

FIRST KEY STEPS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY IN TOURIST AREAS



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1. About the SEEMORE project

Studies show that leisure travel accounts for 50% of all travel in industrialized countries and is expected to grow further in the coming years. The impact of growing leisure travel is especially felt in tourist regions, that have to cope with seasonal changes in transport demand and road congestion because of private car use. **An inefficient organisation of mobility can lead to a decrease in the attractiveness of a destination. For tourist destinations to remain competitive and attractive in a global market, cooperation between local actors from tourism and mobility sectors is essential.**

The SEEMORE project, financed by the EU *Intelligent Energy Europe* programme, aims at showing that regional actors in 8 European coastal tourist regions are able to change the travel behaviour of their visitors towards more sustainable transport modes.

The SEEMORE project has the following **specific objectives**:

1. Increase the awareness among visitors about sustainable mobility options;
2. Increase co-operation between the sectors of tourism and mobility, and create new and improved energy efficient mobility options for leisure travel;
3. Shift of travel behaviour of visitors towards more sustainable modes;
4. Widely share and communicate the SEEMORE experiences and outcomes with other actors in Europe, so that they start implementing similar actions.

The CEI participates in the project to transfer the knowledge and experiences to CEI countries, through the organisation of national transfer seminars as well as through Central European transfer seminars (Trieste – autumn 2013, Romania – autumn 2014), which will gather tourist regions from several CEI countries.

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2. SEEMORE approach: from the framework analysis of local preconditions to the action plan

The framework analysis is the first necessary step to evaluate the baseline situation of regions and consequently to set up their local strategy for sustainable mobility, to be used as a basis for the implementation actions. The framework analysis foresees two main activities: an analysis of local preconditions and a local strategy workshop.

1. *The analysis of local preconditions*

Key actors from transport and tourist sector in the regions are identified, e.g. local/regional authorities responsible for planning and implementation, public transport authorities and operators, tourist and hotel organisations/associations etc. Secondly, a data collection by direct questioning the tourists/visitors is carried out, in order to identify tourists' needs and preferences as well as potentials for shift to sustainable transport modes.

2. *The Local strategy workshop*

A **local working group for sustainable transport for tourists** is established in the region with representatives from both the transport and tourism sector (the key actors previously identified).

In the form of a **local strategy workshop**, the output from the analysis of local preconditions is discussed. The discussions address questions such as:

- What are the future transport-related trends affecting the tourism in the region?
- Do we want to promote our destination as a sustainable tourism destination and therefore promote also sustainable transport for tourism?
- How can the transport and tourism sectors be stronger together and form the basis for a competitive and sustainable region?
- How do we cope with future trends such as climate effects, more expensive fuels, an ageing population, etc.?
- Who are our target groups today and in the future?

On the basis of the discussion, the group elaborates the local strategy document, which identifies the **visions and goals** for sustainable mobility for tourists in the region.

Based on the local strategy document, the local working group develops a concrete **action plan** for addressing the common visions and goals. The role and responsibilities of each key actor are clarified and a plan for timing and financing elaborated. The action plan will serve as starting point for the implementation actions.

3. The experience and actions of the Dobrich region (Bulgaria)

1. Introduction

The Bulgarian organization Club “Sustainable Development of Civil Society” is the central actor for the implementation of SEEMORE in Bulgaria. **The north coastal district of Dobrich was selected as target region. The district of Dobrich is visited by 500,000 tourists per year.** It faces many problems regarding tourists’ mobility: no traditions in mobility management, no public transport, no cycling routes along the seaside. SEEMORE will facilitate the development of appropriate sustainable mobility habits among visitors and locals, promoting a shift from private cars to public transport, cycling and walking.

2. The analysis of local preconditions

The road infrastructure connecting the city of Dobrich with the seaside and the resort areas is quite good but public transport connections between maritime areas and towns are not well developed. Public transport does not exist in the maritime towns of Kavarna, Shabla and Balchik. **Most of the small picturesque villages with high anthropologic value are totally deprived of transport connections with bigger cities and the seaside area.** Thus, tourists and local population rely mainly on their private cars. The intense traffic causes a lot of pollution, noise, congestions and accidents.

In the Dobrich district mobility surveys had never been conducted and mobility management measures never introduced. During the communist era of organised tourism, travels of tourism groups were planned by the state tourism company Balkantourist and all transfers and tourist trips were performed by luxury new buses. Today the hotels and other resort facilities only offer taxi services to their customers. **The perfect conditions for developing cycling routes and pedestrian alleys are totally neglected and small maritime settlements face many parking problems during high season.**

In October 2012 a thorough analysis of the current mobility situation was made using primary and secondary sources of information. **The regional survey showed that nearly 100% of the tourists are not satisfied with the mobility information and underline they do not receive any information even if they ask for it.** In addition, the local population is not aware of the existing (small) possibilities of sustainable mobility in the region.

3. The Local strategy for sustainable tourism and transport

The Local Working Group was established in autumn 2012, gathering **representatives of the local government and all relevant stakeholders in the tourism and transport sectors.** The main target groups of SEEMORE in the Dobrich region were defined as follows:

- Individual tourists coming from Bulgaria and abroad for summer holidays, who stay in the district resorts on the seaside corridor Albena – Kavarna;

- As a secondary target group, Dobrich young residents visiting the seaside during weekends in small groups or with their families.

A Local Strategy was developed, defining the Dobrich district's vision as **“More attractive and environmental friendly seaside Dobrudza through sustainable tourism and transport development”**. The main goals were defined as follows:

1. To develop a strong information and promotion campaign thus introducing the term “Mobility Management’ in the region and explaining the benefits of sustainable tourism and transport development;
2. To introduce new mobility measures in resort areas thus linking the tourism and transport sectors;
3. To increase the energy effectiveness of transport.

The project team immediately started working on the first task. By the end of February 2013 the necessary information, pictures, maps and the design of the **advertising material which shows the integrated sustainable mobility information package for visitors** was prepared. In particular, the leaflet and the brochure were conceived: the leaflet contains a detailed description and pictures of local leisure sites with information on how to reach them sustainably, while the brochure represents a Regional visitors’ mobility guide including complete and integrated information on public transport routes and timetables. The texts are presented in Bulgarian, Russian, English and Romanian. During the 2nd meeting of the Local Working Group, held in Balchik on 6 March 2013, the proposed items were finalised. A printable version of the mobility package was published on the official websites of the local institutions, thus allowing tourists and citizens to download and print for their own needs.

The Bulgarian team also started to work on the task **“Training on integrated sustainable mobility options” for 80 professionals being in direct contact with visitors** (hotels, bus drivers and leisure activities staff). The first workshop was held in Balchik on 7 March 2013, gathering 20 participants from the tourism sector (hotel and restaurant managers from Albena, Balchik and Kavarna; representatives of tour-operators and tourism agencies and public transport providers).

The technical assistance of the CSDCS team will continue to provide local decision makers with innovative and tailor-made mobility options that will be gradually implemented. It is already planned to introduce Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans in some cities along the Black Sea coast, thus making a significant step forward to reach EU requirements for a better quality of life in urban areas.

Visitors of Dobrich region will benefit from the improved traveller information, the increased choice in mobility options and the attractive integrated travel and leisure products. The improved ecological situation will attract more tourists, create more jobs and influence in a positive way the public health.