

AUSTRIA

Local development

Location

Mariazellerland - Mürztal

Programming period

2014 – 2020

Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local development

Measure

M19 – LEADER/CLLD

Funding (EUR)

Total budget 242 927

EAFRD 116 605

National/Regional 29 151

Private 97 171

Project duration

2018 – 2020

Project promoter

Regionaler

Entwicklungsverband

Mürzzuschlag

Contact

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Website

www.bikeregion-muerztal.at

E-bike charge stations generate new rural tourism potential in Austria.

Summary

The Mürz valley, in eastern Austria, is surrounded by mountains and has an extended network of mountain bike trails. It was clear that the area could become a prime destination for mountain bike and e-bike tourism. However, the necessary infrastructure for e-bikers was not at a level that would support this ambition.



The NGO Regional Development Association Mürzzuschlag, supported by the Local Action Group (LAG) Mariazellerland – Mürztal, installed a robust network of 25 e-bike charging stations providing complimentary power across the eight municipalities. Promotional activities organised within the project framework included organising a competition, publishing articles, and launching a website targeting e-biker tourists from Austria and Germany.

Results

- 25 e-bike charging stations were installed to provide power for e-bikes.
- A total of 22 mountain bike trails and three cycle paths can now be used by e-bikers. The total length of the cycling network is around 480 km.
- The new services have created an entire value chain geared towards e-bikers.
- The number of visiting e-bikers has increased despite the pandemic.
- The project can contribute to climate change mitigation as studies indicate that e-bikers drive 30% less by car.

Lessons & Recommendations

Important success factors for the project included:

- Cooperation with a company that developed innovative charging equipment that is suitable for all common e-bikes.
- The cycling region concept was an integral part of the LAG area's local development strategy.
- Intensive research and planning to understand and respond to the current trends in tourism.
- Excellent communication and built trust between all stakeholders (the association, local authorities, businesses, the LAG, etc.)

Context

About 80 000 electric bikes are sold each year in Austria, and this represents around a third of total bicycle sales. E-bike riding has the highest growth rates in summer tourism.

Austria's Mürz valley has an extensive network of mountain bike trails offering potential to become a destination for e-bikers. This could bring new commercial opportunities to the region's economy. In addition, a reliable recharging infrastructure could encourage residents to shift from cars to bicycles to provide health and climate benefits. Existing e-bike infrastructure was problematic and poorly developed, creating risks, and hindering opportunities.

The E-Bike-Region Mürztal project was implemented in the LAG Mariazellerland – Mürztal area. The Regional Development Association of Mürzzuschlag NGO was the project promoter, while the LAG provided support in developing the project, its implementation and communication, as well as its financing.

Objective

The project aimed to build e-bike infrastructure to develop new tourist services that could help stimulate the local economy and contribute to climate change mitigation.

Activities

The project activities included:

- Identifying locations across eight municipalities and their alpine pastures where charging stations could be installed (in cooperation with tourism associations, community leaders and other interested parties from the hospitality and leisure sector) and agreeing which type of charging stations to set up at each point (line, point or tower).
- Installing the network of charging stations.
- Designing a visual identity brand to represent the e-bike region concept and using it to prepare a communication campaign which included a website (www.bikeregion-muerztal.at) and a branded series of cycling sportswear.
- Production of 30 000 maps / pocket cards of the cycling routes which showed the location of the

charging stations, publishing promotional articles and reports.

- Organisation of a promotional competition 'The E-Bike Cup' in which participants competed to discover as many destinations as possible by e-bike.



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Main results

- 25 e-bike charging stations were installed to provide power for e-bikes.
- The new services for e-bikers have created an entire value chain serving e-bikers.
- A total of 22 mountain bike trails and three cycle paths can now be used by e-bikers. The total length of the cycling network is around 480 km.
- Within the first year of launching the E-Bike region, restaurants, tourism and leisure businesses along the biking routes confirmed that the number of visiting e-bikers has increased despite the pandemic.
- Encouraged by the project, two additional locations set up another two charging stations independently.
- The project contributes to climate change mitigation as e-bikers tend to drive less by car. The security of being able to recharge their e-bike anywhere along the way, motivated people who were previously hesitant to use their e-bikes.
- The project has increased the cooperative spirit of the eight municipalities involved and strengthened regional identity.
- Risk related to e-bikers using home chargers has reduced.

Key lessons

An important success factor for the E-Bike region Mürztal project was the cooperation between partners. The contractor specialises in the production of charging stations that are compatible with all common e-bike brands and enable fast and safe charging. The company received the Green Tech Award in the field of climate protection technologies.

Other contributing factors were:

Prioritising cycling opportunities within the LAG's local development strategy.

The extensive research into cycle and e-bike tourism undertaken by the project promoter to understand the trends in cycle tourism and identify the innovative charging technology.

An open and trusting communication and cooperation between the project promoter, the municipalities, and the LAG, which has been built up over many years.

“We wanted people to be able to charge their bikes where they were taking a break anyway. 25 (plus 2 private) charging stations were therefore connected to the gastronomy. As with all offers, the same applies here: They have to be easy and uncomplicated to access and use - then they will be perceived as attractive and accepted by many.”

Project manager



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Additional sources of information

<https://bikeboard.at/Board/In-der-E-Bike-Region-Muerztal-th259552>