

## SURVEY

### The Role of Different Sectors in Nature Tourism Development: The Case of Lake Vörtsjärv

The region of Lake Vörtsjärv comprises seven rural municipalities the different parts of which border the lake. These seven rural municipalities are connected by way of historically evolved traditions of joint action. The development of Lake Vörtsjärv and its vicinity, and the planned utilisation of the lake as a resource is the common interest of all municipalities. The domains of the development which are primarily connected to Lake Vörtsjärv and depend on the cooperation of the rural municipalities around the lake comprise fishery, recreation and tourism, and the limnological research.

A relevant survey was conducted in the seven rural municipalities in the vicinity of Lake Vörtsjärv, with an aim to collect data with regard to the contribution of different sectors in the development of tourism – their motivation for cooperation, problems or satisfaction with the current developmental activities (which are based on Management Plan).

Four interviewees of different sectors, incl. observers, were freely selected from each seven municipalities in the Lake Vörtsjärv area, altogether 28 persons. Interviews were conducted within the time period from December 2008 to April 2009. The respondents comprised 12 women and 16 men. Age-wise, the distribution was as follows: age group 20-30 years, 2 respondents; 31-40 years, 9 respondents; 41-50 years, 10 respondents; 51-60 years, 6 respondents and 1 respondent more than 60 years of age.

The majority of entrepreneurs have economic expectations, with regard to loyal customers or repeat visitors, and the tourism-related cooperation should be targeted at the development of tourist attractions.

NGOs and the representatives of the control group, i.e. the observers, give the highest preference to customers who respect the community and culture and are environmentally sustainable. As directions in tourism development, more emphasis is laid on the need for joint cooperation, interaction and the organisation of different training sessions.

The visions of the representatives of local governments are almost evenly distributed among nearly all preferred customer types. Preference is given to customers with a high willingness to pay, loyal regular customers and to environmentally friendly customers who respect the community. Development of infrastructure, organisation of events, development of tourism attractions and the advancement of educational life are highlighted as the directions in the area of tourism development.

Gender and age-wise, the preferred visitor types were mainly those who are environmentally sustainable and respect the community and culture.

Cooperation between different sectors was evaluated more highly by women than men; during the interviews, men also tended to be rather doubtful about cooperation suggestions. Likewise, younger respondents regarded cooperation as more positive than the older ones.

None of the entrepreneurs gave a “very good” or “good” rating to mutual cooperation between businesses. All opinions of the entrepreneurs, with regard to mutual cooperation scored lower than the “fair” scale. The opinions of entrepreneurs about their cooperation with local governments and NGOs were modest. Only two entrepreneurs out of seven thought that cooperation with NGOs is “good” and, similarly, only two entrepreneurs considered the cooperation with local governments and businesses either “very good” or “good”.

Local governments' rating to mutual cooperation between municipalities is "very good" and "good", only one rural municipality out of seven gave the score "fair". Regarding the co-operation with other sectors, local governments see this as relatively positive.

Representatives of NGOs are rather pessimistic with regard to inter-sectoral cooperation, and, in the majority of cases, rate the relevant cooperation as "fair". The respondents of the control group give "fairly good" rating to the cooperation between different sectors.

Yet the general attitude of the control group, as the bystander of developmental activities, is generally positive regarding inter-sectoral cooperation.

Ten years of development activities in the Vörtsjärv region have highlighted the key learning points. Different experiences indicate a need and demand for the initiatives by different sectors. Cooperation and partnership between different sectors and stakeholders are an important element and the greatest challenge in the management and operation of tourism structures.

An important task for the future is to encourage entrepreneurs in pursuing sustainable business activities, integrated nature conservation and entrepreneurship, and also in informing the inhabitants and visitors.

- Recommendations for Lake Chapala:

effective lake Management Plan and its fulfilment in co-operation with all stakeholders; environmental education, information dissemination