ACCESS
Improving accessibility of services of general interest – organisational innovations in rural mountain areas

- AS priority area: Accessibility and Connectivity
- Duration: 01/09/2008 - 31/08/2011
- Project webpage
- Project on the website of the Alpine Space Programme

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Project summary

ACCESS was an INTERREG IV B project developed in the framework of the Alpine Space Programme (ASP). It involved eleven PPs from Austria, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. The partners had come together to improve the accessibility to services of general interest in sparsely populated mountain regions.

The maintenance of a spatially and socially equal accessibility to services of general interest (SGI) is a core issue to the functionality of mountain areas. However, the ongoing territorial concentration of SGI leads to a vicious circle of further deterioration in the quality of provision which in turn causes a decreasing demand of the existing services. The withdrawal of SGI has many negative consequences for the affected regions of which a reduced functionality, competitiveness and a higher amount of

motorised mobility are the most pertinent.

The ACCESS project therefore aims at improving the accessibility to SGI in sparsely populated, mountain areas. This will be done mainly by finding new forms of organisation of SGI, using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and fostering demand oriented, integrated mobility systems. To achieve these ambitious goals, ACCESS builds on a transnational approach and on participatory methodologies to assess the specific demands of stakeholders on different levels.

Hypotheses

- Coordination of sector policies to prevent exploitation of natural resources and single-sector economies
- Sensitive Alpine territory requires appropriate and diversified measures (consensus-oriented multi-stakeholder approach)
- Rural-urban partnership requires vital networks and processes
- Cross-sectoral and integrated approaches are needed to slow down impacts in rural areas
- Rural areas need to cooperate and complement each other
- Ageing population requires adaptation and offers opportunities for Alpine areas

Keywords

- accessibility
- public services
- urban-rural partnership
- governance

Topics

- unspecific
- Balanced accessibility
- peri-alpine relationship
- Developing access to information and knowledge

Results

Results of a project can be differentiated in outputs, outcomes and impacts of an intervention. Source:OECD Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management.

Outputs

Output	Category	Language(s)	Target group	Remark
Final Report	Report	EN	Policy makers, civil servants / administration / planner / scientists / specific institutions	Final results of the ACCESS project and recommendations

Output	Category	Language(s)	Target group	Remark
Regional Intermediate Reports	Report	EN	Policy makers, civil servants / administration / planner / scientists / specific institutions	Regional Analysis on pilot areas on status quo with regard to different indicators (connectivity, population density etc.).
Transnational Intermediate Report	Report	EN	Policy maker; civil servants / administration; Planner; Scientists; Specific institutions	Transnational comparison on situation in different pilot areas with regard to services of general interest.
25 implemented pilot projects	Report	EN	Policy maker / civil servants / administration/ planner/scientists/specific institutions	25 implemented pilot projects which serves as model on how to improve service of general Interest in mountain areas.
8 strategies for better accessibility to services of general interest	Report	EN	Policy maker; civil servants / administration; planner; specific institutions;	on the basis of the pilot projects, the ACCESS partnership developed 8 strategies for better accessibility to services of general interest in mountain areas.
Regionalplanung für den Ländlichen Raum - Neue Wege zur Grundversorgung in Ländlichen Räumen	Report	D	Policy maker; civil servants / administration; planner; specific institutions;	Description of new ways of service delivery in the rural area (Region Südlicher Oberrhein).
Verbesserte Erreichbarkeit von Einrichtungen und Dienstleistungen der Daseinsvorsorge im Alpenraum - Strategien und Gute-Praxis-Beispiele	Brochure	D	Policy maker; civil servants / administration; planner; specific institutions;	Description of ACCESS results.

accessibility, public services, urban-rural partnership, governance]

Résumé of project outputs

Results which are directly or indirectly suitable or applicable for practitioners / politicians and civil servants / administration:
Two results are especially of interest for practitioners / politicians and civil servants / administration

- The 24 implemented pilot projects are especially suitable/applicable for practitioners / politicians and civil servants / administration since they demonstrate a practical solution to a problem in accessibility of SGI in a representative test area in the alpine space. The

methodology implemented and the lessons learnt as well as political framework conditions are documented in the final synthesis http://www.alpine-space.eu/uploads/tx_txrunningprojects/Final_report_and_recommendations_ACCESS.pdf

- The 8 strategies on how to improve accessibility to SGI are built on the above mentioned pilot projects and include also experiences from other projects in the alpine space. The strategies can directly applicated in all regions of the alpine space.

Strategy 1: Aggregating offer Strategy 2: Alternative delivery mechanisms Strategy 3: Different types of providers Strategy 4: Improve marketing and demand Strategy 5: Improving reachability and strengthen communication networks Strategy 6: Strengthen rural-urban linkages Strategy 7: Improve Governance, Co-design and Codelivery Strategy 8: Reinforce SGI related policies

Which of the project results are usable for which aspect of SSD and which are the most relevant for practitioners / politicians and civil servants / administration?

- The 8 elaborated strategies address all aspects of sustainable spatial development: an equal accessibility to services of general interest for the entire population of a country (social), a cost efficient installation and maintenance (economic) as well as a minimal impact on the environment (ecological). The most relevant results for practitioners / and civil servants / administration are the strategies 1: Agregating the offer, 2. Alternative delivery mechaniscms, 3. Different types of providers, 4: Improve marketing and demand, 5: Improving reachability and strengthen communication networks, 6 strengthen rural urban linkages, 7: Improve Governance, Co-design and Codelivery. The most relevant strategy for politicians are to reinforce SGI related policies. Every strategy is underpinned with a pilot project. This approach increases the comprehensibility of the strategies and make them very useful for practitioners / politicians and civil servants / administration

Are there results which need further steps to be useful for practitioners / politicians and civil servants / administration?

- The Regional Intermediate Reports and the Transnational Intermediate Report display the status of SGI in the test areas nicely. However the underlying data is not accessible for the wider public due to copyright restrictions. The alpine-wide accessibility of data is a major problem for all projects.

Which kinds of stakeholders have been involved, how have their competences been used in the project and are there options for a better implementation?

The implementing partners of the ACCESS projects were mainly regional bodies (eg. Regional planning organisations). In their work they involved local and regional politicians, experts in mobility/logistics, representatives of NGO, responsables of schools, tourism promoters, Regional development experts etc. The involved stakeholders were important to identify needs of customers of SGI and to develop tailored solutions. The project partners reported in an evaluation that they should have started earlier with regional groups implementing the pilot projects. However this is not easy in the framework of an alpine space programme with a time period of three years and expecting already implementation results in the first year.

Are the results (tool, method, indicator, recommendation) directly or indirectly addressing the strategic objectives for the Alpine Space?

- Balance and equity in access to services of general interest across the Alps

This objective was the main goal of ACCESS. The project was directly adressing this strategic objective.

- A dynamic and innovative SME sector and thriving entrepreneurship

This objective has indirectly been addressed by ACCESS. By improving the accessibility to SGI it was intended to provide better production conditions for SME implantation and maintenance.

- Enhances capacities based on alpine traditions and social diversity

This objective has not been addressed by ACCESS

- Sustainable managed biodiversity and landscapes

This objective has not been addressed by ACCESS

- Sustainable resource management and production

This objective has not been addressed by ACCESS

- Shared responsibilities and fair co-operation among alpine territories

This objective has indirectly been addressed by ACCESS. The strategies take into consideration that the different alpine territories can benefit from each other. In this way it is important to establish urban-rural links that connect agglomerations with peripheric areas.

<u>What could be long-term outcomes of this project? If none, why low impact? Why high impact? What is needed to achieve outcomes in the long-run?</u>

A very important aspect is the accurate embedding of the projects into existing policies or new policies to be developed. The strategies developed in the ACCESS project have been integrated in policy strategy papers in Bundesland Tirol and in Région Franche Comté. This is the main longterm ouput. The awareness raising processes, trainings and knowledge transfer activities contributed essentially to a longterm sustainability of ACCESS pilot projects. The majority of the 24 pilot projects are still running, this is another longterm outcome. Finally, to assure longterm success, stakeholders should have a benefit out of the projects implemented; this is of course decisive for a successful continuation. In this respect the inquired ACCESS partners were convinced that the implemented projects already have a positive impact.

On the question in the evaluation form "should you start the project again, what would you change?" most PPs responded they would dedicate more time and resources to communication on the project to local population. They reckon this is the basis of success. RVSO even recruited among its partnership a communication agency to have a professional marketing of the project. It raised highly the awareness of the local population on the project. In order to get a high level of awareness, some PPs relied on public authorities (municipalities or region for instance) to grant visibility of actions and eased participation. Pilot projects whose aim was to offer a new service or improve the information about the offer on the TAs were the ones which required a lot of communication and advertising. "We needed much more communication and advertising for the mobility management than expected, at the beginning it seemed clear that our new offer is widely known in the region but we realised that only advertising and communication is needed" (quot. BLC). Innovative projects are often dealing with bringing something new to inhabitants or the targeted group. It implies cultural and behavioural changes and this takes time. This is one of the main challenges faced by the ACCESS Partners. All Partners mentioned that it is a long process and it needs a lot of communication. Even if innovative

actions bring good solutions to problems or critical situations, partners reckon they have to deal with timing difficulties. Local stakeholders (e.g. elected representatives) would like to find immediate solutions but the time to develop innovative actions is often long (average preparation time until implementation in ACCESS projects: 10 months). This is why communication and strong awareness are fundamental. Not only is the communication about the project itself essential but also raising the awareness among the people involved in the project is crucial. Convincing political stakeholders, defining clearly responsibilities and role of everyone are key elements in the implementation of projects. Especially when they are innovative, projects may call upon actors that are not used to working together. One has really to prove the efficiency and impact of the project as it may be something never done before or form new kinds of partnership. Thus some Partners needed to elaborate formal agreements between institutions to smooth the process and reinforce the stakeholders' involvement. Capacity of trust-building is often mentioned by the ACCESS partners as one of the success factors in their pilot projects. "It required a large anticipation from projects' managers to get public services involved as the pilot project may change their internal organisation or their way of working"

Outcomes and Impacts

Unlike project outputs, outcomes and results cannot be described in a standardised way. Therefore, they are listed as free text:

Achievements that could be further implemented

Theoretically the pilot projects made during the ACCESS project in the pilot areas could be extended to a larger area. However an implementation must always be justified by needs of the local population and the feasability (finances, technical approach etc.) of a foreseen activity. In the partnership it was decided - for reasons of to develop the pilot projects on a nuts 2 level.

Remaining gaps

Hypothesis 15: Ageing population requires adaptation and offers opportunities for Alpine area. There is a gap between the project results and their practical usability for SSD (in terms of the selected hypotheses): In the ACCESS project the needs and requirements of elderly people were considered and the offer adapted however more could have been done to really benefit from the opportunities the ageing population offers.

Emerging contradictions

The following contradictions can be identified in relation to the Access project:

Public policies request innovative approaches and solutions however the Access partnership encountered in some cases a lack of flexibility in existing policies, which are not suitable for atypical projects, transversal or multisectoral projects, or projects which mobilize public-private partnerships.

Synergies

- Internal and external costs of living and commuting
- Sustainable settlement development
- Regional analyses
- Toolbox for analysing mobility, settlement patterns and service provision
- Decline of services in remote areas
- Pilot action database

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