



2020 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: *NATURE PROTECTION CENTRE SOTLA – BEAVER'S CENTRE*

Destination Name: *(include any state, province or region)*

Rogaška Slatina, Savinjska region

Country: Slovenia

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Nomination Category: *(Please check the boxes that indicate the focus of your story)*

- Culture & Communities
- Environment & Climate
- Nature & Ecotourism
- Islands & Seaside
- Immediate responses in dealing with the COVID -19
- Post COVID -19 recovery
- One of the 17 SDGs* *(if yes, which one)* Click or tap to choose

*The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. The 17 SDGs are integrated—that is, they recognize that action in one area will affect outcomes in others, and that development must balance social, economic and environmental sustainability. What are the Sustainable Development Goals? <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals.html>

For further information on Tourism for SDGs: <http://tourism4sdgs.org/>

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DESCRIBE YOUR GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Address each aspect of your good practice story in the different sections being specific including relevant quantitative and qualitative information.

Issues faced

Beaver has been eradicated in Slovenia as well as in some other countries before they returned in 1998 and populated the river basins of Krka, Kolpa, Sava, Drava, Mura and Sotla with affluxes (data from Natura 2000). Beaver is once again becoming one of the key types of ecosystems, since they bring down trees and build lodges and dams, and therefore changing the characters of rivers, streams and riverine lands.

This is how they increase the versatility of habitats, which have beneficial effect on a number of plant and animal species.

The problem or rather an issue in the area of former and future Vonarsko Jezero lake have always been messy habitats and shelters for the animal species (otter, beaver etc.)

Within the INTERREG V-A Slovenia – Croatia collaborative programme, supported by the European Union and co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund the project titled Vezi narave (Bonds of Nature), was implemented. Some of its other partners are: Grosuplje Municipality, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, Hyla Association, Public Institute for Management of Protected areas of the Krapinsko-zagorska Županije, Risnjak National Park, Vrbovsko City and ROGAŠKA SLATINA MUNICIPALITY, which acted as the responsible partner for the working section and implemented one the project activities, i.e. "Vezi narave" (Bonds of Nature) NARAVOVARSTVENI CENTER SOTLA (SOTLA NATURE PROTECTION CENTRE) (changed into: BOBROV CENTER, hereinafter).

Methods, steps and tools applied

The Vezi narave project presented the challenge of preservation and sustainable use of natural and cultural sources, and renewal of the biotic diversity for the future generations and raising awareness on the role, which the nature holds for the welfare of people of current and future generations.

Alongside partners we researched the area and determined locations for setting up habitats and inlets for the fauna. The last part was building the Bobrov Center, intended for protection and education of local residents and visitors for the preservation of nature and environment.

The Rogaška Slatina Municipality has implemented sustainable measures at the Sotla River and its affluences during the winter of 2019/2020; including the opening of the river bed by creating cutoff meanders, regulating shores and planting vegetation. The key objective was and remains to guarantee, improve and preserve the natural shelters of selected plant and



animal species at the total are of 3,159 hectares. Based on the measures taken they managed the protection and renovation of the biotic diversity and encouraged ecosystem services for they have regulated natural shelters, 7 inlets for otters, beavers, stag beetles, great capricorn beetles, marsh fritillary, large copper, amphibians and other animal species. By regulating the substitute habitats, we expect positive influence to the condition of preservation of otter, beaver and other animal species.

Key success factors

OBJECTIVES:

- To improve the access to knowledge on the ecosystem service.
- Raising awareness of the local residents on the importance of preserving nature for their quality of life.
- Active involvement of local population into preserving nature.
- Improvement of habitats' condition, especially otter's at the nature protection area "Sotla with affluences".
- To establish infrastructure, which will act as a promotional and connective space between nature and residents, and direct tourists to the selected area, regulated for this purpose.

The areas of Natura 2000, which already include such centres in their offer served as an example: Škocjanski zatok (inlet), Rojstna hiša reke Kolpe na Hrvaškem (Kolpa River Family House in Croatia), Hiša rek Havelberg (Havelberg House of Rivers) and Elba Resere in Germany.

The solution was creating inlets for these animals, since they would be left without shelters.

The most important measure to reach the set objectives was construction of the "Bobrov Center", where the residents/visitors will use the interactive equipment and learn something new about the plant and animal species in the wider area of Sotla, and by that establish space for learning, raising awareness, work and visit management on this area, as well as observing different natural plant and animal species. The space is equipped with animation, models, interactive elements, didactic toys, beaver lodge, imitation of the River Sotla basin, educational range, room for learning/workshops, coffee shop etc. The Bobrov Centre can be reached by regulated cycling trails and stations in the embrace of unspoiled nature. Renting a bicycle or an electric bike at the Rogaška Slatina Tourist Information Centre. The Bobrov Centre is located in the area of the Vonarsko Jezero lake, connecting the Rogaška Slatina and the Podčetrtek Municipalities, making it suitable for a visit or staying of local/foreign guests and collaboration with the neighbouring municipality and the Krapinsko-Zagorska Županija in further activities and programme packages.



The Bobrov Centre will serve as support of the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation (ZVRSN) and other organisations in implementing the management programme of the Natura 2000, since it will at the same time enable dispersion of the acquired knowledge, as well as creating new one; and it will mostly serve as space for implementing content, which long-term strengthen the capability of target groups for increasing inclusion, raising awareness, knowledge and accepting nature conservation and ecosystem services, as foundation for long-term sustainable development.

Lessons learned

The VEZI NARAVE project addresses the key challenge of the programme area within the selected specific objective: preservation and renewal of the biotic diversity for the future generations and raising awareness on the role the nature has for the welfare of people and prevention of long-term natural risks. To reach this objective the project shall implement activities to respond to:

- 1) lack of mutual, cross-border coordinated measures for improving the bad condition of certain species,
- 2) lack of inter-sector collaboration for introducing contemporary, sustainable methods of natural resources management and
- 3) low awareness on the importance of nature conservation and the benefits, which the preserved nature can offer for the long-term quality of life in the area.

By implementing inter-sector and cross-border coordinated measures (on the level of professional institutions as well as local communities) for the selected target species, which will be introduced at the cross-border area, and by implementing measures for the species, which are present in the programme area on both sides of the border, we directly contribute to the objectives of the Natura 2000 programme. And combined with the active inclusion of the local shareholders in the measures taken with activities in the field of raising awareness and interpretation of benefits of the ecosystem services we, in long-term, increase the appeal of habitat space and development in accordance with the Interreg VA – Povezani v zelenem (Connected in Green) programme strategy. By establishing new and renovating the existing space for nature interpretation and interactive learning of the preserved nature's benefits, education, visit management and presentation of development opportunities, which are offered by the preserved nature, the project embodies the principles of connecting the natural and cultural capital as a comparative development area benefit. This project therefore indirectly contributes to twisting trend of abandoning agricultural land, fast spreading of non-native species, uncontrolled visits to the protected areas and not recognising the potential of the ecosystem services for the area development.

Results, achievements and recognitions



The project addresses the species with low level of habitat preservation with partially degraded structures in habitat with option of renovation. The project in the field implements actual activities of renovation of habitat's structures of target species, which will improve the preservation level of the qualification species' habitat at the discussed areas of Natura 2000. We will achieve improvement for:

- otter; areas: Sotla with affluences (SI3000303), Sutla (HR2001070), Risnjak National Park (HR2000447), Kupa (HR2000642); 150 ha of renewed/newly created areas
 - beetles: great capricorn beetle, stag beetle, hermit beetle; areas: Sotla with affluences (SI3000303), Sutla (HR2001070); 1950 ha of renewed/newly created areas
 - amphibians; areas: Sutla (HR2001070), Radensko polje - Viršnica (SI3000171); 20,1 ha of renewed/newly created areas
 - butterflies marsh fritillary, large copper; areas: Sutla (HR2001070), Risnjak National Park (HR2000447), Radensko polje - Viršnica (SI3000171); 956 ha of renewed/newly created areas
 - Kamačnik spring (HR HR2001158) for the habitat type 8310; 74 ha of renewed/newly created areas. With this we indirectly contribute to the programme indicators of results.
- Based on the mutual professional foundations the planning of the nature conservation measures will improve at the cross-border area. By implementing the programmes on raising awareness and the network of 4 nature points of VEZI NARAVE we will establish the permanent spaces for strengthening knowledge on the ecosystem services. By introducing the workshops, we will improve the capability of 50 farmers and other land owners for the implementation of natural conservation measures, 40 teachers will acquire knowledge and tools for presenting the ecosystem services in schools. 100 individuals will acquire knowledge on the nature's welfare for people by being included in content design for the presentation of ecosystem services.

The comprehensive approach will improve receiving and understanding the preservation of biotic diversity and ecosystem among the local population and visitors to the programme area.

Additional references

<https://www.facebook.com/bobrovcenter/>

<https://www.rogaska-slatina.si/si/objave-in-napovedi/novice/9176-vezi-narave-izgradnja-naravovarstvenega-centra-sotla>

<https://www.rogaska-slatina.si/si/objave-in-napovedi/novice/10562-zakaj-so-mali-bobri-velika-stvar>

<https://www.rogaska-slatina.si/si/objave-in-napovedi/novice/10640-od-letosnje-jeseni-na-obisk-v-bobrov-center-pri-rogaski-slatini>

<https://we.tl/t-YAvRfofy7W>

