

## European regions for sustainable tourism

### What's new in Preserve?

Welcome to the 3rd edition of the PRESERVE newsletter, dedicated to the key events that we have recently organised, such as the conferences in Alba, Alytus and Abruzzo, as well as the practical experience of sustainable tourism shared during the peer reviews. The

latest events allowed partners to exchange know-how on tourism management and how potential resources can be given new added value. Through their different exchanges, partners discovered new good practices that will feed into the more general transnational cooperation of

the project. Faced with harsh realities after the economic crisis, one of the underlying principles of the recent activities is the need to involve a wide range of stakeholders in the tourism policy to ensure that people continue to travel and to guarantee that tourism does not stop entirely.

### European tourism in times of crisis: how regions use sustainability for stability

## Mid-term conference 16-18 March, Alba (RO)

Today, like all other economic sectors, the tourism industry is faced with challenges linked to the economic downturn. More than ever the overarching challenge for the tourism sector is to remain competitive but not only:

environmental and social sustainability in tourism are more than ever crucial when foreseeing the future of this sector. Past crises show that people continue to travel and that tourism does not stop altogether but requires adaptation on behalf of the policy makers and stakeholders.

The mid-term conference offered a wide-range of activities, discussions and networking opportunities. Speakers included representatives from Tuscany (IT), Eszák-Alföld (HU) and Alba (RO) as well as from the Bureau for International Social Tourism (BITS); they illustrated the impact of the financial crisis on the tourism sector in their regions. Jakob Stoumann, from Oxford Research, took the floor to present various scenarios facing the European tourism sector in times of crisis. The current economic downturn and globalisation tend to raise concerns for our economic stability. The presentations and the discussions that took place in Alba should support regional actors and politicians in the field of tourism to view sustainability not only as a worthwhile long-term investment but also as a shield against possible future crises.

Website: <http://preserve.aer.eu/news-activities/mid-term-conference.ht>



The conference took place in the historical city of Alba Iulia, in the Upper city's fortress



The conference gathered almost 150 participants from around Europe and was an opportunity to discuss the lessons that can be drawn from the crisis and the long-term prospects of this sector to come out stronger by harnessing tools of sustainability.



The event was concluded by a visit of the 15th Century Ramet Monastery

## Peer reviews:

# A personal experience

I have been part of the team visiting Avila and Sterea Ellada. Both visits have been great personal as well as professional experience. There are too many moments to describe, and I have chosen to present a small selection of them. Going through a peer review week is tiring but rewarding. The schedule is fully booked from morning to late night. The hosts try really hard to squeeze as much of information on the region into the tight schedule as possible. This

is, of course, a fantastic and unique opportunity that few other visitors are able to experience. However, in addition to all the impressions and information that you need to gather for the report, you also receive fantastic personal impressions of the region's people, food and culture. There also are some practical considerations

when attending a peer review. Carrying too much luggage on the flight home is one. Another is to know what the proper dress code is for each event. Walking boots or sneakers? Tie or not? Can I wear shorts? Is this shirt too casual? The host is constantly bombarded with these questions.

Some peers might be able to stay fully focused each minute of the whole week. However, many others have to use another technique. For my part, I have to save some energy in order to be fully alert and attentive at the right times. The difficult part is to know when full attention is needed.

For example, you might be able to get valuable information talking to the taxi driver. Or maybe you are in a conversation with a local guide while eating dessert, and suddenly realize that this person for some reason knows much about the educational system, and proves to be a valuable source of information.

Social skills are priceless during a peer review, especially those linked to leading interviews. When the team is asking questions during an interview, there is often only time for a few questions. You know what information you need, but it is another thing entirely to ask

the right questions. As much as you want to receive the necessary information, you also try to avoid creating an uncomfortable moment. It is challenging to find that middle ground; sometimes you realize too late which person is more resourceful.

Finally, questions formulated too directly for the start of an interview can lead to a closed discussion in the end.

Being part of the peer review gives you new understanding about your own competence. In your home country, you might be considered as an expert in certain fields, in our case sustainable tourism. But in an international team of experts, your special competence might turn out to be rather common, whereas some of the knowledge that you considered elementary turns out to be very specific. Being surrounded for one week by smart international professionals is very uplifting. When not being engaged in an interview or such, there is enough time to learn about the situations in other European regions. Furthermore, the relationships you make are quite personal after a full week. These acquaintanceships were an unexpected positive bonus to this professional event.



Lars Arvidsson  
Partner Peer Review Team 1

## Dissemination conference:

# Alytus, 9 June 2010

The objective of the event was to disseminate information about PRESERVE and sustainable tourism to various stakeholders in Alytus region, including Tourism information centers and policy makers.

2 partners from PRESERVE took part in the event - Jönköping (SE), Styria (AT) as well as 5 tourism information centres, regional and national parks, local authorities, and the Ministries of Environment and Interior.

The concept at the heart of the term "sustainability" is to find the meeting point between environmental, social and economic development, which are interlinked; social sustainability is a prerequisite. Economic viability is in turn essential to allow for environmental and social sustainability.

Socially sustainable development is what keeps the cohesion of a society and its ability to support its members in working together to achieve common goals, to meet the individual needs of health and well-being, adequate food and shelter, expression and cultural identity and political commitment.



Dissemination conference in Alytus

# The European tourism sector faces a challenging future

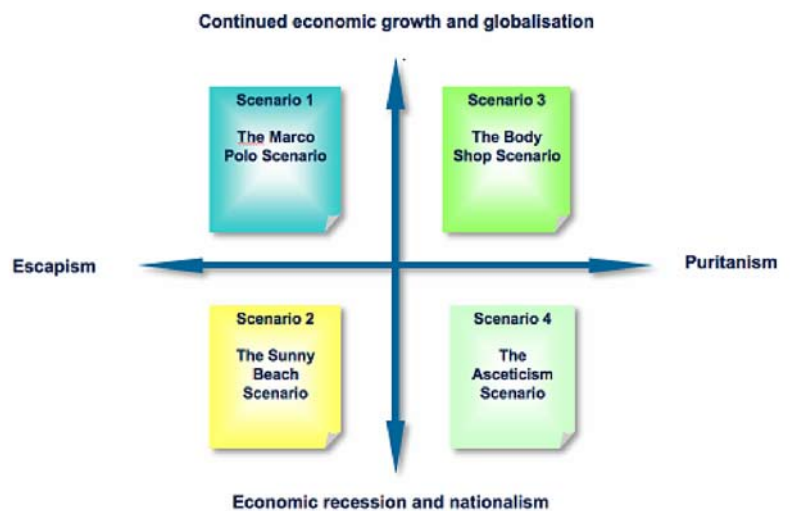
As Europe is the world's primary travel destination, the tourist sector represents an important part of the European economy. Nevertheless, despite being one of the most important growth sectors, European tourism faces a challenging future and is falling behind in growth rates versus its equivalent sectors in emerging economies in Africa or Asia. On behalf of the European Commission, Oxford Research has carried out a comprehensive study of the European hotel, restaurant and catering sector thereby mapping structures, trends and drivers of change in this particular sector. Moreover, the analysis focuses especially on

labour related issues such as changes in skills need, the employment structure or emerging competencies. On the basis of the general economic development and the development of consumer trends, four different scenarios have been created in order to study possible future developments of the hotel and restaurant sector and assess possible impacts on European tourism. One of the main findings of this research project is that the restaurant and hotel sector faces a number of serious employment and labour related challenges such as an ageing European workforce, high staff turnover, low productivity, skills shortages and lack of training.

Furthermore, changes of lifestyle towards health and environmental awareness, intensified digitalisation of the branch and an increase in global travelling demand an stronger adaptation from the education and training system within the tourist sector as certain skills and competences such as multi-skilling, intercultural competencies or IT skills are more and more requested. Thus, in order to meet the challenges of increased global competition and the emergence of new consumer trends, the tourist industry in Europe has to put a stronger focus on strategic planning, innovation and cooperation.

## Preserve Key results

The four scenarios | **OXFORD RESEARCH**  
- a company in the Oxford Group -



Source: Oxford Research report, 22/06/2009

[http://www.oxfordresearch.dk/library/documents/pdf/451767-HotelsRestaurants\\_FinalReport.pdf](http://www.oxfordresearch.dk/library/documents/pdf/451767-HotelsRestaurants_FinalReport.pdf)

Data for November 2008 - June 2010

<b>Events organized:</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Events participated in:</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Participants:</b>	<b>1937</b>
<b>Appearances in the media:</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Average visits/month on our website:</b>	<b>5746</b>
<b>Good practices identified:</b>	<b>9</b>

## Sustainable tourism and measure for limiting the desertion rural areas.

# Dissemination conference: Corvara (province of Pescara) 26 May, 2010



Landscape of Corvara

This seminar could have been organised in many other venues, more comfortable and renowned and easier to access.

The choice of Corvara – a village abandoned in the fifties - corresponded to the aims of the PRESERVE project, which seeks to promote “the development of methods, tools and infrastructure for the promotion and management of the landscape and cultural heritage in European regions in order to achieve sustainable socio-economic development”.

The project involves the region of Abruzzo - with regard to inland areas, characterized by high rates of population loss, even in the presence of a rich natural heritage, architectural and cultural heritage, only partially known and valued.

The tourism economy - involving resident populations and raising their awareness - represents an opportunity to create jobs and limit the abandonment of towns and villages, affected by a long and not only demographic decline.

Perspectives resulting from the lack of youth “are condemning these

areas with imminent death, “emphasizes dramatically the basic document of project, which concerns the management of financial resources or the creation of investment, but rather the transfer of knowledge, experience, good practices and reflections to be developed in a transnational circuit, even fostering collaborative networks.

Meeting in Corvara was consistent with the project PRESERVE, as it served as an immersion, in some ways dramatic, in a ghost

village - marked by desolation and ruins - which describes with few words the suffering, misery and neglect of the local population, largely migrated to “the Americas”, as it has happened in other parts of Abruzzo; the region is renowned for having a larger population living outside its borders than its actual residents. At the same time the choice of Corvara is a concrete sign of hope for the future, since it is implementing a complex project to recover and reuse the village for tourism and residential aims. This initiative was launched with a brave investment by the Paggi group, hoping to make the dream of reviving the old village “as it wa and where it was” to become a reality.

The project does not only focus on the material reconstruction of the village, but also on the need to encourage the consolidation of the historical memory of the place, mostly destroyed by the depopulation.

PRESERVE project is an opportunity for Abruzzo to focus on EU policies regarding the cultural heritage protection, which can help to preserve the identity of places, their history, their landscape, which are essential parts of sustainable tourism.

During the seminar some innovative tourism activities, contributing to the development of the territory and linked to the objectives of the EU project, have been showed and analyzed sharing the results of 20 good practices.

The event gathered 60 participants amongst which project partners, local operators and policymakers.



Dissemination conference in Corvara



Guided visit in the streets of Corvara with architects working on the town's renovation



Typical authentic house in Corvara and plans for its renovation.

# Preserve and beyond

In this section we would like to highlight the initiatives that have resulted from the project but that were not initially foreseen; these illustrate the ripple effect of the project beyond the partnership and contribute to its overall sustainability.

## Office of the Carinthian Government Nature Experience Carinthia.

Based on the aims of the Interreg IVC-project PRESERVE in Carinthia, a process has been started to bring together all relevant players in the field of „sustainable tourism“.

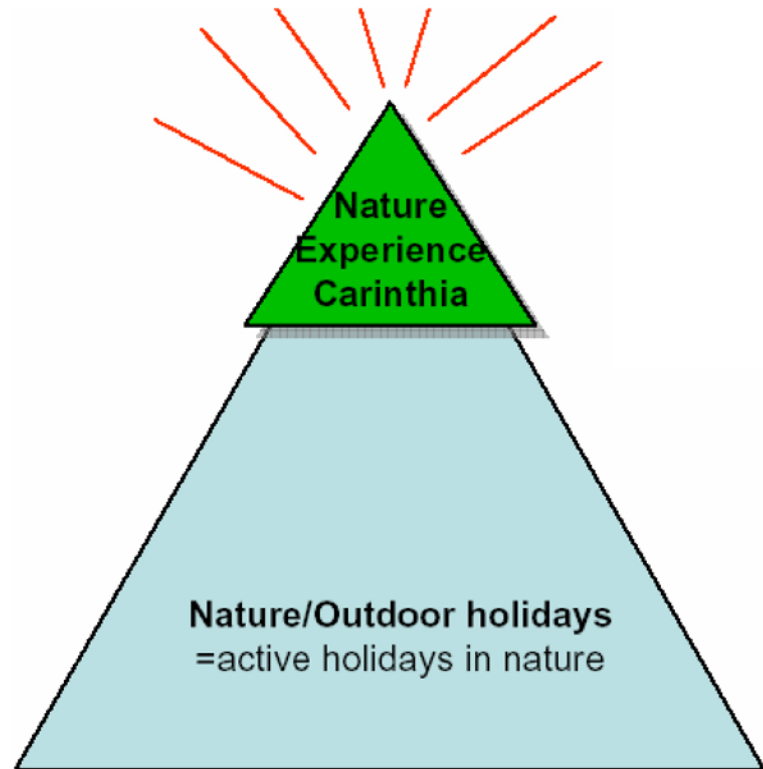
For the first time in Carinthia, the representatives of the most important protected areas, the relevant tourist regions and the Carinthian Tourism Board have worked together by planning a strategy for sustainable tourism in Carinthia.

The process was started in March 2009 and in November 2009 a reliable consortium with 7 protected areas, 7 tourist regions, the Carinthian Tourism Board and an advisory council was founded. These areas account for 7.9 million overnight stays.

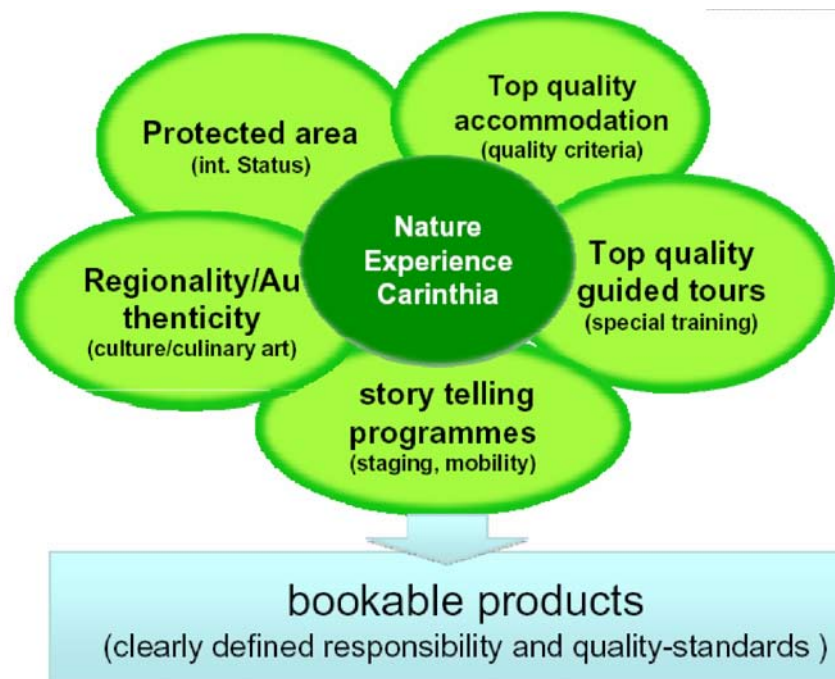
An analysis of trends and competitors was carried out which allowed for the definition of a strategy for the positioning of „nature experience“.

Clear quality guidelines were defined for the development of products as well as marketing activities.

Since June 2010 the products are “online” at [www.natureerleben.kaernten.at](http://www.natureerleben.kaernten.at)



**high competence (top quality natural environment, guided tours, operation, service,..)**  
**+ lifestyle orientation (pleasure, experience, exploration, regionality)**



The next steps are to set up a quality management system for „sustainable tourism“ in Carinthia to develop all services in detail. All players are working together very efficiently and are highly motivated because they feel they are doing something that is in line with their needs.



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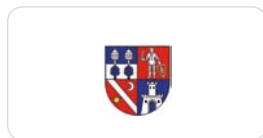
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National co-financing: 367.120.99€

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end: October 2011  
Number of partners 14