

SOČA VALLEY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

SILVER SMEs ACTION PLAN

FOR THE NORTHERN PRIMORSKA
(GORIŠKA) DEVELOPMENT REGION



Prepared by Vesna Kozar, project manager of SILVER SMEs., Soča Valley Development Centre, and Dr. Sc. Drago Rudl, MKS d.o.o. Design: Tatjana Šalej Faletič. Photo: iStock

NORTHERN PRIMORSKA (GORIŠKA DEVELOPMENT REGION) IN SILVER SMEs PROJECT

SLOVENIA

- Municipalities: 212
- Regions (statistical): 12
- Population: 2.095.861
- Ageing index: 133
- Percentage of population aged 65 +: 20,7 %
- Average age of population: 43, 4

NORTHERN PRIMORSKA (GORIŠKA) DEVELOPMENT REGION

- Municipalities: 13
- Population: 118.421
- Ageing index: 155;
- Percentage of population aged 65 +: 22,4 %
- Average age of population: 44,9

SOČA VALLEY

- Municipalities: 3
- Population: 18180
- Ageing index: 189,13
- Percentage of population aged 65+: 24,99%
- Average age of population: 46,7

In general, demographic changes are recognized as one of the most important factors that will shape both economic development and the development of individual regions in the future. The population is ageing rapidly, and in some areas is declining. The labour market will become smaller and it will be more difficult to get a suitable workforce.

The demographic picture of Northern Primorska (Goriška development region) is one of the worst in Slovenia. In the next 20 years, the population in the Goriška region, mainly at the expense of the Soča Valley, will decrease by more than 10 %.

The ageing trend of the population in the last ten years shows that in 2050 more than 30 % of the population in the region will be aged 65+, while in the Soča Valley this number will grow up to 40 %.



Position of Northern Primorska (Goriška) development region in Slovenia



WHY SILVER ECONOMY IN NORTHERN PRIMORSKA (GORIŠKA) DEVELOPMENT REGION?

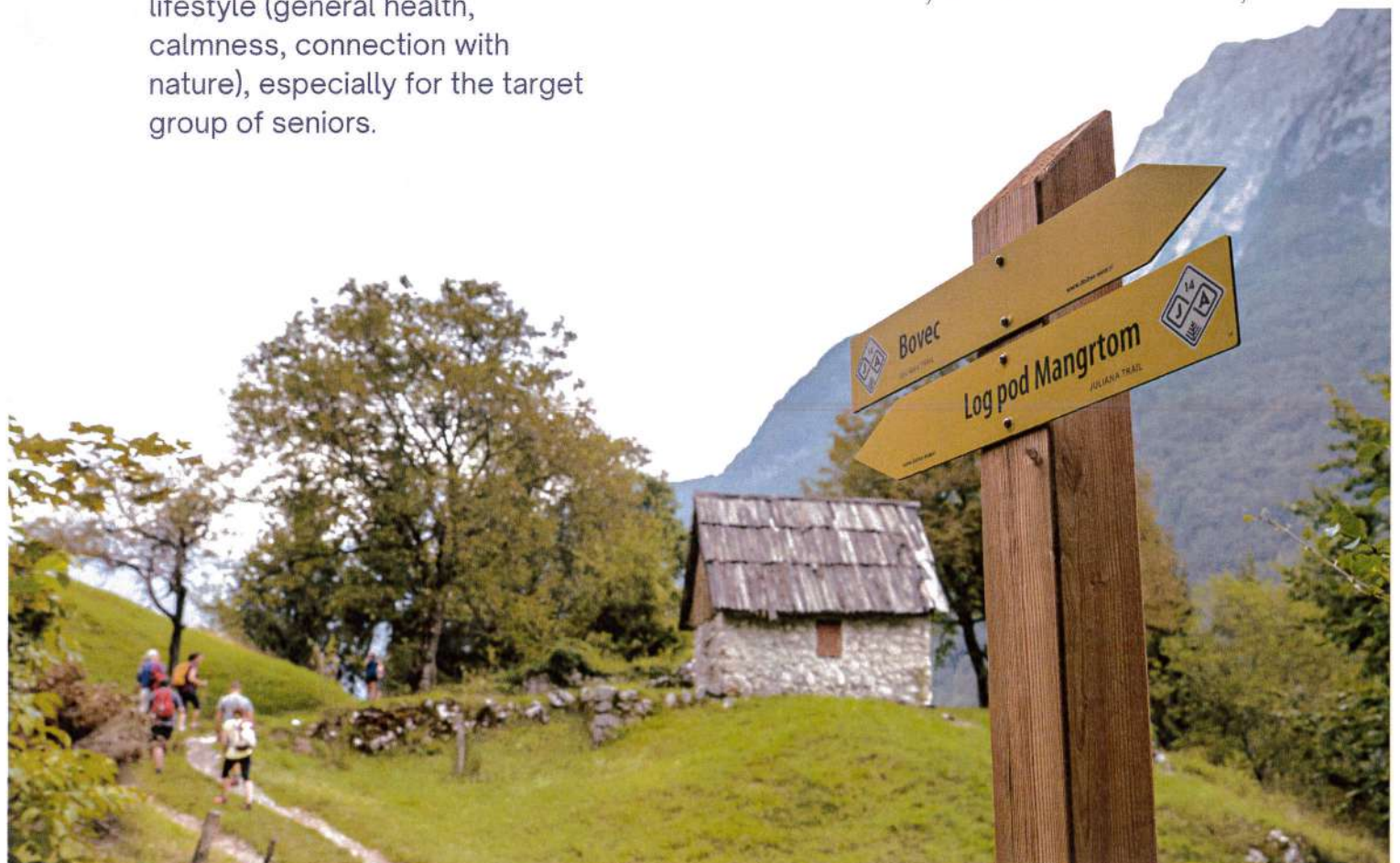
DEMAND FOR SERVICES AND PRODUCTS

New services and products must be developed for elderly people (active, fragile, and dependent).

GROWING TOURISM (Touristic attractiveness – Green Outdoor Tourism)

More wellbeing areas could be set up, aiming at developing holistic destinations. In the period affected by Covid-19, outdoor activities are of key importance for a healthy lifestyle (general health, calmness, connection with nature), especially for the target group of seniors.

Photo by: archive of the Tourist Board Soča Valley



WHY IS SILVER SMES PROJECT IMPORTANT FOR NORTHERN PRIMORSKA (GORIŠKA) DEVELOPMENT REGION?

- Identify the elderly as an added value in society, and not as a cost.
- Provide access to basic services for the elderly.
- Raise awareness of the importance of active ageing.
- Increase the visibility of the silver economy and thus the opportunities that it brings to:
 - SMEs for the development of new innovative products and services;
 - Older people to reintegrate into the labour market.



Photo by: M. H. (Pixabay)



Posoški razvojni center

SOČA VALLEY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE / POSOŠKI RAZVOJNI CENTER

To facilitate development in the region and its subregions



MISSION

The Soča Valley Development Centre aims to bring new ideas, knowledge and opportunities to the Upper Soča Valley as well as to the broader region. Alongside its partners the Soča Valley Development Centre helps create an environment, which is not only a pleasure to live in, but promotes work and innovation as well.



VISION

We aim to become a leading regional development institution, which promotes lifelong learning and is capable of forming and implementing grand-scale local and regional projects in the field of business, human resources, rural development, environment and spatial planning. We strive to become an institution known for its project management skills, efficient drawing of European and national funds and, building on this basis, partner coordination and implementation of projects for the benefit of the entire region.

SOČA VALLEY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE / POSOŠKI RAZVOJNI CENTER

Business and Regional
development

Environment and Spatial planning

Rural development

Adult Education Centre

Public relations

25 employees

are specialised in various areas of work

Entrepreneurship Regional development Project management Sustainable mobility
Lifelong learning and adult education Rural development Preparation of strategic documents
Publishing a magazine Marketing etc.



Posoški razvojni center

SOČA VALLEY DEVELOPMENT CENTRE / POSOŠKI RAZVOJNI CENTER

Most important references and principals

Integration and cooperation

Integration within the region (we are the leading development agency in the Goriška region in the period 2014–2020 and 2021–2027) and cooperation with other regions, especially strong connections with the Gorenjska region and the entire area of the Triglav National Park

Experience in managing projects

Experience in managing projects at the national, cross-border and transnational levels (working on more than 20 territorial cooperation projects in the period 2014–2020 as project partner or lead partner)

Sustainable mobility

Specialisation in the field of sustainable mobility, development of innovative approaches (implementation of public transport, reducing car mobility in tourist and protected areas, bike lanes, walking trails ...)

Leading

Leading the preparation of the Regional development program 2021–2027, preparation of the Regional sustainable mobility plan for the Julian Alps

Adult Education Centre

Centre for non-formal adult education (lifelong learning)

Support and counselling to SMEs

Support and counselling to SMEs in all branches (specialised in the field of tourism in rural areas)

Lead partner of Local Action Group

Soča Valley Development Centre is the lead partner of Local Action Group (LAG) Soča Valley (instrument CLLD)

Alpine Convention

Soča Valley Development Centre is the Alpine Convention Info Point

ACTION PLAN

The policy instrument addressed

In the original document of the SILVER SMEs project, it was foreseen that the Operational Program for the Implementation of European Cohesion Policy in the Period 2014–2020 would be the policy instrument to be impacted by the SILVER SMEs project. As the Operational program is completed and no funds are available for further actions, the Soča Valley Development Centre (Posoški razvojni center), being the SILVER SMEs project partner, has identified a new strategic document that may benefit from the project actions.

The action plan aims to impact The regional development programme of the Northern Primorska (Goriška) region for the period 2021–2027 (Regionalni razvojni program Severne Primorske (Goriške) razvojne regije 2021–2027), Ver. Dec. 2020. It has been prepared by the Soča Valley Development Centre, as the regional development agency of the South Primorska (Goriška) development region and is still in the draft version. It is a complex regional development strategy document addressing the economic development of the Northern Primorska (Goriška) region and the quality of life of all citizens, including seniors.

There are two groups in the focus of the actions in the strategic document:

- **SMEs that would enter “Silver economy” by providing products and/or services**
- **Elderly people living in their home environment in remote rural areas are the products consumers and/or the services users.**

The document follows the Slovenian national strategic documents for exploiting the European cohesion funds for the development of products and services targeting the elderly population where their accessibility in rural areas is under-pinned.

Demands for products and services in the Northern Primorska (Goriška) development region that would improve the quality of life of the elderly population are evident. There is a lack of home care services for elderly people in remote rural regions. Consequently, there are opportunities and potentials for SMEs, start-ups, persons seeking part-time employment, and self-employed people seeking business opportunities in their region e.g. in care business, tourist industry, non-formal adult education (universities for the third age), entertainment, high-tech products for elderly persons etc.

ACTION PLAN – PROPOSED ACTION

A network of centres for the development of silver economy in the Northern Primorska region

The proposed action aims at developing a network of centres for silver economy in the Northern Primorska region. The Soča Valley Development Centre will pilot the action by establishing the first centre as one of its departments. It will be based on the good practices available at the Interreg platform and direct cooperation with the partners which have developed similar centres. The centre will get involved in new R&D projects and services to gain additional knowledge.

The main activities of the network of centres will be:

-  **Awareness-raising** on the silver economy services and products needs and potentials for the local entrepreneurs
-  **Promoting the existing silver economy services and products** that are available regionally
-  **Inspiring, consulting, and supporting entrepreneurs** in the Primorska region in the development of their products and services
-  **Developing promotion plans and supporting local municipalities** at running their silver economy-related promotional activities
-  **Preparing programmes that would support silver economy development** in the region
-  **Supporting SMEs** in preparing applications for the bids and calls for projects
-  **Fundraising** for start-up SMEs specializing in silver economy area

- 8 **Setting up and supporting a network of stakeholders interested in silver economy.** The centre should become a contact point for the silver economy products manufacturers and service providers on one side and potential buyers/consumers of the products and users of the services on the other
- 9 **Supporting local municipalities** in the preparation of development plans that would embed silver economy programmes
- 10 **Running activities at the national level** that the silver economy becomes a part of the relevant national strategies
- 11 **Running activities in cooperation** with the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology to establish a network of regional silver economy centres in Slovenia.

In the early stage, the centre will serve as a promotion centre for “silver economy” for three municipalities where the Soča Valley Development Centre runs several other activities/projects. SMEs in this area will benefit from the advice of country experts specialized in the specific needs of elderly persons.



ACTION PLAN

The policy instrument addressed

In the original document of the SILVER SMEs project, it was foreseen that the Operational Program for the Implementation of European Cohesion Policy in the Period 2014–2020 would be the policy instrument to be impacted by the SILVER SMEs project. As the Operational programme is completed and no funds are available for further actions, the Soča Valley Development Centre (Posoški razvojni center), being the SILVER SMEs project partner, has identified a new strategic document which may benefit from the project actions.

The action plan aims to impact The regional development programme of the Northern Primorska (Goriška) region for the period 2021–2027 (Regionalni razvojni program Severne Primorske (Goriške) razvojne regije 2021–2027), Ver. Dec. 2020. It has been prepared by the Soča Valley Development Centre, as a regional development agency of the South Primorska (Goriška) development region and is still in the draft version. It is a complex regional development strategy document addressing economic development of the Northern Primorska (Goriška) region and quality of life of all citizens, including seniors.

There are two groups in the focus of the actions in the strategic document:

- **SMEs that would enter “Silver economy” by providing products and/or services**
- **Elderly people living in their home environment in remote rural areas being the products consumers and/or the services users.**

The document follows the Slovenian national strategic documents for exploiting the European cohesion funds for the development of products and services targeting elderly population where their accessibility in rural areas is underpinned.

Demands for products and services in the Northern Primorska (Goriška) development region that would improve quality of life of the elderly population are evident. There is a lack of home care services for elderly people in remote rural regions. Consequently, there are opportunities and potentials for SMEs, start-ups, persons seeking part-time employment, and self-employed people seeking for business opportunities in their region e.g. in care business, tourist industry, education of informal carers (the third age universities), entertainment, high-tech products for elderly persons etc.

ACTION PLAN

Relevance: how the action contributes to the policy instrument(s) addressed

The action will impact the Regional development programme of the Northern Primorska region 2021-2027 by supplementing it with an additional aim and activities targeting the development of silver economy industry in the region.

It will impact the following chapters:

5.1: Region for people with the measures

- 5.1.1: Increased social inclusion
- 5.1.2: Labour market and employment

5.2: A smarter region with its measures

- 5.2.1: Infrastructure and supportive environment to increase the competitiveness of the economy in the region
- 5.2.2: Research, development, and innovation for a sustainable economy.

The action aims at introducing the »spirit« of silver economy into the regional policies and programmes. The proposed network of centres for the development of silver economy will be a new project of the strategic document with allocated project attributes (aims, activities, resources, expected impact, contractors ...). The supplement will improve the quality of the policy instrument by bringing in novel activities that would complement the traditional approaches to support economic development in the region.

Source of inspiration from the SILVER SMEs project

The action was inspired by the aims of the SILVER SMEs project which highlights the necessity of harnessing “silver economy” to serve the needs of elderly people and the resources.

Additionally, it was inspired by the GP “Cross-border silver economy accelerator” (<https://www.interregeurope.eu/policylearning/good-practices/item/2664/cross-border-silver-economy-accelerator/>). The accelerator was developed within the project SEAS 2 GROW, an Interreg 2 Seas Mers Zeeën project.

ACTION PLAN

Timeframe

Q4 2021–Q4 2022

Stakeholders involved

The stakeholders responsible for the preparation of the strategies are:

- The Soča Valley Development Centre
- The Municipality of Bovec
- The Municipality of Kobarid
- The Municipality of Tolmin
- The Regional Development Centre of the Northern Primorska ltd, Nova Gorica
- The Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia – Regional chamber
- The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia – The Northern Primorska Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Costs

80.000 €/per year

Funding resources

The action will be initially financed from the budget of the municipalities of Bovec, Kobarid and Tolmin which are also partly the founders of the Soča Valley Development Centre. The Centre signs yearly contracts with the municipalities for its activities. This is in line with the system of financing regional initiatives/actions in Slovenia. The government finances some of the actions previously identified as priorities at a regional level directly from EU cohesion or national funds. The first finances for the action will be available in 2022.

The Silver Economy Centre project will be placed in the RDP as a regional project, which will be co-financed directly from cohesion funds by the Ministry of Economic Development and Technology and the Ministry of Labor, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. In addition, the project will be financed from the annual budgets of the municipalities of Bovec, Kobarid and Tolmin and from the national fund of municipalities.

ACTION PLAN

The government financing is usually only partial, so additional resources are needed for completing the projects. The Centre should seek also other means of financial resources e.g. through national, cross-border and international projects. Potential resources for the action funding are:

- **the EU funds** – based on the placement of activities from the Action plan to the strategic part of the Regional Development Plan for Goriška development region 2021–2027
- **the Recovery plan for Europe coupled with Next Generation EU funds** where Slovenia will receive 5,3 billion EUR. In the Slovenian document Recovery and resilience plan (30 April 2021) funds are allocated for such types of actions
- **European Regional Development Fund:**
 - **Cross-border Interreg Programme Italia-Slovenia 2021–2027**
 - **Transnational Interreg Programmes** (Central Europa, Alpine Space, Danube, Adrian, Mediterranean, Interreg Europa). Potentials to get involved in the Interreg projects are high as Silver economy is one of the priorities in Interreg Central Europe. The first call for project proposals is announced for autumn 2021.
- **European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, European Regional Development Fund, European Social Funds; European maritime fisheries and aquaculture fund 2021–2027** – the Rural development Programme Slovenia 2021–2027 LEADER / CLLD (Community-Led Local Development).

The Regional Centre for the promotion of Silver economy that will be established through the action will have its own budget. Initially, one person will be employed.

Tolmin, Slovenia / September 2021



Simon Škvor,

direktor regijske razvojne agencije Posoški razvojni center/Director of the Regional Development Agency Soča Valley Development Centre