



# OUR WAY

Interreg Europe



European Union  
European Regional  
Development Fund

**2nd  
Newsletter**

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## **Seminar and 2nd Steering Group Meeting in Westport (Ireland)**

The *EGWA*, as advisory partner, reviewed key contributions and points for completion from **best practices** received from partners, as well as from regions not represented in the association.

The partners were able to directly present best practices from their own regions. It should be noted that some of the best practices presented at the seminar were not those put forward on the fact sheets. **The seminar and BP presentations by partners and stakeholders** highlighted the different baseline conditions of the partners in terms of experience and knowledge of the greenways concept and its advantages, as well as in terms of geographical conditions, human and material resources, responsibilities and the inclusion of this accessible infrastructure among their regional priorities.

Also made clear was the diversity of working methods among the partners and stakeholders taking part in the seminar. From initiatives and infrastructure development supported by government authorities to initiatives with no physical infrastructure, promoted by local rural action groups and based on local participation and collaboration with non-profit organizations.



The project results will need to take starting point conditions and human and material resources into consideration, as well as the established priorities of each political

region and the responsibilities of the different partners in relation to the greenways concept.

At the end of the sessions, the partners were able to make a preliminary **selection of the best practices presented** by other partners, according to which they judged most interesting in terms of cooperation and funding, the two core aspects addressed by the meeting, though the final choice of best practices will be made with their stakeholders. All the regions represented have best practices of interest to other project partners. Equally, all the partners are highly motivated by the project, which will facilitate the application or adaptation of best practices in their regions.

In relation to the two core aspects focused on by this first seminar, the following **key conclusions** were drawn:

## **1) Essential cooperation.**

Government authorities share responsibility for regional management, e.g. building of infrastructure, promotion of tourist activities, equipment, investments, etc. Cross-departmental cooperation in government authorities at local, regional and national level is therefore an essential requirement. Infrastructure is vital, but equipment, transport and the promotion of tourist activities, etc., are equally important.

Because consumers demand a quality service offering, private sector and public-private sector collaboration are also of critical importance. If you have an outstanding greenway infrastructure with no nearby services, access is difficult and visitors are left with nowhere to eat, stay or hire bikes. This will seriously restrict the numbers of tourists using the greenway, and those that do use it will do so without spending any money, rendering the building of the infrastructure an unprofitable investment. In the same way, you can start an exceptional business, but it will not prosper without quality, well-maintained infrastructure; and if your greenway is not promoted, nobody will know about it.

All the different elements have a part to play, and when all the players work together, it's a win for all concerned. This is particularly true for itineraries whose outstanding potential is compromised by a lack of collaboration, maintenance and services for tourists.

It is also vital to clearly identify the entity and the person responsible for management of the itineraries and the natural and cultural heritage associated with them.

## **2) Essential promotion of natural and cultural resources along the itineraries.**

Capture and convey the identity of the region, on the basis of natural and cultural resources. Promote resources, values, history, traditions... everything that makes your region different. Do what you do best and make it available to visitors, make them want to explore and enjoy the region. Local involvement is key to the success of the initiatives and boosting the economy of the region.

## **3) Essential funding.**

Ongoing funding is essential for the maintenance, management and promotion of the itineraries. Funding is needed for the itineraries to succeed and exert a positive impact on the conservation and promotion of natural and cultural heritage.

*The seminar was very positive, with real-life success stories. No doubt the success of the Irish experience, exemplified by the award-winning Great Western Greenway in County Mayo, will inspire new greenways initiatives in Europe for the protection and promotion of the cultural and natural heritage, thanks to the OurWay project within the framework of the Interreg Europe.*

**Mercedes Muñoz**

**European Greenways Association, Director**

**Advisory Partner**

## **OUR WAY discovers the Great Western Greenway in Ireland**

The 1<sup>st</sup> Interregional Thematic Workshop of the OUR WAY Project took place in Westport, Co. Mayo, Ireland on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

Partners and stakeholders travelling from Spain, Poland, Hungary, France and Bulgaria and a representative from the European Greenways Association visited Westport to learn about the Great Western Greenway in County Mayo and to share experiences and Good Practices between stakeholders.

On day 1, visiting partners and stakeholders were able to experience firsthand the collaboration and coordination among key actors in the field of greenways by hearing presentations given from businesses along the Greenway route (Dermot Madigan – General Manager Mulranny Park Hotel and Travis Zeray – Owner Clew Bay Bike Hire). They also then cycled the route from Mulranny to Newport (18kms) taking in the magnificent scenery of Clew Bay & Croagh Patrick with various points of interest along the way. Some partners even braved the elements and continued on to Westport cycling almost 30kms.

Among the delegation that cycled the Greenway was Mercedes Muñoz, President of the European Greenways Association. Mercedes said *'the Greenway is truly an exceptional example of how regions can harness the economic potential of the beauty that is surrounding us'*.





Day 2 provided the opportunity for stakeholders and partners to network with each other and learn about national, regional and local strategies to support and finance the development of Greenways in Ireland. Derek O'Neill from Department of Transport & Tourism gave an overview of the National Strategy for Developing Greenways while Conall McGettigan gave an overview of the Greenways in region and Greenways feature in the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy. Doug Corrie from Sports Ireland spoke about the different types of Greenways in Ireland and the guidelines they have developed for Local Authorities to ensure they are safe and user friendly. Kurt Lydon from Galway County Council spoke about the Connemara Greenway which is currently being developed and will be 76KM when finished Anna Connor from Mayo County Council and Fionnán Nestor from Fáilte Ireland explained how they have developed and promoted the Great Western Greenway to both domestic and international visitors which has resulted in over 275,000 people using the greenway each year and directly supports over 200 jobs and is worth over €7.2m to the local economy annually.

Visiting Stakeholders and partners also got the opportunity to present Good Practices from each of the partner regions and got to share the knowledge experience they have gained when developing greenways and policy. Mercedes Muñoz, President of the European Greenways Association facilitated the workshop and explained Good Practices examples of Greenways from outside the partnership.

For more information and updates on the OURWAY project, visit <https://www.interregeurope.eu/ourway/> and keep a look out for updates on our social media platforms.

### **Launching conference of OUR WAY project in Rzeszow (Poland)**

On 21st March 2019, the Marshal's Office of the Podkarpackie Region hosted a press conference devoted to the OUR WAY project "PreservatiOn and promotion of cUltural and natural heRitage through GreenWAYS", in which the Podkarpackie Region is a partner.

Maria Kurowska - a member of the Board of the Podkarpackie Region and Danuta Cichoń - director of the Department of Economy and Certification, at the same time acting as a project manager, have presented the details of the project implementation, objectives and activities that have been taken and will be undertaken as part of the project.

Maria Kurowska and Danuta Cichoń have informed journalists about financing of the project by the Interreg Europa 2014-2020 program, attending by six regions from: Spain, Ireland, France, Hungary, Bulgaria and Poland and the advisory partner - the European Association of GREENWAYS from Belgium, project implementation period - from June 1, 2018 to November 30, 2022, total budget of the project



(almost one million EUR) and the project budget for tasks implemented by the Podkarpackie Region (almost 120,000 EUR).



## VI European Greenways Conference

VI European Greenways Conference took place in Vitoria-Gasteiz (Spain) 4-5 of April 2019. In this conference attended representatives of OUR WAY project: Antoni Jeż - communication manager of Podkarpackie Region and Edyta Pałkowska – member of Stakeholder Working Group from Podkarpackie Region. One of organizers of the conference was European Greenway Association and Mercedes Munoz was moderating parts of this event and was speaker of few sessions. In the conference took part over 30 speakers from many countries and almost 200 participants .

Participating in this event was a great opportunity for exchange experience among the partners and participants and was excellent way to learn a lot about Greenways in many countries in Europe.



## OUR WAY – Department of Hérault

At the end of March, the regional working group met to work on good practices for benchmarking. More than thirty actors of the greenways were gathered.

From the 12th to the 14th of April, OURWAY was presented to the general public during the exhibition of nature sports at the Parc des Expositions in Montpellier, which gathered nearly 5,000 visitors. On the stand of the department of Hérault, project posters and brochures in English and French and members of the project team were present for information. Members of the project team were present to inform the public.



## **Stakeholders meeting in Debrecen 22.05.2019 (Hajdú-Bihar, Hungary)**

The 3rd regional stakeholder working group (SWG) meeting was held at the office of Hajdú-Bihar County Government (Hungary) on 22 May 2019. Participating experts and relevant practitioners covered a wide range of themes concerned. Judit Karácsonyi (OUR WAY project manager at HBCG) presented the OUR WAY project, the partnership, planned activities and expected outcomes. The good practices presented by other project partners during the Ireland workshop were also presented to the stakeholders. After the president of the Hungarian Greenway Methodology Association gave a presentation on the Hungarian situation, criteria and presented the Hungarian good practices.

The good practices of other OUR WAY project partners were deeply discussed by the SWG members and possible adaptable good practices were chosen.

After the active and useful discussion, planned further project and particularly partner activities have been presented including the topic and date of the next project meeting in Poland and the following SWG meeting in the second half of 2019.





## **Meeting with Bulgarian Ministry of Tourism**

After the First interregional workshop in Ireland, CCI Vratsa initiated a meeting with the Ministry of Tourism, which is the main policy maker in Bulgaria, regarding the implementation of the project activities.

During the meeting, the entire project, the activities as a whole, as well as what has to be accomplished by the CCI Vratsa was discussed.

The results of the workshop in Ireland were presented by CCI Vratsa. Particular attention was paid to all the good practices presented by the partners in order to be able to make an ex-post assessment of them and to choose the best practices to be implemented in Bulgaria. Also, in the course of the discussion, the different strategies, documents and ways that partners use to develop green ways in their countries were also considered.

One of the main topics of discussion was the preparation of an Action plan in the second phase of project implementation. After the discussion and analysis of the situation in Bulgaria, it was concluded that Bulgaria is rich in green ways, called "Eco-paths". Many of them are built on projects, but unfortunately a large number of them are not supported. The opportunities that this leads to are a policy change in the part of conservation and renovation of such paths, both by local authorities and by means of specific new programs on national level.

The meeting for both sides, as well as for the Ministry of Tourism, as a main stakeholder and CCI Vratsa , was extremely fruitful. An action plan was drawn up so that the preparation of the action plan began very soon.



## **Tourism and gastronomy in rural areas in Spain**

On May 3th, the project OUR WAY: Preservation and promotion of natural and natural heritage through GreenWAYS was present in Mazarrón (Spain) at the Conference on 'Tourism and gastronomy in rural areas', financed by the Rural Development Program of the Region of Murcia (PDR), within the framework of the 'Encuentros por el Desarrollo: Soy Rural'.

This is one of the projects programmed in the Participatory Local Development Strategy 2014-2020 'Territorio Campoder, growing together'. The objective is to promote networking and the promotion of integral, harmonious, endogenous and sustainable rural development of the territories.

It also aims to inform and raise awareness of the potential of the rural territory and the opportunities it offers for its own economic, social and cultural development, boost



entrepreneurship and job creation, as well as the efficient use and use of natural and heritage resources of our territory, seeking maximum care for the environment and equal opportunities.

Juan Soria, manager of the Greenways of the Region of Murcia participated in these conferences in the round table 'Hiking and boom of cycling routes', in which he had the



opportunity to explain what is the project OUR WAY: Preservation and promotion of cultural and natural heritage through GreenWAYS. At the same time, the public that attended the conference had the opportunity to learn about the activities of the project in the stand reserved for it, in which brochures were also distributed in both English and Spanish language.

## Upcoming in Semester 3

- Workshop in Poland (September 2019)
- 7 Internal meetings - inside partners organisation (1 per partner)