

Novo mesto, 2nd February 2022

2. CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF SPA TOWNS AND REGIONS

Environment, climate and tourism in spa areas

Slovenia is a land of many sources of natural healing resources, which occur in different forms and in different areas. Increasingly complex activities at global level require a comprehensive response and approach on local level. This can be done by integrating and strengthening relations between institutions, experts, and the general public at different territorial levels.

On 2nd February 2022, Razvojni center Novo mesto held a 2nd consultation on the future of spa towns and regions for the presentation of selected aspects in spa areas: the environment, climate and tourism.

At the beginning, Mateja Jazbec, Deputy Director of the Novo mesto Development Centre, presented the work of Razvojni center Novo mesto and the importance of participating in projects such as HealingPlaces. Vane Urh continued with basic information about the HealingPlaces project, which is cofunded with the support of INTERREG Central Europe programme. He presented current results and views on how, as a regional development agency, Razvojni center Novo mesto engages in such activities. A draft tool has been presented to demonstrate how spatial planning, environmental management and environmental impact assessment procedures are integrated in Central Europe and how can it support the decision-making process. For the idea of space and land use, various cartographic representations were presented for the region of Jugovzhodna Slovenija.

The conclusions of the consultation are not an official position or an opinion of Razvojni center Novo mesto, d.o.o or the Interreg Central Europe programme. The authors are responsible for the opinions expressed.

PROGRAMME AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Tuesday, 2nd February 2022

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| 8.50 - 9.00 | Gathering of participants |
| 9.00 – 9.20 | Franci Bratkovič
Vane Urh
<i>Development Centre Novo mesto</i>
Spa areas and regions of Central Europe - HealingPlaces project and its role in South-Eastern Slovenia |
| 9.25 – 9.45 | dr. Peter Skoberne
Natural attractions and spa tourism |
| 9.50 – 10.00 | Barbara Kink
<i>Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, OE Novo mesto</i>
Health resorts and nature protection |
| 10.05 – 10.15 | Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maja Turnšek
Katja Kokot
Nejc Pozvek
<i>University of Maribor, Faculty of Tourism</i>
Climate change and tourism in the region |
| 10.15 – 10.30 | Break |
| 10.30 – 10.45 | dr. Urška Blaznik
<i>National Institute of Public Health, Centre for Health Ecology</i>
dr. Urška Rozman
prof. dr. Sonja Šostar Turk
<i>University of Maribor, Faculty of Health Sciences</i>
Promoting the supply of whole grain cereal products in the catering and tourism sector – advantages and potential health risks |
| 10.50 – 11.05 | Barbara Pavlakovič
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maja Turnšek
Nejc Pozvek
dr. Milica Rančič Demir
<i>Faculty of Tourism, University of Maribor</i>
A new hygiene reality - a threat or an opportunity for spas? |
| 11.10 – 12.00 | Round table and conclusions |

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

1. Natural attractions give us feelings of specialty. These include natural healing resources. They were written about more extensively in our space in the 16th century, giving them a broad historical and socio-economic significance.
2. Natural resource management in relation to tourism requires a coordinated approach between all relevant stakeholders (investors, public). People involved must have a common objective, a minimum common interest and mutual respect.
3. Climate change dictates different implications: the extension of the transitional parts of the winter and summer seasons, the shortening of the winter part of the season and the extension and the impact on the shortening of winter work and the extension and intensity of the summer part of the season are expected.
4. Adaptation of tourism activities will require particular attention in relation to
 - a. Time and periods of interventions
 - b. Questions on the intensity and expansion of tourism activities
 - c. New technologies and their effects
 - d. Role of the State and other regulators
5. National Programme for Nutrition and HEPA 2015—2025 is an important programme for good environmental status and healthy living, which are also promoted through Slovenian spa areas. Further efforts are needed to cooperate with agricultural activity, which can contribute to the provision of local products and to increasing the consumption of whole grain products, of which the health and well-being benefits currently outweigh the risks.
6. Guests and visitors to spa areas and spas expect a wider and more inclusive offer of tourist potential from places such as natural areas and forests, sports areas and cultural sites/heritage in the post-covid time.
7. Within the Faculty of Health Studies, University of Maribor, the Institute of Balneology and Climatology, of which Prof. Dr. Sonja Šostar Turk is head of, works in many fields. It is involved in various national and international projects and is available for further forms of cooperation.

EXTENDED SUMMARY

NATURAL ATTRACTIONS AND HEALTH TOURISM

Dr. Peter Skoberne

Presentation of relations and links between natural attractions and spa tourism. In the introduction the clarification of the concept of natural sights – something that stands out conspicuously for man, something special – where also included thermal and mineral springs, which, in addition to aesthetic attractiveness, also have useful value. The first inspection of natural sights was prepared by Janez Vajkard Valvazor, who wrote about spas in Kranjska. A photographic and brief descriptive presentation of various Slovenian spas, mineral springs and slatine followed. They were particularly exposed to the surroundings of the spa resorts, which offer guests additional activity and the impact of spa tourism on natural attractions. This manifests itself as a change in the origin and surroundings that is no longer in its natural state, visibility, urbanisation - due to the tourist interest and increased visit, there is a need for new infrastructure, social and economic change.

Among the natural attractions, spas play a good role for visibility and promotion, it is necessary to follow the interests of guests and adapt the offer. In addition to education, good infrastructure must be provided, which must be uniformly regulated. In addition to visitors, we must also pay attention to the locals and see if they have an interest in such development, which is dictated by the spa and how to adapt the local economy.

In governance, the important question is How far to go with development? Butler's model of development of the tourist area can help. It is recommended to act on the principle of quality > quantity. In order to be considerate and respectful, it is necessary to establish rules of attendance, for which harmonised labels are set.

THERMAL TOURISM AND NATURE PROTECTION: Environmental management challenges in health areas

Barbara Kink, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, unit Novo mesto

Presentation of Institute's experience and method of integration with nature monitoring – what the Institute learns about what is important in their work tied to health tourism. Comment that in Slovenia relatively late (2009) we embarked on coordinated management of health (health sites) (Concessions Acts). Protected areas of nature are defined by certain statuses (wider, narrow, Natura 2000). The springs of thermal waters do not have this status, but there are some areas in their hinterland – in Dolenjske Toplice it is the creek Sušica (defined as a natural value). In addition to the larger thermal spas (Šmarješke Toplice and Dolenjske Toplice), we also have smaller spas such as Klevevž, Klunove toplice, Topličnik. In the area of Klevevž there is a protected area, natural value, cave entrances, etc. The use of thermal water, which is a natural public good, requires a concession. She presented the challenge of environmental pressures – temperature and chemically polluted waste water. Much has already been done to optimise these processes, with the aim of ensuring efficient use, but some challenges remain. Finally, she presented the possibility of connecting health spa complexes with the wider nature (e.g. Terme Čatež with Jovsi,...) as a segment of natural tourism.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND TOURISM IN THE REGION

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Maja Turnšek, Katja Kokot, Nejc Pozvek, University of Maribor, Faculty of Tourism

The presentation was related to the national research project Climate Change and Sustainable Development of Slovenian tourism, which identify the impact of tourism on climate change and plans to establish a methodology according to existing data. They are further exploring the impact of climate change in the future and which tourism products will be the subject of the greatest changes. They note that there are inequalities of causes, especially within transport (air, rail, autobus, automobile), while

differences are also evident between continents (in Europe tourism highly relies on high proportion of air traffic). The vulnerability of Slovenian tourism is linked to several factors – sea level rise, winter tourism and rising temperatures, and the negative effects of heatwaves and temperature rises. The assessment of climate change on the temperature can be assessed using the *Tourism Climate Index*. A calculation is needed to calculate how climate change will affect different types of tourist activities – parts of the season is extended and for some activities it will be too hot in summer. The key problem is reaching consensus, the need to talk to tourism providers and representatives of the areas. Mitigation measures can include raising awareness of tourists and providers, adaptation of offer, addressment of other guest segments, changes in travel habits to and within the destination, increased energy efficiency, technological innovation, compensation of the carbon footprint of visitors and tax policy. Adaptation measures can include the protection of natural and cultural heritage, crisis management (rainfall, flooding, heat), addressing other guest segments, increased energy efficiency – where the central issue is cooling during the summer months (what technologies to use and how to aim to minimise carbon footprint), supply adjustment and change travel habits towards more sustainable mobility.

PROMOTION OF THE SUPPLY OF WHOLE GRAIN CEREAL PRODUCTS IN CATERING AND TOURISM – ADVANTAGES AND POTENTIAL HEALTH RISKS

Dr. Urška Blaznik, National Institute of Public Health, Centre for Health Ecology

Doc. Urška Rozman, Prof. Dr. Sonja Šostar Turk, University of Maribor, Faculty of Health Sciences

Presentation of cereals and its three most important parts of the seed - envelope (bran), endosperm and sprout. Exposed nutritional value, an important source of carbon hydrates, protein and dietary fibre in whole grain cereals, which are associated with a reduction in the risk of developing chronic non-communicable diseases. The National Programme on Nutrition and HEPA 2015-2025 lists 12 steps of healthy eating – the second reads: choose whole foods from cereals and cereal products. The recommended daily intake is 90 g. Although they are an important source of environmental pollutants, their benefits of consumption outweigh the risks (mycotoxins, arsenic, cadmium, lead, acrylamide).

NEW HYGIENE REALITY – A THREAT OR OPPORTUNITY FOR SPAS

Barbara Pavlakovič, Prof. Dr. Maja Turnšek, Nejc Pozvek, Doc. Milica Rančič Demir, Faculty of Tourism, University of Maribor

Presentation of the study on visits to spas, based on comparison before and after 2020 – marked by the epidemic of covid-19 disease. The primary reason for visiting spas is relaxation/relaxation, followed by physical activity, healthy diet, mental activity/education, and treatment. In post-covid time research participants most support the introduction of new/alternative activities and thus disperse visitors to several locations. Like other acceptable options for the adapted operation of spas, they support the time-limited visit with advance booking or unchanged activity, but by following the regulations of wearing a mask, maintaining distance and disinfection. As additional activities, the most popular are nature visits, recreation (hiking, cycling),

cultural activities (visiting museums, castles, galleries,...), various events, courses, events and outdoor animations.

Spas thus represent relaxation together with visits to nature, sports and recreation, and visits to cultural sights.

DEBATE:

Prof. Dr. Sonja Šostar Turk presented the Institute of Balneology, founded by dr. Zmago Turk, and their work. The Institute works in conjunction with other institutions (such as the national institute for public health) and other experts. It has also been transferred to the pedagogical and research field, starting in autumn with a new study programme Public Health, which will be environmentally oriented.

Jelka Hudoklin of ACER Novo mesto, which is involved in spatial planning, added that in the case of spa tourism, the case of tourism is an example of nature protection, cultural heritage, agriculture and recreation. Spa resorts are the most important tourist destinations of Jugovzhodna Slovenija. As spatial planners, they miss the tourism spatial development strategy, because tourism needs detailed planning - areas with high visibility are bound by other activities. In the context of the renovation plan of Balnea health park in Dolenjske Toplice (prepared by ACER Novo mesto), 10 other spa towns were visited and researched. Spa parks were found to be in an unenviable position, several of them abandoned, uncared, or too small.

Iztok Altbauer from the Association of Slovenian Natural Spas added an important message to the conference: the impact of the local environment. He added the idea of Local = Global, explaining that in addition to domestic guests we also have global ones, and this requires the adjustment of human resources and presented the Zero-Kilometers initiative, which means the shortest supply chain for food and other services. As an example of good practice, he pointed out the spa's own garden in Otočec - next to the hotel, where foreign tourists were surprised by the garden and the food produced within the tourist complex. The importance of

medical rehabilitation activities needs to be emphasized even more. Many spas have included treatment programs related to recovery from covid-19 (post-covid, long-covid). Finally, he added that in the field of balneology in Slovenia, in addition to dr. Zmag Turk is also important dr. Janez Krašnja, who researched sources and conducted research and analysis for the recognition of indications of health effects in the 1960s. He also recommended the library of the European Spa Association (ESPA), which collects studies on balneology and other spa activities at <http://www.espalibrary.eu/>.

Prepared by

Nuša Hudoklin

Vane Urh