



Interreg Italy-Croatia 2021-2027 Programme
Priority 4 - Culture and tourism for sustainable development
Special Objective 4.1 - Culture and sustainable tourism

GUSTI - Gastro UpScaled Tourist Itinerary in rural regions of Croatia and Italy

D.1.2.1. Cross-border focus group established

A.1.2.

WP 1





Work Package:	WP1 Comprehensive Analysis
Activity:	A.1.1. Conduct a sustainable gastro-cultural task force and research on the state-of-art of the destinations and quality system labels
Deliverable:	D.1.2.1. Cross-border focus group established
WP Leader:	Regional agency DUNEA – PP2
Responsible partner:	Regional agency DUNEA – PP2
Involved partner:	All partners





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1. Introduction

1.1. Overall objective

Deliverable *D.1.2.1. Cross-border focus group established* represents an important preparatory step toward the development of the *D.1.2.3. Plan for the capitalization of the project TAKE IT SLOW results created*. This activity sets the groundwork for collecting cross-border insights and fostering collaborative inputs building upon the results of the TAKE IT SLOW project, both essential for identifying key opportunities and shaping an effective capitalization plan.

By engaging participants from diverse institutional, professional and territorial backgrounds, the cross-border focus group enables the exchange of perspectives, the identification of shared challenges and the validation of priority themes. The contributions of its members directly inform the structure, content and strategic orientation of the Capitalization Plan.

The Cross-border focus group brings together 37 stakeholders from the participating regions, representing:

- Local public authorities (Municipalities)
- Destination Management Organisations (DMOs)
- NGOs and associations
- Tourism enterprises and sectoral organisations
- Local action groups (LAGs)
- Other public and private stakeholders.

Together, these stakeholders bring complementary expertise, practical knowledge and region-specific insights that ensure the Capitalization Plan will be well-grounded, cross-border oriented and aligned with the principles of sustainable gastro-cultural tourism. Their involvement marks a solid starting point for coordinated cooperation and the effective continuation of project activities.



2. Terms of Reference (ToR)

2.1. Purpose of Cross-border focus group

The primary purpose of the Cross-border focus group is to provide strategic, technical and consultative support for the development of the Capitalization Plan within the GUSTI project. The work of the group builds upon the knowledge, results and experiences generated through the TAKE IT SLOW project.

The Group serves as a structured forum in which experts, practitioners, and representatives of key regional stakeholders jointly discuss, analyze and validate elements essential for strengthening sustainable gastro-cultural tourism in the cross-border area within Croatia and Italy.

More specifically, the Group aims to:

- Ensure that cross-border perspectives are effectively integrated in the preparation of the Capitalization Plan;
- Facilitate the exchange of knowledge, including transferable practices, methodologies and tools developed within TAKE IT SLOW;
- Support partners in approaches to sustainable tourism and gastronomy, ensuring coherence and comparability between regions;
- Provide expert guidance in identifying gaps, opportunities, challenges and strategic priorities;
- Foster ongoing collaboration and networking among institutions, local authorities, DMOs, SMEs, NGOs and other tourism and cultural stakeholders.

By fulfilling this purpose, the focus group contributes to strengthening long-term cooperation and improving the capacity of both regions to design, implement and promote sustainable gastro-cultural tourism models.

2.2. Guiding principles

The work of the Cross-border focus group is guided by the following principles:

- Cross-border cooperation – ensuring balanced participation and exchange between Croatian and Italian stakeholders;
- Inclusiveness – engaging representatives from public authorities, tourism organizations, private sector, civil society;
- Knowledge sharing – promoting exchange of experience, good practices and lessons learned;
- Sustainability – supporting tourism development aligned with environmental, cultural and socio-economic sustainability principles;



- Capitalization – ensuring that results and practices developed within the TAKE IT SLOW project are effectively transferred and further developed within the GUSTI project.

2.3. Scope of the focus group

The Cross-border focus group operates as an advisory and coordination body that supports the technical and strategic development of project activities. Its scope includes:

- Assessment of shared challenges and opportunities within the Italy-Croatia cross-border tourism and gastronomy sectors;
- Review and discussion of existing quality systems, labels and certification schemes, including their applicability and transferability across regions;
- Identification, evaluation and selection of best practices derived from the TAKE IT SLOW project and relevant external sources;
- Contribution to the design and structure of the Capitalization Plan, ensuring that proposed actions are realistic, relevant, and aligned with regional needs;
- Support to cross-border coordination, ensuring that partners develop consistent approaches and coherent outputs;
- Promotion of integrated and sustainable tourism pathways, including alignment with EU, national and regional strategic frameworks;
- Facilitation of stakeholder engagement, ensuring that local actors have a platform for contributing their views and expertise.

The scope includes both strategic and operational dimensions, enabling the focus group to guide, advise and support partners throughout the development of the deliverable.

2.4. Responsibilities of the focus group

Members of the Cross-border focus group are responsible for ensuring active and meaningful participation throughout the process. Their key responsibilities include:

- Participation in scheduled meetings, workshops and consultations convened by project partners;
- Providing expertise and professional input related to sustainable tourism, gastronomy, cultural heritage, destination management, and other relevant fields;
- Reviewing project findings, analyses and draft sections of the Capitalization Plan to ensure accuracy, relevance and cross-border coherence;
- Sharing relevant data, knowledge, experiences and insights, including identified challenges, successful practices, local initiatives and stakeholder needs;



- Supporting the identification of transferable tools, methodologies and solutions developed under TAKE IT SLOW or similar initiatives;
- Supporting dissemination, where relevant, by promoting project findings and ensuring that stakeholders in their regions remain informed and engaged;
- Ensuring continuity of involvement throughout the development of the Capitalization Plan.

Members participate on a voluntary basis, representing their institutions or areas of expertise, and contribute to a collaborative, open and constructive working environment.

2.5. Expected outcomes

The work of the Cross-border focus group is expected to result in several concrete outputs and benefits, including:

- Jointly defined priorities for the Capitalization Plan, reflecting cross-border needs, opportunities and strategic directions;
- Recommendations for action, including proposed measures, tools and collaboration mechanisms to strengthen sustainable gastro-cultural tourism;
- Identification of transferable practices and methodologies useful for the implementation of the Capitalization Plan and future cooperation initiatives;
- Creation of a cross-border knowledge base, including shared insights, analyses, stakeholder inputs and practical examples;
- Strengthened cross-border cooperation, fostering long-term collaboration between participating institutions and regions;
- Improved capacity of partners and stakeholders to design, manage and promote sustainable gastro-cultural tourism initiatives.

These outcomes will support the development of a robust and actionable Capitalization Plan, contributing to the continuity, visibility and long-term impact of the TAKE IT SLOW project.



3. Methodology

The establishment and operation of the Cross-border focus group were guided by a structured methodological approach aimed at ensuring balanced representation of stakeholders, effective knowledge exchange and meaningful contribution to the analytical work carried out within A.1.2. of the GUSTI project.

The methodology applied consisted of several key steps:

- Stakeholder mapping and identification

Project partners conducted an initial mapping of relevant stakeholders within their respective regions, identifying institutions and organizations involved in tourism development, gastronomy, cultural heritage, rural development and destination management. Particular attention was given to actors with practical experience in sustainable tourism initiatives and quality certification systems.

- Nomination and selection of members

Based on the stakeholder mapping, project partners proposed potential members of the Cross-border focus group. The selection process aimed to ensure a balanced representation of sectors, including public authorities, tourism organizations, private sector actors, NGOs and local action groups. Expertise, institutional relevance and willingness to participate were considered key criteria for inclusion.

- Invitation and confirmation of participation

Selected stakeholders were formally invited to participate in the focus group and were informed about the objectives, scope and expected contributions. Participation was confirmed on a voluntary basis, with members agreeing to contribute their knowledge and expertise to the project activities.

- Cross-border coordination

The establishment process was coordinated among partners to ensure that the focus group reflects the cross-border nature of the project and includes representatives from both participating countries. This coordination also ensured consistency in stakeholder engagement across regions.

- Consultative working approach

The focus group operates as a consultative platform supporting the implementation of A.1.2. activities. Its members contribute through meetings, consultations and feedback on project outputs, particularly in relation to the analysis of destinations, quality systems and the development of the Capitalization Plan.



Through this methodology, the GUSTI project ensures that the Cross-border focus group functions as a structured and inclusive platform for stakeholder participation, contributing to the quality, relevance and cross-border dimension of the Capitalization Plan.

The applied methodology ensured transparency, balanced representation of stakeholders and a structured process for establishing the cross-border focus group in line with the objectives of Activity A.1.2.

4. Establishment of the Cross-border focus group

The establishment of the Cross-border focus group was coordinated by the Regional Development Agency Dubrovnik-Neretva County – DUNEA (WP Leader) in cooperation with all involved project partners. It included the identification, selection and confirmation of relevant stakeholders across Croatia and Italy, representing institutions and organisations involved in tourism development, gastronomy, cultural heritage, destination management, and sustainable rural development. Partners jointly ensured balanced representation from public, private and civil society sectors.

A total of 37 members were appointed to the focus group across the three participating partner regions. The group includes representatives from:

- Local and regional public authorities
- Destination management organisations (DMOs) and tourist boards
- NGOs and community-based organisations
- Tourism enterprises and sectoral associations
- Local Action Groups (LAGs)
- Educational and cultural institutions
- Other relevant stakeholders in the field of sustainable tourism and gastronomy.

The establishment was conducted through coordinated communication among partners, during which potential members were invited to participate, informed of the Group's objectives and responsibilities, and asked to confirm their willingness to contribute to the process. All partners ensured that nominations reflected expertise, geographical coverage and sectoral relevance.

Following the confirmation of members, the Group was officially constituted. Partners agreed on the Terms of Reference (ToR), which outline the purpose, scope, responsibilities and expected outcomes of the focus group. The focus group is therefore formally recognized as established and operational, and its members are actively contributing to the development of the Capitalization Plan through



consultations, provision of expert insights, and participation in collaborative activities coordinated within the project.

The composition of the Cross-border focus group reflects the objective of ensuring a balanced representation of key stakeholders involved in sustainable tourism, gastronomy and rural development across the participating regions.

The members represent institutions and organisations from both the public and private sectors, as well as civil society and tourism-related organisations.

The table below presents an overview of the stakeholder structure within the focus group.

Stakeholder category	Type of institutions / organisations represented
Public authorities	Local and regional administrations involved in tourism development and rural policy
Tourism organizations	Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), tourist boards and tourism promotion bodies
Private sector	Tourism enterprises, gastronomy sector representatives and tourism-related businesses
Civil society organisations	NGOs, cultural organisations and community-based associations
Rural development actors	Local Action Groups (LAGs) and organisations involved in rural and territorial development
Cultural and educational institutions	Organisations active in cultural heritage promotion, research and knowledge transfer

Following the establishment of the Cross-border focus group, project partners organized a series of focus group meetings in order to introduce the objectives and working framework of the Group and to engage stakeholders in the capitalization process.

Each partner first organized an internal focus group meeting with stakeholders from their respective region. During these meetings, participants discussed key topics related to the capitalization of the TAKE IT SLOW project results, opportunities for strengthening sustainable gastro-cultural tourism, and the transferability of good practices across the Italy–Croatia cross-border area.

The process concluded with a joint Cross-border focus group meeting involving all partners and selected stakeholders, where the findings from the internal meetings were presented and discussed. These meetings confirmed stakeholder interest and commitment to contribute to the capitalization of the TAKE IT SLOW project results. The detailed documentation of these meetings is provided in Deliverable D.1.2.2.



5. Cross-border focus group composition

5.1. Regional Development Agency Dubrovnik Neretva County – DUNEA

  Co-funded by the European Union Italy – Croatia  GUSTI									
Cross-border focus group Regional Development Agency Dubrovnik Neretva County - DUNEA (PP2)									
Nº	Stakeholder	Type of stakeholder	Address	City	Country	Web	Name and Surname	Contact person e-mail	Function of the person
1	Municipality of Ston	Public organisation	Trg kralja Tomislava 1	20230 Ston, Pelješac	Croatia	https://opcinaston.hr/	Ivana Vlahušić	opcina.ston@du.t-com.hr	representative
2	Tourist Board of Ston	Public organisation	Gundulićeva poljana 1	20230 Ston, Pelješac	Croatia	https://www.ston.hr/?l=en	Fani Slade	tzston@gmail.com	director
3	Development agency of Ston - RAST	Public organisation	Trg kralja Tomislava 1	20230 Ston, Pelješac	Croatia	https://www.ra-rast.hr/rast-pocetna/	Lora Bušković	info@ra-rast.hr	director
4	Križ Winery	Private organisation	Prizdrina 10	20244 Potomje	Croatia	https://vinarijakriz.com/en/	Marijeta Čalić	vinarija.kriz@gmail.com	co-owner
5	Republic d.o.o.	Private organisation	Poljana 2	22000 Šibenik	Croatia	https://republic.com.hr/	Marko Barišić	ured@republic.com.hr	director
6	Biotechnicon Entrepreneurial Center Ltd.	Private organisation	Hrvatskih iseljenika 30	21000 Split	Croatia	https://biotechnicon.hr/	Ana Marušić Lisac	marusic@biotechnicon.hr	director
7	FLAG Šabakun	NGO	Vukovarska ulica 19/2	20000 Dubrovnik	Croatia	https://flagsabakun.hr/	Mato Oberan	flagsabakun@gmail.com	director
8	Fuzija d.o.o.	Private organisation	Boljenovići 15	20230 Ston, Boljenovići	Croatia	n/a	Franica Miloš	franica.fuzija@gmail.com	director



5.2. Emilia-Romagna Region

Nº	Stakeholder name	Type of stakeholder	Address	City	Country	Web	Name and Surname	Contact person e-mail	Function of the person
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; gap: 10px;"> Co-funded by the European Union </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; gap: 10px; margin-top: 5px;"> Italy – Croatia </div>									
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>Cross-border focus group</p> <p>Emilia-Romagna Region (PP3)</p> </div>									
1	Kaleidon srl	Private sector - Tourism and Communication Enterprise	via Dante Alighieri 12	47921 Rimini	Italy	www.kaleidon.it	Montespini Barbara	barbara.montespini@kaleidon.it	Tourism Professional
2	Municipality of Santarcangelo di Romagna	Local public authority	piazza Ganganelli, 1	47822 Santarcangelo di Romagna	Italy	Comune di Santarcangelo di Romagna	Torsani Davide	d.torsani@comune.santarcangelo.rn.it	Manager/Director
3	Tourism Initiatives	Private sector - Tourism and Communication Enterprise	via Darsena 178	44122 Ferrara	Italy	www.100cities.it	Dell'Anna Barbara	barbara@iniziativeturistiche.com	Project Assistant
4	Confesercenti Rimini	Private sector - Commerce and Tourism	via Clementini 31	47921 Rimini	Italy	CONFESERCENTI Provincia di Rimini	Berlini Massimo	m.berlini@confesercentirimini.it	Manager/Director
5	Pro Loco – IAT	Non-profit organizations working with local public authority to promote and enhance the territory	via C. Battisti 5	47822 Santarcangelo di Romagna	Italy	Pro Loco Santarcangelo di Romagna	Pro Loco – IAT	iat@comune.santarcangelo.rn.it info@prolocosantarcangelo.it	Office manager
6	Destinazione turistica (tourist destination) "Romagna"	Public sector	P.le Fellini n.3 (presso APT Servizi srl)	47921 Rimini	Italy	https://www.visitromagna.it/en	Chiara Astolfi	Chiara.Astolfi@regione.emilia-romagna.it	Director
7	GAL (Gruppi di Azione Locale/Local Action Groups) "L'Altra Romagna"	Public and Private sector - Development of the rural area to which they refer	Viale Roma 24	47027 Sarsina (FC)	Italy	https://www.altraromagna.it/en/	Mauro Pazzaglia Bruno Biserni	direzione@altraromagna.net	Director President
8	SNAI (Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne/National Strategy for Internal Areas)"Appennino Forlivese e Cesenate" - Municipality of Civitella di Romagna (1)	Public sector - National policy that aims to counteract the marginalization and phenomena of demographic decline typical of the internal areas of our country. 9 Municipalities are part of the SNAI and the Lead Partner is the Municipality of Civitella di Romagna	Viale Roma, 19	47012 Civitella di Romagna (FC)	Italy	https://www.comune.civitella-di-romagna.fc.it/servizi/notizie/notizie_e_homepage.aspx	Claudio Milandri	sindaco@comune.civitella-di-romagna.fc.it	President and Mayor



9	SNAI, Municipality of Santa Sofia (4)	Local public authority	Piazza Matteotti, 1	47018 Santa Sofia (FC)	Italy	Comune di Santa Sofia	Ilaria Marianini	sindaco@comune.santa-sofia.fc.it	Mayor
10	SNAI, Municipality of Bagno di Romagna (2)	Local public authority	Via Verdi 4	47021 Bagno di Romagna (FC)	Italy	Comune di Bagno di Romagna - Portale Istituzionale	Mattia Lusini	mattia.lusini@studio.unibo.it	Councillor for Tourism Development - Youth and Sport
11	SNAI, Municipality of Galeata (5)	Local public authority	Via Castellucci, 1	47010 Galeata (FC)	Italy	Comune di Galeata	Francesca Pondini	sindaco@comune.galeata.fc.it	Mayor
12	SNAI, Municipality of Verghereto (3)	Local public authority	Via Caduti d'Ungheria 11	47028 Verghereto (FC)	Italy	Comune di Verghereto - Portale Istituzionale	Enrico Salvi	sindaco@comune.verghereto.fc.it	Mayor
13	SNAI, Municipality of Premilcuore (6)	Local public authority	Piazza dei Caduti 14	47010 Premilcuore (FC)	Italy	Comune di Premilcuore	Sauro Baruffi	sindaco@comune.premilcuore.fc.it	Mayor
14	SNAI, Municipality of Portico e San Benedetto (7)	Local public authority	Piazza G. Marconi 3,	47010 Portico e San Benedetto (FC)	Italy	Comune di Portico e San Benedetto	Maurizio Monti	maurizio.monti@comune.portico-e-san-benedetto.fc.it	Mayor
15	SNAI, Municipality of Rocca San Casciano (8)	Local public authority	Piazza Tassinari n. 15	47017 Rocca San Casciano (FC)	Italy	Comune di Rocca San Casciano	Marco Valenti	marco.valenti@comune.roccasancasciano.fc.it	Mayor
16	SNAI, Municipality of Tredozio (9)	Local public authority	Via dei Martiri, 1	47019 Tredozio (FC)	Italy	Comune di Tredozio	Giovanni Ravagli Rossi Milena	sindaco@comune.tredozio.fc.it	Mayor Councillor for Budget and Staff
17	Territorial Marketing Manager	Private sector	Via San Giovanni – Basino, 41 – Località Cusercoli	47012 Civitella di Romagna (FC)	Italy	Fattorie Faggioli	Fausto Faggioli	ff@fattoriefaggioli.it	Manager
18	Strada dei Vini e Sapori FC/Wine and Flavours Route of the Hills of Forlì and Cesena	Public and Private sector	Piazza della Libertà, 9C	47032 Bertinoro	Italy	Strada dei Vini e dei Sapori dei Colli di Forlì e Cesena	Federico Facciani	info@lacas.it info@stradavinisaporifc.it	Manager
19	UNPLI Emilia-Romagna APS/Comitato Provinciale Forlì-Cesena	Non-profit organizations working with local public authority to promote and enhance the territory	Via G. B. Melloni 6	40066 Pieve di Cento (BO)	Italy	Homepage	Maximiliano Falerni Atos Mazzoni	presidente@prolocoemiliaromagna.it atosmazzoni@libero.it unpli-forlicesena@libero.it	Regional President Forlì-Cesena President (County)



5.3. Apulian Public Theatre – Regional Consortium for Arts and Culture

Cross-border focus group									
Puglia Culture (PP4)									
		  Co-funded by the European Union Italy - Croatia 							
Nº	Stakeholder name	Type of stakeholder	Address	City	Country	Web	Name and Surname	Contact person e-mail	Function of the person
1	Municipality of Fasano	Local public authority	Piazza Ciaia	Fasano	Italy	https://comune.fasano.br.it/	Concetta Boggia	concettaboggia@comune.fasano.br.it	Tourist Office
2	SOC. COOP. GAIA ENVIRONMENTAL TOURS EDUCATION AND EVENTS	Tourism Enterprises – private sector	Viale Francesco Crispil, 58	OSTUNI (BR)	Italy	https://www.coopgaiatours.it/	MARIA FRANCA MANGANO	MARI.FRA211@GMAIL.COM	Legal Representative
3	FOR PLAY SRL	sustainable mobility, communication, tourism Enterprises – private sector	Corso Giuseppe Mazzini, 141	OSTUNI (BR)	Italy	https://www.forplaysrl.com/	PAOLA BICCIATO	forplaysrl@gmail.com	Legal Representative
4	MADERA BIKE TOUR	Tourism Enterprises – private sector	via Marco Pacuvio, 5	Brindisi	Italy	https://maderabike.com/en/	Daniele Pomes	info@maderabike.com	Legal Representative
5	MASSERIA SAN LORENZO RESORT srl	Tourism Enterprises – private sector	Contrada San Pietro, 5	Fasano	Italy	https://www.masseriasanlorenzoresort.com/	Donato Palasciano	INFO@MASSERIASANLORENZORESORT.COM	Legal Representative
6	Rete di Imprese Terredifasano.net	Business Network	Contrada Gravinella n. 93.	Fasano	Italy	n/a	Angelo Recchia	masseriafragnale@gmail.com	Representative of the Network
7	Villa Rosato	Tourism Enterprises – private sector	Viale del Leccio sn	Fasano	Italy	https://www.villarosatoselva.com/home	Manuela Rosato	info@villarosatoselva.com	General Manager
8	Ente Parco Dune Costiere	Public Body - Natural Heritage Management	Piazza della Libertà	Ostuni	Italy	https://www.parcodunecostiere.org/	Annarita Angelini	info@parcodunecostiere.org	President Park Authority
9	Centro Ippico Parco di Mare	Association	C.da Ottava, sn	Montalbano di Fasano (BR)	Italy	https://www.parcodimare.com/it/	Quirico Santoro	parcodimare@libero.it	General Manager
10	Masseria Mozzone	Tourism Enterprises – private sector	C. da Mozzone	Montalbano di Fasano (BR)	Italy	https://masseriamozzone.it/	Floriana Fanizza	info@masseriamozzone.it	General Manager



6. Summary

Deliverable *D.1.2.1. Cross-border focus group established* represents an important milestone in the implementation of A.1.2 of the GUSTI project.

Through this deliverable, a Cross-border focus group composed of 37 members from three partner regions in Croatia and Italy has been formally established. The group brings together representatives of public authorities, tourism organizations, private sector actors, NGOs and other relevant members involved in sustainable tourism, gastronomy and cultural heritage.

The focus group serves as a structured platform for engagement and cross-border dialogue of the members, ensuring that the analytical work supporting the preparation of the Capitalization Plan is informed by expert knowledge, regional experience and practical insights from the participating territories. The group directly contributes to the capitalization of knowledge and results generated by the TAKE IT SLOW project, supporting their further use and transfer within the framework of the GUSTI project and strengthening the basis for future cross-border cooperation in sustainable gastro-cultural tourism.

The adoption of the Terms of Reference, the appointment of relevant focus group members and the organization of focus group meetings coordinated by involved project partners confirm that the Cross-border focus group has been formally established and convened within the framework of Activity A.1.2 and is actively supporting the preparation of the Capitalization Plan.

