2020 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: A secret dialect or cultural heritage
Destination Name: Hiiumaa island
Country: ESTONIA

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Position: destinations marketing and marketing manager
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.unsd.org/succ/sdg/sggoals.html

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

Find detailed instructions for submitting good practices here
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.

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<th>Issues faced</th>
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<td>Language - the base of our identity. Language is not simply a way of making oneself understandable to others but it connects us to our family, culture, music, beliefs etc. A language or dialect carries customs, traditions, folklore and history from a generation to another and shapes the individuals personality. In the rush of globalisation or because of occupations or wars in smaller countries or communities the local language as part of nation’s identity, the corner stone of cultural heritage is in danger to vanish. We know and have rules how to protect nature areas, rare species, buildings, paintings etc. – but what about our mother language? Hiiumaa dialect was almost forgotten during the Soviet occupation period which lasted over 50 years. Many Estonia’s were even not aware that the Hiiumaa islands dialect even existed, local inhabitance of 10 000 people did not speak it very much any more and younger generations did not use the dialect in their speech. But luckily there were some enthusiasts who managed to bring the dialect back to daylight and back to life and made it popular among present generations.</td>
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<th>Methods, steps and tools applied</th>
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<td>Hiiumaa is a tiny island in a small European country Estonia. Thanks to the good examples of popularizing of East – Estonian minor dialecls ( Seto and Võro) which have been popularised by the initiative of local people and with the help of professional linguists, the Hiiumaa islands dialect has been saved for the further generations. Proceeding in small steps. Firstly adding the awareness in local people and summer residents of Hiiumaa island in cultural events and local newspapers. Starting by constantly using few dialect words in speeches and marketing materials. Then publishing primary alphabet book and dictionary of the dialect, some story books for adults, children’s books and then making the dialect known for bigger public elsewhere in Estonia (pop-songs or plays or films. In Hiiumaa it was books and a mono play called Mamma lood ie Mum’s stories that have become most known among larger public groups.) Finally the dialect and local culture studies were added to local school and kindergarten programs. Additionally we have different linguistic workshops for summer residents and mainland people held by local seniors or museum. This is important for spreading the knowledge about the dialect. Weekly radio news in local dialect helps to keep the grown interest alive and an interactive exposition in the new experience centre promotes the the theme. There everyone can learn about the local dialect and test their Hiiu dialect skills through humoristic test. Within few years we have achieved a good number of local people and a great number of those who have their roots in this island but live elsewhere, who are interested in their roots, who are aware and know the local dialect, are proud of it and furthermore we have a whole new generation who treasures their forefathers mother tongue. Valuing and treasuring the local dialect and way of speech and culture as part of Hiiumaa islands identity has been added to the municipalities strategy, action - and marketing plans.</td>
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<th>Key success factors</th>
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<td>In the result the Hiiu Dialect is know all over Estonia and it has become a trade mark of the island. We have modern written materials in Hiiu dialect. Several books in Hiiu dialect or about Hiiumaa island have been published since. Even elderly people, who during the occupation period preferred not to speak the local dialect or share their memories have started to write down their memories and proudly use the local language. The books have been so popular that many of them were sold out within few months and new editions have been printed and new books keep on coming. The basic study book is essential, but it is important that there are different styles of books represented so that different target group can find suitable ones.</td>
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As a success factor, we consider the fact that the books published are not scientific or linguistic studies but easy to read and understandable by anyone, without having special linguistic background.

The next level was achieved by production of a humoristic mono-play about the childhood summers of a popular Estonian actors in occupied and closed border zone of Hiiumaa island. The play was a side product of the first Hiiu language study books. Humor or pop song make the dialect more acceptable to larger target groups. In the play Mamma lood, the language was a mix of Estonian language spiced up with phrases of Hiiu dialect and small fragments about the local language itself explained by a linguist. Everyone who had spent summers with grandparents in countryside could easily imagine themselves into the scenes and stories of the play. All the funny sayings the grandparents have! Actually the experience itself is not so different in different places - only the language is. The play was deliberately held for a quite small audience only and the number of plays was limited. It was a sensation that rose the Hiiu language to the knowledge of most Estonian’s. Afterwards the concept of the play has been adapted to other regions too.

Many grandparents visited the play with their adult and grandchildren who got interested in the Hiiu language and wanted to know more about it. Thanks to that mono-play, an interactive dialect exposition was planned to a new experience centre Windtower and also all other stories in the exposition are spoken by the same actor using the Hiiu way of speech.

And finally the dialect is back in local schools, know it is possible to study the local language and culture in primary schools and kindergartens as there are books suitable for learning the dialect and it is possible to hear the dialect at the exposition and also in a popular Estonian cartoon where the same actor uses fragments of Hiiu dialect in the role of dog.

Lessons learned

The enthusiasm is not enough, there must be legal body. We had a NGO which had been established a while ago but was not very active and the language was not primary issue at first:

It was easier to start the activities through the Hiiu Öko as they had a practice of working together. Linguists and business orientated persons make good partners for such an action.

Biggest obstacle for promotion of a dialect was not money but lack of interest. Only when we had had enough attention outside of our own region the locals got enthusiastic about the issue too.

Attention can be achieved easier by making a professional communication plan. When the interest has risen it is important that the local authorities notice the importance of the dialect and make it “official” by adding it official development and action plans. And then the local schools must be involved as the keepers of the local cultural heritage. It takes time and it is not possible to promote the language without basic study books.

Results, achievements and recognitions

Local language and culture program in local schools
Written materials for studying and entertainment
Several books
Summer play Mamma lood
Recognition for Mamma lood and Hiiu Öko NGO
http://www.hiuleht.ee/2015/12/valime-aasta-teo-ja-aasta-hiidlase/
https://www.meiemaa.ee/index.php?content=artiklid&sub=54&artid=80449
https://www.sirp.ee/s1-artiklid/c7-kirjandus/hiiumaa-loominguline-toitepinnas/
Recognition in media:
https://www.emmaste.edu.ee/uudised/etlusvoislus-hiiu-keel-ja-meel


https://tuuletorn.ee/en/?teenus=hiidlaste-lood
https://www.hiiumaa.ee/

Additional references