



Dubrovnik-Neretva County, Croatia

Korčula Island

General overview

Dubrovnik-Neretva is the southernmost county in Croatia, located in south Dalmatia; it is also the county that is furthest from the capital, Zagreb. Its seat is Dubrovnik; other large towns in the county are Korčula, Metković, Opuzen and Ploče. The Dubrovnik-Neretva County borders with Bosnia and Herzegovina in the north, Montenegro in the south east, and Italy in the south. The Municipality of Neum, which belongs to neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina, divides the Dubrovnik-Neretva County, rendering its southern part an exclave. The County has a land area of 9272.37 km² with a population of 122 568, which is diminishing, specially on the islands and the Pelješac Peninsula. There are more women than men in the County (51,4% and 48,6%, respectively), the ratio being similar to that at the national level (51.8% women and 48.2% men) (1). Life expectancy is 75 years and 82 years for men and women, respectively (2).

The Croatian state is responsible for the overall provision of health-care and social services and for the Croatian Health Insurance Fund. Medical care in the Dubrovnik-Neretva County is organized at the primary and secondary levels. There are two hospitals in the County: (i) General Hospital Dubrovnik with the 299 beds; and (ii)

Kalos Hospital in the municipality of Vela Luka, which specializes in medical rehabilitation. Both hospitals are financed mainly by the state from county funds with income from private patients covering a small part of the expenditure.

There are large distances between some areas of the County and General Hospital Dubrovnik and between Dom Zdravlja (the Regional Health Centre) in Dubrovnik and the closest medical centres that provide additional medical care (for example, Clinical Hospital Split). During the summer months, the presence of tourists increases the need for medical care and the County and cities finance tourist-related medical teams themselves. Currently, there is no cross-border cooperation with non-European Union (non-EU) countries although a project is underway to make life-saving invasive procedures available to neighbouring countries without this possibility. The WHO Country Office in Croatia has initiated a pilot project to promote healthy diet for tourists, as well as a project entitled “The heart is the best medicine for the heart”, the aim of which is to reach the most distant parts of the County, the islands and the rural areas with cardiology diagnostic medical tools. The latter project entails the organization of weekly one-day missions to

Konavle in the very south of Croatia during which people living on the islands and in the villages have an opportunity to undergo cardiological check-ups. The Regional Health Centre, which is financed by both state and county funding, is responsible for the provision of primary health care in the County. Recognizing the needs of patients receiving palliative care, the Centre has initiated a project, which involves visiting and treating them in their homes. This project is sponsored completely by the County and needs supplementary resources and support from the state. The Centre is also planning to offer specialist medical care to patients residing in rural areas and on the islands, thus, providing new services in the field of public health.



Strengths

The strengths of the Dubrovnik-Neretva County are:

- ✓ its hospitals and the Regional Health Centre, which are legal public entities financed by both the State and the County;
- ✓ the opportunity provided by tourism for intersectoral cooperation, the development of new programmes and the strengthening of medical institutions;
- ✓ the well-preserved ecosystem of the Adriatic Sea (off the coast of the County), which makes healthy-food production possible;
- ✓ its Mediterranean-type forests, which are well preserved and play a significant role in preserving the ecological and aesthetic values of the whole area;
- ✓ the relatively high number of nature-protected areas in the County, which contribute to increasing the quality of life of the population.



Aspirations

The Dubrovnik-Neretva County has the following aims:

- ✓ cross-border cooperation with non-EU states in the field of medical care;
- ✓ cross-border cooperation to protect the County from transborder pollution, especially in underground springs;
- ✓ the availability of healthy food for tourists, for example, by supporting the ecological sustainability of the local food system;
- ✓ further development of palliative care in the County;
- ✓ access to specialist medical help in rural areas and on the islands.

Challenges

These include:

- ✓ an ageing population;
- ✓ transport problems in general (maritime, air and road);
- ✓ lack of health professionals in Dubrovnik Hospital, as well as in rural areas and on the islands;
- ✓ the mass influx of tourists during the summer season, slowing down border control;
- ✓ the pollution of fresh and sea water by industrialized parts of the neighbouring countries, which can cause extensive ecological and economic damage.

Potential areas of collaboration

The Dubrovnik-Neretva County is interested in collaborating with other regions on:

- ✓ cross-border health care (exchange of experience; development of education programmes);
- ✓ cross-border projects to combat air, soil and water pollution;
- ✓ problems related to global warming (floods, fires).

Working groups

The Dubrovnik-Neretva County is interested in participating in working groups on:

- ✓ environment;
- ✓ women's/men's health.

People active in the Regions for Health Network (RHN)

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