

**Project name:** Preserving the Adriatic Sea Ecosystems by Active Participation of CitizenS – SEAS

**Project promotor:** Association for Nature, Environment and Sustainable Development Sunce

**Partners:**

- Green Istria
- WWF Adria – Association for the protection of nature and conservation of biological diversity
- Urbanex d.o.o.
- University of South-Eastern Norway (USN)

**Project implementation period:** 1.1.2021. – 31.12.2022.

**Total project value:** € 166,497.90, of which € 149,848.11 was provided through financial support from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway within the European Economic Area and Norwegian grants

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**Link to relevant website:** <https://sunce-st.org/>

**Project summary:**

The project aims to contribute to the preservation of biodiversity of the ecosystem of our Adriatic Sea, and the flora and fauna of the sea. Today, the sea and the coast are exposed to numerous pressures from growing economic sectors, ie human activities (such as: fishing, tourism, construction, etc.). Given that the management of the sea and the coast is divided between several different bodies, it is necessary to coordinate, ie harmonize their activities, in order to better and more up-to-date protection of the sea and the coast. In addition to the coordinated work of the body, it is necessary to improve the existing legislative framework governing this matter and strengthen court practice, ie encourage administrative and judicial bodies to think and act more intensively in protecting the marine environment without which there is no life on land. Furthermore, the project plans to encourage the adoption of new laws and policies and conduct additional research and analysis, in order to strengthen the knowledge that will be used to better protect the marine environment. The same will be achieved through the implementation of activities of participation in the adoption of relevant national and local policies, acts and procedures that have an impact on the marine environment and analysis of the use and effects of legal tools in the marine environment, as well as case studies on this topic. Better implementation of environmental legislation will be enabled by the strengthening court practice and educating all stakeholders.

An important role in the project is played by partner associations and other associations and civic initiatives for environmental protection in the Republic of Croatia that want their voice to be heard and their views respected. The project will enable them to improve in thematic areas of the project related to the protection of the marine environment and the use of legal tools; institutes of public participation and access to justice. In addition to improving and further strengthening these capacities, the project will enable them to educate and acquire advocacy skills to advocate for good practices and solutions among decision makers and the general public. Also, the bodies responsible for decision-making and adoption of laws and policies at the national and local level have a significant role in the project; experts in certain areas of marine environmental protection; academic community, and especially students and

young people who will use their energy and motivation to help initiate change and strengthen civic awareness of the importance of protecting the marine environment and active civic engagement in its protection among its population.

Namely, with the help of mentors and volunteers in the Association, students will be involved in the design, organization and implementation of public educational events strengthen civic awareness and civic engagement of other students and citizens. Finally, the media, ie the general public and citizens who are already showing great interest in participating in environmental protection and those who are about to acquire this interest, will contribute to the project by raising awareness and acquiring knowledge about the marine environment and ways to protect it, through informed and active participation in decision-making on interventions and their potential, harmful effects on the marine environment. The project therefore provides an opportunity to actively participate in the protection of life sources, ie the sea and the marine environment. The planned project activities directly indicate the need for sustainable management and action by advocating the establishment of a coordinated management system, policy making, decisions and acts based on sustainability principles, encouraging public involvement in decision-making processes and documents and raising awareness of the need for active civic engagement. The successful implementation of project activities will ensure a step further towards the establishment of sustainable coexistence with nature on which our future and the future of our planet depend. In a time of crisis caused by the Covid-19 virus, we believe we are more aware of this than ever before.