



## 2021 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

### HAND IN HAND INTO A GREEN FUTURE

**Nomination category:** Culture & Communities

#### **Introduction – presentation of the problem**

Collaboration serves as the bridge between all tourism stakeholders and the added value that can offer the most to both locals and tourists and visitors to a destination and brings together various stakeholders. Unfortunately, too frequently, destinations do not liaise with neighbouring destinations. Four municipalities in the area thus liaised and established the new Rogla-Pohorje Tourist Destination intended to strengthen and provide a framework for collaboration on development and promotional activities and further development of a joint brand. Before joining forces as set out below, the Municipalities of Oplotnica, Slovenske Konjice, Vitanje, and Zreče had operated separately in the field of tourism. Each municipality had taken the development of tourism and promotional activities in its own direction. On many occasions, various providers had displayed at trade fairs with the same promotional materials. Promotional materials had thus not only been duplicated but each provider had to pay for its own promotional space. Each municipality had sought to keep guests in its own towns, in most cases, offering and presenting its own tourism offering. The Municipality of Zreče had dominated in tourism development with the largest number of lodgings available. Slovenske Konjice, with its rich cultural heritage, had been of particular interest to day visitors, whereas Oplotnica and Vitanje had pursued their tourism activities through tourist information centres.

Tourism stakeholders had wondered how to promote a breakthrough in less-visited municipalities and to bring visitors/tourists from more crowded areas thereto, thus ensuring a more balanced distribution of visitors/tourists and providing the local population with the opportunity to earn additional income (concern for their welfare). In all of this, we wanted to follow the Triple Bottom Line (TPL) model combining the environmental, economic and social aspects of tourism development. After the municipalities joined forces, the sustainable management of the Rogla-Pohorje Tourist Destination (hereinafter referred to as the “RPTD”) was added.

#### **Methods**

It was first shifted towards combining destinations with the adoption of the “2017-2021 Rogla-Pohorje Destination Tourism Development and Marketing Plan”, developed as a collaborative effort of the destination stakeholders and containing the starting points for the visions of all participating municipalities so as to constitute the Rogla-Pohorje destination. The good present-day quantitative and qualitative performance of the RPTD has resulted from active and systematic implementation of the aforementioned strategic tourism documents. Importantly, the strategy did not collect dust in a



“drawer” but the implementation of our pursued objectives has, in fact, been ongoing during this five-year period and has been successfully completed in the vast majority of cases.

The Rogla-Pohorje Tourism Cooperative that oversees both the financial performance and management of development projects compliant with the law and urban development plans of the individual municipalities. Work in the joint DMMO was divided among the existing human resources employed in the tourist information centres (TIC) in the individual municipalities. Tourism marketing and development activities are pursued by four RPTD centres: The Quality Centre, The Strategic and Operational Marketing Centre, the Experience Centre and the R&D Centre. Each centre operates under the responsibility of the Centre Manager (a TIC employee) who coordinates the activities of the working groups implementing the desired vision and strategic objectives of the RPTD and the individual municipalities within the destination. Representatives of the working groups (tourism industry, various associations, the economy, local government and population) of all four RPTD plan and implement activities for all four municipalities on an equal footing. Functions and duties are implemented for the benefit of stakeholders of all municipalities and the RPTD as a whole, allowing for coherent “bottom-up” and “top-down” approaches and efficient development and marketing of the RPTD.

A joint strategy, as well as a joint vision of the following, has sufficed for our success story, which all engaged municipalities have striven towards:

- a joint vision of the RPTD marketing model,
- tourism product development and marketing,
- promotion and sales and
- a comprehensive mid- and long-term vision of the sustainable development concept of the RPTD.

The VISION implemented by pursuing development and marketing qualitative and quantitative goals reads as follows:

In 2021, Rogla-Pohorje is recognised as a rural destination with premium health and well-being preservation programmes, active holidays and athletes’ preparations, creative wine and culinary stories, profound space culturalization experiences, experiences associated with discovering nature, a rich cultural heritage and crafts, globally-recognised sports and traditional events and business gatherings between Rogla mountain and the wine-growing hills of the Dravinja Valley, to which hospitable and active locals invite visitors.

The RPTD is also represented by its own CGP (logo) and a joint slogan: Explore, feel, enjoy. In this way, the destination is in the process of becoming attractive and friendly for the local population, visitors/tourists, local investors (restoration of the Trebnik Mansion with guest rooms in Slovenske Konjice, restoration of the Oplotnica Mansion, Brodej Glamping in Vitanje, modern restoration of the Žiče Charterhouse Chapel, etc.) and foreign investors, further enriching our tourism offering (The Pohorje Treetop Walk on Rogla). In collaboration with the German Stöger + Kölbl architectural firm,



the Czech investor ZAK has brought a new philosophy of experiencing nature to Slovenia: “opening” forests and nature to the public in a sustainable manner that strictly adheres to environmental protection principles. As we can see, satisfied investors invest in innovative stories that provide for a green future to successive generations as well.

Bringing together all tourism stakeholders in our destination through the “Tastes of Rogla” brand and providing locals with an additional source of income serves as an important aspect of the presented good practice case. The RPTD wishes to significantly contribute to the welfare of the local population. The “Tastes of Rogla” brand brings together local providers of culinary services and producers of agricultural and food products and handicrafts, culinary events, and guided experiences for tourists. Both products and services are assessed under the watchful eye of certificate-awarding experts. Autochthony, domesticity, local production, natural materials, a sustainable philosophy, etc. play an important role.

LTO Rogla-Zreče, EIG, has formally assumed the function of coordinating the activities of the RPTD and has become a key interlocutor of the Slovenian Tourist Board (STO), the Ministry of the Economy, Research, and Technology and other important tourism-engaged entities on a national level. In addition, all four municipalities of the RTPD also joined the Pohorje Partnership at the end of 2019, bringing together 19 municipalities with whom active collaboration on several partnership levels (management, implementation, and content) is pursued. An important part of the Pohorje Strategy as a whole for the 2022–2027 period (currently under development) will also be played by the RPTD which has established its signature DNA over the past five years, has positioned itself well on the Slovenian tourism market and established itself as an important interlocutor of national tourism organisations. Through the new strategic period, it will thus be placed into the wider context of Pohorje as a whole, continue its liaising and development efforts, all the while preserving its unique distinctive qualities on which to build sustainable development for human beings of the future. As the proud holder of the Slovenian Green Destination Gold designation, it will put all its resources into the safety and health of the local population and its visitors and the systematic sustainable and socially responsible development of local tourism.

### **Key success factors**

The key success factor of the RPTD sustainable development management is, as repeatedly mentioned, the actual monitoring and implementation of the strategic document, active liaising of all tourism stakeholders, their strong support and, last but not least, raising awareness of the importance and effects of sustainable development through various channels (educational workshops, zero-waste events, appearances in local printed media and on social media platforms). Without actively raising awareness of the importance of sustainable development, taking care of the natural environment, and the importance of preserving cultural heritage, no mindset shifts in people can be expected. Major shifts start with small steps, through education and continuous awareness campaigns for the local populations and tourists.



It is our belief that organising the development of tourism in the RPTD in such a way will result in long-term effects for everyone involved. This allows the destination to gain business opportunities that it otherwise wouldn't as the process of bringing together makes it more attractive for many local and foreign investors. Through its joint brand, it has been gaining visibility, a good reputation and trustworthiness. It is important to know that the destination management is here to serve tourism providers, business partners, visitors and the local population. The local population is communicated with directly or via local government. Communication therewith must be regular and well-considered in order to achieve its purpose.

### Lessons learned

All changes must be embraced and recognised as essential and beneficial for all involved. For this reason, more than 70 workshops were carried out with various tourism stakeholders (hotel owners, caterers, local governments, various associations, the local population, etc.) at the beginning of the RPTD development process to bring home the idea of bringing together tourism activities and establish trust among stakeholders, which is key for liaising and collaboration activities. These workshops were also intended to acquaint the destination management with the diverse interests of various stakeholders in order to observe them insofar as possible and to also engage the local population in the creation of the RPTD. This way, RPTD was more easily embraced by the local population since it was established with their help and their conceptual contributions. The greatest challenge that continues to be faced from time to time is a mindset shift that a guest/tourist is not lost through collaboration and liaising and directing them into another municipality but, on the contrary, all that generates an added value for the destination as a whole.

A brief summary of our key challenges:

- establishing (building) trust among stakeholders
- carrying out more than 70 workshops and engaging all tourism stakeholders
- observing the diverse interests of various stakeholders
- mindset shift – liaising/bringing together ideas.

### Results

The success of the RPTD presented below through key indicators required a clear vision, the image of a desired green future, measurable objectives, feasible measures, a lot of political will and motivated and highly qualified associates building upon natural and cultural heritage with a unique interpretation—telling stories tailored to visitors—through a synergy of partner relationships.



Some qualitative effects are listed first, followed by the quantitative results of the RPTD association.

Qualitative effects: population satisfaction, rural environment development, dispersion of tourists which increases their satisfaction and finding hidden locations and positive economic effects on the entire region. New employment opportunities and reduction of emigration of the population from rural areas to urban centres, preserving the landscape and tradition, etc.

#### TASTES OF ROGLA BRAND

- Destination committed to traditional gastronomy
- **Number of certified products with the quality designation: 239**
- **Number of providers with the quality designation: 38**
- Number of crops, food products with the quality designation: 124
- Number of dishes with the quality designation: 37
- Number of handicrafts and unique and industrial design products with the quality designation: 62
- Number of guided tourist experiences with the quality designation: 15
- Number of culinary events with the quality designation: 1

#### DIGITAL DESTINATION AND PROMOTION

- New destination portal: [www.rogla-pohorje.si](http://www.rogla-pohorje.si)
- Destination booking system
- Destination online store
- Five issues of the Rogla-Pohorje Destination newspaper which serves as a guide for visitors
- New tourist guide Explore, feel, enjoy
- 4 tourist informants
- AR and VR applications
- New photo and video library

#### RESULTS:





Traffic on the ([www.destinacija-rogla.si](http://www.destinacija-rogla.si) and [www.rogla-pohorje.si](http://www.rogla-pohorje.si)) websites between 2017 and 2021:

- **Number of Users: 243,689**
- **Number of Pageviews: 835,599**

NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS/LIKES ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS AT THE END OF 2020:

#### FACEBOOK

- **Rogla-Pohorje FB page: 20473 likes**
- **Okusi Rogle/Tastes of Rogla FB page: 1127 likes**

@roglapohorje INSTAGRAM PROFILE: **2178 followers**

Rogla-Pohorje YOUTUBE channel:

- **more than 320000 views**

#### RDTP HASHTAGS:

#RoglaPohorje #RazisciObcutiUzij (#ExploreFeelEnjoy) #ExploreFeelEnjoy #mojaroglapohorje (#myroglapohorje) #OkusiRogle (#TastesofRogla)

#### DESTINATION IN TERMS OF EU PROJECTS

Number of implemented projects: 12

Number of ongoing projects: 5

Drawn EU funds: € 981,000

#### PURSUING "GREEN"

- 130 accommodation facilities, 3 with a sustainable eco-label
- 6 diverse trips for groups along the RPTD



- 5 diverse experience packages for individuals and 1 family package along the RPTD (“My Slovenia”)
- 8 bicycle rental stations
- numerous sustainable exploration opportunities (10 market cycling trails, 7 mountain biking trails, theme hiking trails, etc.)
- clean and potable water

#### **SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY**

- 14 e-bicycles, 2 rental locations
- 8 bike rental stations (KolesCe system)
- Number of chargers for e-vehicles: 10
- summer bus route (complimentary)

#### **SUSTAINABLE CULTURE AND TRADITION**

- 442 IMPORTANT HISTORIC AND HERITAGE-PROTECTED LANDMARKS
- 21 MUSEUMS
- 2 monuments of national cultural importance
- 6 Destination events
- 10 providers engaged in open houses
- 35 qualified Destination tourist guides

