

Example of good practice	Cooperative and Cooperation Council as drivers of the development of sustainable grazing at Gajna
Category	Local initiative; management; culture; local products
Organization	Brodsko Ecological Society (BED)
Partners	Natura Slavonica Public Institution
Area of activity/location	Slavonia, Gajna (Slavonia-Prisava floodplain pasture)
Country	Croatia
National protection category (IUCN?)	Natura 2000
Scope of implementation (local, national)	Local
Time needed to achieve solution	4 years
Number of employees	3
Budget	100 000€
Source of financing	EU project
More information	http://test.bed.hr/hr/gajna/program-ocuvanja-biologke-raznolikosti/
Contact person	Iris Beneš
Accomplishments (overview)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The only protected area in Croatia for which the management was entrusted to the local community and an NGO • A cooperative of livestock breeders was founded and includes 16 family farms (OPGs; positive benefit for 50 family members). • Constant increase in the number of OPGs since the end of the war. • Rehabilitation of veterans who now run OPGs. • Establishment of an intersectoral Cooperation Council. • Subsidies received for the joint pasture, together with Lonjsko Polje.

Problem/opportunity

Problem to be resolved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overgrowth of pastures • Loss of indigenous animal breeds • Depopulation
Opportunity to be taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood control • Cultural heritage • Retaining the local population • Sustainable livestock breeding • Joint management of pastures • Local products
Planning	
Key requirements for success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land use (state/private) • Overlapping authority (conservation, agriculture, water) • Poor coordination of responsible sectors • Greater valuation of local products (*social benefit from grazing on floodplain pastures) • Establishment of the Cooperation Council (local population, competent sectors) • Retention of the local population • Preserving local practices
How did the idea arise?	<p>A group of enthusiasts from the local community who established a society in 1989.</p> <p>Discovery of the connections between extensive livestock raising and nature conservation was the trigger.</p>
Was the idea part of a wider strategy?	<p>Initially it was not part of a strategy, but during the development process, certain strategies were created and the concept was implemented into other existing strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic programme of BED, • County development strategy • County spatial plan • County tourism development strategy.

	In the report on the state of conservation in Croatia, this was mentioned as a positive example.
Implementation	
Key phases – from idea to realisation?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resolving institutional barriers (lack of recognition of low productivity in agricultural practice as a solution for nature conservation) 2. Agricultural Lands Act (joint pastures in agricultural areas – commenting on laws, lobbying) 3. Establishment of cooperatives/pasture communities 4. Identification of local producers 5. Marketing plan for Gajna 6. Marketing in local restaurants 7. Presentation at fairs 8. Lectures in the community
Which actions did you take?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of the Gajna Association of livestock breeders, which is legally entitled to manage the joint pastures, enabling it to receive subsidies from the agricultural system. • Establishment of the Cooperation Council (including farmers, fishermen, hunters, border guards, municipalities, firefighters, Croatian Environment Agency, livestock breeders, Croatian Forests and Croatian Waters) as a means of ensuring cross-sectoral communications at both the local and national levels. • Creation of synergy between the Environment Ministry and Agriculture Ministry on the overlap of agricultural and Natura 2000 lands.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placement of meat products from indigenous breeds (Slavonian Podolian cattle, Slavonian Black pig) in local restaurants. • Development of educational trails and an info centre.
How were partners and stakeholders involved?	With the establishment of the Cooperation Council, all partners, area managers, resource managers and resource users were included.
How were local stakeholders selected?	Interested local population (elderly, veterans).
Which vulnerable groups were included, and how?	Veterans over the age of 55 years (total 16, including 1 woman). The Smiljak Women's Association – small museum. Two young families have also become included in the past two years.
Did you inform (local) stakeholders of their right to information?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establishment of the cooperative (local) – meetings every two months 2. Establishment of the Cooperation Council (local) – inclusion of all sectors
How were activities to reduce and mitigate climate change included in your work?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retaining the indigenous breeds that are adapted to climate change – large flood waves, which are not as commercially profitable. • Conservation of the genetic material of resistant livestock and traditional pasture practices that can handle large flood waves, and also mitigate the effects downstream.
Challenges during implementation:	<p>Financially:</p> <p>There are no sources of financing for projects such as Gajna.</p> <p>The BED society independently resolved all financial issue by applying for project funding, subsidies.</p>
	<p>Administrative:</p> <p>Too demanding to apply for a project such as LIFE.</p>
	<p>Institutional:</p>

	Lack of understanding of the system and competent sectors for unconventional practices.
Changes (your contribution to change)	
What are the positive changes for nature?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the flora and fauna, endemic plants and animals, species under Natura 2000 protection • Retaining indigenous breeds (Slavonian Podolian cattle, Slavonian Black pig)
How were negative impacts on nature reduced?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood control • Control of invasive species
Positive economic (E) and social (S) changes:	Public sector (local, national): S: support from National Foundation for Development of the Civil Society; co-financing from the Natura Slavonica Public Institution; local community in the executive board of BED; tourist board of the Oprisavci municipality promotes Gajna
	Private sector (local restaurants): E: sale of local products from Gajna in local restaurants S: donations in private sector initiatives
	Protected area managers: S: institutional support – National Foundation for the Development of the Civil Society Co-financing from the Natura Slavonica Public Institution
	Local population: E: survival and increase in the number of family farms since the end of the war. In the Oprisavci municipality area, where the Gajna flooded pasture is found, there are 16 OPGs supporting some 50 family members; unlike in other surrounding municipalities where there is no cooperative, the joint pastures

	<p>have been overgrown with false indigo, an invasive plant.</p> <p>S: recognition and easier placement of local products on the market, when organised in the cooperative</p> <p>Retaining families in Oprisavci municipality, preserving traditional practices and cultural heritage (preserving trades), education polygon.</p> <p>Rehabilitation of retired veterans.</p>
	<p>Scientific community:</p> <p>S: support of the Croatian Environment and Nature Agency as the expert body in the initiative</p>
Replication and recommendations	
Which key items were important for replication?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer work • Motivation of members of the local community to launch the initiative • Communication with various sectors (BED as initiator and facilitator) • Dialogue with land managers (Natura Slavonica Public Institution) • Keep in mind that results will only be visible after 2 years.
What would you recommend to others?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistence as the path to success. • Constant communications with all parties. • People are the key (16 families participated to their mutual economic benefit). Without people there is no sustainability, and the project must be their story. • Livestock keeper is a socially unacceptable profession, BED had difficulty hiring a person even amongst 30% unemployment. • Volunteers are an important aspect in project implementation.

What is key for project sustainability?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing projects for the cooperative (BED) – technical support (tractors, mowers, baling machines), enabling subsidies, resolving legal barriers • Annual investment of HRK 100,000 which the cooperative raises through a combination of economic activities, agricultural subsidies, and projects. • Since 2015, Gajna has been included in the agricultural subsidy system for its surface area (great victory by BED) – see the story about Lonjsko Polje for more detail.
What are your recommendations for policy improvement?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Synergy between the Environment Ministry and Agriculture Ministry concerning the overlap of agricultural and Natura 2000 lands • Recognising poorly productive agricultural practices as a solution for nature conservation • Cooperation Council as one of the management mechanisms for protected areas – replicable everywhere. • Local (ecological) society as the driver (delegated) of the (protected) area – sustainable way to manage natural resources.
Expectations	
What are your expectations from WWF?	To be a part of the national CSO platform, support in negotiations?