



PRESS RELEASE | CARINTHIA [KÄRNTEN]

Peer Review in Carinthia from 4. – 8. October 2010

Carinthia in Austria is a member of the AER organisation and has therefore been hosting a Peer Review – an evaluating of sustainability in tourism. For this reason a team of five tourism experts from other European regions have visited Carinthia from the 4th to 8th of October 2010. The Peer Review group consisted of members from Banska Bystrica Region (Slovakia), Tuscany (Italy), and South Denmark (Denmark). The visitors were very impressed with the province and their suggestions for improvement are based on the information they received while interviewing a wide range of persons engaged in the tourism development in Carinthia.

Partnership, community commitment and infrastructure are necessary

The private and very independent work within tourism in Gmünd by local authorities and private actors really show, that commitment, partnership and a strong unique idea and image attract tourists – more and more every year. Visiting Gmünd (an artistic city based on an old village and castle) was a very delightful insight of how *commitment* is used as a fundamental pillar in a project, and how commitment assures a steady progress.

Having *partnership*, *community engagement* and *commitment* are three basic pillars in every fundament of a healthy long-term project. Without, a project can potentially fall apart. But when there is commitment and many partners to divide the work, then both in good and hard times of a project, the willpower secures a final solid result. Farm Holidays is another successive project organisation, in spite of the coordination of the three previously mentioned basic pillars and the strong and clear structure developed along.

Through hard work and one clear vision, the National Parks and the Nature Parks demonstrate how a truly success can arise. They have respectively involved private actors, and brought their knowledge and engagement into the work, which has shown a great success. Many other regions and local actors in the province of Carinthia can certainly learn from those above mentioned projects: The structure of these projects, the idea of sharing knowledge, and the three fundamental social pillars. These are all key assets in creating a sustainable development and a healthy tourism origin.

A combination of “Seasonal tourism” works in Carinthia and seems sustainable

Many regions within Carinthia work with combined seasonal strategies, and have a specific strategy for Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter – all strategies are iterative and connected into each other. The hereby elimination of peaks and pitfalls into an average stabile tourism curve brings very positive outcomes, and has a positive effect to both the local community and the destinations as a whole. The work with seasonal tourism illustrates; Instead of

thinking sustainability as one single strategy – building and combining small sub-strategies into a common (yearly) strategy could be a new way to build also future sustainable tourism strategies – of course, considering the environment and the respective set of actors priority.

Vision and strategy are in phase one

The Peer Review group has observed a tendency to conduct practical implementing (e.g. marketing plan, material etc.) – without an overall vision is made previously. No clear vision or structure has no long-term perspective – and in worst case; A short-term negative effect as well. Therefore the governmental institution of Carinthia is recommended to develop a clear overall long-term sustainable tourism strategy for the entire province of Carinthia. Afterwards, bigger regions should adjust into this common vision and extract an unique version on their own. However, the regional strategies should aim to encompass also regionally differences, local uniqueness, and privately matters, although the strategy should be seen as the point of parity. Finally, it must be underlined, that the practical implementation must be an extension of the fundamental strategy, vision, and structure.

Academic level is important in tourism sector as well as in other businesses

The Peer Review group acknowledge, that projects tend to be more well-founded and structural considered, when admitting the right time and space for building up a solid vision and strategy, which also include a marketing plan as a *sub-strategy*. As seen in the project of Hohe Tauern National Park and the Naturpark Weissensee, academic people with special sets of tools and business knowledge can be crucial in developing strong and very solid founded strategies and structures. All in all, the Peer Review group therefore encourages further enhancement of skilled and academic employees, especially employees with a background or higher education in common economy or business development is seen to be ideal for the strategy progress.

AER and the Peer Review method

The Assembly of European Regions (AER) is an European organisation representing 250 regional authorities in Europe. The AER helps regional authorities to exchange experience on issues of common interest, ranging from regional economic development to environmental policies and strategies for developing tourism. Furthermore, the AER helps regions to identify and implement best practices in these areas, and to influence development at European and national levels. Hereby, The AER Peer Review Initiative (APRI) specializing in helping regions to improve their tourism policies by drawing on best practice developed by other European regions, which has recently been conducted in Austria, through the province of Carinthia.

The Peer Review Team is very satisfied with the planning of our review, and will like to address a special thanks to Dr. Kurt Rakobitsch and Ms. Siglinde Weiser.



Key points extracted from above

1. Private initiative and commitment are really important in every project.
 2. Vision and strategy is first phase in sustainable development.
 3. An overall vision and strategy should be developed for Carinthia, and not just a marketing plan.
 4. Individual strategies are important as to create uniqueness and should therefore be allowed – but under an overall common provincial vision.
 5. Enhance and allow the use of skilled and academic people within the area of business and economic, as it is seen as key knowledge in building strategies. Furthermore, properly time and space necessary to develop a secure fundament must be allowed and aligned.
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