

THEMATIC TRAIL TRIGGER (THREET)

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KEY WORDS: Regional planning and development; Improving transport connections and accessibility; Sustainable Mobility; Good practices; Policies; Thematic trails; Cultural tourism; Eco-tourism.

ABSTRACT:

ThreeT seeks to improve the performance of 8 policy instruments to protect and enhance natural and cultural heritage by setting up thematic trails or improving existing ones, making them accessible to all through green modes of transport and readily available information. The ultimate aim is to maximize the eco-tourism potential of heritage sites. Partners share the challenge that sustainable accessibility to those sites is limited by lack of material links open to sustainable transport modes and of adequate information to ensure their visibility. This adversely affects strategies for a place-based, sustainable development of regional economies, since the potential of those sites is not being efficiently utilised.

To address such challenge, partners' relevant experience will be shared and jointly analysed. A minimum of 20 documented good practices will be earmarked, tailored to the specific needs of each partner and suitably fed into the Policy Learning Platform of Interreg Europe Programme. The experience learning will ultimately result in 8 regional Action Plans being drawn.

Main benefits for the participating regions are:

- Public accessibility and forms of sustainable enhancement of cultural and natural heritage improved
- New practices about green mobility, inter-modality and innovative information adopted
- Effective system for monitoring the Action Plan to assess the actual influence of its actions on regional development strategies
- Increased competence and skills of partner staff and key-stakeholders.

The project privileges a bottom up approach for Action Plan formulation with key-stakeholders being involved in all project activities. Their contribution by implementing the planned actions is expected to act as a strong multiplier lever for benefit sharing and territorial cohesion of local communities. The Stakeholder Groups established within the project will constitute a permanent forum to ensure a durable impact on to the project theme and consequent actions planned/implemented.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Interreg Europe

1.1.1 The Programme

Interreg Europe (IE) helps regional and local governments across Europe to develop and deliver better policy. By creating an environment and opportunities for sharing solutions, this Programme aims at ensuring that government investment, innovation and implementation efforts all lead to integrated and sustainable impact for people and place.

1.1.2 Its aim and opportunities

Solutions exist that can help European regions become the best that they can be. Today, the EU's emphasis is very much on paving the way for regions to realise their full potential – by helping them to capitalise on their innate strengths while tapping into opportunities that offer possibilities for economic, social and environmental progress.

To achieve this goal, Interreg Europe offers opportunities for regional and local public authorities across Europe to share ideas and experience on public policy in practice, therefore improving strategies for their citizens and communities.

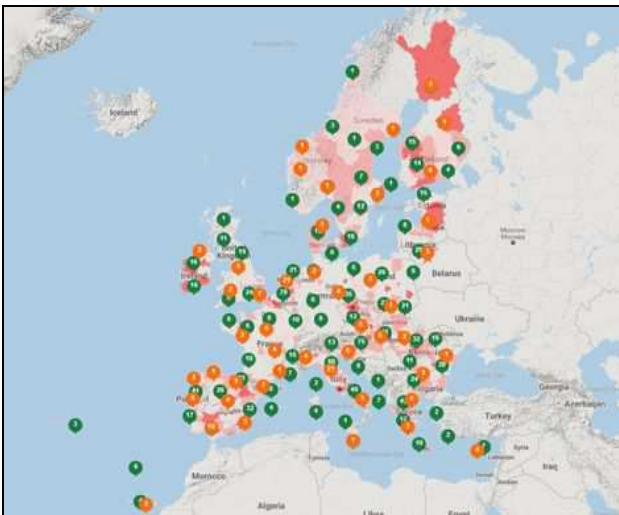


Figure 1. INTERREG EUROPE projects on Keep Platform

1.2 ThreeT project

1.2.1 Standard reference methodology. "Thematic trails" are "tourism products which line-up natural or man-made attractions accessible by different transport forms around a chosen topic or theme" (as defined in Puczko 2000; Rätz 2007). ThreeT project stems from the necessity to develop an innovative methodology for thematic trail development & management by addressing the present constraints towards a more coherent system of trail access, visibility and eco-management.

The regional level has been chosen as the reference level for a thematic trail promotion, in order to:

- help regions to cooperate better
- allow an effective exchange of relevant experiences
- share solutions to better the present policies,

with the aim to implementing accessible and sustainable trails as an important element of territorial integration within Europe. An interregional project is, in fact, one of the solutions to ensure regional exchange and jointly agree on common

definitions, standards, indicators, coaching and tutoring as well as planning, implementing and monitoring methods.

1.2.2 Pre-project activities. The starting point was to recognize that policies related to trail enhancement, related accessibility & mobility could be of mutual interest, taking into account partners' individual policies, past experience and their own territorial needs and potential. ThreeT project was initially submitted in response to Call II of Interreg Europe and was close to being funded. The Quality Assessment indicated areas for necessary changes and possible improvements.

At the European IE Conference in Malta on 23.3.2017, Livorno Province coordinated a Networking Table on the remodelled project idea, by introducing the issues of inter-modality and green mobility modes and facilities to ease sustainable access and use of trails. Contacts were established at that Table on how to involve new partners, with priority given to public regional or local authorities. Each partner was asked to identify a relevant policy aligned with the Priority 4 issue and objectives, and to demonstrate his capacity to effectively influence its policy. A project Logical Framework scheme was shared, then gradually supplemented by spreadsheets for activity identification, time-frame, responsibilities and needed resources based also on living and other cost parameters for each region. An analytical budget by partner was prepared, tailored to partner area conditions, responsibilities and specific needs. Six partners met at that Table. Regular information-sharing and discussions by internet sessions facilitated the mutual contribution and acknowledgement of contents as the project proposal was being developed. Partners held internal meetings and established contacts with national, regional or local programming authorities as well as other key-players sharing the partners' interest for the project approach. This laid the required ground work for the setting of Stakeholder Groups (STG) from project start.

ROP and other policies of the partner areas, together with the relevant experiences at hand, constituted the common platform of the project and the final partnership was set by considering a balanced geographical distribution and different GDP levels. The Application Form merged identified experiences, indications and information originated at each partner's level, with the final formulation and detailed work-plan peer-reviewed and jointly endorsed before submission.



Figure 2. Malta networking table

1.2.3 The INTERREG EUROPE 2017 call. THREET project proposal was formulated and submitted under Priority 4 "Environment and resource efficiency" and, in particular, for the field: "Protection and development of natural and cultural

heritage” of the Interreg Europe Programme (2014-2020 Programme Period) 4th Call ended on 30 June 2017. The project was approved for funding on 13 March 2018 and starts its operations on 1st June 2018. Its completion is scheduled by 30 November 2022.

1.2.4 Aims of THREEET project. The project intends to improve the implementation of regional and local policies in order to make "thematic trails" sustainable eco-tourist means for enhancing protected, accessible and visible territorial natural and cultural assets. Focused attention within the objective is paid to facilitating:

- inter-modality
- human-powered (also called “green” or “soft”) mobility
- asset visibility.

These are 3 key-factors leading to the successful development and sustained use and maintenance of trails, ultimately triggering territorial development.

1.3 ThreeT partnership

ThreeT project is implemented by 9 partners from 8 EU Member Countries.

Partner	Location	Country
1 Livorno Province	Livorno	Italy
2 Tuscany Region	Florence	Italy
3 Regional Council of Central Finland	Jyväskylä	Finland
4 Planning Authority	Floriana	Malta
5 Kujawsko-Pomorskie Voivodeship	Torun	Poland
6 Local Government of the island of Tenerife	Santa Cruz de Tenerife	Spain
7 Brasov County Council	Brazov	Romania
8 Self-Government Office of Vas County	Dunántul	Hungary.
9 Regional Management Central Hessen GmbH	Giessen	Germany

Table 3. ThreeT project partners



Figure 4. Geographical location of ThreeT partners

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Objectives

2.1.1 General objectives. The methodology developed and being tested under ThreeT project aims at establishing a European reference model procedure to:

- define, structure and promote sustainable thematic trails (TT), thus contributing to Europe 2020 tourist destination target
- set up shared tools for EU regions to improve their socio-economic conditions and competitiveness while preserving the local cultural and natural heritage
- contribute to decarbonizing transport by promoting alternative eco-friendly modes of transport.

2.1.2 Specific objectives.

- make soft mobility the third strategic pillar of a sustainable transport policy, on an equal or larger footing with public transport and motorized individual circulation, whereby pioneering related experiences successfully undertaken in other European countries in the past will be consolidated
- promote trails not “independently” but as integrated components of an enlarged trail system, capable of amplifying the benefits from a wider, sustainable use of trails. A system-oriented approach facilitates mainstreaming methods and solutions in the current and future programming periods. It may also better safeguard regional trail networks when obstructed, cut apart or made unsafe by new motorways/roads planned
- exploit transport inter-modality and soft mobility as a significant, yet often untapped potential to: improving a more diversified and integrated transport system towards natural and cultural sites / reducing other environmental impacts (air pollution, noise) / promoting public health / alleviating public and private spending on public and private motorised transportation and related infrastructural investment
- boost the role of stakeholders, as a multiplier lever to:
 - a) jointly achieve and maintain sustainable levels of territorial economic product
 - b) attain a more diversified and integrated employment growth in eco-tourism, transport and other interlinked sectors (hospitality, eno-gastronomy etc.)

From a methodological perspective, other specific objectives are:

A. Knowledge-base Development. Creating a knowledge-base in the field of valorisation of cultural and natural heritage and its socio-economic context, by identifying and documenting aspects of relevance to a specific trail theme and its associated cultural & natural heritage local assets.

B. Capacity Building. Building a thematic trail-based capacity by:

- (i) strengthening the guidance role of regional & sub-regional institutions as policy makers co-acting with stakeholders
- (ii) reinforcing public-private cooperation;
- (iii) promoting local trail-related enterprises & products by enhancing their integration and quality level.

C. Sustainability. Contributing to ensure the economic and environmental sustainability of trail-related activities. Economic stakeholders along the trail need to acquire a global understanding on how the trail system works, what is their role to play and how to satisfy travellers' expectations, while also tackling the environmental issues deriving from trail and related resource fruition.

2.2 Methodology stages

The reference methodology is outlined in this para. 2.2 and in Figure 3. The conceptual structure consists of two main Components and 4 Sections, with the first two sections split into sub-sections.

2.2.1 A. Organisation of interregional learning process

Section A.1 - each partner will acquire from his own informative sources and open data the main parameters of the regional baseline structure and will carry a territorial SWOT analysis. Policies addressed will also be reviewed and updated. The analytical results constitute the knowledge repository to facilitate downstream activities, in particular the Action Plan formulation.

This Section also deals with the structuring of permanent relations, legal and operational, among all entities involved or interested in promoting the selected TT.

Each partner shall set up at project start, therefore, a Stakeholder Group (STG) expected to:

- contribute to benchmarking the good practices identified by each partner at its local area level
- recommend good practices to be subject of exchange with the other partners and uploaded in the Policy Learning Platform
- assist in designing the Action Plan (AP)
- contribute to mobilize local socio-economic & financial resources to support the AP implementation
- cooperate in making project outputs sustainable in the medium-term

The stakeholder analysis consists of a 4 step process:

1. Finally identify key stakeholders starting from the initial list outlined in the project application form
2. assess stakeholders' interests and the potential impact of the thematic trail initiative on them
3. assess stakeholders' influence and importance
4. outline each stakeholder's participation strategy.

Stakeholders are identified by utilising a power/interest matrix to map out local stake-holding members and classify them by power exerted over project-related decisions and by interest shown towards the thematic trail initiative or one or more specific objectives/topics.

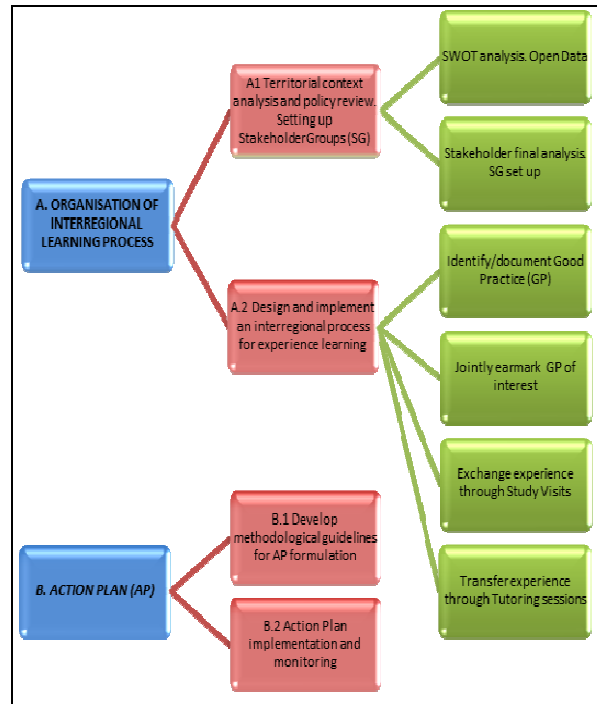


Figure 5. Methodology: logical structure

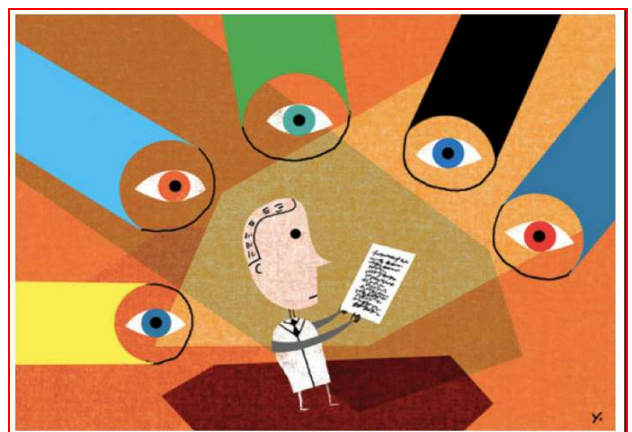
Section A.2 is at the core of the methodology and the basis for final outputs of Phase 1. Relevant policy experiences are identified, analysed, reviewed, benchmarked so that resulting most significant and relevant experiences are field-inspected, become the subject of tutored transfers and eventually become the backbone of the actions to be planned.

In ThreeT the following is envisaged:

- (3.1) Good practices (GPs) are documented and exchanged by cross-comparing similar experiences in different areas or implemented projects utilising a standard format for the document with related guidelines and a check-list to present the quality features of every practice.

Each GP will refer to one of the following macro-categories, for consistency and ease of classification.:

- 1) Infrastructure and service to/along the trail (inter-modality exchange, accessibility and connectivity)
- 2) Soft-mobility transport means
- 3) Information and communication support to trail visibility
- 4) Trail management and governance



- (3.2) The most relevant and interesting GPs, analysed by means of a logical search tool, are preliminarily earmarked among the ones documented in 3.1

- (3.3) Site visits are made to partner regions to inspect GPs earmarked in 3.2
- (3.4) Benchmarking sessions are held to confirm the chosen GPs and to possibly select at least 1 GP for each macro-category for replication/adaptation. In addition, site tutoring sessions are performed in receiving partner regions by partners that have developed a specific GP among those selected. An expert team cooperates to transfer a specific GP by establishing a replication/adaptation process to suit local conditions.

2.2.2 B. Action Plan

Section B.1 concerns with the design of targets, strategies and actions suitable for establishing, developing and making sustainable the thematic trail selected by the partner.

In ThreeT the following is envisaged:

- (5.1) TT local targets and consequent actions to be executed are agreed at STG level, having regard to the chosen policy being addressed by the partner
- (5.2) Costs and conditions for implementing the agreed actions are estimated and identified
- (5.3) An Action Plan (AP) is being developed for each TT. Each AP provides a concrete roadmap for the thematic trail enhancement in each participating region by institutional engagement and stakeholders' involvement and shall consist of:

- networking-governance-sectoral actions to be executed
- multi-year budget for action implementation
- financing lines related to the AP as a whole or to individual sectoral actions (cultural/natural resource-related services, SMEs, etc.) closely related to the policy addressed at project design stage.

Analytical tools help forecasting and ranking the expected level of economic and social returns from each action; this facilitates action classification and priority schedule, consistent with baseline information (collected in A.1) and policy resources.

Section B.2 - In Phase 2 (two-year period) each partner monitors progress of AP implementation and reports to the lead partner. Pilot actions may be supported during this period.



2.3 Outputs and Results



2.3.1 Outputs. Main outputs are those indicated in italics hereunder with their indication in quantitative terms as indicated in ThreeT application form:

1. **8** reports of territorial context assessment on partner regional socio-economic conditions, constraints and potentialities, and of reviewed policy instruments
2. **8** Protocols signed by Stakeholder Groups (SG) to ensure that SG are actively engaged in the project and stabilized in future
3. **8** study visits to examine the territorial context and practices with regard to the policy addressed by each hosting partner
4. A minimum of **20** Good Practices earmarked, validated and transferred on main aspects related to trail sustainable management, accessibility, soft-mobility and visibility
5. **8** Action Plans improving policy instruments
6. **14** interregional experience learning/exchange events organised with resulting increased competence of partner key-role staff, policy-makers and other participating stakeholders
7. **64** local seminars/workshops to facilitate territorial context analysis, GP documentation/selection, Action Plan formulation and monitoring and to ensure a coordinated synergy with interregional project activities as planned
8. **1** set of guidelines (Toolkit) for Action Plan formulation/monitoring, suitable for other planning use in the future by partners, policy-makers and other stakeholders
9. **1** Communication Plan and outputs (29 press releases, 1 project website, 1 poster, 5 Newsletters)
10. **3** procedures from ISO 10006:2003 project quality management system guidelines
11. **1** Joint Glossary established and adopted

2.3.2 Results. Main anticipated results are the following.

The main result of the project is an achieved higher performance of 8 policy instruments having been influenced, improved and/or modified. Those policy instruments are expected to effectively contribute to making visitor-driven "thematic trails" more sustainable, accessible and visible.

Other major results include:

- Improved skills and competences of partner key-role staff, policy-makers and other stakeholders in the planning, implementing and monitoring processes (Deming Cycle in quality management). Beside the main benefit deriving from experience-sharing activities, there will be the additional advantages in terms of improved governance by use of quality management guidelines and advanced search tools before and during Action Plan formulation

- 8 Local Action Plans formulated in Phase 1, monitored during implementation in Phase 2 (one Plan per partner region)
- Increased number of tourist and other visitors of natural and cultural resources moving in sustainable modes along the "thematic" trails (as per policy matching indicators set in the application form)
- Increased territorial areas related to the trail, where natural and cultural resources are being protected and enhanced (as per policy indicators)
- other results (as per policy indicators)
- Cooperation with other EU funded projects, in particular Interreg Europe ongoing projects
- Proactivity among partners with sea or inner islands (Tuscany Archipelago, Tenerife and its minor islands, Malta, Finland) sharing similar special challenges and constraints.

3. CONCLUSIONS

3.1 Innovative and Original Character

ThreeT project will combine a number of practices to support the sustainable management and accessibility of Thematic Trails by soft mobility. These practices will rely on a sustainable eco-tourism strategy to enhance the surrounding natural and cultural heritage. The innovative approach is to introduce sustainable mobility into Priority Axis 4 of IE Programme because it safeguards fragile ecosystems, thereby leading to a positive impact on biodiversity (until now sustainable mobility is generally recognized more for its impact on climate change, emission reduction, urban traffic congestion).

Another innovative feature is introducing soft mobility as the third pillar of a territorial transport system, complementing public and private motorized transport, but competitively trying to attain a gradually larger share within that system.

GP experiences will bring innovative knowledge to partners as the scrutiny of experiences is improved by the use of an advanced search tool to drill down core details frequently embedded or hidden in GP documents but not easily identified. Thanks to the project, most partners will innovate their trail-significant experiences from past Programmes.

Finally, the Action Plan methodology is innovative as the screening of potentially successful actions is here supported by Cost-Benefit, Multi-Criteria and Sensitivity analysis, so as to identify the most effective, sustainable and durable actions; this analytical support can avail to other needs/users.

3.2 Impact and added values

The project approach of establishing trails using green modes of transport supports the principle of sustainable development by recognizing that the preservation of the environment is a contributing factor to growth and employment.

In ThreeT, trails promote soft mobility which, apart from the environmental and health benefits, retains a social role by bringing people together and connecting urban as well as rural areas. It also leads to cost-savings by reducing soil/other material consumption for infrastructure and maintenance costs. They encompass the three pillars of sustainable development – economic (increased tourism), environmental (preserved cultural and natural heritage and using green modes of transport) and social (accessible to all).

Sustainable trails reduce:

- social conflicts regarding its use
- damage to soils and landscape vegetation and plants /disturbance of fauna
- damage to cultural heritage and religious/spiritual sites
- disturbance of waterways and natural resources

Transfer of practices constitutes only one aspect of the benefits of interregional cooperation having European relevance and value, whereas exchange and transfer of experience can also lead to more **structural changes** within the regions. Such structural changes are deemed to be part of the Action Plan and the medium-term perspective for its implementation constitutes also the time-based scenario for impacts and added values to materialise. Phase 2 activities will ensure monitoring of the initial action implementation for an initial period of 2 years.

3.2 Future Developments

3.2.1 Sustainability. Four Partners are regions directly responsible for policy implementation; other four partners are provincial/county institutions who will be collaborating with their managing authorities/ policy-makers. Where policy-makers are not partners, they are envisaged to be key-members of the Stakeholder Groups and thus participate in project activities such as SG meetings, experience learning events, seminars at local level. This synergistic dialogue is expected to positively influence the policy instruments addressed. For instance, even when in a policy instrument funding criteria are already set, partners being members of policy implementation/ monitoring tables will recommend priority considerations being given to public-private networking on the thematic trail promotion. Managing authorities will be invited to consider suitable adjustments to the funding criteria, so as to specifically accommodate and support such applicants. It is anticipated that such support will entail more durable results for the territorial economy.

Regions, responsible for the strategies of future programmes, are expected to consider the project results and follow-up outlooks when formulating their programmes. This may allow follow-up or longer-term actions stemming from the exchanged experience. The action screening exercise during AP preparation. will facilitate such process. STG are expected to become permanent working forums, open to larger numbers of more diversified participants, thus ensuring durable commitment and a constant focus on future opportunities.

The planning model approach utilized in ThreeT project is expected to be standardized and thus easily integrated, together with the supporting experience, for possible replication in other contexts and European/regional territories and the realisation of new capitalisation projects.

3.2.2 Experience sharing. The planning model approach utilized in ThreeT project is expected to be standardized and thus easily integrated, together with the supporting experience, for possible replication in other contexts and European/regional territories and the realisation of new capitalisation projects.

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THREET, PGI05391, Thematic Trail Trigger, Irene NICOTRA, Head, Strategic Development, Territorial Planning, Local Public Transport Department, Province of Livorno (Italy).

THREET is a project funded by the EU's European Regional Development Fund, through the INTERREG EUROPE Programme 2014-2020. The Interregional Cooperation Programme INTERREG Europe helps European regions to work together to share experience and good practice in the areas of research and innovation, SME competitiveness, Low-carbon economy, Environment and resource efficiency.

Project website: <http://www.interregueurope.eu/ThreeT>

Keep portal information: [click here](#)

