

SUSTANCE

D.2.3.2 - Pilot action No. 2 (cross- border train connection HU-AT - Neusiedl am See - Fertőszentmiklós-Sopron)

Ex-post Pilot Action Report - GYSEV

Version 1
102023





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Abbreviations

AF	Application Form
WP	Work Package
PT	Public Transport
SPAG	SUSTANCE Pilot Advisory Grout
TCM	Technical coordination meetings



1 Overview

This report is related to the Sustance pilot action ex-post monitoring and assessment phase foreseen in Activity 2.2 “Solutions setting up: monitoring, peer review, assessment and dissemination”. In this report, each partner describes the key impacts and results of the Sustance pilot action implementation. The key goal is to assess from a qualitative and quantitative point of view the key effects of the pilot action in terms of environmental, social and economic impacts at local/regional/national levels.

In this report, it is possible to find relevant information on pilot implementation and testing key results, influence at local/regional and national levels and key impacts in terms of improvement of public transport offer in the testing areas. Moreover, it is possible to find information on the different strategies/solutions adopted for the continuation of the measure after the Sustance project conclusion.

2 Pilot Action activities. Key results and SWOT analysis

2.1 Pilot key results and reached expectations

In this paragraph, a brief description of the pilot's key results and main impacts at local, regional and national levels are presented. Moreover, each partner, starting from the objectives defined in the ex-ante and interim reports, is called to describe if the defined expectations are reached and if not why it is not possible.

The pilot action consisted of a seasonal cross-border weekend train service on the route Sopron - Fertőszentmiklós - Neusiedl am See between April and August 2024, targeting primarily tourists and visitors to the Lake Neusiedl region, with particular focus on bicycle tourists.

The pilot action was successfully implemented. On 20 weekends (40 traffic days; Saturdays + Sundays) two train pairs were offered per day, i.e. 8 train runs per weekend or 160 train runs in total.

The service provided for the first time ever a direct train service between Sopron in Hungary and the Seewinkel region east of Lake Neusiedl in Burgenland/Austria.

The target values for the KPIs set before the start of the action were two cases over-achieved. This was the case for KPI 1 (Number of passengers using the service), where the number of passengers was two times higher than expected and KPI 2 (Number of bicycles using the service), where the achieved number was by a factor six compared to the target. The target for KPI 3 (Willingness to discuss continuation of traffic after end of the project) can be considered at least as partly achieved as well, as discussions with relevant parties are ongoing, though on a general level. It is, however, too early to assess the outcome of those discussions; major obstacles - in particular related to financing - are to overcome and there is for the time being no commitment from either the Hungarian or Austrian side for continuation of the traffic and consequently no written declaration.

Among the positive outcomes of the pilot action should also be noted a number of good suggestions from various stakeholders on both sides of the border for further development of the service in the future. This demonstrates the interest by stakeholders in the pilot action in both countries. A preliminary assessment of the suggestions has been carried out by GYSEV (also to be presented and discussed at the 3rd Stakeholder Consultation and Final Dissemination Event) and further follow-up of selected elements is intended to take place even after the end of the project.



Figure: In this map the route of the train service is marked in green.

2.2 Pilot action SWOT analysis

In this paragraph, using the SWOT methodology, each partner is called to summarize the pilot action's key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. In particular, each partner is called to focus on the pilot action development and implementation phases in order to analyze the key internal and external factors influencing the successful development of the pilot action. Moreover, the the key pilot action problems are analyzed and adopted solutions are described.

No critical problems occurred in the preparation and implementation of the project. The pilot action was implemented as planned and without delays.

A major success of the pilot action was the high share of passengers travelling with bicycles (roughly one quarter). However, a high number of bicycles on trains in combination with huge, hard-to-predict fluctuations in demand pose potential safety issues. Effective and at the same time customer-friendly capacity management measures for bicycles on trains are still to be defined. Mandatory pre-booking could be a measure, but might in regional traffic not be appreciated by users.

A specific challenge arising during the project implementation is related to the funding rules under the Interreg-programme, resulting in unexpected unclarities regarding the eligibility and/or forms of proof of



certain cost elements related to the train service, e.g. costs for electric traction power and track access charges. In its current form, programme rules appear to be clearly prohibitive for activities like operation of trains, if operated with own resources and not being sub-contracted.

Table 1. Pilot Action SWOT analysis

Internal factors

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Modern, comfortable rolling stock could be provided by GYSEV/Raaberbahn • The train service was reliable, without major disruptions or train delays • Possibility to carry bicycles on connecting Intercity services between Sopron and Budapest was provided during the traffic days of the train service (supporting activity by GYSEV, not part of the project) • Accompanying marketing activities	• Relatively long planning and preparation were necessary before the start of the traffic, however, all activities were accomplished on time

External factors

Opportunities	Threats
• Sopron and the Lake Neusiedl region is attractive for tourism (including bicycle tourism), providing a good basis for the train service and further development in the future	• Funding posed a restriction on the scope of the pilot action. Some of the suggestions for improvement made by stakeholders could have been implemented within the project, if available funding would have allowed so. • High and strongly fluctuating, hard to predict numbers of bicycles on the trains are a potential safety issue; effective and at the same time customer-friendly capacity management measures for bicycles are still to be defined



3 Pilot Key results

3.1 Final KPIs assessment

In this paragraph, the key pilots' results are summarized (number of users, number of PT travels, etc.). Starting from the KPIs defined in the ex-ante and interim reports, each partner is called to describe both from the qualitative and quantitative point of view the key results reached by the pilot action.

The table below shows the fulfilment of the KPI targets set before the start of the action. As can be seen, for KPI 1 (Number of passengers using the service) the target value was over-achieved by roughly a factor 2 and for KPI 2 (Number of bicycles using the service) the target value was overachieved approximately by a factor 6. The target for KPI 3 (Willingness to discuss continuation of traffic after end of the project) can be considered at least as partly achieved as well, as discussions with relevant parties are ongoing, though on a general level. It is, however, too early to assess the outcome of those discussions; major obstacles - in particular related to financing - are to overcome and there is for the time being no commitment from either the Hungarian or Austrian side for continuation of the traffic and consequently no written declaration.

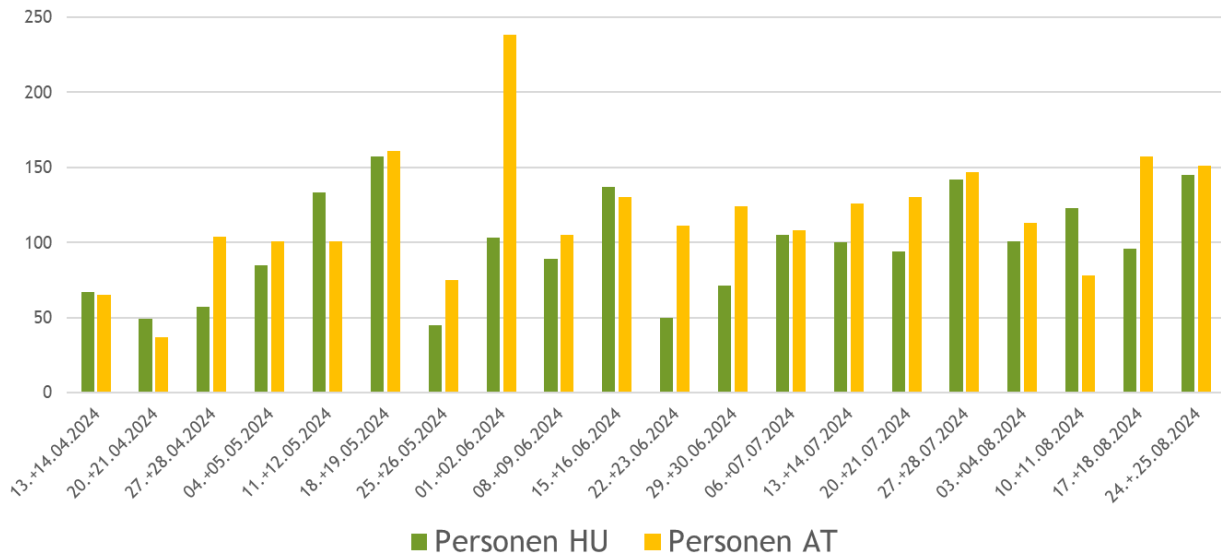
Table 2. Pilot KPIs

KPI	Brief description	Value	Target (if available)	Fact data
KPI 1. Number of passengers using the service	Number of passengers during the testing period of the trains. (The target value takes into account, that the period for building up passenger volumes is very short)	Number of passengers	1.000 passengers	Passengers HU: 1949 AT: 2362
KPI 2. Number of bicycles using the service	Number of bicycles transported by passengers during the testing period of the trains. (The target value assumes, that on average each tenth passenger is carrying a bicycle).	Number of bicycles	100 bicycles	Transported bicycles HU: 573 AT: 622
KPI 3. Willingness to discuss the continuation of traffic after the end of the project	Willingness expressed by stakeholders to discuss continuation of traffic after the end of the project	Declaration by relevant stakeholders	2 stakeholders	Discussions ongoing

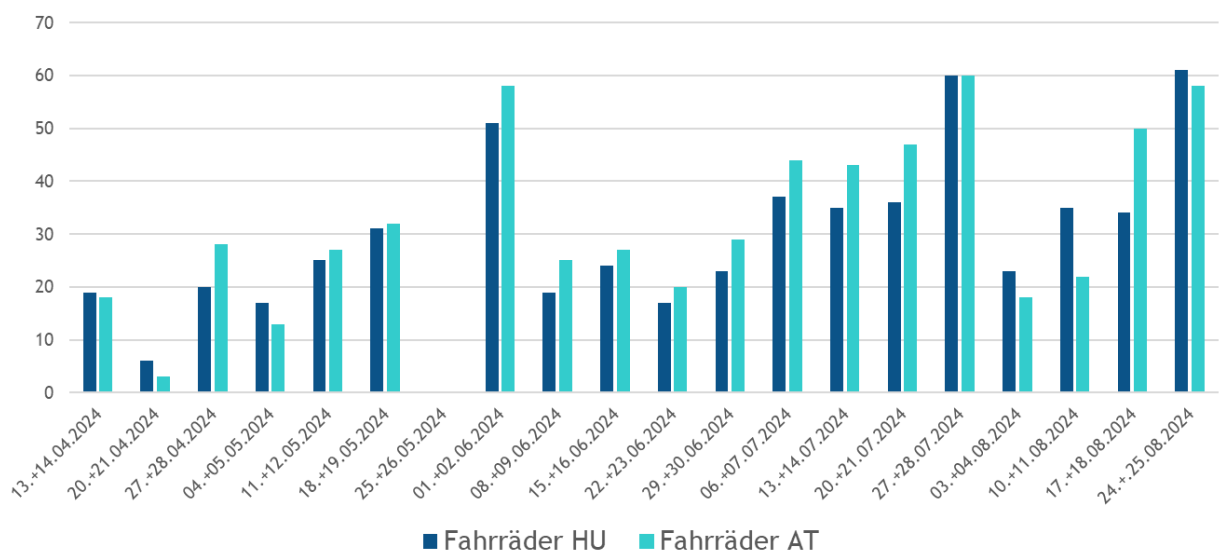
The following graphic shows the development of the number of passengers during the traffic season. As can be seen, there was a building-up phase from the start of the traffic in April 2025 until ca. beginning of June. After that phase the number of passengers fluctuated around a level of ca. 100 passengers/weekend. The last two weekends of operation showed again a higher usage around 150 passengers/weekend, probably by passengers being aware of the soon-to-be-expected end of the traffic. Taking into account, that the dedicated train offer was additional to the regular trains - whose timetable must not be affected - and that



on parts of the route a regular train often ran shortly before or after the dedicated train the numbers appear very positive.



The next graphic shows the development of the number of bicycles carried on the trains. The bicycle carriage was for free. The development replicates the building-up phase from the beginning of April until beginning of June. After that phase the number of bicycles varied strongly, with top numbers achieved again in the latter phase of the traffic season.



The sales statistics for the discounted global price tickets for the train can be seen in the following graphic. As can be seen the by far most popular tickets were the 24-hour Fertőtáj-ticket, followed by the Fertőtáj Single Ticket. In contrast, demand for the 48-hour version of the ticket (valid on both Saturday and Sunday) was rather low.

It should be noted, that also all other types of tickets valid on the route (like VOR-tickets and any other national and international train tickets) were accepted.

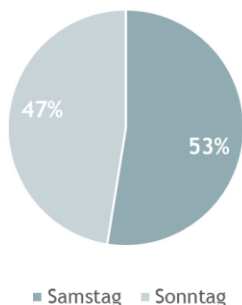


Bicycle transport was for free and therefore no bicycle tickets appear in the table.

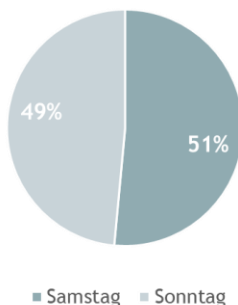
Fertő-táj vonat jegyértékesítési adatok_ Lake Ferto train sales data								
	Jegydarab / Number of tickets	04.hó	05.hó	06.hó	07.hó	08.hó*	Összesen	
Pénztári / online értékesítés - Ticket counter / online	FERTŐTÁJ SINGLE felnőtt / adult	28	72	75	72		247	
	FERTŐTÁJ SINGLE gyermek / child	1	0	8	5		14	
	FERTŐTÁJ 24 felnőtt / adult	28	84	114	102		328	
	FERTŐTÁJ 24 gyermek / child	3	13	7	7		30	
	FERTŐTÁJ 48 felnőtt / adult	0	8	0	4		12	
	FERTŐTÁJ 48 gyermek / child	0	0	0	0		0	
Fedélzeti értékesítés - Ticket onboard	Felnőtt egyúti (adult single	8	12	15	33		68	
	Felnőtt 24 órás	0	15	4	3		22	
	Gyermek egyúti / child single	0	0	2	2		4	
	Gyermek 24 órás / child 24	0	0	0	1		1	
	Összesen (jegydarab)	68	204	225	229		726	

The graphics below show the distribution of passengers respectively bicycles between Saturdays and Sundays. As can be seen, the numbers were relatively equally distributed between both days, with a slightly higher number of passengers using the train on Saturdays and a slightly higher number of bicycles carried on Sundays.

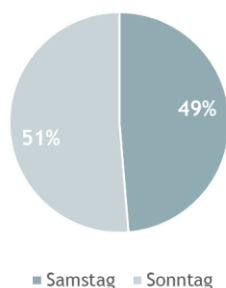
Passengers HU



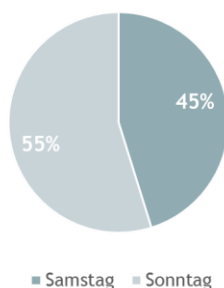
Passengers AT



Bicycles - HU



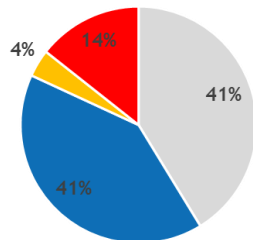
Bicycles - AT



A deeper analysis was carried out of the utilization of the bicycle capacity. Each train provided eight bicycle places. The utilization showed strong variations: On more than one-third of the train departures actually no bicycle was carried at all, while on 14-15% of the trains the number of bicycles exceeded capacity (all bicycles could be carried though, utilizing even train vestibules). The highest number of bicycles on a train was 22.

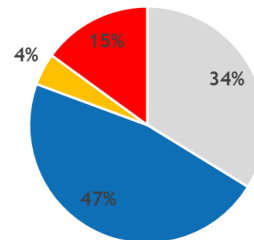


Utilization of bicycle capacity - HU
Total: 160 train runs



0 Fahrräder 1-7 Fahrräder 8 Fahrräder >8 Fahrräder

Utilization of bicycle capacity - AT
Total: 160 train runs



0 Fahrräder 1-7 Fahrräder 8 Fahrräder >8 Fahrräder

3.2 Pilot action evidence and communication/promotional strategies

3.2.1 Pilot action evidence

In this paragraph, the pilot action key implementation and testing evidence are described and shown. In particular, photos showing the pilot implementation and testing phases are presented.

The photos below show the Fertő-Train on the Lake Neusiedl line during one of the days of operation.

In the second photo, the train can be seen side-by-side with an ÖBB-train, which usually operates this line (GYSEV not having other train services than the Fertő-train).



3.2.2 Pilot action communication and promotional strategies

In this paragraph, the pilot action communication and promotional strategies and tools are presented.

On the first day of operation of the train service, 13 April 2024, GYSEV organized a start-up event at the station of Sopron. Speeches were held i.a. by the CEO of GYSEV, Mr. Szilárd Kövesdi, by the mayor of Sopron, Mr. Ciprián Farkas, and by Dr. Marcell Gábor from the Hungarian Ministry of Transport. The event was attended by national and regional media as well as by project partners and interested citizens (the event was open to the public). The photos below give an impression of the event.





Targeting the end-users of the services - passengers with and without bicycles - information posters were set up already ca. 2-3 weeks before the start of the traffic at all stations of the GYSEV network in Hungarian and German, see below (i.e. not only at stations along the route of the train) and information was also included in video-loops displayed on large monitors at stations (where available, e.g. in Sopron and Szombathely) as well as onboard of GYSEV's Intercity-trains between Sopron and Budapest.





Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Co-funded by the European Union

SUSTANCE

Már 2 EURO -tól!

ÚJ FERTŐ-TÁJ VONATOK

2024. április 13. – augusztus 25.

Fedezze fel az Unesco Világörökség részét az új Fertő-táj vonatokkal!

- közvetlen csatlakozás Budapest, Szombathely, Szentgotthárd irányából
- kényelmes, klimatizált motorvonat • alacsonypadlós szerelvény • könnyed fel-és leszállás

Egy és kétnapos aktív kikapcsolódás Fertő-táj felfedező jeggyel, tartalma:

- Sopron-Fertőszentmiklós-Pamhagen-Neusiedl am See viszonylaton közlekedő Fertő-táj vonatokon történő utazás
- Tetszőleges fel-és leszállás, rugalmas közlekedés • díjmentes kerekpártszállítás

Jegyváltás: • bármely vasúti jegypénztárban és online • www.gysev.hu/webáruhaz és MÁV Applikáció

FERTŐ-TÁJ VONATOK* MENETRENDI KIVONAT

Szentgotthárd (Szombathely) irányából 9167, 9185 Sopron érk.	8:51	14:51	Neusiedl am See	11:33	17:33
Sopron	9:08	15:08	Fertőszentmiklós	12:21	18:21
Budapest, Győr irányából IC 982, IC 994 Fertőszentmiklós érk.	9:19	15:19	Budapest, Győr irányába IC 995, IC 981 Fertőszentmiklós ind.	12:38	18:38
Fertőszentmiklós	9:38	15:38	Sopron	12:47	18:47
Neusiedl am See	10:26	16:26	Szentgotthárd (Szombathely) 9184, 9168 irányába Sopron ind.	13:08	19:06

* Közlekedik: 2024. 04. 13. – 08. 25. között szombati és vasárnapi napokon. A táblázatban megjelölt IC vonatokon a kerekpártszállítás biztosított. Pamhagen és Neusiedl am See állomások között minden állomáson és megállóhelyen megáll.

% A Fertő-táj vonatokra történő átszállás esetén bármely belföldi induló állomásról 50% alkalmi menetértéki kedvezmény vehető igénybe. A kedvezmény jogosultsága visszaítélés a jegyvizsgálat során a Fertő-táj felfedező jegy felmutatásával igazolható. A belföldi vonatokra kerekpártya váltása kötelező, amelyre a kedvezmény nem vonatkozik.

Reports appeared in print and online media both in Hungary and Austria/Burgenland already before start of the traffic. About the start-up-event a TV-report was shown at prime time in the national evening news of Hungarian television as well as a report in regional television. A list of TV-reports and media and news releases you find below.

TV reports:

- Hungarian national evening news on 13 April 2024 (<https://mediaklikk.hu/video/hirado-2024-04-13-i-adas-8/> ; min. 15:23 - 19:17)
- Regional television report on 15 April 2024 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YV409hSXcqM&t;> min. 8:23 - 11:26)

Media and news releases in Hungary and Austria (selection):

- <https://www2.gysev.hu/hirek/aprilistol-augusztusig-ferto-taj-vonatokat-kozlekedtet-a-gysev>
- <https://www.raaberbahn.at/aktuelles/news/detailseite/neusiedler-see-fahrradzuege>
- <https://www.vor.at/aktuelles/news/news/neusiedler-seebahn-neue-ausflugs-zuege-in-der-sommersaison>
- <https://cyberpress.hu/2024/elindult-az-also-aprilistol-augusztusig-ferto-taj-vonatokat-kozlekedtet-a-gysev/>
- <https://www.vezess.hu/hirek/2024/04/14/uj-vonat-indul-magyarorszagon-sok-szeretni-fogjak/>
- <https://www.startlap.hu/utazas/fertotaj-vonat-magyarorszag-ausztria/>



- https://www.enyugat.hu/cikk/48243_aprilistol_augusztusig_ferto_taj_vonatokat_a_gysev
- https://sokszinuvidek.24.hu/mozaik/2024/04/13/ferto-to-ferto-taj-vonat-gysev/#google_vignette
- <https://volksgruppen.orf.at/magyarok/stories/3252940/>
- https://hvg.hu/elet/20240413_elindult-az-első-ferto-taj-vonatjarat-ausztriaba
- <https://hirado.hu/belfold/cikk/2024/04/13/elindult-a-ferto-taj-vonatjarat-ausztriaba>
- https://lelepo.hu/ferto-taj-vonat/#google_vignette
- <https://spabook.net/blog/blog-hu/ferto-taj-vonat-gysev/>
- <https://turizmus.com/utazas-kozlekedes/ferto-taj-vonatjarat-gysev-zold-ut-1191719>
- <https://roadster.hu/ferto-taj-vonatjarat-ausztia/>
- <https://www.ikvahir.eu/kozvetlen-vonattal-sopronbol-a-ferto-tajra/20553>
- <https://budapesthirek.hu/2024/04/13/szuper-hirt-kozolt-a-gysev-aprilistol-indulnak-a-ferto-taj-vonatok-friss-jegyakkal/?ModPagespeed=off>
- <https://hirek.ma/2024/04/13/elindult-ferto-taj-vonatjarat-ausztriaba-ie9f3dB>
- <https://nalunk.ujso.com/haza-es-nagyvilag/kirandulas-a-ferto-korul-vonattal>
- <https://hirnavigator.hu/hir/6818632-aprilistol-augusztusig-ferto-taj-vonatokat-kozlekedtet-a-gysev>
- <https://www.inforabakoz.hu/hirek/olvas/fedezd-fel-az-unesco-vilagorokseg-reszet-az-uj-ferto-taj-vonatokkal-2024-03-24-190000>
- <https://www.savariaforum.hu/rovat/elindult-a-ferto-taj-vonatjarat-ausztriaba>
- <https://www.vaol.hu/helyi-kozelet/2024/04/elindult-a-ferto-taj-vonatjarat-ausztriaba>
- <https://infostart.hu/eletmod/2024/04/13/elindult-a-ferto-taj-vonatjarat-ausztriaba>
- <https://hivonal.hu/hirkep/9566702>
- <https://www.alon.hu/orszagos-hirek/2024/04/elindult-a-ferto-taj-vonatjarat-ausztriaba>
- https://frissvideok.hu/regionalis/1797447-video-felszallas-utan-igy-indult-el-az-első-ferto-taj-vonat-sopronbol#google_vignette
- <https://www.bvz.at/neusiedl/neusiedler-seebahn-neue-ausflugs-zuege-zwischen-sopron-und-neusiedl-am-see-417446971>
- <https://www.sopronmedia.hu/cikkek/dr-farkas-ciprian-a-terseg-turisztikai-vonzerejet-novelik-az-uj-ferto-taj-vonatok>
- <https://iho.hu/hirek/aprilistol-augusztusig-ferto-taj-vonatokat-kozlekedtet-a-gysev>
- <https://www.hellovidek.hu/utazas/2024/04/13/szuper-hirt-kozolt-a-gysev-aprilistol-indulnak-a-ferto-taj-vonatok-friss-jegyakkal>
- <https://www.kisalfold.hu/helyi-kozelet/2024/04/elindult-az-első-ferto-taj-vonat-sopron-es-az-ausztriai-neusiedl-am-see-kozott-fotok>



4 Pilot action key outcomes

4.1 Lessons learned and replicability suggestions

In this paragraph, each responsible pilot action partner presents the main lessons learned during the pilot development, implementation and assessment. A specific focus is dedicated to the provision of relevant information and suggestions to external stakeholders interested in developing similar initiatives in other territorial contexts.

The pilot action raised interest among stakeholders on both the Hungarian and Austrian side of the border.

A number of suggestions for further developing the traffic were made during the three stakeholder consultations carried out during the project. The table below shows the suggestions made.

	Suggestion for further development (without ranking)
1	Extension of traffic period to the shoulder season (in particular September and October)
2	Increased frequency of departures
3	Integration of the section Pamhagen - Fertőszentmiklós - Sopron into the VOR-tariff
4	Extension of the route from Neusiedl am See to Vienna
5	Integration with the “bicycle train” of ÖBB, operated between Vienna and Pamhagen during the tourist season
6	Creation of a „circle line” around Lake Neusiedl (Sopron - Fertőszentmiklós - Neusiedl am See - Eisenstadt - Wulkaprodersdorf - Sopron)
7	Additional stop in Sarród (on the Hungarian side between Fertőszentmiklós and Pamhagen)

There were also ideas raised by stakeholder to combine two or more of the suggestions above into a “package”.

GYSEV made a preliminary assessment of the suggestions as follows:

Suggestion 1 - Extension of traffic period to the shoulder season (in particular September and October)

- Desirable to cover demand outside the main season
- Operationally relatively easy to implement
- Depending on financing



Suggestion 2 - Increased frequency of departures

- Desirable to increase flexibility for travellers (especially bicycle tourists)
- Probably additional trainsets needed, but moderate increase during weekends may be feasible
- Extension of offer to weekdays (Mo-Fr) difficult for reasons of rolling stock availability
- Depending on financing

Suggestion 3 - Integration of the section Pamhagen - Fertőszentmiklós - Sopron into the VOR-tariff

- Desirable from a passenger perspective; facilitating use of the train offer
- May exploit new market potentials even outside the touristic market
- Requires strong political support and negotiations between a high number of actors to both sides of the border
- Probably only feasible in a long-term perspective
- Depending on financing

Suggestion 4 - Extension of the route from Neusiedl am See to Vienna

- Desirable to better exploit market potential in the Vienna region
- Probably additional trainsets needed due to considerably bigger route length
- Timetable options to be checked
- Depending on financing

Suggestion 5 - Integration with the “bicycle train” of ÖBB, operated between Vienna and Pamhagen during the tourist season

- Realisation of synergies
- Cooperation between more actors (i.a. two railway undertakings (ÖBB + GYSEV/Raaberbahn) needed
- Timetable options to be checked
- Depending on financing (higher complexity of financing)

Suggestion 6 - Creation of a „circle line” (Ringzug) around Lake Neusiedl (Sopron - Fertőszentmiklós - Neusiedl am See - Eisenstadt - Wulkaprodersdorf - Sopron)

- Desirable to better cover the Lake Neusiedl region as a whole
- Better connection between east and west side of the lake - more options for bicycle tours
- New direct connections, i.a. between the Eisenstadt (capital of Burgenland) and Sopron (today always change of trains in Wulkaprodersdorf)
- Timetable options to be checked (note: all lines are single track!)
- Depending of financing



Suggestion 7 - Additional stop in Sarród (on the Hungarian side between Fertőszentmiklós and Párhagen)

- Improving accessibility to the Hungarian part of the Lake Neusiedl region
- Operationally uncritical
- Infrastructure measures required (platform, platform equipment and access route)
- Depending on financing of infrastructure measures

As potential solutions for financing of a continuation of the traffic the following two approaches were identified:

Approach 1: Complete integration into the public service contracts for the regional train traffic, on both sides on the border

- Permanent solution
- Complex negotiations needed between high number of actors in both countries necessary
- Strong political support needed in both Hungary and Austria
- Probably only feasible in a long-term perspective

Approach 2: Project related financing by suitable support programme

- Identification of suitable support programme(s)
- Temporary solution
- Possible follow-up project under Interreg, e.g. test of modified traffic offer (e.g. Ringzug around Lake Neusiedl)
- Probably easier and faster feasible than approach 1 (if suitable support programme can be identified)

4.2 Strategies for the Sustance pilot action follow-up after the project conclusion

In this paragraph the adopted strategies and strategies for the pilot action continuation after the project conclusion are described.

GYSEV intends to follow up on the stakeholder consultations through bilateral meetings with relevant parties even after the end of the project, with the aim:

- 1) To further assess the feasibility of suggestions for improvement, including combinations of suggestions
- 2) To identify possible funding sources
- 3) In case of a follow-up project to identify potential project partners



4.3 Pilot Action influence on local, regional and national policies

In this paragraph, starting from the stakeholder's engagement strategies analyzed in the ex-ante and interim reports, a brief description of the key pilot action influence on local, regional and national policies is presented.

The primary influence of the Pilot Action must be seen in awareness raising among decision makers on mostly regional and local level, and to a certain extent on national level, for the role of Public Transport in general and rail transport in particular as a means to foster environmentally-friendly tourism and for sustainable mobility solutions in ecologically sensitive areas like the Lake Neusiedl/Fertő National Park region.

The Pilot Action has initiated a - continuing - exchange with stakeholders on potential solutions for a future continuation of the service, including possible adaptations in terms of i.a. routing and timing, taking into account the feedback received during the stakeholder consultations and the final dissemination event.

Certainly, the Pilot Action did not (yet) result in any formalised changes to local, regional or national policies - in the sense, that it would be reflected in official policy documents - but taking into account the limited timeframe of the project and the rather longer-term revision cycles of such documents, it was also not reasonable to expect this.

However, the action laid a foundation in order to achieve a potential impact on policies in the medium- to longer term. This impact could be strengthened by follow-up activities and projects to test further developed service concepts and to “keep the discussion alive”. This would be of importance not least taking into account, that certain challenges in connection with a future continuation of the service cannot be overcome in a short time-frame, but requires perseverance and commitment.



5 Conclusions

This final paragraph provides a synthesis of the Sustance pilot key results, lessons learned, replicability factors and all the other relevant information related to the pilot development, implementation and assessment.

The pilot action was successfully implemented. The action was well covered by print and online media as well as television. Passenger numbers and the number of bicycles carried exceeded expectations. Several suggestions by stakeholders how to further develop the service in case of a possible future continuation demonstrate a strong interest in the pilot action.

The service implemented under the pilot action could serve as a blueprint for similar cross-border services in Europe, if there is a touristic market developed on both sides of the border.

Programme rules under the Interreg-programme are, however, currently discouraging for the operation of trains, if own resources are used for the traffic.



6 Co-design and peer-review process

6.1 Co-design

In this paragraph, a brief description of the co-design activities updates are provided. In particular, are presented the updates about the information provided in the interim report.

Co-design activities consisted mostly of an exchange with partners directly involved in the operation of similar cross-border train services between Italy, Slovenia and Croatia. This exchange took place on 7 December 2023 in form of an online-meeting organized by the Lead Partner.

No further co-design activities were necessary, since GYSEV has experience in planning and operating train services, both in form of regular train services and extra trains.

6.2 Stakeholder engagement

Please briefly list here the main recommendations/suggestions that emerged during the third round table discussion with Stakeholders (D.3.3.3) and summarize the key strategy you intend to adopt in order to integrate these suggestions in the pilot development/implementation phase.

The main recommendations/suggestions arising from the third stakeholder consultation were the following (partly confirming those already made in previous stakeholder consultations):

- 1) Extension of traffic period to the shoulder season (in particular September and October)
- 2) Increased frequency of departures
- 3) Integration of the section Pamhagen - Fertőszentmiklós - Sopron into the VOR-tariff
- 4) Extension of the route from Neusiedl am See to Vienna
- 5) Integration with the “bicycle train” of ÖBB, operated between Vienna and Pamhagen during the tourist season
- 6) **Creation of a „circle line” around Lake Neusiedl (Sopron - Fertőszentmiklós - Neusiedl am See - Eisenstadt - Wulkaprodersdorf - Sopron)**
- 7) Additional stop in Sarród (on the Hungarian side between Fertőszentmiklós and Pamhagen)
- 8) Integration of the service in regional tourist card offer (e.g. Burgenland Card)

Suggestion No.6 raised the strongest interest from the side of the stakeholders and was discussed extensively, preferably in combination with Suggestions No.4 and No.5. Also, the extension of the traffic period to the shoulder season was considered important (Suggestion No.1). The integration of the service in regional tourist card offers (Suggestion No.8) arose as an idea during the consultation.

Stakeholders supported the assessment by GYSEV, that an integration of the Hungarian section into the VOR-tariff would be desirable, but complicated and, if at all, only feasible long-term.

The idea to combine a train ticket with tourist card offers in the region (e.g. Burgenland-Card) was new and not raised in previous stakeholder consultations. Also, the possibility to combine different suggestions in order to achieve synergies was extensively discussed.

Regarding financing, stakeholders shared the assessment, that it is the most challenging aspect for a future continuation and expressed, that a project-based financing for testing a modified traffic solution might be the most feasible way forward.



6.3 Peer-review key results

Please briefly list here the main recommendations/suggestions that emerged during the third peer-review event and summarize the key strategy you intend to adopt in order to integrate these suggestions in the pilot assessment phase.

The peer review, carried out by the international railway expert Mr. Simon Fletcher, took up several suggestions made by the stakeholders in the third (and also the preceding second) stakeholder consultation. In particular the link to the ÖBB bicycle train was considered deserving attention and also the idea for a modification of the route to a “Circle Train” around Lake Neusiedl was discussed.

A particular aspect raised by Mr Fletcher was the safety of bicycle transport onboard trains, especially in cases, when the (nominal) carrying capacity is exceeded. Here, the conclusion of the discussion was, that a proper risk assessment and an effective capacity management would be necessary, possibly resulting in a need for mandatory pre-booking. However, this could also lead to negative market reactions, at least when it comes to local/regional traffic, where customers cannot always plan their trip precisely in advance. GYSEV in principle agrees with these considerations, however, since the issue is not specific to this particular train service, a sector-wide approach on national and preferably even European level would be preferred.

Further recommendations by Mr. Fletcher were, that careful analysis of traffic and sales statistics is important as well as good promotion of the service. GYSEV has carried out a thorough analysis of traffic and sales data and is also making it available in other related projects and activities. The service operated under the Pilot Action received very good media coverage in print and online media as well as in television. Social media channels were used as well.

Overall, Mr. Fletcher shared the assessment, that the Pilot Action was highly successful and on key targets - e.g. the number of bicycles carried - overachieved the target values.