

**ENTREPRENEURIAL LEARNING EXCHANGE INITIATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE
HOSPITALITY SMEs IN THE BALKAN-MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

Subsidy Contract No. BMP1/1.3/2616/2017

Company name: MADONA Inn

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Source: <http://hanmadona.com>

Country/region of operation: Falkovets, Belogradchik, Bulgaria

Sustainability dimension: environmental, heritage-based tourist product, facility management

Description of the enterprise/initiative:

MADONA Inn is situated in Falkovets, just 14 kilometers from the town of Belogradchik, 52 kilometers from the municipality town Vidin and 170 kilometers from the capital Sofia. It is the place where the natural phenomenon Belogradchik rocks starts from. The inn offers two suites, six bedrooms, ten double rooms and one single room, all with separate bathrooms, TV sets and Wi-Fi Internet, as well as a conference room for 40 people. The restaurant has 60 seats, divided in two halls. During the summer season there are 20 more seats in the garden. There you can enjoy the delicious Bulgarian cuisine and unique Torlak specialties and judge the local wines and brandies on their merits. There is a 7-decare yard with facilities for guests with travel trailers (caravans) or campers.

There are great opportunities for practicing alternative tourist, biking, hiking and cave tourism, hunting and fishing, sport, kayaking and white- water rafting. Tourists can visit the Belogradchik rocks, the Kale fortress, Magura cave, Baba Vida fortress, as well as numerous monasteries in Northwest Bulgaria.

Social/ community impact sought:

Creating a place for accommodation and starting point to the Belogradchik rocks, the Kale fortress, Magura cave, Baba Vida fortress, as well as numerous monasteries in Northwest Bulgaria.

Stakeholders: Tourists visiting the northwest Bulgaria

Approach applied:

There is a legend saying that God created that place around Falkovets when he was in a very good mood and made it for his own pleasure. It was a long, long time ago at the times when the Belogradchik fortress was built. One young maiden fell in love with a Torlak from the nearby village. Unfortunately, she was desecrated by the fortress commandant. She couldn't bear the shame. So she climbed up a rock overhanging the river at the end of the village and jumped in the river. At that same moment the rock changed into the form of her beloved- "The Torlak". The cool water embraced her and carried her along the stream. Her heart was praying to God to take her but her long mermaid-like hair got caught on the willow roots at that far end of the village. So the maiden turned into a mermaid. Every night at the deepest and darkest hours she gets out of the waters and silently cries looking at her Torlak lover. The big clear teardrops that run down her beautiful pale face have made a small lake. At daytime we admire the water lilies that the mermaid collects and plaits in her hair, at night the crickets accompany her quiet sighs. That way she reminds us for the pure true love that lives within us all.

Knowing all that, loving the place and the story one family decided to establish MADONA Inn Falkovets as a family business.

Innovation applied:

The innovation applied is in the opportunity for guests with travel trailers (caravans) or campers to use the yard and the facilities of the inn.

Social impact and business results achieved:

The hosts treat every visitor like a friend. Mr. Mladenov knows the region very well. If the stay is longer, he'll show the visitors incredible places. Mrs. Mladenova will fascinate everyone both with delicious dishes and half-forgotten legends and stories. Mr. Mladenov, Jr. knows the history of the town and the region and will impress the ones who visit the inn with curious facts of this and that. That way, the guests of MADONA Inn Falkovets become friends with the hosts and come back. The people who have spent some time in MADONA inn share that visiting this place only once is not enough.

Financial situation / sustainability of the business model:

The sustainability of the business is ensured by facility management, resource-efficiency and heritage conservation. MADONA Inn Falkovets is a family business. The family

members work in the inn and also guide the tourist around. The inn is built in old style, using natural materials. The dishes served in the restaurant are typical for the region and cooked with home-grown products thus preserving the culinary heritage of the region. In addition, the proximity to some of the most impressive sights in the region makes the place preferable accommodation place for most of the tourists.

Key success factors: Location, family involvement and devotion, innovation in facility management, heritage-conservation

Challenges and problems: As the place is mostly visited for alternative tourism and outdoor activities, the workload of the inn is seasonal. The challenge faced by the owners is in maintaining the place during the non-peak months.

Year when the enterprise was created: 2009

References (web-site, intent links, video, etc.):

<http://hanmadona.com>