Description of the Good Practice, highlighting key elements, and policy challenge to be addressed

The Slovenian BirdLife Partner (DOPPS – BirdLife Slovenia), with the support of the Municipality of Ormož (which adopted a Municipal Detailed Spatial Plan for the area), successfully transformed a degraded site - the former wastewater treatment plant of the Ormož Sugar Factory - into a wetland of exceptional nature conservation value. Today, the area is an important hotspot of biodiversity, hosting waterbirds, amphibians, and dragonflies. It is a clear example of how degraded land can be given a new, nature - friendly function. This is a Good Practice that combines ecological restoration, stakeholder involvement, and the innovative reuse of abandoned land for the benefit of nature, education, and nature - based tourism.

The practice demonstrates that degraded areas - large or small can be creatively revitalised, increasing local biodiversity and reconnecting people with nature. At the same time, it addresses a broader policy challenge: how to manage degraded urban and peri - urban areas in a sustainable way. Such areas often hold significant but overlooked potential for nature restoration, climate resilience, education, and eco - tourism.

Through similar measures, environmental quality can be improved by creating flower - rich areas that support pollinators and birds, small wetlands that provide habitat for amphibians and dragonflies, and tree lines or small woodland patches that offer refuge for birds and small mammals. With targeted restoration, degraded sites can become valuable nature hubs, connecting landscapes and improving the quality of life for local communities.

The initial challenge was both environmental and spatial: how to repurpose an abandoned industrial area that no longer served its technical function. Despite its degraded state, the area had great potential for establishing green space and natural habitat -but this required ecological, legal, and social consideration, as well as a plan for future management.

DOPPS approached the transformation through nature based solutions. Instead of abandoning the site entirely, the existing basins were preserved and sensibly integrated into a new ecosystem design. Reintroducing water enabled the restoration of the wetland, which became a suitable habitat for various species - amphibians, dragonflies, birds, and plant species adapted to standing water.

With the creation of wetland habitats and new water regimes, the site developed within just a few years into a rich mosaic of biodiversity. In addition to its conservation value, the site now also serves as a place for education, nature - based tourism, and awareness - raising about the importance of protecting and expanding areas dedicated to nature.
It is an excellent example of Good Practice that can be adapted and transferred to other municipalities wishing to restore degraded areas in a sustainable and nature - based manner.

The area has become an outdoor classroom, a space for volunteering and citizen science (e.g. during the Open Days of the Ormož Basins Nature Reserve). Today, it functions as a multi - purpose natural area, combining conservation, education, recreation, awareness - raising, tourism, and agriculture.

An added value of the practice is its low financial demand and high transferability. The project required relatively low investment compared to full industrial remediation and restoration to its original condition. By relying on natural processes and encouraging ecological succession, costs for construction and maintenance were significantly reduced. This makes the approach highly suitable for replication in other small towns with abandoned or degraded land.

Profile of the Transfer Partner Cities

Limerick City & County Council

Limerick faces challenges in biodiversity conservation and water quality, especially in the area of the Loughmore canal, located in the southwest part of the city. This artificial canal was built in the 1970s to support the development of an industrial park and today crosses the protected Natura 2000 site – Loughmore Common SAC – and is often flooded. The canal is unlined and ecologically degraded, yet it represents an important natural corridor.

Due to its location and hydrology, the area is prone to degradation but offers great potential for habitat restoration, water quality improvement, and the development of educational, awareness-raising, and tourism activities. The municipality aims to carry out a pilot project to enhance the ecological value of this area, which could later be expanded to other similar sites within the city.

The city already has an established Blue-Green Infrastructure (GBI) strategy and a newly adopted Biodiversity Action Plan 2025–2030, but it needs additional knowledge, methods, and tools to implement nature-based solutions (NbS) in complex areas like the Loughmore canal. There is also a need for greater community involvement and the development of communication approaches to raise residents' awareness about

the importance of green interventions in the urban fabric. The Good Practice from Ormož offers inspiration on how to transform degraded water infrastructure into a highly biodiverse area with an educational function at low cost and through stakeholder engagement, which is directly applicable to Limerick.

Municipality of Srebrenica

The Municipality of Srebrenica faces major environmental challenges. Key areas like the Križevica River and Lake Perućac are heavily degraded due to household waste dumping, untreated wastewater, and floating debris. The Križevica River is severely polluted by direct wastewater discharges. Lake Perućac, although protected within Drina National Park, suffers pollution from weekend settlements and waste carried by the Lim and Drina Rivers, impacting both local and transboundary ecosystems. Despite participating in lake clean-up initiatives, the lack of systemic long-term improvement.

The municipality has strong natural and tourism potential and is committed to promoting nature-based tourism, environmental education, and biodiversity conservation as outlined in the Srebrenica Development Strategy 2023–2030. Besides environmental issues, climate change poses threats such as floods, landslides, and water shortages. In 2023, residents endured over two months without drinking water due to an outdated supply system and high water loss.

The Ormož Good Practice inspires Srebrenica by showing how degraded sites can be transformed into valuable natural spaces through nature-based solutions, community engagement, and cross-sector cooperation despite limited resources. This approach supports education, tourism, recreation, and climate adaptation. Lake Perućac holds potential for developing a nature reserve, educational trails, wildlife observation points, and eco-tourism, involving collaboration with Drina National Park and local tourism groups.

Through URBACT network participation, Srebrenica aims to build institutional capacity, establish sustainable site management practices, and create a transferable model for other regional areas.

Municipality of Bogovinje

The Municipality of Bogovinje in North Macedonia is a mainly rural area within Šar Mountain National Park, known for its rich natural assets and water resources. It includes Lake Bogovinje and the Kamenjan River, valued for waterfalls and springs, offering great potential for biodiversity conservation, education, and sustainable nature-based tourism.

Bogovinje sees potential in Lake Bogovinje and Kamenjan waterfalls for educational points, eco-tourism trails, and community nature initiatives but lacks a comprehensive restoration and management model.

The Ormož Good Practice provides a practical, transferable approach: restoring degraded areas with limited resources, engaging stakeholders (farmers, schools, youth), and developing nature conservation tourism to protect nature and boost the local economy.

By joining the network, Bogovinje aims to gain experience in nature-based solutions, water and biodiversity management, piloting educational areas, and involving communities in natural environment protection.

Municipality of Priboj

Located in southwestern Serbia near the borders with Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Municipality of Priboj is a less developed area facing environmental and infrastructural challenges. Despite rich natural assets, especially along the Lim and Uvac Rivers, the municipality lacks a wastewater treatment system. A project is in progress to build a primary sewer collector and reconstruct the sewage network, with plans for a central treatment plant near the rivers' confluence.

Close to the planned facility lies a 15,000 m² degraded area with strong potential to be transformed into a biodiversity-rich site for education, awareness, and nature-based tourism. The municipality sees this location as ideal for multifunctional use, combining nature protection with community benefit.

Priboj has already taken notable steps in environmental sustainability, such as launching Serbia's first biomass district heating system and subsidizing residents to replace old stoves, significantly reducing air pollution. However, challenges remain in waste separation, water and biodiversity management, and sustainable mobility.

The site but seeks to improve it through knowledge exchange and proven practices from other European cities.

Through URBACT, the municipality aims to gain expertise in:

- Planning and applying nature-based solutions
- Creating pilot sites for biodiversity
- Involving citizens and schools in environmental projects
- Strengthening capacity for sustainable natural resource management

Yaremche

Nestled in the Ukrainian Carpathians and gateway to Carpathian National Park, Yaremche is rich in natural assets yet increasingly threatened by climate change, un-managed tourism and ageing infrastructure.

Key challenges are:

- Overloaded water and municipal systems in peak season;
- Watercourse pollution from incomplete sewers and obsolete treatment plants;
- Habitat fragmentation from urban growth and transport routes;
- Absence of protected ecological corridors and degradation along the Prut River;
- Rising flood risk and river-bank erosion driven by extreme weather.

Local assessments highlight several degraded zones suitable for restoration: land around two outdated wastewater plants

(Yaremche, Mykulychyn); riverbanks of the Prut and tributaries; overgrown railway strips; and peripheral settlement areas ideal for constructed wetlands or other nature-based treatment systems.

Though no comprehensive restoration plan exists, civil society groups, schools, rsearchers and tourism operators strongly back green infrastructure, ecological rehabilitation and nature-positive tourism.

The Ormož Good Practice offers Yaremche a proven template for turning degraded infrastructure into biodiverse wetlands and educational spaces through nature-based solutions, participatory planning and cross-sector collaboration—an approach tailored to a mountain municipality with scarce flat land and heavy seasonal visitor pressure.