

Interreg GO!

Governance models for tourism & culture in Interreg

28 March 2025

#Interreg

GOI 2025
NOVA GORICA-GORIZIA

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The objective of the workshop on “*Governance models for tourism & culture in Interreg programmes*” is to explore how Interreg programmes have effectively integrated these themes into programme delivery as well as their strategic goals. Participants will engage with examples highlighting different models of programme governance developed to implement projects in the fields of tourism and culture, examining their long-term impact, sustainability, promotion, capitalisation and legacy of project results. The workshop aims to provide key lessons learned and recommendations for other Interreg programmes across Europe, fostering knowledge exchange and inspiring future synergies and collaboration to enhance tourism through regional growth.

Venue: Botanical Garden, Sežana, Partizanska c. 4, 6210 Sežana, Slovenia

Project visit:

Location: Botanical garden

Address: Partizanska c. 4, 6210 Sežana, Slovenia

Projects to be presented:

- KRAS-CARSO II | Italy-Slovenia
- GeoKarst | Italy-Slovenia
- KRAS-CARSO | Italy-Slovenia
- KRASn`KRŠ | Slovenia-Croatia

The Karst Plateau

The Karst Plateau (Italian Carso, Slovene Kras) is a geological region located across the Province of Trieste (Italy) and South-west Slovenia. Most of the Karst is located in the Slovenian Littoral, covering an area of 429 square kilometres, with a total population of about 19 000 people. The town of Sežana is the centre of the region on the Slovene side of the border. The main rural centres are the settlements of Divača, Dutovlje, and Komen. On the Italian side of the border, significant settlements include Opicina, Duino, and Aurisina.

The most prominent geological feature of this territory are the caves. In Slovenia, these include the Škocjan Caves, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and Grotta Gigante in Italy, the largest show cave in the world. Thanks to the prominent natural features of this territory, this area represents an ideal destination for slow tourism, mainly for hiking, cycling and food tourism. Several Interreg projects have therefore focused on the promotion of a cross-border governance for this tourism destination.

KRAS-CARSO II | Italy-Slovenia - Operation of Strategic Importance (OSI) 2021-2027¹

• Main project objectives

The KRAS-CARSO II project aims at establishing the Kras-Carso European Group for Territorial Cooperation to be dedicated to the management of the Kras-Carso Geopark and cross-border tourism in the area, acting as an institutional actor capable of managing cross-border tourism in the area and the financial management of the Kras-Carso Geopark. At the same time, the project intends to promote the tourism offer of the Karst geopark through the development of a joint tourism product.

The project intends to capitalize on the results of previous projects, namely the *GeoKarst* project (Interreg Italy-Slovenia 2014-2020) and the *Kras-Carso* project (Interreg Italy-Slovenia 2007-2013).

• Key results and lessons learned

The key results achieved so far include:

- Finalization of the Convention and Statute of the European Group for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)

The Lead Partner collaborated with the Partner GAL Carso (Local Action Group Carso) on the Italian side and the Slovenian Ministry of Public Administration to finalize the agreement. The initiative was presented to Slovenian mayors and the Minister for Slovenians Abroad, culminating in a letter of intent signed by mayors on both sides in March 2024 to establish the EGTC Kras-Carso with headquarters in Slovenia.

- Ongoing workings on a sustainable cross-border geopark management structure

The Project Partner Turistica is developing a quality brand for the geopark, analysing tourist flows, and preparing questionnaires for quality label holders.

- Development and management of a joint tourism product

At the European Week of Regions and Cities in Brussels, a joint tourism product for the Interreg SLO-ITA region was presented. Meanwhile, cave management progress was reviewed, and a workshop for cave managers was organized in Škocjan Caves Park. A cross-border professional excursion and training connected Italian and Slovenian providers.

• Ideas for the future

• Description of the collaboration method

Project implementation relies on cooperation between institutions and academia on both sides of the border, as well as on the involvement of local stakeholders. It maintains a collaborative approach in the creation of the management structure, the preparation of joint cross-border products, and the organisation of cross-border events.

The project includes research and scientific bodies as Project Partners. These produce studies and analyses for the development of tourism products. Sustainable products will be created with innovative interpretation methods. In addition, the project activities are promoted with the help of digital tools, namely digitalisation techniques such as 3D digital modelling, virtual reality and interactive exhibitions.

Local stakeholders are involved in the development of a quality label to improve the quality of the tourism offer, through capacity building and cooperation network opportunities, as well as the organisation of cross-border promotional events.

PROJECT DATA

DURATION: 1ST january 2023, ongoing

BUDGET: EUR 3 500 000.00 (ERDF), EUR 4 375 000.00 (TOTAL)

LEAD PARTNER: Območna Razvojna Agencija Krasa In Brkinov Doo (Krasa In Brkinov Maritime Development Agency Sežana, Slovenia)

PROJECT PARTNERS: 12

¹See project website:

<https://www.ita-slo.eu/en/kras-carso-ii>



GeoKarst | Italy-Slovenia - Standard Project 2014-2020²

- **Main project objectives**

The *GeoKarst* project intended to strengthen the capacity of institutional cooperation in the Karst area through involvement of public authorities and key players for the design of joint solutions to common challenges.

- **Key results and lessons learned**

- Establishment of the Karst Geopark

The first key outcome of the project was the Act establishing the cross-border Karst Geopark, representing the basis for the legal and formal constitution of the geopark.

The project contributed to strengthening collaboration and coordination between the two countries in land management, ensuring more efficient resource management, sustainable development and strengthening competitiveness.

- Shared solutions to ensure greater connectivity

Another important achievement of the project

was the creation of two shared solutions to ensure greater connectivity, coherence and coordination in the management of the area. The Cross-Border Management Plan and the pilot solution for creating an innovative interpretation of heritage for more effective governance have increased the intensity of cross-border cooperation.

- **Ideas for the future**

- **Description of the collaboration method**

The overall objective was achieved by strengthening institutional cooperation, stimulating key actors to create joint solutions to address common challenges and increasing the intensity of collaboration in the Karst area through the exchange of experience and the transfer of good practices in the programme area. The Cross-border Management Plan and above-mentioned pilot solution constitute a novel path for the sustainable development of the Carso to the benefit of the target groups.

- **Post-implementation arrangements**

PROJECT DATA

DURATION: 3rd February 2020 to 31st October 2022

BUDGET: EUR 749 981.35 (ERDF), EUR 882 331.00 (TOTAL)

LEAD PARTNER: Občina Sežana (Municipality of Sežana, Slovenia)

PROJECT PARTNERS: 4

²See project website:

<https://2014-2020.ita-slo.eu/geokarst>



KRAS-CARSO | Italy-Slovenia - Strategic project 2007-2013³

The project KRAS-CARSO was carried out within the territory of Karst and aimed at promoting sustainable territorial integration for a more homogenous area of Karst. The project included activities to foster the sustainable management of natural resources and territorial cohesion with joint strategies at a transnational level.

The results of the project included (not exhaustive):

- A feasibility study for the establishment of the Karst Geopark, bringing together nature conservation and improving the quality of life and socio-economic development of the local population.
- The Assessment of the possibility of setting up a dedicated European Group for Territorial Cooperation
- An Integrated strategic plan for the development of the Karst, for the planning of spatial development

- Several Guidelines for the Management of the natural areas of the Karst
- A Plan for coordinated management of visitor centres

The project demonstrated that further integration of the Karst area could be achieved through the establishment of a cross-border geopark as a development tool for the sustainable use of resources. The innovative approach of valuing and interpreting heritage, based on the inclusion, training and networking of local stakeholders, and the promotion of new business ideas, has increased the identification of local stakeholders with the area and increased the awareness and recognition of this shared heritage.

PROJECT DATA

DURATION: 1st January 2010 to 31st March 2014

BUDGET: EUR 2 622 250.00 (ERDF), EUR 3 085 000.00 (total)

LEAD PARTNER: Občina Sežana (Municipality of Sežana, Slovenia)

PROJECT PARTNERS: 16

³See project website:

<https://www.krascarso-carsokras.eu/>



KRASn`KRŠ | Slovenia-Croatia 2014-2020⁴

- **Main project objectives**

The main goal of the KRASn`KRŠ project was to preserve and promote the rich natural and cultural heritage in the newly created cross-border KRASn`KRŠ area between Slovenia and Croatia, a sustainable destination that combines the principles of sustainable tourism and promotes the Karst and its heritage.

- **Key results and lessons learned**

The key results of the project are:

- An increased awareness of karst heritage, which will be reflected in a greater number of visitors to the four heritage areas and their wider hinterlands.
- 4karst and KarTrail, cross-border tourism products in the form of trails to explore the area following different themes
- The SmarTKarst digital navigation platform summarizing, connecting and upgrading the contents of the 4Karst and KarTrail products
- Benefits for locals in terms of new economic opportunities related to tourism

PROJECT DATA

DURATION: 1st September 2017 to 29th February 2020

BUDGET: EUR 1 296 073.43 (ERDF), EUR 1 524 792.27 (total)

LEAD PARTNER: Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Ljubljana, Slovenia)

PROJECT PARTNERS: 7

⁴See project website:

<https://www.smartkarst.eu/en>



