

3rd e-newsletter

OUR WAY

Interreg Europe



European Union
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Development Fund

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3rd Steering Group Meeting & 2nd Interregional Thematic Workshop of the OurWay Project.

Conclusions

- ✓ *Original and successful local development initiatives in the beautiful Bieszczady Mountains in Podkarpackie.*
- ✓ *Funding opportunities for tourism and greenways, linked to the promotion and management of cultural and natural heritage.*
- ✓ *Development of greenways as the perfect way to promote the natural and cultural resources of the region.*

The 2nd Interregional Thematic Workshop “Identification of financial instruments and funding for Greenways” was held in Rzeszów, Poland, on 24 – 25 September 2019, together with the 3rd Steering Group Meeting of the OurWay project.



The first day saw a visit to the Bieszczady Mountains to get to know different entrepreneurial and local development initiatives on the ground. The local panorama was completed with presentations by stakeholders and other interest groups for attendees to learn about greenways in Poland and other experiences and initiatives underway in the territory. The 3rd

Steering Group Meeting was also held at the same location.

The second day was set aside for the thematic workshop, which focused on the identification of financial instruments for greenways, with presentations from partners and stakeholders in the Podkarpackie region. There was also an opportunity for the project partners to exchange ideas and discuss financing, opportunities and limitations to greenways development and other issues of interest.

Thanks to the press conference, attended by the Vice Marshal of the region, we were able to spread the word about the OurWay project and the benefits of greenways for the territories they pass through, as well as draw attention to the potential for development in Podkarpackie. The Vice Marshal also announced the region’s unequivocal commitment to moving forward a strategy for the development of greenways as the perfect way to promote the natural and cultural resources of the region.



The director of the EGWA had previously had a meeting with Władysław Ortyl, Marshal of Podkarpackie, and department chiefs, during which the region's highest representative expressed his explicit commitment to support the implementation of a greenway strategy for Podkarpackie.

➤ Conclusions

We were given a fantastic welcome in Podkarpackie and got to know some beautiful places in Bieszczady and Rzeszów as well as the nature and heritage of the region.

In particular, we all had the opportunity to meet local people full of creativity, drive and commitment to launch initiatives of great importance for the development of Bieszczady and Podkarpackie, which have made a big impact on the territory and will inspire new initiatives.

The presentations and visits demonstrated that good funding opportunities are available for European projects, for tourism and greenways, linked to the promotion and management of cultural and natural heritage, successful examples of which have been exhibited. They can be directly managed through Interreg projects, for example, which include infrastructure funding as well as implementation by national authorities.

But to do so, it is essential to remember that **actions relating to tourism (and greenways) must be included in Regional Strategies and Operational Programmes in order to be subsequently financed by European funds. Proposed initiatives will receive no funding if they cannot meet this criterion.** It is also advisable to explicitly include **Indicative Actions** to be funded in relation to greenways within those Operational Programmes, with respect to both infrastructure creation and promotion, and all other areas of activity in which the regions wish to engage in the next period.

The project partners cited a number of limitations of this kind in relation to the development of cyclable infrastructure in the current 2014 – 2020 period. In the case of Podkarpackie, the region has not been able to invest in cyclable infrastructure, as it is not a priority in the regional development plan (RIS3). **It is particularly important to take these recommendations into account from the early stages of preparation of regional plans and operational programmes.**

It is also very important to obtain **guaranteed income for the operation, maintenance and development of greenways.** An excellent example is the French land planning tax in France mentioned by Hérault, the construction tax which enables the funding of route itinerary planning and promotion in environmentally sensitive areas.

An environment that includes people with creativity and drive, backed by stakeholder collaboration, has favoured the introduction of high-impact initiatives in the Bieszczady Mountains to the southeast of Podkarpackie in Poland. Beginning with the [Bieszczady Bicycle Draisines \(Uherce Mineralne\)](#), which has given a new use to the disused railway and achieved impressive numbers of visitors, the trend was recently continued with the [Bieszczady School of Craft](#) in the same locality, which is also showing all the signs of becoming a success, like the [craft brewery Ursa Maior](#), and the [Milling Museum and Restaurant in Ustrzyki Dolne](#).

It should also be noted how links with local artists and craftsmen have contributed to the success of local development initiatives in Bieszczady.

The social economy is another formula for revitalising local economies and encouraging private initiatives, as shown the example of the [Czatownia Café in Czarna Góra](#), linked to the Eastern Carpathians Green Velo route.

Another initiative presented focuses on collaboration with the private sector, relying on the CSR policies of companies the territory: greenways meet all the criteria to be incorporated into company

CSR strategies and receive funding, as shown in the example of the greenways in Murcia.

In all cases, **funding is closely linked to cooperation**, since the participation of both public and private stakeholders is essential for joint projects. Round tables or meetings under the name or guise that best adapts to the possibilities of the territories are essential to working in collaboration. Cooperation or governance and the link to funding, which was the subject of the 1st seminar in Westport (Ireland), was well reflected in this seminar.

It is therefore essential to have human resources with the training, the motivation and the necessary personal skills to carry out these concertation tasks. The representatives from the French department of Hérault described an example of concertation in which the plans mentioned above were developed in collaboration with other provincial departments—e.g. tourism—and with many and varied non-profit associations. Concertation is an essential task that requires interest and dedication. In the example of Hérault, one person worked specifically on enabling these cooperative agreements with stakeholders.

Public, private and non-profit sector promotion is key to making a route or a territory known and achieving a positive economic impact through tourism, and this will be the subject of the next seminar.

The seminar was concluded with a press conference which was attended by Deputy Marshal Maria Kurowska, EGWA Director Mercedes Muñoz, and Chair of the Greenways Poland Association Dominika Zareba, and which received reports in the media.

On the whole, the meeting was highly positive and comprehensive and facilitated a first direct contact with this beautiful region as well as discussion of greenways funding issues, which was the objective of the seminar. We were also able to learn first hand the region's commitment, reiterated by its governors, to the OurWay project.

The leaders of the Podkarpackie project have involved their stakeholders on site and mobilised key authorities from neighbouring regions, such as Świętokrzyskie, to disseminate the project and communicate the importance of greenways for the promotion of the territory's cultural and natural resources.



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➤ Meeting with Marshal Władysław Ortyl

The director of the EGWA had the opportunity to meet with Marshal Władysław Ortyl and the Marshal office management team, as well as a chat with Deputy Marshal Maria Kurowska.



It was an excellent opportunity to convey to regional authorities the potential of greenways for local and regional development, which is triggering their increasing spread throughout Europe. **The Marshal and the Vice Marshal expressed their explicit commitment to the realisation of a greenway plan for Podkarpackie.**

Mercedes Muñoz
European Greenways Association, Director
Advisory Partner

Credit photos: © Murcia Region; Podkarpackie region, EGWA |

Second Stakeholder Meeting in Ireland

On the 11th June, the Irish regional stakeholder group for the OUR WAY project met for the second time to discuss emerging best practices from Irish & European partner regions. The draft planning & economic strategy for Ireland (RSES – Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy) was also discussed in relation to the development of greenways in Ireland & the region. Conall McGettigan (Senior Executive Planner, Northern & Western Regional Assembly) delivered a presentation on emerging issues surrounding the advancement of greenways versus the improvement of railways and the arguments presented on both sides. Caroline McCarroll (Waterways Ireland) also gave an update on the Pilgrim Way Project which is currently undergoing a feasibility study examining the potential of The Pilgrim Way in Ireland and how a product could be created from this. The study will also look at how The Pilgrim Way will be branded. The proposed way is 350km in length with a 20km radius from South Donegal to the Shannon Estuary in Kerry.

Stakeholders from various Local Authorities in the region were in attendance along with





representatives from Fáilte Ireland, Department of Transport, Tourism & Sports and Waterways Ireland. Other topics discussed at the meeting included land acquisition for greenway development and the possibility of creating a national best practice document for same (pros and cons discussed), Planning Permission, Environmental Assessments and Financial Instruments/Funding for Greenways. The meeting proved very informative & Patrick Devine (EU Projects Officer, Northern & Western Regional Assembly) agreed to coordinate an update newsletter for the stakeholders at regular periods throughout the lifetime of the project. Stakeholders were also told about the next OUR WAY Interregional Workshop and Partner Meeting which will take place in Poland in September.

The meeting finished with a practical trip to examine closely a demo section of the greenway in Ballysadare, Co. Sligo. Most stakeholders attended this also and the visit was a great success.

Press conference 25 September 2019 in Rzeszów, Poland

On 25 September 2019, during the 2nd interregional thematic workshop of the OUR WAY project co-financed by INTERREG Europe 2014-2020, a press conference was held at which the current state of the project implementation and further activities of the project were presented.

Guests of the conference were: Maria Kurowska - member of Podkarpackie Voivodeship Executive Committee; Mercedes Muñoz - director of the European Greenways Association and Dominika Zaręba - president of the Greenways Polska Association.

During the conference, member of the Board of Podkarpackie Voivodeship Maria Kurowska emphasized that it is very important for Podkarpackie Voivodeship to participate in this project and use good practices already applied in other partner regions. She also announced making a new concept for the development of greenways routes in the Podkarpackie region.



Mercedes Muñoz presented examples of good practices in the field of greenways routes identified within the OUR WAY project and beyond, emphasizing that the implementation of such projects results in economic development and new jobs in the tourism sector.

Dominika Zaręba, president of the Greenways Poland Association, pointed out that Podkarpackie has everything that tourists all over the world need: people with passion, extraordinary landscapes, valuable natural areas, cultural heritage, great local cuisine. This creates an excellent opportunity for the development of greenways routes in the Podkarpackie region.

3rd meeting of Stakeholder Working Group in Rzeszow. Poland

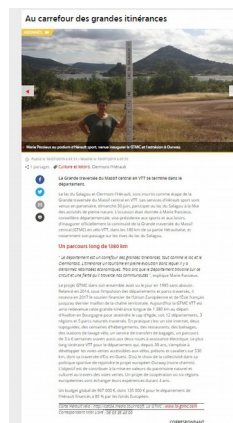
On 6th November 2019 in Marshal's Office in the Podkarpackie Region took place the 3rd meeting of Stakeholder Working Group OUR WAY project. In this meeting attended representatives of self-governments from the region, Regional Directorate of the State Forests, Bieszczady National Park, associations and foundations involved in the development of the touristic in the Podkarpackie Region.



During the workshop was presented implementation status of the OUR WAY project, presented Best Practices which were identified by all partners of the project and start preparing the Action Plan for the Podkarpackie Region. Stakeholders were informed about activities in the next period of the realization of the OUR WAY project i.a. study visits and were also informed about the realization of preparing technical documentation of the expansion of tourist itineraries based on the mileage Green Bike – Greenway Eastern Carpathians and its connections with the Green Velo trail.

Activities of OUR WAY Project in France

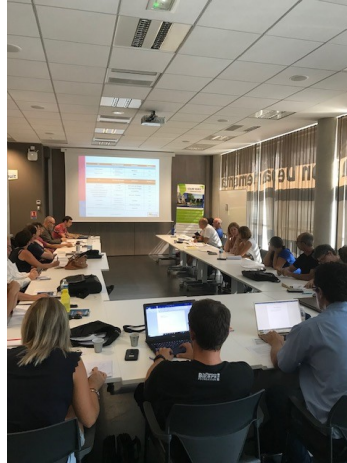
In early July 2019, Marie Passieux, Vice-President of the Departmental Council of Hérault Delegate for Youth, Sports and Recreation had the opportunity to present the project OURWAY during a press conference organized for the inauguration of the « Great Crossing of Massif Central in mountain bike and electric mountain bike » in front of the general public and partners. The regional press relayed the information on the project .



In early September, we participated in the presence of European partners at a meeting organized on our territory on the project INTERREG MED "INHERIT" which adheres the Departemental of Herault. It was indeed interesting to cross the information with the project OURWAY because the INHERIT project focuses on sustainable tourism strategies to conserve and enhance the natural heritage.



The 4th meeting of the regional stakeholders took place on September 19th which made it possible to prepare our participation in the Rzeszów 3rd SWG in Poland September 24th and 25th.



SPAIN. 4TH STAKEHOLDERS MEETING IN MURCIA REGION

On November 22, Murcia Region partner held the 4th meeting of stakeholders of the OUR WAY project in Bullas, near the greenways of the Northwest of Murcia Region. Before the meeting there was a guided visit to the Wine Museum in Bullas, one of the most important museums which cultural patrimony is promoted around the greenways. This Museum born in response to the winemaking tradition of the region. It is conceived as a center of services and activities related to tourism and cultural promotion in the Region of Murcia.



After the visit to the museum, the meeting with the stakeholders was held, a meeting that welcomed new members, so the beginning of the meeting was an update of the OUR WAY project, where we are and where we are going. The good practices developed by all the partners were explained and



the exportable and importable good practices of the Region of Murcia were thoroughly explored. In addition, what was learned in the

Interregional Thematic Workshops in Ireland and Poland was announced. All stakeholders were involved, and were informed of the next steps of the project and the importance of their contributions for the near development of the Action Plan. Next Interregional Thematic Workshop to be held in Montpellier (France) and will cover the Promotion axis was also reported.

After the meeting, another guided tour of Bodegas del Rosario was carried out in Bullas, to continue learning about the culture that surrounds the greenway of the Northwest in the Region of Murcia.

Bulgaria. 3rd stakeholder working group meeting

On November 21, 2019, the Vratsa Chamber of Commerce and Industry organized the Third Stakeholder working group meeting on the project "OUR WAY - Preservation and promotion of cultural and natural heritage through Green Roads", under the Interreg Europe Program.

The meeting was opened by Mrs. Svetlana Borisova, Project Coordinator and briefly presented the project and what has been done so far.



The meeting was attended by representatives of the local and public authorities, representatives of the non-governmental sector, representatives of the Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism, a representative of the Eco-community Foundation, as well as a representative of the Association "Bicycle Evolution".

During the meeting Mrs. Irena Ivanova and Mrs. Stella Kamenova, representatives of the Municipality of Vratsa acquainted the attendees with the current status of GreenWays at the Municipal level, as well as the impressions gained from their participation in the Second Interregional Thematic Workshop on the topic: "Identification of Financial Instruments and Financing for GreenWays" held in Rzeszow, Poland.



During the meeting, working groups were formed on the work on developing the Action Plan. There was a representative of local, public authorities and NGOs in each group. The purpose of the discussion was to identify the anchor points at which work should begin. The discussions were quite productive, with each group coming up with concrete results.



Upcoming in Semester 4

- Workshop in France (March 2020)
- 7 Internal meetings - inside partners organisation (1 per partner)
- Study visits