EMASEASY MOVE-IT!

Manage and communicate a great and unique regional tourist «all inclusive product package» with EMAS

LAYMAN’S REPORT

Environmental management in the tourism industry: linking clusters approaches to sustainable destinations
The challenge

Fifty percent of international tourism takes place in Europe. Its sea shores, mountains, thousands of beaches and lakes, historic cities and towns are the most frequented destinations in the world. Tourism and travel is one of the Europe’s biggest and most rapidly expanding industries, and is expected to double over the next decade. Today Europe can claim to combine a rich diversity of cultures, languages, landscapes, nature, climatic zones, people, lifestyles, and social values together with a high standard of living, an excellent infrastructure, and expansion of free time for leisure and holiday making. This growing interest in visiting cultural, heritage and natural sites has paralleled the growth in Europe of a high level of environmental consciousness and a willingness to include environmental concerns in the daily life of both consumers and host populations. Europe has, for instance, some half a million accommodation providers that impact both the environment and directly depend on the quality of their natural surroundings. Of these, 95% are small or micro enterprises with less than 50 employees. Yet, because they are dependent on their natural location, many of them are very active and innovative in establishing and maintaining a high-quality environmental performance.

Although the rapid expansion of tourism in Europe has increased environmental threats, the corresponding acceleration of technical and management solutions to environmental problems has created better market opportunities for attractive tourism services and products. One of the challenges is to ensure that the more sustainable products are easily recognised and that the consumer is offered and then makes the “green” choice in selecting value driven tourism destinations and services. It is here that the eco-management certification programmes such as EU Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and EU Ecolabel can play a vital role. The dual function of these voluntary initiatives is to help direct travellers to environmentally and socially responsible tourism businesses and to encourage improvements and set standards within the tourism industry.

The diversity of tourism in Europe presents, however, enormous challenges for certification initiatives. Europe has far more “green” certification programmes than other regions in the world. In practice these represent a rich, but often confusing and overlapping, array of certification programmes.

The success of EMAS, EU Ecolabel and other environmental management schemes in the tourism sector depend upon efforts to increase cooperation and integration among the programmes, including mutual confidence that programmes include similar criteria, standards, and auditing practices.

In addition, the traditional ways of implementing standardised environmental management systems do not fit into the reality of typical small enterprises. Bureaucratic and financial barriers make it too complicated for small companies to apply for this type of certificate or label. Therefore, what is needed is a new generation of adapted and effective methods for implementing certification programmes simply, smoothly, and with lower transaction costs.
THE PROJECT

The aim of the EMAS Easy MOVE-IT! project was to develop and test an eco-innovative software-based support mechanism (a collective coaching and learning model) that helps to drive small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism sector towards lean and cost-effective EU EMAS and Ecolabel applications. EMAS Easy MOVE-IT! applies the EMAS cluster certification to regional tourist products or services. It clusters SMEs of a region which are all part of a value chain of tourism and form a competitive tourism service package, linking cultural, economic, ecological and social aspects with their respective added value.

The MOVE-IT! approach was tested in various types of destinations and clusters in 5 EU member states: Belgium, Germany, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Estonia.

Various collaborative efforts with regional certifications, labels or awards have been made, like the UNESCO BIOSPHERE regions, the PANPARKS recognition and the EDEN (European Destination of Excellence).

Main outcomes of the project:

» 15 clusters coached in 5 countries (Belgium, Germany, Spain, Bulgaria, Cyprus and Estonia) including 144 companies out of which 110 were certified, labelled or recognised by the end of project (June 2012).

» Vocational training provided for regional development agents and consultants (altogether 55 agents trained).

» An online platform for communication, e-learning and coaching at European level (in 6 languages), cluster level and internal level of SMEs

» Cluster management guide - information and guidance for tourism developers and agents for establishing and managing regional sustainable tourism clusters as well as tools for SMEs for implementing and integrating performance based labels and environmental management systems.

» Web-based supporting tool AVANTI that facilitates the introduction of integrated management system.
THE RESULTS

An innovative approach

The innovation of the MOVE-IT! service model resides in using the simple and practical EMAS Easy methodology in territorial clusters with specific and online guidance to reduce the internal and external transaction costs of the effort of SMEs to implement EMAS.

Through its cluster approach, EMAS Easy MOVE-IT! builds on the active participation of various stakeholders – SMEs, local authorities, regional developers and tourism agencies. Within the same territory, a multi-cluster approach links these stakeholders around the common goals of preserving the environment, enhancing economic development and strengthening regional identity. The regional cluster with certified SMEs can be used to communicate and market regional values and assets as well as tourism services and products.

The approach aims to go further than the traditional implementation of EMAS by providing specific performance indicators for social, health and economic issues while encompassing other existing schemes and labels at regional and local level (e.g. EU Ecolabel, Green Key, BIO Hotel, regional environmental approaches, etc).

EMAS Easy: A simplified method for implementing environmental management system

EMAS Easy methodology, which covers all requirements of the environmental management standards for EMAS and/or ISO 14001, is based on the eco-mapping concept, where the business is mapped in terms of both location and internal processes to identify its environmental aspects. Using simple and sequential tables and prompts, smaller businesses can develop an environmental management system and either register for EMAS or achieve ISO 14001 certification.

The environmental objectives and action plans are tailored to the reality of the company and defined according to its own abilities. This approach allows for the progressive implementation of a range of actions that also fit in the framework of the Green Key or the European Ecolabel criteria.
In the MOVE-IT! model, taking the cluster through EMAS implementation to certification is a collective learning process. The MOVE-IT! blended capacity building and training package includes various tools that were developed throughout the project.

First of all, the MOVE-IT! model comprises blended training and coaching of SMEs using cluster approach and EMAS Easy methodology. The training package includes training courses for both environmental consultants and tourism agents as well as for tourism related companies (e.g. accommodation providers, catering services, travel agencies, and museums). The trainings for environmental consultants and tourism agents cover the topics of creating and coaching an environmentally friendly tourism cluster and implementing an environmental management system in a company. The implementation of the management system is done in groups, involving several companies. Besides the onsite training the face-to-face and web-based coaching as well as online support is provided for SMEs. This reduces the cost related to coaching and also establishes a creative space to exchange good practices.

Secondly, the MOVE-IT! training package involves an e-learning platform, where consultants and regional tourism agents can be trained and tutored for coaching the SMEs. The platform can also be used as an assistant tool for coaching the SMEs.

Finally, the MOVE-IT! training package includes a Cluster Management Guide. There are seven modules in the Cluster Guide that provide information and guidance for tourism developers and agents as well as SMEs for establishing and managing regional sustainable tourism clusters and tools for implementing and integrating performance based labels and environmental management systems (EMAS, EU Eco-label, Green Key, regional labels).
The uniqueness of MOVE-IT! service model compared to other similar services and approaches:

» Collective learning and tutoring – reduces internal and external cost on consulting and certification.
» Software-based tools – simplifies implementation of EMS, data collection and analysis.
» Holistic view - integration of performance based labels and environmental management systems (EMAS, EU Eco-label, Green Key, regional labels).

Benefits of MOVE-IT! approach:

» Regional and local cooperation and competence building – involves and improves qualifications of individual members of the cluster as well as other key stakeholders, all part of the regional value chain of tourism.
» Shared knowledge among SMEs – information, best practices and benchmarking.
» Branding and marketing of the destination/region - it helps to foster a sense of regional identity and raise awareness of sustainability, regional products and services.

SME-Master (Avanti GreenSoftware)

The web-based SME-Master (Avanti GreenSoftware) helps to facilitate data collection and reporting for SMEs that implement environmental management. Avanti has been designed as a comprehensive solution, which can be successfully integrated into daily operations and business processes.

Avanti helps SMEs to collect, monitor and evaluate data on their environmental performance in a systematic way. It also can be used during the EMAS implementation to develop and monitor performance indicators. As an integrated management software, Avanti supports the integration of sustainable organization development (CSR) and the certification according to EMAS. Environmental, sustainability and business reports/statements can be created largely automatically.

MOVE-IT! website

All the information about the project and the materials developed during the project are available on the MOVE-IT! website where you can:

• Find out details about the MOVE-IT! project
• Learn about the MOVE-IT! service package
• Discover new certified destinations,
• Enroll in new clusters’ training sessions
• Discover the latest news related to tourism and environment

www.move-it.eu
THE MARKET

Considering the impact of tourism on the development of vast majority of European regions as well as the influence of legislative and policy developments, there is a real need for smart and cost effective eco-management training and coaching service for both professionals and SMEs related to tourism sector.

The EMAS Easy MOVE IT! pilot applications cover various types of destinations and different clusters in Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Bulgaria and Cyprus and as such they are a representative cross section of cultural and systemic differences. Therefore, it can be expected that the MOVE-IT! approach and service model is replicable in other regions in Europe. It will be marketed to national and international customers in the tourism sector – SMEs as potential tool users, tourism agencies, local and regional development organizations to provide support to SMEs and act as multipliers and promoters of the project’s outcomes, policymakers at the local, national, regional and European level.

The Environmental Commission recently supported the promotion of EMAS Easy all over Europe and financed several capacity building programmes to train more than 100 environmental consultants in 27 EU Member States to use the EMAS Easy methodology. This consultant network will be informed of the outcomes of the project and will play a major role in market replication.

European Added Value

The project outcomes address the shared problematic issues and market barriers raised at EU level by small businesses concerning the uptake of EMAS and the EU Eco Label and thus constituting a barrier to the minimisation of their environmental impact on the local and global environment such as the lack of human resources, misinformation about EMAS and Eco Label, uncertainty about market benefits of these voluntary tools in the tourism sector and high costs of certification.

MOVE-IT! supports the EU EMAS III and Eco Label implementation as well as initiatives of the EU Environmental Compliance Assistance Programme (ECAP), which encourage more SMEs to take up environmental management practices, to use core sector specific environmental performance indicators EU wide, and to minimise the administrative burden of compliance on SMEs.

Although the focus is on local/regional development, it is within the context of supportive European policies and action. An active effort of this project is to take on and integrate the already existing – and often EU project funded – initiatives (Travellife, EDEN, etc) and ideas into the market, that are all responding to single market needs or sector specific requirements and can therefore contribute that particular strength and innovation to form a complementary and synergic cooperation. This effort will be supported through active communication about the coherence with the EU Sustainable Development Strategy and the European Sustainable Tourism Strategy, aimed especially towards European Tourism Associations that need ecological improvement and a greener, more value driven service package to promote.
MOVE-IT! consortium

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This project is co-funded by the Eco-Innovation initiative within the European Union Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP)