



Sustainable mobility for all in protected areas VCD Nordost

Transregional relations, trade and tourism have a long tradition in the Baltic Sea. With 29% of the EU-population (147 million people) and 29.3% of the gross domestic product in the EU (see HWWI future Baltic Sea Region: Potentials and Challenges, April 2011) there is a big potential for development and innovation. Urban areas in the region are in a state of high and dynamic transformation and modernization. This development requires the allocation of protected areas for nature conservation as well as the development of sustainable tourism to ensure recreation and leisure for the inhabitants.

Currently the link between protected areas and sustainable mobility is gaining an increasing amount of attention. The solution to transport problems is directly connected to climate and demographic changes, visitor management, carrying capacity and accessibility for all. Best practices for sustainable mobility are also an important economic factor for protected areas and their surroundings. Up until now, however, this topic has not been sufficiently acknowledged or dealt with in the planning process of protected area, regional or national administrations. It also remains unrecognized by tourism stakeholders.

As strategic partners of the "PARKS & BENEFITS" project the Association for Sustainable Mobility (VCD Nordost) and the University of Roskilde analysed the sustainable mobility and barrier-free accessibility of protected areas involved in the project. The first step was an analysis of international standards and best practices in protected areas was carried out. This included examining public transport systems, issues concerning carrying capacity and visitor hotspots, information material and barrier-free infrastructure.

Furthermore, interviews were conducted to find out at which level the problem of sustainable mobility is dealt with in each protected area. Field research in the protected areas and their surroundings also provided an overview and comparison of the current situation. The overall SWOT-analysis generated as a result was used to influence the Charter implementation processes of each park in terms of mobility and accessibility requirements.

To more or less extent we found conflicts between nature protection and tourism development in all partner parks. In Southeast Rügen Biosphere Reserve and Kemer National Park in particular there is a high pressure with tourism related traffic. In Matsalu National Park and Maribosoerne Nature Park conflicts with private landowners relate to the maintenance of tourism infrastructure like walking trails have arisen.

Based on the experience of the Association for Sustainable Mobility two guidelines "For sustainable mobility" and "For barrier-free tourism" were developed for the PARKS & BENEFITS project. These contain suitable practical solutions which can make the region more attractive for visitors and also save nature and cultural values. During the project it was possible to create some investments in infrastructure and promote the use of public transport through visitor information and public events, e.g. the Nature-invites-you Day in Kemer National Park. Other best practice examples concerning the aim of accessibility were evolved in Denmark, Lithuania and Norway.

Generally one can say that a common sustainable mobility strategy for protected areas in the Baltic Sea Region would be a great benefit. However, the parks involved were too far away from each other and too different to realize this highly ambitious task. A follow-up project could ensure further knowledge transfer and cooperation. Topics of a follow up project were already formulated by project partners in the evaluation report 2011.

The results of this part of the PARKS & BENEFITS project, guidelines and best practice examples can be found in a [publication from VCD Nordost and the University of Roskilde](#).