

# IVANIĆ-GRAD *Croatia*

 14,000 inhabitants

**The objectives of the Living Streets in Ivanić-Grad are to prepare the ground for the creation of a pedestrian city centre, promote bicycles as a means of transport, support local production and consumption and encourage circular economy. The municipality aims to attract young people to live in Ivanić-Grad after finishing their studies as well as change people's mind-sets regarding the individual use of cars and unsustainable consumption models. For this purpose, the municipality is linked to different local businesses and citizens and is moving from a top down approach to a bottom-up and co-creative one.**

## **Context**

The city of Ivanić-Grad is well developed thanks to gas and oil resources, but this has a negative impact on the local environment. The city also faces two important demographic issues: aging population and emigration. Due to the prolonged economic crisis, there are currently empty commercial spaces in the city centre, as well as abandoned land suitable for agriculture. This land belongs to the municipality, to the ministry of agriculture and to private owners who moved out of Ivanić-Grad.

## **Local food production and consumption, circular economy and changing of mind-sets**

In order to address the issue of local food production, in the first edition of Living Streets the municipality organised a pumpkin production contest to attract citizens to the Living Streets initiative and link with an existing popular event: the pumpkin fest.

To all the citizens who filled in the application form, the Mayor of Ivanić-Grad distributed 100 urban gardening sets, including pumpkin seeds, tools for gardening, labels for seeds and instructions. In this framework, the municipal-owned land was temporarily offered to citizens who live in multi-apartment buildings and do not own gardens to use it for urban gardening. Their results encouraged them to continue in the coming years, creating a demand for more land for the future



Living Streets editions. Therefore, the municipality is relaying with the national ministry of agriculture to use the plots of currently abandoned land. The municipality is also discussing with citizens who do not use their land in order to make it available for urban gardening. Local family farms expressed interest to buy the locally produced vegetables and fruits. Citizens and local businesses were therefore connected by the municipality to collaborate in the future.



*As a Deputy Mayor, I have been following the Living Streets project since the very beginning because I felt it could be very beneficial to our citizens.*

*During the project I was actively involved in urban gardening. Citizens motivated by my own example of planting pumpkins, started planting them as well. At the end of a successful gardening season, we organized a seed exchange and prepared ourselves for the next season.*

*I think citizens will continue to partake in this interesting project even after its official ending and encourage each other in planting pumpkins which will contribute to strengthening the traditional city manifestation.*

*Željko Posilović, Deputy Mayor, City of Ivanič-Grad*

Furthermore, Living Streets offered the opportunity to exchange experience with Macedonian experts on agriculture production leading to an international trading contract signed between businesses from Ivanič-Grad and experts from Macedonia. In this

framework, Macedonian expertise will be transferred to Ivanič and in turn, Ivanič will export innovative products developed within the Living Streets such as urban gardening sets, pumpkin seeds, local eco-toys and eco-devices prepared by local designers and companies. From a

social perspective, the project is expected to link up many citizens in Ivanič who are from Macedonia and it is likely that they will reconnect with their families from Macedonia. In the framework of Living Streets, the municipality encouraged small businesses to cooperate and to communicate on common goals they are reaching for and not to see themselves as competitors. Thus, the NGO Brenta was created to regroup wine producers in order to help them cooperate better. Many produce Škrlet wine, leading to the organisation of a new local event: the festival of the Škrlet wine. They are also now responding together to large market demands for local wine, to which they cannot respond individually. The municipality acted here as a facilitator encouraging networking within its territory by connecting people and businesses. Ivanič-Grad also organised a local workshop on crowdfunding to link up students and existing and future local producers with two goals: future orientation of the students from the middle school and set up local businesses. As a result, a local cookie factory will be opened, the local bakery developed new products and urban furniture for Living Streets

on the main square. Also gardening toolkits and insect hotels were produced thanks to Living Streets connecting Design students who designed the elements, skilled pensioners who pre-crafted the elements according to the drawings and kindergarten children who assembled them. All this got together at the main city square during the green living-room events in Ivanič. So, after the crowdfunding crash-course, the students are considering a start-up in urban design now.

All that it took to make this a true social innovation is the local radio station sharing the right news, passionate handy pensioners, creative and proactive design students and open-minded municipal staff...gathered together via Living Streets in Ivanič.

### **Local consumption and awareness raising**

During the Christmas period, the municipality encouraged the citizens to buy local presents (food, drinks, toys). It turned out that many citizens did not know where to buy these products locally, nor did they know who the local producers were and

whether they had a shop. To solve this issue, in the main square an exhibition office was built temporarily and local producers could sell their products there prior to the Christmas period. This proved to be very successful. Thanks to Living Streets, the mind-sets of the citizens are changing regarding the importance of local production and on their consumption habits.

### **A local pedestrian city centre**

In the past, the municipality envisaged to close the city centre to cars, but this was perceived as an unpopular measure at the time. During the Living Streets, this car free city centre was experienced twice for two weeks during different periods in 2017. At first local businesses and shop owners were worried that their sales would decrease. However, during the urban workshop they understood that even if the square is closed to cars they would still be able to deliver goods. Besides, when they realised that citizens are asking for the square to be pedestrian, they understood that this might be an opportunity for them. The municipality promised to do some communication activities to promote

their businesses. Positive results from other European cities were shown to prove that car-free city centres do not come only with problems, but also with solutions.

After experimenting and evaluating, the following conclusions were drawn:

- Young citizens and the families with kids see the main square as a safe and thrilling place with green spaces, playgrounds, cafés.
- On the other hand, other citizens (especially middle-aged males) voted against closing the main square to cars (they usually can park their individual car in front of the shops).
- It is felt that activities organised within the Living Streets were still not sufficient to change the mind-sets completely and help citizens see that it is much healthier to bike and to walk.
- To make a pedestrian square, budget is required for infrastructure and this is not included in the municipal budget for the next two years. However, experts within the project suggested some soft activities and minor works that do not require a huge budget.

In the near future, the municipality of Ivanič will need to change its urban plans especially related to the historic city centre. It is planned to organise another urban workshop and citizens will be invited again to express their opinions, needs and suggestions. Only political commitment and a decision from the mayor to close the square for a longer period, for instance six month, can have a bigger effect and allow city officials and citizens to better assess the acceptance and impact of a pedestrian main square in Ivanič.

### More information

<https://hr-hr.facebook.com/livingstreetiv/>

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