Action Plan

for strengthening Vas County existing trail network, developing existing competences and advertising a sense of ownership and "forwarding" among the trail service providers

Coordination - Expansion - Development

... a trail brought me here.

SUMMARY

Executive Summary

The **INTERREG EUROPE** project **Thematic Trail Trigger (ThreeT)** has focused for three years on the best available practices for the development, sustainable maintenance of and awareness raising for Thematic Trails.

A prominent part of green tourism, trails offer a unique opportunity to tell stories, integrate services and offer complex experiences for visitors – but also come with extra burdens of coordination and services.

The Self-Government Office of Vas County (VMÖH) participates in the project as a partner and has developed this Action Plan in order to **strengthen its existing trail network, develop existing competences and advertise a sense of ownership and "forwarding" among the trail service providers**.

This is to be achieved by **3 key actions** focusing on **the Coordination, the Expansion and the Development** of the network, through the development of a countywide Thematic Trail Brand, the publication of a Manual for the establishment of successful thematic trails around the country, and several direct interventions establishing new trails, increasing their service qualities and integrating them in the joint ownership of the county's green tourism future.

This Action Plan **has been presented to and approved by** the Stakeholder Group members of Self-Government Office of Vas County on 11th of March 2021.

Part I – General information

Project: Thematic Trail Trigger (ThreeT)

Partner organisation: Self-Government Office of Vas County (VMÖH)

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant): None

County: HUNGARY

NUTS2 region: Western Transdanubia (Nyugat-Dunántúl, HU22)

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Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact: X   **Investment for Growth and Jobs programme**

X   **European Territorial Cooperation programme**

☐   **Other regional development policy instrument**

Name of the policy instrument addressed:

Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme (TSDOP)

Priority 1B "Using endogenous territorial potentials of tourism to increase employment"

Investment Priority 6 "Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency"

Present status of the policy instrument:

Self-Government Office of Vas County (VMÖH) has, together with the strategic stakeholder Managing Authority, *originally committed to impacting Priority 6.1B "Using endogenous territorial potentials of tourism to increase employment" of the Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme (TSDOP) through the ThreeT project*.

The self-defined target indicator was set at 3 trails improved due to direct influence from the project.

During the years of Phase 1 of the project it became evident, however, that

1) by the time any of the policy changes can be implemented and produce measurable impacts, the TSDOP will by necessity be mostly out of funds, and therefore not in a position to affect a wide enough range of projects by itself, and

2) the project produced an unexpectedly high number of relevant good practices (GP), a decent number of which would fit very well into the sustainable tourism development concept of the county, realised through a series of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) projects – some Operational Programme (OP), some cross-border.

This resulted in a conscious, and very organic expansion of the original partner-level project goals, forming a coherent intervention approach across several programmes.

At the point of preparing the Action Plan these include

1) *the original Policy Instrument (PI) is Priority 1B (Using endogenous territorial potentials of tourism to increase employment) under Investment Priority 6 (Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency) of the TSDOP (ERDF/EFS)*.

    This PI has aimed to foster socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable tourism development through supporting infrastructure and service development activities of territorially integrated thematic tourism packages, thematic trails among them since 2016.

    It is now to be influenced at the project level, refining and changing the specific contents of projects running parallel to the ThreeT project. These interventions, as detailed at the respective actions, are relatively minor due to the nature of the situation, but are meaningful, evident, and very directly linked to the ThreeT good practices.

2) *the policy-level influence originally foreseen is to be transferred onto the Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme Plus (TSDOP Plus)*, which contains funding for regional tourism strategy and infrastructure development activities in the 2021-2027 funding period.

The programme is currently in the social discussion phase, foreseen to be launched in late Q1 2021 with some of the more standard calls.

3) ***two cross-border programmes, INTERREG AT-HU and INTERREG SI-HU, are also going to see project-level development***:

    a. Among the 4 priorities of the INTERREG AT-HU programme, *SO2.1 "Sustainability" / "Natural and Cultural Heritage"* and *SO3.2 "Connectivity" / "Eco-mobility"* are relevant for the focus of the ThreeT project, both emphasizing different key aspects of regional trail networks.

    b. INTERREG SI-HU programme declares the main goal of the *establishment of an environmentally and socially sustainable Joint Green Tourism Region* as the focus of its mission statement, and therefore more than 2/3 of its budget is allocated in *Priority 1 "Attractive Region"*, to initiatives forwarding this core vision.

VMÖH has projects in both programmes – as a Lead Partner and also as a project partner –, which have been recently awarded funding, and both conceptually and in infrastructure specifics are inspired by ThreeT good practices.

4) ***The Integrated Territorial Programme of Vas County (ITP)*** needs to be listed as a key defining aspect of the relevant policy framework.

This document defines the strategic aspects of tourism development in the region among other issues and has been the cornerstone of county-level development initiatives in the current programming period.

Its tourism-relevant concepts have already been showcased during the ThreeT project as follows:

    a. Any tourism development initiative needs to be based on and extend from the existing network of microregional centres

    b. Thematic offers for well-defined user segments (cycling, angling, canoeing, etc.) and county level coordination

    c. Active tourism offers in nature parks

    d. Network based products with good quality infrastructures and services

It is foreseen that the ITP will be reviewed and updated in the following years.

Whenever this update takes place, it is extremely likely that it would include direct adaptations and inspirations of ThreeT good practice.

The timeline for this revision is however still unsure, and therefore does not allow to make meaningful, and monitorable commitments in the current Action Plan.

The ITP is thus considered a key parameter here, and it is to be noted that most of the actions and activities detailed below serve to underpin the revised concept outside the project's scope.

In concert with the vision of the current ITP any prospective actions are strongly required to conform to three core values:

1) **Strengthening the Network.**

In general, it can be stated that the natural and cultural heritage of the county is already rich and diverse, and that there are numerous existing initiatives linking up subsets of this "experience trove".

It is a logical and necessary next step to match up more and more of the services and experiences, developing synergies, showcasing the whole unique, complex offer, and finally creating sustainable business opportunities for local service providers.

2) **Existing competences.**

As active tourism is traditionally a strong suit of the regional economy it is both effective and efficient not to introduce completely new services and ideas, but to exploit, enhance and disseminate already existing solutions.

This way, building on the internal strengths of the system minimises both upfront investment need and change resistance, works to adapt smart local solutions and organically levels service quality and scope across the county.

3) **Forwarding.**

As an aspect of networking it is a key task of mindsetting to raise awareness of all local attraction hosts to constant active representation and promotion of not just their respective experience hubs, but of neighbouring ones as well – both geographically and thematically.

This sense of joint ownership of the attraction network reinforces trail mentality, provides value to visitors, fosters a continuous improvement of service quality across the board, and significantly increases sustainability.

Inspired by the long and varied list of ThreeT good practices, the actions below are structured along a three-pronged development model.

The three actions aim to contribute to the three dimensions of value provision and attraction development:

1) **Coordination**.

Increased harmony, joint vision and streamlined communication and marketing channels serve all three core goals.

Through a stable and effortless framework for tighter cooperation and quality assurance existing network potentials are more easily detected and enhanced, while a sense of common identity offers a more in-depth and more varied experience to the visitor.

The action is primarily inspired by the Polish good practice of a well-designed and 21st-century approach to the regional travel passport. Using it as a basis and steppingstone, the aim of the action is to develop an umbrella brand for all regional natural and cultural values that is attractive and valuable to both the participants and the visitors.

With the story-, heritage-, mobility- and quality framework of such a brand identified, the final policy goal is the definition and testing of a value (natural and also cultural) development blueprint/manual for possible use across the county.

2) **Expansion**.

The development of the attraction network to provide more meaningful and tailored experiences to visitors presupposes a continually expanding scope of destinations and "troves" to explore.

Integrating less-known treasures into the network offers a sense of choice and discovery for the visitor and a more stable sustainability basis for the region.

The two most characteristic good practices used here are an area-wide organisation of minor sites in Italy, which gives a perspective for cultural heritage presentation in less-travelled areas, and a system of organised nature discovery trips along a fortress-based trail in Poland, which showcases both an opportunity for personal discovery experiences for the visitors and a sensible way for layering multiple themes along trails.

These ideas are adapted to and tested in local circumstances through two projects, one focusing on the marketing and theme-matching aspect of the GPs around specific tourism hotspots in the county, while the other explicitly aims to build a presentable set of minor historic sites to be offered both as a possible trail and a menu of enticing sideshow attractions for existing routes.
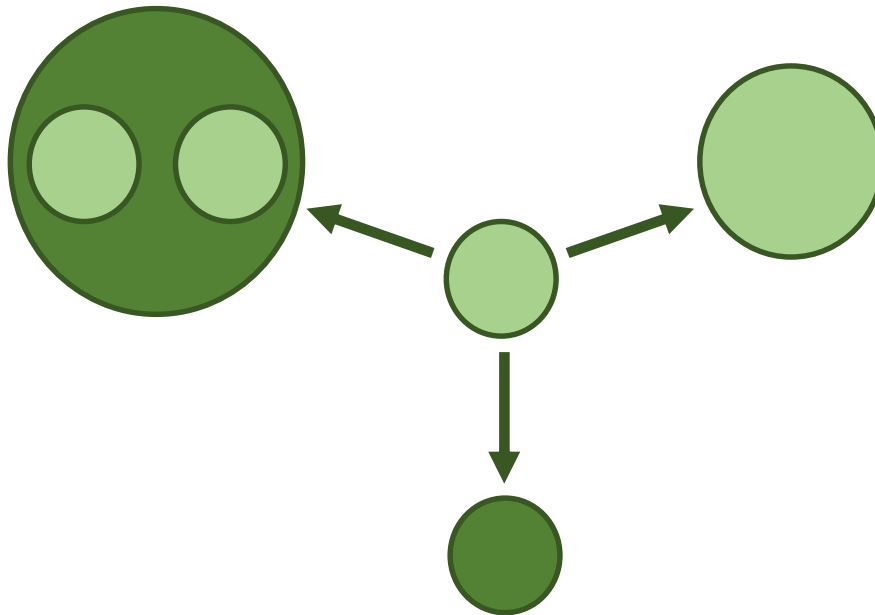
3) **Enhancement**.

Increasing the story depth, service scope/quality and individual visibility of hotspots is the "traditional" dimension of attraction development.

Doing this efficiently however ties it strongly to the utilisation of existing competences, and of course to the joint experience ownership through streamlined service flows along the trails.

There are numerous interesting good practices for such approaches in the partnership, however the two most inspiring and adaptable are a settlement-based cultural product and heritage showcase from Malta, and a smartly organised hiking trail system in Romania.

Both tie directly into the content and realisation of two cross-border projects – a Slovenian cooperation focusing primarily on the "trail-flow" of cultural and historical heritages in the border area, and an Austrian one taking the county's cycling experience management to the next level.

With this complex approach – **COORDINATION – EXPANSION – ENHANCEMENT** – the Self-Government Office of Vas County *aims to embed tested examples of exciting and feasible development trajectories for all actors in the region*, thereby *activating and widening the circle of stakeholders*, and *to lay down a solid set of working concepts for all related development projects in the next funding period*.

As a last thought it is necessary to point out that *many more good practices are fertilising tourism-related initiatives around the county*.

The five chosen ones are only the ones fitting most neatly into the core development goals.

The five chosen ones are:

- GP3 Kujawsko-Pomorskie Tourist Passport as brandholder token (PP5, Poland)
- GP11 The Network of Hiking and Biking Trails in the Transsylvanian Highlands (PP7, Romania)
- GP22 Dingli Heritage Trail (PP4, Malta)
- GP37 Parks and Museums of Val di Cornia (PP2, Italy)
- GP45 Nature tours entitled „Along the Lower Vistula Fortifications Trail" (PP3, Poland)

It is expected that within the next 5-7 years at least 15-20 of the good practices will have had an influence on the county's tourism and trail system – however that is way outside the scope of the current Action Plan.

How the Parks Network System was born

Coordinated urban plans defined the areas to be protected going beyond the legal concepts of cultural and landscape heritage, overcoming the administrative borders and interpreting **the natural and cultural features** of the territory as a unitary common good.

Around 500 hectares of archaeological areas
Around 6,000 hectares of protected natural areas (today Anpil and parks, per Law 394/1991)

6 public parks are planned in this area

- Archeological Park of Baratti-Populonia
- Archeo-Mining Park of San Silvestro
- Sterpaia Coastal Park
- Rimigliano Coastal Park
- Montioni Woodland Park
- Poggio Neri Woodland Park
- Archeological Museum of the Territory
- San Silvestro Park Museums
Since 2009
- Museum of the Castle and City of Piombino
- Museums of Campiglia Castle

The Parks System today

Part III – Details of the planned actions

1.1 ACTION 1 – Coordination: Establishing the Vas County Trails / values brand

1.1.1 Challenge

Thematic trails have been more and more of a focal point of sustainable tourism development in Vas County for the past 20 years.

The area is rich in natural, historical and cultural heritages and themes including rivers (especially the Rába), hills, cycling, wines, specific art styles, spirituality (St Martin, St James among others), and cuisine have all been developed into trail-like visitor experience packs.

As many of these initiatives have grown out of local or microregional development concepts, it has been a natural, if unfortunate side effect, that their management has grown to be fragmented, their story flow, presentation depth, service quality and visibility very heterogenous, rarely complementing each other even at trail crossroads or hubs.

It is therefore both a logical development step and a severe bottleneck in need of breakdown that the disparate trails step beyond light informal connections.

For sustainability to be insured it is critical that overlaps in target audiences are identified, synergies are properly exploited, quality management and benchmarking are internalised and above all, a joint vision of a Vas County Trail is formulated.

This joint vision in turn informs the coordination mechanisms among stakeholders, provides a manual for establishing, maintaining, and developing new and existing trails with identity, sustainability and visitor value considered at their core.

1.1.2 ThreeT lessons learnt

ThreeT GP No.3, "Kujawsko-Pomorskie Regional Tourist Passport" presents a sound and creative contemporary implementation of a well-known concept. It has been consistently maintained and developed for 8 years, with a continuously growing circle of voluntarily participating stakeholders, iterating to an ever more comfortable version of the brand.

The Passport offers a map of all experience hotspots in the region, providing universal visibility to all potential destinations and a unified frame of reference for the visitors through the concept of "Constellations".

The Passport itself serves as a permanent physical token and anchor for all the different trails and sights included in the program. Information about all "stars" however is provided in short and long format on paper, boards, and digital platform, so visitors of all ages and interests can enjoy the presentation through their most comfortable means.

The traditional gamified logic of visits, stamp collection and a final trophy/gift has been developed with lots of creativity offering real challenge and attraction to participating visitors as well, bringing the initiative up to current edutainment standards.

All in all, the GP offers a complex, creative and very much sustainable spin on an existing concept, one that has the potential to provide the needed signal unity and strength in Vas County as well.

1.1.3 Planned actions, expected results and policy impact

The action consists of two parallel series of activities.

ACTION 1/A: On the one hand, ***the Vas County Trails concept goes through its strategic phases of establishment:*** detailed process planning, pitch formulation, stakeholder engagement round one, host brand refocus (optional), design of operation, visibility and quality development strategies, fundraising – and continuous implementation.

This process is foreseen to take at least a year to set up depending on commitment and available funding, and after that also years to reach a state of communicable good practice. Expected results in the unified, attractive identity include all natural and cultural values within the county and a compelling identity providing a solid base for joint product development for the passport, info platforms and segment-aligned visitor experience packs. This visible and identity-forming county-level Thematic Trail Brand is to serve as a conceptual and operational base for sustainable tourism development in Vas County, while also providing strategic input for the upcoming Integrated Territorial Programme of Vas County.

ACTION 1/B: The other activity focuses on the **preparation of a comprehensive Thematic Trail Development Manual**. The Manual will serve as a guideline for local and regional actors, detailing relevant concepts, pointing out important considerations, offering sample protocols, "do's and don'ts", and actionable tips for the establishment of enhancement of successful and sustainable thematic trails. This deliverable is to feed directly into the branding process as well, but also into the Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme Plus (TSDOP Plus) call scheme – hence the separation from the overall process flow.

The Manual is to be finalised and approved by Q3 2021 (more info about the Timeframe: Section 1.1.5), ready to be included as an annex guide for beneficiaries to the regional tourism-related calls of the programme, expected to launch in the Autumn.

Deliverables of this action include:

- Brand development process plan including brand identity and action plans
- Thematic Trail Development Manual

County trails affected/developed/improved through the action: 1

1.1.4 Players involved

- Self-Government Office of Vas County
- Vas County Tourism Association (VCTA)
- Trail management organisations (TMO)
- Participating municipalities and local tourism coordination bodies.
- Service providers along the trails / values
- Prime Minister's Office

1.1.5 Timeframe

- Brand development process including brand launch – Q3 2021-Q2 2022
- Brand strategies – Q2-3 2022 and onwards
- Thematic Trail Development Manual – Q2-3 2021
- Inclusion in TSDOP Plus call annex – Q3-4 2021

ACTION 1	THREET Project Phase 2								Later
	21Q1	21Q2	21Q3	21Q4	22Q1	22Q2	22Q3	22Q4	
Brand Development			■	■	■	■			
Brand strategies					■	■	■	■	■
Manual prep		■	■						
Manual inclusion			■	■					

1.1.6 Costs and other inputs

ACTION 1/A: Branding

As per the nature of the activity the costs for the branding process include shared commitments from VMÖH, trail management organisations and possibly the national tourism agency if a co-branding setup can be reached. At the same time most of the benefits are expected to appear with the trail service providers.

ThreeT Action Plan Toolkit contains three scenarios for this action. The calculation considers an 8-year period of operation, and regards the possibilities of

1) a conservative baseline for local implementation,
2) a co-branding exercise with the national tourism agency for greater visibility, shared responsibilities, and possible roll-out effects in exchange for decreased control and increased coordination needs
3) a more intensive campaigned version for the baseline scenario

The initial costs in the baseline case are foreseen as:

Engagement of trail owners VMÖH and VCTA human commitment and travel; some TMO/local commitment	€ 4 000
Development of joint co-branding guidelines shared, mostly time commitment, some incidental catering	€ 2 000
Publication/manufacturing of co-branded materials and passports VMÖH, VCTA and TMOs – partial in-house production possible	€ 10 000
Website development and integration into trail presence brand manager, probably VCTA - partial in-house production possible	€ 3 000
Development of cross-visibility activities and guidance services brand manager with TMOs, mostly human commitment, expert fee expected	€ 4 000
TOTAL	***€ 23 000***

An annual maintenance cost of 3.500 EUR complements this for the provision of a basic **online presence and coordination**. This needs to be covered by the budget of the brand manager. It is expected that the initiative can conservatively generate 8.000 EUR extra income for the service providers across the board.

As it is visible from the scenarios presented in Annex 1, none of the initial costs are prohibitively high, and therefore should be safely integrated into the respective annual budgets. Yet, considering the financial situation of the trail management organisations, further exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic, it is foreseen that some activities are to be performed in-kind, and there is a distinct possibility that the process will be delayed within 2021 until a suitable external funding source (ERDF) can be secured.

Scenarios 2 and 3 offer slightly different basic assumptions, but the final verdict that the initiative would result in a tangible positive shift is never in question. Due to the nature of the initiative, it is

also consistently stated that any regional/national funds spent on the initiative have a distinct multiplication effect when realised at the service provider level, and thus the policy is both effective and efficient.

ACTION 1/B – Thematic Trail Development Manual

Cross-border project VELOREGIO AT-HU has shifted its budget to schedule 10.000 EUR for the preparation of the Thematic Trail Development Manual, as this initiative aligns well with the project goals as well.
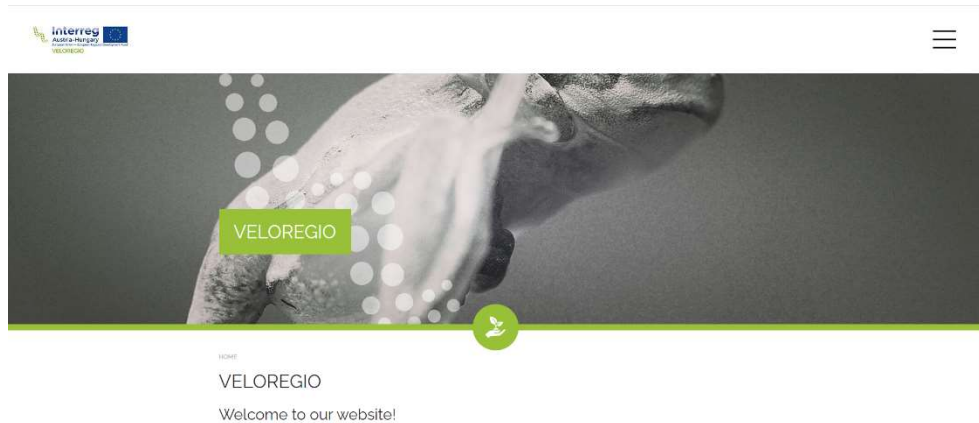
The procurement process is to be conducted within Q2 2021 and the Manual developed before the end of Q3. As per the project requirements the funding is available, and the task is not expected to be postponed.

The TSDOP Plus Managing Authority currently expects to put out the respective regional tourism calls within Q3. In order to avoid scheduling conflicts, a preliminary checklist from the manual is recommended to attach to the call, and the Manual itself is to be added to the list of recommended methodological works as soon as it is ready and approved. This is not expected to generate any additional costs.

1.1.7   Monitoring and Risk assessment

In the case of **Action 1/A monitoring** is straightforward, as all activities are expected to involve milestones, and as all activities are within direct view of the VMÖH their progress can be easily tracked.

As noted above it is expected that the engagement is to start on time but may conclude that the brand development process needs to be postponed. In this case more direct commitment-assertion and stronger engagement from the VMÖH and the sales pitch of a partially developed brand from the brand manager organisation can provide the necessary push out of the comfort zone.

VMÖH hopes that the calls will support such regional initiatives, so even in case of a postponement, the activity implementation is expected to go ahead eventually. This case would redistribute the costs of the initiative toward the project beneficiary. It is therefore important that a shared ownership and sense of responsibility is to be developed within all the actors and partners in order to provide sustainability.

In the case of **Action 1/B risks** are expected to be minimal, and mostly pandemic-related. Due to its short timeframe, specific outcomes and received cooperation from the TSDOP Plus MA, monitoring of progress is also expected to be straightforward.

One key aspect to mention here is the necessary maintenance of communication among the VMÖH, the experts working on the Manual and the beneficiary TSDOP Plus Managing Authority.

1.2 ACTION 2 – Expansion: Network of smaller or less visible archaeological/industrial attractions and secondary side-themes to provide value added to other trails and gain own „treasure-hunt" niche

1.2.1 Challenge

The need for expansion of the existing trail experiences has been around since the very beginning of development in the region.

It can currently be safely stated that *the backbones of all key thematic trails are in place, but they are rather diverse in offer richness, complexity, and revisit value*. There is a definite demand for more options and a sense of discovery along all of them.

On the other hand, there is *a wealth of quasi-hidden natural and historical heritage spots around the county, some of which are just not 'on the map', while others are in actual need of development to be in any presentable shape or quality*.

While these two issues seem to fit together naturally into a solution, sustainability of the hidden treasure spots is a critical question, not at all trivial to answer.

1.2.2 ThreeT lessons learnt

ThreeT GP No.37 "Parks and Museums of Val di Cornia" is a territorial community organisation – in their particular case with a specific mandate from the regional government.

They coordinate the development and presentation of all natural and constructed heritage sites within their area, providing a unified platform for popular and smaller attractions alike. While this concept also ties in nicely with Action 1, in this case the real inspiration is the equal opportunity setting for all sites, reinforced by a common information, ticketing and discount system, diverting 'residual interest' to smaller, less obvious sites. This creates a discovery and choice value for the visitors, delving into places that "only they see" while also generating revenues to actors across the board.

The GP is a complex and well-thought-out mechanism with a lot of attention paid to details like map presentation, storytelling, pricing and mobility, all of which merit consideration for adaptation.

ThreeT GP No.45 "Nature tours entitled „Along the Lower Vistula Fortifications Trail" is a programme providing organised nature trips branching out from the fortress hubs into protected areas, some otherwise inaccessible to the public.

During these trips' specific highlights of natural heritage conservation (forest zones, bats) are presented by expert guides to the participants. In their case the trips are geared primarily towards school groups, which are a key target for awareness raising and provide a continuous visitor base for the programme.

The main source of inspiration for Vas County in this project however is the conscious layering of themes, juxtaposing and enriching the historic trail with an emphasis given to nature, and offering a motivation for in-depth discovery for the visitor.

1.2.3 Planned actions, expected results and policy impact

Two project-level activities are involved in this action.

One is a *TSDOP-financed project running between 2018-2020 "Roaming along County Values"*.

The focus of this project has been the development of a concept trail between two major tourism hubs, Szombathely, the county seat, and Kőszeg, by turning the settlements in between into smaller attraction hubs by themselves. The implementation of this project followed the ThreeT project, which cross-fertilised several activities in Roaming project.

While the infrastructure specifics were only affected in minor ways, the conceptual framework received a major boost thanks to the ThreeT GP inspirations.

The Marketing Strategy deliverable of the Roaming project lists and details GP No.37 and GP No.44-45 as direct influences on the marketing concept in

- visitor flow direction along the trail, providing information on and showcasing different levels and types of sites
- the renovation and sustainable presentation of specific lesser known/hidden attractions to enrich the trail experience and pilot the expansion process
- the establishment of an active cooperation platform among public and private stakeholders reinforcing the joint ownership of the trail and
- basing the marketing strategy on local values, letting the trail identity be shaped equally by the totality of attractions.

The ThreeT inspiration has transformed the Roaming project into a much more collaborative effort than originally envisaged, resulting in a more solid, attractive, and sustainable setup within the set boundaries of the project.

The most important policy-relevant influence of the project however is that as the first in a chain of key development pilots of the Self-Government Office of Vas County, its results and impact is to have a strong and direct impact on its follow-up projects and a strong conceptual influence on the upcoming ITP revision.

Therefore, in this sense while this activity may have had the least diverted investment, or the least wiggle room for change, the shift in its rationale and direction can very well have the strongest impact on the regional tourism policy of the next funding period.

The other activity is an **INTERREG AT-HU SO2.1 cross-border project titled ArcheON**.

The project runs from 01.06.2019 to 31.05.2022 (ongoing prolongation process with 7 months until 31.12.2022), and its basic concept has been heavily influenced by the ThreeT GP No.37.

In essence, the project works on expanding the range and visibility of locations on both sides of the AT-HU border, executing archaeological digs at significant, but lesser-researched sites, and developing a comprehensive information background for the findings, including, among others.

- Info Points with physical and digital information platform
- treasure map and trail guide
- multi-day experience package

The organisation of the participating sites into a trail and the treasure concept are strong heritages of GP No.37.

The way the network of new attractions is planned to complement the existing backbone trails, offering alternative discovery adventures in the border region, ties in well with the key concept of this Action. The development of the new sites into multi-purpose sideshow attractions and sustainable secondary hubs is also foreseen to provide a blueprint for further expansion and integration of new sites into the existing network.

Deliverables of this action include:

- Roaming along County Values – Marketing Strategy document
- ArcheON treasure map and trail guide – to be integrated into the Action 1 map

County trails affected/developed/improved through the action: 1

1.2.4   Players involved

- Self-Government Office of Vas County
- Vas County Tourism Association
- Participating municipalities and local tourism coordination bodies (full list tbc.)
- SAVARIA Municipal Museum with a County Mandate

1.2.5   Timeframe

- Roaming along County Values – Q4 2020
- ArcheON – Q2 2022

ACTION 1	THREET Project Phase 2									Later
	20Q4	21Q1	21Q2	21Q3	21Q4	22Q1	22Q2	22Q3	22Q4	
Roaming marketing plan	■									
ArcheON trail development	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			

1.2.6   Costs and other inputs

The project *"Roaming along County Values"* has concluded with the end of 2020. No further costs are expected. The Tourism Marketing Strategy developed within the framework of the project is ready and is expected to strongly influence the County ITP when it is developed.

The total project budget of the *ArcheON* project is 602.400,- EUR, including 60.200,- EUR for the trail development, visibility, and servicing activities. No costs are expected beyond these limits.

1.2.7   Monitoring and risk assessment

Monitoring of the *Roaming project* is not expected within the ThreeT Phase 2 timeframe; however it has to be noted that if and when the ITP development finally commences at a later point, monitoring activities will be necessary.

As the output is already produced, risks are only expected with the action impact. Mitigating activities can possibly include the continuous reiteration of the results and proposals, keeping them within the forefront of relevant local policymaking.

Monitoring the *Archelon project* is done within the INTERREG AT-HU framework. Risks involve the slowing down of archaeological activities due to the pandemic, but it is foreseen that this will be sufficiently mitigated by the proposed 6-month project extension.

For the integration of the project results into the general framework and the county Thematic Trail Brand, it is key to continuously engage the SAVARIA Municipal Museum with a County Mandate, as the beneficiary of the ArcheON project in the branding and coordination efforts as a trail manager.

1.3 ACTION 3 – Enhancement: Service and attraction development of existing regional trails, focusing on local heritage and identity

1.3.1 Challenge

The service and infrastructure quality and mentality of even the most popular hotspots is less than perfect – that is without doubt.

In order to provide visitor value through a consistent and logically flowing service environment, the entrepreneurial mindset needs to be shifted to a joint responsibility model from a tragedy of the commons one, and viable perspectives of sustainable business are to be creditably offered to service providers.

In a lot of cases there is little need for centrally pushed infrastructure investment though, and the *sharing of smart and successful solutions* and *the maintenance of an active community are the key to the mobilisation of the service sector*.

It is also true though that holes identified in the visitor experience flow need to be filled, and this *development path also needs commitment, negotiation, and not incidentally, capital investment*.

Achieving this smartly and effectively requires skill and competence – and this is where the ThreeT GPs become relevant.

1.3.2 ThreeT lessons learnt

ThreeT GP No.11 "The Network of Hiking and Biking Trails in the Transylvanian Highlands" offers an inspiring solution for the cooperation among landowners, local service providers, NGOs, and public actors.

Transylvanian Highlands is famous for the High Nature Value areas and the villages with fortified churches, however despite this natural and cultural richness, the ecotourism infrastructure was non-existent before the '90s, and until 2012 the only way to visit a fortified church was the main asphalt roads.

Local NGOs however managed to get the landowners on board to provide access, guidance and services to the ancient trails and footpaths of the area – inaccessible to the wider public due to the total lack of info until then.

In the 8 years since then, approximately 600 km of biking and hiking trails have been mapped, marked and serviced.

The main beneficiaries are the active travellers which found an interesting destination to spend at least 2-3 days and the local entrepreneurs which offer services (accommodation, equipment, guidance, local products). The initiative is now overseen by the regional public actor, with the NGOs and the locals actively participating in the maintenance and development of the system.

ThreeT GP No.22 "Dingli Heritage Trail and Visit Dingli mobile application" is a Maltese local initiative in the Dingli area.

Managed by the Malta Tourism Authority, the programme provides digital information on many interesting heritage bits, which were earlier only accessible in limited physical forms. It also pushes the local service providers towards active small-scale maintenance and quality development and enhances visibility to increase potential turnover – leaving the action itself to the individual actors themselves.

This results in a much more proactive sense of ownership by the community, and a more complex, more interesting, immersive experience by the visitor.

1.3.3 Planned actions, expected results and policy impact

The activities of this action are linked to two cross-border projects and initiated partly because of the ThreeT inspiration.

The first one *Guide2Visit, is an INTERREG SI-HU project*, running from 09.2017 to 09.2020.

The main aim of the project is the development of a unified, visible destination and visitor flow system in the border region, promoting the lesser-known areas and inspiring joint responsibility.

In this the project reflects the lessons of GP No.11 very strongly, and its flow system, markings and cooperation model adapt a lot of the lessons of the Romanian example. The activity has active links to areas involved in the other Actions, and a bleed over of experiences and drive is encouraged. In the case of mobile platform development extra care is taken for compatibility with other relevant tools in the region to ease and encourage information exchange and joint offers.

The *VELOREGIO INTERREG AT-HU project* has identified a County Grand Tour cycling route around the region, and is developing a branching, versatile and sustainable trail programme around it.

The final concept realised in this project is a blend of a good practice from the Burgenland project partner in VELOREGIO, titled "Paradiesroute Südburgenland" and the above two initiatives from ThreeT.

The project is under a modification / prolongation process which contains the preparation of a Handbook for the realisation of such endeavours, part of which is to serve as the Thematic Trail Development Manual for Action 1.

Deliverables of this action include:

- Guide2Visit – Mobile-assisted visitor flow system for new area trail
- VELOREGIO – Grand Tour cycling trail map
- VELOREGIO – Grand Tour extended handbook

County trails affected/developed/improved through the action: 2

1.3.4 Players involved

- Self-Government Office of Vas County
- Vas County Tourism Association

- Participating municipalities and local tourism coordination bodies (full list tbc.)
- Service providers along the trail

1.3.5 Timeframe

- Guide2Visit – Q4 2020
- VELOREGIO – project modification / development starting: Q4 2020/Q1 2021

ACTION 1	THREET Project Phase 2								Later
	21Q1	21Q2	21Q3	21Q4	22Q1	22Q2	22Q3	22Q4	
Guide2Visit									
VELOREGIO Map		▓	▓	▓					
VELOREGIO Handbook		▓	▓						

1.3.6 Costs and other inputs

The project **"Guide2Visit"** has concluded with the end of 2020. No further costs are expected. The Tourist Guide System and attractions developed within the framework of the project are ready and are expected to be operated as per maintenance requirements within the ThreeT Phase 2.

The total project budget of the **VELOREGIO AT-HU project** is 1.435.840,- EUR, including 58.795,- EUR for map development, Handbook development and publication (including the 10.000 EUR already detailed in Action 1). No further costs are expected.

1.3.7 Monitoring and risk assessment

Monitoring the maintenance of the Guide2Visit results are progressing in accordance with the respective regulations. It is expected that user numbers will be less than forecasted due to the pandemic. This cannot be mitigated currently, but an intensive visibility campaign is foreseen after the lockdown period, probably in tandem with the branding efforts of Action 1.

In the case of VELOREGIO, risks are expected to be minimal, and mostly also pandemic-related. Due to its short timeframe, and specific outcomes, monitoring of progress is also expected to be straightforward. For the integration of the project results into the general framework and the county Thematic Trail Brand, it is key to keep the project owners in the branding and coordination efforts as a trail manager.

Part IV – ABBREVIATONS

ArcheON	ATHU121 Joint Development and Touristic Utilization of a Historical and Archaeological Offer in the Border Region Austria-Hungary
TSDOP Plus	Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme Plus
INTERREG AT-HU	Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Austria-Hungary
INTERREG SI-HU	Cooperation Programme INTERREG V-A Slovenia – Hungary
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
GP	Good Practice
Guide2Visit	SIHU101 Complex visitor guide system, tourism promotion and cross-border road access in the Slovenian Hungarian border region
ITP	Integrated Territorial Programme of Vas County
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OP	Operational Programme
PI	Policy Instrument
ThreeT	PGI05391 Thematic Trail Trigger
TMO	Trail management organisations
TSDOP	Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme
VELOREGIO	ATHU64 Joint Development and implementation of a cross-border offer for the cycling regions in the Border Region Austria-Hungary
VCTA	Vas County Tourism Association
VMÖH	Self-Government Office of Vas County