

***Reaffirmation and Promotion of Tourism
Occupations, Project in cooperation with DAI –
Development Alternatives Inc.***

***Technical Assistance Partnership Agreement
(TAPA)***

Report on the First Eight Activities

**OPERATIVE PREPARATIONS AND PROJECT
DEFINITION**

1) Agreement Signing

An agreement was signed early in 2007 between DAI/Nathan Group implementing USAID Enhancing SME Performance Project – Poduzetna Hrvatska, and IRTA – Istrian Agency for Tourism Development. The basic purpose of the agreement was to enhance the performance of SMEs and create new jobs within the following activities:

- a) Support the establishment of or improve tourism services in Istria
- b) Technical assistance and training, including identification of opportunities for training and the implementation of training programs useful to local businesses
- c) Marketing services in exports, including support in defining potential export markets for tourism businesses and associations, organizing participation in the most significant fairs and exhibitions, and improving access to market information.

2) Project Mission and Vision

We are completely aware that the process of changing the formal education program is a long term process and that, if we are to wait for the changes to the entire system that will be implemented from the top, it will probably be years before anything is achieved and entire generations will be lost.

Istrian Agency for Tourism Development therefore started taking concrete measures to provide additional training and a possibility to adopt new skills, until the educational program/system is significantly changed. In cooperation with the principals of secondary schools, we have reached an agreement on additional informal education with a purpose of complementing the existing program and enriching it with well organized and professional workshops in order to keep up with the latest trends in food and wine industry and to put those trends to use with the young generations in Croatia.

The objective of the first part of the project is to promote vocational occupations. Our proposal was based on a notion that it was necessary to create the necessary elements which will motivate young people to enroll to vocational schools in order to create a positive environment. This would mostly include the following activities:

1) Promoting tourism occupations through teacher-parent meetings in elementary schools in order to inform the parents of the significance of these occupations, with an emphasis on the long term of the project and the possibilities for employment and for good salaries. We believe that the parents' influence is extremely important and that through joint actions we can explain that waiters will not be an underestimated category in the future development of tourism in Istria.

2) Promoting the occupations (confectioner, waiter, chef) among elementary school children, familiarizing them with the importance of those occupations for the Istrian County since tourism is the chief propellant for regional development, presenting the project as a long-term effort with good approach, presenting the occupations in a modern and professional manner, possibilities for employment, emphasizing the salaries in the private sector, especially the SME sector (and especially for chefs), the success of Istrian culinary and wine sectors. This would be achieved through presentations delivered by young successful Istrian chefs and waiters who have earned reputation, media attention and renown among experts with their diligence, knowledge, and skills, and who also earn sizable salaries.

3) Organize visits for elementary school children to successful large hotels and good restaurants to display the positive atmosphere and success

4) Joint promotion (by the school principal, Istrian County representative, young successful chefs/waiters) of such occupations through local radio stations, call-in shows

5) Emphasize the dignity of the vocation by showing the importance of diet for mental and physical fitness and health

After phase one, i.e. the presentation of vocational occupations to attract a sufficient number of pupils to enroll to vocational programs, the second phase or additional training for existing students, would start. The agreement was that the following would be provided:

1) One-day course in wine serving, sensory analysis, communicating with guests, basics of wine presentation, wine serving techniques, wine and food pairing

2) One-day course in olive oil serving, sensory analysis, communicating with guests, basics of olive oil presentation, olive oil serving techniques, olive oil and food pairing

- 3) One-day course in truffle serving, sensory analysis, communicating with guests, basics of presenting different types of truffles, serving techniques, pairing truffles with wine and other food
- 4) One-day course on the best equipment, appliances and small inventory, in **cooperation with Radin R Gourmet from Kaštelir-Labinci**.
- 5) Presentation from the VINISTRA Association - Agenda
 - Presentation from the Olive Oil Producers Association - Agenda
 - Presentation from the USAMU - Association of Sensory Analysts of Olive Oil
 - Presentation of the Prosciutto Producers Association
- 6) A two-day visit to the ELCTROLUX – Pordenone factory with a workshop on the latest cooking techniques, application of new technologies and the presentation of appliances
- 7) One-day visit to the FASA pentole AGNELLI factory – a course on the use of different materials in thermal processing of food
- 8) Visit to the following trade fairs: VINISTRA; VINITALY; SALONE DEL GUSTO; SALONE DEL VINO

The Reaffirmation and Promotion of Tourism Occupations Program has primarily been developed to stop the negative trend of decreased enrollment to vocational schools, while, on the other hand, the basic mission of the program is to motivate and direct the young population towards such vocations since they are already in demand and are very often well paid, at least when small family hotels, restaurants and typical Istrian taverns are concerned, and the number of such establishments is increasing.

The mission of the program is also to re-establish the valorization and to increase the renown of the vocations of chefs and waiters, which are often underrated. We need, however, to be aware of the fact that waiters are the ones who, after reception, are the first that stand for the company either on the aperitif bar, the terrace, or in the **restaurant, and it is therefore very important how these “ambassadors” will represent a company and in that the entire destination.**

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OPERATIVE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

1) Formal introduction to the project (2 theoretical, general workshops)

On March 21, 2007, in Hotel Park in Rovinj, the first formal introduction to the project was held. The first formal introduction was attended by all project participants: 20 waiters + 20 chefs + all principals + 15 teachers + media and hotel representatives from human resources departments + representatives of the chambers of economy and crafts.

In total, there were more than 70 participants. This is a significant number for the first formal introduction of the project, and a guarantee that a large proportion of the attendees will be able to become promoters of the initiative and that they will be ready for further engagement in the overall development of food and wine culture in Istria.

The basic mission and objective of the conference was to truthfully present the situation that we live and work in to the young students. The situation is contradictory, bipolar. On one side, there are extremely successful young people, professionals and experts in their field and on the other, there is a whole system of seasonal large hotels and restaurants that do not appropriately valorize the food and wine culture and do not contribute to the affirmation of the profession and the creation of new, young, and well-trained workforce.

The gathering started with Denis Ivošević's detailed presentation of the project at hand and continued with an invitation to all principals to present the issues involved in the decreased interest among pupils to enroll to tourism training programs. After that, the same issues were addressed by teachers and finally by representatives of large hotels and of the chambers of economy and crafts.

All participants of the first conference have expressed their opinions and views and I was somewhat discouraged by the tone of the first part of the conference since there was mostly talk about financial difficulties that the schools have in implementing their programs, and less about the vocation and occupation of chefs and waiters, about their training and teaching skills, etc.

The objective of the second part of project presentation was to introduce the participants with a different side of Istrian reality. The aim was to show them Istria where the hospitality industry is active all year round, where skillful, professional and competent workers are appreciated and where incomes are high.

I presented all participants with the new, young, successful generation of tourism workers (restaurant owners, chefs, sommeliers) who have all made significant progress in their work in a short time, and, more importantly, who have all gained a good reputation in the media and renown among experts, and have become reference points for the profiled vocational skills in Istria and Croatia.

I also suggested to all speakers that they should paint a realistic picture of their development, from training to professional success, and to share their vision of the future development of tourism in Istria. Since all of the speakers are successful in their work, my intention was to create an appetite and motivation among the

attendees, so that they would perceive them as successful, young, talented professionals whom they could consider as role models.

2) Delivery of the first Workshop (March 21, 2007)

First, I introduced **Lidia Fabris from Rovinj, the owner of Blu restaurant** opened in 2000 and included in renowned foreign culinary guides Veronelli, Gault Millau, Gallimard. Lidia Fabris is a young entrepreneur from Rovinj who has no formal training in hospitality, but has grown to love the profession and now owns one of the fifteen best restaurants in Istria.

Lidia talked about the importance of education in her line of work and stressed the significance of keeping up with the new achievements in the industry every year through conferences, workshops, professional lectures, guided tastings and specialized courses. She also emphasized the importance of patience and positive modesty since results are not visible over night. Her presentation ended with a statement that she would like to have some of the attendees come as apprentices to her restaurant, who would later on be permanently employed there. The presentation lasted 40 minutes.

The second presenter was a young successful chef **Damir Modrušan, master chef in the Enoteka Zigante** restaurant in Livade, opened in 2001 and included in renowned foreign culinary guides Veronelli, Gault Millau, Gallimard's with excellent marks.

Damir's extremely simple and emotional lecture delivered in the Istrian dialect, which brought it even closer to young students, was the best among all great lectures. In a simple manner, he presented his life and his career which was not at all easy, but with persistence and will to prove himself he managed to succeed. He used very concrete examples to explain how he had solved a lot of problems and dealt with prejudice from superiors who trumped his development. He gave a lot of excellent advices stemming from his rich experience, about how to fight the mentality of mediocrity and the creation of a negative environment. The lecture lasted 60 minutes.

The third presenter was **Sandi Paris, multiple winner of sommelier competitions in Croatia**, and a participant of an European and a world competition of sommeliers. His abundant experience and media reputation enhanced the gathering, while he used simple language to make the participants aware of the fact that it was persistence, practice and love or passion that made him what he was. He told the story of his personal development, of all the good and bad moments, even though the good ones were incomparably more numerous, and stated that, if he were given a choice, he would once again chose the same path. After presenting himself, he also introduced a number of very concrete cases that are common in practice while dealing with guests at a table.

The fourth presenter was **Siniša Škaberna, the sommelier from the Blu restaurant** in Rovinj, who also told the participants about his life story and about his education which had nothing to do with tourism. He also explained that the passion he felt for the occupation brought him to his current job which he loves and which fulfills him both in his professional and in his private life. He also commended the initiative and the Reaffirmation and Promotion of Tourism Occupations project,

expressing his willingness to work with new waiters and chefs participating in the project.

3) Delivery of the second Workshop (April 13, 2007)

The second technical and practical workshop took place in Pomer, in a **restaurant called VEDORNA, owned by Alena and Željko Bročilović**. The basic idea of this technical workshop was to transfer the experience gained abroad where there are different minimum requirements both for education, training, business and advancement in work, i.e. hierarchy of different tourism businesses.

The technical lectures were delivered by Mr. Željko Bročilović, a renowned chef and wine expert. Mr. Bročilović and his wife had spent more than 10 years working in distinguished Trentina-Alto-Adige restaurants with truly enviable level of hospitality culture where, with necessary effort, a lot can be learned. Since Mr. and Mrs. Bročilović are now back in Istria, bringing with them the ten years of experience, we used the opportunity to have them transfer their experiences first hand, to explain how they succeeded as experts abroad, what are the minimum requirements and what is needed to elevate one self above the level of mediocrity.

The topics covered that day included:

- Introduction of the lecturers and their experience in the country and abroad
- Serving wine at the table, communicating with guests
- Presenting wines, how to taste wine
- Wine varieties with emphasis on indigenous Istrian varieties, geographical division

- Practical part: Practicing wine bottle opening and the correct selection of glasses, pouring...

After practical exercises, there was a theme lunch for all attendees and teachers. **The Bročilovići prepared three quite simple courses with indigenous ingredients**. The intention of the presentation and the tasting of the three courses was simply to show **how simple, "cheap" ingredients can be used to prepare an attractive and delicious meal**. Of course, this requires somewhat more effort in the kitchen, and a presentation of cooking techniques and serving skills. We intentionally selected indigenous and simple ingredients and not expensive ingredients, to emphasize the importance of cooking skills and the value of indigenous products. Each of the courses was skillfully presented and explained.

4) Delivery of the third workshop (April 27, 2007)

National championship of Croatian sommeliers was also one of the workshops within the Reaffirmation and Promotion of Tourism Occupations Program. Like every year, the competition took place in the Pical hotel in Poreč.

The idea was for the program participants to be invited to see the competition and to have a unique opportunity to get an insight into pre-competition for the semi-finals and the finals of the best three competitors.

The workshop was made even more interesting by the fact that the participants were allowed to see the level of knowledge, skills and practice needed to meet the criteria for successful sommeliers. All together, the program consisted of 6 tests, 3 of which were theoretical, and three practical tests examining skills and speed.

These tests lasted almost the entire day, observed by numerous onlookers, and I therefore believe this was the best possible way to compare the knowledge and skills gained in school with those required by high class hotels and restaurants.

5) Delivery of the fourth Workshop (May 13, 2007)

The fourth workshop was held on May 29 in the Nautica hotel in Novigrad, the newly renovated 5-star hotel, the first such high-class hotel in Istria. The thematic workshop included a lecture on olive oil, a presentation from a young chef, a young hotel manager, and a presentation of the 5 star hotel.

The first part of the workshop was a training on olive oil. **Representatives of USAMU – Association of Sensory Analysts of Olive Oil, Nada Franković and Olivera Koprivnjak**, delivered a three-hour presentation about their association, their vision, mission and the objectives they are aiming to achieve.

The presentation covered the following topics:

- introduction of the presenters and their experience
- about olive oil in general (harvesting, transport to the oil workshop, processing, bottling, marketing and sale)
- basics of olive oil sensory analysis
- a mini course in olive oil tasting

For the most part, the workshop focused on the basics sensory analyses in which the lecturers presented the general knowledge required for a good analysis to define the quality of oil. This primarily involves the intensity and persistency of senses, and synchronizing the measures for value and quality, which is one of the basic tasks of olive oil evaluators.

After the first theoretical part, there was a tasting of olive oils. The first oils tasted were those with defects, to learn to differentiate between adequate and inadequate olive oils. Later, only good quality olive oils were tasted to practice recognizing different flavors giving with specific scent and taste to olive oil.

After the first part, we were introduced to a young and successful chef: **Marin Rendić, the master chef in the Navigare restaurant of the Nautica hotel**. He showed the students and teachers his kitchen which is one of the best equipped in Croatia. Complementing the presentations on olive oils, he made a meal using olive oil in such a manner as to properly emphasize the value of the oil and to adequately present it. The fourth workshop was concluded by a lecture delivered by the young manager **Suzana Vrtičević**, who gave all training participants a tour of the hotel, explaining the standards and requirements of a 5-star hotel, the promotion and sale of the hotel, and an insight into how to operate a restaurant within a hotel.

After the fourth workshop within the project for the Reaffirmation and Promotion of Tourism Occupations, the Board of Principals of Tourism High Schools from Istria proposed that the workshop program should break between June 1 and September 1, since the program participants have seasonal work during summer month. The proposal was to continue the program after the main tourism season.

During that period, the Istrian Agency for Tourism Development will prepare a specific proposal including the schedule and the program for the remaining workshops (4 of them) to be held in September and October.

Report written by Denis Ivošević