

INTERREG IVC PROJECT
„DEVELOPING SENIOR TOURISM IN
REMOTE REGIONS” (TOURAGE)



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
REGIONAL COUNCIL OF NORTH KARELIA (FINLAND)

October, 2014

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1 Drawing up the implementation plan

The aim of the implementation plan is to ensure that the results of TOURAGE project are utilized in the partner regions after project closure. The plan specifies the key measures that are taken during and after the project implementation in order to ensure that senior tourism and senior segment continue to be acknowledged and their role strengthens in regions' tourism development as a result of the project work.

At the beginning of 2012 Regional Council of North Karelia established a regional working group for the TOURAGE project consisting of regional experts on the field of tourism and ageing. Altogether 13 persons participate in the working group meetings and they represented the following organisations: University of Eastern Finland, Karelia University of Applied Sciences, ProAgria North Karelia, Regional Council of North Karelia and Karelia Expert Tourist Services. Later the group received additional members from the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment, North Karelia Enterprise Agency and Center for Innovations and Independent Living ISAK. Participants were selected based on their tourism and/or ageing knowhow. In addition, some of the group members represent good practices found from the region. The aim of the working group is to share information on the project results, good practices and to enhance the knowledge on senior tourism in the region and relevant organizations. Working group also participated in the preparation of the regional implementation plan.

Furthermore, TOURAGE project cooperated with the regional pensioner working group, coordinated by the Regional Council of North Karelia. The objective was to gain feedback from the project's target group and involve them in the project activities. The input and feedback received from the group affected the contents of this implementation plan. The working group contributed also to development of a questionnaire for local seniors by testing its draft version.

TOURAGE project organised several workshops and meetings where the implementation plan was discussed and prepared:

- Regional working group (experts) convened 4 times: 1.6.2012, 10.12.2012, 3.12.2013, 13.2.2014.
 - On 10.12.2012 a workshop was organized where TOURAGE project's good practices were dealt with. Participants discussed project partners' good practices and chose the practices/operations models that are suitable for North Karelia. As a result of the workshop the project began to transfer a good practice to the region.
 - The meeting on 3.12.2013 introduced the outline of the implementation plan. Participants discussed the topic and agreed on the following steps in the preparation process.

- On 13.2.2014 the meeting discussed the draft of the implementation plan and the members commented on its contents. The implementation plan was updated according to the received comments.
- On the following days TOURAGE participated in meetings of the regional pensioners' group that is coordinated by the Regional Council of North Karelia: 17.8.2012, 26.9.2012, 5.12.2012 and 7.2.2013.
 - On 26.9.2012 the regional pensioners' group tested the survey questionnaire aimed at seniors and gave feedback on how to develop it.
 - A workshop dealing with good practices was organised on 5.12.2012. During the workshop participants discussed the good practices of TOURAGE partner regions and chose the ones they found the most interesting. As a result of the workshop, the project received important information on the activities and themes that interest seniors and also on the challenges they are facing. In addition to this, the participants gave suggestions on how to improve the region's tourism offer so that it would better serve for senior citizens and tourists.

1.1 Description of the project

The project has grown out from the idea that although demographic change brings many challenges it can also create opportunities in regions. Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in Europe and relatively remote regions have both a lot of unexploited and unknown development potential in this regard. The project seeks to identify good practices on developing tourism possibilities for the growing segment of elderly travelers.

The results gained in this collaboration will be essential instrument to communicate to the rest of Europe. By means of the results a "Senior Tourism Model" can be created and enhanced. They also offer tools for the improvement of Regional Senior Tourism Policies. The overall objective of the project is to enhance regional economy through the development of senior tourism and to support active and healthy ageing. The project aims to enlighten the responsible personnel of regional authorities, decision-makers and politicians in the field about the challenges and benefits of senior tourism, its future and trends and above all good practices exchanged and deployed.

The project runs from January 2012 until December 2014. It is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund and made possible by the INTERREG IVC programme. The project consortium consists of 11 organisations from 9 different EU member states. The twelfth partner, North West Regional Development

Agency from Romania, had to opt out of the project at the end of 2012 due to internal problems in the organization.

Partners: Regional Council of North Karelia (Finland), Bourgas Regional Tourist Association (Bulgaria), Region of East Macedonia and Thrace (Greece), Lake Balaton Development Coordination Agency (Hungary), Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County Regional Development and Environmental Management Agency (Hungary), West Regional Authority (Ireland), Vidzeme Planning Region (Latvia), Association of Polish Communes of Euroregion Baltic (Poland), Podkarpackie Region (Poland), County Council of Granada (Spain), Regional Development Agency of the Prešov Self-Governing Region (Slovakia), North-West Regional Development Agency (Romania, partner until the end of 2012).

1.2 Senior Tourism in North Karelia

As the Regional Development Programme of North Karelia defines tourism is one of the most important trades and development areas in North Karelia. The registered overnight stays have risen during the last few years topping half a million overnight stays for the first time in 2013. During the forthcoming programming period the region invests in strengthening the competitiveness and customer-oriented supply of services in tourism centers, expanding year-round tourism offer, promoting theme and event tourism, developing electronic tourism marketing and sales and increasing the collaboration in the field of tourism across the regional borders and with the Republic of Karelia.

In the Regional Development Programme of North Karelia 2014 it was stated that one of the most significant foci for development are differentiation from others, creating the right products and range of services and their marketing to a targeted customer segment. In other words, tailor-made products and services should be offered to different groups, such as domestic and foreign travelers, families with children and seniors. Taking the senior segment systematically into account in the region's tourism development is a fairly new idea and the region offers only some travel services that are directly aimed at seniors. Although no specific measures have been taken for promoting senior tourism, majority of the region's tourists are domestic seniors. On the basis of this it can be concluded that the region is attractive from seniors' perspective. Therefore, TOURAGE project is a natural continuum to the definitions of policy stated in the regional programmes, because there was a need to map the possibilities of development regarding senior tourism. Possibilities of the region have not been fully exploited although the region has competences in the field. Senior tourism development continues also after the project (see Tourism Operational Programme of North Karelia 2014-2020).

Older age groups are strongly represented in the region’s demography whereas the age groups that were born after 1970 are comparatively small. As throughout Finland, ageing is one of the most significant development challenges in North Karelia. For this reason, solutions, service models and know-how relating to the ageing population have been developed in the region already for years in different areas of life. This competence in ageing can be utilized also in new areas of know-how.

From international perspective, travelers over the age of 55 are a rapidly growing group in the forthcoming decades. This should be taken into account also in the development of tourism in North Karelia. In addition to domestic seniors, the national trade, internationalization and investment development organization in Finland *Finpro* estimates that the international markets for Finnish tourism industry can be found from Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Japan. Also the outbound trips of Asian and especially Chinese travelers are assumed to increase notably.

The share of foreign travelers out of the registered overnight stays in North Karelia was approximately 18 per cent in 2013. Most of the region’s foreign travelers come from Russia, in 2013 around 60 per cent of the foreign tourists who registered overnight stays in North Karelia were Russian. The amount of Russian tourists is expected to grow if the possible visa-free regime will be adopted. (Tourism Operational Programme of North Karelia 2014–2020). In addition to Russia, North Karelia receives foreign tourists also from Central and Northern Europe (table 1).

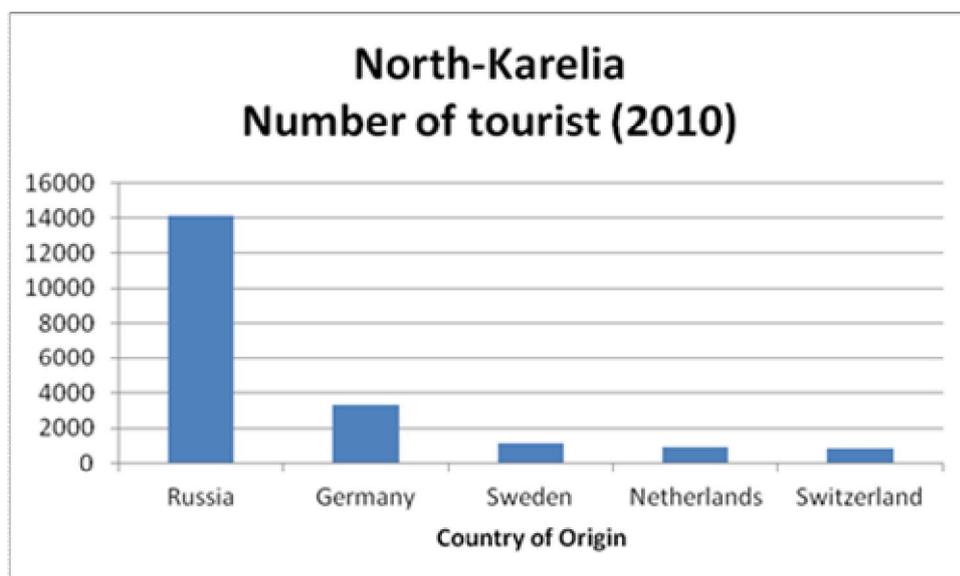


Table 1. Number of foreign tourists in North Karelia in 2010.

Domestic tourists are clearly the biggest group of travelers in North Karelia. Finland is ageing rapidly which means that the demand for tailor-made products and services that are destined for seniors is increasing strongly. Travelling within the region of North Karelia is also popular among seniors. A survey on the service needs in North Karelia shows that there is a call for services that are designed for the ageing population. This will most likely be reflected also in travel services. (Table 2)

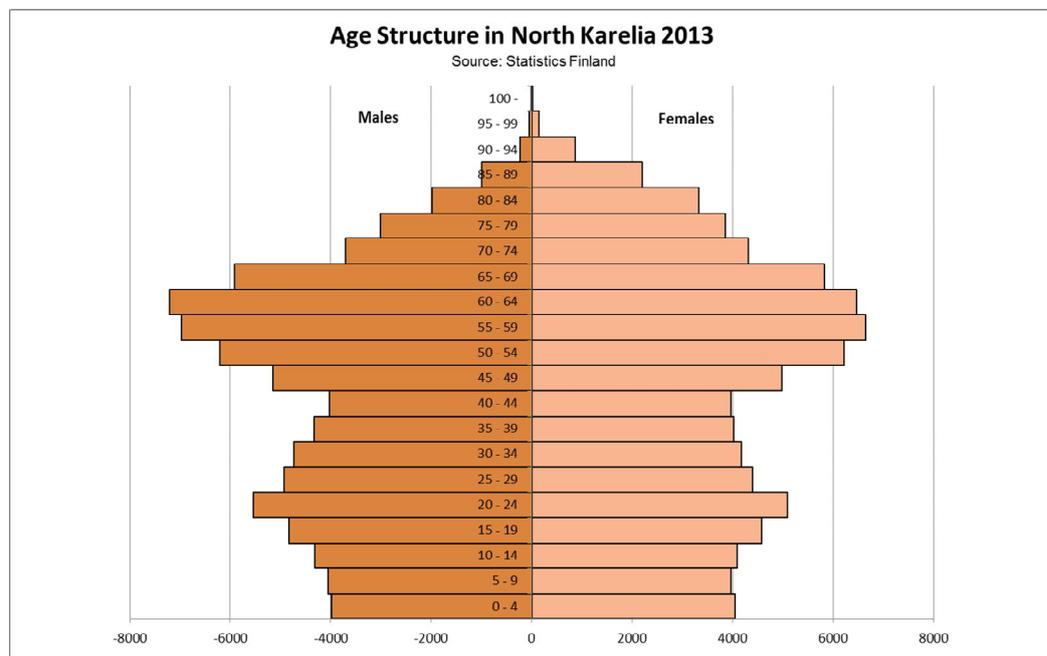
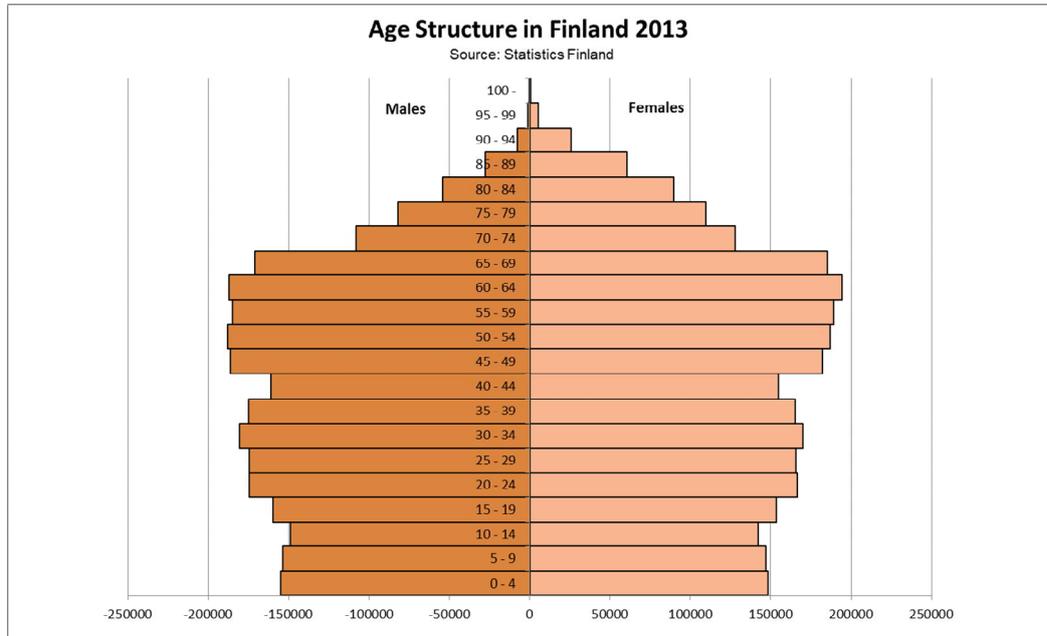


Table 2. Age structure of population in Finland and North Karelia in 2013.

When compared to other project regions, the number of travelers in North Karelia remains moderate (table 3). In 2010 the region was visited by approximately 267 000 tourists who spent at least one night in North

Karelia. In 2013 the registered overnight stays reached the number of 500 000 for the first time (Tourism Operational Programme of North Karelia 2014–2020).

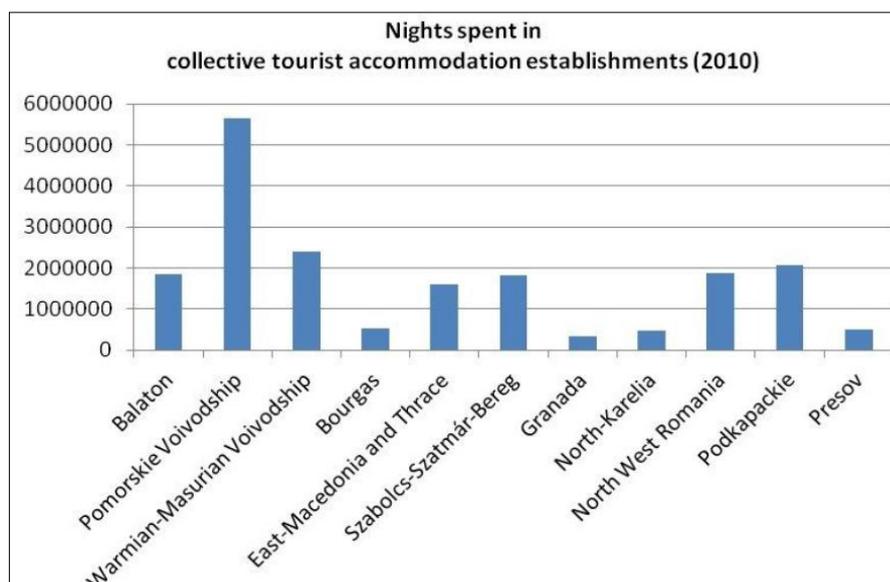
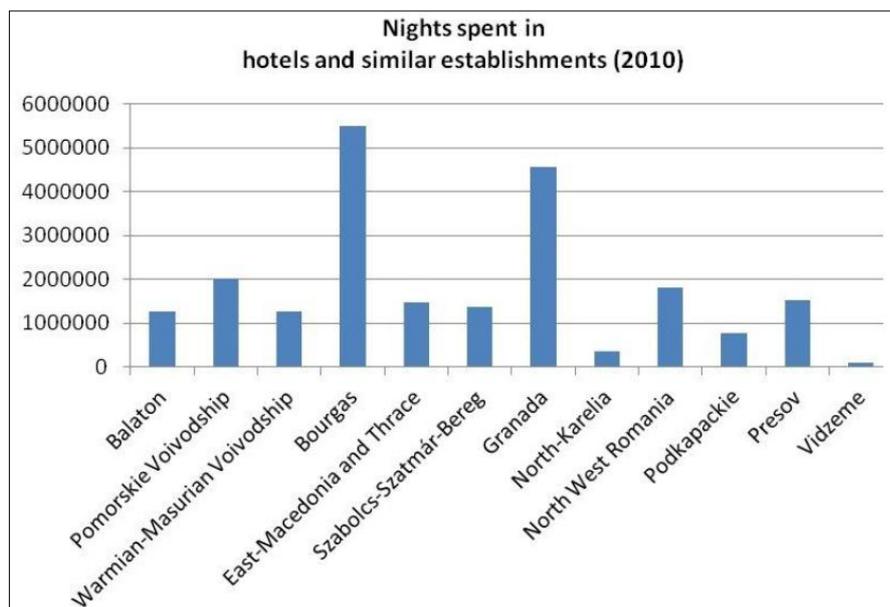


Table 3. The number of tourists' overnight stays in North Karelia is lower than in many other project regions.

According to the SWOT analysis (table 4) that was drawn up in the regional working group during the project, the strengths of the region from the perspective of senior tourism are nature, silence and safety. There are several destinations in North Karelia that could interest senior tourists. In addition, closeness to the Russian border was seen as one of the region's strengths. The possible visa freedom could increase tourism flows in the future. International tourists could be interested in cross-border tourism products and packages. Viewing accessibility as a set of broad-spectrum solutions and removing travel barriers were

considered as both strengths and opportunities. Weakening transportation connections both within the region and to or from the region were seen as threats. Securing air traffic is in a significant position if the region wants to attract international senior tourists to North Karelia which is otherwise difficult to reach, for example, by bus. In addition, it was considered as a threat if regional actors do not respond fast enough to changes in the travel industry.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Clean air, silence, tranquility Forests and waterways, public right of access to the wilderness (freedom to roam) Safety Accessible (nature) products Ageing knowhow in many fields Four distinct seasons (potential in development of off and low season products) Potentially interesting attractions e.g. nature, regional traditions, (Karelian)culture, history, war history Diverse cultural offering throughout the region Local food and natural products e.g. berries and mushrooms Diverse research and development in tourism Closeness to the Russian border Skilled entrepreneurs and service providers VisitKarelia.ru (website for marketing the tourism services of the Republic of Karelia and North Karelia)	Lack of knowledge on the potentials of senior tourism, target group has not been taken into account sufficiently No direct marketing for the senior segment, insufficient promotion especially in international markets Heterogeneity of the target group Not enough suitable door-to-door packages High price level compared to several other countries High travel costs to the region Long distances between attractions (increases the costs) Lack of transportation possibilities to and within the region Small enterprises and lack of networking Shortage of subsidized holidays for seniors Seasonality; high season in summer, less travelers during other seasons Attitude towards senior tourism, prejudice (including target group's attitude)
Opportunities	Threats
Low season packages and marketing, reduced prices for seniors International cooperation and tourism exchange Accessible flow of information and services (complete accessibility), accessibility as quality criteria Emphasizing the local special characteristics (e.g. Karelian culture) Increase of demand in national and international markets Successful marketing for the target groups Recognition of the main market areas Analysing and better understanding of the needs of senior tourists Wide domestic markets Identification of international markets More targeted product development, increasing marketing More engaged and interested entrepreneurs Russia as a neighbor - cross-border products for international senior tourists Visa freedom Improved economic status of elderly people Increased life expectancy	Effects of economic recession to travel habits Not reacting fast enough to the potential markets; others react faster Lack of understanding of the needs and interests of this segment, "wrong" products Lack of interest to develop senior tourism sector Competition with other similar regions Not finding own strengths and unique products Lack of networking between regional actors Weaker transportation connections, it becomes difficult to travel to the region if e.g. the airport is closed down

Table 4. SWOT analysis on senior tourism development in North Karelia.

2 Good practices

2.1 Good practices in North Karelia

Regional Council of North Karelia has identified several good practices relating to senior tourism in their region. Five of these good practices were selected as the region's good practices and were presented to other project partners during the kick-off meeting and study visit in North Karelia (March 2012) or during other project meetings at a later stage of the project.

One of these good practices is Koli shuttle taxi which is a public transport service operating daily between Koli National Park and the city of Joensuu. Koli National Park is one of the main tourist attractions in the region, but due to poor public transport connections it has been difficult to reach without a private car. Koli Shuttle Taxi is the only affordable public transport to the national park from Joensuu. In particular small tourist companies find the shuttle service very valuable since it increases the amount of tourists and other visitors in the area. For seniors and other customers, it is an easy, carefree and accessible means of travelling. Shuttle taxi serves customers individually and it transports them to their wanted destination in the Koli area or in the city of Joensuu (railway station, airport, market square, central hospital). Koli Shuttle Taxi can be booked and paid online. Lake Balaton Development Coordination Agency (Hungary) has evaluated the possibility to transfer this model to their region especially focusing on transportation between main tourism attractions and hotels in their region.

Accessible nature tourism project is another good practices relating to senior tourism in North Karelia. The aim of this project was to develop services and operational environments for companies that are specialized in nature tourism in North Karelia and to provide nature experiences for everyone, including senior citizens, people with disabilities and families with children. The project created guidelines for evaluating, instructing and classifying accessible nature tourism and published a guidebook that will help nature tourism enterprises to better take into account specific customer groups. One of the project's target groups were seniors. Vidzeme Planning Region (Latvia) has transferred this good practice to their region in 2014 by starting to make their nature trails more accessible.

Nature and wellbeing tourism were central themes also in the Fond of the Forest project. This project developed a range of wellbeing tourism products highlighting the special characteristics of Ilomantsi (municipality in North Karelia) for domestic and international travelers. The products are based on forests,

the biosphere reserve and local Karelian culture and have been tested with different customer groups. Among these products is "Bear hunt feast" which is based on Finnish-Ugric traditions and depicts a ritual connected to bear hunt. Other products developed in the project are "trip to the forest for (grand)parents and (grand)children" and "cultural nature tour in Puustila scenic farm". Senior travelers have been one of the target groups of wellbeing tourism development because they are interested in active nature tourism, silence, wellbeing and health services. Region of East Macedonia & Thrace (Greece) has identified the need to develop further wellbeing tourism in their region that combines nature and cultural heritage and they could use ideas of this good practice to develop this theme.

Furthermore, internationally and nationally recognized Karelia à la carte has been chosen as one of the region's good practices. This network was established in 1991 and it consists of North Karelian restaurants, tourism companies, food enterprises and catering and conference service companies. The partner companies use local products and services and are committed to follow the rules and values of the network and fulfill its quality requirements. The network organizes also culinary tours that include cultural activities, gastronomy and learning new things. During these excursions travelers taste local delicacies, learn about local traditions, visit attractions and companies that are part of the network and bake for example Karelian pies. These tours can be customized according to customers' wishes and can be built around different themes. Majority of the people taking part in these tours have been seniors. Region of East Macedonia & Thrace (Greece) has identified culinary tourism as one of their strengths and with the help of this good practice they could strengthen the regional cooperation and visibility. Regional Development Agency of Presov Self-governing Region (Slovakia) has interest to develop senior tourism products based on this good practice and Bourgas Regional Tourist Association (Bulgaria) is interested in developing their Wine Road concept based on this model.

At the end of 2013 Regional Council of North Karelia discovered a new practice relating to senior tourism in North Karelia. This practice is organised by Eastern Finland Sports Institute (ISLO) and is called sports and wellbeing holidays for seniors. For some year ISLO has organized holiday trips to different locations. These holiday trips last usually seven days and they include different kinds of guided sport activities, such as Nordic walking, water gymnastics, Frisbee golf and Pilates. The holiday trips are tailored to the participants' interests and are suitable for everyone regardless of their fitness level or age. This practice increases the wellbeing of senior travelers and helps them to maintain their social relationships. This good practice has raised interest among the TOURAGE partners but also among other actors. Regional Development Agency of Presov Self-governing Region (Slovakia) has interest to develop senior tourism products that combines

tourism and sports based on this good practice. This good practice is stated as a good practice in the publication of [Cubitus project](#) "Senior Tourism Handbook" (not published yet). Also partner Border, Midland, and Western Regional Assembly (formerly: West Regional Authority) from Ireland has mentioned this GP in their "Study of Outdoor Recreation in the West (2014)".

In addition to the abovementioned practices, the Regional Council of North Karelia has presented some additional good practices to other project partners. These practices have been found interesting and some regions have considered transferring them into their region. Among these good practices are mobile guides created by the TG4NP project for Northern Periphery that exploit the latest mobile and web technologies. The aim of these guides is to enhance the experience of travelers in tourist resorts and they include text, sound, pictures and videos. Another good practice presented to project partners is the regional welfare programme that was compiled by a group of experts in the welfare sector. Therefore, it represents the common will of the regional actors in wellbeing. The aim of the programme is to coordinate regional project funding in welfare sector, guide municipal welfare strategies, increase cooperation between regional welfare actors and raise knowledge of the welfare differences between municipalities.

2.2 Transfer of good practices

2.2.1 Marketing and offer for seniors

Lack of targeted marketing was identified as one of the weaknesses during the regional workshops and meetings with the experts and target group. Therefore together with the regional tourism bureau Karelia Expert Tourist Services Ltd. the Regional Council of North Karelia within the TOURAGE project has transferred parts of a good practice that facilitates the marketing of senior tourism services and awareness of the available services. This practice was presented to the project partners by the Irish organization West Regional Authority (Border Midland and Western Regional Assembly 1.6.2014 onwards). The Golden Years holiday trips and their marketing in different travel websites, such as Golden Ireland (www.goldenireland.ie) and Discover Ireland (www.discoverireland.ie), are good examples of this practice (internet based marketing and branding). The holiday trips are made for the over 55 year-old travelers and the websites list a range of discounts on Irish hotels, visitors' attractions and B&Bs. In addition to these, the Golden Ireland website contains information on holiday activities in Ireland that are suitable for senior tourists. Furthermore, Golden Ireland publishes a brochure on its senior discounts and other activities.

Since there was no inclusive information on North Karelia's tourism services and discounts that are suitable for seniors there was a need to establish a portal that lists and markets region's tourism attractions, services, activities and discounts for the senior travelers. The objective of the website is to showcase tourism related products which take into consideration the needs of aged travelers and/or correspond with the interests of the customer segment in question. In addition, the website can encourage service providers to develop services and discounts for this particular target group and it creates a positive image of North Karelia as an "age friendly" region.

Together with the Karelia Expert Tourist Services, the TOURAGE project established a holiday tips site for seniors under the theme of "Your Vacation" on www.visitkarelia.fi website that markets the region's tourism and services. Suitable products and attractions for seniors were searched for with the help of Karelia Expert Tourist Services. Also the results of the senior tourism survey implemented by TOURAGE project and discussions with interest groups contributed to the process. The holiday tips for seniors have been divided into the following categories: accommodation and programme services, activities, sights, events, doing and learning, holiday packages, transportation and senior discounts and offers. Karelia Expert Tourist Services updates the website on a regular basis.

There are three language versions available of the senior section: Finnish, English and Russian. In the future it would be important to translate it into German because the region will intensify its marketing and sales activities in the German-speaking Europe (Tourism Operational Programme of North Karelia 2014-2020). However, it is planned that the entire website www.visitkarelia.fi will be translated into German in the future. The next aim is to market the website and to find tourism entrepreneurs that would like to market their existing products or develop new ones for senior travelers. These actors are reached through Karelia Expert Tourist Services or TOURAGE project. It is also important to map what kind of senior discounts and offers different service providers sell and include information on the accessibility of services and attractions in the website.

The transferred good practice will remain as part of the VisitKarelia.fi website even after the end of 2014. From 2015 on developing and maintaining its contents and operations model will be part of Karelia Expert Tourist Services' tasks. As it has been stated in the Tourism Operational Programme of North Karelia 2014-2020, marketing and sales of senior tourism are part of Karelia Expert Tourist Services' responsibility, which ensures the development of the portal also in the future. The portal has been put together in 2013 and 2014. The contents of the website will be further developed. Activities:

- Informing regional actors and entrepreneurs about the website (meetings, press releases etc.).

- Collecting suitable products and travel information in collaboration with Karelia Expert Tourist Services and through its regional travel information centers (e.g. accessibility, transportation and connections, offers, language issues, safety, health care and doctor's services...). Utilizing the materials and surveys that have been collected during the project.
- Marketing and reaching travelers. Marketing the website through VisitKarelia newsletter and, if possible, preparing a brochure/press release that informs entrepreneurs about the senior section. Karelia Expert Tourist Services is responsible for marketing tourism services to seniors (e.g. senior associations).
- Karelia Expert Tourist Services continues to maintain and develop the website after the project closure.

2.2.2 Other openings

In addition to the abovementioned practices, there are many other good practices in the TOURAGE partner regions that could be transferred to North Karelia. For example, the region of Prešov in Slovakia has developed tourism products based on astronomy (Carpathian Sky – development of tourism products based on astronomy in the region of the Slovak-Polish border). Similar products could also be developed in Jakokoski observatory that is located in North Karelia. At the moment the registered organization for amateur astronomers, Seulaset, organises guided tours and presentation in the observatory. These could be suitable products also for senior tourists as it was discussed, for instance, in the regional pensioners' group. However, these activities should be made more visible through marketing in order to make them known within a wider audience. Different tourism packages that utilize the existing services of Jakokoski village (e.g. restaurants, accommodation) and competences of the village community could be built around the observatory and its activities. These packages should also include transportation. Activities could be funded for example through Leader programme.

The region of East Macedonia and Thrace, Greece, has tourism products connected to bird watching (Ecotourism in the River Evros Delta and Dadia National Park). These products could provide ideas for tourism development in North Karelia. There are several bird watching towers in the region of North Karelia that could be used for tourism purposes. For example, the bird-watching tower in Noljakka district in the city of Joensuu would be suitable for travelers who want to spend time in nature and observe wildlife near the urban environment. There are good opportunities for bird watching also in Central Karelia. Promotion of tourism that is based on bird watching has already started in North Karelia. The Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment has granted funds for a preliminary nature tourism project called "Luontomatkailu lentoon" which is coordinated by the environmental protection association in North Karelia (Pohjois-Karjalan luonnonsuojelupiiri). The aim of this project is to examine if nature tourism entrepreneurs in North Karelia are interested in including nature attractions connected to bird watching in

their business activities. Furthermore, it aims to introduce entrepreneurs with regional attractions that are suitable for bird tourism. The objective is to find out if there is a need for a follow-up project that would develop and productize bird tourism packages. Senior tourism possibilities are highlighted in the project's steering group through the representative of the Center for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment. Furthermore, TOURAGE project's materials will be forwarded to the project and a meeting will be arranged where these two project's discuss their activities and cooperation possibilities.

The regions of Burgas (Bulgaria), Prešov (Slovakia) and Warmia-Mazury (Poland) have presented practices where village communities have created tourism attractions and products on different themes (Walks through the living Spiš, Slovakia/Places with the Soul – Partnership of Thematic Villages, Poland). For example, the Bulgarian village Brashlian offers accommodation, local food and activities for tourists (Natural Park Strandzha). Majority of the service providers are senior residents of the village. The activity is coordinated by a tourism association established by villagers. Also villages in North Karelia could make tourism products that are based on local traditions. The CULTrips project and the friendship village activity between the villages of Kiihtelysvaara (Finland) and Geresdlak (Hungary) have contributed to village tourism in North Karelia.

In addition to these, the regional feedback survey revealed that North Karelian seniors are interested in learning new things and like nature tourism. For this reason, they could be interested in herbal classes or classes where they learn about wild plants or gardening. The botanical garden Botania in the city of Joensuu could be a potential service provider for these activities in North Karelia. TOURAGE project has discussed with Botania about the possibilities. Examples of similar practices can be found from the region of Vidzeme (Latvia) or from Podkarpackie (Poland) where an accessible "Sensual Universal Garden" has been developed.

A Nordic walking center around Lake Myczowce in Poland which was one of the stops during a study visit in Podkarpackie turned out to be a good practice that could be easily transferred also to North Karelia by marking Nordic walking routes and offering Nordic walking sticks to customers. Sticks can also be helpful for aged travelers during hiking both in summer and winter, consequently, increasing travelers' safety. The popularity of Nordic walking is increasing in Central Europe. This good practice can be utilized, for example, in village tourism and even in challenging terrains in the Koli National Park.

Also the Warmia-Mazury Senior Games event which is organised in Poland is applicable to North Karelia. Relevant realizer could be the Eastern Finland Sports Institute (ISLO) and the games could be organized

during the Biathlon World Cup in Kontiolahti when the focus could be on winter and indoor sports. This way the region could distinguish itself more strongly as a region of event tourism and a promoter of sports and healthy lifestyles. According to the project's survey, seniors are interested in light physical activities, thus, there could be more activities relating to them. For example, ISLO has competence in organizing physical activities for seniors, they offer accommodation services and wish to develop the use of Mehtimäki area in the city of Joensuu.

3 Target group surveys implemented in the project

3.1 Travel patterns, barriers and motivations of North Karelian seniors

In order to receive user oriented knowledge of the needs of senior tourists, TOURAGE project developed a feedback survey for old age pensioners which revealed the travelling patterns, barriers and motivators (push and pull factors) of senior tourists. Each partner region collected data for the survey during autumn 2012 and spring 2013. All in all, 1 704 seniors from 9 EU member states replied to the survey. In North Karelia the survey was implemented in October 2012 and, as a result, 183 responses were received. Each partner region was expected to collect a minimum of 150 answers.

The project-level survey indicated that one third of senior tourists travel usually abroad. This shows that, in addition to domestic markets, international senior tourism offers opportunities to grow sales and develop regional economy. From North Karelia's perspective Ireland and Spain could be the most potential market areas out of the TOURAGE partner regions. Due to Finland's high price level it might be challenging to attract travelers from other partner regions that have lower living standards.

The survey conducted in North Karelia revealed that the region's seniors travel almost as often abroad as in their home country. The most popular destinations for outbound holiday trips were Estonia and Spain. During the most recent holiday trips only a few of the respondents had travelled to Russia, although it is bordering the region of North Karelia. Possible visa-free regime could change this behavior in the future providing that the other requirements and criteria are fulfilled. Also cross-border tour packages might increase the number of senior travelers to and from the Republic of Karelia. Furthermore, a new website, VisitKarelia.ru, which markets the tourism offer of the Republic of Karelia can increase the amount of North Karelian travelers in the region, because it is a convenient channel to find information on different tourism opportunities.

According to the project-level survey, senior tourists travel throughout the year, but most often in summer and less frequently in winter. However, there were some regional differences in the responses. For example, North Karelian seniors travel usually in autumn and the least favorable season for travelling is summer. It should be noted that the differences between travelling seasons are slight both in the project-level survey and the one conducted in North Karelia. Since senior travelers travel in every season, tourism enterprises could develop low season products and services that are suitable for this target group and, consequently, alleviate the seasonality of the tourism industry.

The project's survey shows that personal experiences, family and friends are the most important sources of information for seniors when they are making plans about their holiday trips. They do not usually look for information from media (e.g. newspapers, radio and television), social media (e.g. Twitter, Facebook) or internet. Like the other partner regions also North Karelian seniors do not often rely on the electronic media when making travel plans. Preferred information sources for North Karelian seniors are their own experiences, friends, travel agencies and non-commercial guidebooks and brochures. These results suggest that there is still demand for printed materials.

According to the project-level survey, the most significant travel barriers for the respondents turned out to be financial reasons, health problems, lack of time, uninteresting supply and lack of travelling companion. These same barriers came up also in the responses of North Karelian seniors. However, from North Karelian senior's perspective concern over safety in a destination was a slightly more significant travel barrier than lack of time. According to the responses, senior tourism could increase if we could find ways to decrease financial barriers. Inexpensive travel services or discounts could be offered to seniors during low season or weekdays that are less busy (compare with Golden Years offers in Ireland). In order to ensure that the supply is interesting for seniors, tourism products should be developed in cooperation with the users. Access to health services and accessible solutions in infrastructure, services and transport connections can, in turn, increase sense of safety in destination. In order to encourage lonely seniors to travel, new modes of travelling should be developed. Holiday trips that different associations organize for their members could be a solution for this.

According to the survey, senior travelers from the partner regions value nature resorts and destinations that are safe and within good transport connections. Furthermore, they like to travel to places that have historical sites, high-quality services, high-grade accommodation, low prices and local culture. On the other hand, doing sports, snow, making handicrafts, dancing and camping were the least favored activities or attributes in a destination. The survey implemented in North Karelia shows that the region's senior tourists

like similar things as the seniors in other partner regions: products connected to nature, culture, history and learning are particularly appealing. Other significant pull factors were high-quality services, safety and good transport connections.

3.2 Survey for foreign senior travelers

As an extra activity, all TOURAGE partner regions have conducted a feedback survey for foreign seniors travelling in their region. The content of this survey was similar to the local senior questionnaire. The Regional Council of North Karelia implemented the survey at the turn of the year 2012/2013 and in summer 2013. Altogether 40 foreign seniors who were over the age of 55 responded to the survey. 22 of the respondents were Russian and 18 German tourists. Due to the low response rate the results are suggestive and give hints on the services that could be offered to travelers from the aforementioned countries.

According to the survey, German and Russian senior tourists travel in every season. However, German tourists clearly prefer to travel in the summer and travel less frequently in the winter. The responses indicate that Russian tourists go on a holiday usually during the winter.

Travel agencies proved to be significant sources for information when planning holiday trips. Other important information sources were personal experiences and friends' recommendations. Social media and commercial guidebooks and magazines were used less frequently. Internet was an important source of information especially for Russian tourists. For this reason, it would be important that websites of different travel destinations would offer information also in Russian. In that case travelers could explore different possibilities independently when they are planning their holiday trips.

Russian and German senior tourists do not often travel alone or in a group of people they do not know. German travelers travel usually with their spouse or partner, whereas Russians with their grandchildren. Since Russian seniors prefer to travel with their family, they are more likely to lean towards holiday destinations that have activities and experiences for all age groups. This should be taken into account when planning additional services to tourist attractions.

The senior tourists that took part in the survey found that financial reasons, health problems and lack of time have occasionally been the most significant travel barriers. In addition to the abovementioned factors, Russian seniors considered lack of interesting supply, lack of travel companion and concern over safety during travelling as main travel barriers. German senior tourists replied that, in addition to health

problems and financial reasons, lack of language skills is a significant obstacle to travelling. Furthermore, almost half of the respondents stated that they have not always been interested in making holiday trips and have, therefore, decided not to travel. The results of both respondent groups show that it would be important to study, for example through more comprehensive surveys, what kind of tourism services and products are interesting for the target group. Financial barriers could be overcome if service providers would reduce their prices during low seasons or offer, for example, discounted entrance fees and accommodation for seniors.

According to the survey, German and Russian seniors go on a holiday trip because they want to rest and enjoy silence and maintain their social relations. Spending time with family was another important motivator especially for Russian tourists, whereas, German seniors were interested in gaining new experiences. When asked about activities or attributes that they consider appealing in a destination, it was discovered that German and Russian seniors have slightly differing interests. Russian seniors value high-quality services, good transport connections, safety, local culture, wellness services and low price-level. German seniors, on the other hand, are attracted by destination's safety, gastronomy, high-grade services, good transport connections, nature and environmentally friendly solutions. They also like to use mobile guides on holiday.

4 Future measures

4.1 Ensuring dialogue

Dissemination started during the project. Through the existing networks and dissemination channels, the results of the project were disseminated as well as the knowledge on the effects of ageing on tourism was increased. Project representatives informed stakeholders about the EU financing possibilities for the senior tourism projects. In addition, meetings with the actors of tourism and wellbeing sector were organized, in order to discuss the possibilities of senior tourism and about the project's results which they can exploit in their work in so far as possible. Regional working group shared ideas on how to better take the needs of seniors into account while developing tourism services and how senior tourism is developed in the other parts of Europe.

In addition to the regional networking, many contacts have been created in other parts of Europe and EU institutions. It has been especially important for networking to participate actively in events and meetings

outside the project. For example, the TOURAGE project was presented in the eCalypso platform launching event (12.6.2013), Committee of the Regions' Natural Resources Commission (NAT) plenary session (1.10.2013) and the Lead Partner was also a member of the European Commission's Senior Tourism Group of Experts (SeGe) during 2014. The SeGe is coordinated by the DG enterprise and industry - tourism unit.

After the project closure senior segment in tourism development is a part of Regional Council's development work. Development and interest group cooperation will be based on the Regional Development Programme POKAT 2017 and Tourism Operational Programme 2014-2020 of North Karelia. Because senior segment has been acknowledged in the Tourism Operational Programme 2014–2020, changes in the age structure of tourists due to ageing are seen as a one of the central development targets and seniors as one of the central segments of tourism development in North Karelia. In the Tourism Operational Programme 2014-2020 it is stated that senior segment is especially essential when developing year-round tourism.

Measures:

- Compiling a contact list: the list will be used when looking for an expert, partners or business contacts, planning project proposals, helping regional actors in finding partners etc. Contact list will be handed over to the people who are responsible for tourism development and project planning in the Regional Council of North Karelia.

4.2 Preparation of project ideas to local/regional/national/EU programmes

Many financing instruments finance also tourism projects. Possible instruments are found on regional, national and EU level. These financing instruments will be followed during 2014 and regional actors will be informed about the possibilities to apply financing for the senior tourism projects. The foci of the future tourism development in North Karelia depend on the choices made in the North Karelia Tourism Operational Programme 2014-2020. How different segments and particularly seniors are acknowledged in the programme will have an effect on the projects that will be financed.

Measures:

- Following the preparations of the programmes and financing instruments and trying to ensure that senior tourism will be taken into account.
- Highlighting possibilities of senior tourism development based on the results that were collected during the project.
- Informing regional actors about programmes and programme development.

- Offering support for drafting project proposals depending on the available resources.

4.2.1 Regional and national financing and CBC

Structural funds are suitable for developing tourism sector. The Regional Council of North Karelia coordinates and provides financing from the structural funds. Hence its participation in the implementation of structural funds projects is mostly indirect. Also the ELY Centre (Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment) provides financing from structural funds.

There have been meetings with projects that are financed by the ELY Centre: 1. TE services of North Karelia (public employment and business services) who are responsible for training programme of tourist guides. It was proposed that the planners of the training programme include a training module in the programme that covers seniors as tourism customers. It could include for example accessibility issues and service knowledge and skills. Meeting with the planners was organized on 15.4.2014 and it was agreed that this will be considered when planning the next training as current has already been planned. 2. Meeting with the representatives of the Finnish environmental protection association in North Karelia who are implementing a project relating to bird watching tourism. Project is financed by the ELY Centre and it was agreed that the member of the steering group from ELY (also a member of TOURAGE regional working group) will tell about TOURAGE project to the project coordinators. Meeting was organized with the bird watching project on 19.5. It was discussed that seniors could be one of the target groups of the follow-up project which should start on 2015. Project coordinators will contact Regional Council of North Karelia when the project starts.

Rural Policy Committee has approved the new rural policy programme 2014-2020 to support development of rural areas. It emphasizes the importance of taking into account local conditions in development of rural areas and decision making. National Rural Policy Programme for 2014-2020 has five themes (participation and local democracy, housing and services, infrastructure and land use, livelihoods and expertise, ecosystem services) which include over 60 practical measures. The programme will be implemented with the help of a wide network. In addition, financing of the national research and development projects for the rural areas will be connected tighter to the programme. It is possible to use the financing from this programme for the tourism related projects as well. Financing is applied from the ELY Centre and from the local Leader groups. It is estimated that the financing can be applied from the beginning of 2015 onwards. It is possible to finance tourism project as a part of the entrepreneurship development.

The priorities of the Karelia ENI CBC programme have not been defined yet. It is likely that tourism will be linked to all of the themes of the programme (culture, environment, wellbeing, border, industries). On 1-3 September 2014 project representatives met some tourism actors in Petrozavodsk in Russia as well as the representative of Karelia ENPI CBC programme's Petrozavodsk branch to discuss about senior tourism development possibilities and cooperation.

4.2.2 Specific programmes and ETC

Regional Council of North Karelia participates in projects especially through EU's specific programmes and European territorial Cooperation (ETC). It also encourages and supports other organizations in the region to participate in those programmes. For example, following programmes finance also tourism related projects: Horizon 2020, COSME, Creative Europe, LIFE+, Erasmus+, INTERREG EUROPE, INTERREG Baltic Sea Region Programme and Northern Periphery and Arctic programme. In 2013 two calls for proposals, one relating to accessible tourism and other to senior tourism was opened by Directorate General Enterprise and Industry under CIP programme (current COSME). During the TOURAGE project, Regional Council of North Karelia started to plan a spin-off project with other organizations to be submitted to the suitable programme, for example to COSME and INTERREG Baltic Sea Region Programme. So far it has not been submitted. Financing possibilities can be found also under other sectors (e.g. welfare and ageing) hence also openings of the other DGs will be followed (DG SANCO, DG EAC, DG AGRI and DG REGIO). Measures:

- Following the priorities and possibilities for senior tourism projects in relevant programmes
- Informing regional actors about the open calls and supporting project planning in so far as possible. Regional Council of North Karelia may participate in the projects as a partner or applicant if applicable (depending on the programme and the measures)
- Securing information flow after the project between Regional Council of North Karelia and other central actors relating the relevant call for proposals (see section 4.1)
- Supporting the project planning and utilizing the networks which were born during the project in partner search
- Participating in the preparation of the EU's Senior Tourism Initiative in cooperation with the European Commission (LP participated to the expert group)

4.2.2.1 COSME – EU programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

Objective of the programme is to support SMEs in access to finance, internationalisation and access to markets, to create an environment favourable to competitiveness and encouraging an entrepreneurial culture. The programme finances also projects targeted to tourism sector and 2014-2015 at least two calls for proposals will open relating to senior tourism. Call for proposals will be about developing low- and medium season tourism by facilitating senior tourism flows in Europe (EU citizens but also senior tourists from third countries). Public private partnership is important in the partner consortium. First senior tourism calls for proposals were opened in October 2014 with budget of 1.6 million euros. Regional Council of North Karelia started to prepare a project proposal for the COSME programme with other organizations already in 2013. So far it has not been submitted.

4.2.2.2 Other possible programmes

The research and innovation programme Horizon 2020 has an objective to support growth, innovations that create jobs, research and to strengthen EU's global position in research, development and innovation activities. The programme emphasizes collaboration between enterprises and it brings together three separate initiatives: excellent science, industrial leadership and societal challenges. From the perspective of tourism sector the most fitting initiative would be societal challenges (Secure, clean and efficient energy; Smart, green and integrated transport; Inclusive, innovative and reflective societies; Secure societies) which grants funding for research relating to cultural heritage. Several calls will open in 2014 and 2015.

The Creative Europe programme for cultural, media and creative sectors aims to promote economic growth, employment and creative industries through the development of competitiveness. The programme includes three sub-programmes out of which the culture sub-programme is the most suitable one for tourism projects. The sub-programme is aimed at actors within cultural and creative sectors (such as museums). Both smaller scale cooperation projects (max. 200 000€) and larger scale cooperation projects (2 million €) can be financed through the programme. The culture sub-programme supports European collaboration projects, initiatives to translate and promote literary works, European networks within cultural and creative sector and establishment of European platforms.

The objective of the Erasmus+ programme for education, training, youth and sport is to improve the level of competences and employment possibilities of the youth. In addition, it aims to modernize education and

training systems and campaigns for the integrity of sports. The programme encourages, among others, the organisations within the sports sector to form collaborative partnerships in Europe and aims to ensure that everyone can enjoy the benefits of sports regardless of their starting points. The projects financed through the programme exchange experiences and methods. The call for proposals 2014 opened in December 2013.

The LIFE+ programme co-finances projects that aim to support environmental and nature conservation according to the principles of sustainable development and mitigates climate change. The programme can indirectly promote tourism activities: tourism actors can act as project partners or the approved projects can implement activities that preserve nature in a specific tourism destination.

The objective of INTERREG EUROPE programme is to enhance the implementation of regional policies and programmes. The programme finances interregional collaboration projects and creates platforms for the exchange of experiences. The programme will be published in November 2014 and the first call of proposals is likely to open in February 2015.

4.3 Launching new senior tourism programmes/developing initiatives

Senior tourism programmes are defined as financing programmes in EU and at national and regional levels. The Regional Council of North Karelia aims to affect them actively by participating in debates and highlighting the specific development challenges of the remote and border regions so that they would be taken in to consideration when compiling the programmes.

4.3.1 eCalypso portal

The eCalypso B2B portal (www.ecalypso.eu) was introduced to the Regional Council of North Karelia and Karelia Expert Tourism Service Ltd. during TOURAGE project. Development of the portal started with STEEP project which was financed by the European Commission and which objective was to create online B2B platform to facilitate trade of tourism offers for the seniors, youth, disabled and families with children. In June 2013 when the project ended eCalypso turned into a non-profit business. Regional Council of North Karelia got acquainted with the beta version of the platform in 2013 and after that it was agreed that Karelia Expert Tourist Service Ltd. will be the member of the platform instead of the Regional Council of North Karelia in the future. Karelia Expert will decide if the platform is suitable for the region depending on the test results. The platform is also a good channel to keep in contact with the network of senior tourism actors and

networks as well as for increasing the knowledge on the potentials of senior tourism development. At the moment eCalypso is beta version.

Measures:

- Possibilities to participate in the portal will be evaluated based on the development and functionality of the portal.

4.3.2 Senior Tourism initiative of the European Commission

The Regional Council of North Karelia participated actively in the European Commission's work group that prepared the "European coordination mechanism to facilitate and increase low-medium season senior tourists flows within Europe and from third countries". The preparation process started in autumn 2013 at which point also the TOURAGE lead partner was invited to answer a questionnaire prepared by the Commission's tourism unit about the ongoing regional and local measures to develop senior tourism. In December 2013 the lead partner took part in the first workshop organized by the Commission's tourism unit (5.12.2013). During this workshop the measures of the Commission were presented to a broad audience, a network of actors was developed and feedback was given on the future measures. After this, the lead partner was invited to the Commission's group of experts to plan more concrete measures for the promotion of senior tourism in Europe. In 2014 TOURAGE project's Project Manager participated in three meetings of the Senior Tourism Group of Experts coordinated by the tourism unit of the Commission's Enterprise and Industry Department. Meetings were held on 29.1.2014 (planning of work and distribution of tasks, preparing a draft according to the discussions), 25.2.2014 (going through the draft report and discussion), 19.3.2014 (discussion on the contents of the report and implementation plan). The group includes around 20 people from different parts of Europe. The task of the group was to analyze development perspectives of senior tourism, study its current status in Europe and draw up recommendations for the European coordination mechanism. The report prepared by the group of experts defines also the contents of COSME programme. In the group, the Project Manager put emphasis on the viewpoints of TOURAGE partnership and the special challenges of sparsely populated areas.

The group of experts defined the following issues as the most central development targets and measures:

- Identifying the versatility of senior segment, recognizing their preferences, drawing up marketing plans in order to increase senior tourism within Europe and from third countries.
- Noticing geographical differences – not focusing only on large-scale tourism destinations but also noticing the importance of mountain, islands and sparsely populated remote regions.

- Recognizing barriers (language, lack of knowledge, transportation, general travel and organizational conditions, age discrimination, health care and emergencies, accessibility, travel insurances...) and means of solving them (NB: the European health care reform as a possibility).
- “Tourism for All” – Accessibility and the Commission’s future initiative “European Accessibility in all European services” (accommodation, transport, restaurants and services alike, infrastructure for disabled people etc.) and possibly a new directive! Users and service competence.
- Quality standards (e.g. council’s recommendations, “European principles of Tourism Quality”, creating quality standards, EU’s senior card).
- Transportation (e.g. long distance bus transportation, trains, cruises, airlines, strengthening collaboration within the sector).
- Innovative products (tailor-made products for seniors, taking into account different regions in Europe).
- Synergies with other European initiatives (Cultural Routes, Eurovelo, EDEN, eCalypso etc.)
- International dimension: possible pilot actions for cooperation mechanism with Brazil, Russia, China and USA.
- Matching offer and supply (better understanding of the users’ needs, starting points of seniors and senior organizations and associations).
- Governance (creating a coordination mechanism to facilitate senior tourism during off and medium seasons within Europe and from third countries, increasing collaboration between public and private sector, political and institutional support at EU, national and regional levels, increasing collaboration between European networks and clusters, increasing knowledge in private and public sectors).
- Financing (EU’s funding opportunities, tourism’s impact on regional economy).
- The role of the European Commission (financing through COSME calls in 2014 and 2015, political support, communication activities and increasing knowledge and international marketing especially with/ initiated by the European travel commission

The whole report can be found here: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/tourism-seniors/index_en.htm.

4.3.3 Regional Development Programme of North Karelia 2017 and Tourism Operational Programme of North Karelia 2014-2020

The Regional Development Programme of North Karelia 2017 (POKAT) and its “sub-programme” Tourism Operational Programme of North Karelia were finalized in 2014. The Regional Development Programme of North Karelia is part of the region’s statutory regional planning. It is the region’s political take on the development goals in the near future and it guides the choices in regional development. Tourism is one of the central sectors for development and the most essential measures are described in the POKAT

programme. The Tourism Operational Programme of North Karelia 2014-2014, on the other hand, defines the development objectives in more detail. The activities of POKAT 2017 programme and the Tourism Operational Programme are mainly financed through structural fund programmes, agricultural fund for rural development, regional development clauses of different ministries and with state subsidies and investments in infrastructure. The aim of the TOURAGE project is to ensure that senior segment is taken into account in the development of tourism in North Karelia and that the project's results (good practices and joint policy recommendations) are utilized in the development in the future. Through these measures also the financing of projects is enabled. Ageing and its effects on the tourism sector have been acknowledged in national and EU strategies and programmes. Without a doubt, elderly travelers are a growing customer group which creates possibilities for the development of tourism in North Karelia in regards to both national and international markets. However, this will not happen automatically but it requires systematic development for the region to succeed in being attractive destination for the demanding senior travelers.

The Tourism Operational Programme of North Karelia was approved by the Administrative Board of the Regional Council of North Karelia on 20 October 2014 after it was introduced to the public in a tourism parliament that was organized in the beginning of June 2014. The programme is based on the results of an enquiry that was sent to actors in the tourism sector. An expert organization was nominated to be responsible for compiling the programme together with a regional steering group. TOURAGE project contributed significantly to the preparation focusing on the future of the senior tourism. For example by:

- Sending information about TOURAGE project, impacts of ageing on tourism and other necessary materials to the body who is responsible for the preparation of the programme.
- Participating in the first meeting of the steering group and presenting the project.
- Proposing senior travelers as a significant segment and proposing the following measures:
 - Recognition of products which are suitable for the target group and identifying how age has been taken into consideration in them.
 - National and international targeted marketing, recognition of the right channels and target countries, international networking.
 - Product development (programme packages, offers, accessibility and other barriers to travelling)
 - Mapping and development of possibilities in the low season of tourism.
 - Increasing service competencies (aged customers).
- Commenting the enquiry draft (questionnaire) and participating in discussions.
- Responding to the enquiry as the representative of TOURAGE project.
- Acknowledging national and EU level measures.

It is stated in the Tourism Operational Programme of North Karelia that the population ageing affects tourism sector and especially the demand for wellbeing tourism is predicted to increase. The programme defines that in 2014-2020 senior tourism will have a significant role especially in the product development and marketing of low season. During the implementation of TOURAGE project, it has been recognized that there are many development possibilities in the off season of tourism and examples for the development can be found from TOURAGE partner regions. Furthermore, the senior tourism initiative by the European Commission supports this development. The measures and definitions of policy in the Tourism Operational Programme ensure that the development initiated in the TOURAGE project will continue in the future.

4.4 Harmonization and development of regional action plans and development tools

Harmonization will be considered from EU, national and regional perspectives. At an EU level, regional (and TOURAGE project's) viewpoints will be shared through the Commission's work group, and according to possibilities the same procedure applies to national level. The central definitions of policy at EU and national level will be reflected in regional measures, since it will increase the possibilities to receive funding for international projects (e.g. European Territorial Co-operation and EU's separate programmes).

A central document in the European Union is the document on "European coordination mechanism to facilitate and increase low-medium season senior tourists flows within Europe and from third countries" (see section 4.3.2). At a national level, a key document is the "Finland's Tourism Strategy to 2020 – Four good reasons to promote tourist industry development" which states (p. 15) that "new customer segments form another distinct factor influencing the future of the tourism industry. The ageing population is growing in number and the elderly are more prosperous than before. For this reason, like other sectors of society, the tourism industry must be prepared to provide services for this active and demanding group of consumers which has the time to travel. Likewise, the industry must be able to manage more distinct customer groups, separated by generations and different ways of life, which demand different services and cannot be handled as one market. This requires sensitivity from the industry in recognizing new kinds of customer segments and their wishes or requirements – in other words, the ability to operate in a user and demand oriented manner." TOURAGE highlighted EU level and national perspectives in the preparation process of the Tourism Operational Programme 2014 - 2020 and promoted harmonization of activities at different levels according to large scale policy definitions: population aging and extending the tourism season to cover off season. Project also presented regional views at the EU level through existing channels (see chapter 4.3.2) and disseminated project results to national key actors (especially Ministry of Employment and the Economy, Finpro, Finnish Tourist Board).

4.5 Other possible measures in the region

4.5.1 Recommendations for product development and marketing

The TOURAGE project organized workshops for the regional working group and regional pensioners' group. During these workshops participants discussed TOURAGE project's good practices relating to senior tourism. The workshops evaluated good practices of different partner regions and deliberated how these practices could be applied in North Karelia. Some good ideas were developed in these workshops and they are useful in the development of products for senior tourists and in planning the marketing. Below is a list of the central conclusions made in the workshops:

- Seniors are interested in learning new things also when travelling. Courses that deal with herbs, wild plants and vegetables are interesting for the target group. Also different kinds of courses covering, for example, healthy diet, might be good additional programme for holiday trips.
- Nature and its offerings should be used more broadly in tourism: picking berries and mushrooms could be made into a tourism product. In addition, seniors are interested in wild plants and would like to learn how to recognize or prepare them. Also hunting, fishing, bird tourism, observing stars and other activities relating to nature are appealing from seniors' perspective.
- North Karelia has several competencies and special characteristics that could be utilized in senior tourism: sauna culture, smoke sauna, migratory birds, fishing and preparing the catch, the northern lights, Orthodox culture.
- In destinations seniors like to get to know the local culture and traditions. Handicrafts and presentations of traditions relating to them (constructing, weaving) are appealing activities for senior tourists. The travelers also like to try out, for example, making handicrafts (courses).
- There is demand also for religious tourism. There could be shared tourism products relation to religion between two Karelia (North Karelia in Finland and the Republic of Karelia in Russia). These products could showcase the Orthodox culture in the regions.
- Culinary tourism should present North Karelian products and Karelian cuisine (food made of rye, Karelian pies). There could be, for example, baking classes where tourists could learn about local cuisine.
- Seniors yearn also for activities relating to exercising. Skiing, ice swimming and Nordic walking are examples of the activities that could be productized. Nordic walking tours could include nature activities (e.g. picking mushrooms) and other additional programme. Skiing tracks made on the Pyhäjärvi lake could be used in skiing tours.

- There should be professional guides in guided tours who are able to take into account seniors' requirements and limitations caused by ageing (accessibility, slower pace, need for breaks etc.).
- Seniors are the ones who know their needs best. Senior guides could be hired, for instance, to museums and destinations dealing with war history where they could tell about their own experiences. This activity could also be based on volunteering. Senior guides could introduce local traditions, such as baking Karelian pies, to tourists.
- When developing tourism products for seniors it is recommended to test the product with the target group and ask for their comments.
- It is important to consider accessibility already at the planning stage of tourism services. Accessible destinations are suitable also for other customer groups, such as families with children.

Annex Resources for product development and marketing

- a) Summary of the TOURAGE's regional working group's workshop (in Finnish)
- b) Summary of the regional pensioners working group's workshop (in Finnish)
- c) New experiences – changing landscapes. Report on the travelling patterns, barriers and motivators of North Karelian old-age pensioners (in Finnish, summary in English)
- d) Report on the travelling patterns, barriers and motivators of Russian and German over 55 year-old tourists (in Finnish)