



# Amazon of Europe Interregional Business Ecosystem

**Owner of the good practice:  
Koprivnica Križevci County**

**Interregional learning event and study visit in Marche  
region, 24<sup>th</sup> September 2024 | Ancona, Italy**

**Presenter:**  
Marina Belković,  
Senior Expert Associate for  
Economy  
and Rural Development



## Main characteristics

**Amazon of Europe (AoE) Interregional Business Ecosystem** is an ecosystem of tourism SMEs in the AoE area and other Biosphere Reserves.

**AoE** is a sustainable cross-border tourism destination, in charge of preserving the natural and cultural heritage spanning across border regions of Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia and Slovenia, along three rivers (Mura, Drava and Danube), becoming 1st five country Transnational UNESCO Biosphere Reserve in the world (TBR MDD) and expanded to other biosphere reserves in regions of Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Romania.

**The area represents the largest and most preserved free-flowing river system in Central Europe.**

**AoE Interregional Business Ecosystem has been developed under 3 EU projects:**

- AoE Bike Trail - Amazon of Europe Bike Trail (**total value:** 3.3 mil. EUR; **duration:** 1st July 2018 – 31st October 2021);
- Amazing AoE - Responsible Green Destination Amazon of Europe, (**total value:** 2.4 mil. EUR, **duration:** 1st July 2020 – 31st December 2022), **Koprivnica Križevci County was one of the project partners in first two projects;**
- Smarter AoE (**total value:** 1.27 mil EUR, 390.000 EUR went for financial support to 3rd party beneficiaries, **duration:** 1st January 2022 – 30th June 2024).

**Lead Beneficiary on projects:** Iskriava, Institute for Development of Local Potentials (Slovenia).

TOURBO













## Main characteristics

**AoE Business Ecosystem consists of:**

<https://visitaoe.com/>

### 1.) AoE Booking Center

- three main proposed touristic products that can be arranged through the AoE Booking Center are cycling (AoE Bike Trail), authentic experiences (culinary, historical, natural- AoE Amazing Moments) and river trekking (Mura-Drava-Danube - AoE River Journey);
- booked touristic products include services like: travel planning and booking with online booking system, accommodation in local hotels and breakfasts, food with focus on local cuisine, luggage transfer, shuttle services, information on "must-see locations" backed by a smartphone app with GPS guiding for cycling, supporting nature conservation projects in the UNESCO biosphere reserve etc.;
- SMEs have the opportunity to be the part of AoE Booking Center and offer their services like accommodation, catering, tourguides, transport, bicycle rental and servicing, as well as services regarding active tourism (rafting, fishing, bird watching, hiking etc.).

<https://visitaoe.com/aoe-hub/>

### 2.) AoE Hub

- online networking platform to promote collaboration and create opportunities for cooperation between tourism SMEs in the AoE area and other biosphere reserves, 6 SMEs from KKŽ is included in Hub;
- company needs to be registered through the registration form and company profile will be visible on the Amazon of Europe map.



## Main characteristics

### 3.) AoE Academy

- capacity building programme for digital transformation of tourism SMEs in the AoE destination and other biosphere reserves;
- the AoE academy includes joint online training for tourism SMEs, regional workshops for SMEs and mentoring program for digitization.

### 4.) Public call SMARTER AOE – closed on 15th January 2024

- **was intended for tourism SMEs** (hotels and similar accommodations; holiday and other short-stay accommodations; camping grounds, recreational vehicle parks and trailer parks; travel agencies, tour operator reservation services and related activities);
- **acceptable activities:** digitalization and marketing tools for better performance of tourism SMEs – compliance adaptations necessary to improve the possibility of cooperation with other actors in the value chain; costs of expert mentors (external consultants) and specialized training courses for SMEs in the field of business digitalization, travel and accommodation costs specifically connected to the project activities.
- **expected duration of projects:** up to 6 months;
- **maximum amount of financial support:** 3.000,00 EUR;
- 1 SME from Koprivnica Križevci County get the funds.

## Results and Impacts

**In the area of AoE Interregional Business Ecosystem is present about 200 SMEs which are included in providing some type of tourist offer (accommodation, catering, tourguides, transport, bicycle rental and servicing etc.) of which approximately 50 of them are included in AoE Booking Center, 150 in AoE Hub, 130 of them was the part of AoE Academy and 122 receive financial support for digital transformation.**

AoE Interregional Business Ecosystem shows how joint cooperation can connect several countries, develop innovative and sustainable tourism destination including small tourism services providers (SMEs), raise the level of cooperation, digital skills, and innovation prospects.

Each tool for helping SMEs within the business ecosystem (AoE Booking Center, AoE Hub, AoE Academy, financial support) has criteria that each SME needs to fulfill in order to become part of that ecosystem. The establishment of such AoE business ecosystem methodology can be transferred and be the inspiration to other regions.

<https://www.facebook.com/AmazonOfEurope>







**Thank you for your attention!**

**Koprivnica Križevci County**

**Antuna Nemčića 5**

**48000 Koprivnica**

**Hrvatska**

**Tel.: +385 48 658 111**

**E-mail: [pisarnica@kckzz.hr](mailto:pisarnica@kckzz.hr)**

**Web: <https://www.kckzz.hr/hr/>**

**PORA Regional Development Agency of  
Koprivnica Križevci County**

**Florijanski trg 4**

**48000 Koprivnica**

**Hrvatska**

**Tel.: +385 48 621 978**

**E-mail: [info@pora.com.hr](mailto:info@pora.com.hr)**

**Web: <https://pora.com.hr/?lang=en>**