

NEWSLETTER

March 2026 Issue Number 1



People Powered Tourism in a nutshell

We are a partnership of 14 project partners from 10 countries across the Danube Region committed to reshaping local tourism through people-powered, experience-based, and sustainable solutions. With the support of 12 Associated Partners, we're rethinking how tourism can work for communities — not just for visitors.

OUR MISSION

is to empower local communities — including marginalised groups — in under-visited urban neighbourhoods and remote rural areas to rediscover and revitalise their cultural and natural heritage. Through social innovation, we co-design sustainable, experience-based and transformative tourism services that support the growth of a locally driven visitor economy and create tangible socio-economic benefits.

NEW TOURISM FOR REAL IMPACT

The project embraces the concept of *visitor economy*, a fresh approach to tourism that values people, stories, and lived experience just as much as destinations and attractions. At its heart are human connections, authentic encounters, and tailored experiences — the elements that make travel meaningful.

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24-26 February, 2026

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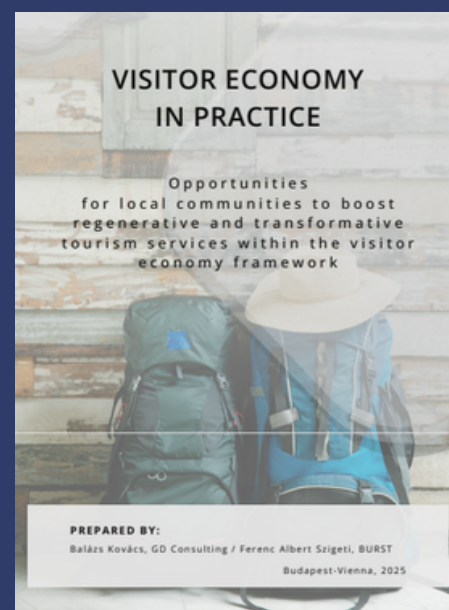
Duration: 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2028

Budget: €2,538,365

Visitor Economy in Practice - Benchmark Study

The project has released a new study exploring how communities across the Danube region can take a leading role in shaping more sustainable and inclusive tourism. The publication introduces the concept of the “visitor economy”, highlighting how tourism development can move beyond traditional destination marketing and instead focus on meaningful interactions between visitors and local communities. By putting people at the centre of tourism development, destinations can create authentic experiences while strengthening local identity, community engagement and long-term resilience.

In addition to presenting the key principles of the visitor economy approach, the study also showcases a collection of inspiring good practices from across the region. These examples demonstrate how local stakeholders – from municipalities and tourism organisations to community groups and small businesses – can successfully co-create innovative tourism experiences rooted in local heritage, culture and knowledge. By combining practical insights with real-life examples, the publication provides valuable inspiration for destinations seeking to develop more people-powered tourism models.



STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

Over the past months, partner locations of the project hosted a series of capacity-building and mapping workshops, bringing together a wide range of local stakeholders – from municipalities and tourism organisations to cultural heritage and nature conservation experts.

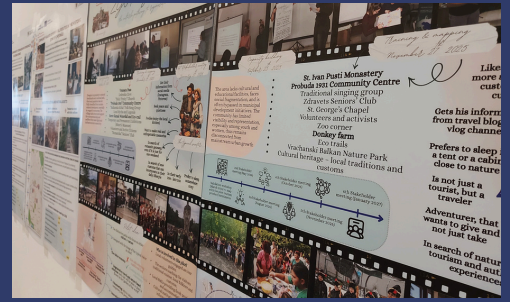
Building on the knowledge gained during the project’s Masterclass at the Kick-off meeting in Szeged, Hungary and the Vienna study visit last autumn, participants collaboratively mapped local cultural and natural assets. The workshops strengthened local capacities while highlighting the crucial role of stakeholder involvement in developing innovative visitor-economy services, particularly in urban and nature-based tourism.



Partner meeting in Timisoara

From 24–26 February 2026, partners of the People Powered Tourism project gathered in Timișoara for three days of intensive collaboration, peer learning and on-the-ground validation activities. Hosted at the creative hub FABER, the meeting combined professional exchange with immersive field experiences, offering partners valuable insights into how community-driven initiatives can revitalise urban and rural areas through culture, heritage and entrepreneurship.

The programme provided an opportunity for partners to present the results of their ongoing capacity-building and mapping activities and to exchange feedback on emerging pilot ideas that will be implemented in partner locations later this year. Through interactive discussions and peer review sessions, the partnership further refined its shared methodological approach for developing visitor-economy services rooted in local cultural and natural assets.



The final day shifted the focus to rural contexts with a field visit to the nearby village of Parța. Through another interactive walkshop, partners experienced how community-driven tourism can build on local traditions, crafts and gastronomy, while reinforcing local identity and strengthening connections between residents and visitors. The meeting demonstrated the value of transnational cooperation and hands-on learning in developing innovative, people-centred tourism solutions that can be adapted across the Danube region.

A key highlight of the meeting was a series of immersive “walkshop” validation activities in the historic Fabric neighbourhood of Timișoara. Participants explored a variety of inspiring initiatives that demonstrate how community engagement, social innovation and creative entrepreneurship can contribute to the regeneration of under-visited urban areas. Examples included social enterprises transforming waste into new products, artist-led sustainability initiatives, and the cultural revitalisation of historic landmarks such as the Fabric Synagogue. These real-life examples illustrated how culture, social inclusion and entrepreneurship can work together to strengthen local visitor economies.



What's next....

Starting in mid-April in Kőspallag, Hungary, the project will launch a series of exciting pilot actions across partner locations, running until November. These initiatives will test innovative visitor-economy experiences designed to better distribute visitor flows, connecting popular destinations with lesser-known places and local communities.

The pilots will feature hands-on workshops in traditional crafts and culinary where visitors can actively participate and learn from locals. Combined with storytelling, community-led guiding and nature-preservation activities – including programmes that link outdoor experiences with environmental awareness – the pilots aim to create meaningful connections between visitors, local culture and the natural environment.



<https://interreg-danube.eu/projects/people-powered-tourism>



<https://www.facebook.com/peoplepoweredtourism>

This project is supported by the Interreg Danube Region Programme and co-funded by the European Union.