

SRCE SLOVENIJE - ZGODBA O INOVATIVNEM POVEZOVANJU LJUDI, INTEGRALNO PREPLETANJE PODJETNIŠTVA, TURIZMA IN SAMOOSKRBE

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Povzetek: Srce Slovenije, območje v osrednjem delu Republike Slovenije, predstavlja primerno holističen model trajnostnega razvoja na regionalni ravni, saj zajema različne dimenzije trajnosti: okoljsko, ekonomsko, družbeno in kulturno. Srce Slovenije predstavlja zgodbo inovativnega povezovanja ljudi z integralnim prepletanjem podjetništva, turizma in samooskrbe. Edinstvenost znamke Srce Slovenije je v tem, da izhaja iz potreb lokalnega prostora. Prvotni namen je bil zgraditi skupno identiteto, ki bo temeljila na skupnih vrednotah podeželskega območja vzhodno od glavnega mesta Slovenije. Ker izhaja iz dejanskih potreb prostora in časa, je znamka skozi čas povezala veliko število deležnikov – posameznikov, organizacij, iniciativ in projektov, ki so prinesli konkretne rezultate za vse, ki živijo in ustvarjajo na območju, pa tudi za obiskovalce, ki na območje prihajajo.

Ključne besede: Trajnostni razvoj, mreženje, soustvarjanje, družbene inovacije, Srce Slovenije

THE HEART OF SLOVENIA - A STORY OF INNOVATIVE WAYS OF CONNECTING PEOPLE, INTEGRAL INTERTWINEMENT OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP, TOURISM AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY

Abstract: The Heart of Slovenia, a sub-region in the central part of Slovenia, presents a requisitely holistic model of sustainable development on the regional level, embracing different dimensions of sustainability: environmental, economic, social and cultural. The Heart of Slovenia is presenting itself as a story of innovative ways of connecting people and as integral intertwining of entrepreneurship, tourism and self-sufficiency. The uniqueness of the brand The Heart of Slovenia is that it was originally born from the need of community. Initial impulse was to build a common identity based on shared values of rural areas east of the capital city of Slovenia. It arises from the current needs of space and time as the brand that managed to connect a great number of stakeholders - individuals, organizations, initiatives and projects that bring tangible results for everyone who lives and works in the area but also for visitors from outside the Heart of Slovenia area.

Keywords: Sustainable development, networking, co-creation, social innovation, 'Heart of Slovenia'

1. Introduction

The area in the outskirts of the capital city of Slovenia has a specific position due to being situated in the centre of Slovenia as well as in the vicinity of Ljubljana. On the one hand it is closely connected with a distinctly urban view of country development, while on the other hand it is a traditional rural area with a very different local lifestyle and its own development potentials, among which the vicinity of the capital city is not primarily seen as an advantage.

How to preserve and strengthen the area's own specifics in this ever-more mobile world and to maintain traditions with development projects, but contributing at the same time to improving the quality of life in the area – this is the focal question to which the Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia has been providing answers in cooperation with partners: municipalities, economic institutions and other organisations of this area. Transcending the municipal and interest borders has enabled the establishment of the well-known destination: the Heart of Slovenia, stretching from the Kamnik-Savinja Alps to Dolenjska and from the outskirts of Ljubljana to the municipalities alongside the River Sava. It has also enabled the realisation of numerous development projects within the Local action group The Heart of Slovenia, as well as the establishment of the brand The Heart of Slovenia, which helped many creative individuals, farmers and entrepreneurs to acquire a new tool for a better recognisability on the market.

2. A strategic three-pillar development model

The Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia, as a coordinator of the area, integrally unites entrepreneurship, tourism and self-sufficiency in all projects. These are the fields for which the Development Centre of the Heart of Slovenia, together with established municipal partnerships, acquires resources from different regional, state and European projects. Within 22 transnational projects from 11 different programmes, projects in the Heart of Slovenia have so far been financed in total of 3 million EUR; more than 1.9 million EUR were obtained for the area within LEADER projects. The key criteria of all the projects are the needs of local inhabitants, with the common goal to improve the quality of life. This goal can be realised only by constantly intertwining different fields (tourism, entrepreneurship, self-sufficiency), taking into account natural resources (earth, wood, water, healthy food and energy in the broader sense – even talents and people's energy) and possessing values, especially networking, which is the basis for successful realisation of projects, cooperation and bottom-up operation.

By establishing that the Heart of Slovenia acts for the good of people who live and work in this area, all projects have clearly defined target groups: youth, elderly, entrepreneurs, tourism providers, farmers, local communities. These criteria are closely related to the principles of sustainable development and modern approaches to innovativeness.

3. Innovative approaches to integral connecting

Projects in the Heart of Slovenia are designed according to the needs of place, with available people and within a manageable time frame, which is why the starting pulse is stronger, the purpose of work clearer and the implementation faster. The Heart of Slovenia develops projects of responsible innovativeness with ethical, social and environmental aspect, always integrating the three key pillars. Tourism development is closely connected with entrepreneurship, entrepreneurship with self-sufficiency in the area, while the projects in the field of agriculture development are connected with tourism as well as entrepreneurship. All the projects are oriented towards responsible innovation for the good of people and at the same time preserve the traditions and natural resources of the area. Constant increase in self-sufficiency in the Heart of Slovenia strengthens tourism attractiveness of destination, tourism development enables new entrepreneurial opportunities, and successful companies give back to communities in a way that enables development of other areas of life and work. Integration and cooperation of different local and interest communities is of utmost importance here, particularly municipalities, which are aware of importance and power a larger region can have.

4. Integral cases within the area

The mission of the brand and the Heart of Slovenia's area is the development of space in which all its stakeholders can self-realize and live a quality life. This means designing and implementing programs and projects that touch different levels of human life and activities. Key priorities in The Heart of Slovenia include therefore the development of this the sub- region, which can be at many levels already shown in concrete results.

The Heart of Slovenia established the first caravanning destination in Slovenia and was awarded for being one of the most innovative tourism products in the country (competition Sejalec 2013) with the project "Caravanning in the Heart of Slovenia". A few years before that, it was awarded at the same competition for the tourism product

“Cycling, equestrian and hiking trails of the Posavje hills”. The Heart of Slovenia also prides itself on the award for the most innovative local community, given by the Inco movement. In the past year, the first Slovenian Network of Craftsmen was also established in the area of the Heart of Slovenia, which maintains the cultural heritage as well as strengthens sustainable entrepreneurship and is at the same time a source of development of new business models including network cooperation and social entrepreneurship. Moreover, new ways of connecting food producers were established in the Heart of Slovenia: they supply kindergartens, schools and other customers with local crops. In the area of the Heart of Slovenia, new projects are being developed which strengthen intergenerational cooperation and enable active ageing, hence contributing to a better quality of life from different population segments. Projects tackling sustainable mobility, as well as information and communication, further increase tourism recognisability of remote countryside areas, and thus improve welfare of the entire area.

Šentrupert municipality is one of the most innovative local communities in the area. They are focused on building up energy self-sufficiency, within their local community-and-enterprises and they are building Green development model of Šentrupert municipality. Another good practice is the House of Idea which brought together thirty small-scale enterprises, all basing their activities on wood, into an economic and social ecosystem.

4. Destination and the brand »The Heart of Slovenia«

The Heart of Slovenia is home and aim, area and idea, past and future at the same time. The Heart of Slovenia is home to people living in the heart-shaped area around the geometric centre of Slovenia. The hospitality of people and uniqueness of the area are what visitors find here, as well as new inspirations for holidays and relaxation. The Heart of Slovenia is a place of opportunities for creativity, self-realisation and quality living. The brand “The Heart of Slovenia” belongs to the most visible proofs of creativity. It belongs to people: to those who keep developing it and to those who choose it, as they can rely on its origin, pristineness and quality. The tourism is based on maintaining genuineness. The traditional features in the Heart of Slovenia are closely intertwined with new ways of travelling, living, socialising and adventures with a special feel for nature.

5. Conclusion

The Heart of Slovenia is becoming a region of the future: it is a junction of opportunities for entrepreneurial and ambitious people who find inspirations and energy for the realisation of their ideas in nature. In the Heart of Slovenia, the principles of sustainable development are not merely words on the paper, but a foundation for bringing people together. Here ambition socialises with innovative youth and active ageing, craft skills are intertwined in business plans, and world trends present in local projects. Networking and cooperation are a foundation of integral green development which – as seen in the Heart of Slovenia – allows for new entities to arise which are larger by size but more importantly so by the quality of living, alongside the preservation and careful use of natural resources.

References

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