

LP – TOWN OF OPATIJA

PP1 – UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA, FACULTY OF TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

# REPORT ON LOCAL WORKING GROUP MEETINGS

For the sport event:

King of Učka

### **Analysis of the tourist destination**

An excellent location and a mild climate supported the early development of tourism in Opatija, which is today considered the destination with the longest tradition in tourism in Croatia. Today, a significant number of local people and tourists is very active and regularly enjoys sport activities. Opatija has a long tradition in tourism, and therefore it is important to keep up with sustainable trends and implement new innovative solutions that can help to protect the environment. Sport events are being utilized as a strategic tool for revitalizing and re-qualifying the destination.

The tourism industry has started to recognize sport tourism, i.e. the experience of travel to engage in or view sport-related activities, as an important market. In order to compete in the growing sport tourism market, it is crucial for communities to develop a profound understanding of the benefits and impacts of sport tourism in a sustainable way.

Individuals who travel to participate in sport events comprise the active sport tourism category. These participatory events can take on a wide variety of forms in a wide variety of sports. Nordic walking, hiking, kayaking, tennis and running are just a few examples of sports that people travel to participate in. Those participants can be divided into two groups “Activity participants” and “Hobbyists”. Activity participants are those individuals who are amateur participants who travel to take part in competitions in their chosen sport, while Hobbyists are those individuals who engage in sport related travel as a form of leisure.

Sport events can have different implications for host destinations: from fostering an economic and social urban “regeneration”, to putting a city on a worldwide tourist map, or even changing the unequal participation of a country in the global economy. There are also many negative impacts on the environment, especially at locations of natural and cultural heritage.

Natural and cultural heritage is a precious development advantage only if the local communities, different types of users and tourists are aware of its value and cooperate for its conservation. Natural and cultural heritage attracts mass tourism and locations are attractive for events as well even if they may impact negatively. The Zero Waste Blue project capitalizes Zero Waste project results with the aim of a broader involvement of local communities and private-public stakeholders in the organization

of sustainable sport events in attractive and fragile areas lowering radically the environmental impact and increasing the benefit for the social and economic development.

Town of Opatija in cooperation with the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management chose the sport event *King of Učka* as a pilot event within the Zero Waste Blue project to test the projects' sustainability solutions. Two local working group meetings were held in order to discuss about those solutions and managing how to merge them with the existing organizational tools this sport event is using.

### **Results of the local working groups and first proposals of solutions to be implemented**

The first local working group meeting took place in Opatija on the 05<sup>th</sup> of June 2019. Representatives of some of the stakeholders of the pilot sport event were present. Associate professor Marinela Krstinić Nižić opened the meeting on behalf of the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management. She presented the Zero Waste Blue project to all present. She explained the connection to the Zero Waste project, which was an IPA Adriatic CBC Programme project that created a Web-based network of events and festivals aimed at decreasing the impact on the environment, which would take into consideration, the amount of waste produced at festivals and events. The Zero Waste project offered the opportunity to create a network of existing events and festivals in the Adriatic area. Thanks to the web-based platform, organizers of events are able to assess the environmental, social and economic impact of their events as well as calculate the sustainability level of the event.

The professor also presented some examples of good practice and explained in which way sport events that take place on locations of cultural and natural heritage, can become sustainable despite many visitors. After she finished her presentation, the director of the AD NATURA SPORT D.O.O., Vladimir Miholjević, as one of the organizer of the sport event *King of Učka* took over the second part of the meeting. He talk about how this region has great potential for developing outdoor tourism, about how to promote cycling in this destination, and how it is necessary to involve the local community and citizens in the event. He emphasized the need to constantly raise awareness of the usefulness of developing selective forms of tourism. Second organizer, the director of the TOP SPORT

EVENTS d.o.o., Elvir Sulić explained how this sport event managed impacts on the environment so far and what to expect this year. He also referred to all the activities carried out last year. After his presentation, everyone present participated actively in the conversation. The best ideas have been left to be elaborated at the second working group meeting.

The second local working group meeting was held at Hotel Palace in Opatija on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2019 with the double number of participants as at the first meeting. Once again, on behalf of the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, associate professor Marinela Krstinić Nižić welcomed all present and opened the meeting with a few introduction words about the Zero Waste Blue project and where the idea of the project came from. She explained the current environment and waste situation in the area, and how sport events can affect the environment. Therefore, pilot sport events within the Zero Waste Blue project will test some of the projects solutions to become sustainable and 'green' sport events and later on pass all these solutions to sport events in general. After that, Mr. Vladimir Miholjević took over the meeting and informed everyone present with activities. He presented the profile of the track and emphasized that drivers in hybrid cars will accompany cyclists. A virtual children's cycling race will be organized, in which elementary school students from Opatija and Lovran will participate. There will be an educational workshop on recycling with participation of people with disabilities. Local manufacturers will present their local products. At the end of the meeting, organizational arrangements have been made in order to facilitate the procedure at the event. The meeting ended by signing the Memorandum of understanding by all representatives: Town of Opatija, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, AD NATURA SPORT Ltd, TOP SPORT EVENTS Ltd, Ičići Tourist Board, Nature Park Učka, Sports Association of Town of Opatija, Sports Recreation Association "Sport for All" of the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, Association Žmergo, Komunalac Ltd, Association of people with disabilities, Mateo Jurčić videography for video production services.

The parties that sign the Memorandum intend to cooperate in the realization of project events through activities aimed at reducing negative impacts on the environment, as well as protecting and

promoting the resources of the host territory, facilitating access and the use for different type of users. Recommended activities are of interest to all involved participants. Some of those activities are:

- Constant coordination between all subjects involved in the realization of the event
- Implement all possible actions to protect the environment at event locations
- Provide education on ecological sustainability in schools, faculties, institutions and associations before the event, in correlation with the goals of sports, tourism and cultural promotion
- Educate staff and volunteers about health and safety
- Inform the participants about the biological and cultural values of the protected area in order to raise environmental awareness
- Organize a virtual children's cycling race
- Organize an educational workshop on recycling
- Rental of hybrid cars
- Implement a promotional campaign for the ZERO WASTE BLUE project, using digital materials, IT platforms and social media
- Include persons with disabilities and vulnerable population groups in the event
- Promote equal participation of genders through the creation of promotional activities and incentives useful for this purpose
- Set up a system for differentiated waste collection at events (organic waste, paper, glass)
- Use tableware (plates, glasses, cutlery, napkins) made from composted single-use materials
- Plan the composting of waste produced in the event activity
- Controlled water consumption (drinking water and sanitary water)
- Assure promotion of homemade products for local suppliers
- Use and / or promote local products from autochthonous manufacturers
- Promoting sustainable mobility for all participants
- Involve foreign participants in the event
- Provide accommodation to participants in sustainable forms of accommodation (green hotels, agro tourism)
- Use renewable energy sources.