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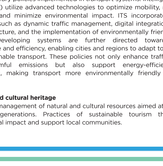
IN4BLUE NEWSLETTER 01 “Green and Blue Potentials in Zadar County”

As part of the IN4BLUE project, the activity “Mapping Business Ecosystems, Green Technologies, and Measuring Competency Levels” included the sub-activity of mapping (analysis) business ecosystems and green technologies in the Zadar County area, focusing on the blue economy sector, with an emphasis on coastal tourism, maritime transport, and creative industries. Data on the state of business ecosystems and green technologies in the blue economy sector were collected through secondary and primary research. The mapping identified 15 business solutions implementing green technological practices. Generally speaking, the concepts applied within business ecosystems can be categorized into the following groups:

1. Sustainability and Environmental Protection
This category encompasses business ecosystems where sustainable development is focused on the green economy, reducing environmental impact, and promoting environmentally friendly mobility. These business ecosystems operate under policies that regulate environmental protection and ensure the preservation of natural resources. Additionally, facilities meeting high ecological standards for managing coastal areas are awarded corresponding certifications.

2. Marine and Coastal Ecosystems Management
This category includes business ecosystems that hold international quality certifications for clean beaches and sustainable coastal area management (Blue Flag and TYHA Clean Marina Accreditation). The focus is on preserving marine and coastal ecosystems through sustainable practices.



3. Sustainable Development and Smart Management
This category encompasses a holistic approach to development that balances economic, social, and environmental needs. Business ecosystems utilize technologies and innovative solutions for efficient resource and operations management. The focus is on recycling (reuse) and the smart utilization of resources such as desalinated seawater.

4. Transport and Infrastructure
Safety standards, energy efficiency, and environmental protection are key aspects of contemporary policies implemented in transport systems. Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) utilize advanced technologies to optimize mobility, reduce traffic congestion, and minimize environmental impact. ITS incorporates innovative approaches such as dynamic traffic management, digital integration of vehicles and infrastructure, and the implementation of environmentally friendly transport solutions. Developing systems are further directed toward improving infrastructure and efficiency, enabling cities and regions to adapt to the needs of future sustainable transport. These solutions not only enhance traffic safety and reduce harmful emissions but also support energy-efficient resource management, making transport more environmentally friendly and socially responsible.

5. Natural and cultural heritage
Sustainable management of natural and cultural resources aimed at preservation for future generations. Practices of sustainable tourism that minimize environmental impact and support local communities.

Types of Innovations Applied in Business Ecosystems

Considering the types of innovation, 7 business model innovations, 1 process innovation, and 8 technological innovations have been identified. Business model innovation refers to changes in the way an organization creates, delivers, and retains value for its customers. This type of innovation often includes redefining core aspects of the business, such as the target market or distribution channels. The key value of business model innovation lies in its ability to identify new revenue sources, reduce costs, and improve the customer experience. Process innovation focuses on optimizing the organization’s internal activities to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and improve quality. This refers to the existence of systems for waste reduction and maximizing productivity. Process innovation often results in faster delivery times, better resource utilization, and improved compliance with regulatory standards. Technological innovation entails the development and implementation of new technologies that transform the way an organization operates. This refers to the application of renewable energy sources. Considering the sector, business ecosystems predominantly encompass several activities: tourism, entrepreneurship, and gastronomy (n=4), while individual sectors are less represented.

Organization of an Event with Stakeholders: Panel Discussion and Workshop
Subsequently, an event with stakeholders was organized: a panel discussion and workshop titled “Green and Blue Potentials in Zadar County.” The goal of this event was to *raise awareness* among participants about opportunities and the current state of the blue economy and related sectors in Zadar County, *analyze* the specific needs of stakeholders and potential solutions, and exchange knowledge and experiences.
The panel discussion and workshop focused on key challenges, needs, and development opportunities in sectors associated with sustainable resource management, reducing environmental impact, and innovations in areas such as tourism, maritime transport, fisheries, aquaculture, energy efficiency, and environmental protection. Discussions also included sustainable agriculture and the creative and service sectors, which are closely connected to the blue economy.

The event was attended by stakeholders from the private and public sectors, as well as a representatives from NGO and the academic sector. Through a workshop and participatory approach, the present stakeholders shared their own experiences and examples of good practice in areas covered by the blue economy, and also had the opportunity to network their initiatives and share ideas for further project activities through the following topics: **Solutions for renewable energy sources, Technologies for water conservation, Innovations in waste management, Environmentally friendly transport, Use of sustainable building materials and smart technologies.**

The main conclusions of the panel discussion and workshop are as follows:

1. The importance of Sustainable Development through Innovation – The workshop highlighted how various projects, such as the use of green technologies and renewable energy sources (solar panels, bioballs, hybrid engines), contribute to sustainable business practices and reducing the ecological footprint. Participants emphasized the importance of adopting sustainable practices in different sectors, including aquaculture, maritime transport, and agriculture.
2. The Importance of Interregional Cooperation and Knowledge Transfer – Interregional cooperation can enhance the capacity of less developed regions to implement innovations in the blue economy. Knowledge and experience sharing between developed and less developed regions is crucial for accelerating sustainable development and fostering smart specialization.
3. Technological Innovations in Transport – The adoption of environmentally friendly solutions in transport, such as green hydrogen-powered ships and cold ironing technology for powering ships in ports, represents a significant step toward reducing emissions and pollution in the maritime sector. These projects have the potential for broader application and can set future standards for sustainable transport.
4. The Use of Digital Technologies to Optimize Resources – Digitalization in administration, such as utilizing digital paperwork and data management tools, enables reduced paper consumption and increased operational efficiency. Additionally, the challenge of a lack of companies for the purchase of old paper needs to be addressed to improve recycling efficiency.
5. The Role of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Sustainable Development – The active involvement of SMEs in innovation projects, such as olive processing into compost and the production of hybrid tug engines, demonstrates how small businesses can play a key role in green technologies and sustainable practices. SMEs are essential for implementing local innovations with broader ecological and economic impact.
6. The Need for Further Collaboration and Experience Sharing Across Different Sectors – Collaboration between the public, private, and academic sectors is essential for the success of projects in the blue and green economy. Through networking, knowledge sharing, and joint projects, it is possible to achieve greater impact and sustainable growth.

The IN4BLUE project is being implemented under the *Interreg Italy – Croatia 2021-2027* program, starting from March 1, 2024, and will run until August 31, 2026. The leading partner of the project is the Istrian Development Agency – IDA Ltd., while the INOVAcija Institution participates as a project partner, along with 4 other partners from the Adriatic regions of Italy and Croatia. The total budget of the project is €1,390,779.00, with the value of the project for the INOVAcija Institution amounting to €183,000.00. The project is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund with a support intensity of 80%. IN4BLUE aims to build a cross-border systemic support network for key development stakeholders to strengthen the skills and capacities of local actors, enabling them to become part of the digital and green transition activities, creating a positive synergy effect on employment, innovation, resilience, and sustainable competitiveness within the Adriatic region.

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