



"I CARE FOR..." 2012 Experience of international volunteer camps

General report

Introduction

The project "I CARE FOR..." 2012, promoted and organized by "AdriaticGreeNet" and UNESCO Club from Udine, included 4 international volunteer camps in 4 different countries:

- Croatia (Drežnik Grad, Municipality Rakovica),
- Bosnia and Herzegovina (Počitelj, Municipality Čapljina),
- Serbia (Bač, Municipality Bač),
- Italy (Villanova delle Grotte, Municipality Lusevera and city Tarcento).

The main goals of the project are: to promote the culture and the sustainability in little European communities as fundamental bases for the development of the marginal territories, to enforce the "active citizenship" and the European cohesion, to support the creation of the network between citizens, associations and public administrations, to diffuse and share the fundamental rights promoted and guaranteed by EU and UNESCO about participation, environmental protection, sustainability and protection of cultural diversity and heritage.

The chosen places for the realization of the project have the same characteristics:

- little towns, about max 15.000 inhabitants,
- places (territories) full of rich local cultural and natural values that are very important for our common European heritage, under the protection or on the "tentative list" of UNESCO,
- presence of local associations, organizations and administrations interested to be partners, to enforce the network between these places and to collaborate also for the future activities.

The camps were based on:

- cooperation among all participants in the management of the camp,
- without age limit,
- actions of "active-citizenship" to help local communities in taking care of public spaces, historical evidences and cultural traces,
- sightseeing of the cultural and natural values at local level and in its surrounding,
- meetings and discussions about the actual management of the cultural and natural heritage, its accessibility and the opportunities to develop the services for sustainable tourism.

The project got valuable patronages and several partnerships despite the fact that we could define its details only in April 2012, when it was decided to realize the volunteer camps also if we couldn't have any kind of public or private funds to cover the costs of preparation and organization, which were covered by volunteer works of "AdriaticGreeNet" volunteers.

List of Patronages

- Italian National Commission for UNESCO (for "I care for Tarcento-Villanova delle Grotte")
- Croatian Commission for UNESCO (for "I care for Drežnik Grad")
- State Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina for UNESCO (for "I care for Počitelj")
- Serbian National Commission for UNESCO (for "I care for Bač")
- Province of Udine
- Natural Regional Park "Julian Prealps"
- City Tarcento
- Municipality Lusevera
- International Sociology Institute from Gorizia

List of Partners

"I care for...Drežnik Grad":

- Čuvari Korane – Drežnik Grad (CRO)
- Tourist Board of Municipality Rakovica (CRO)
- Dinaridi – Zagreb (CRO)
- Dobrovoljno Vatrogasno Društvo - Drežnik Grad (CRO)

"I care for...Počitelj":

- Udruženje građana "Počitelj" (BiH)
- MLAZ - Počitelj (BiH)

"I care for...Bač":

- Tourist Board of Municipality of Bač (SRB)
- Vekovi Bača (SRB)
- Obavezna Komponenta – Odžaci (SRB)

"I care for...Tarcento-Villanova delle Grotte":

- Casa per l'Europa /House for Europe – Gemona del Friuli (IT)
- Conoscenza e Protezione ambiente naturale del Friuli – Tarcento (IT)
- GELGV (Gruppo Esploratori Lavoratori Grotte di Villanova) – Lusevera (IT)

"I Care for..." 2012 – essential data

Calendar of camps:

According to the program, the camps were organized and realized from 22nd to 30th of June in Croatia, from 5th to 13th of July in Bosnia and Herzegovina, from 18th to 26th of July in Serbia and from 27th of August to 4th September in Italy - total 36 full days of activities, while the overall organization included 3 "AdriaticGreeNet" volunteers from Autumn 2011 until now, involved in creating a website in Italian and English language and lot of days necessary to define all details, to send informations, to prepare all documents and materials for the participants and lot of different communications with partners, local authorities and public bodies which gave their patronages to the project.

About participants:

Total amount of volunteers who participated at least in one of international camps organized in 2012 is 54 persons. Furthermore about 75 local citizens and members of local organizations were involved during the actions of active-citizenship, meetings and cultural events provided in each camp. The camp in Bosnia and Herzegovina hosted the biggest number of people (25!) although some of them could participate only for few days because of short vacation. Probably the experience of the first international volunteer camp that was realized in the summer 2011, helped the diffusion of this camp in respect to the others.

According to their occupations, they were very different:

occupation	n.
student	14
retired	2
without regular job	10
worker	5
private entrepreneur	3
office worker	6
doctor	2
fireman	2
teacher	4
writer/painter	2
journalist	3
public health manager	1

The age range of participants was from 15 to 83 years:

Age	n.
15-25:	15
26-45:	14
46-65:	23
> 65:	2

The multigenerational range of age of participants is one of choice (goal) of the project. We thought, from the beginning, it might be very important to share emotions, experiences, ideas between participants of different ages, not only for themselves but also for the enrichment of the results and contents of the project. In fact the working actions, sometimes very hard because of weather conditions, or the cultural events and meetings in which all participants, always, were participated and the different "points of view" gave everyone the chance to feel and live fully experience that was offered by the camp, such as easily understood by reading the "memory book" collected by the responsible for the camps, Slavica Mendelski.

The volunteers who applied to the project came from 7 different Countries as it is shown by the next table:

Countries	n. of participants
Austria	2
Croatia	10
Ireland	1
Italy	34
Serbia	1
Slovenia	2
Sweden	4

According to the possibilities of information that as association we could organize in few months, especially in the Countries where live the coordinators and the responsible of the project, this year about the 80% of participants came from Italy (60%) and Croatia (20%). And also the involvement of local citizens during the camp activities was mostly evident in Italy - especially regarding the final conference "I care for Europe" and in Croatia - especially regarding the actions of "active-citizenship" to which participated almost 30 local citizens.

But the contacts with international agencies and associations for the promotion of cultural and sustainable tourism that we had after the starting up of the project and with several persons who couldn't participate because of the dates during which they were not free (camp in August could not be organized because of possible "terrible" hot weather or because our partners are too busy in that month), let us to be sure that for next year it could be increased the number of involved countries and the number of new associations - partners.

About camps activities:

The activities of the camp could be subdivided in: actions of "active-citizenship", sightseeing of local heritages and cultural meetings and events.

Actions of "active-citizenship": several concrete working activities were made in each camp, because we believe in importance of the concrete simple work experience shared together to involve participants and local communities in taking care of cultural and natural heritage.

The hours devoted to working activities during the camps were altogether 66, and according to the number of volunteers who participated in each different actions the total workers/hours were 865. In particular:

- in Drežnik Grad (CRO), volunteers participated in 2 community actions: cleaning of canyon of river Korana (2 days of activities) and cleaning of the medieval well in the center of the village. This actions were organized by local partner associations with the support of local authority and large number of citizens or members of associations participated;
- in Počitelj (BiH), since the number of participants was large enough, we could arrange 2 different working groups which could make a big actions – one was the cleaning of the old tower (especially the room of prison and the area around old "cisterna" tank) and another working action was cleaning of the bank along the river Neretva, finally cleaned of garbage and weeds in the length of one hundred meters. We couldn't get the support of local inhabitants of the old town (few and old people) but after days of volunteer activities, some young citizens from the "new" town continued our work along the river Neretva and also some tourists and local traders were "conquered" with the result of the volunteer action.
- In Bač (SRB), the ten volunteers were involved almost every day in actions regarding to take care of the local heritage. The activities in the old fortress concerned the cleaning of weeds and branches all around the area of old entrance to the fortress and along the external wall and the painting of the wooden bridge. Furthermore the participants cleaned thoroughly also the ruins of old turkish bath. All works were made under the supervision of the responsible of "Vekovi Bača", organization founded for the maintenance and management activities of the historical monuments in Bač.
- In Villanova delle Grotte-Tarcento (IT), was organized 2 cleaning actions; the first was in the Villanova caves with the local association that manages the caves and the second in the territory of Tarcento regards the cleaning of an old landfill, in a forest near a cave along the street to the Bernadia mountain. But "AdriaticGreenet" volunteers also cleaned and left ex-school of Villanova to become useful, where was the camp base, thanks to 3 working days...

Sightseeing of local heritage: several excursions and sightseeing of local heritage and surroundings were provided and realized during the camps, not only to give opportunity to the participants to discover wonderful places full of cultural and natural values, but also to monitoring the accessibility, visibility and management of heritage.

This activities shown us the wealth of chosen areas, interest and reactions of participants (they never were before in these places) shown also a high potential to increase the sustainable tourism in these places.

In details and chronological order we visited:

Drežnik Grad (old castle and village) – Rastoke – Slunj - National Park Plitvice Lakes (UNESCO World Heritage) – Caves of Barać – Bihać center – Valley of river Una (National Park) - Počitelj – Kravice waterfall – Blagaj (Tekija of dervishes, on UNESCO Tentative List) - Mostar ("Stari Most" – "Old bridge" UNESCO World Heritage) – necropolis of stećak tombstones of Radimlja (on UNESCO Tentative List) – ruins of Daorson (on UNESCO Tentative List) – Vjetrenica cave (on UNESCO Tentative List) – Gabela - Bač (Bač with its surroundings - on UNESCO Tentative list) – Odžaci – National Park Fruška Gora – Petrovaradin fortress - Novi Sad – Monastery of Bođani – Provala Lake – Deronje – Čelarevo - Villanova Caves – Julian Prealps Regional Park – Cividale del Friuli (UNESCO World Heritage) – Aquileia (UNESCO World Heritage) – Gemona del Friuli – Venzone (medieval place totally reconstructed like it was before earthquake 1976).

Cultural meetings and events: some cultural events were organized during the camps in order to analyze the local situation regarding the management of cultural and natural heritage, to learn more about the history of the territories, to listen the local traditional music and to talk about European citizen's rights and UNESCO's activities about Agenda21 for Culture and the Convention for the promotion of cultural diversity from Paris.

Thanks to these meetings, we collected several informations that we can share with our partners and Bodies which gave us their high patronages. Furthermore, the camps were an opportunity also to realize several artistic or cultural performances.

In particular we organized:

- 6 meetings with local associations, experts and local authorities on the management of the local cultural and natural values/world heritage and about the state of services for sustainable tourism
- 2 workshops about "active participation"
- 1 public conference "I Care for Europe" (in Tarcento) organized by House for Europe from Gemona del Friuli,
- 1 poetry reading in Drežnik Grad, thanks to our special guest Giacomo Scotti (the oldest participant in the project, but...only according to his age)
- 1 wall-painting performance made by the artist "Kerotoo" in Počitelj
- 2 concerts of traditional music.

Meetings were organized with local partners/associations, starting from a list prepared by "AdriaticGreenet" to

screen the status of the management of the cultural and natural heritage, its accessibility to people with disabilities and the quantity/quality of sustainable tourism services. This "check-list" was useful to test the quality of basic information which could be found in each territory, to harmonize the methodology that we are defining for the next year projects, when we will continue to promote the information and proposal about the realization of the Agenda 21 for Culture at local level.

During the meetings we could collect also several suggestions about the role of UNESCO at local level that we share with each commission in the specific annexed letter.

Workshops, also organized in collaboration with the ISIG from Gorizia, according to a methodology that could be used to analyze the results of preliminary meetings and screenings of local Agenda 21 for Culture, started from the experience of Aquileia (which is a project partner in the application sent to UNESCO's tender that is funded by the International Fund for Cultural diversity on the implementation of cultural policies for next year).

The public conference "I care for Europe", made in Tarcento on 1st September, promoted by House for Europe from Gemona del Friuli and organized in the suggestive Villa Moretti conference hall thanks to the patronage of the City Tarcento administration, could support the goals of the project and the importance to continue and to enlarge the networking activities and the information about the European citizen's rights.

Final considerations about strenghts and weaknesses of the territories

According to the results of the camps activities, in particular about all the sightseeing and meetings, we could summarize some general aspects common to all these places:

- on the positive side - the wealth of cultural and natural values;
- on the negative side - the difficulties of access for persons with disabilities, both to local heritage and to private accomodation, and the inexperience of participatory processes.

Table of strenghts and weaknesses:

Place	Strenghts	Weaknesses
Drežnik Grad	The strong presence of active local associations and collaboration with local community - Location - High capacity of accommodation, services and quality of information for tourists –The large number of natural and cultural sites	Accessibility to natural and cultural values and in the private houses for people with disabilities - Relation between management of National Park Plitvice Lakes and local communities
Počitelj	Location – The richness of cultural and natural heritage in the town and its surrounding - Sufficient amount of accommodation seats in the old town	Quality of tourism services – Information services – Accessibility to natural and cultural values for people with disabilities - No experiences of participatory processes in the local community - A complicated relationship and competence at the administrative level
Bač	High quantity and quality of cultural and natural heritage in the town and surrounding – Multiculturality - Attention to restoration and management of cultural monuments	Accessibility to natural or cultural values and in the private houses for people with disabilities - No experiences of participatory processes in the local community
Villanova delle Grotte	Multiculturality – Public spaces and structures at disposal – Natural values attractive despite the marginality of location	Accessibility to natural or cultural values and in the private houses for people with disabilities – Location – Public services

So, for the next year, we will prepare the content of volunteer camps to study in depth and promote the discussion about possible solutions for the problematic themes identified during this year, to implement services for cultural and sustainable tourism and for the participation of people in public cultural policies.