



RESEARCH

FETE: First European Travel Experience
DESIGN – IMPLEMENTATION – EVALUATION

REPORT

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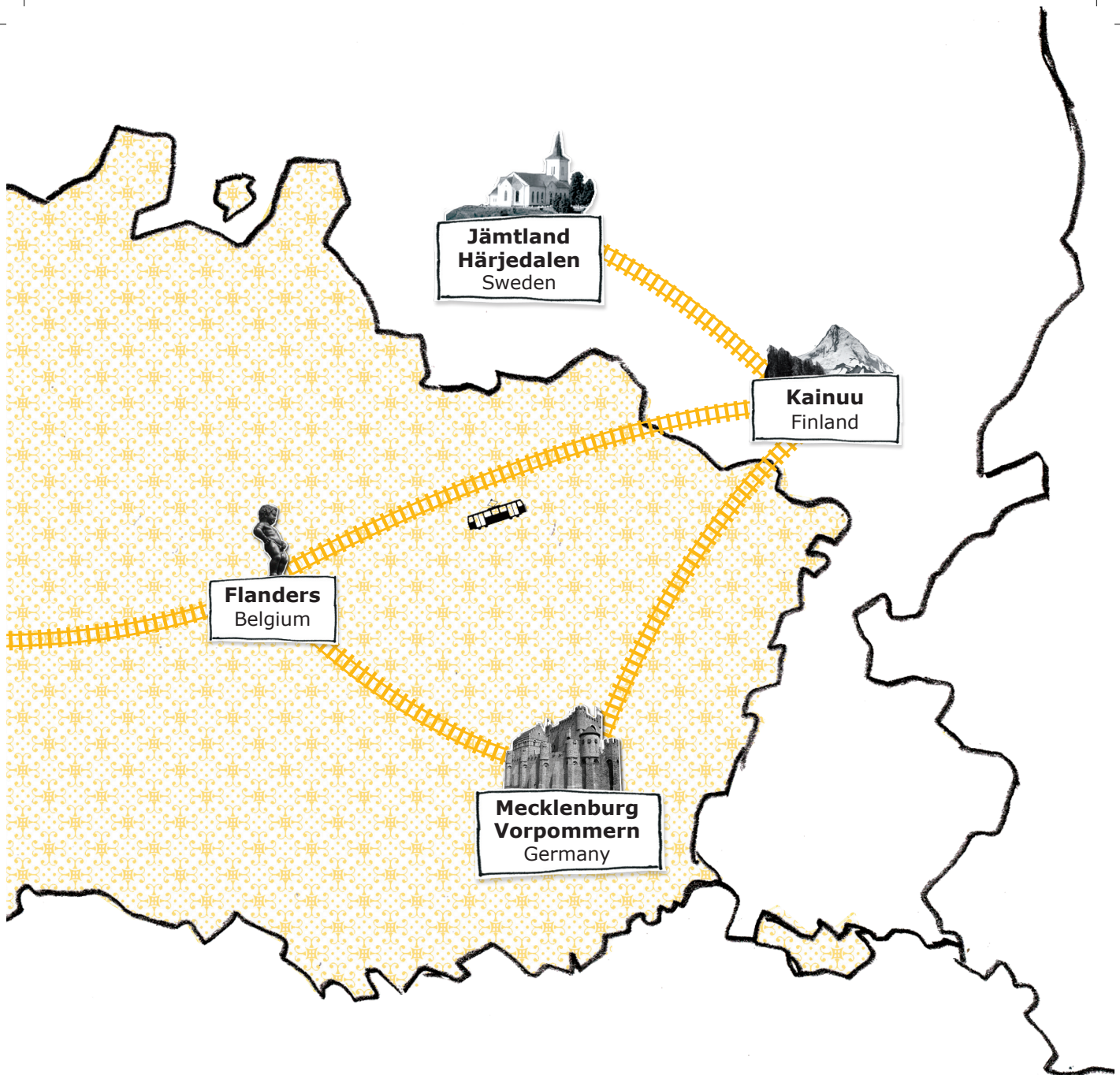
Fete# 1ST EUROPEAN TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

The FETE project has been developed by Tourism Flanders | Holiday Participation Centre (Belgium) with participation of Jämtland Härjedalen Turism (Sweden), Kainuun Etu Ltd / Snowpolis Oy (Finland), Tourismusverband Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Germany), BundesForum Kinder- und Jugendreisen (Germany) and with the financial support of the Calypso Program of the European Commission.
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**Jämtland
Härjedalen**
Sweden

Kainuu
Finland

Flanders
Belgium

**Mecklenburg
Vorpommern**
Germany



1. Introduction

This report is presented in response to objective three of the Calypso-funded project FETE – First European Travel Experience:

“To conduct objective research into the development and management of cost-efficient exchange mechanisms, into appropriate and innovative funding systems for post-pilot implementation, into the financial, legal, political and infrastructural barriers that need to be overcome, and into untapped potential in the commercial and social economy that can be exploited.”

The report will review the organisation of the two exchanges, the selection of beneficiaries and suppliers, the social and economic impacts of the exchanges, and the main challenges encountered. It will also provide recommendations and ‘lessons learnt’ for product development, for the maximisation of social and economic benefits and for financing future exchanges. The report will conclude

by assessing the viability of a self-sustaining FETE-style initiative in the future.

The analysis of this report will be structured on the basis of a **DESIGN – IMPLEMENTATION – EVALUATION** approach.

For each element in the analysis, the report will consider the

- **conceptualization** and design by the project partners, based on discussions and agreements at partner meetings
- **implementation** in practice, taking into account challenges and opportunities in each local context
- **evaluation** of the project element as implemented, followed by recommendations for future practice

2. The FETE project: Summary

The FETE project aimed to develop pilot mechanisms for CALYPSO exchanges of young people with limited or no travel experience during the low season. To achieve these pilot exchanges, it has developed criteria for the selection of beneficiaries, as well as the selection of social and intermediary organizations. The partners in the project are

1. **Toerisme Vlaanderen**, Belgium: lead partner & coordinator
2. **Jämtland Härjedalen Tourism**, Sweden: partner
3. **Kainuun ETU Snowpolis** (association of Kainuun municipalities), Finland: partner
4. **Tourism Mecklenburg-Vorpommern**, Germany: partner

A detailed overview of the project design can be found in appendix 1.

Two **pilot holidays** have taken place. The first, from the 20th until the 26th of August 2012, took place in Ukkohalla, Finland. The holiday was designed as

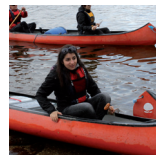
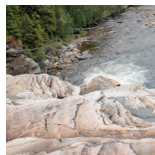
a health and wellness break with activities such as sauna visits, sports and relaxation. Five beneficiaries and two volunteers from Flanders participated in the holiday.

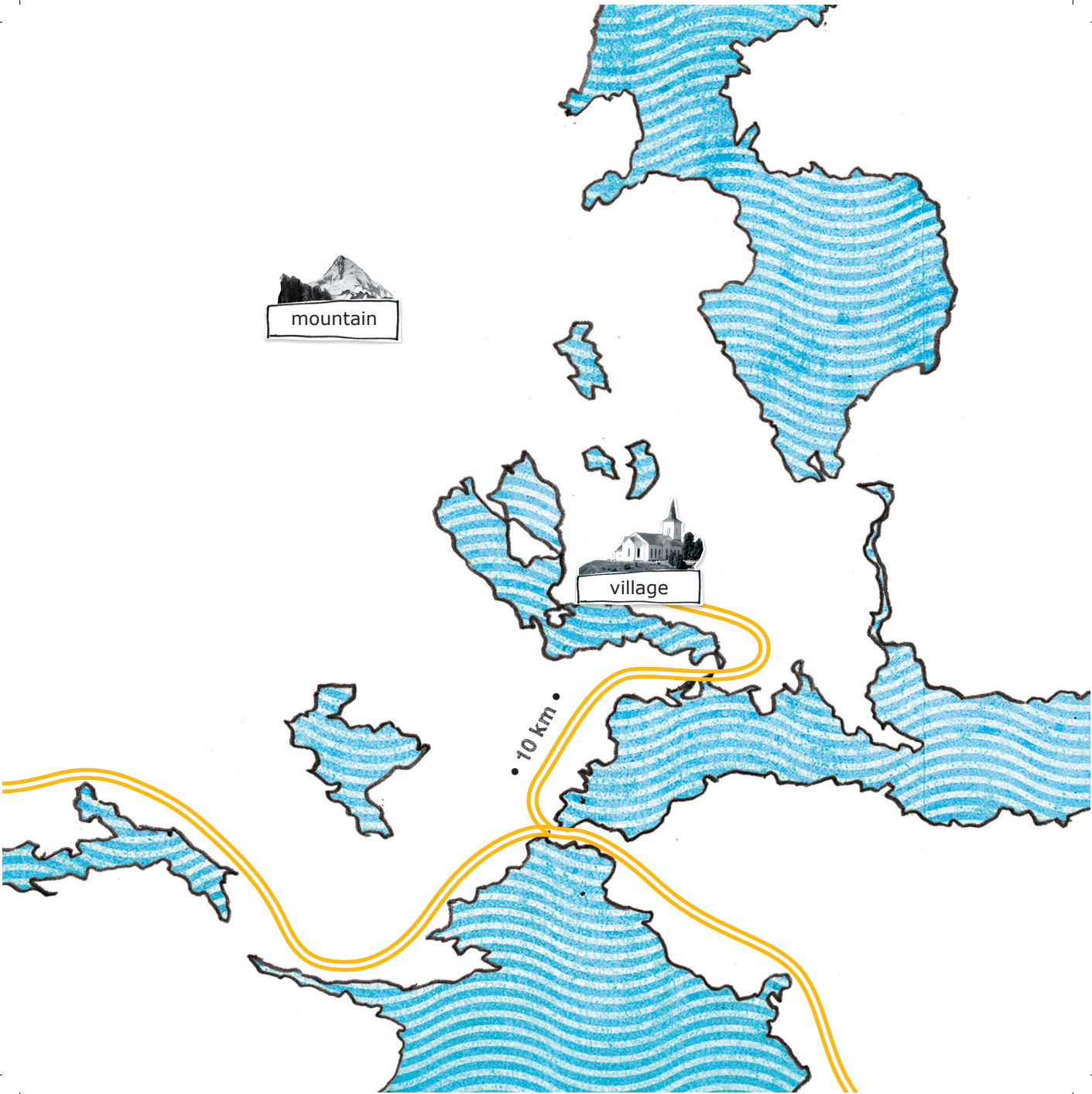
The second holiday, from the 10th until the 14th of September 2012, took place in Kolåsen, Sweden. The holiday was designed as an active adventure, with activities such as canoeing, hiking and camp building. Five beneficiaries and two volunteers from Flanders participated in the holiday. All holidays took place during the low season at the destination.

The second objective of FETE was the **facilitation of networking and partnership opportunities** in the destinations, to build innovative social tourism collaborations. In one destination (Belgium), FETE has drawn on a strong pre-existing network of collaborators in the social support and tourism sectors – here links between partners have rather been strengthened than new ones have developed.

In some of the other destinations, new collaborations have been formed with tourism and/or voluntary sector partners. It was noted that the development of trans-sectorial relationships, between the tourism and the social sectors, was a particular challenge for three destinations (Finland, Sweden, Germany).

Thirdly, FETE's objective was to **provide a detailed research report**, which is presented here. Lastly, FETE will contribute the data of its commercial and social partner organisations into the Calypso web platform.





mountain



village

• 10 km •



3. Selection criteria for beneficiaries

DESIGN

The FETE partners have developed a selection mechanism for participants to fit the objectives of the project: offering a first European travel experience to young people who have not travelled outside their own country before. An age limit of 16-25 was adopted, in line with a range of other initiatives within the youth sector. These limits would allow capturing young people who are likely to be sufficiently independent to travel abroad, and who are likely to either be dependent on a parent or carer, or who are living independently on relatively low incomes.

Where beneficiaries are living with a parent or carer, an income threshold for the highest income earner was set (variable by country) of 60% of the average national income – this is an internationally accepted threshold to measure material deprivation. As a result, income thresholds were set at €850 for

Belgium, €800 for Finland, €890 for Germany and 7715 SEK for Sweden.

Where beneficiaries are financially independent, they were required to meet two of the following criteria:

- Income lower than the thresholds outlined above
- No longer in education and not in regular, paid employment
- Currently in secondary education (to exclude students in higher education who live in student accommodation, and who are dependent on high income earners)
- Having a disability of a long-term health problem



IMPLEMENTATION

The selection criteria generally seemed to work well and allowed to reach participants who would have been likely to be unable to afford travel abroad without the social tourism exchange. The pilot holidays however showed that adjustments may need to be made in the following areas:

- Several of the participants were in the **care system** or had been in previous years. In the 'financially dependent' category, it would thus be advisable to add the condition 'in care', without reference to income thresholds.
- Although the participants generally had limited travel experience, some had **been abroad before** – often they had visited neighbouring countries and/or their ancestral homelands, to visit family. In small countries like Belgium many low-income young people are likely to have crossed the border at some stage, for example on school trips, even though they would not be able to take a foreign holiday independently because of financial reasons. Even in larger countries there may be young people living fairly close to the nation's borders.
- There are greater limitations in developing holidays for 16-18 year olds than for participants

who are older. The **age of independence** was shown to be different across the partner regions, raising questions about the guardianship of the minors. (For example in Belgium, minors are under certain circumstances allowed to make independent decisions as adults, whereas this is not the case in Finland.) The FETE project has shown that a more targeted approach is needed for minors, and more support of social organisations is often needed to ensure their well-being on holiday. On the basis of the FETE exchange, it is proposed that for the younger age groups, group holidays with a suitable number of monitors are developed, whereas independent travel is more suited to young adults.

- The **composition of the group** has shown itself to be of vital importance in the success of the holidays. The young people in the group, as well as the volunteers who accompany them, need to be clearly briefed. If the group is to include young people with challenging behaviours (e.g. violence), it is necessary to prepare the holidays carefully and carry out the necessary risk assessments. Support and screening before departure has been proven to be vital, so that the group

atmosphere can contribute to the social outcomes that are desired. There may thus be a need for further guidance for recruiting social organisations, and a longer time line for preparation. A more detailed analysis of this point will be included in section 6 (social impacts).

EVALUATION

It is recommended that the condition for participants who are financially dependent is supplemented by a reference to the care system. All young people in the care system can be seen as automatically qualifying for participation in social tourism.

Although thorough selection criteria for participants are necessary to avoid misuse, more detailed guidelines need to be provided for recruiting social organisations. These could include the recommendation to host a meet-and-greet day before departure, or to conduct visits to group members. This is established practice for many organisations organising youth holidays, and could be equally instrumental in the success of social tourism exchanges.

4. Selection of suppliers and the Charter of Social Hospitality

DESIGN

The design of FETE included a 2-day interactive workshop, led by an expert, about potential product development and financing options: with a presentation of product development mechanisms, partnership possibilities and good practice examples of financing schemes. The workshop aimed to provide the different regions with options they would be able to implement in their local context – on the basis of these options, each region could then organise a seminar with potential partners in the commercial and social/voluntary to establish cooperation links. Once the cooperation links had been established, partners could be accredited via the Charter of Social Hospitality: a code of conduct that offers guidelines for tourism providers in their engagement with vulnerable target groups.

IMPLEMENTATION

The establishment of new collaborations in the regions, particularly with the social/voluntary sector, proved a particular challenge for most destinations. The exception was Flanders, where these links have been developing over many decades, and have been formalised since the 'Tourism for All' decree in 2003. In the other destination no such stimulus from the public sector is in place. Particular challenges encountered were:

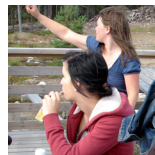
- The **time frame** for the FETE project was very short. Because of the length of the tendering process, the external expert could not be appointed by month 2, which meant that the interactive workshop needed to proceed without her input. The time pressure also meant that the pilot holidays needed to be designed, priced

and marketed to target groups within a matter of months – this reduced the options available as the transport costs can increase strongly in this period, and many suppliers operate more long-term planning. As a result of the time pressure, destinations did not host seminars with suppliers across sectors but relied on existing contacts or approaching new organisations individually to reduce the delay in getting a product ready. It is probably that under different time constraints, more effort could have been put into the development of new links. Even within this short time frame, there are collaborations between international partners that are likely to be continued in coming years (e.g. Belgian social organisation Lejo and Swedish supplier Kolåsens Fjallhotell)

- Sweden and Finland have reported that there was initially little **interest** from tourism partners to

offer products for a target group with restricted budgets. As the cost of provision is generally higher in these countries, it was shown to be harder to find suitable partners. In Sweden however, a partnership was developed by changing the location from Bergs kommun to Åre. Finland operated a similar strategy and found a supplier in Ukkohalla at a lower cost.

- For Belgium and Germany, cost was less problematic. Both destinations opted to put together ‘DIY’ holidays: holidays where accommodation is arranged and participants could then choose between a range of activities. Feedback from other destinations however highlights that there may be a preference for fully **organised holidays**, and that this ‘DIY’ concept may not be suitable for minors (16-18) or for vulnerable young people with limited travel experience.



- **Transport costs** were a challenge for all partners. International transport providers were outside the network of the regions and were found not to be willing to offer discounts. This is partly due to the difference in holiday times across Europe: although August was for example a low season month in Ukkohalla, it is not a high season month in Flanders, which resulted in high flight prices. During the low season transport options to tourist destinations are often operating with reduced availability, which may mean that the fares may increase rather than decrease. Because the holidays were developed within a short time frame, the flights had to be booked last minute, which also resulted in higher prices.
- **Time pressures** were even more detrimental for the collaborations with social organisations. Although all partners had links with tourism suppliers, many had no pre-existing networks with social organisations. Although some partners went through considerable efforts to recruit young people for exchanges, finding potential funders for exchanges (Navigator Centre in Sweden, Lyons Club in Finland), the short deadline

meant that the product was only ready in June or later, with limited information available about the holidays until late in the summer. Many social organisations operate on minimal capacity during the summer months; in addition young people were often unwilling to sign up for a holiday due to the lack of detailed information. As a result, only Flanders (where links with social organisations were already established before FETE, and with pre-existing funding mechanisms to support participation) was able to send participants. Particularly in Sweden, where public sector interest in the programme exists, a sustainable collaboration could have been developed given different time constraints. In Finland, support from the voluntary sector seems possible in the future but unlikely before the project shows tangible social outcomes for the participants. In Germany, collaboration was attempted with two youth clubs but these attempts were abandoned before the end of the project – this partner currently seems least likely to be able to participate in reciprocal exchanges.

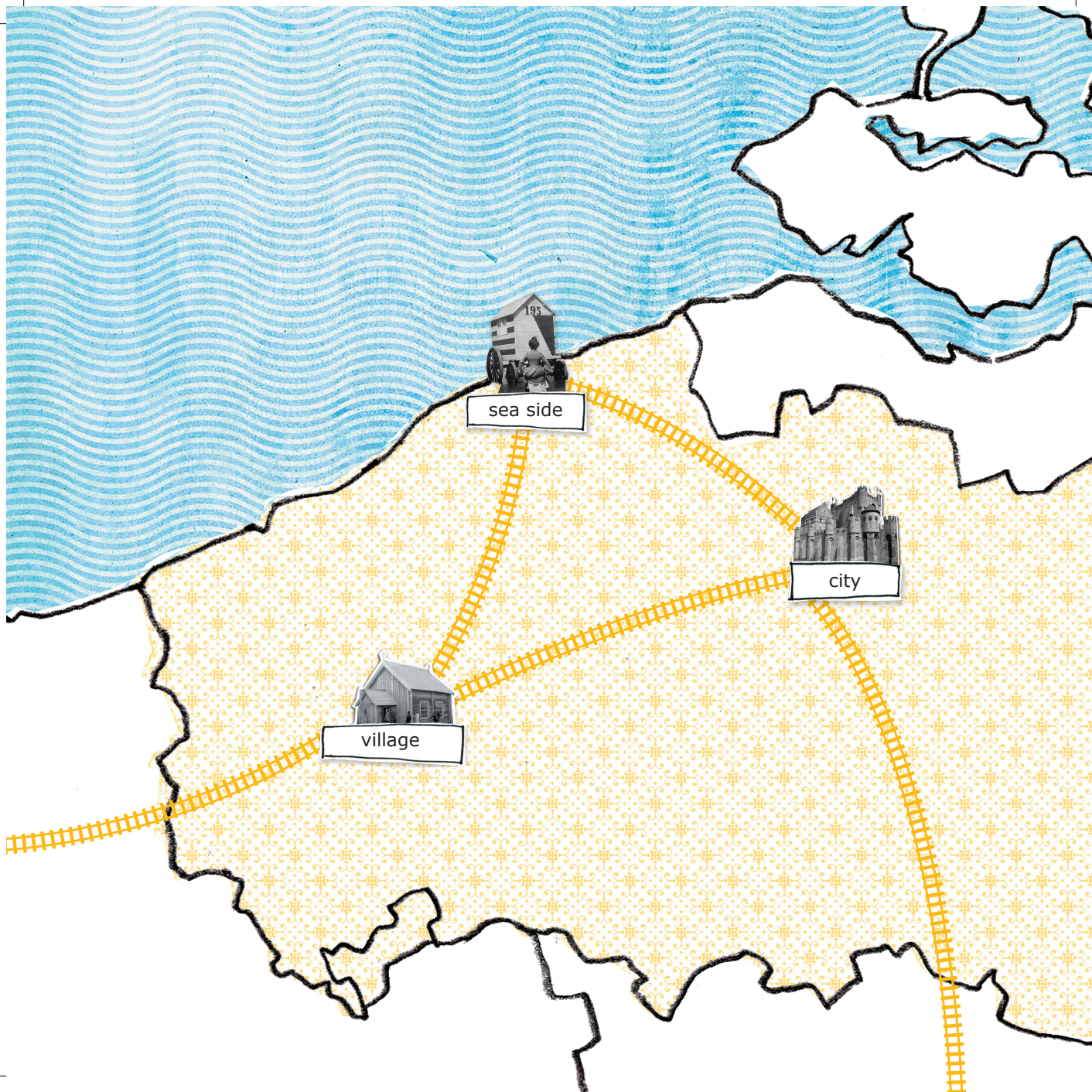
As a result of the challenges outlined above, it seemed premature to launch the Charter of Social Hospitality, although a proposal text is outlined in appendix 3.

EVALUATION

FETE has shown that 11 months is insufficient to both build innovative links in destinations with social and tourism partners where these links are non-existent, and to design, market and run pilot holidays. Ideally one year is reserved for the development of partnerships and the design of the holiday, so that in the next year there is enough time to liaise with potential participants and to market and sell the holidays. A **two year** project would allow more time to explore and meet the needs of both the social sector and those of tourism partners.

FETE also shows that working with international (air, rail and sea) transport providers is a challenge that supersedes the capacities of the regions – the European Commission could play a certain role here.







5. Economic impacts of FETE programme

DESIGN

The aim of FETE (and Calypso) is to search for mechanisms to facilitate tourism in the low-season for groups who are often excluded from international travel for financial reasons. FETE aims to create revenue for local tourism suppliers, and to stimulate employment. Four exchanges with up to 25 participants and volunteers on each holiday were envisaged. FETE moreover stimulates the development of new partnerships in the partner destinations, to facilitate product development and innovation. This focus on innovative enterprise can support the competitiveness of these destinations in the face of increasing competition in the tourism sector. This support may be of particular importance to SMEs in the sector.

IMPLEMENTATION

Fifteen beneficiaries and volunteers participated across 2 exchanges. The number of pilot holidays and participants in this projects are too small to draw general conclusions about the economic impacts social tourism could have on whole regions, but data have been generated that show the value of the pilot for the suppliers involved.

These data were collected via in-depth interview and via the form that can be found in [appendix 2](#).

FINLAND: UKKOHALLA

The cost charged per delegate was €391. This was an all-inclusive price: marginal additional spending was incurred on a shopping trip to Kajaani. The accommodation cost was €610, a 20% discount compared to the normal price of a cottage rental

for that period (please note however the group was upgraded to luxury apartments at no extra cost). €510 was spent on activities, a discount of 30% compared to normal prices. Catering was by far the largest cost: €2450. The total cost for the holiday was €3570. To reach break-even the holiday needed 9.1 participants and volunteers in total, however there were only 7, resulting in a loss.

Although this holiday did not result in a profit for the region, it has led to a reconceptualization of the product towards a more cost-effective alternative. No discount was achieved for catering, and the cost for catering in this holiday was very high – to mitigate this, another potential accommodation supplier has been found: a guesthouse with its own kitchen. The cost of this accommodation provider is also likely to be low, as their (undiscounted) prices start from €25 for a double room per night. The guest house owners also recommended the use of an alternative airport which could potentially lower travel costs. The Ukkohalla region was keen to develop further summer exchanges as their occupancy rate at the end of august is as low as 0-20%.

SWEDEN: KOLÅSEN

The cost charged per delegate was €336 (2890 SEK). The total accommodation cost was 21,700 SEK. This included all catering. Activities were charged at 1850 SEK, staff costs were 11,000 SEK. All the prices above include a 42% discount compared to usual rates. The total cost of the holiday was 34,550 SEK. Again, due to the low number of participants, the pilot holiday resulted in a loss.

Like Ukkohalla, the accommodation would have reached a very low occupancy level without this group (0-10%). The business owners are keen to develop further exchanges as with a larger group the holiday would have been a viable product to develop during the low season. The business offers a similar product to local school children, so FETE-style exchanges with young people lean closely to the enterprise's core product. The devaluation of the Euro compared to the Swedish Kroner resulted in the need to charge delegates a higher price than originally expected (€336 instead of €300).

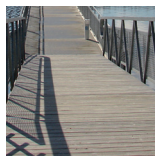
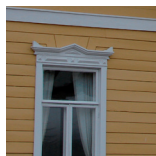
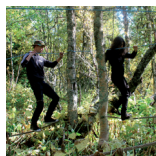
EVALUATION

Due to the low numbers, and the inability to attract participants from regions other than Flanders, the projected positive economic impacts on the two host regions have not been materialised. The pilot holidays however have shown that given larger groups and the selection of more suited partners, the holidays have the potential to bring beneficial business to the destinations. Both Kolåsen's Fjallhotell and Gasthalla guesthouse expressed a strong desire to be involved in FETE-style exchanges in the future.

The findings also show that the periods that were chosen for the holiday coincided with the low season in the region. Even these small exchanges led to employment opportunities for local activity organisers. In both destinations there is underused

capacity and unused facilities that, given economies of scale, could be made available at a discounted rate to make them affordable for young people in social tourism. Larger groups may also allow for prices to be reduced even further as they may fill the accommodation to capacity or would allow for bulk buying foodstuffs and other supplies.

It is recommended that holiday prices are formulated in the host country's own currency to avoid the effects of currency fluctuations.



6. Social impacts of FETE programme

DESIGN

The FETE holidays were designed for young people with limited or no international travel experience, so that this group would be able to benefit from the positive social effects of holidays. These include the experience of new, life-enhancing experiences and the generation of positive, lasting memories. Participation expands travel horizons, and as a result can be confidence building. It can also be a way to increase social networks. Participation in international travel can also lead to an increased intercultural awareness and European citizenship. To achieve this last element, the holidays were designed so that groups of young people of all four partner regions would be represented during each holiday.

IMPLEMENTATION

The FETE holidays have shown to have a number of positive social impacts on the participants:

- All participants commented that the holiday had included new, life-enhancing experiences that would lead to positive, lasting memories. Examples of new activities that were particularly appreciated by the participants were cross-country skiing, canoeing, wakeboarding, building a camp and making a fire. For many, these activities will be the basis for lasting memories and are the basis for new attitudes and skills:

'I didn't know how to swim before, but I do now! Isabelle¹ has taught me. Everyone will be so surprised at home!'

¹ All names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants



'I have developed as a person – I have learnt not just to think with my brain but also with my eyes and ears'

'The food was a bit strange at first but I like it! Meat and berries, they go together really well, who would have thought!'

'I look at nature very differently now. In Belgium nature is forced into boundaries- there everything was just so pure'

'It was amazing to learn how to survive in the wilderness... all the things people can do just with things you find lying around'

'We live in cities and think we have everything, and yet we miss things in our lives – we wouldn't know how to survive in the wild like people here'

'I couldn't believe how far we were from everything – from friends, from your home, but mainly from the busy cities. It was great to experience that sort of quiet – we just don't have it back home'

- Social tourism can expand travel horizons and raise confidence levels in the target group: many beneficiaries of social tourism initiative report feeling proud they have expanded their boundaries via a holiday. For the great majority it was the first time they had ever taken a plane.

'When we walked in the accommodation was so beautiful... I thought 'this can't be right', 'this can't be for us'. I have made a video of it on my phone to show my friends back home'

'It seems weird, going on holiday in a foreign country with five strangers. But you shouldn't think about it, just DO it'

'Just spending the night in the airport was quite an experience'

'The plane was a bit scary – but I also thought it was really exciting'

'This is such a great place – I am going to do everything I can to come back here one day'



- Extension of social networks: Participation in FETE was a way to develop new friendships. The participants of one holiday had decided to meet again two weeks after the holiday at an activity day organised by the social organisation. Many are also staying in touch via social media.

'Everyone in the group was so different, but somehow it just worked. It seemed like we all brought something to the experience'

'When I am going to think back on this holiday in a few years, I will mainly remember the group of wonderful friends I met there'

'It was the best birthday I ever had. Tom* and Jessie* made a cake for me, we had an amazing time'

- International tourism has exposed the participants to a new language, new foods and a new environment. This was seen as an enriching experience and can lead to an increased sense of European citizenship. The accommodation owners, activity leaders and local project

partners played a big role in achieving this, since the groups constituted only of Belgian participants.

'The accommodation owners motivated us, made us discover new things and made us feel incredibly welcome'

'I loved the Swedish modesty and how they appreciate healthy food – those are things that will stay with me a long time'

However, there were also challenges to achieve these positive social impacts. In one of the holidays, the composition of the group led to arguments and fights. The participants reported that although they had enjoyed experiencing the destination, the arguing had affected their enjoyment of the holiday. In one instance, the fight was accompanied by physical aggression, which was quickly addressed by the volunteers. This highlights the importance of a careful selection and briefing of participants, and the need for professional staff to accompany the holiday if it includes young people with medium to severe behaviour problems. Risk assessments

need to be carried out to ensure volunteers or paid staff members know how to address problematic behaviour, particularly in international settings.

The volunteers also highlighted that because only limited information about the holiday was available before departure, and the time pressure, there was limited opportunity to brief the participants, which led to different groups having different expectations of their time abroad. The volunteers were also not aware that the programme would include a lot of free time each day – this time proved hard to fill as during the low season many facilities were closed. The destination was also remote and the volunteers had no private transport available. The organisers had put the holiday together in this fashion to show the participants what a ‘typically Finnish’ holiday would be like – however the Belgian participants expected more activities, and the ensuing boredom contributed to the arguing among the group members.

Finally it became apparent that the upgrade to private apartments led to further segregation among the group. The upgrade was offered with the best intentions from the Finnish providers, and

the luxury surroundings were greatly appreciated by the group, yet both participants and monitors commented that if they would have stayed in a cottage, perhaps the group would have bonded more – food preparation would have also taken up some time that was now unfilled. (This would have also reduced the food cost considerably.)

EVALUATION

The FETE exchanges have created a range of positive social impacts for the participants. For many the air travel and the activities were new and unforgettable. The personal engagement of the accommodation owners was a big factor in facilitating these impacts.

The evaluation also shows that working on a positive group atmosphere is of paramount importance. This may be easier to achieve in accommodation which provides communal areas. From the FETE experience it becomes also clear that there is a preference for holidays with lots of planned activities, rather than programmes with a lot of free time or ‘DIY’ style packages.

7. Main challenges/barriers encountered

This section summarises the main challenges encountered in the FETE project. They are presented together here as learning points for future FETE exchanges and other Calypso projects.

Time pressure

This can be seen as the main challenges as many of the following issues derive from the time pressure of the project. To develop the new and innovative collaborations between the tourism and the social sector Calypso envisages, more than 11 months are needed, particularly in destinations that do not have a strong social tourism tradition. Finland, Sweden and Germany are three countries that did not participate in the Calypso Preparatory Action, and although this has not hindered the participation of the regions, it shows a certain reluctance to

adopt social tourism as interpreted by the European Commission on a national level. Attitudes of the public sector in the participating regions varied widely.

Transport costs

Although the regional partners could negotiate with local suppliers (in Belgium for example free bus and tram tickets are offered to all social tourism users; in Germany McPom had secured free bus and tram tickets for the participants in the whole of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Brandenburg, Berlin and parts of Schleswig-Holstein, Niedersachsen and Hamburg and also free tickets for the ferry in the Baltic sea between Mecklenburg-Vorpommern Sweden and Finland), international air carriers fall outside their remit. It was found that airlines are

not usually willing to allocate discounts for social tourism. In the future, alternative transport means could be examined, e.g. private coach companies, ferries or train companies (the latter two often offer discounts for advance bookings).

Lack of existing inter-sectorial relations

The tourism and the social sectors are very different in their structure, aims and objectives. Although there is often a willingness to work together across the sectors, the level of understanding of the other sector's needs is often limited. FETE has shown that despite often good intentions, developing inter-sectorial working relationships is often time-consuming. It transpired that these inter-sectorial relations rarely existed on the regional level (besides Flanders), so that to achieve collaborations on an international level was a very ambitious goal for a project of limited length. FETE however has established a number of international links that can serve an exemplary function, and that may encourage further collaborations on a local, regional or international level.

Finance

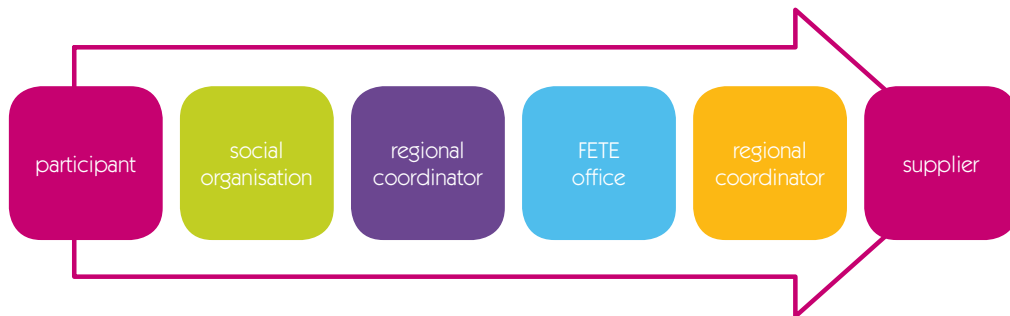
Although discounts were obtained in the destinations, it proved hard to bring the costs down sufficiently in some areas for the holiday to stay affordable, particularly when international airfares were added to the cost. Low-cost providers needed to be found, and these are not in great supply in all destinations. Particularly for Sweden, currency devaluation was an added challenge. It proved difficult to find funding bodies willing to support the project financially to reduce the travel costs for the participants, particularly at short notice. In Flanders, existing funding mechanisms were used so that each participant only paid €90-€150 (for participants in care institutions) for the holiday, transport included. In other destinations this support was not available, resulting in a higher holiday cost – equivalent to holidays available in the commercial circuit. Although it could be argued that social tourism offers added value compared to commercial holidays, price stays an exclusionary factor when additional funding is not available.

Staff time

Where FETE pilot holidays were organised, they demanded large proportions of the time of the regional project partners. The regional coordinators were often personally involved in the running of the holiday, on top of their other duties. It needs to be highlighted that further holidays would not be able to depend on this level of staff engagement.

Communication

Because international networks needed to be formed fast, via the project partners, the communication chain between the participant and the supplier in the destination became very long. The regional coordinator in the generating region would approach a social organisation, which would liaise with the participants (sometimes via volunteers). Via the FETE office the regional coordinator in the destination would communicate the offer of the



supplier. As can be seen in the figure below, the chain of communication reaches thus at least six steps, and along the way information can get lost or misrepresented, particularly considering the time pressure all partners were under. Communication issues led to uncertainty about what the programme would entail, what participants needed to pack, what would be expected of the volunteers accompanying the group and how much additional money would be required.

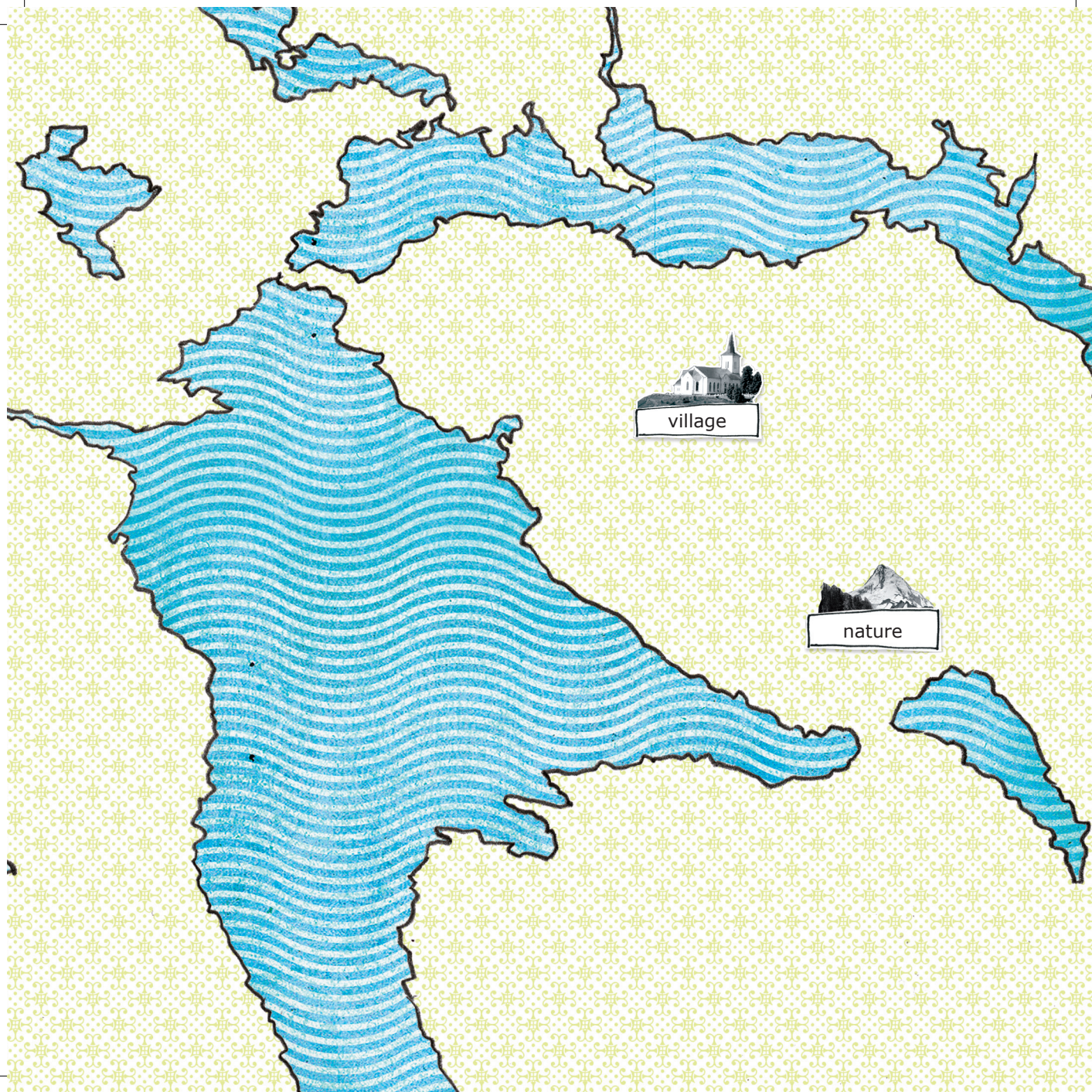
Legal limitations

Because of the EU Package Travel Directive, it was not possible for regional coordinators to recruit participants directly. A social organisation complying with the PTR regulations is thus needed to sell the holidays. This is not in itself a challenge, but combined with the time pressure mentioned above it was often not possible for the partner regions to find a social organisation willing and able to offer the holidays in time.

Contractual obligations

In one case a last-minute cancellation has shown that greater clarity is needed on cancellation terms and charges. These need to be agreed with suppliers in advance.





village



nature

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8. Product development recommendations for social tourism exchanges

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From the FETE project, three main lessons can be learnt with respect to the product design of the holidays:

Low season in the destination does not always equal low season on transport routes.

FETE (and indeed Calypso) is based around the premise that periods of high demand in one region can correspond to periods in high availability in others, and it is indeed a useful exercise to explore to which extent this can be beneficial for social tourism. However, the existing exploration of this issue rarely addresses the issue of transport. As long as there is high demand in a destination, transport costs are likely to be high. When demand for a

destination goes up (for example through social tourism) this is often another stimulus for suppliers to increase their prices. From this, one can deduct that social tourism exchanges cannot be implemented on a large scale as long as providers of scheduled transport links do not participate in Calypso. Private Coach Companies may be an untapped resource, however these rely on larger numbers and may only be useful for medium distances.

Involve young people in product design.

The FETE exchanges indicate that the target group prefers holidays that are full of activities and that do not include too much free time. Programmes with scheduled activities seem preferred over 'DIY'

packages, particularly for younger participants. Although the Flemish partners had meetings with ‘Use It’ (a travel information service for young people in Belgium), who advised that a combination of free choice and planned activities would be best to develop independence in the participants – yet this view was not shared by the Finnish and Swedish partners.

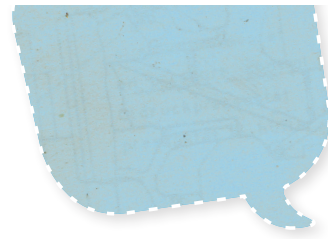
Decide if the project is mainly focused on economic impacts for a region, or on tourism participation for the most vulnerable and excluded groups.

Minnaert, Maitland and Miller (2011)² have shown that the term ‘social tourism’ can in fact refer to four different types of initiatives. All refer to ‘tourism with an added moral value, that primarily aims to increase the benefits of tourism for tourists or host communities’. Yet each type has its own characteristics, aims and likely outcomes (for a full explanation see following pages). A challenge in the Finland holiday may have been that where the host region expected to provide services under

the ‘stimulation’ model, the generating region was expecting a more specialised holiday for vulnerable holiday makers under the ‘adaptation’ model. The Sweden holiday also included vulnerable tourists, but because the suppliers offered a holiday in the ‘adaptation’ model, the fit between participants and product was better.

| | | TOURIST | |
|---------|--|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | | Social tourism users only | Social tourism users and other users |
| PRODUCT | Standard product | Participation model | Inclusion model |
| | Specific provisions for social tourism users | Adaptation model | Stimulation model |

² Minnaert, L. Maitland, R. & Miller, G. (2011). What is social tourism? Special Issue on Social Tourism, Current Issues in Tourism, 5, 403-415



Each of the above interpretations finds an expression in social tourism practices today. In the participation model, social tourism is clearly targeted towards socially or otherwise disadvantaged persons in society, but is not necessarily characterised by specialised products or services. An example of this approach is the Centre for Holiday Participation in Flanders, Belgium. To increase the participation in tourism of low-income groups, the Centre negotiates reduced tariffs with accommodation providers and tourist attractions. These discounts are offered on a voluntary basis by the private sector in exchange for increased business, added publicity and in consideration of CSR (corporate social responsibility) objectives. The discounted products are only available for persons on low incomes – their income status is either confirmed by a support worker in the social sector, or beneficiaries provide a proof of their income themselves. The key characteristics of this approach to social tourism are that the product offered is standard, and no different to the experience offered outside of the scheme; and that participation in the programme is limited to social tourism users.

The inclusion model is also based on tourism products and services that are standard (the same for all participants, disadvantaged or not), but here the programme is not limited to disadvantaged target groups. An example of this interpretation of social tourism is the 'Chèques Vacances' (Holiday Voucher) scheme in France. Companies participating in this scheme give their employees the opportunity of making regular savings for their holiday, and these savings are supplemented by the employers and social organisations. The companies and social organisations benefit from reduced taxes and social contributions, which in effect constitutes a state subsidy, funded by tax payers. The employee can redeem the total value of the savings and supplementary contributions in the form of holiday vouchers, which can be used on a wide variety of items including lodgings, dining, transport, leisure and culture. This system aims to enable access to holidays to the greatest number, and is open to everyone irrespective of income. A motivation for making the system available to a wide range of employees is the economic impact of the holiday vouchers on the domestic tourism industry:

it is estimated that total spending is four times more than the volume of vouchers issued.



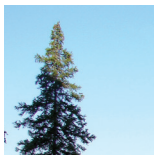
The adaptation model applies to programmes that offer a product with special provisions for social tourism users, that is thus specifically adapted to the needs of disadvantaged target groups, and where

participation is limited to these disadvantaged target groups. An example of this form of social tourism is Break, a charity in the UK providing short breaks and holidays for families with children with learning difficulties. The charity has four holiday centres where care staff are available to provide specialist care, and the centres have facilities for children with associated physical disabilities and high level care needs (www.break-charity.org). The holidays are offered at reduced prices: the holiday makers pay around half of the cost, and the charity's fundraising activities cover the other half of the stay. Other programmes in the adaptation model may focus on different target groups, such as senior citizens (e.g. National Benevolent Fund for the Aged, UK), children with long-term illnesses (e.g. Fondation de France, France), single-parent families (e.g. One Parent Families, UK) or teenage parents (e.g. CRZ, Belgium).

The stimulation model differs significantly from the ones described above, as in this model the social benefits created for the destination are a key motivation for provision. Destinations or providers in this category are often affected by a decline

in popularity and faced with spare capacity, particularly during the shoulder season, resulting in a lack of revenue and the need to terminate employment contracts. By attracting social tourism customers with specialised products during the shoulder season, a new market is created – initiatives of this type thus have economic as well as social benefits. An example of such a scheme is the IMSERSO programme in Spain. This programme offers dedicated holidays for senior citizens in coastal areas of Spain, during the shoulder season. The holidays are financed through contributions by beneficiaries (70 per cent in a single payment) and the public sector (30 per cent of cost). The holiday offer is only available to senior citizens and includes transport, meals and activities. The State aims to recover its contribution through cost savings and earnings: the scheme allows for longer seasons and increased employment in the coastal regions;

and the tourist expenditure may lead to higher tax income. Because of these factors, in addition to the potential social benefits for the participants, the contribution of the State is argued to be far outweighed by the financial benefit of the scheme (Minnaert et al 2010). Around 300 hotels participate in the scheme, which has benefited around 1 million participants in the 2008-2009 season and has been estimated to generate or maintain 79300 jobs. The Spanish government has allocated €105 million for the 2009-2010 season, and it claims that every Euro invested yields 4 Euro's in tax, spend and reduction in benefit payments (www.imserso.es).



9. Recommendations for the maximisation of economic and social impacts

The evaluation of the FETE pilot holidays leads to the following recommendations for maximising the economic benefits of social tourism exchanges for young people:

Work with suitable suppliers.

Although some providers are willing to allocate great discounts on luxury products for philanthropic reasons (and this is to be commended), these tend to be solutions that are not sustainable. The product may also not be suited to the needs of the target group. It is therefore recommended to approach suppliers that already work with the target group in the destination, and those that offer a low-cost product so that no excessive discounting is

required. Businesses position their product towards certain customer groups in commercial tourism – it is advisable for those businesses to do the same towards the Calypso target groups. Businesses are recommended to focus on one particular target group and provide the best possible product, rather than adopting a ‘one size fits all’ approach.

Suppliers with personal motivations to be involved in social tourism can develop into social enterprises.

The Sweden exchange was a success partly due to the dedicated support of the owners of the accommodation – one of the owners had been a teacher before. Gasthalla, the alternative

accommodation suggested for future holidays in Finland, is run by an owner who used to be a social worker. The owner showed a great personal commitment to be involved. Businesses like these have the potential to develop into social enterprises (or devolve part of the business as a social enterprise) which would give them access to new funding mechanisms and networks.

Encourage suppliers to think creatively, and do things differently.

By providing suppliers with information about the target group, they can think creatively about how to reduce their costs so they can make their product more attractive, competitive and profitable. The Belgian holiday for example would have included free tours and chocolate tastings offered by the

accommodation suppliers. The catering costs in the Finnish holiday are a prime example of costs that could have perhaps been reduced to make the holiday profitable.

The evaluation of the FETE pilot holidays leads to the following recommendations for maximising the social benefits of social tourism exchanges for young people:

Preparing and briefing the group is of utmost importance.

The social organisation in Belgium that recruited the participants usually runs home visits and pre-departure workshops for vulnerable young people who go on holiday with them. Due to time pressures



these were not possible for FETE. However, in the future it seems these are indispensable to ensure all group members have the same expectations and motivations for the holiday, and to avoid conflict. The preparation stage cannot be omitted if it is the aim to maximise the social benefits for the participants. Although FETE tried to encourage preparation via the development of 'holiday passports', a more thorough approach is needed.

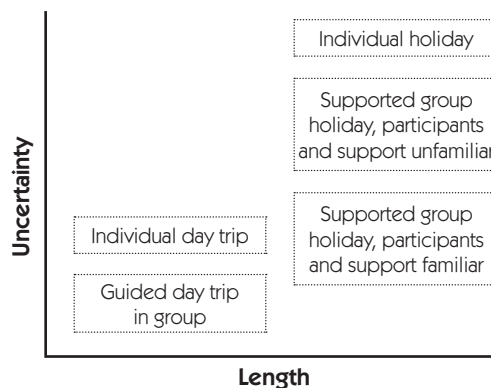
Consider the involvement of paid staff for young people with known behavioural problems, and carry out risk assessments.

Volunteers can be a good way to keep costs down but when dealing with challenging behaviour a paid member of staff may have the necessary skills and experience to assess and manage situations that can be potentially hazardous.

Find the right holiday for the right participant.

Previous research (Tourism Flanders 2008³) has shown that the selection of the right holiday type for the participant can improve the social outcomes

of the experience. The most vulnerable participants often benefit from a holiday where the level of uncertainty is reduced, either by reducing the length of the trip, or by going with familiar people (see figure below). In the context of international holidays, one could add to this that a familiar environment reduces the level of uncertainty. Careful briefing and preparation of the participant is needed to ensure that they are ready to embark on an international holiday with people they may have never met.



³ Tourism Flanders (2008). 'Holidays are for Everyone. Research into the Effects and the Importance of Holidays for People living in Poverty'. Brussels: Tourism Flanders



10. Financing recommendations for social tourism exchanges

Tax incentives

Tax holidays or tax deductions could be offered to businesses that are engaging in the development of social tourism products. These tax incentives could be offered in return for the increased off-season revenue and employment social tourism initiatives are likely to generate.

Low-interest or interest-free loans

Interest-free loans are offered to encourage certain types of behaviour. The Carbon Trust in the UK for example offers interest-free loans to SMEs to reduce energy consumption and encourage environmentally sound business practices. Similar loans could be offered to businesses that want to meet their social sustainability and CSR (corporate social responsibility) goals via social tourism products.

Product development grants

Like loans, grants can be offered to encourage product development. They can lead to increased

entrepreneurial activity in the region, and could be used for feasibility studies or skills development. These grants can be designed so that they are co-financing: this would ensure optimal buy-in from applying organisations.

Subsidies for social tourism participants in the target group

In a number of countries in Europe, funding streams are available to support the target group to participate in travel, via grants or holiday vouchers.

Application of existing funding streams to social tourism

A myriad of funding streams is often in existence targeting young people, although much of this funding is not designed for social tourism funding. Co-operations with organisations like Youth In Action or PEJA are avenues that could be explored further.

11. A perspective from the voluntary sector

A telephone interview was conducted with the social support organisation in Flanders (Lejo) that liaised with and sources the participants to the FETE holidays. Although their views are not necessarily representative for the whole sector (research into their attitudes on a more general level falls outside the realm of this study) it was deemed of interest to present their views here.

Lejo considered international social tourism to potentially bring a great added value to their target group of socially vulnerable young people. International travel is exciting and appealing to the youngsters they work with, and for many a unique opportunity to expand their travel horizons. However, it is also apparent that the threshold for international travel is high for this group, as their travel experience is usually limited. Therefore it is important to provide adequate support and preparation with each participant, including a home

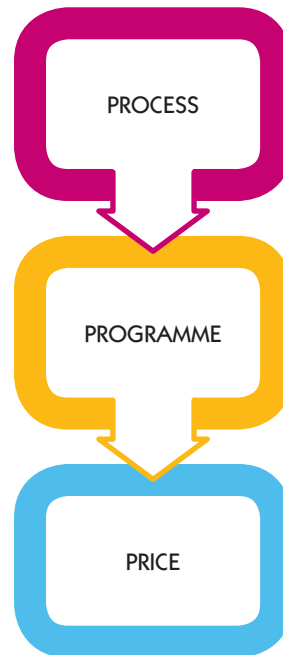
visit. From this perspective, FETE could be seen not as a mere holiday, but as a personal development trajectory or a process which culminates in the foreign experience.

Lejo is interested to develop further international social tourism programmes but would be keen to run these as exchanges between cultures – as was planned originally in the FETE project. The intercultural learning aspect would justify the additional use of resources for international travel. An appealing programme for Lejo is one that includes contact with local young people or local families, and that facilitates learning about local world views and customs.

Finally, price is an important inhibitor to travel: although Lejo appreciates the discounts that were provided, some aspects of the trip were still expensive (e.g. transport, food). The price for

the whole package needs to be attractive: if one element is expensive it can affect the feasibility of the whole holiday. Lejo was supported by Tourism Flanders to cover the costs of the holiday partly – they are aware however that this is not always possible elsewhere. They therefore recommend collaborations with international organisations such as 'Youth in Action' to raise awareness.

The views of Lejo can thus be summarised in the figure below: an attractive social tourism programme is based on a well-considered process, programme and price:







12. Conclusion: The future of FETE

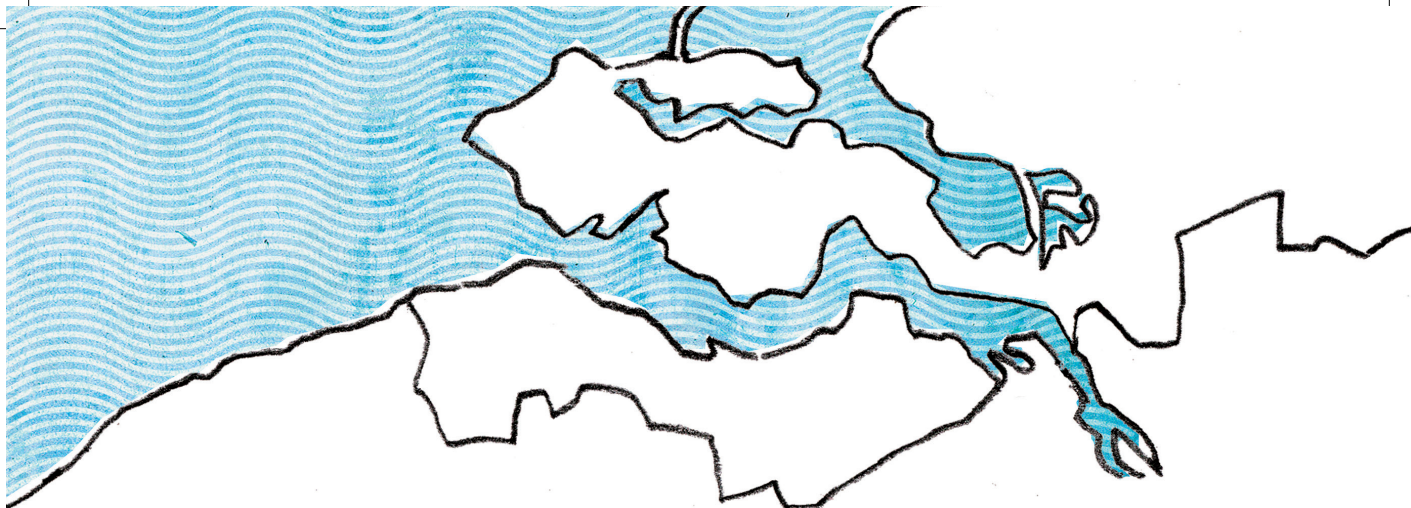
The FETE pilot holidays have been instrumental in highlighting the opportunities and challenges of international social tourism. Key buyers and suppliers have been identified in all participating regions, and the FETE team sees its future role mainly in the facilitation of links between the two groups. This report has provided recommendations on the product that is most appealing to buyers (fully organised group holidays) – it has also highlighted that the chain of communication between buyers and suppliers needed to be shortened. On the basis of these recommendations a web-based solution is proposed.

FETE has produced a website where holiday packages will be offered social organisations working with minors and young adults. Each package will be accompanied by a number of calendar periods to choose from. Independent travellers will have the opportunity to join these group holidays – the holiday will be confirmed when the minimum number of participants has been reached. To be self-sustaining, a commission could be charged to the suppliers when a holiday

is confirmed. Advertising opportunities could also be offered.

The current FETE partners are dedicated to form an initial product offer. All suppliers in the offer will be asked to sign the Charter of Social Hospitality. This offer will then be communicated and further supplemented. Trade shows and conferences of social support organisations are identified as key opportunities to introduce the FETE database to potential buyers in social organisations. Potential funding opportunities also need to be highlighted to make the database attractive to them. Within each of the regions the FETE partners will continue to build awareness about the business opportunities social tourism can offer in the shoulder season.

The management of the website is likely to be undertaken by one of the project partners in the short term, with the aim of moving the webmaster rights to an independent organisation in the youth travel / social tourism field in the longer term. It may also be possible to include the FETE offer in the STEEP database that is currently under development.



Appendix 1: Delivery of FETE exchanges

| KEY TASKS IN FETE METHODOLOGY | CALYPSO OFFICE OF THE REGIONS | BID PARTNERS |
|---|---|--|
| 1. Intermediary organisations working with the target group select candidates who can participate in the pilot exchanges during the low/shoulder season | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides guidance on the criteria for participation agreed during the workshop • Creates the database | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select the intermediary organisations • Screening if the criteria are met • Input data into database |
| 2. Provision of support for the target group, who have limited travel experience. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies best practices and examines how these can be implemented in other regions • Identifies programme-specific support options | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exchange best practices • Create a support system that can be replicated throughout Europe |
| 3. Selection of appropriate accommodation options and accreditation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalises the criteria for inclusion in the Charter of Social Hospitality and accreditation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise networking activities to identify and/or develop accommodation facilities • Education of staff about the Charter of Social Hospitality |

| KEY TASKS IN FETE METHODOLOGY | CALYPSO OFFICE OF THE REGIONS | BID PARTNERS |
|--|--|--|
| 4. Selection of 'coaches' in local social organisations to support the target group at the destination | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalises criteria for selection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select potential social organisations • Oversee selection of coaches |
| 5. Selection of appropriate attractions, event and activities for the target group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formalises criteria for selection and accreditation under the Charter of Social Hospitality | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise networking activities to identify and/or develop potential events, attractions and activities • Education of staff about the aims of the Charter of Social Hospitality |
| 6. Evaluation of economic and social impacts of the exchange, on the target group and the destination | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost-benefit analysis of the economic impact via measurement of spending and tax revenue, taking into account seasonality factor • Questionnaires and in-depth interviews with target group, social support organisations and coaches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide translation of the questionnaires • Facilitate the interviews |
| 7. Final evaluation and continuity planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepares final report and conference | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide data input where necessary |

Appendix 2: FETE research manual



Dear FETE coordinators, tour coordinators and group leaders,

45

My name is Lynn Minnaert and I will be carrying out the research element on the FETE project. I will be visiting each of the exchanges to collect data in August and September 2012 – I look forward to seeing some of you then.

This brief document gives you an overview of which information I am after, and how you can help me obtain it. I know you have lots to do already but the research report is important to obtain possible further funding in the future, so I would really appreciate it if you could read this before I arrive. I have tried to keep it short and sweet – so it won't take too much of your time.

See you soon!

Lynn

l.minnaert@surrey.ac.uk

1. When ?

Finland: 26 (evening) – 28 (AM) August

Main research day 27th August

Sweden: 9 (evening) – 11 (PM) September

Main research day 10th September

Belgium: 14 (evening) – 16 (PM) September

Main research day 15 or 16 September

Germany: 3 days between 18 and 23 September (Unconfirmed)

Main research day unconfirmed

2. What?

During my visit I would like to arrange interviews / focus groups with 3 groups of people:

- PARTICIPANTS
- SUPPLIERS
- ORGANISERS

PARTICIPANTS

I would like to hold 2/3 **focus groups** with participants. Each focus group will last approximately 30 minutes. The maximum number of participants per focus group is 10. The focus groups can take place during the evenings or the day – I can do smaller groups too if that is easier. Any space that is relatively quiet and undisturbed will do. If the participants do not speak English / Dutch / French / German please can there be an interpreter present.

Tour coordinators, please can you arrange a time and suitable space for this to happen?

We will also collect data via the holiday preparation booklets. Tear-out pages are inserted for this purpose.

SUPPLIERS

I would like to do **one-on-one interviews** or **small focus groups** with key suppliers for the programme: accommodation providers, attractions etc. For each destination I would be looking for 1-3 contributions. Interviews will last 15-30 minutes.

Regional / Tour coordinator, please could you make appointments with suitable providers?

ORGANISERS

I would finally like to interview the regional coordinator, tour coordinator and group leaders. These can be **one-on-one interviews** or **small focus groups**. Interviews will last around 30 minutes, focus group length depends on the size (estimated 1 hour).

Please can regional coordinators, tour coordinators and group leaders agree on a time for this to happen before my arrival?

Finally I would like to request that each regional coordinator / tour coordinator would **fill out the template** on the next page. It assesses the economic impacts of the exchange.

If you have any questions regarding this research plan, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Lynn Minnaert – l.minnaert@surrey.ac.uk
0044 7989 232 842

ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Destination:
Completed by:

REVENUE
Price charged per participants:
Total number of participants:

COSTS:
Please fill in the costs for the different categories, with an estimation of the discount allocated per provider. **Please calculate the discount compared to usual price in low season.**

| TYPE | COST | DISCOUNT (in %, example: 50%) |
|--|------|-------------------------------|
| Accommodation (total) | | |
| Supplementary catering (not provided by accommodation) | | |
| Activities (total) | | |
| Staff costs | | |
| Other (please describe below) | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

Which percentage of the accommodation would have been unused without this project? (E.g. if all rooms would have been likely to be empty without the FETE group, enter 100%)
.....
.....

Appendix 3

Proposal for a

Charter of Social Hospitality **Five small steps to quality social tourism**

Mission:

It is the aim of FETE to provide access to low-cost travel options in Europe for young people between the ages of 16 and 25 who have limited or no previous travel experience.

Aim of the Charter of Social Hospitality:

The FETE website allows eligible individual travellers and social support organisations to book tourism products with a range of providers. We are thrilled that you have decided to be one of them! This charter aims to optimise the experience of the FETE participants, and your own: it outlines a number of simple steps you can take to make the holiday run as smoothly as possible. By signing this Charter you show your dedication to high service standards for all your guests, including the FETE guests, and to facilitating quality tourism participation for this new client group.

Five small steps

By signing this charter, you declare that you will

- Look for creative ways to provide FETE participants with an enjoyable experience at a low cost, without compromising on the quality of the experience.
- Provide the same high quality services to FETE participants as to your other customers. Under no circumstance participation in the FETE programme will be a reason for the provision of a lower level of service.
- Be discreet about the financial status of the participants, so as not to cause embarrassment on their behalf.
- Make staff members aware that FETE beneficiaries have limited travel experience, and ask them to be attentive to any help the participants may require.
- Be aware of the great importance of a warm welcome. The first contact with the accommodation provider is often vital for tourists with limited travel experience, and we are dedicated to making FETE participants feel comfortable in their new surroundings.

The FETE project has been developed by

Tourism Flanders | Holiday Participation Centre (Belgium)
 with participation of Jämtland Härjedalen Turism (Sweden)
 Kainuun Etu Ltd / Snowpolis Oy (Finland)
 Tourismusverband Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Germany)
 BundesForum Kinder- und Jugendreisen (Germany)

Author Dr. Lynn Minnaert – University of Surrey

Coordination Sofie Poncelet - Tourism Flanders

Layout Katrien Davans

With the financial support of the Calypso
 Program of the European Commission



www.holidayparticipation.eu



flanders

LITTLE | DISCOVER | BELIEBIS

Jämtland Härjedalen





First European Travel Experience

Going abroad for the first time can be exciting, scary and challenging.

Exploring new things, meeting new people and discovering another country.

How did we select beneficiaries and suppliers? What are the social and economic impacts of the exchanges? What main challenges did we encounter? What are the recommendations and 'lessons learnt' for product development, for the maximisation of social and economic benefits and for financing future exchanges?

This report reviews...