

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

The town of Žabljak and the neighboring area of Durmitor is recognized as one of the most important mountain tourist destinations of Montenegro, with an original and attractive tourist offer characterized by the National Park Durmitor protected by UNESCO, and the ski center Zabljak. This tourist destination, which includes other three municipalities - Žabljak, Plužine and Šavnik, is very important for identity and future development of tourism in the northern part of Montenegro and has the biggest potential to develop into a leading mountain tourist destination in the Balkans, with the programs for summer and wintertime.

The typical natural features and morphology of the area, which includes peaks over 2,000 m, the Tara River, the small lakes in the nearby area, the green mountain plateau at the average height of 1,500 m, offer the needed preconditions for the development of many different tourist offers such as:

- nature-based tourist activities, like bird watching, wildlife observation, geo-tourism;
- soft open air activities like walking, resting in nature, cycling, horse riding and agri-tourism;
- mountain wellness programs in the healing mountain climate, with natural and healthy food and recreational activities for a healthy life;
- open air sports such as hiking, biking, alpine and nordic skiing, snowshoe trekking, water sports;
- adventure sport activities like rafting, climbing, alpinism, ski-touring, canyoning, extreme ski, paragliding;
- social-entertaining programs and events;
- educational and cultural visits aimed at discovering the huge natural and cultural heritage of the area and the ways to properly preserve and take pleasure of it.

In this framework Durmitor's area shows that environmental features and open air sports are the main topics of its attractiveness. In this situation, the social perception of environmental values and of the economic possibilities that they offer, if properly protected and managed, acquires a high centrality for boosting a sport culture, under which a quite large number of micro and small enterprises could flourish.

Despite the huge potential of possible activities, that could allow a nearly all-year long, first level tourist offer capable to attract international tourism, tourist operators and investors, the tourist offer is not yet well developed. The current offer is well developed mostly for regional family tourism, with few international tourism segments mostly related to adventure sports. Although offer on some activities, like rafting, is already well developed, and hiking and biking are achieving a good level thanks to Government efforts, most of the other possibilities are not developed. This is due to lack of tourist services and infrastructures, of a proper enhancement of natural resources and to the low level of consciousness of local population upon the natural wealth of its territory.

Increasing education and skills of local population creating at the same time opportunities of enjoyment of the local territory for tourists through development of an educational and entertainment network would provide a powerful start-up to the full development of nature-based tourism in the area.

The creation of this edu-entertainment, or better "edutainment" network, i.e. combining both education and entertainment in its strategy, should start consolidating the already existing offer and expanding it both from the educational and from the entertainment sides, thus creating the preconditions for developing a large range of local micro and small enterprises operating in the

tourist sector, broadening at the same time the tourist segments attracted by the Durmitor Area and, ultimately, tourist overnights and incomes.

This edu-tainment initiative shall be strongly addressing young travelers and tourists, including school oriented activities, winter sport (ski club, etc.) activities, summer (nature exploring, etc.) activities, etc.

## **2 PROJECT OBJECTIVES**

The objective of this comprehensive cooperation project is to create a network of tourist facilities where it will be possible to link leisure & entertainment to experience & learning focusing on the creation of unexpected situations that allow a pleasant stay, comfortable, interesting, and rich of different activities of choice: the naturalistic, the sportive, the social and the educational ones.

The knots of the network, represented by existing or planned facilities and attraction in the area will be designed on the basis of safety and low environmental and landscape criteria and will allow the naturally based enjoyment. At the same time, facilities will be equipped for sport and outdoor activities as well as for education and training ones.

The implementation of the project will boost the development of all-year round tourist offer in the area, including complex tourist programs based on innovative products.

## **3 SCOPE OF WORK**

In order to successfully develop the project, the following activities are envisaged:

### **TASK 1: NETWORK DESIGN**

In the first phase, the Sustainable Tourism Edu-Entertainment Network shall be duly designed, identifying its fundamental knots, the targeted tourists, the associated tourism development strategy and defining the overall program implementation development.

#### **Activity 1: Knots Identification**

To identify the knots of the edutainment network the existing tourist facilities and the suitable sites will be evaluated to determine the effect on potential usage and the actual profitability of investments. The main factors for the site evaluation will include:

- present activity;
- tourist vocation of the area;
- operational efficiency rate;
- present revenues;
- market proximity;
- physical limitations or constraints;
- access routes and traffic patterns;
- surrounding development;
- potential complementary and competitive facilities.

In this phase all the potential stakeholders and local communities will be identified and engaged to allow a constant consultation with the authorities and the actors of the tourist industry allowing a collaborative approach to all the phases of the development.

#### **Activity 2 Tourist Mix and Development Strategy**

The tourism development program will be developed with the involvement of all the stakeholders and local communities, and once fully agreed it will be adopted for immediate

implementation. This plan will guide the decisions and assist the stakeholders in allocating marketing resources such as money and personnel time. This plan will include:

- the inventory of the territorial resources;
- the overall business objectives, i.e. what is the results to accomplish;
- a business/community profile, i.e. what resources are available;
- the market identification/segmentation, i.e. the specific traveling customers most interested in the product;
- the gap analysis and the program of countermeasures, to be periodically updated;
- the marketing strategies, i.e. the best combination of the 4 Ps (product, price, place, promotion) for the area.

The communities such as Žabljak often attempt to market themselves as tourist destinations without accurate information about their resources (facilities, services, staff), image (projected vs. actual), and how well their customers are satisfied. Without this information, it is difficult to work out effective decisions in the planning process, and to make profitable investments in the field with low risks.

To this purpose territorial resources will be inventoried and analyzed, in terms of their attractiveness, ability to draw visitors, accessibility and availability of services, contribution to environmental and cultural protection, etc., as a key driver that can influence the visitor behavior in terms, for instance, of the type of products and activities they choose, the times of the year they visit, the type of accommodation they stay in, their expenditure patterns, etc.

The tourism resources, to be assessed in terms of quality and availability, should include recreational and entertainment facilities, sport and health care activities, cultural and historic sites, overnight accommodations, restaurants, shopping opportunities, town recreational activities, special events and activities, staff size, and transportation.

Based on the available resources, market segments will be identified as follows:

- taking existing and/or potential customers/visitors (market) and categorizing them into groups with similar preferences referred to as market segments;
- selecting the most promising segments as target markets; and designing marketing strategies, which satisfy their special needs, desires and behavior.

After segments will be identified, target markets should be selected taking into account:

- existing and future sales potential of each segment;
- the amount and strength of competition for each segment;
- the ability to offer a tourist portfolio attractive for each of the identified segments;
- the cost of servicing each segment; and
- the contribution of each segment to accomplish overall business and community objectives.

An in-depth analysis of the gaps and deficiencies affecting the four components (tourism resources, infrastructures, traveler services and host community) connected to the tourism market will be developed. On the basis of a review and further assessment of the current gaps in the tourism system, a multifaceted action program will be developed jointly by the municipal authorities and the tourism stakeholders, to be then periodically updated based on the attained results.

An effective development strategy shall be finally defined, including promotional programs to communicate destination messages to targeted segments of potential visitors. The definition of the program will be carried out through a collaborative approach involving all the relevant

stakeholders and local communities. The feasibility of the different services could be assessed, based on a public/private partnership.

### **Activity 3: Tourism Program Development**

Once the programs will be agreed, all the necessary works and equipments will be identified and eventually designed according to following principles:

- minimize social and environmental impact of tourism development;
- pursue the sustainable use of resources;
- build environmental and cultural awareness and respect;
- provide positive experiences for both visitors and hosts;
- target specifically the youngest segments of the tourism market, both in winter and in summer;
- provide direct financial benefits for conservation;
- provide financial benefits and empowerment for local people;
- raise sensitivity to host countries' political, environmental, and social climate.

### **TASK 2: PILOT KNOT INSTALLATION AND START UP**

Once the programs design will be defined and authorized, the system implementation phase will begin. This activity will be focused on the full development of a physical edutainment knot of the network, aimed at fully realizing a working structure for environmental education and training, able to teach in an entertaining way and to provide skills for full enjoyment of the natural beauties of the area in a sustainable, fun and safe way.

The detailed design of the pilot knot shall be developed in full cooperation with the local stakeholders, under the guidelines of the local and central authorities. All relevant sectors and businesses such as travel, leisure, hospitality, marketing, events, attractions, tour operators and other tourism business operators should be involved.

Sport and nature-based tourism is one of the fastest growing areas of the global travel and tourism industry, especially for the youngest segments. Besides the benefits it offers the youth, sport and nature-based tourism can be favorable for the economy, investment and job creation. The possibilities are endless in all seasons ranging from skiing, paragliding, hiking, rafting, mountain climbing, forest exploring, cultural heritage spots visiting, etc..

While the infrastructure for such activities is developing in the Zabljak area, an overall strategy is needed to develop nature and sport tourism in the area encompassing all its sectors from educational to recreational and extreme sports.

Following the installation and configuration of this Pilot Knot in all its components, the Pilot Service will be started-up in full collaboration with the local stakeholders. Local operators will be trained for system operations and full assistance will be provided in order to validate the initial results.