

TESTEAT – CIVIC MONITORING VISIT

INTERVIEW WITH TESTEAT PROJECT MANAGERS AT CIVIFORM (CIVIDALE DEL FRIULI, UD)

(0:00) First of all, what are the main objectives of the Interreg project Italy-Croatia TESTEAT within CIVIFORM?

(0:07) We can say that the CIVIFORM project has four main specific objectives. (0:13) The first one is to map the current enogastronomy heritage and to develop an innovative framework for the integrated tourism offer of the cross-border area Italy and Croatia. (0:25) The second specific objective is to start the socio-economic change by upskilling and reskilling the present and future tourism workforce.

(0:36) The third objective is to valorize the enogastronomy heritage adapted to the modern customer choices and needs to innovate and make more sustainable the Italy-Croatia cross-border area. (0:53) And the fourth objective of our project is to support the policy change and sustainable development of the cross-border area by building guidelines and develop some action plans aimed at enhancing the intangible cross-border heritage. (1:16) This project aims at improving the food and wine tourism offer as a way of a sustainable tourism together with a specific attention to training young people to work in this sector.

(1:26) What was or what were the main issues you had to face? (1:30)

Not so many issues because of course the cross-border cooperation is a challenge and is a very stimulating challenge. (1:44) We can quote one because you know that strong cooperation with our stakeholders. (2:00) Stakeholders working in the catering sector are very difficult to engage because they are very busy.

(2:08) They work when they don't work and so they are really busy and difficult to be engaged.

(2:19) What are the advantages and disadvantages of a cross-border project? (2:29)

The advantages are of course departing from similarities and differences. (2:37) It's always a discovery when you relate to different institutions, different associations and different partners. (2:45) You get to know new good practices to develop in your own context if you want or sometimes you can even influence the offer according to what you are currently doing in your association, in your institution. (3:02) This for sure is a valuable opportunity. (3:09) Another advantage could be the fact that you get to create a stronger network that is transferable to the future.

(3:25) Having a network is the most important thing when you create EU funded projects. (3:33) Also not only with the partners but also with the stakeholders as we said before for the hub activities. (3:41) On the other hand there are some disadvantages.

(3:52) We have different ways of working. (3:56) Sometimes also the language is a barrier since we have to use a third language. (4:05) And so maybe sometimes the communication is not really efficient.

(4:13) When we are expected to provide deliverables that are common, that have to be developed by so different organizations, (4:25) sometimes it's very difficult to find a balance between the different needs and features of the different organizations. (4:33) For example, we were in charge of providing guidelines and also contents and all the material needed for the training of students. (4:45) But the partners involved were to schools but also in organizations with different languages. (5:00) And so we had to find a very flexible way to provide the training for all the students while reaching the same objectives for all. (5:12)

Were there any actions or parts that were changed or modified? (5:19)

No, there were slight modifications. (5:22) There were no big ones so maybe sometimes the numbers. (5:29) We had to change some numbers concerning the number of training developed by each partner but it was very slight changes. (5:37) There were some partners who actually modified a bit more deeply the project but it stayed in its original configuration. (5:51)

And are there any parts of the project which has not started yet and if so, why? (5:59)

Yes, the fourth part is the part which will be developed in the future semester of activities and it's the fourth part of the project. (6:10) We are on time so we expect to develop these last activities in this moment. (6:20) And these are the policy level activities, so the part of the strategy, the transferability plan, the action plans and all this type of multi-level actions (6:33) that require more in-depth analysis of the whole context. (6:41) But everything is in the timeline as we expect it to be. (6:47)

Now let's talk about allocated funds. (6:50) We read that Civiform received about 275,000 euros. (6:55) Are you satisfied or you needed more funds? (6:58)

We are quite satisfied. (7:02) The budget we received was in line with what we expected and so we were able to reach the expected objectives. (7:12)

What method did you follow to divide the funds for the different actions? (7:17)

It was at the beginning, in the phase of the project design. (7:22) The programme gives you different ways of building your budget. (7:30) So we analysed our situation, we decided what was our best. (7:41) We stick to that for the entire time of the project, so what we decided in the beginning is kept throughout the project. (7:49)

One of the objectives of this project is to train some professionals in covering jobs. (7:53) How many people are going to be trained or all have already been trained? (7:58) Are you going to monitor the impact of training on the people trained? If yes, how? (8:05)

I'm going to answer in small pieces. (8:09) Concerning the people that have been trained, we have just finished the training part of the project, (8:17) which we were actually guiding for the entire partnership. (8:21) We are actually now collecting all the data from different partners to see how many present or future tourism workforce they have trained. (8:34) But what I can tell you is that the target value was 45 participants and we went way far beyond that. (8:42) Just to give you an example, Civiform has trained over 30 students just by itself with the student workshops. (8:53) Or the University of Venice has already trained 27 present tourism operators. (9:03) So I'm sure that when we will gather all the data, we will go far beyond 45 and I can say that all the training, upskilling and reskilling was a great success. (9:16) About the impact that you were talking about, I guess that for us it's easy without trainers because we know what they do during the courses that they manage during the school year. (9:33) It's a bit more difficult with students because when students finish their course, it will be difficult to follow them because we have many students. (9:43) So in some ways it's easy, we are going to do that and in some ways it's not. (9:50)

Will the state help develop tourism in this area? Since this is a cross-border project also based on tourism, (9:58) have you thought or are you going to manage an integrated monitoring system in terms of the impact of hospitality and food service facilities? (10:08)

We need a project just for this type of action and it's not possible for us since we are just a school. (10:22) But what I want to say is that we are sure that the project gave some very positive impact. (10:38) Since we put together different stakeholders and it was the first time they took each other together, (10:47) and so some new nets are growing now and so we are sure that the territory will take advantage of this. (11:02) And I want to say that our students, the ones that were trained, but all the ones that were involved will be the future of the tourism area here. (11:20)

What impact will the test state have in the area? Considering this is a border area with Slovenia, do you think this is a valid value? (11:30)

As I was saying before, growing the skills of the curator is very beneficial for the territory and also since we are near the border, (11:45) also for the territory beyond the border. We manage different projects also with Slovenia (11:55) and so after the project, during the project also, we can, without sharing all the knowledge, (12:06) the positive effect of this also with other stakeholders there. And so it's a very positive aspect. (12:16) A Circle, yes, it's a very valuable circle that gets created because we don't have to forget that we are going to create (12:23) it's already active, it will be implemented in the future, the tested online tool, which will be available for everybody (12:35) and it will collect all the main findings of the project. So with the webpage, I'm sure that it will be easier for other stakeholders (12:46) in Slovenia and the nearby area to get to know what we have done for the tourism of the area in general. (12:57) Thank you very much. (12:59)