

Classic Peaks

Building a Cross-Border Cultural Destination

A Practical Guide to Cooperation between Culture and Tourism
Interreg Bavaria–Austria | Lead Partner: Tiroler Festspiele Erl

Original title: “Kultur als Motor für grenzüberschreitenden Tourismus” (BA010031)



Table of Content

| | |
|---|----|
| FOREWORD..... | 4 |
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 5 |
| PROJECT TIMELINE | 7 |
| CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION | 8 |
| CHAPTER 2 – REGIONAL CONTEXT AND INITIAL SITUATION | 9 |
| CHAPTER 3 – BUILDING THE PARTNERSHIP..... | 11 |
| CHAPTER 4 – CREATING A STEERING GROUP | 13 |
| CHAPTER 5 – FROM STAKEHOLDERS TO A SHARED VISION | 15 |
| CHAPTER 6 – DEVELOPING THE CLASSIC PEAKS IDENTITY | 17 |
| CHAPTER 7 – FROM BRAND TO CAMPAIGN | 19 |
| CHAPTER 8 – MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING..... | 21 |
| CHAPTER 9 – CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED..... | 23 |
| CHAPTER 10 – RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE CROSS-BORDER PROJECTS | 25 |
| AFTER THE PROJECT | 27 |
| The Project Ended. The Cooperation Did Not..... | 27 |

classic PEAKS
CHIEMSEE-KUFSTEIN-FESTIVALS

PARTNER PROFILES29

Tiroler Festspiele Erl 29

Unsere Oper Gut Immling 29

Festivo Aschau 29

Schlosskonzerte Amerang 29

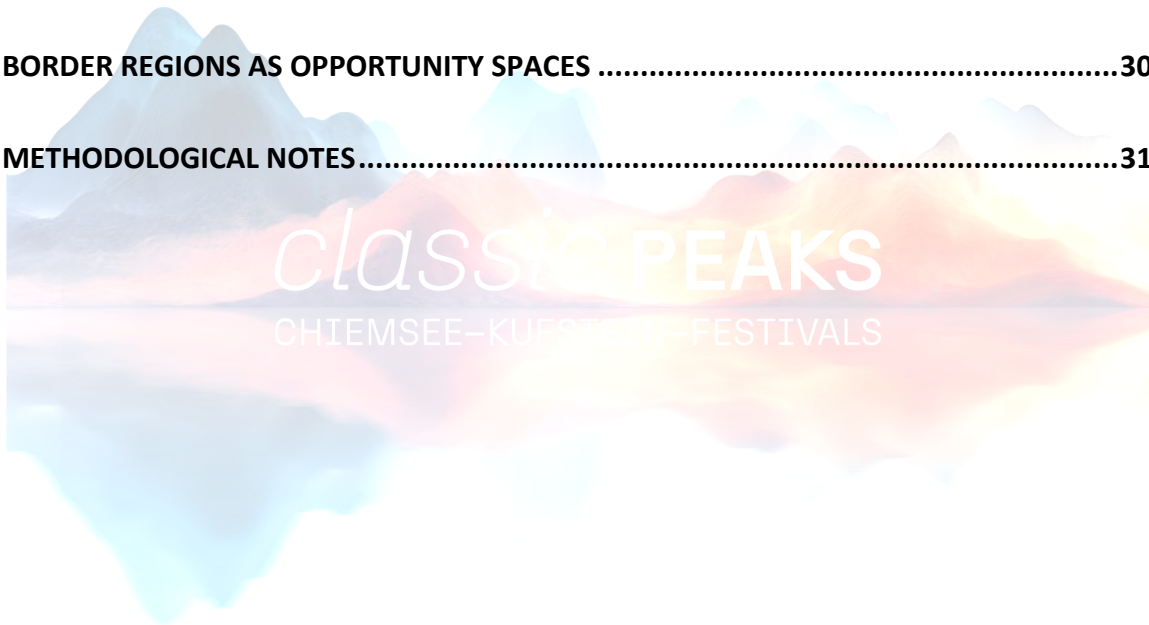
Kufsteinerland Tourism Association 29

Chiemsee-Alpenland Tourism Association 29

WHY CLASSICAL MUSIC?30

BORDER REGIONS AS OPPORTUNITY SPACES30

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES.....31



Foreword

Cross-border cooperation is often described in terms of programmes, funding schemes and administrative structures. Yet those who have participated in such projects know that their true success depends on something less tangible: the willingness of people and organisations to engage with one another, to exchange perspectives and to explore opportunities that extend beyond established boundaries.

The Classic Peaks project emerged from precisely such a process. Between 2025 and 2026, cultural institutions and tourism organisations from Bavaria and Tyrol came together to explore a simple but ambitious question: how can culture contribute more effectively to regional development, tourism visibility and cross-border cooperation?

The project was coordinated by Tiroler Festspiele Erl as Lead Partner under the direction of its Managing Director, Andreas Leisner. From the outset, however, the initiative was conceived as a genuinely collaborative undertaking. The ideas, experiences and recommendations documented in this publication emerged through continuous dialogue between all project partners, members of the Steering Group, external experts and supporting institutions. The project therefore reflects a collective learning process rather than the perspective of a single organisation.

What began as a cultural tourism initiative gradually developed into something broader. Throughout the project, participants discovered that cooperation itself became one of the most important outcomes. Cultural institutions that had previously interacted only occasionally entered into sustained dialogue. Tourism organisations gained deeper insights into the realities of cultural production. New relationships emerged and a shared understanding of the region's cultural potential began to take shape. The resulting brand, Classic Peaks, became the visible expression of this process. Yet the brand is only one aspect of a much larger story. Behind it lies a series of discussions, decisions, challenges and discoveries that offer valuable insights for future projects throughout Europe.

This publication is therefore intended not only as a record of what was achieved, but also as a practical guide. It seeks to demonstrate how cross-border cooperation can be initiated, how diverse stakeholders can develop a shared vision and how culture can become a catalyst for regional development and European integration. The partners hope that the experiences documented in the following pages will inspire other regions to explore similar paths. While every border region possesses its own characteristics and challenges, the principles of trust-building, dialogue and collaboration described here are widely transferable.

Ultimately, the project confirmed a simple but important lesson. Borders do not merely separate regions. Under the right circumstances, they can also connect them.

On behalf of all project partners,

Tiroler Festspiele Erl (Lead Partner)

Executive Summary

The Classic Peaks project was initiated within the framework of the Interreg Bavaria–Austria Programme with the objective of exploring how culture can contribute more effectively to cross-border tourism development. Bringing together four professional cultural institutions and two regional tourism organisations from Upper Bavaria and Tyrol, the project sought to create new forms of cooperation across institutional, sectoral and national boundaries.

The participating organisations shared a common observation. While the project region possesses an unusually high concentration of cultural assets, including internationally recognised festivals, concert series and music theatre institutions, these strengths were rarely communicated as part of a coherent regional narrative. Tourism marketing focused primarily on landscapes, recreation and traditional tourism products, while cultural institutions promoted their activities largely independently from one another.

The project therefore pursued a central question: could cultural institutions and tourism organisations jointly create greater visibility, stronger regional positioning and increased attractiveness than either sector could achieve independently?

To answer this question, the project established a cross-border Steering Group, bringing together representatives of all participating organisations. Through a structured process of dialogue, consultation and strategic planning, the partners developed a shared understanding of the region's cultural potential and gradually articulated a common vision for its future development.

One of the project's most significant achievements was the creation of the Classic Peaks brand. Rather than replacing the identities of individual institutions, the new brand created a shared framework through which cultural organisations and tourism stakeholders could communicate collectively while maintaining their independence.

Building upon this foundation, the project implemented an international communication campaign targeting selected audiences in Italy and Spain. A dedicated digital platform, common communication channels and coordinated marketing activities were developed to present the region as a connected cultural destination extending across national borders.

The evaluation of the project revealed both successes and challenges. The campaign generated substantial visibility, reaching millions of potential visitors and creating significant awareness for the newly established brand. At the same time, limitations in measurement infrastructure made it difficult to establish direct links between communication activities and visitor behaviour. These experiences generated valuable lessons regarding governance, branding, digital infrastructure and stakeholder cooperation.

classic PEAKS

CHIEMSEE-KUFSTEIN-FESTIVALS

Perhaps the most important outcome of the project was not a marketing measure, a website or a communication campaign. Instead, it was the establishment of lasting relationships between cultural institutions and tourism organisations that had previously operated largely independently. Through the project, participants developed a common language, a shared strategic perspective and a framework for future cooperation.

The experiences documented in this manual are therefore intended not only as a record of a completed project but as a practical guide for future initiatives. They demonstrate how cross-border cooperation can be developed step by step, how culture can serve as a catalyst for regional development and how collaborative approaches can strengthen both cultural institutions and tourism destinations.

Classic Peaks was conceived as a project. It evolved into a platform for long-term cooperation.



Project Timeline

Spring 2025: Partnership formation and governance.

Summer 2025: Shared vision and brand development.

Autumn 2025: Platform and campaign preparation.

Winter 2025/26: Campaign implementation.

Spring 2026: Evaluation.

Summer 2026: Sustainability planning and continuation.



Chapter 1 – Introduction

The Classic Peaks project is the result of a collaborative process undertaken by cultural institutions and tourism organisations in the Bavarian-Tyrolean border region between 2025 and 2026. While the project originated within the framework of the Interreg Bavaria–Austria Programme, its significance extends beyond the administrative context of European funding.

This manual has been prepared as a practical guide for organisations, regions and stakeholders interested in developing cross-border cooperation between culture and tourism. Rather than presenting a traditional project report, the publication seeks to document the processes, decisions, challenges and lessons that emerged throughout the project and to translate these experiences into recommendations for future initiatives.

The project itself brought together organisations with different missions, organisational cultures and strategic priorities. Cultural institutions and tourism organisations rarely operate within the same professional ecosystem. Yet both sectors depend upon audiences, visitors and the attractiveness of places. The project therefore provided an opportunity to explore how these complementary perspectives might be combined to create new forms of regional development.

Particular attention was devoted to the question of identity. How can a region communicate its cultural strengths more effectively? How can independent institutions collaborate without sacrificing their individuality? How can cross-border cooperation create added value for visitors, residents and participating organisations alike?

The answers presented in this manual are not intended as universal solutions. Every region possesses unique characteristics and every cooperation project develops within its own specific context. Nevertheless, the experiences described in the following chapters demonstrate that certain principles are widely transferable. Trust, dialogue, shared vision and long-term commitment remain essential components of successful cooperation regardless of geography or sector.

The project also illustrates the particular role that culture can play within European cooperation. Cultural experiences create emotional connections that often transcend administrative boundaries. Festivals, concerts and artistic encounters not only generate economic value but also contribute to shared understanding, collective identity and social cohesion.

The following chapters therefore document more than the implementation of a funded project. They describe the gradual emergence of a shared cultural destination and the development of a cooperation model that may offer inspiration for other border regions throughout Europe.

Chapter 2 – Regional Context and Initial Situation

The Bavarian-Tyrolean border region is widely recognised for its outstanding natural beauty. The Alps, the Chiemsee, the Inn Valley, historic market towns and rural cultural landscapes have shaped the identity of the region for centuries. These assets have also contributed significantly to the development of tourism, which remains one of the most important economic sectors on both sides of the border.

Less visible, but equally remarkable, is the region's cultural landscape. Within a relatively small geographical area, a network of professional festivals, concert series and music theatre institutions has developed over recent decades. These organisations have established strong artistic profiles and attract audiences from across Europe and beyond. Together, they contribute to a concentration of cultural activity that is exceptional for a predominantly rural region.

The Tiroler Festspiele Erl have developed into one of Austria's most internationally recognised music festivals. Gut Immling has established itself as an important independent opera festival within the German cultural landscape. Festivo Aschau and the Schlosskonzerte Amerang contribute further artistic diversity and demonstrate the breadth of cultural activity within the region. Although differing in scale, structure and artistic focus, these institutions share a commitment to high-quality cultural production and audience engagement.

At the same time, the region benefits from well-established tourism organisations with extensive expertise in destination management and visitor communication. The tourism associations of Kufsteinerland and Chiemsee-Alpenland have long promoted the region's natural attractions, hospitality infrastructure and recreational opportunities. Their work has contributed significantly to the area's visibility within domestic and international tourism markets.

Despite these favourable conditions, culture and tourism frequently developed along parallel rather than interconnected paths. Cultural institutions concentrated on artistic programming, audience development and organisational sustainability. Tourism organisations focused primarily on destination marketing, accommodation, mobility and leisure experiences. While both sectors pursued complementary objectives, systematic cooperation remained limited.

This separation was not the result of disagreement or competition between the sectors. Rather, it reflected the historical development of independent professional ecosystems. Cultural organisations and tourism associations operated according to different rhythms, planning cycles and success indicators. Opportunities for structured exchange were relatively rare.

The project partners therefore began with a shared observation: the region possessed all the ingredients necessary to establish itself as a distinctive cultural destination, yet these assets were rarely communicated collectively.

Visitors often experienced the region as an integrated cultural landscape long before institutions described it as such. A guest attending a performance in Erl might stay near the Chiemsee, visit cultural attractions in Upper Bavaria and combine artistic experiences with tourism activities across both countries. From the visitor's perspective, administrative borders often played only a minor role.

The project recognised an opportunity within this discrepancy.

Rather than promoting individual institutions in isolation, it might be possible to present the region as a coherent cultural destination. Such an approach would not replace existing identities. Instead, it would create an additional layer of communication capable of highlighting the collective strength of the region.

This perspective represented a significant conceptual shift.

The project was not primarily concerned with increasing visibility for individual organisations. Nor was it intended to create a new institution or centralised cultural structure. Its objective was to identify shared opportunities and to explore whether cooperation could create added value for all participating organisations.

The broader European context reinforced the relevance of this approach. Across Europe, many rural and peripheral regions face similar challenges. They possess cultural assets of considerable quality, yet struggle to achieve visibility comparable to major metropolitan centres. At the same time, tourism markets have become increasingly competitive, requiring destinations to differentiate themselves through distinctive experiences and authentic narratives.

Culture offers significant potential in this regard. Unlike many tourism products, cultural experiences are deeply rooted in place. They cannot easily be replicated elsewhere. Festivals, concerts and artistic institutions contribute not only to economic activity but also to identity, reputation and regional distinctiveness.

For the Bavarian-Tyrolean border region, these observations formed the starting point of the Classic Peaks project.

The initiative was therefore founded upon a simple but powerful assumption: if cultural institutions and tourism organisations could develop a shared understanding of the region's strengths, they might also develop a stronger and more compelling narrative than either sector could create independently.

The subsequent chapters describe how this assumption evolved from an initial idea into a structured cooperation process, a shared identity and ultimately a model for cross-border cultural destination development.

Chapter 3 – Building the Partnership

The recognition of a shared opportunity does not automatically create a partnership. Even when organisations pursue complementary goals, meaningful cooperation requires trust, commitment and a willingness to invest time in collective processes.

This was the starting point of the Classic Peaks project.

The participating institutions entered the initiative with different histories, organisational structures and strategic priorities. Each organisation possessed its own identity, audience and development objectives. The tourism associations and cultural institutions also approached regional development from different professional perspectives.

Yet beneath these differences lay a common challenge.

All partners operated within an increasingly competitive environment. Cultural institutions competed for audiences, sponsors and public attention. Tourism organisations competed for visibility within national and international markets. Both sectors faced rising expectations regarding communication, audience engagement and measurable impact.

The project therefore created an opportunity to examine whether cooperation could provide advantages that individual organisations would struggle to achieve independently.

From the outset, the partnership was deliberately designed to combine different types of expertise. Cultural institutions contributed artistic knowledge, programming experience and audience relationships. Tourism organisations brought expertise in destination management, market analysis and visitor behaviour. Together, these perspectives created a broader understanding of regional development than either sector could have generated alone.

The formation of the partnership required more than formal agreements and project documentation. It required the creation of an environment in which participants could exchange ideas openly and discuss challenges honestly.

This process began through a series of meetings, workshops and strategic conversations. Early discussions focused on understanding the expectations of each partner. What did success look like from the perspective of a cultural institution? What objectives were most important for tourism organisations? Which opportunities appeared realistic and which assumptions needed to be challenged?

These conversations revealed both differences and common ground.

Participants quickly discovered that many of their concerns were remarkably similar. Audience development, visibility, sustainability and long-term relevance emerged as recurring themes. Although organisations approached these topics from different angles, they increasingly recognised that their interests were often aligned.

An important aspect of the partnership concerned the relationship among the cultural institutions themselves.

Festivals and concert organisers frequently operate within competitive environments. They compete for audiences, media attention, public funding and sponsorship support. Cooperation therefore required a conscious effort to move beyond traditional patterns of thinking.

The project did not attempt to eliminate competition. Nor would such an objective have been realistic or desirable.

Instead, the partnership encouraged participants to distinguish between competition and collaboration. Organisations could continue to pursue their own artistic ambitions while simultaneously contributing to a larger regional narrative. Cooperation would not diminish individual identities; it would strengthen the collective visibility of the region.

This realisation proved transformative.

As discussions progressed, participants increasingly shifted their focus from institutional interests towards shared opportunities. The question was no longer how one organisation could benefit from the project, but how the region as a whole could become more attractive and visible.

The partnership gradually evolved from a project consortium into a community of practice.

Trust developed through repeated interaction. Shared language emerged through discussion. New ideas arose because participants were exposed to perspectives that differed from their own.

These developments may appear intangible, yet they became some of the most important achievements of the project.

Many cooperation initiatives focus heavily on outputs, deliverables and communication activities. The experience of Classic Peaks suggests that the quality of relationships established during a project can be equally significant. Strong partnerships create resilience, facilitate innovation and increase the likelihood that cooperation will continue beyond the formal project period.

By the time the partnership entered its next phase, it possessed something that could not have been created through contractual arrangements alone.

It possessed trust.

And trust would become the foundation upon which all subsequent activities were built.

Chapter 4 – Creating a Steering Group

One of the earliest strategic decisions taken by the project partners was the establishment of a cross-border Steering Group. Initially conceived as a governance structure to coordinate activities and monitor implementation, the Steering Group gradually evolved into one of the project's most important achievements.

At the beginning of the project, its purpose appeared relatively straightforward. Representatives of the participating organisations would meet regularly to discuss progress, review milestones and coordinate activities. Such structures are common within European cooperation projects and are often viewed primarily as administrative necessities.

The experience of Classic Peaks demonstrated that they can become much more.

The Steering Group brought together individuals with different professional backgrounds, organisational cultures and expectations. Representatives of cultural institutions approached discussions from artistic and audience-centred perspectives. Tourism organisations focused on destination development, visitor behaviour and market positioning. Each participant brought specific expertise while simultaneously learning from the perspectives of others.

This diversity became one of the group's greatest strengths.

Regular meetings created opportunities for exchange that would otherwise not have occurred. Participants discussed practical implementation issues, but they also began exploring broader questions regarding cultural tourism, regional identity and cross-border cooperation. The conversations gradually expanded beyond project management and entered the realm of strategic reflection.

An important characteristic of the Steering Group was its continuity. Cooperation rarely emerges from a single workshop or conference. Trust develops through repeated interaction. Ideas mature through discussion. Consensus evolves through a willingness to revisit assumptions and refine positions over time.

The regular rhythm of meetings therefore proved essential.

Participants became increasingly familiar with one another's organisational realities. Challenges that initially appeared specific to individual institutions often revealed broader relevance for the entire partnership. Tourism organisations gained a deeper understanding of cultural production processes. Cultural institutions became more familiar with destination management perspectives and visitor-oriented thinking.

The Steering Group also provided a framework for managing complexity.

Cross-border projects inevitably involve different institutional interests and expectations. Decisions regarding branding, communication, budgets or strategic priorities require careful consideration and broad support. The Steering Group offered a transparent environment in which such decisions could be discussed openly and collectively.

Importantly, the group operated less as a hierarchical decision-making body and more as a forum for consensus-building.

This approach proved particularly valuable during periods of uncertainty. Questions concerning brand identity, target markets and communication strategy often generated multiple viewpoints. Rather than forcing rapid decisions, the Steering Group encouraged discussion and exploration. This process occasionally required patience, but it ultimately strengthened the quality and legitimacy of the decisions that emerged.

Several of the project's most significant achievements can be traced directly to the work of the Steering Group. The development of the Classic Peaks identity, the articulation of a shared vision and the design of the communication campaign all emerged through collective discussion rather than top-down instruction.

The experience offers an important lesson for future projects.

Steering Groups should not be regarded merely as governance mechanisms. When properly facilitated, they can become platforms for learning, innovation and institutional development. Their greatest value often lies not in controlling projects but in creating environments where cooperation can flourish.

By the conclusion of the project, the Steering Group had become more than an administrative requirement.

It had become the place where the partnership learned to think collectively.

Chapter 5 – From Stakeholders to a Shared Vision

By mid-2025, the project had established a functioning partnership and an active Steering Group. Yet an essential question remained unresolved.

What exactly were the partners trying to build together?

While participants agreed that cultural tourism represented a significant opportunity for the region, they did not yet share a common vision regarding how this opportunity should be communicated or developed. Different organisations naturally emphasised different aspects of the region's identity and strengths.

The project therefore entered a phase of strategic reflection.

Rather than focusing immediately on branding or communication, participants sought to identify the underlying narrative capable of connecting their diverse institutions and destinations. This process required careful consideration because the project was not attempting to create a new organisation or replace existing identities.

The challenge was to discover common ground without sacrificing individuality.

Through workshops, consultations and Steering Group discussions, participants began exploring fundamental questions. What distinguished the region from competing destinations? What experiences did visitors actually seek? How could culture and tourism be connected in a meaningful way? Which values and characteristics united the participating organisations?

These discussions revealed a number of recurring themes.

Participants repeatedly referred to artistic excellence, authenticity, landscape, hospitality and accessibility. The region offered internationally recognised cultural experiences while maintaining a strong connection to local identity and place. Visitors could encounter world-class artistic performances while simultaneously experiencing Alpine scenery, lakes, historic towns and regional traditions.

The more these themes were discussed, the clearer a common narrative became.

The region was not merely a collection of individual institutions. It was a cultural landscape. Its strength did not reside in any single organisation but in the combination of experiences available across the region as a whole.

This realisation represented a decisive turning point.

The conversation gradually shifted from institutional visibility towards regional visibility. Participants began asking not how individual organisations could become more prominent, but how the entire cultural landscape could become more recognisable.

The implications were significant.

A shared regional narrative created opportunities that extended beyond the capabilities of individual institutions. It enabled collaborative communication, strengthened the attractiveness of the region for visitors and provided a framework within which culture and tourism could cooperate more effectively.

The process also highlighted the importance of listening.

Shared visions rarely emerge through persuasion. They emerge through dialogue. Participants were required to consider perspectives that differed from their own and to acknowledge priorities that might not have been immediately obvious from within their respective sectors.

This openness ultimately became one of the project's defining characteristics.

By the conclusion of this phase, the partnership possessed something far more valuable than a communication strategy.

It possessed a shared understanding of why cooperation mattered.

The Steering Group did not rely solely on its own expertise. With prudent foresight, it consistently invited a wider circle of advisors to contribute to its discussions and decision-making processes. Although not formally integrated as project partners, these individuals provided valuable perspectives and external expertise.

Among them were local political representatives as well as experts from Euregio Inntal, who contributed additional impulses, recommendations, and strategic reflections. This approach ensured that the Steering Group was able to incorporate a broad spectrum of stakeholder perspectives and regional interests into its deliberations.

The underlying principle was clear: successful cross-border cooperation requires the inclusion of as many relevant voices and viewpoints as possible. This participatory approach further strengthened the network surrounding the transregional Steering Group and contributed significantly to the project's long-term sustainability.

For initiatives of this nature, a broad network of experts, decision-makers, and stakeholders is indispensable. The relationships established and reinforced through this process will continue to serve as a valuable foundation for future cooperation beyond the lifetime of the project itself.

That understanding would become the foundation for the next stage of the project: the development of a common identity capable of communicating this vision to the outside world.

Chapter 6 – Developing the Classic Peaks Identity

The development of the Classic Peaks identity represented one of the most visible outcomes of the project. Yet the brand did not emerge from a traditional marketing process. It was the result of months of discussion, reflection and strategic alignment among the project partners.

The process began with a simple challenge.

How could a diverse group of independent cultural institutions and tourism organisations communicate a shared vision without losing their individual identities?

This question shaped every aspect of the branding process.

From the outset, participants agreed that the project did not require a new institution. Tiroler Festspiele Erl, Gut Immling, Festivo Aschau and the Schlosskonzerte Amerang already possessed established brands and reputations. The objective was therefore not replacement but connection.

A common identity would function as an umbrella under which existing organisations could present themselves collectively when addressing external audiences.

The development process involved extensive collaboration with communication specialists, workshops and numerous discussions within the Steering Group. Various naming proposals, visual concepts and positioning strategies were explored. The challenge was to identify a concept capable of expressing both the cultural and geographical characteristics of the region.

Several themes repeatedly emerged during these discussions.

The first was artistic excellence. The participating institutions represented a concentration of professional cultural activity unusual for a rural region.

The second was landscape. Mountains, lakes and natural environments formed an essential part of the visitor experience and differentiated the region from many urban cultural destinations.

The third was connection. The project sought to overcome fragmentation and communicate the region as a coherent cultural destination.

These themes ultimately converged in the concept that became Classic Peaks.

The name proved effective because it communicated multiple ideas simultaneously. "Classic" referenced both classical music and enduring cultural quality. "Peaks" evoked the Alpine landscape while simultaneously suggesting excellence, highlights and aspiration. The combination created an identity that was internationally understandable and adaptable across different markets.

The accompanying visual language reinforced these ideas. Early design explorations drew inspiration from topographical forms, sound waves, mountain silhouettes and water landscapes. The resulting identity connected culture and geography without relying on clichés or traditional tourism imagery.

Perhaps the most important achievement of the branding process, however, was not the final design.

The process itself became an exercise in cooperation.

Participants were required to articulate their aspirations, negotiate differences and identify common ground. Through this process, the brand acquired meaning because it reflected genuine consensus rather than external imposition.

This distinction is crucial.

Many regional brands struggle because they are created before stakeholders have developed a shared understanding of their objectives. Classic Peaks benefited from the opposite sequence. The vision came first. The brand followed.

As a result, the identity was not merely accepted by the project partners. It was recognised as an authentic expression of the cooperation that had emerged throughout the project.

For future initiatives, this experience offers a valuable lesson.

Successful brands are rarely invented. They are discovered through dialogue.

Classic Peaks became effective because it was rooted in relationships, trust and a shared sense of purpose.

The brand therefore represented much more than a communication tool.

It became the public face of a new form of cross-border cooperation.

Chapter 7 – From Brand to Campaign

By the autumn of 2025, the project had reached an important milestone. A partnership had been established, a Steering Group was functioning effectively and the Classic Peaks identity had been developed. The challenge now shifted from internal alignment to external communication.

This transition represented a decisive moment in the evolution of the project.

Until this point, the focus had been on dialogue, relationship-building and strategic reflection. The next phase required the partnership to translate its shared vision into a form that could be understood by external audiences. In practical terms, this meant moving from cooperation to communication.

The first step was the development of a common digital platform.

The partners agreed that the project required more than a campaign. It required a destination where audiences could explore the region, discover participating institutions and gain a better understanding of the experiences available across the Bavarian-Tyrolean cultural landscape. The platform was therefore conceived as a gateway rather than a standalone website.

Importantly, the objective was not to centralise cultural offerings or replace the digital presence of individual institutions. Instead, the platform would function as a shared point of entry. Visitors could discover the region through Classic Peaks and then continue their journey through the websites, ticketing systems and communication channels of individual partners.

This approach reflected the underlying philosophy of the project itself.

The platform connected organisations without reducing their independence.

At the same time, preparations began for the implementation of an international communication campaign. Following extensive discussion, the Steering Group selected Italy and Spain as initial target markets. Both countries possessed strong cultural traditions, substantial tourism potential and audiences likely to respond positively to a combination of artistic excellence, landscape and authentic regional experiences.

The communication strategy deliberately avoided focusing on individual productions or events. Instead, it sought to communicate the broader idea of a cultural destination.

This distinction proved important.

Traditional cultural marketing often promotes specific performances, artists or programmes. The Classic Peaks campaign adopted a wider perspective. It presented the region as a place where culture and tourism interact to create memorable experiences. Visitors were invited not simply to attend a concert or opera performance but to discover a landscape shaped by culture.

The visual and textual language of the campaign reflected the strategic discussions that had taken place throughout the project. Themes such as authenticity, excellence, discovery and connection appeared consistently across communication channels. The campaign sought to communicate not only what visitors could experience but also why the region was distinctive.

A combination of communication formats was employed. Digital advertising, social media campaigns, video content, search engine marketing and digital outdoor media were used to build awareness and direct audiences towards the Classic Peaks platform. Each channel played a different role within the broader communication ecosystem, contributing either to visibility, engagement or conversion.

The implementation phase also demonstrated the operational value of the partnership.

Coordinated communication required institutions to align schedules, share content and agree upon common priorities. Practical collaboration became just as important as strategic alignment. The campaign therefore tested not only the effectiveness of the brand but also the capacity of the partnership to act collectively.

Viewed in retrospect, the campaign represented more than a marketing activity.

It became the first public expression of the cooperation that had developed throughout the project. For the first time, cultural institutions and tourism organisations appeared together within an international marketplace, communicating a shared narrative and presenting themselves as contributors to a common destination.

The journey from partnership to brand had been complex.

The journey from brand to campaign demonstrated that the effort had created something tangible.

Classic Peaks was no longer merely an internal concept.

It had become visible.

Chapter 8 – Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

From the beginning, the project partners recognised that evaluation should be more than a contractual requirement. If Classic Peaks was intended to function as a model for future initiatives, it was essential to understand not only what had been achieved but also how those achievements had been realised and where limitations remained.

Evaluation was therefore conceived as a process of learning.

This approach reflected one of the central ambitions of the project. The objective was not merely to measure outputs but to generate knowledge that could support future cooperation initiatives throughout Europe.

The communication campaign provided a substantial body of quantitative data. Millions of impressions were generated across communication channels, while the newly established Classic Peaks brand achieved visibility within selected international markets. The campaign demonstrated that the concept of a shared cultural destination possessed genuine communication potential.

From an awareness perspective, the results were encouraging.

The campaign successfully introduced the region to audiences that had previously possessed little or no familiarity with the participating institutions. Digital advertising, social media communication and search engine marketing generated significant visibility and directed audiences towards the newly created platform.

These results confirmed one of the project's central assumptions: collaboration can generate visibility that exceeds the capabilities of individual organisations acting alone.

Yet the evaluation also revealed important limitations.

Perhaps the most significant concerned measurement infrastructure. While campaign data demonstrated strong levels of audience engagement, tracking systems were not sufficiently developed to establish a reliable connection between communication activities and visitor behaviour. Questions concerning ticket purchases, travel decisions and economic impact could therefore only be answered partially.

This experience generated one of the most important lessons of the entire project.

Data collection and measurement systems should not be treated as secondary technical considerations. They are strategic tools that influence decision-making throughout implementation and evaluation. Future initiatives should therefore invest in tracking and analytics from the earliest stages of development.

At the same time, the evaluation process highlighted the limitations of quantitative indicators alone.

Many participants regarded the most significant project outcomes as organisational rather than statistical. The establishment of lasting relationships, the creation of a shared identity and the development of a common strategic perspective were repeatedly identified as major achievements.

These outcomes are difficult to express through traditional performance metrics.

Yet they may ultimately prove more important than short-term communication results.

The evaluation therefore encouraged a broader understanding of success. Cooperation projects should not be judged exclusively through immediate economic indicators or campaign performance. Their value often lies equally in the networks, capacities and relationships they create.

This observation is particularly relevant within the context of cross-border cooperation. Trust, mutual understanding and institutional learning require time. Their impact often becomes visible only after formal project activities have concluded.

The evaluation process also highlighted the importance of sustainability.

Awareness generated through communication campaigns inevitably declines if it is not supported by ongoing activity. Brands, websites and social media channels require continuous development. The long-term value of the project therefore depends upon the willingness of partners to maintain and expand the structures created during implementation.

Ultimately, the evaluation demonstrated that Classic Peaks achieved more than the implementation of a communication campaign.

It generated practical knowledge regarding governance, branding, stakeholder engagement and cultural tourism development.

Perhaps the most valuable outcome of the evaluation was therefore not a number but a lesson.

Successful cooperation should be measured not only by what it produces but also by what it enables.

Chapter 9 – Challenges and Lessons Learned

Every meaningful cooperation project encounters challenges. Indeed, the absence of challenges would often indicate that a project has not ventured beyond familiar routines and established structures. The experience of Classic Peaks confirms this observation.

Throughout the project, participants encountered organisational, strategic, technical and cultural challenges. Some were anticipated from the outset. Others emerged only during implementation. Together, these experiences became one of the project's most valuable sources of knowledge.

The first lesson concerns time.

Cooperation develops more slowly than many stakeholders initially expect. Shared understanding cannot be established through a single workshop, meeting or communication campaign. Trust requires repeated interaction, and consensus emerges gradually through dialogue.

The project demonstrated that time invested in relationship-building should not be regarded as a delay. It is a prerequisite for meaningful cooperation.

Closely connected to this is the question of trust.

Many projects implicitly assume that trust exists before cooperation begins. The experience of Classic Peaks suggests a different perspective. Trust emerged through the project itself. As participants became familiar with one another's priorities, constraints and ambitions, relationships strengthened and collaboration became easier.

The project also highlighted the importance of developing a shared vision before developing a brand.

The success of Classic Peaks was rooted in the strategic conversations that preceded the branding process. Participants first established a common understanding of what they wished to communicate and why cooperation mattered. Only then did they begin discussing names, visual identities and campaigns.

This sequence proved critical.

Brands are most effective when they emerge from consensus rather than attempting to create it.

Another lesson concerned the relationship between culture and tourism.

The project brought together sectors that frequently operate within different professional environments. Cultural institutions tend to focus on artistic quality, programming and

audience experience. Tourism organisations often prioritise destination development, visitor behaviour and market positioning.

The project demonstrated that these perspectives are not contradictory. On the contrary, they become more valuable when combined.

Technical infrastructure provided another important lesson.

The limitations encountered during evaluation highlighted the importance of tracking systems, analytics and data management. Future projects should ensure that measurement structures are fully operational before communication campaigns begin.

The project also reinforced the distinction between awareness and conversion.

The campaign successfully introduced the Classic Peaks concept to new audiences. However, behavioural change occurs gradually. Recognition precedes consideration. Consideration precedes action. Expectations regarding immediate economic impact should therefore remain realistic.

Finally, the project demonstrated the importance of sustainability.

The most valuable outcomes of cooperation often emerge after formal project activities have concluded. Relationships continue, ideas mature and new opportunities become possible. For this reason, projects should be designed not only to achieve short-term objectives but also to create structures capable of supporting future collaboration.

Viewed in retrospect, the challenges encountered during Classic Peaks should not be regarded as shortcomings.

They are evidence of experimentation, learning and institutional development.

In this sense, the project's difficulties became one of its greatest strengths.

Chapter 10 – Recommendations for Future Cross-Border Projects

The experience of Classic Peaks extends beyond the specific context of cultural tourism in the Bavarian-Tyrolean border region. While every cooperation initiative is shaped by its own geography, institutions and stakeholders, the project generated insights that may prove relevant for future cross-border initiatives throughout Europe.

One of the most important recommendations concerns the starting point of cooperation itself.

Successful projects rarely begin with funding programmes. They begin with people and organisations that recognise a shared opportunity or challenge. Financial support can facilitate cooperation, but it cannot create trust, commitment or common purpose.

Future initiatives should therefore invest substantial effort in stakeholder engagement before focusing on budgets, work packages or communication measures.

Equally important is the establishment of effective governance structures.

The experience of Classic Peaks demonstrates that Steering Groups can serve functions far beyond administration. Properly designed, they become spaces for learning, innovation and strategic dialogue. Governance should therefore be understood not merely as a control mechanism but as an enabling structure.

The project also highlights the importance of developing a shared vision before developing a brand. Stakeholders must first agree on who they are, what they represent and what they wish to achieve together. Only then can communication activities achieve lasting impact.

Technical infrastructure deserves similar attention. Digital platforms, analytics systems and measurement tools should be considered strategic investments rather than administrative necessities. Reliable data supports better decision-making and enables more meaningful evaluation.

At a broader level, the project suggests that cooperation initiatives should think beyond their formal duration. Sustainability is most effective when incorporated from the beginning rather than added at the end. Structures capable of surviving beyond the funding period should be regarded as core project outcomes.

The experience of Classic Peaks also raises a wider question: why is culture particularly well suited to cross-border cooperation?

One answer lies in the nature of cultural experiences themselves.

Infrastructure projects connect places.

Economic projects connect markets.

Administrative projects connect institutions.

Cultural projects connect people.

Culture operates within the realm of memory, emotion and shared experience. A performance, concert or festival visit may influence perceptions for years or even decades. Cultural experiences become part of individual biographies and collective identities. They shape how communities understand themselves and how regions present themselves to others.

This characteristic makes culture uniquely valuable within the context of European cooperation.

The Bavarian-Tyrolean border region benefited from a significant advantage: a common language and closely connected cultural traditions. Communication barriers were comparatively low, and historical relationships already existed. Many European border regions face more complex conditions involving multiple languages, legal systems and cultural traditions.

Yet the project suggests that these differences should not be viewed as obstacles. In many cases, they represent opportunities. Cultural cooperation creates spaces in which diversity becomes a resource rather than a barrier. Shared artistic experiences encourage dialogue, curiosity and mutual understanding.

From a European perspective, this may be one of the most important conclusions of the project.

The European Union is sustained not only by institutions, treaties and economic relationships but also by connections between people, communities and regions. Programmes such as Interreg create opportunities for these connections to develop. Culture strengthens them by providing shared experiences capable of transcending administrative and political boundaries.

Viewed in this light, the significance of Classic Peaks extends beyond tourism marketing or regional branding.

The project demonstrates that cooperation across borders can generate new ideas, new identities and new forms of regional development. More importantly, it demonstrates that cultural cooperation contributes to something larger: the creation of a Europe that is experienced not only through institutions but also through relationships.

The future of European cooperation will require many different types of projects. Yet cultural initiatives possess a particular strength.

They remind us that lasting cooperation begins not with structures, but with people willing to imagine a common future together.

After the Project

The Project Ended. The Cooperation Did Not.

Many publicly funded projects conclude with a final report, a closing event and the completion of administrative obligations. Once the funding period ends, the structures established during implementation often disappear and the partnerships gradually dissolve.

The experience of Classic Peaks developed differently.

During the final phase of the project, discussions increasingly focused not on closure but on continuation. Participants recognised that some of the most valuable outcomes were not temporary project outputs but long-term assets. The Classic Peaks brand, the digital platform, the communication channels and, above all, the relationships established between the participating organisations represented foundations for future activity rather than endpoints of a completed initiative.

This observation reflects one of the central insights emerging from the project. Campaigns generate visibility and funding programmes create opportunities. Sustainable regional development, however, depends upon structures capable of continuing beyond individual project cycles.

For this reason, the project partners agreed that the cooperation initiated through Classic Peaks should continue after the formal conclusion of the Interreg project. Discussions focused on maintaining and further developing the digital platform, improving measurement systems, strengthening communication activities and exploring new opportunities for collaboration.

The Steering Group, originally created as a governance mechanism, increasingly evolved into a platform for ongoing exchange. The participants discovered that regular communication had become valuable in its own right. New ideas emerged, new opportunities became visible and the benefits of cooperation extended well beyond the original objectives of the project.

This development may ultimately represent the most important achievement of Classic Peaks.

The project succeeded in creating a framework through which organisations with different missions, structures and priorities discovered common interests and shared opportunities. It demonstrated that cooperation does not require uniformity and that independent institutions can strengthen one another through coordinated action.

The future of Classic Peaks remains open. New projects may emerge. Additional partners may become involved. Communication strategies will evolve and priorities will change.

Yet one outcome will remain.

A conversation began.

A network was established.

A shared understanding of a cross-border cultural destination emerged.

The project has ended.

The cooperation has not.



Partner Profiles

Tiroler Festspiele Erl

Founded in 1997, Tiroler Festspiele Erl has developed into one of Austria's leading opera and concert festivals. Located in the Tyrolean Alps, the institution combines artistic excellence with a strong regional presence and international reach. As Lead Partner of the Classic Peaks project, Tiroler Festspiele Erl coordinated the partnership and facilitated the strategic development of the initiative.

Unsere Oper Gut Immling

Located in Upper Bavaria, Gut Immling has established itself as one of Germany's most distinctive independent opera festivals. Combining ambitious artistic programming with an accessible atmosphere, the institution attracts audiences from across Germany and neighbouring countries.

Festivo Aschau

Festivo Aschau contributes significantly to the cultural profile of the Chiemgau region through innovative chamber music programming and strong regional engagement. Its participation added valuable perspectives regarding audience development and smaller-scale cultural formats.

Schlosskonzerte Amerang

The Schlosskonzerte Amerang combine high artistic standards with the unique setting of a historic Bavarian castle. The concert series illustrates how cultural heritage and contemporary cultural production can reinforce one another.

Kufsteinerland Tourism Association

Kufsteinerland Tourism Association is responsible for destination development and tourism marketing within one of Tyrol's most dynamic tourism regions. The organisation contributed expertise in visitor behaviour, destination branding and tourism communication.

Chiemsee-Alpenland Tourism Association

As the destination management organisation for the Chiemsee-Alpenland region, the association contributed extensive knowledge regarding tourism markets, regional positioning and visitor engagement strategies.

Why Classical Music?

The Classic Peaks project focused primarily on organisations operating within the fields of classical music, opera and related performing arts. This was not coincidental.

Classical music possesses characteristics that make it particularly suitable for cultural tourism development. Audiences often demonstrate a high willingness to travel, cultural experiences frequently motivate overnight stays and festivals typically attract visitors with strong levels of engagement and spending capacity.

At the same time, classical music combines international appeal with local identity. A performance by Mozart, Wagner or Verdi may attract visitors from across Europe, while the setting in which the performance takes place remains deeply connected to the cultural and historical identity of a specific region.

This combination of international relevance and regional authenticity creates significant opportunities for destination development.

Border Regions as Opportunity Spaces

Border regions are frequently perceived as peripheral areas located at the margins of national territories.

The experience of Classic Peaks suggests a different interpretation.

Rather than representing limitations, borders can create opportunities.

Border regions possess access to multiple cultural traditions, multiple networks and multiple markets. They often serve as meeting points where different perspectives interact and where innovation emerges through exchange rather than isolation.

The Bavarian-Tyrolean border region benefited from a shared language and closely connected cultural traditions. Yet the lessons of the project extend beyond this specific context. Across Europe, border regions possess unique opportunities to create value by connecting communities, institutions and ideas that might otherwise remain separate.

The most successful cross-border projects do not attempt to eliminate differences. Instead, they transform diversity into a resource.

Methodological Notes

The experiences documented within this publication emerged through a combination of practical implementation, stakeholder dialogue and continuous evaluation.

The project employed several complementary methods:

- Regular Steering Group meetings involving cultural institutions and tourism organisations.
- Strategic workshops focusing on identity, positioning and communication.
- Procurement procedures for branding, communication and campaign development.
- Quantitative campaign evaluation and digital performance analysis.
- Qualitative reflection and discussion among project participants.
- External input from communication agencies and academic evaluation partners.

The resulting recommendations should therefore be understood as practice-based observations derived from real-world implementation rather than theoretical models.



© Classic Peaks Steering Group, represented by Tiroler Festspiele Erl, 2026