to their challenges. These are very original examples that do not currently exist in the region.
- **Stakeholders involved:**

The Outdoor Territories of Excellence, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme, mountain resorts
- **Expected timeframe of the improvement:** 2019
- **Indicative costs**

The proposed changes will not result in additional costs.
- **Indicative funding sources**

Not applicable.

3.2 Good practice transferred: Wild Atlantic Way

- **Name of the owner of the good practice:** Fáilte Ireland
- **Description of the good practice**

The Wild Atlantic Way project was developed as a reaction to the challenging economic climate since 2008, which had a negative economic impact on tourism in Ireland. A shorter summer season and a decline among coastal communities were also being experienced. In order to

overturn this decline, overseas growth in tourism was necessary. The national tourism authority, Fáilte Ireland, thus identified a single, connecting route along the entire west coast of Ireland, from Donegal to Cork. It was deemed that this would create the necessary scale and singularity required for a brand that would be visible in key overseas markets, re-branding the Western region of Ireland, resulting in generating incremental international tourists, increased revenue and job creation.

- **Name and location of the organization implementing the transfer:** Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme

- **Description of the transfer**

The ViaRhôna is an 815 km long bicycle route along the Rhône River. It begins on the banks of Lake Geneva and ends at the Mediterranean Sea. Like the Wild Atlantic Way, the ViaRhôna proposes a thematic journey, across mountain landscapes, iconic cities and the landscapes of Provence before arriving at the sea. It has a singular image that lends itself to further development. The route was completed in 2018 and can be travelled from end to end. However, the tourism offerings and services along the cycling route are not yet fully developed. Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme, using the work carried out on the Wild Atlantic Way as an example, identified stages and major points of interest. It became clear that services were not developed on these points of interest, in particular bicycle rentals. Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme, in collaboration with the services of the regional council, assembled a group of bike rental companies along the ViaRhôna on 3 December in Valence to begin creating a network. A tourist travelling along the route needs to be able to rent a bike at one major site and return it to the next. For this, the rental companies need to cooperate and work together in a network.

The marketing of tourism products around the route is also very well organised on the Wild Atlantic way. Tour operators and agencies must offer experiences that match the image created by the manager of the route. This helps make the route a true brand for the territory, with added value for tourism products marketed under the brand. ViaRhôna has a strong identity connected to the history of the Rhône River. Cycling along a section of the ViaRhôna is a unique experience that a touring visitor should be able to enjoy. In product marketing and in particular on online sales platforms, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme will take inspiration from the Wild Atlantic Way to define the image linked to the itinerary and the river and apply them to the products marketed under the brand.

- **Stakeholders involved**

Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme, Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Regional Council

- **Expected timeframe of the transfer:** 2019

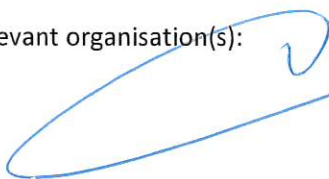
- **Indicative costs:** €20 000 per year

- **Indicative funding sources:** Budget of Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme

Date: 29/03/2019

Name of the organisation(s) : Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes Tourisme

Signature(s) of representative of the relevant organisation(s):



AUVERGNE-RHÔNE-ALPES TOURISME
Site de Clermont-Ferrand
59 boulevard Léon Jouhaux - CS 90706
63050 CLERMONT-FERRAND Cedex 2