



Federal Ministry
for Economic Cooperation
and Development

CONNECTIVE
CITIES



Rural-Urban Sustainable Tourism

1st March – 23rd April 2023, Virtual dialogue events

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GLOBAL
Service für Entwicklungsinitiativen



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für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

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Introduction

This report presents the process and the results of the dialogue of the municipalities of the cities in the SEE-Region on the subject of sustainable tourism on the virtual networking-platform Connective Cities.

Connective Cities is a Cooperation project between the **German Association of Cities**, the German Society for International Cooperation (**GIZ**) and **Engagement Global** and its **Service Agency Communities in One World**. It is funded by the **Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)**.

The Rural-Urban Sustainable Tourism (SEE) group was created in December 2022 and focused on the all kinds of processes and events in agenda of sustainable tourism in SEE-Region which have been happening since the start of the dialogues at the virtual networking-platform Connective Cities. The group currently has sixteen members, among them there are municipal and NGO representatives, experts and managers.

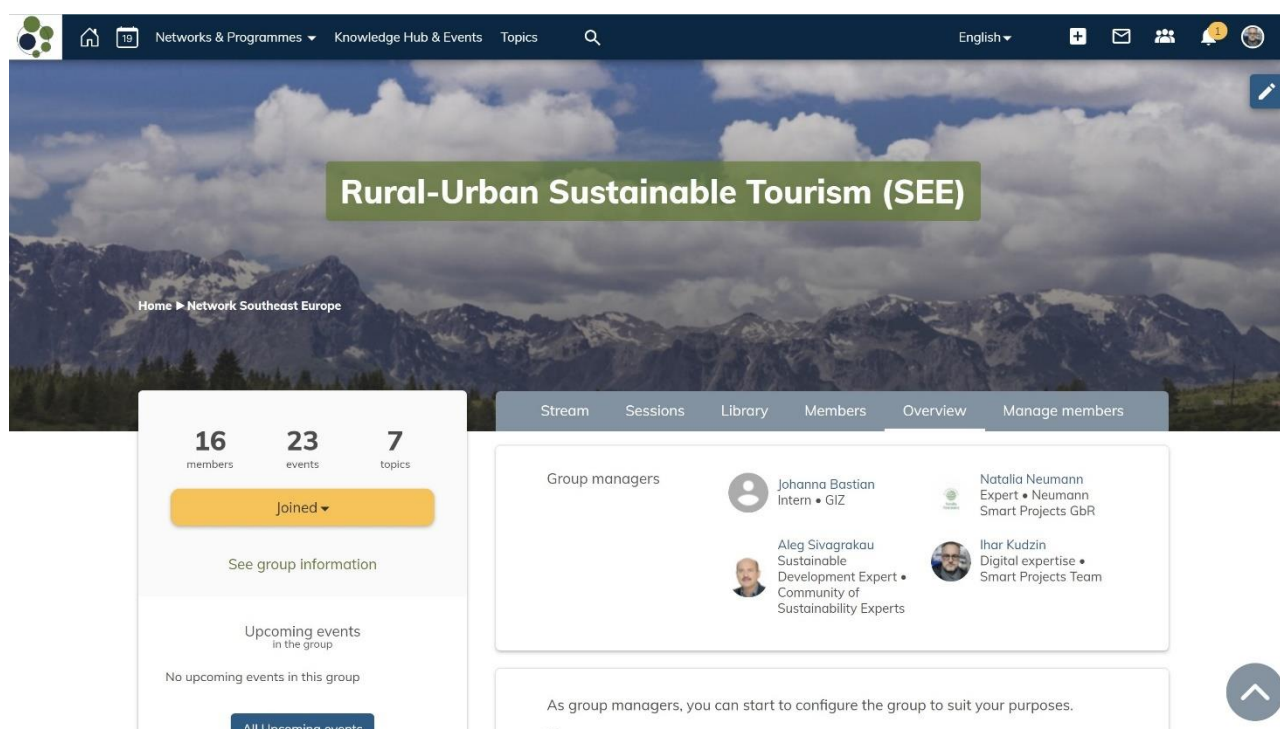


Figure 1: Working Group Rural-Urban Sustainable Tourism on the platform Connective Cities

The importance of sustainable tourism in the overall context of climate protection has increased in recent decades with the increase in tourist flows associated with the growth of mass tourism. Climate effects of tourism are the emission of carbon dioxide by tourist traffic, excessive water withdrawals and water pollution, loss of natural soil functions with effects on the water balance, destruction of biotope forms for the preservation of a diverse biodiversity. Tourism affects almost

all areas of the environment. In order to elaborate the sustainable tourism strategies for the cities, the collaboration with the administrations of the rural regions is indispensable. In order to discuss climate-friendly tourism solutions for cities and surrounding regions, we brought together in our meetings the representatives of administrations of cities and regions and experts.

The results of the meetings in the form of project ideas and examples of the benchmarks are presented in detail in the annex of the report.

Executive Summary

Participating cities

There are five main cities-participants have been involved in the group and provided a various ideas' specter and very productive collaboration at the all stages of the work. The full list of the cities you can find in attachments.

All cities participated in the dialogue of municipalities of the SEE-Region on the subject of sustainable tourism on the virtual networking-platform Connective Cities:

1. Bukhara, Uzbekistan

Bukhara city is the seventh-largest city in Uzbekistan, with a population of 280,187 as of 1 January 2020, and the capital of Bukhara Region. People have inhabited the region around Bukhara for at least five millennia, and the city has existed for half that time. Located on the Silk Road, the city has long served as a centre of trade, scholarship, culture, and religion. The mother tongue of the majority of people of Bukhara is Tajik, a dialect of the Persian language, although Uzbek is spoken as a second language by most residents. Bukhara served as the capital of the Samanid Empire, Khanate of Bukhara, and Emirate of Bukhara and was the birthplace of scholar Imam Bukhari. The city has been known as “Noble Bukhara”. Bukhara has about 140 architectural monuments. UNESCO has listed the historic center of Bukhara (which contains numerous mosques and madrasas) as a World Heritage Site.

Bukhara remained the capital of the Bukharan People’s Soviet Republic, which replaced the khanate, until the republic was absorbed into the Uzbek S.S.R. in 1924. It remained the capital when Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991. The city grew rapidly after the discovery in the late 1950s of natural gas nearby.

The city’s economy based on a number of food and light industrial undertakings, including a large works processing Karakul lambs’ fleece. Bukhara’s importance has grown also because it is the

largest city in a natural gas region. Certain traditional handicrafts, such as gold embroidery and metalworking still practiced. Tourism contributes to the local economy. The city is the seat of Bukhara State University (founded 1930); there are also medical and light industry institutes there. Cultural amenities include a theatre and a museum.

2. Dilijan, Armenia

Dilijan is one of the most important and beautiful towns in Tavush region of Armenia. It is located on the banks of Aghstev River and surrounded by mountains covered with thick forests. It is a major resort town of Armenia.

As of April 1, 2023, the population (permanent residents) of Dilijan is 17,500 people.

Dilijan National Park is a beautiful place rich with natural and cultural monuments and healing mineral water. Not too far from the Parz lake is the ancient Monastery of Haghartsin (10-13th centuries) – one of the most popular monasteries in Armenia. This small town has many hotels, resort houses, and sanatoriums. The restaurants are famous for their delicious food and good service.

Dilijan is famous for its mineral water, processed and bottled by the “Dilijan Mineral Water Plant” founded in 1947. The town is also home to the “Aramara” company for fine woodworking founded in 1993, and the “Dili” factory for dairy products founded in 2005. Dilijan is also famous for its hand-made rugs and carpets. The town has its own style of carpet design, with many samples shown at the Dilijan museum of traditional art. The Armenian government has announced plans to turn Dilijan into a regional financial capital, beginning with the move of a part of the Central Bank's operations to Dilijan in 2013. The town is also home (since 2014) to the United World College Dilijan that is the 14th member of the United World Colleges movement.

3. Dolyna, Ukraine

The town of Dolyna is a regional centre, located in the south-west of Ukraine in the Ivano-Frankivsk region, on the lands of the historical and ethnographic region of Boykivshchyna. The town is located in the Carpathian region, stretching in the valley of the small rivers Sadzhava, Sivka and Turyanka. In the centre of Dolyna is the Dolynske Lake (an area of 25 hectares), on the banks of which the central city park is laid out. A transport corridor (road and railroad) passes through the city, Lviv - Ivano-Frankivsk. The regional centre lies 58 kilometres from Dolyna town. Town population is 20,775 people

Dolyna is one of the ancient centres of salt production in the region. The year 979 is called the founding date of Dolyna, although the first mention of it dates back to 1403 and the settlement is listed as “the free royal Dolyna town”. The architecture of the city is represented by buildings of the late XIX - early XX centuries, the Church of the Nativity of Anna Maria (1839), a synagogue and the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary with a bell tower. The main monument of the town is the column in the center, dedicated to the fighters for the independence of Ukraine. In 1998, the local history museum “Boykivshchyna” was opened, dedicated not only to the Dolynski district, but also to the traditions and life of the Boikos - an ethnic group of Ukrainians. Dolynsky Folk Amateur Theater and Children's Christian Theater operate in the city. In the 60s, the Dolinske oil field was one of the most powerful oil fields in the Ivano-Frankivsk region.

4. Chisinau, Moldova

Chisinau is the capital and largest city of the Republic of Moldova. The city is Moldova's main industrial and commercial centre, and is located in the middle of the country, on the river Bîc, a tributary of the Dniester. According to the results of the 2014 census, the city proper had a population of 532,513, while the population of the Municipality of Chisinau (which includes the city itself and other nearby communities) was 700,000. Chisinau is the most economically prosperous locality in Moldova and its largest transportation hub. Nearly a third of Moldova's population lives in the metropolitan area.

Chisinau is the financial and business capital of Moldova. Its GDP comprises about 60% of the national economy reached in 2012 the amount of 52 billion lei (US\$4 billion). Thus, the GDP per capita of Chisinau stood at 227% of the Moldova's average. Chisinau has the largest and most developed mass media sector in Moldova, and is home to several related companies ranging from leading television networks and radio stations to major newspapers. All national and international banks (15) have their headquarters located in Chisinau.

Notable sites around Chisinau include the cinema Patria, the new malls Malldova, Megapolis Mall and best-known retailers, such as N1, Fidesco, Green Hills, Fourchette and Metro. While many locals continue to shop at the bazaars, many upper class residents and tourists shop at the retail stores and at Malldova. Elăt, an older mall in the Botanica district, and Sun City, in the centre, are more popular with locals.

Several amusement parks exist around the city. A Soviet-era one is located in the Botanica district, along the three lakes of a major park, which reaches the outskirts of the city centre. Another, the

modern Aventura Park is located farther from the centre. A circus, which used to be in a grand building in the Râșcani sector, has been inactive for several years due to a poorly funded renovation project. Museum of the City of Chisinau (Water Tower) is located in the old water tower built in 1860-1888 (architect Alexander Bernardazzi).

5. Tbilisi, Georgia

is the capital and the largest city of Georgia, lying on the banks of the Kura River with a population around 1.5 million people. Tbilisi was founded in the fifth century AD by Vakhtang I of Iberia, and since then has served as the capital of various Georgian kingdoms and republics. Between 1801 and 1917, then part of the Russian Empire, Tiflis was the seat of the Caucasus Viceroyalty, governing both the northern and the southern parts of the Caucasus.

Because of its location on the crossroads between Europe and Asia, and its proximity to the lucrative Silk Road, throughout history, Tbilisi was a point of contention among various global powers. To this day the city's location ensures its position as an important transit route for energy and trade projects. Tbilisi's history is reflected in its architecture, which is a mix of medieval, neoclassical, Beaux Arts, Art Nouveau, Stalinist, and Modern structures.

The Georgian National Museum gathers several important museums, including the Art Museum of Georgia and also Museum of Modern Art was founded in 2012.

Georgia's growing popularity as an international tourist destination has put Tbilisi on the global travel map. With the country hosting more than 9 million international visitors in 2019, the capital saw major investments in the hospitality industry. It now is the leading tourist destination in the region, offering exquisite cityscapes, Art Deco, Russian, Eastern and Soviet architecture, national museums and galleries, cultural attractions, festivals, historical landmarks and exceptional, traditional Georgian cuisine along with a wide range of international restaurants.

The program

The next crucial chapters were blueprinted with deep collaboration in the CC networks and executive managers and SPT experts.

Nowadays, we have under our belt 16 active participants and very good results that have been achieved in one month of the tough work.

So, we have one month for the next steps:

- Define the activities of the working group;
- Identify the relevant specific issues of the thematic block “Sustainable Tourism in the Caucasus/SEE Region”;
- Mobilize the relevant entities/cities for the working group;
- Presentation of the problems of each city and recommendations of colleagues on formats of mutual learning and mutual exchange;
- Feedback gathering from other cities in the network.

All of these chapters have been summarized in one simple milestone: Milestone 1:

Elaboration of the first project ideas using peer learning methods.

Although, during work process three events with specific themes and goals were created and deployed, such as:

- Event 1: Opening Event with inputs from experts;
- Event 2: Peer to Peer Learning and Exchange;
- Event 3: Peer to Peer Learning and Benchmark.



Figure 2: Presentation of the best practices of the city of Bonn

Initial situation

Tourism is a popular cross-cutting issue and is dealt in different ways within city administrations.

Cities in mountain regions focus on mountaineering solutions, seaside regions seek management

of beach tourism, but all city administrations participating in dialogue events face the same challenges, such as changes in climatic conditions, political situations and epidemics.

In the dialogue process it was found that the elements of sustainability had been considered in most of the previous projects of the participants. The primary goals of the projects were to support local product manufacturers, involve civil society and create interesting and unique tourism experiences. The climate-related issues related to the tourism projects were often included in the practices of the municipalities, but the focus of the participants was primarily related to the economic development of the tourism industry, taking local conditions into account.

Awareness of the links between climate change and tourism was raised through expert input and the approach to environmental issues was taken in reviews of past projects and taken into account in the analysis of new project opportunities. A good basis was created for joint consideration of the sustainability and climate neutrality of tourist destinations and the measures that a municipality can contribute to this.

The exchange between the participants took place within the framework of the tourism topic but under the aspects of the current challenges:

- energy efficiency
- preservation of green areas and biodiversity
- management of waste in high-traffic areas
- minimization of carbon emissions

According to the different size, structure and geographical location of the municipalities, the challenges that the participating municipalities face in view of climate change also differ.

Therefore, the municipalities themselves determined the topics where they saw the greatest need for adjustment and about which they wanted to exchange ideas in the network.

Aimed goals and expected impacts.

In addition to the professional exchange, the main aim is to bring the municipalities of different regions together and network them more closely. The employees of the municipalities should be given the opportunity to discuss questions and problems with other municipalities within the framework of an exchange meeting in order to benefit from the experiences of others.

The dialogue event is intended to strengthen the municipal options for action on site. The direct, informal exchange of experience among administrative staff can be an important source of

information. The advice of individual practitioners who deal with similar tasks and have specialist knowledge was very much appreciated by the participants.

With the municipal exchange, the working group offers the municipalities an open discussion and discussion forum and platform on the topics of "sustainable tourism and climate", "rural-urban relations" and other current topics or current fields of action relating to the municipality.

The event should bring added value for the exchange and joint processing of content from different advanced municipalities. The exchange should help to avoid typical mistakes and to find good solutions faster. It is also promising if the topic of climate adaptation can be integrated into an established, already familiar topic of "tourism". It is helpful when planning the exchange. to focus on specific topics instead of getting lost in a large variety of topics. The methods of prioritization will be used for this. Good practice examples should be presented regularly as a component of the meetings.

Methodology of learning process

Peer-to-peer learning

Peer-to- peer learning means "learning with and from each other". Everyone involved is called upon to get involved, to temporarily assume the role of knowledge provider – and then to leave it again. The method is an indispensable element of the learning process. In the knowledge society, knowledge once acquired does not carry you far. Rather, we live from constantly solving new, unknown problems. Lifelong learning is the keyword here. It is important to develop appropriate competencies and cultivate characteristics, including:

- flexibility, adaptability and agility
- creativity and innovation
- social and intercultural competence
- efficient solutions and activity

Peer to peer learning is an active process. It thrives on everyone getting involved and taking responsibility for the mutual learning success. Group interaction is a core element of peer-to-peer learning.



Figure 3: Advantages of Peer-to-Peer Learning

"All genuine education comes about through experience."

"Education is not an affair of 'telling' and being told, but an active and constructive process."

(John Dewey, US-American philosopher)

In order to guide and develop the successful learning process, five next steps of peer-to-peer exchange were taken:

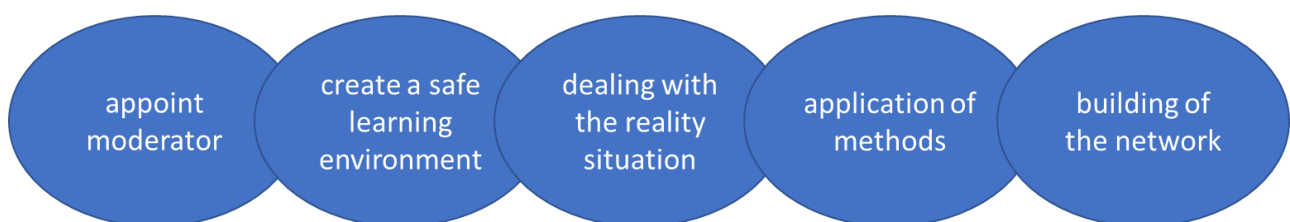


Figure 4: Steps of Peer-to-Peer Learning

Create safe learning environment.

After the moderator was appointed, the prerequisite for successful joint learning was the creation of a safe and comfortable learning environment on the Connective City platform. It is safe and trusted learning platform where the onboarding process has automated and easily managed for the members. Each member has access to any uploaded information, and it can be easily categorized by them. During the meetings on the platform, all e-learning solutions have been used to provide participants with an efficient management and motivating learning environment.

In the virtual classroom, all possibilities of e-learning were used. Including:

- whiteboard;
- application sharing;
- question-answer options;
- synchronous browsing;
- feedback options;
- audio and video conversation and meet-ups.

Dealing with the reality situation: benchmarks and experiences

"Benchmarking" means a process of systematically attempts to find comparative information during learning process. The benchmarking process basically goes as follows:

- Develop of a topic that all stakeholders confirm.
- Collect the data and empirical values in the participating organizations.
- Evaluate the data.
- Feedback gathering on the results of your own organization in comparison to the results of other organizations. Usually these are compared to the average results achieved and to the best result set.
- Exchange with and learn from the best: What are they doing differently? What can we transfer this to our organization?

During the second meeting, the participants reported about general tourism situation in their regions, their experiences and state of knowledge in the field of sustainable tourism. The presentations were supported by experts such as Dr. Darja Hirsch from the city administration of

Bonn. The representatives of the municipalities looked for similar examples or solutions in their institutions and presented them at the end of the third session. After each best practice presentation, the applicability of colleagues' examples to their own regional situation was discussed. Both the common intersections of the projects carried out were defined, as well as the different aspects, the reasons for which will play an important role in the development of future project ideas.



Figure 5: Presentation of Dr. Aleg Sivagrakau

Application of methods

The guiding principles of cooperative learning play an important role in our working group to ensure that everyone in the group is able to contribute to the solution of the task at hand and is responsible for achieving a common result. Simultaneous interaction, positive interdependence, individual responsibility and equal participation are among the principles of cooperative learning. Collaborative learning can be implemented using different methods. We used classic lectures, discussions, mentoring, brainstorming and prioritization methods, the results of which are discussed in a group discussion. A mix of methods that corresponded to the wishes and interests of the participants was ideal for the learning process.

Brainstorming

The brainstorming procedure is a very open method for working on the finding of the project idea, in which only a generic term or a roughly structuring key question is given in order to determine

the knowledge interests and desired actions, experiences, likes and dislikes in this way. A diverse spectrum of ideas is achieved through a broad collection of ideas by all learners, in line with brainstorming. The process enables the learners to form a focus and to plan and structure the learning process based on this.

As a result of the brainstorming on the topic "Relationships between rural and urban regions in the field of tourism" a large number of interesting topics were identified in which the participants would be interested. To identify the most important issues, we used the prioritization method.

Methodology of prioritization

The main concept of the prioritization methodology consists from two types:

1. External prioritization. This is a fast method to define most urgent/profitable/important things or stages or ideas.

It is very useful to use this approach at the start of discussing any ideas or project when the group (experts, representatives etc.) is on the initial stage of the work to get consensus in the group of the main (key) stakeholders and/or to define tasks or characteristics not perceived by the users.

2. Internal prioritization. In comparing with external method it is a bit slowly approach but very objectively and provide more thoroughly results. It could be used to crystallize and refine results obtained from the EXTERNAL methods. In other case, it can be used if the team has a history of ideas/tasks previously successfully implemented in the focus of the future project.

There are a lot of approaches use in the process of the prioritization in depend on the main goal of the main project and types of project (IT, social sciences, eco/green, tourism, etc.).

The main approaches and useful comments are showed in the attached short presentation.

56 initial project ideas have been found at initial meetups with the group with experts and municipal representatives.

Then, we start a special voting procedure chosen from some best practices of the prioritization methodology. In common words, it could be described as a dot voting or "poker style" ideation planning procedure with some add-ons. After the first (fast) stage of prioritization, we simplified the list of the ideas to the **best 12**.

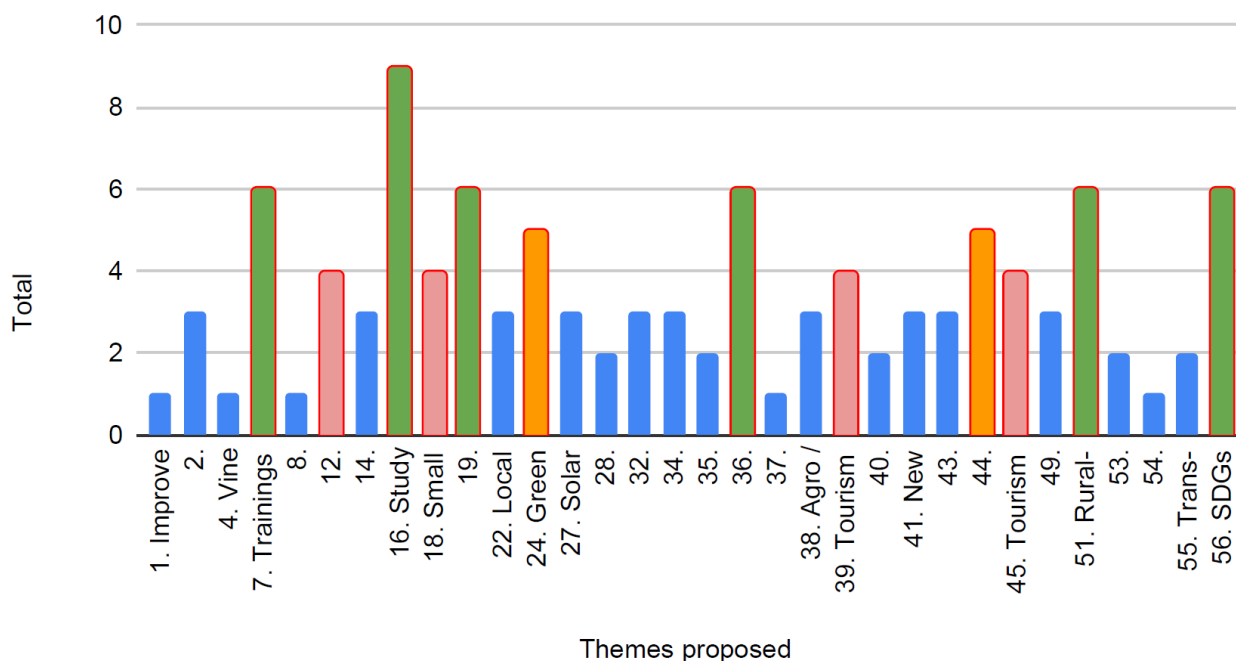


Figure 6: Evaluation of the vote on relevant project topics

Then we had started to work with these 12 preliminary ideas with the slow internal prioritization method in two stages.

At the 1 stage, we invented 2 fast criteria and assessed by them all 12 ideas. These criteria were:

- **Coverage\interest:** how many people will be covered/involved in this idea? Will it be interest for the society/government/NGO?
- **Benefits.** Is it a profitable idea? Which kind of the benefit will society take by it?

Thus, have worked with 1 stage of the internal prioritization stage and at the end we defined only 6 ideas which we had before start of the stage.

Then, the 2-nd stage of the internal prioritization was initiated. We found next more thoroughly criteria for that stage:

- Is it in SDG/climate goals?
- Does it contribute to raising of the life quality of the citizens?
- Project scale/population coverage. Is it big or small?
- Risks
- Reality. Is it real and can it be implemented?
- Sustainability of the results.

And at the end of our work in this final second stage, **only 4 winner initial ideas** have been defined.

By the way, we took a very interesting result: only one from the list of 8 "best" initial project ideas have trapped in the win list at the end of the second stage of the prioritization method. It shows us a good potential of using methodology to define a hidden significance of the all considered initial ideas or topics.

Now this 4 project ideas laid to the group discuss basement to further representing project proposals to the cities representatives and stakeholders of the projects.

WINNER TABLE		
1	36. Involvement of local communities in tourism development	1st place
2	39. Tourism Branding of Territories	2nd place
3	45. Tourism and Local food production (Permaculture)	3rd place
4	24. Green projects & Tourism	4th place

Figure 7: Results of the prioritization method

Results and conclusion

Before the collaboration on the Connective Cities platform, the participants were at different levels of knowledge and practice. After the peer-to-peer group, a common idea of sustainable tourism with a focus on climate was developed. This common idea strengthens the connection between the participants and turns the individual experiences into a network that works even more closely together through the development of project ideas.

The value proposition of our city network is advocacy, knowledge dissemination and policy implementations. **Advocacy** means the representation of the interests of citizens, members of local organisations and businesses and of the national government. The advocacy efforts often directed towards strengthening and institutionalizing the participation of local and regional governments in international frameworks.

The **knowledge dissemination** is the most important focus of networking. The participating institutions make their living from collecting, structuring, and utilizing the information from their field of work. The workshops were extent directed towards stimulating mutual cooperation and exchange among member cities and their peers, in a process where city networks act as platforms for knowledge sharing and policy learning.

Policy implementation refers to the fact that beyond facilitating peer-to-peer learning and the exchange of information, most city networks devote significant efforts to assist in building the capacity of their members to respond to a variety of urban challenges or to implement particular policies. Support from city networks with policy implementation requires resources and skills from multiple actors that go far beyond the provision of a platform for peer-knowledge exchange, and that include the use of technologies, expertise, contacts, know-how, and even financial resources. Other typical activities performed by these organizations include drafting guidelines and roadmaps and establishing benchmarking and certification systems to monitor and recognize progress. It is also an increasingly common practice to provide consulting services and direct technical support to strengthen members' capacities, to assist in brokering partnerships with the private sector and/or civil society organizations, and to facilitate access to funding in order to implement specific innovative and replicable projects.

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Attachments

Project Proposals

- Project Proposal 1: Development of sustainable and eco-friendly tourism in Dilijan. (Dilijan)
- Project Proposal 2: Reduction of CO2 emissions and minimizing the use of fossil fuels in the cultivation of inner-city agricultural areas. (Bukhara)
- Project Proposal 3: Methods of combating desertification in the Bukhara region. (Bukhara)
- Project Proposal 4: Green Museum. Energy efficiency and sustainability in urban cultural institutions. (Chisinau)
- Project Proposal 5: Green Bus Stops. (Dolyna)
- Project Proposal 6: Energy-efficient modernization of the heating and electricity system of the sports school in Dolyna (Dolyna)
- Project Proposal 7: Sustainable, eco-friendly and future-oriented urban development plan (Dolyna)

Best Practice

- Best Practice 1: Regional Spatial Planning in Tourism and Recreation Cluster of Samtskhe-Javakheti Region
- Best Practice 2: Social and urban projects within the framework of urban development of the town of Dolyna
- Best Practice 3: Bio Stadt Bonn