

LA DALMATIAN ISLANDS PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

The Dalmatian Islands Learning Area (LA) is a mosaic landscape scattered across the Adriatic Sea. Croatia is the newest member of the European Union and still in the process of adopting the Acquis. The country is in the beginning stages of implementing the Common Agricultural Policy's (CAP) Pillar 2 agri-environmental measures. Although the average farm in Croatia is around 2ha, farms in the LA are only about 1,7 ha. These small farms are characterized by diversified production, and they are entrenched with the local tourist economy. HNV farmland landscape provides the setting for tourism, which supports the small-scale HNV farms through providing a market for the farm goods.

It is in this setting that Local Area Group LAG 5, as the national coordinator and one of the three LAG's that cover our LA, started building a community of HNV farming actors in the islands. LAG 5 has used a range of participatory methods for framing and shaping the project. The team has held informal bilateral meetings with stakeholders on most of the islands. Through face to face meetings and virtual group discussions, LAG 5 has linked HNV farming to tourism activity and to the local and regional agriculture knowledge and information systems (AKIS) representatives and also conducted education on the use of agri-environmental measures. The team ensured inclusion of stakeholders through different fairs and social occasions where it showcased HNV farming products and practices from the LA.

In order to address local LA issues and the nascent implementation of agri-environmental measures, the team focused the participatory process on both the local level end users and on the national AKIS. Because HNV farming in the mosaic landscape with a network of dry stone walls produces agri-environmental, economic and safety benefits (the latter in the form of forest fire prevention and improved water collection for fields), the team targeted communication activities to AKIS on multiple scales. It also collaborated with international organizations such as SMILO-Programme for the labelling process for small sustainable islands and has participated in drafting the new Island Act.

To date, the team's major effort is focused on the creation of an engaged network of national actors that will foster the process of landscape restoration and maintenance of the mosaic landscape in the Dalmatian islands. The HNV vision, innovation, and innovation gaps are based around these aims. The participatory approach, initiated at the preparation of the HNV-Link project proposal and currently ongoing, has kick-started the creation of new projects to solve specific problems common to the islands in the LA. According to the participating actors, actions are needed specifically for the development of island-based short value chains, establishment of islander producers' association, enhancement of the pastoral activities, and improvement of the national legislation.

The LA coordinator acts as a knowledge broker to translate the EU norms to the local context of the LA and as an active participant of the HNV farming network who brings in the perspective of the LA's HNV farming actors. It is with this process that LAG 5 has formed a network of scientific researchers, practitioners, farmer associations, AKIS, and the public authorities for the Dalmatian Islands LA.





Table 1 List of key HNV-Link activities which together detail the participatory approach adopted in our LA and its expansion to other islands in Croatia (up to April 2018).

Activity	Number of Participants	Date
Presentation of the project on LA Dalmatian islands	50	June 7, 2016
Meeting of the working group LA Dalmatian islands	8	June 18, 2016
Workshop "mosaic landscapes"	21	August 25, 2016
Promoting the HNV landscape 'Kinookus' for LAG5 area"	130	September 3, 2016
Working meeting on Mljet	7	September 20, 2016
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Linking the islands- MIC conference Vis	5	September 21, 2016 September 24, 2016

Meeting with the Faculty of Economics, Split University	4	October 27, 2017
Network meeting in Ston	15	November 22, 2017
Evaluation meeting on how to bridge the gap between research and practice	17	January 16, 2018
Informal meetings- field work with stakeholders	232	February- March 2017

Links

Baseline assessment process

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-c1g5DFhOX4>

Report from the innovation seminar (national language)

http://www.hnmlink.eu/download/CR_NationalLanguageReport_innovationseminar_Dalmatianislands.pdf

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