

Seniors Go Rural (SenGoR)

Focus Group meeting Berlin – Grüne Woche

18th-January-2015, 10-12 a.m.
Meeting room Stand 8.2 (Latvia)



This project is co-funded by the European Union

MINUTES

The focus group meeting gathered 16 participants from 9 countries

Start of the meeting: 10:15 am

End of the meeting: 12:30 am

- **Introduction to the SenGoR project (15 min)**

The summary of objectives and content was attached for previous lecture. A resume of main objectives and outcomes was provided. Questions from Austria and Estonia were answered.

- **Experience with the senior segment so far in rural tourism (5 min each)**

ESTONIA – Raili Mengel-Sünt: Older people prefer organised tours / groups, with an “all included” idea. Individual travel is not popular with EE clients, but observed in foreign visitors from Western Europe. Dissemination is best made through specialized Journals for seniors – *more information will be provided.*

AUSTRIA – Hans Embacher. Growing demand based on the demographic development (“Turimona”). A specific organisation / brand already exists: “50+ Hotels” (contact Mr. Paschinger). Reference to a specialist that could assist (Dr. Kornbichler):

Dr. Alois Kronbichler
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NORWAY – Jan Tjosaas. Similar to Austria, so far no specific initiatives or actions are known in the country, but the demographic curve is evident.

SPAIN. Existing schemes that are much extended (IMSERO) only consider group travel. Very active organisation in the field of accessible tourism (PREDIF). Specific field survey will be organised in February, based on interviews with senior visitors during the last weekend of February (“long weekend” in Andalusia).

Other countries participated: GERMANY, UK, Denmark, Latvia, Serbia

In a following brainstorming round regarding topics or contents of interest that should be considered in the SenGoR outcomes, the following was gathered:

- gender-specific differences in ageing, as usually there are more women than men → check on gender-specific trends in demography.
- How is interest in RURAL services compared with others tourism segment.
- Does small-scale service appeal.
- What benefits do senior tourists expect / are attractive for them.
- Why do they go (motivations)
- Do destinations matter.
- Accessibility / transport schemes.
- Adapt experience-based products to senior needs.
- “Nesting” – go with grandchildren and similar schemes
- Activities this age group wants & create / (re)define existing products accordingly.
- Do we want or need a specific external labelling? Ambiguous to negative opinion, however internal (= for the tourism services) rules and certification can be useful. *Experience: use indirect labelling (“barrier-free” indicates that criteria are fulfilled without specificly mentioning it).*

Possible external / business partners:

- Insurance companies are likely to be able to provide risk-based criteria, but also for future cooperation and sponsoring of Senior-friendly services that keep risk reduction in their criteria list.
- Booking.com and similar platforms – do they see this at all as a relevant topic, are they interested in more detail, or have data that could be used
- Questions about any EU-wide comparative or comprehensive study or data on the above matters. AGE platform results?

• **Presentation, explanation, comments on the online survey (15 min)**

The survey draft at <http://goo.gl/forms/byfQwDIO1L> was explained. Information about this online service will be sent to all EuroGites members in February, data will then be gathered continuously until the end of 2015.

This online form can be personalized with the logo of specific organisations, and different language versions are possible – more information on this will be given at the meeting.

• **Commercial and administrative structures (15 min)**

SenGor not only creates guidelines for senior-friendly products and how to promote them. It also aims to provide practical tools that can help to reach the target market of seniors through direct agreements between organisations (ie. Senior Association of Holland with the Rural Tourism organisation in a German “Land”) for senior travel in low season. The two concepts were presented as initially suggested:

- The “**Holiday Cheque**” system as common in France
- **Guest- / ID-cards** as already used in cities or local destinations

UK proposed additionally the concept of “**Gift Vouchers**” – they self-finance because only about 80% of the sold vouchers are really used.

No clear opinion could be found on the preference or viability of either of the above. This discussion shall be deferred to the upcoming Seminar-Workshop to be held in June in Cyprus.

- **Information and promotion website for Rural Senior Tourism (15 min)**

The project includes the set-up of a specific new website to present and promote senior-orientated rural tourism products. Points discussed:

- Language versions – project partner languages plus (where not covered) English, German, French. If this is not included in the budget, another solution should be found.
- Common site “one only” from a start. However, the tender should include as additional value for scoring that the technology allows for easy creation of “white versions” to be customized by third-party (country, organisation, etc.)
- Combine Hobbies with Holidays (“Hoblidays / Holihobs”)
- Integrate in the EuroGites general image – a front page that attracts to rural tourism as whole; attention-calling flashlights “what can I find in different areas”; then break down to products, countries, or agreements
- Functionalities
 - Home page – concept and what to focus on
 - Overall search by products, map, language
 - Visual design, intuitive
 - Attention to accessibility criteria of webs
 - Adapted for mobile use
 - General travel information
 - User feed-back

NO decision was taken on the following:

- Sustainability of the site management (who is responsible, cost of maintenance and resources for it, ...)
- Only product promotion, or also a presentation of the “senior tourism” in a wider context; if yes, where on the site
- Include booking facilities? – if yes, how.

- **Open discussion and other matters of interest (remaining time)**

No further topics were raised.