

Output Factsheet

Output title: Output 3.2: Regional Stakeholder Empowering Workshops of LAG Central Istria

Summary of the output (max. 2500 characters)

Regional Stakeholder Empowering workshop related to the pilot implementation as well as strategy implementation in general, was held on 27 September 2018 in Borut, near City of Pazin on a small rural farm.

The workshop was attended by 20 stakeholders from private, civic and economic sector relevant for the development of tourism in the area:

- Representatives of three Touristic Boards that operate in the area- Municipality of Motovun tourist board, Municipality of Žminj tourist board and Tourist board of central Istria
- Mayors of Municipalities of Žminj, Cerovlje, and Pićan, as well as major of City of Pazin
- Head of Administrative department for tourism of Istrian region, as associated partner on the project
- Representative of Destination management organisation for bike and outdoor under the governance of Istrian Region
- Representatives of economic sector- stakeholders that work in the touristic field

The aim of the workshop was to improve regional/local governance based on specific local challenges that involve managing touristic development of relatively small and coherent area of central Istria, with common characteristics, potentials and resources but fragmented touristic offer and management.

Representatives of touristic boards and local governance, encouraged by the fruitful cooperation on the project, especially regarding developing and implementing pilot actions, expressed their willingness for future joint activities.

On their tourist councils and monthly mayor's coordination, they will present the idea of forming a touristic cluster that will represent needs and interests of stakeholders in the area as well as coordinate future development. This way the existing boards would be able to maintain their autonomy in order to most effectively respond to specific needs of their local area but at the same time formalize the cooperation with other boards in order to harmonize the touristic development of the wider area. Furthermore, participants acknowledged the need of joint activity in terms of marketing and promotion as the best way for increasing visibility and touristic growth. Also, they have agreed that future branding efforts have to be closely connected with tradition, culture and nature preservation thus following the concepts of slow, green and healthy tourism and the whole idea behind the INSiGHTS project.

Contribution to the project and Programme objectives (max. 1500 characters)

The output directly contributes to the programme priority PA2: Environment and culture responsible Danube Region- Foster sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage and resources since its focus was to find optimal solutions for improving local governance regarding development of slow, green and healthy tourism.

Furthermore, the output is in direct line with project objectives since the main result of the empowering workshop was to further develop the current fragmented management schemes and direct them towards a coherent integrated management network ensuring thus comprehensive long-term fulfilment of other project objectives – promoting coordinated and smart tourism products linked to greenways and stimulating eco conscious and healthy lifestyle through green tourism.

With the tailor- made solution for promotion and usage of natural and cultural heritage on sustainable way via bike and trail routes we are promoting healthy lifestyle and contributing to sustainability of the region. In that way we made a conscious shift towards green, healthy and slow tourism that preserves and nurtures local customs and resources rather than sacrifice it for the sake of mass tourism and profit at cost of devastation and exploitation.

Transnational impact (max. 1500 characters)

Given the fact that project activities are being implemented in the Istrian region which is a well-known touristic destination it is clear that the transnational visibility and impact are significant. This way, the output combined with the project results can be seen as a good practice example in developing good management schemes and coherent touristic product out of fragmented touristic offer divided by different municipalities and tourist boards.

By developing new touristic products that are returning to the essence of the local environment and community, the destination is giving precedence to sustainable principles and its development towards green, healthy and slow tourism. Other than the tourism strategy that is in line with those principles, the pilot action and its results are also contributing to them by developing bike and trail routes and additional authentic offer along them as well as with the interactive map. This way we are making a shift towards being eco conscious and saving limited and precious resources.

Ultimately, the destination is taking a firm stance towards an effort to form the tourism sector to meet the needs of the local area – its nature, traditions, inhabitants and its future generations. It is believed that this kind of touristic offer will attract the type of visitors who will recognize the true value of the destination and spread the good word which will result in making a transnational impact as well as in exchange of experience and share of good practice results between different destination aiming to achieve sustainability. Additionally, LAG Central Istria as well as the tourist boards will be dedicated in forming new international project partnership with similar follow up objectives.

Contribution to EUSDR actions and/or targets (max. 1500 characters)

The output contributes to project and Programme objectives in trying to find the common ground regarding tourism development in direction of slow, green and healthy tourism which will preserve the traditional way of life as well as natural and cultural heritage as most valuable resources of the area. It is in line with priority area 3 of the EUSR “To promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts” and action IV. Develop green tourist products along the Danube Region.

In regards to the INSiGHTS project, LAG Central Istria as project partner is developing green tourist products in the area related to the development and advancement of the bike and trail routes as well as the interactive map that will help to further promote the routes and the related authentic offer along them. Additionally, a touristic strategy will be developed as a basis for development of additional green touristic products in the future. This is especially important given the fact that project activities are taking place in a region which has a very high growth in terms of tourism and a very high number of visitors in the pick of the season. With the help of the project, the emphasis has been put to long term possibilities and consequences of the tourism sector and a clear preference and agreement of all the included stakeholders has been made towards the responsible relationship in terms of environment and community. The main aim of the output - empowering workshop was to ensure the durability of the project results and this way on a long term ensure continuous contribution to the above mentioned EUSR target.

Performed testing, if applicable (max. 1000 characters)

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Integration and use of the output by the target group (max. 2000 characters)

Target group of project activities and more specifically of the empowering workshop were the representatives of key stakeholders in tourism development in the area from the public, private and civic sector. LAG Central Istria as project partner and intermediary organization between the involved stakeholders with the INSiGHTS project has proven that good cooperation can bring multiple benefits for the whole area. However, ultimately, the results of the output in the future will be entirely integrated and used by the target group. It was decided that this was only the first workshop of a kind and that it is crucial to establish a regular meeting schedule during the strategy implementation lifetime, that is until the period of 2025 in order to supervise the realization of the development activities as defined in the strategy. The involved stakeholders will thus meet again in the next six months period to each present the comments and conclusions from their tourist councils on the cluster forming idea as well as to find the means to ensure further assistance of the external expert that were responsible of the strategy development. Moreover, the workshop has stressed the responsibilities of every group of present stakeholders in the upkeeping and further development of the project results – the goals as defined in the strategy and the pilot actions results. The most important role of public bodies is to ensure good management schemes and working conditions (financial means, information, coordination) whereas the touristic boards as executive bodies and the representatives of private sector are responsible of extensive promotion (for example of the developed interactive map) and continuous persistence on the respected principles of sustainable touristic offer in their everyday work. It was decided that this and similar responsibilities will be formally listed with the help of the external experts once the future cooperation agreement will be definitely defined.

Geographical coverage and transferability (max. 1500 characters)

The main geographical coverage of the output and partner project activities is the area of inner Istria that covers the operating area of three touristic boards - Municipality of Motovun tourist board, Municipality of Žminj tourist board and Tourist board of central Istria – The city of Pazin, municipalities of Cerovlje, Lupoglav, Gračišće, Tinjan, Sveti Petar u Šumi, Karojba, Pićan and Sveti Lovreč.

However, the indirect coverage can be spread on the area of the whole Istrian region which is often perceived as divided on the coastal and inner part. The INSiGHTS project is covering one part of the non-coastal municipalities and this can be a good starting point of spreading the project results on the whole inner part of the region making it thus more coherent and strengthened to develop an independent touristic offer based on sustainability principles. Moreover, due to the existence of many small-scale touristic boards in the whole Croatia, this is a good example how different boards can come together and cooperate in development projects and ideas maintaining at the same time their autonomy.

Durability (max. 1500 characters)

The main purpose of the workshop itself was to ensure durability of project activities and results after the project lifetime. With the help of INSiGHTS project three touristic boards that operate on the area are now linked together by the promotional material developed as part of the project such as interactive map, printed maps and informative tables. This way from the perspective of the visitors the area can now be perceived as one coherent destination and the visitor can receive clear and simple information on his interests no matter the borders of the touristic boards.

Even though it was important to make a better understanding of the destination towards the outside – for the visitors, it was crucial to define the terms of cooperation on the inside and for this reason the workshop was organized. By gathering the representatives of the local and regional governance additional emphasizes on the project objectives was made stressing the importance of their role in ensuring the durability of the results. This was further underlined by the assistance of the external experts who gave concrete examples of the similar existing national and European systems that are fully functional and successful in managing touristic destinations.

It is believed that the workshop has set up good basis for a future close cooperation which will have a huge impact in the further development of the area in line with the sustainability principles.

Synergies with other projects/ initiatives and / or alignment with current EU policies/ directives/ regulations, if applicable (max. 1500 characters)

The output and the entire INSiGHTS project is in line with a number of initiatives of the European Commission regarding sustainable tourism. First of all, project activities are in synergy with the Agenda for a sustainable and competitive European tourism and its principles. What is most notable in terms of this specific output is the principle which states the importance of involvement of a wider circle of stakeholders with a widespread and committed participation in decision making and practical implementation by all those implicated in the outcome. Additionally, the empowering workshop has been organized in order to ensure practising of continuous monitoring which is also on the of the principles proposed by the Agenda. In the project level, even though not directly connected, project activities can be considered to have a lot in common with sustainable tourism actions of the European Commission such as Diversifying the EU tourism offer - sustainable transnational tourism products where, even though the project will not develop transnational tourism products, different regions have come together to discuss and exchange experiences on

sustainable tourism as well as do extensive analyses which will ultimately lead to Danube transnational policy recommendations and other transnational documents aiming to make improvements in the field of sustainable tourism. It is also important to stress that many of the indicators defined in the ETIS System developed by the European Commission have been in synergy with the indicators used to do the self-assessment on the included partner destinations as well as the national strategies and policy analyses.

Output integration in the current political/ economic/ social/ technological/ environmental/ legal/ regulatory framework (max. 2000 characters)

The output is integrated in the current comprehensive framework related to the growing interest in sustainable tourism. This way, the output which underlines the importance of stakeholder cooperation as well as project activities that are directed to green products development are theoretically and politically in line with national and regional strategic and action plan tourism documents as well as those on the European level as stated in the previous question. Socially and environmentally, the output and project activities are in line with raising awareness on ecological issues and a wish to return to the roots and have an authentic experience of the visiting culture. One of the most obvious and often stressed concepts of sustainable tourism is responsible travel and cycle tourism routes are in more and more demand especially in terms of sustainable rural development when combined with the host community and cultural heritage being in the centre of the touristic offer. Developing a good managing plan, setting up goals and establishing a year-round sustainable tourism offer, which were all in focus of the empowering workshop and other project activities, is also in line with the efforts to encourage additional employments in the rural areas by developing a stable tourism sector non-dependent on the coastal “sun and sea” offer.