**The Final Event in Ormož, Slovenia for EU Project “BEYOND” Emphasizes how Tourism and Cultural Heritage Create a Sense of Belonging and Solidarity in the Community**

From 23.10.2024 to 25.10.2024., the Municipality of Ormož hosted the final event of Project „BEYOND“ („Rural Communities pushing BEYOND COVID-19). . All activities of the event were held in-situ. The activities were organized in a manner ensuring that the following objectives were achieved:

• 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

Day 1 of the event (Wednesday, October 23rd, 2024) was organized as welcoming presentations and a cultural demonstration that takes into account the lessons-learnt during the COVID 19 pandemic.

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 Puklavec 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.

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.

Via the 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.

You can access the documents from the event on the following links:

* Agenda for the event
* Presentations
* Summary of the results of the event (“Ormoz\_Event Description Sheet\_sheet 2” – in English only)
* Photos
* “Citizen Guidebook” (In English and Slovenian)

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