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# REGIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR THE COUNTY OF ISTRIA

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The content of the Action plan is designed in line with the “Joint Methodology for the preparation of the draft regional Action plan”, developed by Marco Polo System EEIG, partner within the project YouInHerit. The working group has studied the available material regarding cultural heritage valorization with the involvement of the youth in the County of Istria identifying the needed development. Based on this facts, we have set priority objectives, outputs and activities for their realization.

YOUINHERIT project is carried out within the Interreg Central Europe 2014 - 2020 Programme, and it is co-financed from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The project involves 12 partners from 5 European countries. Partners from Croatia: the City of Vodnjan - Dignano and the Association of farmers “Agroturist” as associated partner, which is also from Vodnjan. Other project partners are: Municipality of Budafok-Tétény (Hungary), Sinergija d.o.o. (Slovenia), Maritime Museum of Piran (Slovenia), Municipality of Piran (Slovenia), Municipality Beltinci (Slovenia), Office of Regional Planning "Masovia" (Poland), Centro Internazionale Civiltà dell'Acqua (Italy), Marco Polo System EEIG (Italy), Veneto Region (Italy) and the High school of viticulture Soós István (Hungary).

The project deals with current issues related to the revival of traditional crafts and trades, as well as the lack of commitment and interest of young people for involvement in the same. The common problem between all partners involved in the project is the lack of youth participation in the process of revival of cultural heritage and the development of innovative ideas for successful launch of traditional crafts and trades.

The aim of the project activities is to achieve youth integration in the valorization of cultural heritage and traditional crafts. The project aims to encourage young



people to participate in the process of revival of cultural heritage, traditional crafts and trades and also to reveal the potential of business opportunities within their own ideas, suggestions and within the involvement in project activities contribute to the development of their local communities. Beside the inclusion of young people, the project focus are local and regional authorities, in order to raise their level of awareness within the project and thus to improve the management of cultural heritage.

The emphasis in Vodnjan - Dignano/County of Istria has been placed on the tradition of olive growing and olive oil production, as a potential for employment of youngsters and general development in the region. The objective is to raise awareness of local residents to discover the hidden potential of economic development that is based on olive oil and other traditional crafts and trades, and to prioritize jobs based on local tradition and culture. However, this process is not so simple. To achieve the desired results, the community must steer on different economic fields. Because of the natural advantages of the County of Istria and being a very tourist-oriented region, the high potential of the tourism in the regional economy must be taken into consideration for further development.

This action plan is in line with the

- a) “Strategy for development of human resources in the County of Istria 2016 - 2020” (December 2015) and especially touches the next measures:
  - 2.3 Improving the quality and flexibility of lifelong learning systems;
  - 3.2 Systematic scholarships and mentoring;
  - 3.4 Encouraging entrepreneurship and self-employment;
  - 4.3 Encouraging social entrepreneurship;
  
- b) “National program for youth in the period 2014 - 2017” (October 2014), with an emphasis to the measure:



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- 2.1.3 Encouraging the stakeholders in the labor market towards partnership approach for improving the employment conditions and youth entrepreneurship.



## 2 SUMMARY

This document contains priority objectives, outputs and activities for the implementation of cultural heritage valorisation in the area surrounding Vodnjan - Dignano with the involvement of youth. It deals with current issues related to the revival of traditional crafts and trades as a market niche to produce job opportunities for youngsters willing to develop innovative ideas and raises the level of awareness of local authorities in the field of management of cultural heritage.

Istria, as a very tourist-oriented region, offers a high potential in development of services related to the hospitality industry based on its' rich natural and cultural heritage. The pressure of tourism on the coastline shall decrease in favor of green sustainable tourism in the hinterland, where also the City of Vodnjan - Dignano is located, shifting tourism flows and creating an all seasons destination.

The objectives and actions mentioned in this action plan aim to enhance the employment and self-employment of youth and to make the region more attractive to youth and tourists. They promote the cultural and natural heritage, enhance the cooperation with local stakeholders for a joint and sound sustainable development, promote education to exploit the potential heritage and innovative usage of local products and support the establishment of promotional centers for local products together with training centers for local producers and service providers.



### 3 VISION

*Our region is a lively and livable place, both for tourists and local people, improved on eco sustainable development, based on cultural heritage and high quality traditional local products.*

The County of Istria builds on preservation of regional cultural and natural heritage by including heritage of traditional local products to support a higher quality tourism based on sustainability and eco approaches. Istria has a very interesting area for coastal tourism, but also a hinterland with rich natural and cultural heritage that is becoming more and more interesting for tourist purposes. In 2016, the region was visited by 3,8 million tourists, with a stunning 25 million overnights.

With such numbers, we can all agree that there is a big potential for improvement of tourism, because the region is already very visited, known abroad and also widely promoted. Most of the tourists are attracted by the coastal area (coastal towns, beaches, camping...) in summer months, while during the rest of the year, the potential of the whole region remains mostly unexploited. The pressure of tourism on the coastline shall decrease in favor of green sustainable tourism in the hinterland, where also the City of Vodnjan - Dignano is located, shifting tourism flows and creating an all seasons destination.

The active inclusion of cultural and natural heritage of the hinterland is a source of sustainable development and opportunity for self-employment in traditional crafts and potential for joint capacity of management of the area resources. The above stated challenges combined with the right activities will assure an increase in tourism revenue, reduce seasonality and prolong the tourist's holidays in the area, resulting in more employment options for local youngsters (and others).

The County of Istria offers a vast variety of local agricultural products (olive oil, wine, aromatic herbs,...) and traditional gastronomic specialties (truffles, seafood,



boškariin meat, istriian prosciutto,..) and combined with the rich cultural and natural heritage (cultural and natural heritage sites, intangible heritage of Istria,...) and the already existing tourism infrastructure (transport infrastructure, accommodation capacities, recreational and leisure facilities,...) offers numerous possibilities of eco sustainable development, accretion of added value and new jobs.





#### 4 GENERAL OBJECTIVE

1. Enhance the employment and self-employment of youth
2. Make the region more attractive to youth and tourists

One of the general objectives is reaching a higher level of sustainable economic and territorial development by exploiting the potential of natural assets and cultural heritage while preserving and increasing their value. By taking advantage of heritage of the area in a sustainable way, protecting and enhancing it in both urban and rural contexts, particularly in less visited areas (Istrian hinterland), and with actions supporting the shift of tourist flow from peak periods towards low season months and from more visited (coast) to less visited areas (hinterland), The City of Vodnjan - Dignano wants to create opportunities for employment and self-employment of youth.

The City of Vodnjan - Dignano wants to maintain and improve the identity of the Istrian hinterland and its natural and cultural heritage. The implementation of the planned activities will ensure the use, the promotion and the integration of the hinterland's identity in a smart and sustainable way to guarantee its presence on the market. By linking the existing offer of natural and cultural heritage sites, protected areas, small tourism providers, agro operators in rural areas through the implementation of itineraries, the activities will take advantage of the benefits of the cooperation and market opportunities. Heritage and tradition of rural areas will serve as inspiration to produce new and innovative products, based on traditional products and crafts. The activities will increase the awareness and the knowledge and skills of local population, especially the younger and the existing providers. All this will contribute to decrease seasonality in tourism of the region and will help to shift the tourist flows from the overcrowded coast to the less visited sites in hinterland, having an impact on a sustainable and more balanced territorial development.



## 5 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. Promotion of cultural and natural heritage.
2. Cooperation with local stakeholders for a joint and sound sustainable development.
3. Education for exploiting the potential of heritage and innovative usage of local products.
4. Establishment of promotional centers for local products.

### 5.1 Promotion of cultural and natural heritage

The buildup of a “YOUINHERIT” tourism product will serve as a basis for development of itineraries that will include locations of cultural and natural heritage situated in the region. An analysis of tourism service providers and natural and cultural heritage in the rural area will show the existing potentials. In collaboration with stakeholders, it will be decided which locations of cultural and natural heritage will be included in thematic itineraries. Heritage connected with local agricultural products such as an exhibition on viticulture and olive growing in ancient Istria, Istrian stone field “kažuni” etc. will be specifically promoted. Promotion will be improved using existing channels in cooperation with tourism operators with the aim to enable the visitors’ richer and simpler visit to the heritage locations promoted. Chosen natural and cultural heritage sites in Istria will be promoted in such a manner.

Cultural and natural heritage of the area together with typical local products will be promoted at local traditional events, upgraded with additional activities especially aimed at youth. The main objective of the events is the presentation of the rich tangible and intangible heritage in the territory of local communities organizing the event for the wider audience (tourists, visitors and local inhabitants).



## **5.2 Cooperation with local stakeholders for a joint and sound development**

Cooperation with local stakeholders is vital for a joint and sound sustainable development, and is necessary to share good and bad practice and to successfully create the tourism product “YOUINHERIT”. Only this kind of cooperation enable specific bottom-up planning and coordination of clear development of regional structures that enable integrated activities. As local stakeholders are primarily intended: local public authorities, tourism organizations, tourism related businesses, sectoral agencies, higher education and research, agriculture institutions and organizations, regional innovation agencies, interest groups including, NGOs, SMEs, LAGs, local food producers, olive oil and wine producers, farmers...

## **5.3 Education for exploiting the potential of heritage and local products**

In order to achieve a higher quality of products or services, the producers or service providers must make a change and make an upgrade. It is planned to organize educational workshops for actors in the agricultural and nutritional sector, tourism offer providers and youngster interested in cultural heritage and traditional crafts. The workshops will be aimed at increasing the level of presentation of the overall tourism and cultural heritage related products, improving the tourism offer of products and services in rural areas for more demanding guests as they will be able to take advantage of unique products, which will integrate visits to natural and cultural heritage. All of these activities will better inform all the target groups about the new tourism offer and the included cultural and natural heritage.

The development of the activities and the implementation of high-level traditional events will include various local organizations and associations in the field of cultural and natural heritage and agricultural products.



#### **5.4 Establishment of promotional centers for local products**

The investment of the City of Vodnjan - Dignano within the YouInHerit project is the reconstruction of a building that once served as point for weighting olives after the harvest. The reconstructed building will combine the old traditions (olive oil tradition) and new ones (new demands raised by the young generations). The new facility will be used as promotional center for presentation of local traditional products from the region and will host workshops and trainings. The long-term intention is to use the “Promotional center for presentation of local traditional products” in Vodnjan as a good practice, to encourage other municipalities from the county to establish similar facilities. There is already an interest from the neighboring Municipality of Svetvinčenat, who is planning to establish such a center till 2020. After the opening of the center, The City of Vodnjan will promote this good practice trough the LAG of South Istria, the County of Istria and other promotional channels.



## 6 ACTIONS

1. Promotion with itineraries linked to local cultural heritage.
2. Education and training for a sustainable development.
3. Establishment of clusters for promotion of traditional products.
4. Establishment of promotional centers - training centers.
5. Organization of “upgraded” traditional events aimed at promoting cultural and natural heritage.
6. Promoting usage of abandoned olive groves as a model for a start-up.

### 6.1 Promotion with itineraries linked to local cultural heritage

The action encompasses the development of a new tourism product by integrating rural areas and their assets and heritage in the widest sense, ranging from cultural (in)tangible heritage to local agricultural products, gastronomy, customs and natural characteristics. The action also involves the participation of agencies from the agricultural sector in charge of proper focusing of tourism product towards involvement and promotion of authentic local agricultural products and their producers. The new product YOUINHERIT will be improved on the basis of the results and the analysis of the tourism offer based on local products and identification of natural and cultural heritage in the hinterland, as well as the analysis of target groups. The project encompasses natural (parks, olive groves, botanic paths) and cultural heritage (museums and other cultural sites) connected with organized tastings of traditional meals, wine and olive oil. Based on this activity and an overview of foreign good practice, unique itineraries of sustainable and green tourism will be developed in collaboration with all partners, and these itineraries will comprise the elements of folk tales, legends and gastronomy in relation to cultural landscape, natural heritage and local agricultural produce.

Within the framework of the new tourism product and in collaboration with the tourism sector, a chosen number (at least 2) of integrated tourism itineraries will be



developed that will connect the heritage of rural areas with local products and gastronomy, starting from the end of 2019 on. An innovative approach to the experience of the region within the YOUINHERIT product will be achieved through the integration of the itineraries with available or new ICT to support and provide all the information about the product and at the same time offering a possibility of choosing and combining individual packages - itineraries. We aim to use the itineraries to redirect tourist flows from the coast to the hinterland and offer a completely new type of experience to the visitors, at the same time enabling better promotion and year-round profit for the local tourist suppliers, olive oil producers, winemakers, farmers and other local products or services providers.

The providers must be aware that the disappearing of a traditional craft is caused by numerous factors and that it is almost impossible to bring it back as it was, because it is definitely not interesting for today's market. This action will stimulate all providers to upgrade services and think in an innovative way of exploitation of cultural heritage and traditional crafts. The action is also connected with the establishment of promotional centers for local products

The developed tourist itineraries have to be tested on target groups. The group of tourists, tour operators and other local providers will test the excursions - they will be visiting the prepared tourist itineraries. In this context, they will visit the participating tourism offer providers and the supported natural and cultural heritage. The action is aimed at showing the content of the itinerary and the gastronomic offer included in the project to target groups. Furthermore, the providers in the field of tourism and agricultural products will be able to test their knowledge acquired during educational workshops and courses (linked to other actions).



## 6.2 Education and trainings for a sustainable development

This action holds much significance for the project as it emphasizes the education of local producers and local service providers involved in the tourism product YOUINHERIT and the tourist itineraries. To prepare the product as well as possible, examples of foreign good practice will be consulted - Good practice destinations which have already established quality tourism packages actively encompassing natural and cultural heritage connected with local products by increasing the recognizably and attractiveness of the destination and (in)directly contributing to a higher added value in tourism and the increase in the number of visits to the locations of natural and cultural heritage.

Educational workshops for will comprise the presentation of good practice and the possibility of including the local tourism offer providers in rural areas and agricultural producers into the new tourism product YOUINHERIT. The workshops will also expand the knowledge of local biodiversity and techniques of improving biological diversity. Their purpose is modifying the concept of good practice abroad to fit the local reality with an emphasis on the inclusion of local agricultural products into the tourism offer. The City of Vodnjan - Dignano will encourage the identification of entrepreneurial opportunities for setting up companies that will employ unemployed young people and women in rural areas. The objective of these activities is using educational workshops to raise the level of presentation of tourist and agricultural products as a whole and improve and upgrade the tourism offer of products and services in rural areas.

A distinctive feature of the action is carrying out practical workshops for tourism offer providers and operators from the agricultural sector. Practical courses and seminars will share the findings in the field of local biodiversity and techniques of protection and improvement of biological diversity. The workshops will be carried out for operators from the agricultural and nutritional sector that will facilitate the transfer of knowledge on how to improve the quality and sustainability of offer,



develop new products/services, promote joint strategic and operational planning at the local and regional level and improve their marketing capacities. These activities will contribute to trainings in terms of the importance and implementation of activities in sensory laboratories for the improvement of the quality of products. For the presence and good sale of foodstuffs in today's markets, it is essential that they have good sensory characteristics. Such sensory trainings within the project will primarily be done with olive oil and wine, the agricultural products traditionally present in region. The inclusion of sensory laboratories will improve the quality and the implementation of the itinerary with the evaluation of the tourism product. Target groups will be taken to select itineraries and the participants will be given questionnaires after the performed visit. The resulting analysis will provide important information that will be used in further improvement of the itineraries. Stakeholders will participate to the formation of the itineraries and preparation and organization of educational workshops.

Summary of trainings and courses planned:

- courses in the field of local biodiversity, techniques of protection and improvement of biological diversity,
- practical courses for the improvement of the offer of local producers/providers,
- education in the field of sensory analysis.

Education and training activities are foreseen every year during March and April.

### **6.3 Establishment of clusters for promotion of traditional products**

The definition of a business cluster is a geographic concentration of interconnected businesses, suppliers, and associated institutions in a particular field. Clusters are considered to increase the productivity with which companies





can compete, nationally and globally. Clusters are also important aspects of strategic management.

The action aims at the establishment of clusters, starting with the “Olive oil cluster” planned in 2020, as a signature product of the City of Vodnjan - Dignano. Olive oil is a symbol of the Mediterranean, of health and gastronomical pleasure. It is a typical traditional product, whose sustainability is proven by the fact of its presence in since antiquity. Nowadays olive oil is increasingly popular and recognizable owing to the enthusiasm, dedication and love of the new generations of olive oil manufacturers witnessed by numerous international awards received over the past years. The establishment of a cluster is a mean to achieving efficient collaboration among several entities complementing each other, each with its own differentiating elements (diversity, peculiarity). The action will result in establishing regional olive oil cluster, which will include scientific and expert organizations, micro, small and medium enterprises and/or individual producers of the common scope - promotion the traditional product “olive oil”.

The establishment of the cluster will lay foundations in support of innovations and activities through promotion, sharing facilities and exchange of expertise and knowledge as well as through an efficient contribution to the transfer of knowledge, networking, and dissemination of information and collaboration of all subjects in the cluster. The objective of the activity is achieving a better competitive position of the involved companies and/or individual olive oil producers in the national and international market.

The action can be replicated to other products such as: wine, aromatic herbs, truffles, boškari's meat products, ...



#### **6.4 Establishment of promotional centers - training centers (pilot action)**

This action comprises elements of promotion with the planned establishment of centers of information and promotion aimed at promoting local traditional agricultural products (virgin olive oil, wine, etc.), cultural and natural heritage of the area, tourism product YOUINHERIT, and other outputs of the project.

In 2018 The City of Vodnjan - Dignano has established a promotional center in Vodnjan. The center displays promotional materials, present agricultural products of local producers that visitors will be able to taste and buy, and promotes services linked to tradition, cultural and natural heritage.

The center involves a fusion of diverse praxis and as such forms an integrative part of the itineraries YOUINHERIT, representing an ideal platform for presentation of gastronomic heritage and products, along with the ecological officinal and aromatic herbs park (planned in Vodnjan) and related exhibitions. Benefits are multiplicative and linked to the actors in Vodnjan, in the region and to end users, since it enables a rich interdisciplinary, international and intercultural cooperation, playing an active role in the development of culture, tourism and gastronomy. Moreover, it serves as a unique and innovative way of sightseeing infused with local history.

The new infrastructure serves as an educational facility and model for urban conservation and regeneration that makes alternative to the standardized environment of contemporary touristic facilities. With its presentation of local gastronomic products, permanent exhibition and activities held throughout the year as well as with the planned thematic park of officinal and aromatic herbs, it interprets and communicates the bond between gastronomical delights and the local population with their long lasting tangible and non-tangible heritage and culture. The Promotional info center validates and strengthens the cooperation and includes an image of the local communities as a recognizable brand and as a destination of cultural, gastro and active tourism. It uses gastronomic products as a link not only



between local communities of Istria, but also with local communities and regions, which have based their identities in the development of local gastronomic products. Its' role is to conserve natural and cultural resources as well as the encouragement promotion of local products as the most significant factor for the sustainable development of the region. Moreover, the infrastructure also serves as a model for adaptive reuse, since it shows a perfect way to breathe new life into an old building, while conserving resources and historic value. In this respect, the center serves as a replicable good practice for municipalities with distinguishable tradition and related built heritage.

The facility will host workshops and trainings listed in this action plan that should consist of a theoretical and practical part with “on the spot” education. The desire is to establish such promotional centers in numerous location over the County of Istria, starting with the neighboring Municipality of Svetvinčenat in 2020.

### **6.5 Organization of “upgraded” traditional events aimed at promoting cultural and natural heritage**

In collaboration with institutions and associations in the field of cultural and natural heritage, innovative contents will be developed, aimed at the promotion of the rural area, through different events: open kitchen, presentation and tasting of typical products of rural areas, special workshops for the young, children and other interested public, demonstration of local crafts, traditions and folklore, etc. This will help preserve the cultural heritage of rural areas and contribute at reducing the seasonality of tourist visits. Some of the less known events, taking place every year, and locations in rural areas will be supported, and promoted within the action, which will boost the promotion and visits to the rural area (Vodnjan: New Olive Oil Days, Svetvinčenat: Medicinal/Aromatic Herbs Days, ...)



The main objective of the events is the presentation of the rich tangible and intangible heritage in the territory of local communities that will organize the event for the wider audience (tourists, visitors and local inhabitants).

The whole concept of promotion of cultural and natural heritage through traditional events connected with the typical local products and services can be very easily transferred to other environments. The names of the events reflect typical products and services, which is a strong promotional factor. These events are easily transferrable with modifications of local products and heritage. The same is true for the involvement of local actors whose activity covers the area related to traditional events and cultural and natural heritage.

To increase the number of visits to sites of natural and cultural heritage in rural areas, it is necessary to attract holidaymakers. The action aims to organize and promote “upgraded” traditional events. Their level needs to be more advanced following the development of an innovative programme of events and their suitable promotion. Depending on the main traditional content of individual events, activities for the promotion of natural and cultural heritage will be included, such as rural crafts fair, open kitchen km0, ethno music, traditional costumes and folklore, workshops for children related to cultural and natural heritage, guided sightseeing of cultural and natural heritage. Various local organizations have to be invited to collaborate on the events.

#### **6.6 Promoting usage of abandoned olive groves as model for a start-up**

The City of Vodnjan - Dignano and the local Farmer’s Association “Agroturist” individuated a common problem in Vodnjan and nearby. As the population is aging and the youngsters leaving the rural areas, a big number of olive groves are abandoned. These olive groves are privately owned and not treated.



The first step of this action is for City of Vodnjan - Dignano in cooperation with “Agroturist” to prepare a database of identified abandoned olive groves. The second step is to create a system to reach an agreement between the olive groves owners and youngsters willing to cultivate the olive groves and engage in the production of olive oil.

The potential of these abandoned olive groves is enormous. The revitalization of such olive groves offers the perfect starting point for youngsters to start a business in a short time. The olive oil production business is usually a long process with a basic assumption of being in possess of some land with olive trees of a certain age. The process from planting an olive tree to the first hefty harvest takes several years. The proposed action cuts the time to a minimum of what is needed to put in order the olive grove.

Every year, after the olive harvest in November, The City of Vodnjan - Dignano will publish a call for the olive groves owners and youngsters willing to participate to this action. Together they will set the agreement system between owners and tenants.

This action offers the possibility of mentoring the youngsters by the agronomy experts from the Farmer’s Association “Agroturist”, improves the revitalization of abandoned areas and most important creates opportunities for new jobs.