

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT PLAN

For House of Castles in Momjan

October 2022

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. TAKE IT SLOW PROJECT

According to the project application documentation:

TAKE IT SLOW is designed to establish, manage and promote Adriatic Region as smart, integrated, sustainable, accessible, year-round, green and slow tourist destination of the Mediterranean based on accessible, protected, valorised, promoted tangible and intangible joint natural and cultural heritage of its islands, coastal, inland and rural Adriatic. With realization of project activities within 36 months, Dubrovnik-Neretva County (lead partner), 11 project partners and 1 AP will trigger high-quality level of services and products of tourism value chain through smart specialization concepts stimulating innovation, knowledge, competitiveness, networking and CB partnership processes.

TAKE IT SLOW will develop community based partnership platform of scientific, private & public sector with 120 actors, strategic framework, methodology, monitoring system, marketing & promotion of CB tourism destination focused on 10 cultural and natural heritage, 10 ecolabel/green certification obtained and promotion of sustainable tourism realized and 7 natural and/or cultural heritage sites with improved accessibility put in place. Project will contribute to more balanced seasonality of tourism activities on natural and cultural heritage sites in Project area, make natural and cultural heritage a leverage for sustainable and more balanced territorial development.

The mission of TAKE IT SLOW project is to develop strategic framework, methodology and monitoring system for management of smart, sustainable and slow tourist destinations through development of heritage-based tourist offer based on smart specialization. The project is to be implemented based on bottom-up approach with the involvement of local communities through participatory process in order to engage key stakeholders on local, regional and cross-border level in decision-making process for sustainable destination management.

1.2. REGION OF ISTRIA

Region of Istria is the north-western most county of Croatia encompassing 2,820 sq km and with population of 208 thousand. The area has long-standing and rich history, steaming back from antic and especially Roman times, while over the last several hundred years, cultural heritage is a combination of Venetian, Austro-Hungarian and Slavic cultural influences. In terms of natural setup, peninsular nature of Istria makes the coast the most dominant natural characteristic, while the fact that Istria is one of the northernmost parts of Mediterranean and related climate, make Istria to reflect the overall positioning of the “Green Mediterranean”. Cultural heritage from all of historical epochs is overall well preserved, however less successfully utilised, where situation with natural heritage is slightly more favourable.

According to the Eurostat, Region of Istria (as a part of Adriatic Croatia) was the second most visited tourism region of EU in 2019 in terms of nights spent, after the Canarias in Spain. Tourism is highly concentrated on the western coast of the Region of Istria, where some of the most visited Croatian

tourist destinations are situated: Rovinj, Poreč, Pula, Medulin, Umag, Vrsar and Novigrad. Due to the favourable position to the populous and relatively lucrative Central European markets and constant increase in accommodation stock supply, visitor numbers have been on continuously increasing trend prior to the COVID 19 pandemic outbreak in 2020. Such a trend has led to a situation where most of the leading destinations have already started facing symptoms of over tourism during the peaks of the sun and beach tourism main season.

Hinterland of Region of Istria generally follows tourism development model similar as in the leading hinterland regions of Mediterranean (Tuscany, Provence) with a sustainable combination of agriculture and tourism. Visitor numbers have increased substantially over the last ten years, mostly due to the increase in commercial real estate construction. However, despite the tourism intensity both in the coast and the hinterland, relevant research on tourist motives, behaviour and expenditure (TOMAS 2019) and tourism value chains evaluation in relevant project documentation (Master plan of tourism development of Region of Istria 2015 – 2025, Tourism development plan for Central Istria, Motovun and Žminj) lead to the following conclusion:

- Utilisation of cultural and natural heritage for tourism purposes is above national average, however below the standard of the benchmark regions in Europe, as visible in available offer, tourism expenditure structure and opinions of local and regional stakeholders;
- Despite being one of the designated operational strategies in the Master plan for tourism development of Istria county, plan for improving utilisation and sustainability of cultural and natural heritage (that includes development of more sophisticated tourist products) needs more institutional support.

National and regional planning framework relevant for smart specialisation and overall Region strategy for the period of the new financial perspective with EU are still in early development stages, while there are already some pioneering projects related to SMART cities and SMART tourism (including the subject one). There is a lack of systematic approaches in the field, as well as related management processes and capacities. In that sense, this project serves as the pilot effort in establishing systematic development of tourism related SMART solutions and specialisations, where the project geographic scope includes primarily the area of Momjan/Buje municipality, followed by conceptual logic of SMART tourism development in Istrian hinterland, and finally Region of Istria as a whole for which guidelines and principles will be proposed.

2. PROJECT AND FACILITY DESCRIPTION

2.1. PROJECT AREA

Momjan is a settlement within the city of Buje in North-western Istria with population of 283 (2011 census). The settlement is first mentioned in 11th century, while its landmark castle dates back from 13th century.



Momjan, picture taken from the website of Buje municipality, <https://buje.hr/momjan/>

Settlement encompasses wider area and is composed of several minor villages. The area is primarily known for winemaking (Momjanki muškat - Muscato di Momiano is one of 18 Croatian wines with the certificate of authenticity awarded by the EU), with Moscat and Malvazija Istarska as the leading grape varieties, where Momjan and Buje area are home of some of the leading regional winemakers (Kozlović, Kabola, Clai, Sinković, Prelac and others).

In terms of tourist management, Momjan and Buje are a part of North-western Istria tourism cluster that also includes local communities of Umag, Novigrad, Buje, Brtonigla, Opatlj, Grožnjan and Motovun. It is one of the major coastal Istrian tourism clusters alongside Poreč, Rovinj, South Istria (concentrated around Pula and Medulin) and Labin/Rabac. Following are the most important characteristics of North-western Istria cluster:

- Domination of seasonal sun&beach product in the coastal part of the cluster, where collective accommodation supply (hotels, campings and resorts) is concentrated in two major companies – Istraturist in Umag and Aminess in Novigrad;

- Developed gastronomy and wine tourism, where the cluster hinterland (primarily Buje and Brtonigla) accounts for one of the prime Croatian wine and gastronomy destinations. Product utilizes the geographical position of the cluster as closest to central European markets, which is especially beneficial in terms for the short break products outside of main summer tourism season such as gastronomy or wellness;
- Relatively strong tourism value chain with the major water park Istralandia in Brtonigla and the cultural offer and image of Motovun, Grožnjan and Oprtalj municipalities. North-western Istria is among the earliest tourism clusters that has formally integrated several local communities and has since been one of the paramount areas in the country with regards to tourism management sophistication.

2.2. HOUSE OF CASTLES

House of Castles is a visitor and interpretation centre opened in July 2022 and financed by Take it slow project of the European Regional Development Fund. The House of Castles is conceived as creating an architectural marker by restructuring a traditional architecture object, the former old post office and dairy in the center of Momjan. Its interior design reinterprets the castle tower and palace, while preserving and presenting traditional elements, and is intended for an innovative multilingual multimedia interpretation of the cultural route of Istrian castles, especially the ones of northern and central Istria.

The space is divided into four units:

- (1) the ground floor composed of:
 - a. info point area that includes small presentation area for local and national products and souvenirs;
 - b. an area intended for multimedia presentation;
 - c. two toilets, one of which is accessible;
 - d. a courtyard with an elevator for persons with disabilities;
- (2) a staircase with interactive multimedia interpretation including a space at the foot of the staircase intended for interpretation for people with disabilities;
- (3) the first floor equipped for artistic and scientific research visits and the work of experts from various fields
- (4) the second floor is designed as an exhibition space and multifunctional hall for events, presentations and creative tourism education.

The following multimedia presentation units are in place:

- (1) Istrian castles – the main multimedia display, in the main area on the ground floor, which consists of video and VR displays of selected castles in Istria with 3D reconstructions, associated old town cores and natural heritage, as well as vine producers and their gastronomic offer;
- (2) The tape of time – set on the top of the staircase and presents the events related to the castles through time from before the Middle Ages to the present day;
- (3) Virtual castle - 360 video - VR glasses at the foot of the stairs with which the user turns around and sees the entire sphere of space and gets the feeling as if he is on location;
- (4) Walking through the castles – on the ground floor below the stairs in improvised tunnel, the visitor "walks" through the castles with a brief overview of applications on 10 tablets for individual castles with a collage of attractive scenes and views of the real state and 3D reconstruction with specific sounds or music of that period;

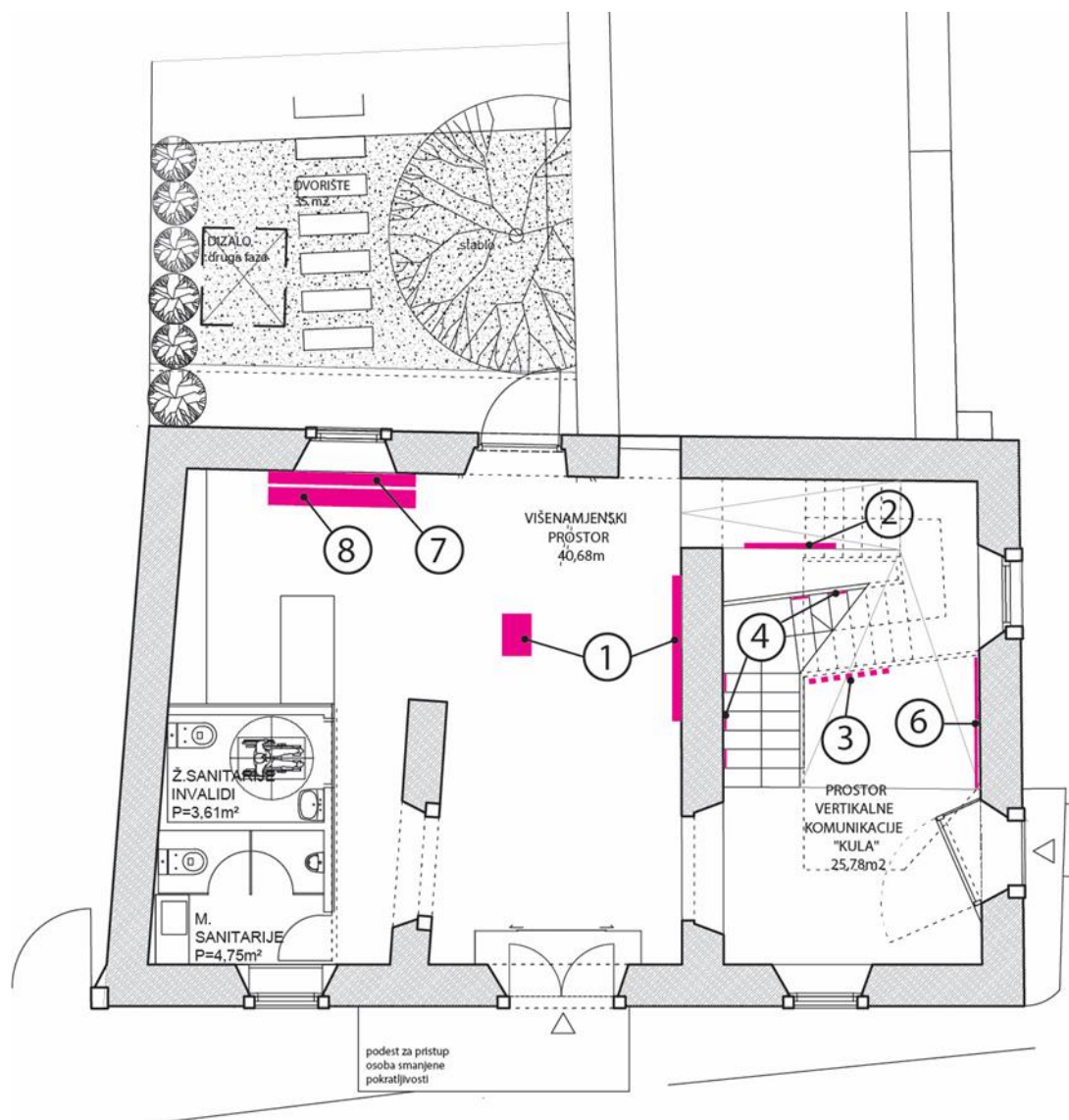
- (5) Momjan families and the history of Momjan - an exhibition of graphic panels on the second floor related to Momjan families that represented important families of the northern Adriatic region with a video presentation of the location;
- (6) History of the house of Istrian castles – panel at the entrance showing what this space was used for before (post office, diary shop);
- (7) 3D models of the castle with description in Braille letters - in the main area on the ground floor primarily intended for virtual and sensory impaired visitors, but equally attractive for everyone else.

All contents are available in 5 languages: Croatian, English, Italian, German and Slovenian.

The following castles are included in presentation: Momjan, Pietrapilosa, Pazin, Savičenta - Morosini Grimani, Dvigrad, Grožnjan, Kršan, Paz and Posert, Žminj, Završje.



House of Castles - interior



House of Castles - layout

3. MANANAGEMENT INPUTS

3.1. STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

Stakeholder analysis has been performed in order to identify interests, potentials and possible roles of the various stakeholder groups in the project that create a necessary input for the long-term sustainable management of House of Castles. This analysis is a result of the field work and discussions held on the regional and local workshops and meetings. Following are the stakeholder analysis findings per stakeholder:

Region of Istria

- Project applicant and manager;
- Mandatory responsible for the management of House of Castles for the first five years of operation including funding for the budget operations, where no commercial operations are allowed,
- Lacks internal capacity to manage the object on its own and has to rely on other stakeholders know-how and participation;
- Interested in successful and smooth management that can serve as a role model for the similar future projects.

City of Buje

- Object owner;
- Interested in yielding maximum result of the object operations on local economy, synergy with other local stakeholders and maximum utilisation of the object;
- Capable of taking over the responsibility for part of the tasks related to object maintenance, adequate road signage, local awareness raising and other related tasks that can be performed within the regular responsibilities and capacities of the city.

Historic and Maritime Museum of Istria

- Operator of several museum objects in Region of Istria; ???
- The institution has know-how and experience in operating sophisticated museum objects and has the potential and interest to integrate House of Castles within its management portfolio.

Buje and North-western Istria Tourist Board

- Legally responsible for development of tourist products and tourist information system in the project area;
- Have significant tourism marketing means within its disposal, including online (web page, social networks) and offline (brochures and similar);
- Interested in integrating the object in tourism offer in order to raise overall tourism attractiveness of the area, i.e. participate in development of products and tours that may include visit to the House of Castles.

Local wine makers and agricultural producers

- Have strong individual reputation and offer within wineries, but lack joint cooperation efforts compared to other leading winemaking regions on Mediterranean;
- Interested in acquiring a central place for exhibition of the local products, storytelling and organisation of minor events.

Other tourism related stakeholders

- Local tourism related stakeholders interested in servicing additional demand (tourists whose primary motive of arrival is a visit to the object) that may occur from object operations;
- Local stakeholders may participate in events related to the object and are interested in promotion opportunities within the object;
- Major regional stakeholders (seaside tourism companies) can promote the object, or build niche products for small groups, such as meetings, presentations or events;
- Major stakeholders may also be interested in cross-marketing initiatives with the object.

Local communities of Buje and Momjan

- The object presents one of the first local tourist attractions in the field of contemporary presentation of cultural and historic heritage, and thus has significant effect on local pride;
- Various local organisations and stakeholder groups have interest in occasional use of the object and its surroundings for various purposes.

3.2. MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

According to the guidelines of Take it slow project, sustainability is the key characteristic to be implemented in the future management of House of Castles. According to UNWTO definitions and guidelines, sustainability of tourism development includes components of economic, social and environmental sustainability. Assuming that most concerns of environmental sustainability have been incorporated and dealt with during the construction process, focus of the management has to be in ensuring social and economic sustainability of the object operations.

Together with inputs that occur from stakeholder situation in the project area, this leads to the following management principles:

INITIAL OPERATING PERIOD (FIRST FIVE YEARS OF OPERATIONS)

- To extend object opening hours to maximum possible degree through inclusion of wider stakeholder participation in management process;
- To ensure the inclusions of stakeholders with necessary operational know-how for creation of clear guidelines on operations rules and procedures, mandatorily including environmental sustainability guidelines such as waste treatment and energy usage;
- To allow for stakeholder participation in coverage for management costs in exchange for object utilisation for stakeholder groups, especially in terms for costs that may arise from the inclusion of additional activities;
- To engage local stakeholders and community in object operations workwise, in exchange for the usage of the object (primarily in tourism off season periods);
- To open and maintain communication links to regional scientific and academic institutions, especially in terms of usage of object capacities related to research and education activities;
- To establish simple but frequent management reporting system suitable for situations that include relatively large number of stakeholders;
- To initiate marketing and promotion activities as early as possible, including the activities of internal marketing for local community.

LATER OPERATING PERIOD (after December 2027)

- To switch to commercial operations, where it is previously necessary to prepare a plan for that switch that would at least include product development, marketing plan and financial feasibility calculations guidelines;
- To redefine stakeholder relationships and previous terms of object use given the new model of operations;
- To develop descriptions and introduce commercial pricelist for various object offerings, from commercial entry ticket to rentals of presentation rooms;
- To introduce the offer of souvenirs and/or other products;
- Depending on the success of commercial operations, to consider the option of extending the workhours, i.e. to increase the number of work staff.

4. SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT PLAN

4.1. INITIAL OPERATING PERIOD

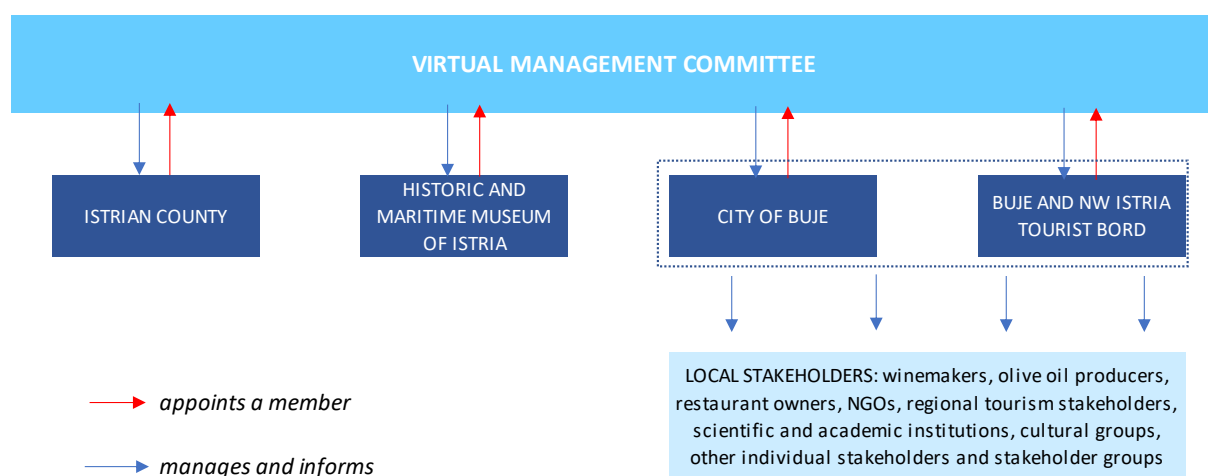
GENERAL PROVISIONS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCESSES

- The object is owned by the city of Buje;
- The object employs one person;
- Region of Istria (i.e. its Administrative Department for Culture and Heritage) is the main responsible body for management of the House of Castles, responsible for the coverage of material costs that arise from object operations and management of external partners;
- Management partners of Region of Istria include Historic and Maritime Museum of Istria, Buje/North-western Istria Tourist Board and City of Buje;
- Maritime Museum of Istria takes over the responsibility for providing all of the necessary know-how on operations, product development, monitoring and protection;
- Buje/North-western Istria Tourist Board is responsible for internal and external marketing activities of the museum using the online and offline marketing infrastructure within its disposal;
- City of Buje is responsible for object maintenance in off season period, setting the adequate signage to the object, coordinating local stakeholders and stakeholder groups and related internal marketing activities;
- All of the management partners allocate a single person as a member of Virtual management committee of House of Castles;
- Virtual Management Committee meetings occur on a quarterly basis via teleconferencing platform. Meetings are also attended by the House of Castles employee;
- Virtual Management Committee approves quarterly plans for the activities of House of Istrian Castles;
- The employee is responsible for delivering monthly activity reports to all Virtual Management Committee members in format that will be defined during the first Virtual Committee meeting.

OPERATIONS

- The objects operates Tuesday-Sunday 9 am – 1 pm and 5 pm – 9 pm (or different depending on decisions of Virtual Management Committee) in June – September period;
- During the remainder of the year, the Object operates upon request, or reservation, through a contact highlighted on the web sites of Buje Tourist Board and Historic and Maritime Museum of Istria;

- Given their overall responsibilities, following are the main actions of the management partners:
- Historic and Maritime Museum of Istria will:
 - o Suggest program updates on annual basis to Virtual Management Committee (end of year meeting);
 - o Create guidelines on the practical aspects of the object operations (“Guidelines on operations”), such as a code of conduct for employees and visitors, terms of event organisation, etc.
- Buje Tourist Board / Tourist Board of North-western Istria will:
 - o Add a section on House of Castles on the web page within the *Culture* section with photo and basic documentation;
 - o Update the section according to annual program, events and offerings;
 - o Introduce House of Castles in offline marketing materials;
 - o Conceptualise a presentation of local and regional tourism supply to be visible on the info point of the object for the initial (non-commercial) phase of object operations;
 - o Participate in organisation of events in and around the House of Istrian Castles;
 - o Help in coordination of tourism stakeholders though collecting requests and initiatives related to House of Castles via tourism council.
- City of Buje will:
 - o Take over the responsibility of coordinating local stakeholders interested in using House of Castles in off season period as the focal point of contact, with the help of Buje Tourist Board;
 - o Make sure that Guidelines on operations created by the Historic and Maritime Museum of Istria are visibly presented and communicated to all interested parties and visitors of the object;
 - o Take over the responsibility for object maintenance in off season periods. The exact maintenance responsibilities have to be agreed upon and specified in writing on the meeting of Virtual Management Committee;
 - o Management structure for the initial phase of the object operations is shown in the following scheme:



4.2. LATER OPERATING PERIOD (beyond December 2027)

- The period of object operations starting with July 2027 is characterised by the end of important contractual provisions for the first 5 years of operations:
 - o The end of the restriction for commercial operations for House of Castles;
 - o The end of mandatory leading responsibility of Region of Istria for object operations.
- In that sense, it is a task of Virtual Management Committee to prepare a plan for commercial operations of the House of Castles during 2026 based on previous operating experiences and respecting the following changed circumstances:
 - o Chief operating responsibility is transferred from Region of Istria that was a project applicant and manager to the City of Buje that is an object owner;
 - o Virtual Management Committee is transformed from management to consultative body, with the notion that this guideline may be changed in case the object owner (City of Buje) decides so;
 - o Sustainable management concept is extended with the component of economic sustainability. This effectively means that financial feasibility of House of Castles becomes the leading criteria, while the approach of considering the object through local or regional economic cost benefit criteria must be supported by the inclusion of local budgetary sources or stakeholder contribution.
- Commercial operations to be introduced include but should not be limited to following:
 - o Various types of entry ticket (single, group, high season, off season, children, etc.);
 - o Meeting room rentals;
 - o Event organisation, where City of Buje may find a model of incorporating public spaces around House of Castles into the offer;
 - o Study visits for researchers and academics;
 - o Souvenirs and other local products.
- Program development and operation monitoring should primarily remain the responsibility of Historic and Maritime Museum of Istria on consultative level;
- Alternatively to previous recommendations, City of Buje can decide to transfer full object management to Historic and Maritime Museum of Istria under similar terms as Istrian County for the initial operating phase (City of Buje covers all of the management costs, where Historic and Maritime Museum of Istria provides know-how).

4.3. ACTION PLAN

ACTION	DESCRIPTION	RESPONSIBILITY	DEADLINE
1. Establishment of Virtual Management Committee	Coordination of management partners to appoint members for the Committee operations and first meeting	Region of Istria / Department of Culture and Heritage	End of 2022
2.Guidelines on House Castles operations	Set of guidelines for employees and visitors on code of conduct, object	Historic and Maritime Museum of Istria	End of 2023

	operations, monitoring and related issues		
3. Inclusion of House of Castles in online and offline marketing materials of Buje and North-western Istria Tourist Board	Marketing descriptions and visualisations set within the Culture section of North-Western Istria web accompanied with information of social networks	Buje and Northwestern Istria Tourist Board	End of 2023
4. Establishment of the reporting format on the House of Castles activities, plans and potential issues	Reporting template that will House of Castles employee to inform Virtual Management Committee on a monthly basis	Virtual Management Committee	End of 2023
5. Creation of management/collaboration platform with local stakeholders	Online platform where local stakeholders can receive all necessary information on opportunities and terms of usage of House of Castles, send their suggestions and arrange activities	City of Buje / Buje Tourist Board	1 st of April 2023
6. House of Istrian Castles program update proposal	Proposals on enhancing the program of the object	Historic and Maritime Museum of Istria -> Virtual Management Committee	1 st of July 2023, recurring on annual basis afterwards until 2027
7. Plan for commercial operations of House of Castles	Plan for switching the object to commercial operations including terms, pricelists, exact operation responsibilities and other issues of operations	Virtual Management Committee	End of 2026