



# ACCESS 2 MOUNTAIN Newsletter No.1

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## Mostviertel - mild and wild

The Mostviertel is Lower Austria's most captivating region. A flourishing, charming hideaway between Salzburg and Vienna, between the River Danube and the summit of the Ötscher mountain, almost 2,000 metres high. The delightful contrast between the gently rolling, fertile land to the north and the wild, romantic alpine country in the south inspires multi-faceted voyages of discovery, mountain adventures and fun-filled family holidays.

In terms of climate the Mostviertel benefits from both Atlantic and Pannonian influences. Fruit, wine and vegetables thrive in the mild climate of the gentle hilly country south of the Danube. In order to maintain nature and landscape, the people in the Mostviertel are highly aware of the issue of sustainability. Therefore, 3 nature parks and a wilderness zone have been established and every year in September, a high-level conference on sustainable tourism takes place in the region.

The Mostviertel has joined **Access2Mountain** in order to identify possibilities for public regional alpine transport systems near the nature park Ötscher-Tormäuer, where there is an eminent need for transport between the two valleys divided by the Ötscher. The narrow-gauge railway Mariazellerbahn, which runs through the nature park, plays a crucial role here. Possible improvements of the railway line, which is not only the longest, but also the oldest electrified narrow-gauge railway line in Austria, are to be evaluated. Such improvements will include the installation of a bicycle and/or e-bike rental system at the train stations in the Pielachtal valley as well as at the main train stations of Mariazell and St.Pölten in order to improve the offer at the well known cycle route Traisentalradweg.



## Communication Activities

The very first focus of the project has been on communication activities. For coherent internal and external project presentation, a **logo** has been designed for all communication materials to demonstrate the partnership's **corporate identity**. Further the project **website** has been designed and launched.

First arrangements and preparation work have also started for the organisation of the **mid-term conference**, which will take place in autumn in Slovakia.



## Success factors of regional and narrow gauge railways

The objective of the **work package 'Regional and narrow gauge railways'** is to strengthen small and narrow gauge railways through modal shift by introducing sustainable tourist mobility in regions with natural assets. The tourism market can contribute considerably to the revenues of regional railways, in some cases together with every day mobility and freight transport. To obtain information on how successful small and narrow gauge railways in mountain areas deal with the challenges of the tourism market, a **good practice study** on organizational and economic issues, as well as traffic planning and tourism is being elaborated by the project partner **bmvit** as a first step. With associated partners and external experts, the partnership will then develop plans for "railway tourist regions", while fine-tuning already envisaged pilot activities and supporting their implementation.

The core question of the study is how regional railways can win tourists as passengers, for example how they work together with stakeholders in tourism and what their successful advertising strategies are. Moreover, a lot of background information is collected on regional and traffic data and schemes, as well as on organization, financing and decision-making processes to identify success factors and associated risks.



## Partner Meetings

In June a **kick-off meeting** was held in **Vienna** by the lead project partner. The partners had a first chance to meet each other personally and discuss the first tasks.

In November the second **partner meeting** was organized in the **Mostviertel**, where first results and experiences were discussed and exchanged. Apart from reports on ongoing communication activities and data collected on a traffic model, first results were presented e.g. of a good practice study on regional railways. Besides the hard work, the meeting was characterized by the region's generous hospitality and a memorable trip on the regional narrow-gauge railway, the "**Mariazellerbahn**". The landscape and views of this trip proved to be an unforgettable experience in an area which was considered to be worth visiting again.

