

MEETING WITH ANA SAVŠEK FROM HEART OF SLOVENIA (SLOVENIA)

Heart of Slovenia is a development center, established in 2000. It works like a local development agency connecting several municipalities in the central part of Slovenia and covering the area east from Ljubljana. The municipalities support yearly programmes that focus on topics related to regional development such as tourism, entrepreneurship, active aging and sustainable mobility.

Heart of Slovenia joined Euromontana in 2014. We met Ana Savšek, deputy Director of development center of the Heart of Slovenia, to discover more about their work and their involvement in regional development in mountain areas.



Ana Savšek, deputy Director of Heart of Slovenia

Euromontana: What are the Heart of Slovenia projects related to mountains?

Ana: "We are very active in regional development projects. Until now we have already been involved in 32 European projects. Among our initiatives, one of our project focused on the **promotion of local products through a quality brand called "Heart of Slovenia"**. The labelling system was created in 2014. Within this project, our development agency organized calls for producers and handcrafters who would like to obtain the label. The attribution of the label happens according to a system of criteria that also identify the origins of the products."



Are these producers based in mountain areas?

"The brand covers all the region of central Slovenia. One of the municipality within our area, Kamnik, is in the Alpine region, the other municipalities are in countryside or rural areas. At the moment we have 60 products labelled with our brand and we are seeking to improve it by opening selling channels, promoting and marketing the products."

What are the Heart of Slovenia organisation aspirations?

"We work a lot with networks. We supported, for example, the establishment of a network of farmers so that we can encourage them to capitalize on the different opportunities available in the area and increase their wellbeing, creating local business and contributing in the improvement of local economy. These initiatives can, afterwards, help them and the inhabitants to be proud of where they live and create a strong region open for new opportunities."



Why did you join Euromontana, a European network?

"Firstly, we decided to join Euromontana to be part of a network of various actors and we wanted to take advantage of the contacts and the people involved in Euromontana. Secondly, we found important the opportunity to have access to information, through Euromontana's newsletters and all the publications, including the calls for project and proposals. Finally, we appreciated the possibility of being involved in projects."

So, what do you think about Euromontana's new Projects Platform to discuss about projects?

"We think the platform is a good idea. We believe that meeting personally the partners is the best choice, but it is not always possible, especially when you live in different countries. So I hope the platform will help to have contacts and cover certain programmes."

Finally, how would you like to contribute to other Euromontana's members?

"I think sharing our good practices is one of the contributions we can bring to the network. For instance, we presented on 19 October 2017 our project EDEN55plusNW during the Silver Tourism final conference, in Brussels.

We thought it was worth sharing and interesting for other members. Moreover, we believe we could give our contribution by sharing our network of partners, our knowledge and our lessons learnt, especially because we are one of the few members from the western Balkans, thus we would like to become an major actor in this part of Europe."

« We would like to become a connector between Western Balkans' mountain actors and the other Euromontana's members. »