

EVENT DESCRIPTION SHEET

(To be filled in and uploaded as deliverable in the Portal Grant Management System, at the due date foreseen in the system.)

 Please provide one sheet per event (one event = one workpackage = one lump sum.)

PROJECT	
Participant:	N0.3 – OBCINA ORMOZ (Ormoz)
PIC number:	911144087
Project name and acronym:	[Rural Communities pushing BEYOND COVID-19] — [BEYOND]

EVENT DESCRIPTION	
Event number:	7
Event name:	Event 7/Final event in the Municipality of Ormož, SI
Type:	<p>Day 1 of the event (Wednesday, October 23rd, 2024) was organized as welcoming presentations and a cultural demonstration that takes into account the lessons-learned during the COVID 19 pandemic.</p> <p>Day 2 of the event (Thursday, October 24th, 2024) was organized as a series of site visits to small producers that endured the COVID-19 pandemic (Vegetable Farm Kumer and Puklavac Family Wines) . There was also a site visit to the CSO Ormož (the elderly care facility in the town). The second part of the visit included a visit to the Ormož lagoons along the Drava River as a means to emphasize the importance of cross-border cooperation (b/w Croatia and Slovenia). The cultural assets of the tourism destination “Jeruzalem” were also presented as a means to show how tourism related activities contribute to building community spirit, sense of identity in the community, and create solidarity among citizens from different groups.</p> <p>Day 3 of the event (Friday, October 25th 2024) included the organization of the closing conference. In the week previous to the event, the partners held a project meeting where the final details of the cooperation agreement and final publication (“Citizens’ Guidebook”) were finalized. At the closing conference, the cooperation agreement was signed by all partner representatives. The agreement serves as a means to sustain and build on the project concept over the long-term. Apart from the signing, the final project results were presented to the attendees, the “citizens’ guidebook” was presented and distributed as printed and online copies, and interviews were held with the media (from Croatia and Slovenia). The event ended with a short tour of the Ormož Museum and the Castle of Ormož.</p>
In situ/online:	<i>In-situ</i>
Location:	Slovenia – Municipality of Ormož (Občina Ormož)
Date(s):	September 18 th 2024 – September 20 th 2024
Website(s) (if any):	https://www.ormoz.si/objava/763300
Participants	
Female:	64
Male:	41
Non-binary:	0
From country 1 [Croatia]:	17
From country 2 [Slovenia]:	68
From country 3 [Italy]:	8
From country 4 [Hungary]:	6
From country 5 (Germany)	6
Total number of participants:	105
	From total number of countries: 5
Description	
<i>Provide a short description of the event and its activities.</i>	
<p>The event took place over three days (from October 23rd, 2024 – October 25th, 2024) in the Municipality of Ormož, Slovenia. All activities of the event were held in-situ. The activities were organized in a manner ensuring that the following objectives were achieved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To raise awareness about how local authorities work with citizens and adapt to their needs in times of crisis (i.e. relating to organizing public events and measures that bring citizens together and promote local development COVID-19) To enhance the capacity and understanding of citizens about how to organize actions that build sense of belonging and solidarity in rural communities 	

On Day 1 of the event (Wednesday, October 23rd, 2024), a welcoming conference was organized at the Castle of Ormož in order to introduce the participants to the Municipality of Ormož, and to detail how the municipality has been able to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic (under T7.1. Welcoming presentations and cultural demonstration using COVID-19 measures). The conference began with a presentation of the Municipality of Ormož, which was held by Mrs. Milena Debeljak (director of the town administration) and the Mayor/Župan Mr. Danijel Vrbnjak. Through this presentation, the participants were able to become familiar with the municipality's main characteristics and learn how the town addressed the COVID-19 pandemic. It was emphasized that the actions of civil society organizations, volunteers and citizens during the pandemic ensured that Ormož could remain resilient. After this, Ljudska Univerza Ormož (LUO), which is an adult education institution in Ormož presented its main training approach and programmes, which are centred on the needs of citizens. The presenter, LUO Director Viki Ivanuša, described how online classes were prepared and implemented during the pandemic. During the discussion that followed, the participants described their own situations and mentioned that online learning was mostly less effective than in-situ training. It was agreed though that online learning at least kept education and training actions on track and ensured that there was at least one channel to reach out to learners. In order to create discussion, a short interactive slido survey was implemented in order to determine the best ways to put COVID-19 behind Europe.

After the opening, the participants travelled to the village of Kog, which has developed cultural activities. These activities engage citizens in the community in preserving traditions, cuisine, music and stories from the past. This part began with a traditional musical presentation by TKD Kog. Afterwards the Women's Agricultural Association of Kog (Kmečke žene s Koga), which is made up of women from various backgrounds, demonstrated how they prepare and bake "Prleška gibanica", a Slovenian traditional baked bread. By having the participants take part in the demonstration by participating in the preparation and asking questions during the demo, participants were able to see first-hand how the preservation of cultural heritage contributes to building community and social inclusions. During the Q&A sessions, participants also learnt how such activities contributed greatly in the post-lockdown period of the pandemic to enhancing mental well-being and reinforcing the sense of identity in the community.

Day 2 of the event (Thursday, October 24th 2024) started with a site visit and presentation of Centre for social care for elderly people (CSO Ormož). During the visit, CSO Ormož staff and volunteers demonstrated how they organize social activities (art classes, handicrafts, sports, etc.) for persons residing at the centre in order to ensure that they are engaged with the community. Head nurse **Mrs. Jožica Potočnjak** also described the consequences of the pandemic and how staff at the centre kept residents engaged and contributing to lowering the sense of isolation via specific measures ensuring the health and safety of residents.

After this, two site visits were organized to agricultural producers in the region that produce endemic culinary products (under T7.2. Site visit to small producers regarding their methods to perceive during the COVID-19 pandemic) and a nature walk was organized (T7.3. Nature walk at the Ormož Accumulation Lake to demonstrate solidarity and cross-border cooperation during the Pandemic). During the site visit to Vegetable Farm Kumer (which is known for Ptuj Onion – an endemic product of the area which is a key part of local identity). It was emphasized that due to the community needing fresh produce, they faced fewer challenges than other businesses. Interestingly though, the main manager of the farm **Mr. Jaka Hanželič** explained how the pandemic impacted him personally. During the pandemic, he went from being a medical worker to a manager of a farm in 2021. It was clarified that due to the stress and overworking during the pandemic he resorted to farming as a means to make a living. This provided participants (which included local authorities) insight into the negative consequences of the pandemic on citizens' well-being and shows areas that need more attention in the near future (i.e. the need to address burnout among medical workers).

This visit was followed by the nature walk at the Ormož Lagoons – Ormož Accumulation Lake. It was explained how the Lake was created out of the wastewater from the previous sugar processing plant, which closed roughly 15 years ago. Representatives of the park **Mrs. Ana Vaupotič** explained that by adjusting the eco-infrastructure of the area, the lagoons have become an important bird sanctuary. Concerning the pandemic, it was explained by citizens from Ormož that during the pandemic, this area was considered an essential element where citizens could recuperate mentally and physically due to it being an open natural space. Representatives from Cestica and Ormož explained that by preserving the Drava River Basin in solidarity, both towns have been able to enhance solidarity between citizens in the cross-border zone.

In the second site visit to agricultural producers, participants visited the main winery of Ormož, the Ormož Cellar – Puklavac Family Wines. The purpose of the visit was to show how the winery (and other producers) adjusted to the conditions of the pandemic. It was explained that when the pandemic started, the winery needed to adjust its operations due to not being able to sell wine to restaurants – their main source of revenue. **Mr. Marko Zidarič** explained that due to the lack of demand for its wine, it changed its operations in order to produce pure alcohol, which was used at medical facilities lacking supplies overall during the pandemic. It was emphasized by the representatives of the winery that thanks to taking a common-sense and pragmatic approach to adjusting operations, the winery was able to remain competitive and overcome the challenges of the pandemic.

After this visit, the Municipality of Ormož organized a tour of the "Jeruzalem" area, which is considered a cultural and tourism jewel of Slovenia. A reenactment at the main church - the Church of Sorrows – was held which explained how Jeruzalem came to be, and how the area is a key part of Ormož's cultural identity.

On day 3 of the event (Friday October 25th 2024), the closing ceremony was held (T7.5. Closing conference for the project). As a part of the ceremony, the cooperation agreement was signed by partner representatives, the final results and benefits of the project were presented, and participants were interviewed by media

representatives from Slovenia and Croatia (apart of activity T7.4. Project meeting for representatives of the consortium and interviews with members of the media). The signing of the cooperation agreement details the activities, projects and means in which the partnership will continue to work together after the project ends. In the agreement, two new project ideas were included (to be developed for EU programmes). They were developed as a result of the discussions, workshops and conversations in the previous events. Furthermore, at this event, the final publication (the Citizens' Guidebook) was presented. The guidebook is available in all of the partners languages (Croatian, Slovenian, German, Italian, Hungarian) and in English as printed and online versions. After the closing ceremony ended, a tour of the Ormož museum and the Castle of Ormož was organized which allowed the participants to become further acquainted with the tourism and cultural heritage assets of the Ormož region.

Via this approach to organizing and implementing the event, participants learned:

- How to adjust and use local cultural and tourism assets (e.g. public events) as a means to have citizens remain resilient in times of crisis;
- About methods and approaches that incorporate EU values such as social inclusion, gender mainstreaming, and solidarity; that can be used (relating to tourism, agriculture and cultural heritage) to reinforce a sense of belonging in the community

Furthermore, the conclusion of the **cooperation agreement** at the event's closing ceremony ensured that the partners enhanced their current cooperation beyond the project implementation. The two new project ideas will be further developed by the partners for new EU calls for proposals. The **citizens' guidebook** and media coverage also had a major impact on the public, such that these communication and dissemination tools allow those not directly included in the project access to the project results.

HISTORY OF CHANGES		
VERSION	PUBLICATION DATE	CHANGE
1.0	01.04.2022	Initial version (new MFF).