

KNEB

Kompetenznetzwerk Nachhaltige
Entwicklung für Berggebiete



Sustainable Development Network
for Mountain Areas

Project Summary

«Together Towards Sustainability!»

Education

«Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions»

Services

«Sustainable Development of Mountain Regions»

Pilot Project “Outdoor Guide”

Association «Sustainable Development Network for Mountain Areas»

Weinbergstrasse 133, 8006 Zürich / Switzerland

Mobile +41 (0)79 628 16 03 reto.soler@solerworks.ch

1 Project idea "Sustainable Development Network for Mountain Areas"

The central project objective is to create added value in non-Alpine regions, to use resources sustainably and to preserve and value nature and culture. A competence network will be established, which builds up and conveys mountain-specific and practice-oriented competences and transfers and exchanges know-how for "Sustainable Development for Mountain Areas". Services and educational programs of the competence network guarantee sustainable development in mountain regions adapted to local and regional conditions, taking into account economic, social, cultural and ecological aspects.

1.1 Tasks of the competence network

The tasks of the competence network are defined as follows:

- Education: education and training at Universities of Applied Sciences or higher technical colleges in Swiss mountain areas for players in non-Alpine mountain regions, who have any influence on sustainable development in their area of origin or are having intentions to do so.
- Services: Establishment and operation of a web platform, which links stakeholders, enables transfer of knowledge and know-how through e-learning, offers instructions and counselling and acts as a stock exchange for services, such as the mediation of donors and products.
- Networking with existing or future educational institutions and cooperation with research institutes that generate or impart specific knowledge on mountain regions.

1.2 Guidelines

The "Sustainable Development Network for Mountain Areas" complies with the following guidelines:

- Focus on mountain regions as geographical entities;
- Consistent implementation of sustainable measures in due consideration of all three dimensions;
- Equipment with practicable knowledge;
- Direct transfer of practical know-how to beneficiaries;
- Specific services for local implementation.

1.3 Benefit

Mountain-specific knowledge is ample, but not transferred and is thus insufficiently valued. Exchange of know-how between different groups of actors and integration of knowledge into practical approaches promotes sustainable development. Expertise in sustainable development acquired by players of non-Alpine mountain regions can be applied locally for the benefit of these regions. Special Focus will be placed on potent multipliers, so the gained knowledge will be passed on.

This can be achieved by either carrying out actual projects or by transferring know-how through education modules or educational institutions to other players in mountain areas involved. This multiplication effect leads to "brain gain" and induces development of know-how and skills.

1.4 Realisation steps and current project status

- Establishment of a well-functioning organization, which can build up structures to achieve project objectives: Non-profit **“Association Sustainable Development Network for Mountain Areas”** was founded;
- Implementation of the pilot project **“Outdoor Guide”** to gain valuable initial experience: concept, implementation plan including reference examples for services and education modules as well as finance planning is available;
- Engaging in project-relevant partnerships: A discussion forum with potential project partners and project-relevant experts was conducted. The association is under patronage of CIPRA Switzerland. Contacts with The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC and other organisations have been established. Support was assured by The Centre for Development and Environment CDE, University of Bern. CDE conducts research and teaching on behalf of a more sustainable world and has ample experience in intercultural exchange with students worldwide.
- Fundraising and public relations to secure financing: Fundraising for the pilot project will start in the first quarter of 2018;
- Establishment of a web platform: A quotation for the construction of a web platform has been obtained;
- Realisation of a feasibility study to determine the offers (education and services) and the demand situation and show the feasibility;
- Development of services and educational programs for later project phases, after evaluation of the pilot project.

1.5 Project team

President Association Sustainable Development Network for Mountain Areas

Reto Solèr has been committed to sustainable development for mountain areas for more than 25 years. He was long-time director and president of CIPRA Switzerland (2000 to 2014) and is currently leading the campaign "Respect to Protect - Snow Sports and Respect" and "Respect Wildlife" on behalf of the Federal Office for the Environment.

Reto Solèr is co-initiator of numerous initiatives and projects, such as “Model Region Göschenen”, “Pro Val Lumnezia”, “busalpin.ch”, “AlpenTaxi” or “Soft Mobility in Alpine Regions”. Furthermore, he did implement the information campaign “Alpine Convention”, realized the knowledge management project “Future in the Alps” as well as the climate projects cc.alps and climalp in Switzerland. In addition, he wrote various hiking guidebooks, for instance “Istria with Kvarner Bay, Velebit and Plitvice Lakes” (Rother, 2004) or “Dalmatia” (Rother, 2017, 2nd edition).

On an international level, he has carried out projects for transfer of know-how in Slovenian and Croatian mountain areas and is currently involved in projects in Bulgaria.

Expertise

- Sustainable development, with focus on environmental issues;
- Sustainable development related to mountain areas;
- Expertise on water, energy / climate, tourism, mobility;
- Valorisation of nature and culture;
- Sustainable tourism - also for disabled people

Co-project leader for pilot project

Andreas Gauer, MSc Environmental Sciences: Several years of experience in Alpine environmental research at ETH Zurich and Agroscope. Enthusiastic mountaineer and trekker.

2 Pilot Project “Outdoor Guide”

2.1 Objectives of the pilot project

Non-European mountain areas, particularly remote regions, are greatly becoming more popular among Western trekking tourists. This offers the opportunity for locals to work as trekking guides and thus generate an additional income, which enables the livelihood of many.

Customers often ask for well-educated and knowledgeable local guides, with a sense of the natural environment, the cultural history and nature conservation.

The pilot project "Outdoor Guide" opens the possibility for tourism-related players in non-Alpine mountain regions to complete an “outdoor guide” training in Switzerland. Participants receive basic training in tourism and the necessary know-how to safely lead groups on trekking tours in the mountains. It is the aim of this scholarship course to enable graduates to independently operate a profitable tourism business and pass on knowledge and skills to their employees and / or other companies.

A suitable course is currently being designed in close cooperation with the research group “Tourism and Sustainable Development” of Zurich University of Applied Sciences ZHAW. The institute is located at the “Center of Capricorns” Wergenstein, in the Natural Park Beverin in the canton of Graubünden. The park headquarters as well as a hotel are situated at the same location. The institute hosted several interns, who attended a leadership course conducted by "International Training and Development GmbH, InWEnt" in Germany.

In close cooperation with experts in Switzerland and in exchange with other participants, professional- and self-competence will be expanded. The participants receive up-to-date expert knowledge, know-how and tools to sustainably expand and further professionalise their existing tourism business and operate independently and self-employed.

Successful completion of the course qualifies participants to:

- Develop, widely promote and lead attractive and sustainable trekking tours in their region of origin;
- Refine existing value chains and tourist infrastructure;
- Safely guide groups in the (high) mountains, assess weather conditions and provide first aid in case of medical emergencies;
- Convey knowledge about the local environment, flora and fauna and culture;
- Communicate in English within the international tourist network and with guests;
- Professionally and profitably operate a small business;
- Be in contact with inquirers in Switzerland and worldwide through access to the platform KNEB

2.2 Criteria for selection of candidates

For the pilot project, a gender-mixed group of five participants will be evaluated via a contact person in Switzerland vouching for them. Candidates must fulfil the following basic criteria:

- Employment with a tourism-related institution in target regions involved in ongoing development processes;
- A sound basic education and being prepared for intensive language training in English;
- Have good career prospects to be able to apply and pass on gained knowledge;
- Bring along first experience as a tour guide or trekking guide;
- Be able and willing to learn self-determined and interactively;
- Interest in environmental and sustainability issues;
- Minimum age of 20 years

3 Training Modules

3.1 General aspects

Basic knowledge of English is required for participation as English is teaching and colloquial language. Candidates will have to attend E-learning English language courses prior to the start of the course. Ideally, participants already bring along ideas for further development of their tourism business. Course duration is four months and starts in spring 2019. The training is divided into three main parts:

- A Basic education in tourism
- B Outdoor leadership training
- C Elaboration of a case study

3.2 Education in tourism (A)

Contents of module A:

- Basics in tourism industry
- Tourism and sustainability
- IT and Office software (Word, Excel and Power Point)
- Business administration and business management in tourism industry
- Social media, online communication and PR
- Sustainable business administration for hotel industry and catering trade
- Deepening English skills / English for tourism professionals

Study contents will be derived from existing programs of Swiss educational institutions. They will be translated into English and be adapted to the specific needs of the pilot project to serve as effective hands-on tools.

3.3 Outdoor leadership (B)

In this part of the course, participants will improve their skills in:

- Tour planning;
- Safely leading groups in the mountains;
- Meteorology;
- Orientation;
- First aid measures;
- Basics in geology, flora and fauna, nature conservation.

Skills acquired in theory modules will be implemented by accompanying qualified trekking guides on actual tours in the park area. Participants will first act as co-guide and later guide their own tour under expert supervision. By active participation, expert coaching and feedback, student's leadership competence in guiding groups in mountain regions will be significantly improved

3.4 Practical case study (C)

In the course of the training programme, students will develop a supervised specific case study, focusing on a touristic trekking offer in their region of origin. All aspects of tour planning, advertisement, transport and realisation will be considered. Focus will also be on development of value chains taking into account accommodation, gastronomy, cultural goods etc. with strong consideration of environmental protection, energy efficiency and cultural heritage. To maximize benefit, students are strongly encouraged to bring along their own ideas for case studies. If possible, the participants also take on independent, thematically related tasks in parking operation or within other projects.

Depending on opportunities, the participants also carry out independent, thematically related tasks in parking operations or within research projects.

3.5 Accommodation and catering

Accommodation for the students will either be provided at the Hotel Capricorns in Wergenstein or will be arranged in the town of Mathon. Catering will consider nutritional habits of the participants and will be clarified in advance.

4 Contact

Association «Sustainable Development Network for Mountain Areas»
Weinbergstrasse 133, 8006 Zürich, Switzerland
Reto Solèr, Mobile ++41 (0)79 628 16 03, reto.soler@solerworks.ch
Andreas Gauer, ++41 (0)79 751 73 35, andreas.gauer@hotmail.com