



INTERREG IIIB NORTHERN PERIPHERY PROGRAMME • INTERREG IIIB NORTHERN PERIPHERY PROGRAMME

**MAIN PROJECT
FINAL PROJECT REPORT**

Project Name: UseVenue
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Measure: 2.2

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Executive Summary

Project Information & Background

The idea of UseVenue came from a visit to the World Swamp Soccer Championships in Hyrynsalmi, Finland in 2002. This event attracts thousands of participants and visitors and in one long weekend creates over 1M€ of revenue to the local economy. Accommodation for the visitors is provided mainly by two local ski centres, hence creating valuable low season income for these centres and associated businesses. The success of such an unusual event as Swamp Soccer gave the idea that there must be other successful unusual events out there and if these events can succeed in their own areas why can they not succeed also in other areas. Hence the two main project objectives:

1. Diversify the use of traditionally seasonal venues (e.g. ski resorts)
2. Internationalise successful events and create event networks across the Northern Periphery Region.

In January 2003 the organisers of Swamp Soccer, Kainuun Paroonit, started the partner search to build a project with the help of the Oulu company Oy Culmentor Ltd. The idea was popular and partners were found. The Preparatory project ran in the Summer of 2003 and the official project started 1st January 2004 and ended 31st Decenmebr 2006.

Project Purpose

The project purpose was to stimulate event activity in Northern areas and in doing so create event related jobs and give the youth more reasons to stay and pursue a career in the area. The two main objectives of the project are very compatible in that events need venues and venues need events. It follows that event stimulation will also increase the quantity of work places at event venues and associated businesses (of which there can be many at ski resorts).

Activities

The first activity of the project was for the partners to inform local people about the project and to generate participation interest. Once local interest was generated and event organisers identified, brainstorming sessions were held to determine how best to develop event activity. Lists of event ideas and best practices were shared between partner areas and study trips arranged to give event organisers first hand knowledge of these new events. Not only were new events brought to partner areas but existing events were also supported and developed using new ideas brought in by the project.

To support the new event activity a comprehensive Event Manual was created in four different languages. This manual gives the event organiser solid guidelines on how to make his/her event a success. To support the manual a booklet of event case studies was created, in which four events are used as practical examples in event management. After the event it is important to get the correct feedback from the correct sources in order to maintain standards and improve them where necessary. To address this UseVenue worked with the organisers of the Helsinki 2005 World Athletics Championships to create quality assurance questionnaires and data collection packages.

Final Results

The final results of the project were mixed. The joint work to create the events manual, case studies and quality assurance were very successful. The level of success in partner areas in increasing event activity was seen to be largely dependent on the willingness of local event organisers to work with open minds and willingness to learn from others. In the most successful partner areas the legacy of UseVenue will continue indefinitely.

It is incontestable that UseVenue has created long lasting event activity across Northern Europe. It is also incontestable that the money invested in the project has already been paid back in event revenue to the partner areas. Awareness of events and how to run them has increased and local event organisers are better equipped to take an event idea and to make it a success.

Use of Finance

External Experts: The project hired external experts to take care of a number of different tasks. This is an effective way of making sure that certain tasks are completed in a professional and timely fashion. Examples of contracted tasks are: Project Management, Event Expertise, Marketing Consultation and Graphic Design.

Partners' Own Work: Those partners that were able to dedicate more time on the project were clearly able to oversee the production of more work and in a timely fashion. Partners that took on project tasks in addition to their already full time schedules fell behind with tasks and as a result the project was less efficient in their areas. It is a good idea to make sure that a project partner can dedicate enough resources to the project. However, it is a balancing act as it is desired to concentrate as much resources as possible on the project doers.

Travel: Six partner seminars were spaced evenly throughout the project. These were in some cases large, expensive and rather clumsy and had limited value to the project. Successful aspects of these were when they were used to generate local interest in the project. To this end it would have been better for the project to carry out a 'road show' whereby all the partners travel around all the partner areas at an early stage in the project. This must be at an early stage as this is when interest must be generated.

Study trips were successful when the partners selected the correct people to send on the study trips. In general too much money is squandered on travel and there is too much misplaced value put on 'seeing things and meeting people'. Seeing things and meeting people are of course essential but they must be the correct things and correct people.

Publicity & Promotion: This was an area that had particular practical significance to the UseVenue project. Events with limited budgets were able to create professional websites and artwork, brochures, etc. that will benefit them for many years to come. More money in this area would have been useful.

Meetings: The project paid for use of a web meetings system. When no technical difficulties were experienced this was a very useful way for partners to keep in close proximity to each other (albeit in a virtual fashion). This reduced the need for travel for the purposes of decision making and proved to be a comfortable and efficient method of communication. Initially some partners were sceptical but all agreed in the end of the system's worth.

Project Results

Events Manual – A step-by-step guide to organising an event.

Case Studies Booklet – 4 practical event examples.

Quality Assurance – Comprehensive questionnaires and data collection, which cover all important quality aspects of events.

Website – Informing the public about the USEVENUE project. Controlled dissemination of project documents to project partners via an intranet.

Net Meeting System – allowing partners to meet and share information "face to face" without actually being face to face.

Event Networks

Swamp Soccer – Already been staged since 2004 in both Iceland www.myrabolti.com and Sweden www.swampsoccer.se. and in Scotland since 2006 www.swampsocceruk.co.uk. Co-operation with media networks initiated to document the event in the four USEVENUE countries.

Summer Ice Fishing – Two separate events held in Storuman and Tärnaby, Sweden (idea taken from Pudasjärvi, Finland)

Northern Marathons Series – Loch Ness, Reykjavik, Tromsø and Levi marathons are creating “The Northern Marathons Series” (name still open). Only Loch Ness is within the USEVENUE network so the project has the benefit of broadening its network. This is a joint marketing initiative to encourage tourist runners to come to the Northern Periphery areas to participate in mass running events. Kick off meeting held in Tromsø on 6th January 2006. Co-operation is becoming closer. www.northern-marathons.com

FIS Nordic Ski marathons Cup – Mass participant marathon ski events from Isafjordur, Oslo, Övertorneå and Oulu have formed an alliance under the FIS to create this Cup Series. This is a joint marketing initiative that will encourage cross border co-operation in ski events across Northern Europe. Only Isafjordur is within the USEVENUE network so the project benefits from the broadening of our network both in and out of the NPP area. The first year was a success with increased travel of skiers between the northern periphery countries. The network is now seeking sponsors and have agreed to hold annual meetings between the partners. www.nordic-ski-marathon.com

Numerous new events in partner areas.

It is fair to say that the project's results are in line with the original project objectives, however not on such a large scale as was written in the application. At the application stage it was expected that each partner local area would found 3 new events per year for the 3 years of the project. This was not achieved. During the project it was found that with the limited resources at hand it would be better to concentrate on a smaller amount of events to give them the best possible chance of gaining sustainable status. Also it was found that the development of existing events was often found to be a better use of resources.

The international aspect of the project was fulfilled according to original plans with the Event Manual, Case Studies Booklet and Event Quality Assurance. The awareness of event organisers in our partner areas has increased and they now have an excellent knowledge network at their disposal. The event networks created like The Northern Marathons and the FIS Nordic Ski Marathons Cup are real success stories not only in their conception but also in the fact that they mainly include partners from outwith the UseVenue area, hence increasing the size of our network.

Transnationality

The most successful partners in this project were those that embraced the transnationality aspect of the project. We have seen that event ideas from elsewhere have been successfully ‘transplanted’ to partners’ own areas. Idea and best practice sharing within the group was a great benefit to all that were prepared to take part. The international joint marketing aspect of the afore mentioned event networks is bring ‘tourist sportsmen and women’ to our northern areas.

There is no doubt that partnerships formed and contacts made during this project will continue to benefit those that wish to take advantage of them long after UseVenue officially finished.

Dissemination and Transfer of Experience

Information diffusion of events

Each event was responsible for its own information diffusion. This was carried out in normal ways, such as; web sites, fliers, posters, adds in media etc.

Information diffusion of USEVENUE project

Press releases – At the beginning of the project, each partner area made press releases to local the media.

Website – www.usevenue.net . This will cease to exist from the end of 2007 as there will be no longer any funding to pay for its up keep.

Seminars – Each local area hosted its own project seminar (With the exception of the Swedes because their seminar was due to be held at the time when Swedish funding was at its most uncertain. It was therefore cancelled). Each seminar received good local media coverage and was attended by locals interested in participating in event organisation. Some seminars attracted many such locals and others attracted less. Seminars held were as follows:

Kick-off seminar, Pudasjärvi, Finland, May 2004

Plans were made for project activities

Seminar 2, Isafjordur and Snaefellsnes, Iceland, October 2004

Partners presented their areas, events, ideas and progress to other partners and local participants. Partner and steering group meetings were held.

Seminar 3, Aviemore and Carrbridge, Scotland, May 2005

Partners presented their areas, events, ideas and progress to other partners and local participants. Partner and steering group meetings were held. Workshops were held for locals and partners concerning event organisation, ticketing and media relations.

Seminar 4, Tromsø, Norway, October 2005

Only 3 partners were able to attend this seminar so it became a clinic for project management to answer partner questions on budgeting, reporting etc. Contact was made with Tromsø with regard to joining the Northern Marathons series and the NPP held a partnerariat, which was attended by usevenue.

Final Seminar, Pudasjärvi, Finland, October 2006

Partners presented their areas, events, ideas and progress to other partners and local participants. Partner and steering group meetings were held. Clinic held on how to close down the project with regard to finance and reporting.

Other Media

Local Isafjordur radio interviewed Mark Middleton, Culmentor Oy and Runar Oli Karlsson, Isafjordur town about the USEVENUE project.

Swedish radio interviewed Carl-Axel Nordenberg, Vildmannen about the USEVENUE project.

Television and radio coverage of the new swamp soccer events in Sweden, Iceland and Scotland have reached the homes of tens of millions of people.

DVD Report

A report of all USEVENUE activities and pictures is compiled on a dvd for use by anyone.

Events Manual & Case Studies

These are in both hard copies and pdf format. They are available in English, Swedish, Finnish and Icelandic.

Conclusions

In conclusion we can definitely say that UseVenue has been a successful project. Events and event networks exist, and will continue to exist, that did not exist before UseVenue. The Event Manual is a particularly strong and useful publication.

If we could do UseVenue again we would insist on partner areas using their budget in a way that enabled them to have a project worker that could commit sufficient time to the project. It was found in some areas that project tasks were added to what were already very busy working schedules, and this resulted in tasks being late or simply not done. Another change would be to carry out a 'road show' at an early stage in the project whereby all partners would travel around other partner areas to gain local support for the project. This would replace the idea of having seminars in partner areas evenly spaced throughout the project.

On an administration level, a reporting system would be used that would enable automatic transfer of data from partners' book keeping systems to the project reporting system. In the 21st century it is not acceptable to expect project administrators to input the same numbers to reports on as many as 5 or 6 different occasions. Many systems exist that are specifically designed to reduce the reporting work load of such projects. Such systems must be used if projects are to be run efficiently. There is no excuse for accepting the use of inefficient systems and procedures as a matter of course. Efficient use of time leads to efficient projects. Efficient projects produce better results!

UseVenue