

KNEB

Kompetenznetzwerk Nachhaltige
Entwicklung für Berggebiete

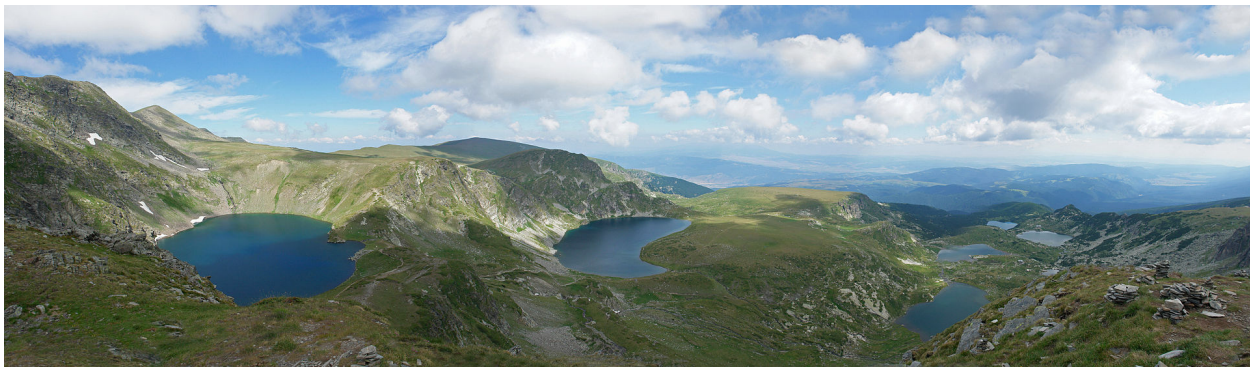


Network of Excellence „Sustainable
Development of Mountain Regions“

Sustainable Mountain Tourism in Bulgaria

Concept Idea

Pilot Project: The Seven Rila Lakes



For the concept:

Pavlina Pavlova, Project manager, Association Co-cycle
Reto Solèr, Project manager, solerworks.ch

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PROJECT SUMMARY

The United Nations 70th General Assembly has designated 2017 as the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. This is a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the contribution of sustainable tourism to development among public and private sector decision-makers, while mobilizing all stakeholders to work together in making tourism a catalyst for positive change.

In the context of the universal 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹, the International Year aims to support a change in policies, business practices and consumer behavior towards a more sustainable tourism sector than can contribute to the SDGs.

One third of Bulgaria's territory is covered by mountains, which are becoming popular tourist destinations in summer and winter. The development of these regions poses the risk of domination of the globalisation trend and mass tourism over the local and typical production and services in serious irreversible impact on the natural heritage. In this Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development a project to raise awareness on sustainable mountain tourism in Bulgaria is initiated. The local stakeholders will be empowered to imply self-awareness and respect towards wildlife and biodiversity. Through Knowledge exchange with the Swiss partners, green entrepreneurship and self-employment in mountain regions will be encouraged to develop alternative and environmentally friendly winter and summer sports and locations.

As a pilot project destination, the region of the Seven Rila Lakes is chosen. Even though located in Rila National Park, the area is currently under environmental pressure as a result of the construction of a chair lift and the increasing number of tourists in summer and winter. In the frame of the project the current socio-political and environmental situation, including basic stakeholder analysis and biodiversity assessment will be assessed. A number of activities, where the public will be sensibilized about the emerging problems regarding biodiversity conservation and mountain sports in the area are planned. Further the dialog between the stakeholders will be initiated and the collaboration for sustainable development will be supported.

The pilot project will be widely communicated in the digital and printed media and the results will be assimilated in printed and online output. After the end of the pilot phase, an assessment of the future opportunities of sustainable mountain tourism in Bulgaria will be evaluated.

¹ More information on the SDGs is available at: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>

Implementation plan

The following table presents the planned activities (as work packages), responsible parties and respective budget per work package regarding the Pilot project only.

Project phase	Responsible	Content	Outcome
Pre-project 2017	Project management team (PM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project concept • Partner • Budgeting and Fundraising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define conditions and premises • Incur commitment • Fundraising
Initial Spring/Summer 2018	PMs/Host	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick-off meeting – partner presentation • Tasks diversification • Scheduling of events • Webpage launch (in Bulgaria) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick-off meeting organized • Partner collaboration roles clearly defined • Events calendar set
Realisation I Summer 2018 to Spring 2019 Socio-economic dimension Sensitize, educate and initiate collaboration	PMs/Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder analysis • Organization and facilitation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workshop – the future of the area ○ Roundtable – problems/ perspectives ○ Launch festival – music, games, local cuisine ○ Guided tours • Social media campaign • Mass media outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic principles and initial conditions are derived • Stakeholders are sensitized • Stakeholder collaboration for common solutions • The public is informed about the project • Information is spread through different media channels
Realisation II Summer 2018 to Spring 2019 Environmental dimension Assess environmental conditions and raise awareness	PMs/Partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic environmental impact and biodiversity assessment • Biodiversity and natural heritage assessment • Preparation of information material, including video and brochures • Public lectures and empowerment of the local population and the tourists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current conditions and threads are assessed • The sites and the conditions are evaluated • Stakeholder including the local population are sensitized
Follow-up Evaluation Summer/Autumn	PMs/Host	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results dissemination • Assessment of the potential for future activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiplication of the results • Assessment of the opportunities for further

2019			projects is available
Project management	PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination • Finances • Management • Reporting • Translation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional project management guaranteed

Pavlina Pavlova is an expert of sustainable development and climate change. Born and grown up in the capital of Bulgaria and graduated in University of Bern, she is inspired to bring the Swiss experience in sustainable mountain tourism to her home mountains.

Momchil Panayotov is an expert of forest ecosystems and biodiversity, freeride, avalanche awareness and education. He is an associate professor in the University of Forestry, president of the Bulgarian Extreme and FreeSkiing Association (BEFSA), member of the mountain rescue service of Bulgaria.

Reto Solèr is an expert in sustainable development of mountain regions and is specialized in the touristic valorisation of nature and culture, and sustainable mobility. References: Many years of experience as manager of CIPRA Switzerland 2001 - 2009, president of CIPRA Switzerland 2012-2015. www.cipra.org, project management of valorisation projects such as “Water world Göschenen” or „Soft mobility in Alpine destinations“, “Respect Wildlife”, etc.

Nikolay Minkov is an environmental engineer and expert in Life Cycle Assessment and sustainability. Graduated in Sofia, Bulgaria, he has few years of experience as a consultant in the area of sustainability and environmental protection in Bulgaria. Currently, he is a researcher at TU Berlin, working on various projects with large multinationals. His passion to mountaineering motivates him to share his experience in the current project.

Zlatina Kolchakova has graduated Masters in Sociology at the Humboldt University in Berlin and is passionate about introducing the topics of green economy, upcycling and sustainable development also among the Bulgarian public. During the week she is working as project manager in an IT office, but each weekend she is hiking, rafting or skiing, depending on the season. She is member of BEFSA (Bulgarian Extreme and Freeskiing Association) and takes part in the National Ladies team in Rafting.

CONTACT DETAILS

Verein Kompetenznetzwerk «Nachhaltige Entwicklung für Berggebiete» KNEB

Network of Excellence „Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions“

c/o Reto Solèr, President, P.O. Box 294, 8042 Zürich

T. +(0)44 431 27 30 Mobile +(0)79 628 16 03 reto.soler@solerworks.ch

ANNEX I: SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CRITERIA

Table A-1. Sustainable tourism criteria¹

Criteria	Advantage/Effect	Activities
Management Criteria	<i>Sustainable management</i>	Bring sustainable tourism services on the market Continuously review, evaluate and improve of the provided offers and services
	<i>Stakeholder engagement</i>	Initiate and moderate the dialog between direct stakeholders, as well as indirect actors
	<i>Inform guests about sustainability</i>	Train employees to point out the sustainability aspects of the touristic services Inform guests about sustainability issues and motivated them to commit
Economic criteria	<i>Strengthen of the regional economy</i>	Support the local business, local and regional products Promote local attractions and increase their value
	<i>Special customer benefit (value)</i>	Provide attractive special services and create unique competitive value for the customers
	<i>Profitability (economic efficiency)</i>	Generate direct and indirect profit Increase the attractiveness of the stay for the guests
Social criteria	<i>Consider specific guest needs</i>	Address the specific needs of the customers and provide information
	<i>Employees working atmosphere</i>	Create attractive and fair working conditions
	<i>Conservation of the local culture</i>	Support and promote the authentic local culture Foster exchange between locals and tourists
Environmental criteria	<i>Energy efficiency</i>	Optimize energy use and the use of renewable energy sources to reduce CO ₂ emissions
	<i>Environmental friendly mobility</i>	Offer environmental friendly transport to the destination and during the stay
	<i>Nature, landscape and environmental resources conservation</i>	Support conservation, protection and melioration of culture and natural landscapes Initiate activities on biodiversity conservation, water protection and waste management

¹Weber, Fabian & Taufer, Barbara (2016). Nachhaltige Tourismusangebote. Leitfaden zur erfolgreichen Entwicklung und Vermarktung nachhaltiger Angebote in Tourismusdestinationen. Luzern