

Ljubljana, Slovenia

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The INTERREG IV B MED project SOSTENUTO was implemented between 2009 and 2012. It focused on bottom-up urban revitalisation of the inner-city district Tabor in connection with innovative cultural events, greening and gardening activities. Local stakeholders and residents have joined forces through cooperation and networking to improve social cohesion, quality of life and future perspectives of their neighbourhood. The project is a good example of strong local efforts to make a difference in current urban development practices in Ljubljana.

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SOSTENUTO: Economic and social innovations in the field of culture and creation activities, for bottom-up revitalisation of the inner-city Tabor district in Ljubljana (Slovenia)

SOSTENUTO project has used transnational cooperation and networking as the principal method to support different partners, local stakeholders and inhabitants from the Mediterranean area to participate in implementation of innovative cultural and creative activities in their cities and regions. At the same time project partners at the local level encourage involvement of different institutions, social groups and individuals to enhance economic and social cohesion, sustainability and quality of life for local residents. The project was implemented between 2009-2012 (36 months) by seven partners from EU countries in the Mediterranean area (Spain, France, Italy, and Slovenia) and one IPA Adriatic country (Montenegro) with the support of ERDF (1.2 mil EUR), IPA Adriatic and matching local funds. It was supported under the INTERREG IV B MED programme which runs from 2007-2013.

The project partner from Slovenia was the BUNKER Institute from Ljubljana, a non-profit organisation for the realisation and organisation of cultural events. The project was implemented in Ljubljana inner-city district Tabor in cooperation with local stakeholders and residents and other citizens of Ljubljana, as an example of a local non-monetary system enabling exchange of know-how, services and local competences in urban revitalisation activities. Innovative cultural events and activities were organized – workshops, festival, art performances, sport competitions, etc., focusing particularly on urban gardening and greening of streets, parks, abandoned sites and other public spaces in the neighbourhood (Garden by the Way). These activities have resulted in establishment of the *Tabor Cultural Quarter* in March 2011 as a non-profit association based on long-term partnership with cultural institutions (museums, galleries, cinemas, theatres, etc.) and other non-profit organisations located or active in the neighbourhood for organisation and implementation of diverse cultural events and activities in future.

In Ljubljana all these activities have contributed to the bottom-up urban revitalisation of the local neighbourhood with the help of local residents of Tabor district and other citizens in Ljubljana. In this sense the project has been a good example of multi-level cooperation and networking and provides a role model of integrated approach involving social inclusion, local empowerment and participation in improving the quality of urban life.

Ljubljana, Slovenia – Journalistic account

SOSTENUTO: Economic and social innovations in the field of culture and creation activities

How to reinforce the cultural sector's innovation capacity in the Mediterranean area? How to accompany its transition towards new economic and social models?

The INTERREG IV B MED 2007-2013 SOSTENUTO project has used transnational **cooperation and networking** as the principal method to support different partners, local stakeholders and inhabitants from the Mediterranean (MED) area to participate in implementation of innovative cultural and creative activities in their cities and regions. At the same time project partners at the local level have managed to improve involvement and active participation of different institutions, social groups and individuals in order to enhance economic and social cohesion, sustainability and quality of life for the local population. The SOSTENUTO project represents a collection of good practices involving diverse local experimentations of inter-connections between culture, economy, social issues and democracy in the MED area.

The aim of the SOSTENUTO project is to reinforce the competitiveness and capacities of economic and social innovation from the cultural and creative sector by accompanying transformation towards new economic and social models. This encourages the policy and decision-makers and the funding bodies to take into account the economic and social potentials as well as the capacities for innovation of the cultural sector, enabling transferability and promoting dissemination within the MED area and beyond.

The SOSTENUTO project is implemented by seven partners from four EU countries in the Mediterranean area (Spain, France, Italy, and Slovenia) and one IPA Adriatic country (Montenegro). Benefiting from the experience of their own networks, the Lead Partner AMI - *Aide aux Musiques Innovatrices* from Marseille, and *Relais Culture Europe* from Paris mobilised partners from the MED area most capable of meeting the objectives of SOSTENUTO and launched the experiments designed to stimulate cultural and creative activities to improve local economies and community cohesion: CITEMA from Toscana and ZUNINO from Liguria (Italy), University of Valencia (Spain), Bunker from Ljubljana (Slovenia) and Exeditio from Kotor (Montenegro). The project focuses more specifically on the innovative methods of organisation and management of cultural and creative activities that are tested within four laboratories (LABS) of experimentation:

- (i) incubator (AMI, France),
- (ii) cluster (CITEMA, Italy),
- (iii) local exchange trading system (BUNKER, Slovenia) and
- (iv) territorial governance (EXPEDITIO, Montenegro and ZUNINO & Partners, Italy).

The University of Valencia (Spain) is responsible for capitalising these experiences, and modelling and evaluating their transferability. The dissemination work will enable diffusion of results and transferability and the valorisation of new appropriate practices, through on-line capitalisation, two transnational conferences (Ljubljana, Valencia) and a Green Book. This is all managed by *Relais Culture Europe* together with AMI and other partners at local levels.

The SOSTENUTO project was implemented between 4 May 2009 and 30 April 2012 (36 months) by seven partners from EU countries in the Mediterranean area (Spain, France, Italy, and Slovenia) and one IPA Adriatic country (Montenegro), with the support of ERDF, IPA Adriatic and matching local funds. Total project budget was: €1 536 411 (ERDF: €1 179 210). The EU support for the SOSTENUTO project is certainly an important added-value element enabling project implementation in different local contexts and countries.

Culture is a major economic development sector in Europe, and in the knowledge economy and innovative society in the framework of the new Lisbon strategy. It is underlined in the study of the European Commission that cultural and creative sectors contribute directly to growth and employment in Europe. This impact is directly linked to the strong presence of creative activities especially enterprises and jobs, the development of new innovative services and products (notably related to ICT) as well as to contribution to development of human capital. The cultural sector relates directly to a society based on innovation embedded in societal values where every form of innovation is promoted. Nevertheless, much more could be made of cultural and creative activities in Europe: the situation is characterised by structural weaknesses, most notably by the presence of a myriad of SMEs that have a strong local base but remain unable to benefit from the internal market due to a lack of appropriate tools and accompanying measures. There is a huge potential for development of the cultural sector in Europe, but low integration of strategies, policies and modes of territorial governance. The SOSTENUTO project proposes to reinforce the competitiveness of the cultural and creative activities in the MED area by applying innovative methods of management and organisation to this sector, notably to SMEs.

The cultural sector potential for innovation and dynamism remains often unrecognised by most public bodies. Practice remains relatively unaffected by a whole set of economic and organisational experiences of urban and regional development. In the MED area, the cultural sector represents a real potential but suffers from loose activities and a lack of organised strategies from public agencies. The SOSTENUTO project is the result of 'top-down' policy recommendations, partners' assessments of the sectoral problems at the (inter)national levels, as well as 'bottom-up' (new) needs and demands of local residents, SMEs and other stakeholders for strategy regarding innovative cultural and creative activities in the cities and regions of the MED area.

BUNKER: the 'engine' behind the SOSTENUTO project implementation

The SOSTENUTO project partner from Slovenia is BUNKER Institute² from Ljubljana, a non-profit organisation for the realisation and organisation of cultural events. BUNKER produces and presents contemporary theatre and dance performances, organises different workshops and other cultural and educational programmes, carries out various research in the field of culture and brings together a prominent international festival, the Mladi Levi (Young Lions) Festival. BUNKER has transformed and further developed the ideas from the original SOSTENUTO project proposal based on international experiences and knowledge gained in production, management and implementation of innovative and alternative cultural and creative events and activities, as well as on the needs and demands of the local population and other stakeholders from the inner-city district Tabor in the capital city Ljubljana where they are all located – for living and working in the area. BUNKER was responsible for the development and implementation of the SOSTENUTO LAB nr 3: *Local non-monetary exchange trading system* (LETS) in cooperation and partnership with other local stakeholders and residents, and in collaboration with other LABs in the SOSTENUTO project, and the organisation of the mid-term international conference in Ljubljana in December 2010.

The total BUNKER budget from the SOSTENUTO project was €271 020: ERDF (€230 667 / 85%), with match funding (15%) from the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia. There was a serious delay with receiving funding from the ERDF. The first ERDF funds were received approximately 12 months after the official start of the project and BUNKER had to finance its working through an international bank loan with low-interest rate via the

² www.bunker.si

SOSTENUTO Lead partner in France. This is a serious problem in Slovenia especially for a small non-profit cultural organisation. No special foundation or bank guarantees with low interest exist at the national level to cover the pre-funding costs in these EU projects in Slovenia.

The inner-city district of TABOR

In Ljubljana the SOSTENUTO project was implemented in the inner-city district of Tabor, located between the Town Hall, the Main Rail and Bus Station and the National Clinical Hospital. Tabor is a small mixed use (formerly industrial and working class neighbourhood) inner-city district of Ljubljana, like many others in Mediterranean and European cities. It is facing problems common to many rapidly changing urban spaces with a lack of social cohesion, exclusion of local residents from the urban development processes, degradation of public spaces (i.e. lack of green areas and non-commercial public spaces), and growing perception of insecurity, etc. BUNKER is located in Slomškova Street as well as Stara Elektrarna (Old Electricity Plant), managed by them as a theatre and performance hall for different events, including the Mladi Levi (Young Lions) Festival.

This location of the inner-city district Tabor is appropriate for SOSTENUTO, in that it comprises different residential and other mixed-used buildings as a heritage of the past (e.g. industrial building, railway station, former military barracks), and places of present activities (i.e. a home for the elderly, students hall of residence, church, schools, offices, shops, museums, cinemas, mixed-use housing, etc.) and was under pressure of property market development until 2009. The neighbourhood did experience a loss of residential and social life, and the SOSTENUTO project activities demonstrate the effectiveness of a model that connects the physical regeneration of urban green areas and organisation of innovative cultural and creative activities with provision of non-monetary services for local residents and visitors.

The SOSTENUTO project is in line with all five priorities of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) 2007-2013 of Slovenia, especially with the promotion of entrepreneurship, innovation and technological development. The project corresponds to all five OP in Slovenia: Strengthening Regional Development Potentials, Human Resources Development, Environmental and Transport Infrastructure Development, Cross-border, interregional and transnational operational programmes. The project was also relevant for implementation of the National Programme for Culture 2008-2011. One of the principle development goals of Regional Development Programme of Ljubljana Urban Region (LUR) 2007-2013 is 'Creative people and successful companies' that can be achieved through the specific instruments and projects involving:

- a) Culture as competitive advantage of LUR;
- b) Supportive entrepreneurial environment; and
- c) Preserved heritage.

Urban development programmes in the City Municipality of Ljubljana, especially culture, tourism, sport, education, health and social security, environmental protection and urban planning for 2008-2011, have also supported the urban revitalisation of Ljubljana through physical and land use regeneration together with different social and cultural activities in specific city districts. The implementation of the SOSTENUTO project in Ljubljana corresponds with the cultural strategy and programme of the City Municipality of Ljubljana 2008-2011 (developed by BUNKER in 2007) and the urban revitalisation strategy of the new Spatial Development Plan of the City Municipality of Ljubljana (adopted in 2010).

Project activities and local partners in Tabor

BUNKER developed and implemented activities in Ljubljana from the summer of 2009 until the end of 2011 in cooperation with local stakeholders and residents from Tabor and other interested actors in Ljubljana, providing an example of local non-monetary systems enabling exchange of know-how, services and local competences for bottom-up urban revitalisation, with the primary aim of social inclusion and environmental improvement.

A research survey conducted in Tabor by BUNKER in cooperation with sociologists and anthropologists from the University of Ljubljana in summer/autumn 2009 found that there was a lack of green spaces, local identity and qualitative social life. It was in response to this that the partners set up an ambitious and innovative plan specifically to use the SOSTENUTO project for urban revitalisation of this neighbourhood. The planned activities focussed on land use regeneration, e.g. urban greening, gardening, re-use of local park, open space between the new museum quarter (former military barracks), traffic calming and temporary establishment of pedestrian zones, etc. together with cultural, social, sport and other events and activities organised at these various public spaces by BUNKER in cooperation with other cultural institutions (museums, cinemas, theatre, galleries etc) and local non-profit associations in Tabor, citizens' groups and residents. The partners organised innovative cultural and social events and activities – workshops, festival, and art performances – on these sites in the neighbourhood, under the comprehensive Garden by the Way project, a long-term project focusing on highlighting how culture influences social and economic innovation within a given space. The activities included the following:

- My Street: art installations and street exchange market in Slomškova Street with temporary transformation of a number of parking lots into open spaces during the festival Mladi Levi for activities and interaction between local residents and visitors as well as other partners – cultural institutions, non-profit associations, sport clubs, eco-farmers, bicycle repair service, etc.
- Trail 10 Book: participation in the event *Ljubljana – the world capital of Books 2010* together with other partners (e.g. Europlakat), sponsored by the City Municipality of Ljubljana, libraries, bookshops, individuals, etc.
- Workshops: printing on T-shirts with art fashion designer, DJ techniques, and culinary events with residents from the home for the elderly, workshop with Professor Franco Bianchini from the University of Leeds (UK), and artist and thinker Simona Levi (Barcelona, Spain).

The concept of a 'garden' in Tabor has served as a window to debate the meaning of space, especially the necessity of green and social areas, and also tackle the subjects of ecology, innovative thinking, solidarity, and the limits of self-sufficiency. The vanishing of natural spaces requires an innovative attitude and originality of ideas in establishing green spaces, with the idea that they can and should be set up practically anywhere; not forgetting the necessity and value of upgrading existing park, open green areas and courtyards, and greening roofs, balconies and windows with plants and flowers, with the help of local architects and landscape architects, applied art school students, and gardening shops and firms. The Garden by the Way project is a unique expression of the living nature of the Tabor neighbourhood and vitality of local residents.

One of the other important project activities developed and implemented together with local residents is the Beyond Construction Site urban gardening project. BUNKER established a partnership with *KUD OBRAT*³ a non-profit association focusing on the relationship between art projects and the public urban space for physical regeneration and upgrading of the long-deserted construction site located between the mixed-use residential blocks near the Main Rail and Bus Station. The project is supported by the City Municipality of Ljubljana, which

³ <http://www.obrat.org/>.

gave permission for temporary use of this building land (brownfield) for urban gardening; and commercial firms sponsored the project granting the soil, seeds, plants, etc., to start up the project. The local residents actively participated with BUNKER and KUD Obrat in the design phase of the project through its implementation with voluntary work, cleaning the site, preparing the plots for gardens, exchanging knowledge and gardening skills, helping newcomers, etc. All partners also take part in various cultural and social activities organised on this site e.g. culinary activities, music, eco-farming and gardening lectures, etc. Approximately 50 plots have now been established. The purpose of this urban gardening project was to transform the degraded construction site surrounded by residential and mixed-use buildings into a dynamic and creative common area through cooperation with local inhabitants and other interested actors and visitors. The Beyond Construction Site project is expected to live on in future as a leisure activity of residents and citizens in cooperation with KUD Obrat.



Photo 1: *Beyond the Construction* site: start of the new urban gardening project (photo Bunker)

BUNKER also made a partnership with ProstoRož (*Flower Space /young architects*) for the physical upgrading of the urban park Tabor⁴ and other greening activities in the neighbourhood and organisation of cultural, sport, and art performances. Everyone was invited to participate in activities such as installation of public lighting, care of the greenery and the birds, restoration of the playgrounds, and improvement of traffic arrangements around the park. The first actions started in autumn 2009 with the aim of restoring the park benches and creating a boules court, a basketball court and a children's sandbox. In the spring and summer of 2010 and 2011 different sport, cultural, social events were organised and performed in the park organised on a voluntary basis and attended not only by local residents, families, children, students, elderly, but also by other citizens of Ljubljana, visitors and tourists.

All these activities have resulted in the establishment of the *Tabor Cultural Quarter* (March 2011), a non-profit association (legal entity) based on long-term partnership among cultural institutions (museums, galleries, cinemas, theatres, etc.) and other non-profit organisations located or active in the neighbourhood for organisation and implementation of diverse cultural events and activities in future⁵. This has become a role model for social and cultural cooperation and participation of local stakeholders in Tabor for the overall social cohesion and improvement of the quality of urban life in Ljubljana.

⁴ <http://prostoroz.org/slo/index.php?tabor/o-projektu/>

⁵ www.kct.si



Photo 2: *Beyond the Construction* site: start of the new urban gardening project with community events (photo Bunker)



Photo 3: *Beyond the Construction* site: new urban gardens after upgrading (photo Suzana Kajba)

'I like it here a lot, this is my new love' (local resident Ružica on the establishment of the community garden⁶

'This area used to be quite dead in the past, now, it seems that there is this great energy present'. (local resident Andrej on Bunker's efforts in Tabor⁷



Photo 4: *Park Tabor*: new activities at the park Tabor and sport centre Tabor (photo Bunker)



Photo 5: *Park Tabor*: new community activities at the upgraded park Tabor (photo Bunker)

'I've been living in this neighbourhood for more than 25 years and I have to say it's really becoming revived. When I tell my friends about all the things going on and that we now have community gardens, they just can't believe me.' (local resident Vida on the change of the Tabor district).

BUNKER also organised a mid-term international conference in December 2010 in Ljubljana⁸ in cooperation with other principle SOSTENUTO partners, their own (inter)national networks, and cultural institutions located in Tabor district and Ljubljana. More than 200 participants gathered from around 20 countries in Europe and beyond. They proposed yet further ways of operating of the cultural sector, highlighting how cultural agents are coping with social transformations, public policies, as well as with new cultural and artistic practices, collaborative practices, the integration of communication technologies, etc. The participants of the conference also prepared a Manifesto, as part of the capitalisation of the SOSTENUTO project results and the forthcoming Green Paper⁹.

⁶ <http://onkraigradbisca.wordpress.com>

⁷ <http://www.bunker.si/slo/sostenuto>

⁸ The conference was titled 'Ready to Change? – Experimental Forum on Culture and Social Innovation in Europe and the Med Area' [link to conference website]

⁹ <http://www.bunker.si/slo/ready-to-change-eksperimentalni-forum-o-kulturi-in-socialnih-inovacijah-v-evropi-in-obmocju-med>

The results of the SOSTENUTO project in Ljubljana have far exceeded the expectations of the original project proposal: they have been developed step-by-step during project implementation in Ljubljana in close cooperation with residents and other stakeholders based in Tabor district and Ljubljana. The innovative aspects of the local partnership are apparent in the successful cooperation between different stakeholders, local residents and end-users for implementation of innovative cultural events and activities on voluntary and non-monetary basis – that is to say the cooperation between researchers, non-profit associations, public institutions (museums, cinemas, schools, student hall of residence, home for the elderly), voluntary groups, residents, businesses, etc., located in Tabor, and citizens of Ljubljana, as well as other visitors from Slovenia and abroad taking part in these events and activities. The beneficiaries of the SOSTENUTO project in Ljubljana are thus widely distributed on various levels and scales, going well beyond BUNKER, the project partner, and including many local stakeholders and participants, and most of all the local residents of Tabor.

The Role of City Administration

The City Municipality of Ljubljana supported the SOSTENUTO project but did not co-fund the project activities due to budget constraints as a consequence of economic crisis in Slovenia. The Department of Culture of the City Municipality of Ljubljana provided some funds for BUNKER activities over a three-year period but they are only indirectly connected with SOSTENUTO. The Department of Urban Planning issued a temporary planning permission to BUNKER for the use of urban brownfield land for urban gardening activities within *Beyond the Construction Site* as well as providing temporary permissions for traffic calming of the streets in Tabor during cultural and sport events and other activities implemented within the SOSTENUTO project. The Mayor of Ljubljana, Zoran Jankovič, Chief architect prof. Janez Koželj and other decision- and policy- makers supported the project and participated at SOSTENUTO activities organised by BUNKER in Tabor district.

'We have organisations like BUNKER to thank for producing these kinds of events (that build community cohesion) for the residents of Ljubljana.'

(Mr Zoran Jankovič, Mayor of Ljubljana, opening an art installation in Tabor¹⁰.)

SOSTENUTO is a role model for possible transfer to other city districts in Ljubljana for improvement of social cohesion, sustainability and overall quality of urban life. More is needed to include such practices in official city policies and development programming activities in future.

Culture and Sustainable Development: The Way Forward

The SOSTENUTO project improves the social cohesion and quality of life in the inner-city district of Tabor in Ljubljana by creating a new cultural focus that integrates physical regeneration (urban greening and gardening) with the provision of cultural, social, sport events and other activities, and the active participation of local stakeholders and residents in the neighbourhood. The project has added to the establishment of flexible connecting spaces (i.e. a new urban garden with 50 small plots), the revitalisation and use of Park Tabor for various social activities and street events, and the establishment of the Tabor Cultural Quarter with partners such as the Old Electricity Plant (a theatre and performance hall managed by BUNKER), Kinodvor and Slovenian Cinematheque (cinemas), museums (the National Museum of Ljubljana, the Slovene Ethnographic Museum, the Modern Gallery), the elementary school, student hall of residence, a home for the elderly, a drama school, non-profit associations, businesses, etc.

¹⁰ <http://www.bunker.si/slo/sostenuto>

The implementation of the SOSTENUTO project in Ljubljana has involved experimentation with new methods of cooperation and networking between economic, social and cultural agents and new methods of territorial governance. This will lead to new long-term partnerships and activities based on shared responsibilities and a shared vision of development of Tabor and other neighbourhoods in Ljubljana. The project encourages development of the participative capacity of citizens, public and private organisations in cultural and creative sector that carries economic and social innovation in the MED area.



Photo 6: *Park Tabor*: upgraded children playground and community activities (photo Bunker)

Some project ideas and activities implemented in Ljubljana draw on traditional ways of spending leisure time in Slovenia – urban gardening, greening, organisation of local sport and cultural events in open public spaces, or voluntary activities in the neighbourhood –that had waned during the previous 15 years. The same (or a similar) approach could easily be transferred to other urban areas in Slovenia, Central, South-East Europe or Mediterranean area. Undoubtedly a success factor of the SOSTENUTO project in Ljubljana has been also the existence of a consistent public funding provided by the ERDF as a solid base for implementation of physical regeneration, social networking, participation and cooperation. The integrative approach aimed a promoting the multi-functional use of the inner-city district Tabor has been most successful in its anticipated social and environmental sustainability.

The SOSTENUTO project has been a good example of multi-level cooperation and networking and provides a role model for social inclusion, local empowerment and participation for improving the quality of urban life in Ljubljana.

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