

TRANSNATIONAL MEETING – FOLLOW-UP REPORT

Karlovac county as a starting point

"About 1.5 million visitors pass through the Plitvice Lakes annually, and very close to this tourist gem there is much more hidden potential, which not even a fraction of these visitors see. This is precisely why we need projects like this, which will try to devise strategies and work on promotion of these insufficiently known, but very interesting tourist locations, such as in Croatia, and I'm sure in Italy, much more than we know," said Darka Spudić, director of the Public Institute for the Management of Protected Natural Resources of Karlovac County, Natura Vita, at the public presentation of the project Discover, which takes place in Karlovac. The project Excover: let's experience, discover and valorize the hidden treasures of cities and destinations in the Adriatic area is implemented as part of the Interreg program of international cooperation Italy-Croatia, and one of the 13 partners is the Public Institution Regional Development Agency of Karlovac County.

"We are extremely proud of the fact that Karlovac was chosen as the city where the Excover project was presented, which has an interesting goal, which is to promote the cultural and natural heritage of gems from the Croatian and Italian regions, which, unfortunately, are not so popular among tourists. I hope that the project will succeed in its goal, which is to contribute to a more even distribution of tourists who are mostly located on the coast during the year - said Marijana Tomičić, head of the office for city development and EU projects of the City of Karlovac.

During the three-day initial meeting of the project, the partners were introduced to the technical details of the project, roles and responsibilities were divided and further activities in the project were agreed upon. In addition to the technical aspects, the partners are familiar with the tourist potentials that could potentially be found on the routes that will be developed through the project: Dubrovac Castle in Karlovac, Barac caves in Rakovac Municipality, Lika Museum in Gospić, Nikola Tesla Memorial Center in Smiljani. Freshwater aquarium Aquatika, which hosted the second day of the Excover meeting, was also presented as an example of good practice of EU projects implemented in Karlovac.

"The Excover project is another in a series of projects through which the Public Institution Regional Development Agency of Karlovac County is actively developing the potential of Karlovac County, and we hope that this partnership will result in quality outputs that will increase the number of visits to all our tourist assets - the well-known and the less well-known." pointed out Krunoslav Kralj, deputy director of the Regional Development Agency of Karlovac County.

"I believe that the selection of Karlovac County as the starting point of this project is the perfect move, because this county offers a handful of hidden tourist gems that need to be discovered and worked together with us on their promotion. I wish that this project contributes to these efforts and that all of these locations get their deserved tourist valorization", concluded Martina Furdek Hajdin, Deputy Prefect of Karlovac, who greeted the partners and wished them successful work and enjoyment in Karlovac.

The Excover project began its implementation on January 1, 2019, and lasts until June 30, 2021. The partners in the project are the Regional Development Agency of Karlovac County and the Development Agency of Lika-Senj County (HR, project holder), the University of Zadar (HR), the Primorje-Gorski Kotar County (HR), the Association of Municipalities of Carnia (IT), Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna (IT), University of Udine (IT), Municipality of Rive d'Arcano (IT), Delta 2000 Societa



Consortile a R.L. (IT), Municipality of Campobasso (IT), National Park of Sasso Simone and Simoncello (IT), Consortium Company Terre del piacere (IT), Municipality of Predappio (IT) .

The main goal of the project is to increase the number of tourists in accordance with the cultural and natural potential of the area and reduce the seasonality of tourism in both countries. The project aims to contribute to a more even distribution of tourists and relieve areas of excessive concentration of tourists located mainly on the coast. This irregularity is related to the lack of an adequate chain of tourist offers. The results of the project are the establishment of an efficient tourism system that will direct the local population to the use of their own resources and skills and the branding of new destinations. With better and more effective marketing, and the participation of the local population, the goal will be achieved, and tourist flows will be directed to a greater number of hitherto hidden locations. The project develops a strategy that does not require large investments and enables sustainable use of resources.

The project was financed through the Interreg cross-border cooperation program Italy - Croatia 2014-2020, and its total value is €2,474,876.05, of which grants from the European Regional Development Fund amount to €2,103,644.64.