



PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE ALPS

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1. Introduction

In this paper, the Netherlands Alpine Platform (NAP) will describe the role and function of multi-stakeholder partnerships in Dutch initiatives for developing and promoting more sustainable forms of alpine tourism.

NAP is a platform that was established in 1991 by four Dutch organisations active in the fields of the environment, mountaineering and skiing, and recreational tourism and transport. The member organisations are: the Royal Dutch Touring Club ANWB, the Dutch Ski Federation (NskiV), the Dutch Climbing and Mountaineering Club (NKBV) and the Dutch Foundation for the Protection of the Alpine Environment (NMGA). Together, these organisations represent four million members. The main goal of the platform is to help preserve the alpine environment by promoting conscious and sustainable alpine tourism.

This paper will describe the background to and provide concrete details on how Dutch stakeholders are realising more sustainable alpine travel and holiday products. NAP is convinced that these initiatives and projects can only be successful when all players in the tourist chain work together. This approach will be illustrated in the 'Sustainable Tourism: Alps 2005' project that was launched in 2001 and will terminate in 2005. 'Alps 2005' is being carried out in cooperation with representatives of the Dutch travel industry and other important stakeholders in the Netherlands and the Alpine region.

2. The Alps: a unique area

Because of its varied surroundings, clean environment and still wide-open spaces and peace and quiet, millions of tourists choose the Alps as their holiday destination - including about two million Dutch holidaymakers. The other side of the coin, however, is that large-scale tourism presents a threat to the conservation of the quality of the alpine landscape and its cultural heritage. Transport, accommodation and entertainment can damage nature and the environment and cause a decrease in the quality of life.

More sustainable ways of tourism are urgently needed, if the (ecological) quality of the Alps for plants, animals and humans is not to suffer. If this does not take place, tourists will have less to experience, and the position of all of those socially and economically dependent on tourism will be endangered.

3. Awareness of the need for sustainable alpine tourism in the Netherlands

Apart from the alpine countries, in the Netherlands, the government, the tourist and travel sector and NGOs also consider it their responsibility to limit the negative impact of the mass tourism flow, and to evolve a more sustainable development in outgoing tourism. An important motivation for the member organisations of NAP is the fact that the Alps are the playground for two million Dutch skiers, climbers, hikers and nature lovers every year.

With the support of the member organisations and the Dutch government, the Netherlands Alpine Platform (NAP) was founded to promote more sustainable forms of alpine travel and tourism for the Dutch travel industry and Dutch consumers. Since 1991 NAP has taken the lead in several initiatives and projects concerning information provision, developing sustainable holiday packages, and organising workshops and conferences for parties involved in alpine tourism. Landmark initiatives include: 'The Alps - your concern too!' campaign and the 'Wintersports 2005' digital brochure conducted together with Travel Unie Netherlands and the Travel Workshops for product managers of Dutch tour operators in Switzerland and Austria.

In 2002, after ten years of intensive activity, NAP can conclude that:

- tourists, the travel industry and the Dutch government are more aware and conscious of the relationship between tourism, nature and the environment in the Alps;
- the travel industry is willing to cooperate with NAP to work on more sustainability in their travel and holiday products and services;
- Dutch initiatives are linked to important European networks like Ecotrans, NETS and CIPRA.

4. The principle of multi-stakeholder partnerships

One of the major standpoints for all NAP initiatives and projects is the philosophy of cooperation between all stakeholders in the tourist chain. All parties in the tourism chain have to accept responsibility and work together constructively.

This cooperation between partners in The Netherlands as a country that generates alpine tourists, and the host countries in the Alps is necessary for achieving more sustainability in alpine tourism. Dutch parties often lack relevant information and knowledge and do not know where to find it. The supply side (the destinations and service providers) is not informed about the needs of 'green' consumers. The only solution is for stakeholders to be linked and to be aware of one another's wishes and needs as well as the options for making alpine travel and holidaying more sustainable. Through its projects, NAP is taking the lead and building bridges between all parties in the chain.

In this paper NAP will illustrate the partnership approach through its "Sustainable Tourism: Alps 2005" project.

5. Description of the project "Sustainable Tourism: Alps 2005"

The 'Alps 2005' pilot project aims to make all parts in the tourist chain sustainable - from the Netherlands to the Alps. Only in this way will it be possible to offer complete sustainable travel and holiday packages to Dutch consumers.

In this pilot project, sustainable development is interpreted as a dynamic process, aimed at achieving better cohesion between ecology, economy and socio-cultural aspects in respect of both plants and animals and the populations of destinations, as well as tourists and travel organisations in the tourism-generating countries. This project is striving for a "win-win" situation for both the environment and tourism. By using the products and services developed, tourists will be able to combine their holiday pleasure with an intensive experience of the destination involved as well as respecting the holiday environment. The starting point is that a rich environment and varied nature have an added value for tourism and may even form a unique selling point, whereby the quality of the holiday increases.

The role of NAP in this project consists of initiating, stimulating and supporting the process, in order to achieve the desired goals and products. An important element is the bringing together of all parties concerned in both the Netherlands and the destination countries.

Goals of the "Sustainable Tourism: Alps 2005" project

The main goal of the pilot project is to develop and offer coherent packages of up-to-date, environmentally friendly, and sustainable forms of alpine tourism to Dutch consumers. These packages will contribute to the protection of vulnerable ecosystems in the Alps and to promote sustainable tourist use of bio-diversity. From October 2003, it will be possible to book certified, sustainable winter holidays and trips to the Alps at a minimum of six travel organisations, and the holidays will be sold by a number of travel agencies and on the Internet. As the most important consumer target groups for sustainable holiday products, the members of the Royal Dutch Touring Club ANWB, the Dutch Ski Federation and the Dutch Climbing and Mountaineering Club will all be involved in the project.

The travel organisation, travel agent and/or an on line database will keep them well informed on nature and the environment.

Secondary goals

To realise the main objective, secondary goals relating to transport, accommodation and activities in the Alps or a combination of these elements, have been set down:

- To develop and market on-line information about 'green' options and initiatives in the Alps for both the travel sector and tourists;
- To improve the luggage logistics in public transport to and from alpine countries as a stimulus to travel by public transport;
- To develop and market sustainable / 'green' packages with and through Dutch travel organisations;
- To design an environment standard for mountain tourism;
- To develop and implement a network / Lowlands Protocol.

Project approach and final products

To realise the 'Alps 2005' project goals, 5 sub-projects related to transport, accommodation and activities or a combination of these elements, have been set down:

1. Provision of information to the travel sector and consumers ("Alps on-line")
2. "New Mobility International"
3. 'Green' packages in the tourism trade and industry
4. Designing an environment standard for mountain tourism
5. Network / "Lowlands Protocol"

The combination of these projects results in consumers having the option of booking 'green' / sustainable holiday packages with environmentally responsible transport, including a "home-to-hotel" service, accommodation in "green" hotels and the possibility of participating in 'green' activities.

At the end of three years the project will have resulted in the following final products:

1. An on-line database with nature and environmental information, with the emphasis on the environment label;
2. A 'home-to-hotel' service for tourists and luggage;
3. Sustainable / green holiday packages, which can be booked in various ways;
4. An environment standard for mountain tourism;
5. A network / lowlands protocol implemented in selected European countries.

Timetable

Project	Jan. – June 2001	July – Dec. 2001	Jan. – June 2002	July – Dec. 2002	Jan. – June 2003	July – Dec. 2003	Jan. – June 2004	July – Dec. 2004
1. Alps On-line								
2. New Mobility International								
3. 'Green' Packages								
4. Environment Standard								
5. Network / Lowlands Protocol								

Target groups & partners and their role in the project

In the more than ten years of its existence, NAP has constructed a huge network of organisations and enterprises in the field of the environment, tourism and sustainable development.

The project will focus on the target groups along all parts of the tourism chain. Not only the tourist themselves are an important target group, but also the intermediaries who ultimately will develop and sell the product to customers. The following target groups have been defined in the tourism chain: tourists (organised and not organised); sector associations of the travel and transport industry; travel organisations; travel agencies; transport organisations (train, bus, local transport); organisations offering accommodation and activities such as climbing, skiing and mountaineering organisations.

Representatives of the stakeholders mentioned above are partners in the NAP project and will play an important role in achieving the goals of the 'Alps 2005' project. With these partners, NAP will start to construct the pilot projects aimed at information provision, the improvement of luggage logistics in public transport, 'green' holiday packages, and establishing an environment standard for mountain holidays.

The major partners in NAP are:

In the Netherlands:

- Companies from the travel industry like TUI, NS-Travel, Hotelplan and the sector organisation, ANVR;
- NGOs like the IUCN and the WWF;
- Consumer organisations like the Royal Dutch Touring Club ANWB, the Dutch Ski Federation (NskiV) and the Dutch Climbing and Mountaineering Club (NKBV);

In the alpine countries:

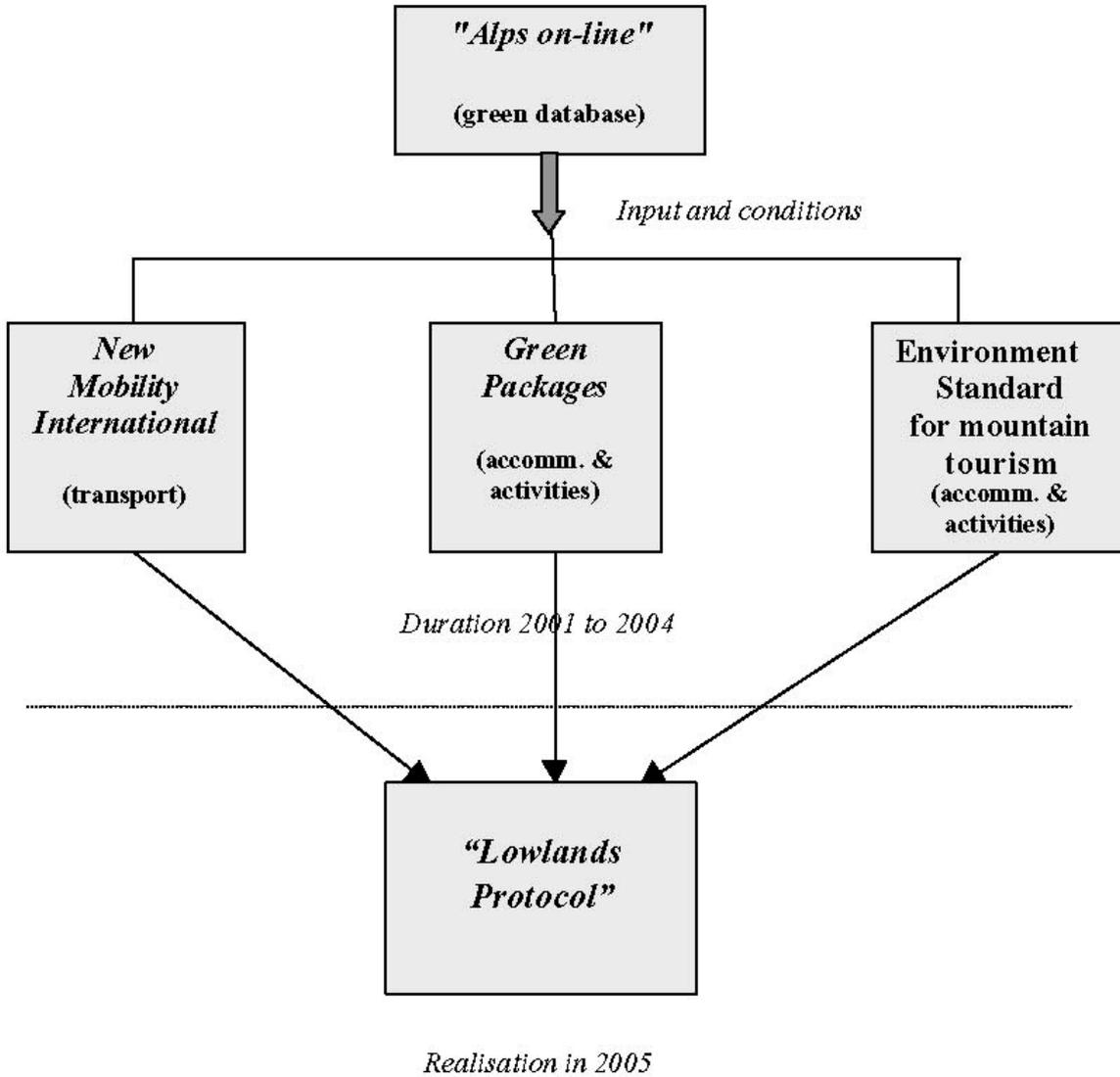
- The networks of car-free areas: GAST (Switzerland), IAKF (Bavaria), IG Sanfte Mobilität (Austria);
- The national parks like the National Park Hohe Tauern in Austria;

In Europe:

- The network for Soft Mobility in European Tourism (NETS);
- International Network of Experts and Organisations on Sustainable Tourism and the Environment (ECOTRANS);
- Commission internationale pour la protection des Alpes (CIPRA);
- Union internationale des associations d'alpinistes (UIAA)

Activity plan for the 'Alps 2005' project

Illustration of partnerships using the 'Sustainable Tourism: Alps 2005' project



In 2001, a strategic survey was conducted into the possibilities for entering into partnerships with organisations and institutions active in the fields of tourism, transport, nature and the environment. A great many of these showed interest in participating in the project. In order to realise a broad and efficient joint venture, we have to work out a multi-stake holders approach for each project. The point of departure for the joint ventures is that the parties involved reinforce one another and create economies of scale by supporting each other's projects. Below, we have outlined the procedure for three 'Alps 2005' sub-projects.

"Alps on-line" sub-project

This sub-project aims at the development of a database with "green" information about the Alps. This database is for both the travel branch and consumers. The supply of this "green" information is the basis of the entire project. It shapes the input and sets the necessary conditions for other projects.

This sub-project inventories the databases of 'green' alpine information and checks which ones are available and whether or not the owners are interested and ready to collaborate with NAP. This results in the following:

- The Netherlands Committee for IUCN/ The World Conservation Union would like to collaborate with 'Alps on-line' in the development and management of its 'Natourdata' database. This collaboration will comprise the exchange of expert knowledge and the reciprocal integration of 'green' data in databases.
- Within the framework of the European VISIT project on ecolabels for tourism, Ecotrans and Eceat that both operate on a European-wide basis, are developing a 'Green Travel Market' database for travel organisations. The alpine region is the first destination in the database. Due to the overlapping destination area, Ecotrans/Eceat and NAP are best served by constructive consultation and collaboration in the development of the databases and the entering of data. NAP is currently investigating the best form for this collaboration and how both projects can best provide information to the tourist industry. In this way, the use of databases by the travel industry is promoted and the impact of the initiatives is increased.

"New mobility international" sub-project

In addition to accommodation and entertainment in the Alps, transport to the Alps also plays an important role in the load placed on the environment.

The "New Mobility International" sub-project is a result of a process that started in 1999 with the focus on cooperation between NAP and car-free villages in Austria and Switzerland. "New Mobility International" targets the transport sector. The goal of this project is to make sustainable modes of transport to the Alps more attractive by composing a total package in which both tourists and their luggage are transported from door to door by taxi, bus and train.

This sub-project investigated the following:

- Existing initiatives and projects in respect of sustainable tourism mobility in the Netherlands and the Alps to which NAP projects could be linked. In the Netherlands, travel organisations underscore the importance of door-to-door transport for persons and luggage. The logistic, financial and communication bottlenecks of current products and services are specified. Travel Unie, Hotelplan and NS Travel are interested in investigating, together with NAP, how these bottlenecks could be tackled in door-to-door transport. In the Alps, Switzerland has expressed interest in the New Mobility project. The same applies in Austria to the Gepacks-logistik project and to the GAST, IAKF and IG Sanfte Mobilitat associations for car-free and car-restricted destinations. Alpine initiatives can be linked to NAP projects through the network for Soft Mobility in European Tourism (NETS). This offers reciprocal economies of scale and greater exposure for the projects, and consequently a potential increase in sustainable mobility within Alpine tourism. In 2002, NAP will flesh out the possibilities of collaborating with various partners.
- The views of the various stakeholders in Austria on the 'New Mobility International' project and under what conditions they wish to participate. Interviews were conducted with, among others, government representatives, tourist offices directors, tourist services providers and communication bureaus. The consensus of opinion was that NAP projects

are important initiatives due to their breadth, international approach and the fact that they allow for the further investigation of opportunities for cooperation. Participation in the projects gives alpine stakeholders the chance to market their sustainable products and services in the Netherlands.

'Green' packages in the tourist trade and industry

This sub-project is aimed at the development and marketing of "green" packages in the tourist trade and industry. In consultation with tour operators and travel agents, new packages will be composed that make optimal use of available 'green' accommodation and activities. These are already available, but are not yet widely known and have not yet been controlled for quality. This project meets the requirements of stimulation, guidance and support.

In this project, NAP investigated the following:

- The role Dutch travel organisations desire to play in the further integration of sustainability in their alpine packages. Travel operators regard sustainability as important in respect of the continuity of business operations. They also will benefit from objective and reliable basic standards for ecolabels in tourism and desire more transparency for these labels. Travel Unie Nederland, Hotelplan and NS Travel would like to make arrangements with NAP for collectively setting up pilot projects within the framework of 'Alps 2005'.
- Which tourist destinations in the alpine region are interested in participating in the project. More than forty car-free and car-restricted destinations affiliated with GAST, IAKF and IG Sanfte Mobilitat would like to investigate, in consultation with NAP, how they can participate in the 'Alps 2005' project. The policy of the municipalities concerned is aimed at achieving a combination of quality tourism and sustainable tourism. For them, participation in the project means the opportunity of having their product bought by Dutch travel organisations, as well as allowing them to direct their marketing campaigns at 'green' consumers in the Netherlands.
- The possibilities for collaborating in the European VISIT project in order to establish minimum requirements for 'green' packages. In the event that companies operating under the VISIT logo participate in NAP projects, travel operators will easily be able to find 'green' accommodation. A further study will be conducted in this respect.

6. The perspectives of a multi-stakeholder approach for the 'Alps 2005' project

The results of the 2001 strategic survey clearly show that both in the Netherlands and the alpine region broad-based support exists for the 'Sustainable Tourism: Alps 2005' project. Opportunities are available for establishing a consortium that can work collectively in developing and marketing 'green' holiday and travel products on the basis of common points of departure and objectives. This will also still allow each company to promote its own commercial interests and to construct its own 'green' product line in harmony with its business philosophy. In concrete terms, four travel organisations have shown interest: Arke Reizen, Holland International, NS Travel and Hotelplan. NAP is an interesting partner for these companies due to its expertise, its extensive alpine network and the commercially interesting support of the NAP-affiliated organisations the ANWB, NskiV and the NKBV with hundreds of thousands potential customers.

Participating companies are obliged to observe a 'code of sustainability' in which their cooperation with NAP is set down. This is drawn up on the basis of common points of departure, objectives, marketing/promotions and the message to be communicated in respect of alpine tourism.

NAP coordinates the projects which means, for example, that in destination countries, NAP seeks out destinations that the strategic survey showed were interested (like the GAST destinations in Switzerland and the IG Sanfte Mobilitat in Austria, as well as the alpine region's tourist offices in the Netherlands).

The members of the organisations affiliated with NAP form a potential 'green' market that can be effectively reached through fine-meshed communication, publicity, and the sales networks of the member organisations (the ANWB, NskiV and NKBV). With the participation of government departments in – and relations of – the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and

the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Fisheries, (VROM en LNV), a collective campaign for 'sustainable winter sports' can be developed within the framework of government policy on the development of sustainable tourism and recreation.

The roles are divided as follows:

- **NAP:**
 - management and coordination of the 'Sustainable Tourism: Alps 2005' project;
 - will act as agent between partners in the Netherlands and local authorities in the alpine countries;
 - will make available its expertise on sustainability and will develop a communication strategy/campaign for 'green' travel and holidays.
- **Participating alpine destinations** (GAST, IG Sanfte mobilitat and IAKF)
 - will make a common 'bookable green' range of products/services available to the consortium's travel organisations.
- **Tourist companies**
 - collective product development and marketing under individual image with support from the sector organisation, ANVR;
- **Alpine country's tourist offices in the Netherlands**
 - promotion of the 'green' products of participating local authorities and travel organisations;
 - providing information on sustainability and tourism to consumers.
- **NAP member organisations: the ANWB, NskiV, NKBV and NMGA**
 - communication/promotion and/or sale of 'green' products to their members;
 - providing information on sustainability and tourism to consumers.
- **Government**
 - Supporting the sustainable alpine tourism campaign in cooperation with NAP and its member organisations.