

A STAKEHOLDER'S VIEW ON THE CREATION OF A SUSTAINABLE ENERGY- FLAGSHIP REGION WITHIN THE LEADER-REGION NATIONALPARK HOHE TAUERN

ABSTRACT

Lately, the Alps increasingly face challenges due to different economic, social and environmental developments, and have to find new ways to stay competitive and counteract the consequences of climate change. The Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology and the Klima- und Energiefonds recognised the importance of sustainable development and created the funding programme “Energie Vorzeigeregion” – energy-flagship region – with the goal to introduce new and innovative energy technologies in Austria and to test them in a geographically restricted area. Considering the characteristics of the Alps, an energy-flagship region would be a great fit, especially as winter tourism is responsible for a major energy consumption. Making Alpine regions more sustainable will contribute to environmental protection and preservation, a compatible economic development as well as increase the quality of life for the region's residents and tourists.

In light of that, the Austrian Institute of Technology works in cooperation with Modul University Vienna and Energy Changes on the project “Vorzeigeregion Tourismus – Energietechnologien & Innovationen Leben!” to target these challenges and to create an energy-flagship region in the tourism sector and an applied laboratory for innovations in the LEADER-region Nationalpark Hohe Tauern.

So far, there has been no information available about the acceptance and commitment of the stakeholders to create a sustainable energy-flagship region in the LEADER-region Nationalpark Hohe Tauern. Hence, the guiding research question was formulated as “How do potential stakeholders imagine a sustainable energy-flagship region and what are they willing to do to achieve it?”.

The interview participants agreed that the energy-flagship region needs to include the three components environmentally friendly mobility, awareness raising and education as well as destination marketing and image. When multiple stakeholders are involved in a process, it is likely to encounter a conflict of interest due to different organizational interests, motivations and internal agendas; therefore, the other potential elements have shown a broad variance in terms of importance. However, even though the general attitude towards an energy-flagship region is positive, the commitment of the stakeholders is low. The stakeholders attribute a higher priority to the implementation at the regional level, which shows that the responsibilities are pushed away. In addition to that, the areas of contribution that are mentioned by the stakeholders highly overlap with their jobs and functions.

A stakeholder graph that depicts the attributes power, urgency and legitimacy has been developed to illustrate the view of the participants in regards to the regional stakeholders that are involved or affected by the development of an energy-flagship region.

After discussing the results of the analysis and the implications, recommendations are developed to overcome the challenges and enhance the regional stakeholders' commitment.