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# MARINA AND LOCAL COMMUNITY IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: A CASE STUDY OF PUNAT

## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Croatian islands have many small communities where marinas are located and play the role of local leaders. The paper analyses socially responsible behaviour of a small local community to gain insight into the level of understanding of social responsibility as well as the forms of operational activity. Research was conducted in the municipality of Punat on the island of Krk and in Marina Punat.

**Methodology:** Structured in-depth interviews were used to identify the factors of socially responsible behaviour in the community.

**Results:** The research confirms the gradual shift from spontaneous to conscious socially responsible management and behaviour. Focusing on small Adriatic towns, particularly Punat, this study explores the relationship between the marina as a local leader and the local community. Findings show a developing unity based on shared socially responsible practices. However, legal regulations currently prevent joint investment in their mutual development. This paper proposes legal reform to enable coordinated socially responsible actions between marinas and municipalities, supporting sustainable local development.

**Conclusion:** Socially responsible business in Croatia is emerging as key to sustainable tourism. The Punat case shows how cooperation between local government and marina leadership fosters economic development, community well-being, and destination quality, despite legal barriers hindering joint investment initiatives.

**Keywords:** Local marina, local community, socially responsibility, legal regulations

## 1. Introduction

Marinas, as a key segment of nautical tourism, serve as platforms for leisure activities and play an important role in local economic development (Luković et al., 2024). While supporting tourism, marinas also impact the coastal environment, acting as potential sources of pollution due to their commercial

activities. Thus, marina management must balance service provision with environmental oversight (Martín & Yepes, 2022). Modern marina operations increasingly adopt sustainable and socially responsible practices, moving beyond short-term profit. Emerging management approaches focus on environmental responsibility and the social dimension, aiming to balance the needs of tourists, local com-

munities, and long-term development (Martín & Yepes, 2021).

Development is a constant need across all sectors, accompanied by a shift toward sustainable and socially responsible business practices. The core aim of such practices is the joint protection of resources and raising awareness of social responsibility among all community actors. In Croatia, the local community is a key driver of social and entrepreneurial activity, making it essential to analyse its development through the lens of social responsibility. This is particularly relevant for the coastal and island regions, where understanding local dynamics is crucial for broader economic and social progress (Luković et al., 2024).

Socially responsible enterprises vary widely by form and location, with marinas in small coastal and island communities in Croatia often acting as local leaders. This research focuses on the relationship between marinas and local communities, aiming to assess the degree of synergy in their socially responsible behaviour. Croatian marinas, especially those of higher categories, increasingly take on leadership roles in local development (Marušić et al., 2024).

In line with the above, the research in this article aims to assess the form of socially responsible behaviour and business between the local community and the marina that is increasingly developing on the Croatian Adriatic coast. On the Croatian Adriatic coast, one of the important and frequent local leaders is the marina, which contributes to the development of the local community by its growth. Therefore, in accordance with the aim of this research, a hypothesis was put forward stating that the marina significantly promotes the development of the destination through socially responsible business that goes hand in hand with the activities of the local community.

## 2. Overview of previous research

With regard to previous research on this topic, it is worth mentioning the work of Brščić et al. (2020). Brščić et al. emphasise the importance of managing destinations in the context of sustainable development in order to reduce the negative impacts of tourist flows. They presented the results of a project that tested the application of sustainable tourism indicators in coastal resorts in Catalonia, Istria

and Tuscany using the European Tourism Indicator System (ETIS).

Gračan et al. (2022) explore how the blue economy, particularly nautical tourism, affects the quality of life in Mediterranean EU countries. Their study confirms that implementing blue economy goals positively impacts local communities' well-being. The research highlights that sustainable tourism and resource management can lead to measurable social benefits.

Martín and Yepes (2022) aimed to identify the landscape values marina users associate with satisfaction and explore their role as a management tool. Research findings highlight that users mostly appreciate the sense of tranquillity and well-being, while concerns include overcrowding, excessive urban development, and poor hospitality and maintenance.

González-Morales et al. (2022) study CSR involvement in maritime tourism, focusing on relational responsibility. They identify that strong human resource management and environmental initiatives are key CSR areas. Smaller, younger companies show higher CSR engagement, particularly those adapting to change, supporting communities, and collaborating with private stakeholders.

Tippett (2022) emphasises that tourism is an important tool to connect people with nature, especially in the context of marine and coastal areas. She emphasises that sustainable coastal and marine tourism must be developed at a scale that can meet market demand, but on the condition that the environment is preserved.

In addition, Bruccoleri et al. (2023) carried out a study in Italy, which has the largest number of moorings in the Mediterranean. The quantitative survey using questionnaires included information on fossil fuel consumption for vehicles and fixed installations, electricity consumption, fuel consumption related to waste management, water consumption and waste management. Based on the results obtained, the authors concluded that all leisure travel should be closely monitored in order to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and their impact on the environment.

Vasiljeva et al. (2023) explore corporate social responsibility as a key factor in sustainable business development and efficiency. Their analysis shows a positive link between CSR and business perfor-

mance, which is influenced by financial stability. In financially stable firms, management does not mediate this link, while in less stable ones, management plays a motivating role. However, autocratic leadership reduces CSR engagement regardless of stability. The study highlights the importance of aligning CSR with financial stability for sustainable strategy development, particularly relevant for sustainability-focused tourism.

Fairuz Ramli et al. (2024) provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of socially responsible development on sustainable development in specific tourism environments. By combining interviews with key stakeholders, policy analyses and surveys of tourists, the authors attempt to obtain a comprehensive picture of the complex relationships between DSR practises and sustainability indicators. The results show that the integration of socially responsible practises contributes positively to the preservation of the environment, greater involvement of the local community and greater visitor satisfaction.

Milanović Pešić et al. (2025) highlight the socio-economic benefits of natural heritage through tourism, while also noting its potential environmental harm from unsustainable practices. They stress the need for place-specific management and research to better understand tourism's impacts. Sustainable tourism is presented as a strategy for achieving lasting benefits for local communities.

### 3. Sustainability and social responsibility

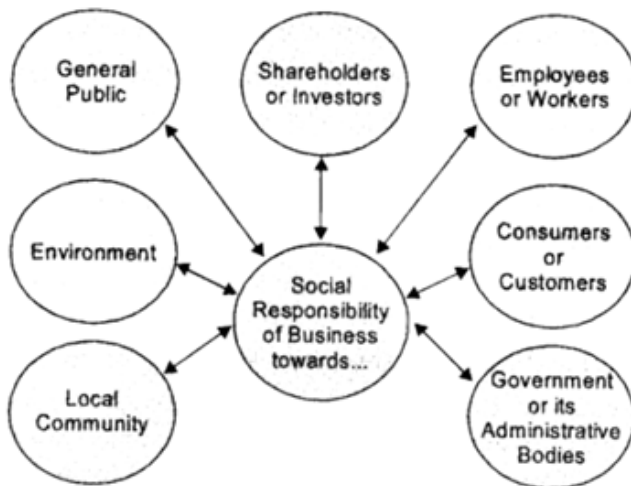
The concept of sustainable development is closely related to resources, which are known to be naturally limited. Resources are the foundation sustainable development is built upon, which in turn supports higher-level socially responsible action.

The concept of sustainable development encompasses financial sustainability, social well-being, and environmental protection, emphasising their interdependence. As environmental and social challenges grow, companies increasingly recognise the need to go beyond profit-making and adopt socially responsible business (CSR) practices.

This approach aligns with the principles of sustainable development, integrating ethical, social, and environmental responsibility. In this context, marinas as local leaders build their growth on the development of the communities they operate in. By jointly investing in local initiatives, marinas and communities form a shared interest, enriching the tourism offer and fostering cooperation. This CSR model is increasingly present among Croatian marinas along the Adriatic coast.

With regard to the research in this paper, it is important to note that the local community is of great importance. What is also important is the role of shareholders and investors related to the business they generate profit from. Socially responsible action should become a dynamic system.

Figure 1 Major areas for social responsibility of business



Source: NCERT Solutions for Class 11 Business Studies Social Responsibilities of Business and Business Ethics, 2019

Marinas play a key role in meeting the growing demand for nautical tourism and supporting local economic development through entrepreneurship (Martínez-Vázquez et al., 2022). As local leaders, marinas are expected to demonstrate socially responsible behaviour. Assessing CSR requires evaluating environmental, ethical, philanthropic, and economic responsibility, which must be integrated for effective governance. Social sustainability is central to planning and operating coastal and nautical infrastructure. In marina development, aligning social responsibility with community goals enhances guest experience and benefits locals, but requires long-term commitment, resources, and institutional support (Biondi & Lara, 2015).

Environmental responsibility involves minimising negative environmental impacts through practices like reducing emissions, saving energy, and supporting green initiatives. It is a common form of CSR.

Ethical responsibility ensures fair and just treatment of all stakeholders. Companies practicing this may go beyond legal requirements, such as paying fair wages or sourcing materials according to fair trade principles.

Philanthropic responsibility reflects a company's commitment to improving society, often through donations to charities or by establishing its own foundations. It goes beyond ethical and environmental actions to actively support social causes.

Economic responsibility means making financial decisions that not only aim for profit but also generate positive impacts on people, communities, and the environment (Stobierski, 2021).

Research shows that marina supports destination development through economic and environmental sustainability. Socially responsible activities in a destination should be considered across all these dimensions, helping assess the level of engagement and unity between marinas and local communities.

#### **4. Socially responsible operation of marinas**

Marinas now offer a variety of services beyond recreational sailing, enhancing the tourism offerings of their location. The range of services provided by a marina ultimately determines its competitive advantage in the market. While marinas bring economic and social benefits to their communities, they can also have negative impacts on the environment (Martínez-Vázquez et al., 2021).

Marina owners and management have faced challenges overcoming prejudices in underdeveloped coastal areas. The introduction of marinas in small, neglected towns in Croatia sparked development and attracted people back to these communities. Local pride associated with the marina motivated residents to invest in revitalising the town, with limited involvement from the central government.

This was important for the development of socially responsible activities of the marina and the local community. To illustrate this, it is necessary to conduct a PEST analysis of the macro environment. The conducted PEST analysis indicates a positive technological environment and highlights the marina's great importance to the local community and, arguably, to the entire island of Krk, especially regarding the socially responsible behaviour of entrepreneurs. What is worrying is the political environment, which is extremely poor, and the close connection with the economic environment shows a high degree of dependence of the economy on politics (Luković et al., 2022).

Negative features of the relationship between the marina and the state are generally related to high taxation, a lack of understanding of special business conditions and the system of concessionary charges, which is unacceptable.

**Table 1** Four characteristics of the environment, PEST analysis of the island of Krk

	POLITICAL	ECONOMIC	SOCIAL	TECHNOLOGICAL
NEGATIVE	Too many laws that change frequently	National GDP growth below the expected and necessary	Lack of local workforce	Level of technological literacy below the EU
	Party diversity at the regional government level	Unfavourable investment climate for small domestic investors	Arrival and engagement of uneducated immigrants	Significant generational differences in literacy
	Weak government engagement in supporting (SME) entrepreneurship	Favourable climate for foreign investors that is unfavourable for local investors	Relocation of small towns to larger cities and emigration	-
	Absence of a macro-national and regional system	Impossibility of favourable lending to small entrepreneurs	Low birth rate	-
	Political and legal solutions not accepted by the scientific community and professionals	Due to numerous small settlements, insufficient market demand prevents faster development	High level of corruption and nepotism	-
POSITIVE	Detailed categorisation of marinas	The GDP of the island is better than the average of Croatia	Understanding the need for significant changes in Croatia	The island's level of technological literacy is above the Croatian average
	Good setting of local community goals	Good competitiveness and occupancy of Croatian marinas and Marina Punat	The connection of the island with the mainland but also with neighbouring islands	Conditional monitoring of technological trends
	There is no great influence of state administration and politics	Development of entities that are not under the direct control of politics	High degree of acceptance of diversity	Investment in technological development by young entrepreneurs
	Outside the political activity of the central government	Good cooperation with foreign business	Increase in the number of inhabitants	Recognising foreign role models important for technological development
	-	Effective use of EU funds	-	New patents

Source: Created by the authors (Autumn 2023)

The following presents the research carried out on the form and extent of socially responsible activities of a small local community and marina in order to assess socially responsible performance. The limitations set in this research are the deviation from the same research in a large city and a large county. This could be explored in future research by comparing small local governments and municipalities with larger ones.

### 5. Marina and local self-government in social responsibility

In general, socio-business sustainability is key to the planning and design of coastal infrastructure, especially marinas. Marinas play a significant role

in coastal tourism, especially in summer resorts and urban waterfronts; therefore, they need to be adapted to the principles of sustainable tourism (Hruška et al., 2021). Port terminal activities can also be harmful to the marine environment, such as, for example, negative impacts on the environment and the coastal area through pollution due to the release of contaminants - waste water, oil and its derivatives (Cibic et al., 2021).

The development of more socially sustainable tourism in the locality is largely connected to human activities related to ports and marinas. In particular, free time, boating, local fishing, and tourist transport, depend on adequate ports and the status of navigation routes (navigability) (Guzzini et al., 2021).

The subject of this study is Marina Punat and the municipality of the same name on the island of Krk, the Municipality of Punat.

In the first step of this study, it is necessary to define local self-government, outline its basic characteristics and see what significance it has in the wider national context. Along the Croatian coast, a number of small local self-governments were established as small municipalities (Jurić, 2021). These were places that were in danger of dying out due to demographic decline and insufficient entrepreneurial development. The problem of demography is the central problem for the survival of small towns and municipalities. When a small community is on the verge of disappearing, it is necessary to turn this negative process into a development process. As a rule, this problem is the responsibility of the state and its policy of unitary development. In order for the national policy of uniform development to be realised, there should be clear goals, and this presupposes the existence of a macro-national system based on the basic pillars of society, which Croatia has not developed yet (Luković et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the development of tourism and the possibility of developing entrepreneurship in the maritime sector after the war have enabled the emergence of private marinas in such small towns. Marina harbours proved to be a good solution. Under these conditions, the necessity and possibility of good cooperation between all parties involved was emphasised. This raises the research question of how direct and indirect cooperation is achieved, with the marina acting as the leader.

In relation to the topic of this study, it can be concluded that in smaller municipalities, regardless of party affiliation, there is a greater connection between the local government and the population. This presupposes that municipal needs are defined and implemented jointly and transparently in comparison to large cities, municipalities and counties. At the level of small local self-government, the "government-community-population" link is stronger and more direct, creating better conditions for the easier realisation of the set goals.

The dynamics of market changes as well as changes from other sources, such as strategic risks, require greater dynamics of research into small towns and municipalities along the Croatian coast (Guzzini et al., 2021). The absence of research determines the limits in the dynamics of development, in both marinas and small towns.

## 6. Socially responsible behaviour in tourism - examples of good practice

Today, there are numerous companies that practise socially responsible business practices and thus make a contribution. The most important examples of good practice are listed and described below.

*Grupo Puntacana (GPC)* is a large private company that develops and operates coastal tourism projects in the Dominican Republic. In 1998, the company established a foundation with social, cultural and educational objectives that supports a range of social needs through social and community programmes in the region such as schools, clinics and vocational training programmes (Biondi & Lara, 2015).

Another example is *Ilirija d.d.*, a tourism company in Biograd na Moru, which applies the Code of Corporate Governance, the Code of Business Ethics and Socially Responsible Behaviour in its operations. The company is also a member of the Croatian Business Council for Sustainable Development (HR PSOR). One of Ilirija's long-term goals is the motivation of employees, which, in addition to material income, is achieved by working in an environment that ensures their professional development and improvement, while taking care of their social and societal needs, respecting their personal and professional characteristics. At the same time, the Blue Flag at Kornati Marina demonstrates compliance with the international environmental and coastal protection programme, whose main objective is the sustainable development, health and safety of the community (Petričević, 2014).

*Haven Kakumäe* is a new marina built to the latest standards, located near the Estonian capital Tallinn. The marina's business is geared towards the needs of users, so there is a recreation centre for the whole family and for all age groups. One of the external collaborators is the "Tallinn Yacht Club", which is also committed to socially responsible action, as the sailing schools and the construction of a sailing stadium are organised in joint cooperation. The marina also works with the local community and has signed an agreement to organise the traditional "Seafaring Days" fair and the marina's Open Days (Jakulj, 2018).

*Marina Frapa* holds the prestigious Blue Flag award, which recognises its high ecological quality. It is also the first marina in Croatia to have a sophisticated sewage system for grey water at a

depth of 40 metres in the sea. As a socially responsible company, the marina contributes to the local community by creating green spaces, employing local residents and organising various events such as concerts, Marina Frapa Day, pageants and sailing regattas (Stipanović et al., 2012).

### **7. Empirical research on the socially responsible activities of Marina Punat and local self-government**

Considering that the basic role of the state, namely the promotion of entrepreneurship, is developing unfavourably in small towns, the development of these small towns depends on the cooperation between the local leader—in this case, the marina—and the local government. This raises the question of the extent to which the marina and the local community act in a socially responsible manner in smaller towns.

#### *7.1 Local government and socially responsible behaviour: The example of Punat Municipality*

Punat is a small municipality, but very successful in terms of many development indicators. From the research conducted using the in-depth interview method, which focuses on socially responsible behaviour, the following insights have emerged.

The definition of socially responsible behaviour in Punat Municipality is not fully known, but the content of this term is understood. In the context of socially responsible behaviour, the management of the municipality focuses on setting goals, transparency of operations, compliance with the law and ethical behaviour. Socially responsible behaviour is therefore widely implemented, but it is a spontaneous action that requires very moral qualities from the leadership.

The leadership of the City Council has made numerous investments in the appearance and design of the town itself, as well as in the private sector, which are expected to pay off through increased business activity, i.e. sales tax. On the other hand, improved business will contribute to the overall development of the town and community.

The activities of the city administration, particularly in financial terms, are transparent and can be viewed on the city administration's website. During the short term of office of the municipality's new leadership, municipal funds have been used to improve the municipal infrastructure, build and tarmac unclassified roads and renovate existing roads, among other things.

It can be concluded that at the level of the leadership of the local community of Punat Municipality, socially responsible behaviour is well implemented in most areas of social responsibility, even if it is spontaneous behaviour. The high level of personal responsibility of the members of the leadership, local patriotism in a positive sense, good business logic and direct cooperation with the population and entrepreneurs contribute to the success and results, although the municipality's resources are limited and staffing is modest.

#### *7.2 Marina and socially responsible business: The example of Marina Punat*

The knowledge of Marina Punat's management about social responsibility and the benefits of such a business did not arise spontaneously, but through constant research and observation of global processes in the most developed economies of the EU and the world. With regard to the research topic—the importance of the local community for the marina itself and the importance of the marina for the local community—qualitative research was conducted using the structured in-depth interview method. All management functions of the marina as well as all key structures of society in the community at different management levels (from top management, owners, directors to the heads of individual departments, reception, sailors, services and additional facilities in the marina) were interviewed. In-depth interviews were used as a qualitative technique as the aim was to gain deeper insights into the real situations on the ground.

The questions cover the following topics: Awareness of the concept of socially responsible business, socially responsible business of Marina Punat based on certain indicators (Table 2); cooperation between the municipality, the marina and the Punat Tourist Board; concern for ecology (environment); investments in renewable energy sources; and public-private partnerships in the organisation of various events and numerous educational and environmental activities.

*Environmental responsibility* is a pillar of the social responsibility of marinas that place environmental protection at the centre of their business and activities in and around the marina. This involves maintaining the cleanliness of the sea, the coastline and the nearby beaches adjacent to and connected to the marina. The following applies to Marina Punat:

a) The method of building piers from sustainable materials that do not leave a harmful footprint on the environment, the supporting structure of the

piers is made from secondary raw materials. An additional argument in favour of environmental preservation is the fact that the structure of the jetties does not float, but is fixed and raised from the sea surface, which allows the free flow of water masses within Puntarska Draga under the jetties.

b) High standards of protection against sea and coastal pollution through ordinances regulating the acceptance of lubricating oils, their disposal, protection, and the development of new patented projects for the inconspicuous collection and disposal of waste and lubricating oils.

c) 24-hour physical and technological monitoring of the ecology of the sea and 24-hour innovative physical and technological monitoring of ships using a digital system for monitoring ships - PROACTIVE BOAT CARE, which provides ship owners with data and image information about the activities of seafarers on the ship and berth and the condition of the ship via a mobile application; integration into the digital sensor system for ship safety, whereby the marina immediately receives an alarm about the non-compliant and risky condition of the ship.

d) Supervision of the contents around the marina, which is carried out as an aid to the local self-government and its supervision system.

e) Development of an independent power supply system that makes the marina energy-independent (solar power plants, heat pumps for water heating).

f) Use of electric vehicles in daily activities and the operation of electric vehicle charging stations.

g) The ecological principles and activities to protect the environment and minimise the ecological footprint are confirmed by internationally recognised certificates and accreditations: the Blue Flag; ISO 14001 – Marina Punat was the first marina to be certified with this globally standardised certificate for environmental management, holding this certification continuously since 2010; Golden Marina Anchor – a global accreditation for marinas according to a very strict scheme implemented and monitored by the Yacht Harbour Association (TYHA); ADAC – the largest German car club rated the quality of the harbour's services with a maximum of five golden rudders; and the Clean Marina Programme assessment by the Yacht Harbour Association (TYHA) that is currently underway.

h) A supportive policy for pet ownership that includes the provision of infrastructure aimed at environmental protection.

Marina's *ethical responsibility* stems from numerous factors, most notably its prestigious international status and its interaction with companies and people from all over the world. There are numerous indicators of Marina Punat's high level of ethical behaviour and business:

a) Due to labour force shortages, the marina employs people from outside Croatia, and through education and training, employees of foreign nationality are placed on an equal footing with local employees.

b) The marina resolves any issues that arise unexpectedly or unforeseen with stakeholders and shareholders in a way that supports the realisation and satisfaction of their interests.

c) The marina is developing a special form of ethically responsible business with the local community and all its entrepreneurs.

d) The marina offers employment and accommodation for foreign workers within its accommodation capacity, as well as training and professional development.

*Philanthropic responsibility* is a pillar of corporate social responsibility, regardless of the size of the company, in this case the marina, which contributes through its activities to the development of the community and the society it is located in. Marina Punat plays an exceptional role in the local community through socio-economic investments in infrastructure and good cooperation with the local community and the residents of Punat Municipality. This involvement has led to several positive outcomes:

a) Accelerated development of local and community entrepreneurship, especially during the summer season.

b) Employment opportunities for the local population.

c) The capacity of the marina in alignment with the needs of the social community, both locally and nationally.

d) Financial support for numerous sporting events held within and beyond the marina.

e) Successful recruitment of labour from the local community. The marina offers accommodation for workers coming from outside or abroad.

f) Support for talented individuals through scholarships, lifelong learning, further education and professional training opportunities.

*Financial responsibility* is a pillar of corporate social responsibility that combines the three areas of social responsibility mentioned above. Marina Punat develops and sets goals and directs funds that focus on environmental protection, development, ethics and philanthropy. However, these plans need to be supported by financial investments in programmes, projects, donations and research, which leads to budgeting and operational activities such as:

- a) Research and development of new products and patents related to ecology and self-sufficiency. Marina Punat plays the role of the owner of an EU project funded through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan of Croatia (NPOO) titled "Development of autonomous robots to increase the efficiency of processes and the organisation of activities in marinas with research on the impact on consumer habits, satisfaction and the level of tourist consumption".
- b) Occupation with the possibility of investing in education, according to natural predisposition, interest and ability, different types of talents and education.
- c) CSR management training initiatives, which are then transferred to employee training to develop social awareness and care for the environment in the marina.
- d) Investments in the energy independence of the marina, as well as projects that ensure greater safety for boats in the marina and safe collection of waste and lubricating oil in an almost invisible way so as not to disturb boaters.
- e) Investments in projects related to new and renewable energy sources.
- f) Support and funding of scientific projects, in particular nautical tourism.
- g) Financing of regattas and other sporting and entertainment events.
- h) Ensuring transparent and timely financial reporting, including an external audit.

It can be concluded that, based on education and observation of the development of scientific thinking and society outside Croatia, the management of Marina Punat is well acquainted with socially responsible business practices and recognises their positive effects. Considering the role of Marina Punat as a local leader, the question arises as to how the socially responsible actions of the municipality and the socially responsible activities of the marina

are combined into a whole that contributes to all issues of the local community.

### 7.3 *Liaison of socially responsible operations of the marina and the leadership of the municipality*

Marina Punat has an almost completely dominant influence on the development of the local and regional economy, Punat Municipality, the entire island of Krk and Primorje-Gorski Kotar County. Punat Municipality is an attractive micro-destination characterised by the unspoiled nature of the northern Adriatic and is ideally suited for the development of nautical tourism. The majority of accommodation capacities are flats, while other types of accommodation are available to a lesser extent. The essence of the synergy between Marina Punat and Punat Municipality is the creation of a holistic product that meets the needs of tourists. To this end, the interaction of the public and private sectors and public-private entrepreneurship is necessary. Tourist activities integrate local interests in the framework of targeted business co-operation with the offer holders to create a destination product. The Punat Municipality should become a destination for quality nautical tourism, a place of relaxation, entertainment and sports, tradition and culture, aimed at tourists who want to spend an active holiday.

The cooperation between the leadership of the municipality and the marina is very intensive. The leadership of the community is aware that the marina is a key factor in the development of Punat Municipality, and together they develop projects of general social interest. Life in Marina Punat is closely connected with the life of the town, i.e. Punat Municipality and the wider community. This relationship is very strong on both sides, which is particularly evident in marina's active participation in the life of Punat. Marina has also taken part in various activities outside Punat Municipality, such as permanent and long-term care of the Sailing Society in Punat (utilisation of the marina's space and infrastructure, assistance in organising regattas, etc.), ongoing support for educational institutions, sports clubs and events, assistance to the Home for the Elderly and Infirm in Krk, financing the activities of the Association of Retirees from Punat, support for the Centre for Neglected Children "Izvor" in Selce, donations to the Ministry of Interior Krk for activities at sea, financial support for the restoration of the 16th century nativity scene on the island of Košljun, financial support and sponsorship for performances by the Cultural and Artistic Society Punat and other cultural associations that promote tradition,

and provision of playground equipment for children and for the new kindergarten.

In order to better connect the marina and the local community, it is necessary to strengthen the social responsibility of the marina and build a positive attitude of the local population towards the marina. The Marina Punat brand has great value and enables a qualitative step forward as a destination with an exclusive programme, either in terms of tourism

or nautical activities. To make it clearer and more measurable, a Likert scale (ratings from 1-5) is used to evaluate the factors of socially responsible business activities of Marina Punat and the socially responsible behaviour of the Punat Municipality's administration. Given that this study analyses the attitudes of the marina's subjects and the municipality's management, the Likert scale is an appropriate tool for measurement.

**Table 2 Evaluation of the views of the Marina Punat and Punat Municipality leadership**

CSR indicators	Punat Municipality leadership	Marina Punat	Note
Understanding the concept of CSR	3	5	With the Punat Municipality leadership, it is spontaneous, and with Marina Punat, it is an insight into the terminology.
CSR planning	4	4	Both the municipality and the marina plan CSR well.
CSR activities	5	5	Both entities are investing heavily.
Activities to help Punat Municipality entrepreneurs	5	4	The municipality is investing in local entrepreneurship, while the marina participates actively by involving local providers of services or goods.
Activities to help entrepreneurship outside the municipality	1	5	The marina supports entrepreneurship outside Punat Municipality and cooperates with entrepreneurs outside the city.
Support for scientific research	1	5	The marina supports and encourages scientific research and uses it for the purpose of its development.
Support for education of Punat Municipality residents	1	5	The marina awards scholarships to pupils or students (e.g., waiters and chefs) or continuously invests in their education and training during their employment.
Childcare in Punat Municipality	5	5	Both the municipality and the marina distinguish themselves through their commitment to children's welfare, demonstrated by the provision of playgrounds.
Beach care	4	3	While the beaches fall under the responsibility of the municipality, which therefore assumes primary care, the marina also actively participates in beach cleaning efforts.
Care of the port area	4	2	The municipality takes care of the maritime property and the harbour area, while the marina only takes care of its own area.
Ecology in the municipality	4	2	The maintenance of ecology in the municipality falls under the responsibility of municipal services.
Investments in renewable energy sources	3	5	The marina strongly supports investments in renewable energy sources, strives for energy self-sufficiency (solar power plants, solar water heating systems, solar lighting and signalling) and develops new patents. The municipality is investing in intelligent benches, solar lighting and signalling systems.
Aspiration for cooperation	3	3	Both companies are striving to cooperate and invest together, but there are legal restrictions.

Source: Authors (February 2024)

The research results allow the conclusion that both entities implement all aspects of socially responsible

business and behaviour very effectively. Namely, the Punat Municipality administration focuses

more on local needs and wishes of its residents, while Marina Punat focuses on the activities in the marina, outside the marina and outside the borders of Croatia. The marina and the leadership of the municipality cooperate well and create the conditions for accelerated development of this small municipality. Unfortunately, Croatian laws prevent better cooperation.

There is an awareness of social responsibility, but it needs to be developed and supported. Given that local self-government in Croatia represents the lowest tier in the hierarchy of authorities and is largely left to operate independently, it demands a high level of social responsibility awareness among those in charge. This also necessitates that decision-making processes be transparent, with morality aligned closely with ongoing learning and development.

## **8. Conclusion**

Socially responsible business practices and actions are a relatively new concept in the Republic of Croatia, which has expanded the scope of management and administration of both business entities and non-profit organisations and communities. The implementation of socially responsible business practices is a challenge for tourism. It implies the ethical behaviour of the company and contribution to economic development while improving the quality of life of employees, the local community and society as a whole.

The research conducted for the purposes of this article, using the example of Punat Municipality and Marina Punat, led to the conclusion about the development of socially responsible business practices and behaviour. It was found that the socially responsible behaviour of both the municipality and the marina initially occurs spontaneously but soon evolves into a conscious concept aimed at maintaining profitability through cooperation—without which investment in development would not be possible. This means that the socially responsible behaviour of community leaders stems from an understanding of the local situation, a desire to develop their place and confidence in the potential of the entire community, which has led to investment in the development of local entrepreneurship, but also to coexistence with the marina. In other words, along the Croatian Adriatic coast, local market leaders have developed in small towns—in

this case a marina—that, like the local community today, understand the need for socially responsible business practices that foster connections with the local community. A good example are the Croatian marinas located in smaller towns and municipalities, which have gradually realised that the arrival of boaters at the marina depends not only on the quality of the marina, but also on the quality of the destination. Joint investment in the destination is therefore economically justified for both parties. In this context, a study was conducted with the aim of assessing the importance of socially responsible business practices for the unity of the local community and the marina as a local leader. The conducted study showed that the investments of the local community have significantly influenced the image of Punat Municipality, which has become an internationally known and recognised tourist destination. At the same time, the Marina Punat has assumed the role of a local leader and, with its strong international reputation in the nautical tourism market, has contributed significantly to the development of Punat Municipality and the entire island of Krk. However, the conclusions drawn from the research on Punat Municipality and Marina Punat represent a small sample size, which indicates the need for conducting a series of similar studies to gain a better insight into the applicability of socially responsible business practices along the Croatian Adriatic coast. There are numerous places along the Croatian Adriatic coast where marinas have assumed the role of a local leader, but it cannot be concluded that this applies to all marinas and all local communities on the Adriatic coast. Therefore, this paper indicates the need for further research on the topic of socially sustainable business practices and cooperation between the local community and the marina, or some other entity that plays the role of a local leader.

In order to achieve the research objective, i.e. to confirm the research hypothesis, an appropriate methodology was developed to investigate the relationship between the local community and Marina Punat. By analysing and comparing key indicators of the relationship between socially responsible behaviour of the leadership of the Punat community and the socially responsible actions of the Marina Punat management, it was found that their cooperation exists in the form of joint planning and cooperation. At the same time, joint investment by the marina and the municipality was not confirmed, al-

though similarities have been clearly documented. The reason for this is the legal obstacle of Croatian legislation that still prevents a combination of socially responsible activities of the municipality and the marina. This is an unacceptable obstacle that should be warned against.

Based on the research results, the hypothesis has been confirmed: Marina Punat plays a leadership role in the Punat Municipality and is fully aware of this responsibility, demonstrating a high level of social responsibility. In line with the core principles of

social responsibility, the marina is developing four key areas of socially responsible management—political, economic, social, and technological—alongside additional forms of social responsibility. This comprehensive approach positions Marina Punat at the forefront of socially responsible marina management in both Europe and globally.

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