



Interreg
Italy - Croatia
EXCOVER

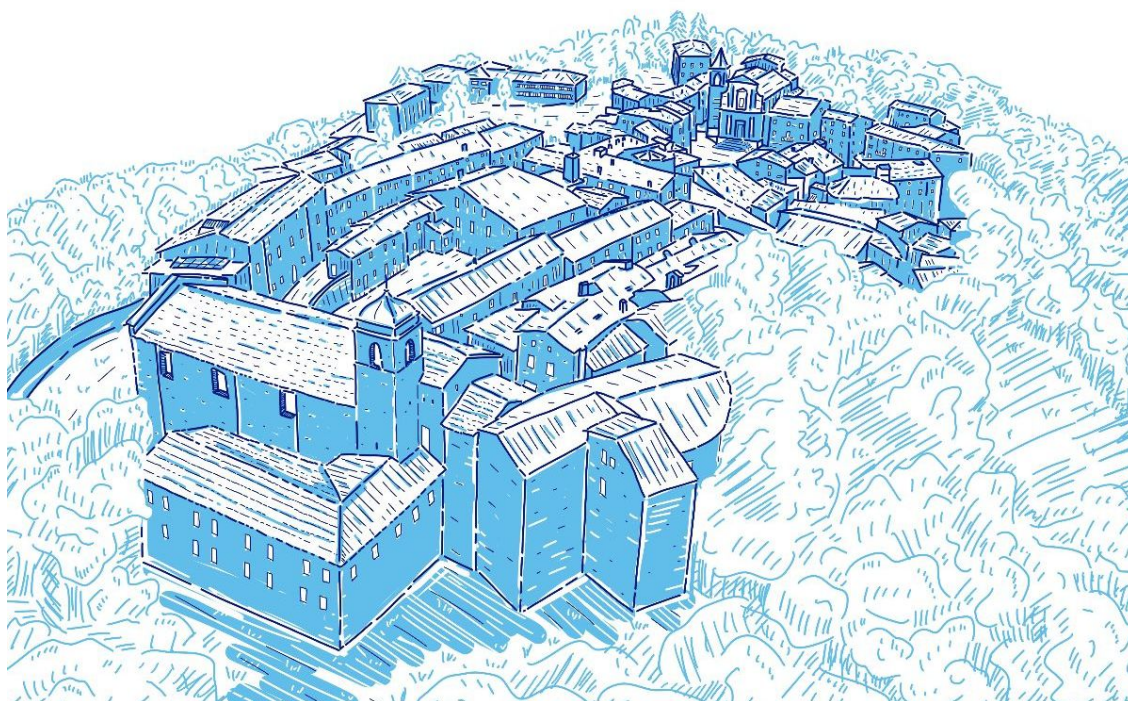
European Regional Development Fund



EUROPEAN UNION

Welcome! Discover Hidden Treasure Towns And Sites Of The Adriatic Area With Us

Are you small or medium enterprise, supplier of tourist services, policy-maker on a local or regional level, tourist blogger or influencer? If yes, join us on a journey of discovering hidden treasure towns and sites of the Adriatic Area. We are 13 partners from Italy and Croatia gathered around project Excover. We'll be mapping the potentials, developing capacities and including local population in building innovative solutions and tourist products, improving the tourism supply chain, and trying to contribute to better territorial and seasonal distribution of tourist flows in Croatia and Italy.



In what condition are tourist systems of destinations in the Excover area?

Level of Readiness for Tourism Development is based on SWOT and Reputation Analysis

Natural environment, safety and friendly hosts – those are the main advantages of Italian and Croatian destinations involved in Excover project. However, **marketing**, as well as variety of **shopping and entertainment opportunities**, are commonly weaker spots of those locations. Experts from **University of Bologna** got to this conclusion after thorough analysis of data collected by other scientific partners from **University of Zadar** and **University of Udine**. Data was composed from opinions of residents, visitors and non-visitors of Excover area.

The research created **framework** for each destination's **market positioning** and configuration of the competitive scenario, simultaneously **identifying** tourism-related sectors where **cross-border synergies** and cooperation initiatives can be effectively implemented.

Strengths and opportunities

Both visitors and non-visitors agreed that natural heritage leads the **list of strengths** – especially on Italian side with municipalities of Ostellato, Alfonsine and Campobasso, as well as the Natural Park of the Sasso Simone e Simocello. On the other hand, findings on Croatian side are **more diverse**, so the main advantage of Municipality of Čavle is cultural heritage, city of Gospić has good geographic position, while strength of Karlovac county lays on natural environment. After that, Excover experts say that, in all the considered areas, **protecting and valorising** the natural environment is fundamental to grasp the opportunity constituted by the growth of green tourism market – combination of pleasant climate and attractive outdoor activities.

Willingness to participate

Given the focus of the Excover project is on **sustainable development**, a special attention is paid to **residents' support** of tourism, that is measured through an **innovative participation index**, built based on the specific informative needs of project partners, and by investigating the availability of the host communities to share their unused accommodations, time, knowledge and skills with visitors. So, based on the visitors' opinions, residents in the Excover area are **very welcoming**, especially in Gospić and Ostellato. Therefore, it is more appropriate than ever to implement communication initiatives able to show the **hospitality** of the host communities. The residents most willing to share assets with tourists are in Gospić, Prato Carnico and Montefeltro, the most refractory are in Paularo, Rive d'Arcano, Čavle and Karlovac.

In all of that, this research suggest that the **COVID-19 outbreak** may be seen as an **opportunity** for Excover area, characterised by wide green spaces, no overcrowding, unpolluted nature and healthy rural lifestyles.



Find out more about the results of SWOT and reputation analyses

Video Playlist: JURRA Made Videos About Everything That Karlovac County has to Offer



Video interviews: Karlovac County has it all - from old City of Ozalj to peaceful City of Ogulin, through famous persons like artist Slava Raškaj and inventor Nikola Tesla, all the way to archaeological and paleontological sites in Barać Caves and mountain springs, woods, green land, karst and protected natural areas...

Find out more about rich resources of Karlovac County



Participants of the first Excover Online World Café raised some good questions about identifying hidden gems that could attract tourists.

Find and Tell Interesting Stories, and the Tourists Will Follow

Touristic outlook has changed and it opened some **new possibilities**, opportunities and needs for new approaches. How to make the most out of the situation, Excover partners discussed on the first online **Excover Café** on June 4th 2020. The session was less formal, open to wide participation, hosted by Gilberto Zangari and the topic was '**Participatory mapping of heritage to identify potential tourist attractions**'. More than 20 participants discussed on how to discover hidden gems that could **attract tourists** to the project areas of Italy and Croatia.

A story is challenging to find

„The real challenge is **identifying stories** and involve the stories in our project. Storytelling is powerful instrument for tourism. Consider, for example, **Santa Claus** who attracts a lot of people to northern parts of Europe. Just because of a story, **a legend**. When you think about stories, think about that. But on the other hand, story is the most challenging **resource** to find. It is hard to extract it from a simple interview. It requires more trust between an interviewer and an interviewee. If we focus on this and on finding the best ways to collect this type of information, we will be able to achieve a good result within our project, and really **make an impact** on the tourist market”, said Gilberto Zangari.

Shaping the tourist products

Some other possibilities for finding information were discussed. **Airbnb experiences** are good way to see what's already available to the tourists visiting the destination, and **local library** can contain books written by locals, sharing some relatively unknown details about local history, customs, places, people...

Participants agreed that the **tourist season** (in whatever form or shape) is a good opportunity to meet real visitors and ask them about the motivation, needs and wants, which can help the project shape better products for real people, and not just guess what they might want. This will be one way of contributing to better inputs for the process of creating Excover **pilot tourism products**.



Find out more about Excover Online World Cafés

Video Playlist: University of Zadar Provided Experts who Participated in SWOT and Reputation Analysis



Video interviews: Collecting impressions of the tourists that visited destinations in Excover area, scientists from the Department of Economics and Department of Tourism and Communication Sciences within University of Zadar, got a good opportunity to create a strategy for development of interesting destinations that are not recognised yet. By creating SWOT and reputation analysis, they will have an opportunity to turn those locations into tourist destinations and destinations of economic development.

Find out what were the findings of UNIZD experts



Andrea Guizzardi, Annalisa Stacchini and Michele Costa are professors from University of Bologna who wrote an scientific article with Excover project data.

Project Excover is on a Scientific Journal

Journal of Sustainable Tourism is now the place where you can find all the results from SWOT and reputation analysis conducted within Excover project. That is all thanks to scientific partners from the **Department of Economics at the University of Bologna** – professors **Andrea Guizzardi, Annalisa Stacchini and Michele Costa**, who wrote an scientific article with the title “**Can sustainability drive tourism development in small rural areas? Evidences from the Adriatic**”. The study explores exactly that topic, while proposing methods and scales to analyse the perceived value of rural tourism and visitor perceived sustainability.

Involving the locals

“Interregional tourism development projects, like Excover, constitute important catalysts of **knowledge, dialogue and collaboration** among stakeholders, including visitors. Therefore, we recommend that Excover experts and destination managers work at facilitating the establishment of SMEs **networks and consortia**, for developing local entrepreneurship, joint initiatives and sharing the costs of advanced services (marketing, ICT, expositions, etc.), taking carefully into account visitors’ perspectives, emerging also from this research. By involving the local communities in this Project, we are **increasing social cohesion**, instilling trust in the possibility for new tourism-related businesses to succeed and providing the informative basis for development”, researchers stated in the article which focuses on the whole Excover area.

Results and conclusions

One of the measured criteria was **satisfaction, destination image and intention to recommend**, while the questionnaires were conducted through **face-to-face** interviews. Their results show that a good state of **conservation** of the local cultural heritage is the most important indicator of perceived sustainability, followed by the observation of **environmental protection** measures enforced. While testing seven different hypotheses, researchers from University of Bologna concluded that sustainability is perceived as a limitation directly, but, indirectly, it appears as a **booster** of destinations’ **competitiveness**, because it increases the overall perceived value.

Find the **article** on the link: <https://bit.ly/3l9Y0qk>

Find out more about the article of University of Bologna experts



LIRA as a Lead project partner organised Excover Info Day at the culture and tourism fair Autumn in Lika in Gospić on 3rd of October 2020.

Excover Info Day in Lika-Senj County

The annual culture and tourism fair in Gospić was a great opportunity to publicly present the ways of participation to the locals and also to **detect experiences** that tourists can get in Lika-Senj County. In all of that, LIRA Info Day was expanded with a **bike tour** through lesser known (and rather popular) localities, where project Excover got to the locals with more **personal approach** while discovering interesting but forgotten stories and customs from that area.

Interest in the project

The Excover stand attracted many visitors with promotional materials and informative videos, and beside to people from all over Croatia, the project was introduced to **potential tourists** from Slovenia, Germany and Belgium. In addition, **exhibitors** such as honey producers, hunters, cured meat producers, fruit and vegetable growers, jewelry makers and renters, **all showed interest** in the project and asked how they could join Excover and contribute to the development of a new tourism product in their area.

Exploring on bicycles

As the goals of the project suggest, after the Autumn in Lika fair, Excover info day shifted its focus to less researched tourist routes that can contribute to a

better distribution of tourist flows, which was achieved by bicycle tour under **expert guidance**. Driving through stunning nature, tame **settlements and villages**, across the calm rivers of Otešica, Bogdanica and Novčica, the residents of Lika-Senj County were introduced to the project, and in return they revealed forgotten customs and stories.



Find out more about the LIRA Info Day

Video Playlist: Delta 2000 Captured Culture, Nature, Sport and History of Localities in Alfonsine and Ostellato



Video interviews: Educational tourism and school visits in Ostellato, birdwatching in Le Vallette di Ostellato, cycling in Po Delta Park, sport fishing in the Canale Circondariale, long history of St. Vitus parish church, World War 2 and revolution in Alfonsine, background of the painting in the Church of St. Mary and environmental

changes in Alfonsine Natural Reserves - all those are the topics of Delta 2000 video interviews in Alfonsine and Ostellato.

Find out more about school trips in Ostellato



Project partners presented potential tourism packages from their areas and tested available nature and culture tours in Alfonsine and Ostellato.

From Presenting at the Festival of Experiential Tourism in Florence to Work Meeting in Alfonsine and Ostellato

Partners of the project Excover took the chance to **meet face-to-face** with tourists, tour operators and travel agencies that could discover hidden treasure sites of Italy and Croatia. It all happened at Festival of Experiential Tourism in Florence, which served perfectly in this phase of identifying and **testing tourist packages** that will be established through the project. In the end, the fruitful days of connecting with potential tourism experts were complemented by a **two-day visit** to northern Italy and all that Alfonsine and Ostellato has to offer.

Areas of Italy and Croatia

Good stories from Croatia, and especially those hidden in **Karlovac County**, were told at the Florence Festival of Experiential Tourism by representatives of the Karlovac County Regional Development Agency, reinforced by the Karlovac

County Tourist Board and Croatia Open Land tours DMC, while LIRA presented the best of pilot tourism packages from **Lika-Senj County**.

Among other partners, the festival showcased the **Sasso Simone and Simoncello Regional Natural Park area**, the businesses that operate there and the natural gems it has. Above all, it confirmed that COVID-19 created unexpected opportunities for territories, such as this part of Montefeltro, which has its strengths in “**slow**” tourism, linked to environmental and cultural values.

Sightseeing and meetings

Afterwards, all the Excover partners were set off to **explore** picturesque Alfonsine, the birthplace of **Vincenzo Monti**, a classic Italian playwright and poet, best known for translating the Iliad to Italian. Alfonsine, that was completely destroyed in **World War II**, was rebuilt after its completion, and the stories of the people who built it and made it what it is today are woven into a **museum** that Excover partners also visited. A rich day of excovering hidden gems ended in **La Vallete Ostellato**, a protected floodplain near the **Po Delta**, known for its rare bird species and opportunities to enjoy nature.



[Find out more the tour through Italy](#)

Video Playlist: Primorje-Gorski Kotar County Invites You to Explore the Hills, Culture and Gastronomy of Čavle Municipality



Video interviews: Municipality of Čavle hides great natural, cultural and gastronomical values in form of “The hill of enjoyment“ - Platak, old Frankopan castle, fearsome Belringers, Polenta and Cheese Festival, Grobnik Circuit and traditional clothes - all in the close proximity of Rijeka and Crikvenica.

Find out more about growing tourism in Municipality of Čavle



Piazzetta Palombo was the place where citizens and stakeholders participated in informal "focus groups" and interviews.

Excover Space Opened up in Campobasso

To develop and foster the process of **community-led participation** in tourism development based on sustainable exploitation of indigenous natural and cultural resources, Municipality of Campobasso created a space that was dedicated to the **meeting and listening** of small focus groups of citizens who were managed and interviewed by the facilitators of the technical assistance group.

Heart of the historic centre

The space that is perfectly suited to these needs in the city of Campobasso, was recognised in **Piazzetta Palombo**: open space and passage, which is at the same time defined on the sides by the porches that make it perfect for meetings in safety but not dispersive. This place was chosen because it's in the heart of the historic centre, and it is one of the urban spaces which represent a **transit point for travellers** and tourists who can there find the **traditional crafts** of the city.

Informal and welcoming

Piazzetta Palombo served as a place for organising the focus **groups with residents** (associations, restaurateurs, merchants, etc.) and meeting anyone who wants to participate and contribute - it was a place that encourages **public participation** in the process of developing a future model. The "Space" is an inclusive place to propose ideas, bring lesser-known stories, chat about the city and try to **hypostasise strategies**.



[Find out more about Excover Space in Campobasso](#)

Video Playlist: Meeting the People and Tradition of Carnia Region



Video interviews: Facilitators working with Comunità di Montagna della Carnia, experts from University of Udine and representatives of Carniamusei shared their knowledge after conducting the interviews in Ovaro, Paularo and Prato Carnico within project Excover, through which they discovered hidden touristic gems of that area, as well as tradition, culture and stories from local community.

Find out more about hidden gems of northern Udine province



The biggest fair in Gospić was the perfect place for project Excover

presentation in front of nearly 4,000 visitors.

University of Zadar at the Autumn in Lika

Forest-park Jasikovac, Gacka river, Krušćić lake and the village of Čanak surrounded by hills, with folk customs, traditional hats and slippers, and various wooden handicrafts, are just some of the **hidden gems** of Lika-Senj County. This was revealed at the Info day by University of Zadar, which presented the cross-border project Excover in the centre of Gospić as part of the fair Autumn in Lika.

Promotion of the results

In addition to promotional materials, videos and basic information about the project, **further project activities and potential results** of the new tourist offer were presented to almost 4,000 visitors. Professor **Ivica Zdrilić** from the Department of Economics within University of Zadar, who conducted a **SWOT and reputation analysis** with his associates, participated in the promotion of the project at the info day in Gospić.

Stories and hidden places

- Little is known that the once **strongest man in the world**, wrestler Marijan Matijević, was born in Lika at the end of the 19th century, while at the beginning of the 20th century the **first tennis club in Croatia** was founded in Gospić, in the Jasikovac forest park, where the first tennis court was built – explained **Darko Tomrlin**, one of the visitors of the stand and an enthusiast of the history and tourism of Lika-Senj County. Such curiosities and stories, which Lika abounds, will become the **basis of new tourist packages**.



Find out more about UNIZD Info Day at Autumn in Lika

Video: Feel the Energy of Sasso Simone and

Simoncello Regional Natural Park



Short video: Mountain bike is all you need if you want to discover beautiful area of preserved nature in the heart of Montefeltro. Located in the provinces of Pesaro-Urbino and Rimini, Sasso Simone and Simoncello Regional Natural Park hides many experiences and emotions that could be find through healthy domestic products, traditional Italian cuisine, and specific natural environment.

Find out what experiences hide in Sasso Simone and Simoncello



Rich program at the Advent in Karlovac attracted media, children, history buffs

and many visitors from all over Croatia.

JURRA Info Day Brought Past, Present and Future of Tourism in Karlovac County

Delicious **masnica** from Ogulin, sweet cakes, mulled wine, hot tea and lots of smiles, combined with **stories for children** by the fire and tourist routes with **first-person historical figures**. All of this was included in the Info Day of the Excover project, which was presented to visitors as part of **Advent in Karlovac** by the Public Institution Regional Development Agency of Karlovac County.

Essence of the project

Tastes of tradition were presented by **Ogulin Women's Association**, children's attention was captured by narrator **Sabina Gvozdić**, while members of the **Association of Tourist Guides of Karlovac County - Bastion** with two interactive tours led by Marjeta Trkman Kravak and Dubravko Halovanić, who brought a breath of history as empress Maria Theresa and Austro-Hungarian officer.

Testing tourist packages

The program that was held under the motto “**Discover the hidden, remember the forgotten, taste the tradition**” united the essence of the Excover project because some of the lesser-known **tourist potentials** of Karlovac County were discovered, through which visitors learned all about the past, present and future of tourism in this area.



Find out more about Excover Info Day at the Advent in Karlovac



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Project Excover · Trg Ante Starcevica 10/1 · HR82346355888 · Osijek 31000 · Croatia

