



Impact Evaluation of the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia - Croatia 2014-2020

Impact Evaluation Report

Report compiled by:

Team Leader - Mladen Vojković

Senior Experts - Antonia Gverić, Emma Zimprich Budanović, Vanja Hazl,
Jelena Kljaić Šebrek, Bianka Logožar

Junior Expert - Mona Manojlović

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PROJECT SHEET

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Acronyms

AIR: Annual Implementation Report

AF: Application Form

CBC: Cross-border Cooperation

CS: Communication Strategy

CSO: Civil Society Organization

CP: Cooperation Programme

DAC: Development Assistance Committee

EC: European Commission

eMS: Electronic Monitoring System

EQ: Evaluation Question

ERDF: European Regional Development Fund

ESI Funds: European Structural and
Investment Funds

EU: European Union

EUSAIR: EU Strategy for the Adriatic and
Ionian region

EUSALP: EU Strategy for the Alpine region

EUSDR: EU strategy for the Danube region

FD: Floods Directive

FLC: First Level Control

HR: Croatia

HU: Hungary

IT: Italy

JS: Joint Secretariat

MA: Managing Authority

MC: Monitoring Committee

NA: National Authority

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation
and Development

PA: Priority Axis

PES: Payment for Ecosystem Service

SEA: Strategic Environmental Assessment

SI: Slovenia

SME: Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

SO: Specific Objective

ToR: Terms of Reference



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Summary

Impact Evaluation Report presents the key findings and recommendations of the impact evaluation of the Cooperation Programme (CP) Interreg V-A Slovenia – Croatia 2014-2020. The evaluation is carried out by WYG Consulting Ltd., for the client, the Government Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Development and European Cohesion Policy. This evaluation includes available data from the beginning of the CP implementation period until the agreed cut-off date, 30 September 2022.

This evaluation consists of Introduction, Findings and conclusion per evaluation criterion and Recommendations, which constitute three biggest and most important chapters of this evaluation. Additionally, this evaluation contains Work plan and project team involvement, Implementation timeline and Annexes.

In the first part, Introduction, the evaluation team presented the context of this evaluation by explaining the most important facts about the CP Interreg V-A Slovenia – Croatia 2014-2020, such as specific objectives, projects, programme area, target groups, activities, beneficiaries and horizontal principle, but also limitations related to the evaluation. The second part provides answers to 13 evaluation questions, divided by four criteria: relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and impact. The third part provides Recommendations that the Evaluation team has given based on key finding of each evaluation question.

The impact evaluation’s key findings and recommendations are presented below for each criterion:

1) RELEVANCE

Recommendation	Key finding
The intervention logic was consistent and should be followed in the same way during the next Programming period.	The implemented projects are very well aligned with the intervention logic of the CP. The evaluators could not identify any inconsistencies. All implemented projects contributed to output and result indicators as defined by the CP. A high level of consistency between intervention codes and CP’s specific objectives has been observed.
Put stronger focus in the new Programme on mobility and connectivity projects.	Within the 2014-2020 Programme period only one project related to connectivity and mobility has been contracted, whereas the public transport and especially sustainable mobility options in peripheral and remote areas remain underdeveloped.
The guidance documents for the next Programme period should keep the practice of detailed and precise requirements for projects to be approved under each priority in the new IP (i.e. in the form	The addition of required and additional guiding principles in this Programme period was a success because of their impact on stronger result orientation and the fulfilment of



of guiding principles implemented within this Programme period or similar) to ensure that projects are fully in line with the expectations of the next IP.	Programme objectives. For this reason, the evaluators advise to continue with a similar practice also in the next Programme period.
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2) EFFECTIVENESS

Recommendation	Key finding
Further simplification and reduction of administrative burden (i.e. through simplified cost options where applicable) in order to speed up the process of approving reports and reimbursing costs.	The most important barrier factors on the Programme level that were hampering the achievement of project results were delays in approving reports and administrative burden.
Consider longer duration of projects related to SO 2.2 and SO 3.1.	Longer duration of projects would enable greater effects in the environmental protection domain (SO 2.2) and allow more opportunities for testing developed solutions on a larger scale under SO 3.1.
More specific explanation of state aid legal framework with prominent examples (in workshops for potential applicants or on the Programme's website) is needed with regard to involving SMEs as project partners	The procedures related to state aid connected with involving SMEs have been highlighted as a barrier (leading either to abandoning the idea of involving SMEs as Project Partners or to different than planned budgeting of certain project activities).
For better reaching general public, it is recommended to use channels such as social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc.). To maintain the visibility, social network channels need constant updates and a developed strategy.	The achievement of Communication strategy objectives is progressing very well, but some additional improvements should be made in communication with the general population. The only indicator far from achieving its target value is <i>Recognizability of the CP Interreg SI-HR</i> (according to the last available data from 2019 Evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness Report, obtained on the basis of the survey).



3) SUSTAINABILITY

Recommendation	Key finding
In the new Programme period consider putting stronger emphasis on the capitalisation of project results achieved within the 2014-2020 Programme period.	Predominance of short-term effects has been observed, where in case of infrastructure issues with sustainability have been raised. It seems that one cycle of funding has not been sufficient to ensure self-sustaining infrastructure and contents, which is partially also a consequence of the COVID pandemic.
In order to foster capitalisation within new Programme period, the accessibility of projects' results should be improved by building a more systematic data repository.	Projects within all specific objectives took into account the means of capitalisation and its benefits. Good capitalisation potential was observed in all four specific objectives, but in many cases projects' results have not been systematically presented and made available.

4) IMPACT

Recommendation	Key finding
Stronger cooperation and synergies between similar projects should be encouraged through facilitating thematic workshops and thus contributing to forming thematic networks.	Lack of synergies between projects of similar thematic or projects implemented in the same geographical area has been observed. This represents missed opportunity for generating stronger effects.
The1. IP should be very clear in describing the expectations towards the integrated approach to territorial development per each of the proposed interventions. Additionally, within workshops for potential applicants more focus could be put on this topic.	Within the SO 2.1 it was observed that in some cases the integrated approach to territorial development was understood as separate conduction of jointly developed activities (or, i.e. establishing separate "bodies" in each of the regions in charge of some specific task relevant for the whole area), but without truly integrating activities across border. Such a finding was also confirmed during interviews with the representatives of Programme bodies.
For projects aimed (among other) also at elaboration of joint cross-border plans and strategies stronger involvement of decision-makers at national levels (i.e. as project partners) is needed in order to achieve better impact (i.e.	As a major barrier to increasing the impact of the CP interventions the evaluators identified insufficient political backing. Projects often result in social innovation or development of strategic document related to a specific field, but without



<p>to integrate newly developed strategies or models of work into the national strategic umbrella).</p>	<p>the political support, these are not further capitalised or not to that extent which would be possible with the stronger political support.</p>
<p>Consider a strategic approach for a stronger involvement of peripheral, rural areas in the new Programme period to avoid mostly concentrating future projects in the most developed regions.</p>	<p>The representativeness of regions/Counties in the projects strongly corresponds with their level of economic development (especially under SO 2.1).</p>
<p>More focus should be put on strengthening the existing networks and partnerships in the new Programme period (rather than creating new ones), as they show more potential for stakeholder gathering and thus stronger influence also on national level.</p>	<p>In general, judging on the change occurred so far, and under specific assumptions, good prospects for the achievement of the expected impact exist. At this moment, a contribution towards strengthening possible functional areas cannot be confirmed. However, in some cases longer-term partnerships have been observed: some of the projects within current Programme period represent a continuation of projects/partnerships from the previous Programme period (relevant for SO 2.1)</p>
<p>In order to better follow territorial impacts of the (future) Programme, it is recommended to add if possible to the application form a notice on where exactly in the project area the project outputs will be "placed" as an obligatory element (if applicable).</p>	<p>In describing project outputs, beneficiaries do not always clearly show the territorial dimension of the outputs and in some cases it is not possible to assess which exact territory will be influenced by specific project outputs.</p>



Sažetak

Ovo izvješće predstavlja ključne nalaze i preporuke Evaluacije utjecaja Programa suradnje Interreg V-A Slovenija – Hrvatska 2014.-2020. Evaluaciju je provelo poduzeće WYG Savjetovanje d.o.o., za Naručitelja, Ured Vlade Republike Slovenije za razvoj i europsku kohezijsku politiku. Ova evaluacija sadrži dostupne podatke od početka provedbe Programa suradnje pa do dogovorenog *cut-off* datuma, 30. rujna 2022. godine.

Evaluacija se sastoji od uvoda, nalaza i zaključaka po evaluacijskim kriterijima te preporuka, a ta tri dijela su najveća i najvažnija poglavlja ove evaluacije. Osim toga, ova evaluacija sadrži također plan rada i opis uključenosti članova tima, gantogram i privitke. U prvom dijelu, uvodu, evaluacijski tim je predstavio kontekst evaluacije prikazujući najvažnije činjenice ovoga Programa suradnje, kao što su specifični ciljevi, projekti, programsko područje, ciljne skupine, aktivnosti, korisnici i horizontalni principi. U ovom dijelu pojašnjavaju se i ograničenja ove evaluacije. Drugi dio se sastoji od odgovora na 13 evaluacijskih pitanja, podijeljenih u 4 kriterija: relevantnost, učinkovitost, održivost i utjecaj. Treći dio predstavlja preporuke koje je evaluacijski tim izradio na temelju ključnih nalaza svakog evaluacijskog pitanja.

Ključni nalazi i preporuke ove evaluacije utjecaja su sljedeći:

1) RELEVANTNOST

Preporuka	Ključni nalaz
Intervencijska logika je bila dosljedna i trebalo bi je pratiti na isti način tijekom sljedećeg programskog razdoblja.	Provedeni projekti su vrlo dobro usklađeni s intervencijskom logikom Programa suradnje. Evaluatori nisu mogli utvrditi nikakve nedosljednosti. Svi provedeni projekti pridonijeli su programskim pokazateljima ishoda i rezultata kako je definirano Programom suradnje. Uočena je visoka razina dosljednosti između kodova intervencije i specifičnih ciljeva Programa suradnje.
U novom programskom razdoblju povećati naglasak na projektima u području mobilnosti i povezanosti.	U programskom razdoblju 2014-2020 ugovoren je samo jedan projekt u području mobilnosti i povezanosti. Pritom su javni prijevoz i održiva mobilnost osobito u perifernim i udaljenim područjima i dalje nedovoljno razvijeni.
Programska dokumentacija za sljedeće programsko razdoblje trebala bi zadržati praksu detaljnih i preciznih zahtjeva za projekte koji se odobravaju u okviru svakog prioriteta u novom Interreg Programu (npr. u obliku vodećih načela koja se provode unutar ovog programskog	Dodavanje obveznih i dodatnih vodećih načela u ovom programskom razdoblju bilo je uspješno zbog njihovog utjecaja na jaču orijentaciju na rezultate i ispunjavanje ciljeva Programa. Iz tog razloga evaluatori savjetuju da se nastavi sa



razdoblja ili slično) kako bi se osiguralo da su projekti potpuno u skladu s očekivanjima novog Interreg Programa.	sličnom praksom i u sljedećem programskom razdoblju.
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2) UČINKOVITOST

Preporuka	Ključni nalaz
Daljnje pojednostavljenje i smanjenje administrativnog opterećenja (npr. kroz pojednostavljene troškovne opcije tamo gdje su primjenjive) kako bi se ubrzali procesi odobravanja izvješća i nadoknađivanja troškova.	Najvažnije prepreke na razini Programa koje su ometale postizanje rezultata projekata bile su kašnjenja u odobravanju izvješća i administrativno opterećenje.
Razmotriti produljenje trajanja projekata unutar SC-a 2.2 i 3.1.	Dulje trajanje projekata omogućilo bi bolje učinke u području zaštite prirode (SC 2.2) te bi omogućilo testiranje novih rješenja u većem opsegu (SC 3.1).
Potrebno je konkretnije objašnjenje pravnog okvira za državne potpore s istaknutim primjerima (na radionicama za potencijalne podnositelje zahtjeva ili na internetskim stranicama Programa) u pogledu uključivanja malih i srednjih poduzeća kao projektnih partnera.	Procedure povezane s državnim potporama povezanima s uključivanjem malih i srednjih poduzeća istaknute su kao prepreka (što je dovelo ili do odustajanja od ideje o uključivanju MSP-a kao projektnih partnera ili do drugačije izrade proračuna za određene projektne aktivnosti od planiranog).
Za bolje dopiranje do šire javnosti preporuča se korištenje kanala kao što su društvene mreže (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube itd.). Kako bi zadržali vidljivost, kanali društvenih mreža trebaju stalna ažuriranja i razvijenu strategiju.	Ostvarivanje ciljeva Komunikacijske strategije napreduje vrlo dobro, ali bi se trebala napraviti neka dodatna poboljšanja u komunikaciji s općom javnosti. Jedini pokazatelj koji je daleko od ciljane vrijednosti je Prepoznatljivost Programa suradnje Interreg SI-HR (prema posljednjim dostupnim podacima iz Izvješća o ocjeni učinkovitosti i učinkovitosti za 2019., dobivenim na temelju ankete).



3) ODRŽIVOST

Preporuka	Ključni nalaz
U novom programskom razdoblju razmotriti stavljanje većeg naglaska na kapitalizaciju projektnih rezultata postignutih u programskom razdoblju 2014.-2020.	Uočeno je kako u provedenim projektima dominiraju kratkoročni učinci, a održivost nove infrastrukture postala je upitna. Čini se da jedan ciklus financiranja nije bio dovoljan da se osiguraju samoodrživa infrastruktura i sadržaji, što je dijelom i posljedica pandemije COVID-a.
Kako bi se potaknula kapitalizacija unutar novog programskog razdoblja, dostupnost rezultata projekata trebalo bi poboljšati izgradnjom sustavnijeg repozitorija podataka.	Projekti u okviru svih specifičnih ciljeva uzeli su u obzir sredstva kapitalizacije i koristi istoga. Dobar potencijal za kapitalizaciju uočen je u sva četiri specifična cilja, ali u mnogim slučajevima rezultati projekata nisu sustavno prezentirani i dostupni.

4) UTJECAJ

Preporuka	Ključni nalaz
Trebalo bi poticati jaču suradnju i sinergiju između sličnih projekata kroz facilitaciju tematskih radionica i na taj način doprinijeti formiranju tematskih mreža.	Uočen je nedostatak sinergije između projekata slične tematike ili projekata koji se provode na istom zemljopisnom području. To predstavlja propuštenu priliku za postizanje jačih učinaka.
Interreg Program treba biti vrlo jasno opisati očekivanja vezana uz integrirani pristup teritorijalnom razvoju za svaku od predloženih intervencija. Dodatno, u okviru radionica za potencijalne prijavitelje moglo bi se posvetiti više pažnje ovoj temi.	Unutar SC-a 2.1 uočeno je da se u nekim slučajevima integrirani pristup teritorijalnom razvoju shvaća kao zasebno provođenje zajednički razvijenih aktivnosti (odnosno uspostavljanje zasebnih "tijela" u svakoj od regija zaduženih za neki specifičan zadatak relevantan za cijelo područje), ali bez istinske integracije prekograničnih aktivnosti. Takav nalaz potvrđen je i tijekom intervjua s predstavnicima programskih tijela.
Za projekte usmjerene (između ostalog) i na razradu zajedničkih prekograničnih planova i strategija potrebna je snažnija uključenost donositelja odluka na nacionalnim razinama (npr. kao projektnih partnera) kako bi se postigao bolji utjecaj (npr. integracija razvijenih strategija ili modela rada u nacionalni strateški okvir).	Kao glavnu prepreku povećanju utjecaja intervencija u okviru Programa suradnje, evaluacijski tim je utvrdio da ne postoji dovoljna politička potpora. Projekti često rezultiraju društvenom inovacijom ili izradom strateškog dokumenta koji se odnosi na određeno područje, ali bez političke potpore oni se ne kapitaliziraju dalje ili ne u onoj mjeri u kojoj bi to bilo moguće uz snažniju političku potporu.



<p>Razmotriti strateški pristup za snažnije uključivanje perifernih, ruralnih područja u novom programskom razdoblju kako bi se izbjeglo da budući projekti uglavnom budu koncentrirani u najrazvijenijim regijama.</p>	<p>Zastupljenost regija/županija u projektima snažno je povezana s njihovom razinom gospodarskog razvoja (osobito unutar SC-a 2.1).</p>
<p>Veći naglasak trebalo bi staviti na jačanje postojećih mreža i partnerstava u novom programskom razdoblju (a ne na stvaranje novih) jer one pokazuju veći potencijal za okupljanje dionika, a time i snažniji utjecaj i na nacionalnoj razini.</p>	<p>Općenito, sudeći prema dosadašnjoj promjeni te imajući na umu određene pretpostavke, postoje dobri izgledi za postizanje očekivanog utjecaja. U ovom trenutku ne može se potvrditi doprinos jačanju mogućih funkcionalnih područja. Međutim, u nekim slučajevima uočena su dugoročna partnerstva: neki od projekata unutar tekućeg programskog razdoblja predstavljaju nastavak projekata /partnerstava iz prethodnog programskog razdoblja (relevantno za SC 2.1).</p>
<p>Kako bi se bolje pratili teritorijalni utjecaji (budućeg) Programa, preporučuje se da se, ako je moguće, u projektnu prijavu kao obavezni element doda obavijest o točnoj „lokaciji“ glavnih ishoda projekta (kad god je to primjenjivo).</p>	<p>U opisivanju rezultata projekta, korisnici ne pokazuju uvijek jasno teritorijalnu dimenziju rezultata, a u nekim slučajevima nije moguće procijeniti na koji će točno teritorij utjecati konkretni rezultati projekta.</p>



Povzetek

Poročilo o vrednotenju predstavlja ključne ugotovitve in priporočila vrednotenja vpliva Programa sodelovanja Interreg V-A Slovenija – Hrvaška 2014-2020. Vrednotenje je za naročnika, Službo Vlade Republike Slovenije za razvoj in evropsko kohezijsko politiko, izvedla družba WYG Savjetovanje d.o.o.. Vrednotenje vključuje razpoložljive podatke od začetka obdobja izvajanja Programa sodelovanja do dogovorjenega presečnega datuma, 30. september 2022.

Poročilo je sestavljen iz uvoda, ugotovitev in sklepov po posameznih merilih vrednotenja ter priporočil, ki predstavljajo tri največja in najpomembnejša poglavja tega vrednotenja. Poleg tega vrednotenje vsebuje načrt dela in opis vključenosti evalvacijskega tima, časovni raspored izvajanja vrednotenja in priloge.

V prvem delu, uvodu, je evalvacijski tim predstavil kontekst tega vrednotenja z razlago najpomembnejših dejstev o Programu sodelovanja Interreg V-A Slovenija-Hrvaška 2014-2020, kot so specifični cilji, projekti, programsko območje, ciljne skupine, dejavnosti, upravičenci in horizontalna načela, pa tudi omejitve povezane z vrednotenjem. V drugem delu so podani odgovori na 13 evalvacijskih vprašanj, razdeljenih po štirih merilih: ustreznost, učinkovitost, trajnost in vpliv. V tretjem delu so navedena priporočila, ki jih je evalvacijski tim podal na podlagi ključnih ugotovitev vsakega vprašanja vrednotenja.

Ključne ugotovitve in priporočila vrednotenja vpliva so predstavljeni v nadaljevanju za vsako merilo posebej:

1) USTREZNOST

Priporočilo	Ključne ugotovitve
Intervencijska logika je bila dosledna in jo je na enak način treba upoštevati v naslednjem programskem obdobju.	Izvedeni projekti so zelo dobro usklajeni z intervencijsko logiko Programa sodelovanja. Evalvacijski tim ni ugotovil nobenih neskladnosti. Vsi izvedeni projekti so prispevali h kazalnikom učinka in rezultatov, kot so opredeljeni v Programu sodelovanja. Ugotovljena je bila visoka raven skladnosti med kodami intervencij in posebnimi cilji Programa sodelovanja.
V novem Programu se je potrebno bolj osredotočiti na projekte mobilnosti in dostopnosti/povezljivosti	V programskem obdobju 2014-2020 je bil sklenjen le en projekt v zvezi s dostopnostjo/povezljivostjo in mobilnostjo, kljub temu, da so javni prevoz in predvsem možnosti trajnostne mobilnosti na obrobni in oddaljenih območjih ostajajo premalo razviti.



<p>Dokumenti s smernicami za naslednje programsko obdobje morajo ohraniti prakso podrobnih in natančnih zahtev za odobritev projektov v okviru vsake prednostne naloge novega Interreg Programa (to je v obliki vodilnih načel, ki se izvajajo v tem programskem obdobju ali podobno), da se zagotovi da si projekti popolnoma v skladu s pričakovanju naslednjega Interreg Programa.</p>	<p>Dodatek zahtevanih in dodatnih vodilnih načel v tem programskem obdobju je bil uspešen zaradi njihovega vpliva na močnejšo usmerjenost v rezultate in izpolnjevanje ciljev Programa. Zato evalvacijski tim svetuje, da se s podobno prakso nadaljuje tudi v naslednjem programskem obdobju.</p>
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2) UČINKOVITOST

Priporočilo	Ključne ugotovitve
<p>Z namenom pospešitve postopkov potrjevanja poročil in povračila stroškov je potrebna poenostavitev in zmanjšanje administrativnih obremenitev (npr. koriščenje možnosti poenostavljenih stroškov kjer je primerno).</p>	<p>Najpomembnejši dejavniki na programski ravni, ki so ovirali doseganje projektnih rezultatov so bili: administrativne obremenitve in zamude pri potrjevanju poročil.</p>
<p>Razmisliti o daljšem tajanju projektov v okviru SC 2.2 in SC 3.1.</p>	<p>Daljše trajanje projektov bi omogočilo večje učinke na področju varstva okolja (SC 2.2) in omogočilo več možnosti testiranja razvitih rešitev v večjem obsegu v okviru SC 3.1.</p>
<p>V povezavi z vključevanjem MSP kot projektnih partnerjev je potrebna natančnejša razlaga pravnega okvira državnih pomoči s predstavljenimi primeri (na delavnicah za potencialne prijavitelje).</p>	<p>Kot ovira pri vključevanju MSP so bili izpostavljeni postopki v zvezi z državno pomočjo (ki vodijo bodisi do opustitve ideje po vključevanju MSP kot projektnih partnerjev v projekt ali do sprememb načrtovanega proračuna nekaterih projektnih aktivnosti).</p>
<p>Za doseg splošne javnosti priporočljivo uporabljati kanale, kot so družabni mediji (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube...).</p> <p>Da bi ohranili prepoznavnost, kanali družabnih omrežij potrebujejo stalne posodobitve in razvito strategijo.</p>	<p>Doseganje ciljev komunikacijske strategije poteka zelo dobro, vendar bi bilo treba komunikacijo s splošnim prebivalstvom še nekoliko izboljšati. Edini kazalnik, ki je daleč od doseganja ciljne vrednosti, (po zadnjih razpoložljivih podatkih iz leta 2019 iz Evalvacije učinkovitosti in uspešnosti, ki so bili pridobljeni na podlagi ankete) je <i>Prepoznavnost Programa sodelovanja Interreg SI-HR</i>.</p>



3) TRAJNOST

Priporočilo	Ključne ugotovitve
V novem programskem obdobju je potrebno dati večji poudarek kapitalizaciji projektnih rezultatov, doseženih v programskem obdobju 2014–2020.	Prevladujejo kratkoročni učinki, v primeru infrastrukture se je pojavilo vprašanje trajnosti. Zdi se, da en cikel financiranja ni zadostoval za zagotovitev samovzdržne infrastrukture in vsebin, kar je delno tudi posledica pandemije COVID-a.
Da bi spodbudili kapitalizacijo v novem programskem obdobju je potrebno izboljšati dostopnost rezultatov projektov z izgradnjo bolj sistematičnega repozitorija podatkov.	Projekti v okviru vseh specifičnih ciljev so upoštevali načine kapitalizacije in njene koristi. Dober potencial za kapitalizacijo je bil opažen v vseh štirih specifičnih ciljeh, toda v mnogih primerih rezultati projektov niso bili sistematično predstavljeni in dostopni.

4) VPLIV

Priporočilo	Ključne ugotovitve
Spodbujati je treba močnejše sodelovanje in sinergijo med podobnimi projekti z omogočanjem tematskih delavnic in tako prispevati k oblikovanju tematskih mrež.	Opaziti je bilo pomanjkanje sinergij med projekti podobne tematike ali projekti, ki se izvajajo na istem geografskem območju. To predstavlja zamujeno priložnost za ustvarjanje močnejših učinkov in s tem prispevanja k trajnosti učinkov
Interreg Program mora zelo jasno opisati pričakovanja glede celostnega pristopa k teritorialnemu razvoju za vsako od predlaganih intervencij. Poleg tega bi se lahko na delavnicah za potencialne prijavitelje temu vprašanju namenilo več pozornosti.	V okviru SC 2.1 je bilo ugotovljeno, da je bil v nekaterih primerih celostni pristop k teritorialnemu razvoju razumljen kot ločeno izvajanje skupno razvitih dejavnosti (ali na primer vzpostavitev ločenih "organov" v vsaki od regij, ki so zadolženi za določeno posebno nalogo, pomembno za celotno območje), vendar brez pravega čezmejnega povezovanja dejavnosti. Takšna ugotovitev je bila potrjena tudi med pogovori s predstavniki programskih organov.
Za doseganje večjega vpliva, je v projekte, ki so (med drugim) namenjeni tudi izdelavi skupnih čezmejnih načrtov in strategij, potrebna močnejša vključenost odločevalcev na nacionalni ravni, npr. kot projektnih partnerjev (za vključevanje na novo razvitih strategij in modelov v nacionalni strateški okvir).	Evalvacijski tim je kot glavno oviro za povečanje vpliva intervencij Programa sodelovanja identificiral nezadostno politično podporo. Rezultati projektov so pogosto družbene inovacije ali razvoj strateškega dokumenta, povezanega z določenim področjem, vendar se brez politične podpore ti projekti ne kapitalizirajo oziroma vsaj ne v takšnem obsegu, kot bi bilo to mogoče z močnejšo politično podporo.



<p>Razmisliti o strateškem pristopu za večjo vključenost obrobni, podeželskih območij v novem programskem obdobju, da se prepreči, da bi bili prihodnji projekti večinoma osredotočeni na najbolj razvite regije.</p>	<p>Zastopanost regij/županij v projektih se močno ujema s stopnjo njihove gospodarske razvitosti (predvsem relevantno za SC 2.1).</p>
<p>V novem programskem obdobju se je treba bolj osredotočiti na krepitev obstoječih mrež in partnerstev (in ne na ustanavljanje novih), saj imajo več možnosti za zbiranje deležnikov in s tem večji vpliv tudi na nacionalni ravni.</p>	<p>Na splošno so glede na dosedanje spremembe in ob določenih predpostavkah dobre možnosti za doseganje pričakovanega vpliva. Prispevka h krepitvi možnih funkcionalnih področij v tem trenutku ni mogoče potrditi. Kljub temu pa je v nekaterih primerih moč opaziti dolgoročnejša partnerstva: nekateri projekti v te programskem obdobju predstavljajo nadaljevanje projektov/partnerstev iz prejšnjega programskega obdobja (relevantno za SC 2.1).</p>
<p>Za boljše spremljanje teritorialnih vplivov (prihodnjega) Programa se priporoča, da se v prijavnih obrazcih če je možno doda obvestilo o teritorialni razsežnosti neposrednih učinkov in rezultatov projekta kot obvezen element (kadar je to primerno).</p>	<p>Upravičenci pri opisu rezultatov projektov ne prikažejo jasno teritorialne razsežnosti neposrednih učinkov in rezultatov, v nekaterih primerih pa ni mogoče oceniti, na katero natančno ozemlje bodo vplivali določeni rezultati projekta.</p>



1. Introduction

The Final Report contains a detailed overview of the purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation, a description of the evaluation context, answers to evaluation questions (EQs), a detailed methodology and defined evaluation tools, including proposed sources of information and procedures for data collection, a detailed description of the work plan, a thorough description of tasks of each member of the expert evaluation team and the dynamics of reporting.

The evaluation of the CP Interreg Programme takes place during the COVID-19 pandemic. These circumstances were taken into account when developing activities and proposing a methodology within the framework of the Inception Report in order to make the Contract feasible in accordance with the prescribed epidemiological measures.

REMARK: Findings and conclusions of this evaluation report are divided by four evaluation criteria, thus changing the original order of questions from the ToR and the Inception report. Besides answering the EQs, the evaluation covers all evaluation points mentioned in the ToR. Where possible, evaluation points were answered as part of the EQ (e.g. contribution to the EU2020 Strategy was addressed in EQ 12), but otherwise they were presented in the Evaluation context (Chapter 1.2.).

1.1. Background

The purpose of this service is to evaluate the impact of the cross-border Cooperation (CBC) Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia - Croatia 2014-2020, the overall aim of which is to promote sustainable, safe and vibrant border area by fostering smart approaches to the preservation, mobilization and management of natural and cultural resources for the benefit of the people living and working in or visiting the area.

In specific, the evaluation is aimed at assessing the impact of results and outputs of CP Interreg and their relevance and sustainability. Another purpose of this service is to give recommendations for the future cross-border cooperation programme between Slovenia and Croatia in the programming period 2021-2027.

The evaluation of the impact of the Programme will assess how and to what extent the programme funds have contributed to the objectives of the Programme, i.e. to the overall objective of the Programme and to the specific objectives (SO) of each priority axis (PA). The impact evaluation will assess the achievements of the Programme and identify key challenges and necessary improvements for the programming period 2021-2027.



Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia – Croatia 2014-2020 is a cross-border cooperation programme which aims to strengthen the social, economic and territorial development of the cross-border area through the implementation of joint projects and activities. The overall Programme budget is 55.7 M€ (with the ERDF contribution of 46,1 M€).

Within the framework of the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia – Croatia, four strategic projects have been approved under Priority Axis 1, 34 projects were approved in the first, second and third phase of the open call under Priority Axes 2 and 3, while six technical assistance projects are being implemented under Priority Axis 4.

All of these will be assessed in the impact evaluation which will cover the following points:

- impact assessment of each priority axis and specific objective;
- analysis and evaluation of the success of programme indicators (result and output indicators), as well as of additional unintended effects of the projects;
- analysis and review of target groups, activities, detection and categorisation of various modes of cooperation (protocols, agreements, networks) and structure of beneficiaries (cooperation patterns between Lead/Project Partners and intensity of cross-border communities focusing on a specific theme, mapping);
- review and evaluation of guiding and horizontal principles;
- updated analysis of socio-economic context of the programme area with SWOT analysis, with special focus on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis and recommendations on mitigating these impacts, and improved resilience of the area;
- examination and evaluation of differences between the programme's achieved and planned results, with special focus on the impact of COVID-19;
- assessment of contribution to the European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth – Europe 2020;
- evaluation of communication strategy (CS) in relation to planned objectives;
- lessons learnt.

The main target groups of this impact evaluation are project beneficiaries and partners, Programme bodies, as well as other key stakeholders (i.e. line ministries, local authorities, experts in specific fields covered by the Programme etc. as outlined on p.13, *Mapping key stakeholders*). The primary intended users are Programme bodies and other experts involved in programming period 2021-2027.

Within CP Interreg V-A Slovenia – Croatia 2014-2020, 41 projects were contracted. Impact Evaluation Report encompasses 38 projects which were fully implemented by the end of September 2022 (final reports approved by JS), while 3 additional projects¹ started only in the summer 2022 and thus were not evaluated. Projects were evaluated in two steps – in first step, 23 projects were evaluated by the end of December 2021, following with additional evaluation of

¹ IstraConnect, MAX AID and CRO-SI-SAFE



another 15 projects by the end of September 2022. The Final Impact Evaluation Report comprises data and findings for all projects co-financed by the Programme in order to provide an overall picture of the Programme's success and impact.

1.2. Evaluation context

Interreg Cross-border Cooperation Programmes are specific EU instruments whose purpose is to support the cross-border cooperation between NUTS III regions from at least two different Member States lying directly on the borders or adjacent to them. Like all Interreg Programmes, Interreg Cross-border Cooperation Programmes are subject to the Regulations (EU) No. 1303/2013² and No. 1299/2013³. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the state of play of the implementation of the Programme. Paragraphs are based on the information gathered through desk analysis and based on information that was provided by the Managing Authority (MA)/Joint Secretariat (JS).

Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Croatia 2014-2020

In the financial period 2014-2020 the Government Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Development and European Cohesion Policy performs the function of the MA for the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia – Croatia 2014-2020. The overall objective of the Programme is to address common challenges in the border region and to capture the full potential of natural and cultural resources in order to improve the quality of environment, fulfil its socio-economic potential and to increase capacity for cross-border cooperation on both sides.

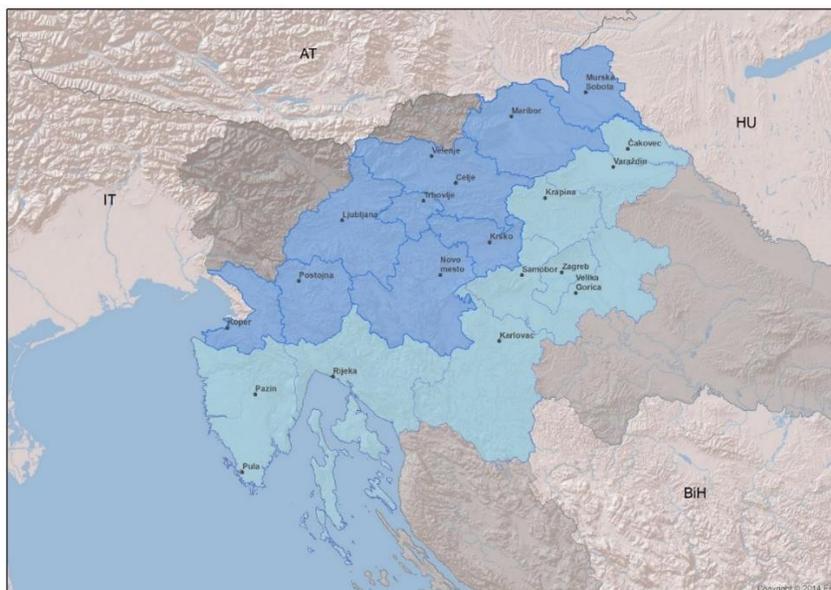
As illustrated by the following map, the Programme covers an area of 31,728 km², which includes 17 NUTS3 regions. Nine statistical regions in Slovenia and eight counties in Croatia are covered by the Programme.

² Common Provisions Regulation (EC) No. 1303/2013 (CPR), particularly Article 54 describing general provisions on assessment, Article 56 on assessment during implementation of the Programme, Article 110 defining functions of the Joint Monitoring Committee, and Article 114 related to conditions regarding submission of the implementation report.

³ ETC Regulation (EC) No. 1299/2013, particularly Recital 26 on Managing Authority's responsibility to undertake the evaluation based on the evaluation plan, and Article 14 describing applications for Implementation report.



Picture 1 Map of the area covered by the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia - Croatia 2014-2020



Source: <http://www.si-hr.eu/en2/programme/about-the-programme/>

The Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia – Croatia 2014-2020 consists of four priority axes and four specific objectives

Table 1 Priority axes and specific objectives of the Programme

PA	Name of the Priority axis	SO	Name of the Specific objective
1	Integrated flood risk management in transboundary river basins	1.1	Flood risk reduction in the transboundary Dragonja, Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla, Drava, Mura and Bregana river basins
2	Preservation and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources	2.1	Active heritage preservation through sustainable tourism
		2.2	Protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services
3	Healthy, safe and accessible border areas	3.1	Building partnerships among public authorities and stakeholders for healthy, safe and accessible border areas
4	Technical Assistance	/	

Source: <http://www.si-hr.eu/en2/programme/about-the-programme/>

The overall Programme budget amounts to 55.7 M€ (with the ERDF contribution of 46,1 M€). The allocation of budget is presented in the following table.



Table 2 Allocation of Union support (ERDF)

PA	ERDF funded
1	10,026,557 EUR
2	28,074,358 EUR
3	5,013,278 EUR
4	3,000,000 EUR
Total	46,144,193 EUR

Source: <http://www.si-hr.eu/en2/programme/about-the-programme/>

The following table shows which projects are included in the Final Report and their division by evaluation process.

Table 3 Project division by reports

Draft Impact Evaluation Report (Dec 2021)		Final Impact Evaluation Report (Sep 2022)	
SO	Project	SO	Project
1.1	FRISCO 1	1.1	FRISCO 2.2
1.1	FRISCO 2.1	1.1	FRISCO 2.3
2.1	Mala barka 2	2.1	Prehistory Adventure
2.1	ENJOYHERITAGE	2.1	RIDE&BIKE II
2.1	DETOX	2.1	INSPIRACIJA
2.1	MISTERION	2.1	MITSKI PARK
2.1	Prebujanje/Buđenje	2.1	Kaštelir
2.1	ŽIVA COPRNIJA	2.1	NATURE&WILDLIFE
2.1	ZELENO ŽELIMO	2.1	MINE TOUR
2.1	Uživam tradicijo	2.1	LIVING CASTLES
2.1	ECool-Tour	2.2	Carnivora Dinarica
2.1	In cultura veritas	2.2	VEZI NARAVE
2.1	KRASn'KRŠ	3.1	ENRAS
2.1	CLAUSTRA+	3.1	EMERGENCY EuroRegion
2.1	RIVIERA4SEASONS2	3.1	HITRO
2.1	kulTura		
2.2	ČIGRA		
2.2	LIKE		
3.1	Demenca aCROsSLO		
3.1	STAR		
3.1	+Health		
3.1	2SoKroG		
3.1	CrossCare		



Key findings of the updated socio-economic overview

In this chapter we will present SWOT analysis, while the whole updated socio-economic overview can be found in Annex 7, along with the Recommendations for increasing the resilience of the PA. On the basis of the situation analysis the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the programme area were identified structured around EU 2020 Strategy objectives:

Smart growth

Strengths

- Tradition, knowledge and skills in manufacturing (mechanical and process engineering, wood processing, automotive, pharmaceuticals, food processing) with organized clusters
- Dynamic and strong service sector (commerce, tourism, logistics and transport, etc.)
- Diversity of tourist products and high number of individual tourist providers
- Some established tourist areas and relatively strong tourist flows across the PA
- Growing start-up initiatives in urban centres
- Quality agricultural land and favourable conditions for agriculture in eastern parts
- Established networks of business support institutions
- Educational, science and research centres in the capital cities and regional centres
- Relatively well accessible area (major EU corridors, ports)
- Polycentric network of regional urban centres

Weaknesses

- Disparities within and between regions with fragile rural and remote communities
- Fragmentation and seasonality of tourism offers
- Weak integration between major tourist centres and the hinterland
- Tourist infrastructure incomplete
- Insufficient valorisation and visibility of cultural and natural heritage
- RDI not sufficiently present in business
- Small average size of agricultural holdings hinders productivity and economic viability
- Low level of entrepreneurial activity and unused growth potential (e.g. heritage resources)
- Weak capacities of business services supporting innovation and growth
- Below EU average of adult participation in LLL, especially on the part of Croatia

Opportunities

- Transfer of knowledge for innovative growth within CB area
- Global trends in green and creative industries
- Growth of foreign tourist arrivals
- Exploiting marketing potential of main tourism centres for tourism development of rural



areas

- Use of modern technologies and innovation
- Increase in co-operation between private and public sector
- Synergies in joint promotion in the third markets
- Nature protected areas and cultural heritage as resource for sustainable development
- LLL sector expansion

Threats

- Continued disparities between the most and least developed regions
- Growing competitiveness in tourism markets at global and regional levels
- Further loss of jobs in industry and agriculture
- Inability of small businesses to compete in international markets
- Lack of trust between different interest groups (e.g., conservationists – businesses)

Sustainable growth

Strengths

- Variety of landscapes and geographical features
- High density of water networks and high forest coverage
- High concentration of natural and cultural values
- High share of areas under Natura 2000 and nature protection
- Parts of cross-border area under Mura-Drava-Danube Transboundary Biosphere Reserve
- Relatively well-preserved biodiversity
- Sustainable management of cross-border rivers through Permanent Slovenian – Croatian Commission for Water Management and its sub-commissions
- Tools, models and maps for coordinated flood risk management in transboundary river basins developed
- Cross-border network of managers of protected area
- Growth of organic agricultural production and quality branding
- Increased awareness on climate change risks
- Awareness on potentials offered by local resources (wood, local food self-sufficiency, RES)
- Improving quality of environment (energy efficiency investments, wastewater and solid waste management)

Weaknesses

- Environment sensitive to extreme weather and nature hazards
- Loss of biodiversity and traditional landscapes due to land abandonment in arid and hilly areas and agricultural intensification in lowlands, pollution, change of management and other pressures



- High vulnerability of specific ecosystems
- Lack of estimates of all visitors to protected areas, except visitors to facilities
- Different stakeholder interests hinder sustainable development of heritage potentials
- Large share of population living in areas prone to flooding
- Areas with higher level of air pollution on highway corridors, urban centres
- Poor supply of public transportation at local level and in remote CB areas and across the border
- Low penetration of renewables in transport

Opportunities

- Synergies with mainstream EU policies
- EU framework enabling joint approaches in planning, monitoring and management of natural resources (waters, forests) and biodiversity
- Global trends in valorisation of heritage for sustainable tourism development
- Increased market demand for sustainable tourism
- R&D potential for management and valorisation of natural and cultural resources and adapting to climate change
- Diverting high level tourist/personal travel flows for tourism development in hinterlands
- Increased need for creating and strengthening cross-border commuting
- Further strengthening of joint cross-border management of protected areas

Threats

- Ineffective management in areas that attract large numbers of visitors
- Increased risk of natural disasters as a consequence of climate change
- Restrictions and limitations of existing legal frameworks
- Loss of biodiversity and worsening of conservation status of habitats and species

Inclusive growth

Strengths

- Tradition of cooperation between countries
- Stable population in most part of the programme area within Slovenia
- Relatively well-established network of social, health, education, civil protection and rescue service institutions
- Common historical base in the development of health, social, civil protection systems
- Large number of NGOs active in social and civil protection and rescue sphere
- High level of voluntarism
- Growing social economy initiatives



Weaknesses

- Serious depopulation within Croatia, apart City of Zagreb, and in Pomurska and Zasavska in SI
- Population ageing and growing need for social care programmes for elderly
- Missing job opportunities
- Unequal access to and quality of services, low level of efficiency
- Health and social inequalities
- Growing number of groups at risk of poverty or exclusion, particularly in less developed areas
- Unexploited potential for CB institutional cooperation
- Low level of cooperation between public and civil society

Opportunities

- Sharing institutional capacities in the border area for provision of effective and efficient services
- Growing need for diverse range of health and social services as employment potential
- Social innovation and new governance models for improving access to health & social services
- Emerging public and civil society partnerships for tackling social & health care issues
- Free movement of goods, services and people due to EU and Schengen⁴ area membership

Threats

- Further growth of health and social inequalities
- Decreasing public budgets for public services
- Prolonged economic crisis
- Reluctance to change

Horizontal principles

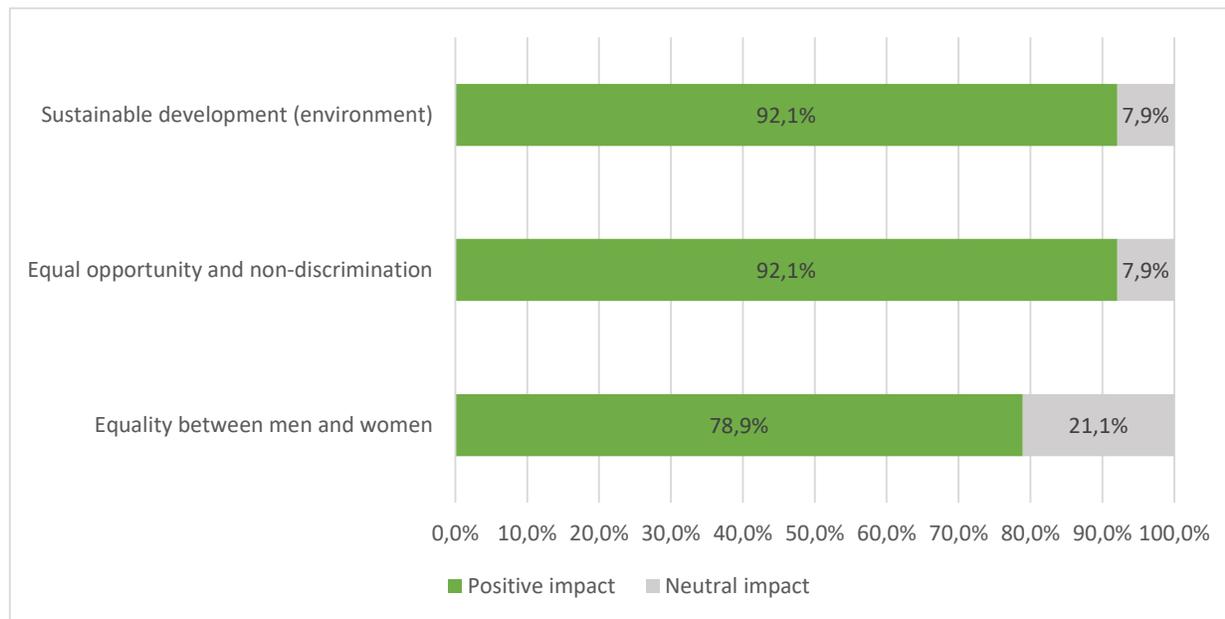
Based on the analysis of Programme documents, namely application forms, it can be stated that the overall intended contribution to horizontal Programme principles is overwhelmingly positive. The most noticeable intended impact has been projected for the principle of sustainable development (environment), with 92,1% of the analysed projects having a positive effect, and for the principle of equal opportunity and non-discrimination, also with 92,1% having a positive effect. The remaining 7,9% of projects considered their contribution to these two horizontal principles to be neutral. For the principle of equality between men and women, a slightly lesser number of

⁴ Croatia is supposed to join the Schengen area in 2022



projects intended to achieve a positive impact (78,9%), while the rest (21,1%) acknowledged a neutral impact of their project on the equality between men and women.

Figure 1 Projects' intended impact in relation to horizontal principles



Source: Online survey

When we look at the intended impact on the horizontal principles by each of the three PA, there are some significant differences, as shown on the graph below. Projects within PA3 projected a 100% positive impact on all three horizontal principles, as well as the projects within PA2 on the principles of sustainable development (environment) and equal opportunity and non-discrimination. For the principle of equality between men and women, 15,4% of projects within PA2 projected a neutral impact. Projects within PA1 stand out as they have projected a 100% neutral impact on the principle of equality between men and women, while for the remaining two horizontal principles the impact is 25% positive and 75% neutral. These figures might lead to an outright conclusion that the projects within PA1 were far less successful in achieving a positive impact on the three horizontal principles. However, this is highly dubious for two reasons. Firstly, PA1 encompasses only four projects that are part of this impact evaluation, so individual projects can significantly impact the total result. Secondly, there is a certain discrepancy in the project application forms when it comes to the projects' assessment of their impact on the three horizontal principles (positive, neutral, or negative) and the description of that impact. More concretely, in many projects' application forms the impact on the principles of equal opportunity and non-discrimination, and equality between men and women is assessed as positive, while the description of how exactly these projects contribute to those principles clearly indicates that the



impact is actually neutral, as they do not actively play a part in enhancing equal opportunities or gender equality, but they also do not have an adverse effect.

Figure 2 Projects' intended impact in relation to horizontal principles by PA



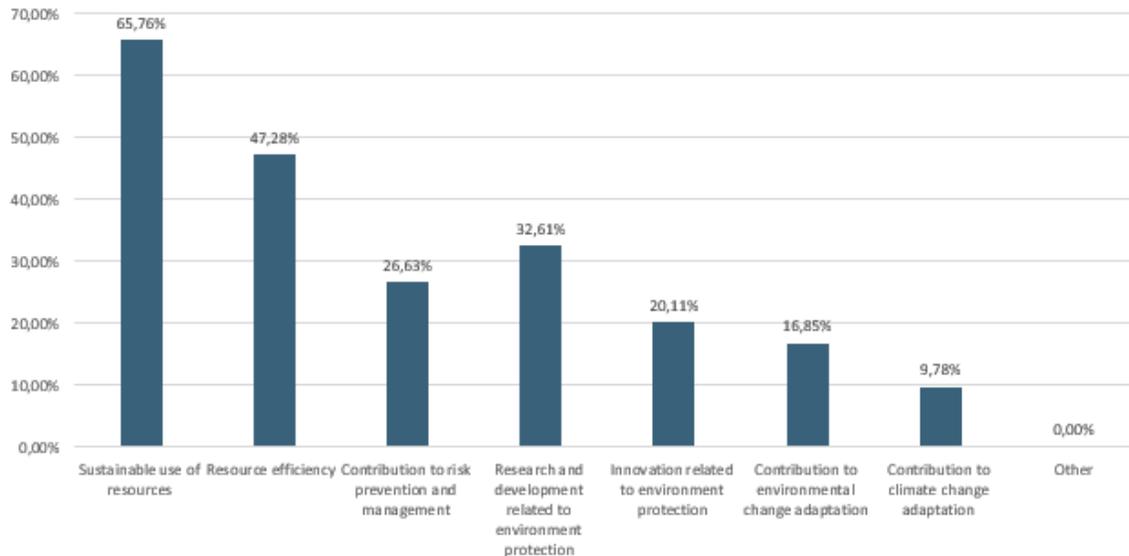
Source: Online survey

More insights into the impact on horizontal principles are drawn from our survey with the lead and project partners. Their answers indicate that projects funded by the Programme contributed to sustainable development to a large extent, mainly by sustainable use of resources, and by focusing on resource efficiency. Also, the projects contributed to sustainable development by managing and preventing risks, doing research and developing innovations related to environment protection, adapting to environmental change. To a lesser extent, the projects contributed to climate change adaptation. Within PA1, projects emphasised mitigation of climate change effects and natural disasters as their contribution to sustainable development. Projects within PA2 focused more on sustainability of the tourism sector and its interaction with environment protection and biodiversity. In addition, these projects fostered the development of sustainable tourist products and services, preservation of natural and cultural heritage, green growth and economic



sustainability. Looking at the projects within PA3, their contribution is more significant to social sustainability through achieving a higher degree of inter-generation solidarity and equality.

Figure 3 Projects' contribution to sustainable development (environment)

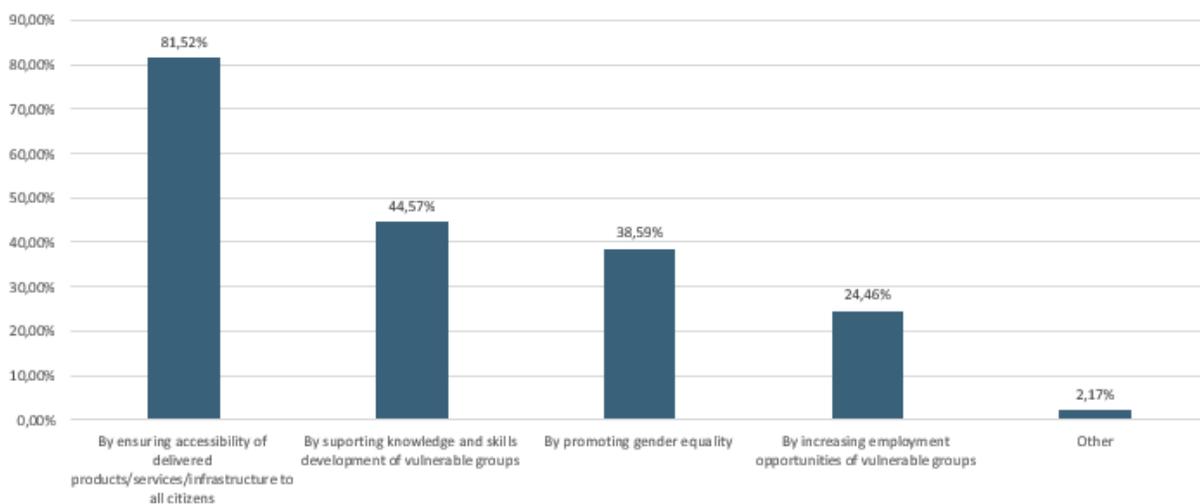


Source: Online survey

Principles of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, and equality between men and women have been respected and promoted by all projects funded by the Programme. Their contribution to these principles is mainly manifested in ensuring accessibility of delivered products/services/infrastructure to all citizens, in supporting knowledge and skills development of vulnerable groups, in promoting gender equality, and in increasing employment opportunities of vulnerable groups. Projects within all PAs put emphasis on providing equal treatment to all groups in the society, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or other characteristics. While PA1 was more oriented towards the general population, who are all equally benefitting from projects that improve flood risk management, some projects within PA2 and PA3 paid significant attention to certain social groups, such as elderly people, minorities and people who live in dislocated rural areas.



Figure 4 Projects' contribution to inclusive development (equal opportunities and non-discrimination)



Source: Online survey

Overall, the horizontal principles were respected and projects' impact on them was positive. Regardless of some inconsistencies in assessing whether the project impact on certain horizontal principles (equal opportunities and non-discrimination, equality between men and women) was positive or neutral, it can be stated with great certainty that the above-stated overall assessment applies to all three horizontal principles and to projects within all three PAs.

Limitations

As some of the projects financed under the Programme were not finished at the beginning of the evaluation, it was decided to carry out the Impact evaluation in two steps as mentioned above. This fact is coupled with the following evaluation limitations, relevant for this Impact Evaluation Report:

- In carrying out the impact evaluation, small sample size makes it harder to detect genuine programme effects. Therefore, findings are presented carefully to ensure appropriate interpretation.
- As only a part of the projects were evaluated in the first step, evaluation findings were revised in the Final impact evaluation. Data on priority axis and specific objective level was aggregated.
- Recommendations presented in the Draft Impact Evaluation Report were upgraded and/or revised in the Final impact evaluation as well, according to the new data gathered in the second step of evaluation.



With regard to the territorial impact evaluation, in describing project outputs and results in the application form, the beneficiaries do not always clearly state where exactly in the project area the project outputs will be “placed”. Therefore, in some cases it is not possible to assess which exact territory will be influenced by a specific project activity or result. This represents a limitation for the elaboration of spatial analysis of Programme impacts.

Another important limitation in evaluating the impact of the Programme is timing. Although there is no specific guidance on the timeframe of impact evaluations of Interreg Programmes, some of the guidance documents on impact assessments⁵ on the policy level suggest describing the temporal distribution of impact as follows: short term (e.g. up to 5 years), medium term (e.g. up to 10 years) and long term (e.g. over 10 years). Therefore, the envisaged timeframe for this evaluation does not allow the identification of longer-term effects, but rather short-term and partially mid-term effects⁶. In this respect, the impact assessment will be carried out to the furthest extent possible, given the collected input data and the relatively short period in which the identified effects should be observed. This also means that to a certain extent the findings and conclusions will necessarily rely on assumptions.

1.3. Evaluation research methodology

In carrying out this evaluation, evaluators used standard evaluation tools that are most effective in answering evaluation questions. A number of relevant documents and data from secondary (administrative) sources formed the backbone of data sources that was supplemented by primary sources, relying on research methods, such as interviews and questionnaires. In addition, document analysis served the purpose of developing instruments for primary data collection. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the analysis of collected data.

The Impact evaluation was carried out using a theory-based approach which resulted in the identification of causal links between inputs, activities, outcomes, and impacts. The following methods are most commonly used in theory-based approach: standardized surveys, literature analysis, interviews, focus groups and case studies that allow for qualitative impact evaluation.

The theory-based impact evaluation monitors each phase of the intervention logic of the programme in order to identify the mechanisms of change. The theory-based approach works with hypotheses formulated in advance – based on the programme logic. The programme logic includes the following levels: resources/inputs, actions/activities, deliverables and (short-to medium-term) results/outcomes up to the level of long-term effects.

⁵ E.g. Territorial Impact Assessment of Policies and EU Directives, available at: <https://www.espon.eu/topics-policy/publications/guidance/territorial-impact-assessment-policies-and-eu-directives>



In addition, assumptions are integrated into the model, i.e. external factors important for the implementation of the programme. It is assumed that a causal relation exists at least between activities, output indicators and result indicators. On the other hand, in case of impact, it can be assumed that the programme is only one of many factors that can affect the level of achievement.

Besides formulating hypotheses about the impact (effects) and their graphical illustration, it is important to identify and analyse unintended effects. Furthermore, the analysis should also take into account the social, political and economic context and current conditions.

The evaluation is based on data triangulation, using sources and methods as described below.

Desk research

Documentation analysis relies greatly on the repository of available programming documents, and on the preliminary analysis of available documents and data sources. Also, an analysis of the current framework and methods of data collection was made.

The key documents that were considered for the desk research are:

Programme documents:

- Final Evaluation of the Operational Programme Slovenia - Croatia 2007-2013
- Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia - Croatia
- Methodological document of indicators and performance framework of the Cooperation programme Interreg V-A Slovenia - Croatia
- Ex-ante evaluation of the Cooperation programme Interreg V-A Slovenia - Croatia
- SEA of the Cooperation programme Interreg V-A Slovenia - Croatia
- Evaluation plan of the Cooperation programme Interreg V-A Slovenia - Croatia
- Evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness of the Cooperation programme Interreg V-A Slovenia - Croatia I, August 2017
- Evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness of the Cooperation programme Interreg V-A Slovenia - Croatia II, August 2019
- Annual Implementation Reports of the Cooperation programme Interreg V-A Slovenia - Croatia
- Manual for beneficiaries and Application Form
- Manual for beneficiaries for strategic projects and Application Form
- Communication Strategy of the Cooperation programme Interreg V-A Slovenia - Croatia
- National and EU legislation (especially Regulation (EU) Nr. 1303/2013 and Regulation (EU) Nr. 1299/2013)



Project documents:

- Project documentation (Application Form with accompanying documentation, reports etc. available in the eMS system)

Data from questionnaires, surveys and interviews.

Mapping key stakeholders

For the purposes of this evaluation, stakeholders were divided into several key categories:

- Stakeholders who have an impact on the Programme (groups of different individuals, groups and institutions directly involved in the implementation of the Programme and groups that are not directly involved in the implementation, but determine and have an impact on the context and environment in which the Programme is implemented);
- Stakeholders affected by the project/project’s target groups (project beneficiaries and partners; groups affected by different activities of the project and programme have direct effects and groups affected by projects and programmes have indirect or unintended effects depending on the context).

Interviews

Interviews as a qualitative research method are meant to supplement and clarify the findings of the desk research and will thus enable in-depth insight into programme implementation and its achievements. The target groups encompass programme bodies and other relevant stakeholders.

Given the current situation and security measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews were conducted online. The project team prepared guidelines for the interviews that were sent to participants before the interview. The design of questionnaires was closely coordinated with the Managing Authority (MA)/Joint Secretariat (JS).

The evaluation team has conducted 26 interviews with Lead/Project Partners of the implemented projects and four interviews with Programme bodies. Due to some extraordinary circumstances, two Lead Partners did not take part in an online interview, but they provided written answers to our questions. Following is the table with interview participants.

Table 4 List of conducted interviews with Lead/Project Partners

SO	Project	LP/PP	Date of the interview
1.1	FRISCO 1	LP	2/11/2021
1.1	FRISCO 2.2	LP	9/5/2022
2.1	Mala barka 2	LP	10/11/2021
2.1	CLAUSTRA+	LP	29/10/2021
2.1	ECool-Tour	LP	4/11/2021



2.1	Uživam tradicijo	LP	5/11/2021
2.1	Prebujanje/Buđenje	PP	5/11/2021
2.1	KRAS'n'KRŠ	LP	22/11/2021
2.1	ZELENO ŽELIMO	LP	11/11/2021
2.1	ŽIVA COPRNIJA	LP	17/11/2021
2.1	Inspiracija	LP	9/5/2022
2.1	Mitski park	LP	11/5/2022
2.1	Prehistory Adventure	LP	13/5/2022
2.1	Mine Tour	LP	3/5/2022
2.1	LIVING CASTLES	LP	9/5/2022
2.1	Kaštelir	LP	3/5/2022
2.1	RIDE&BIKE II	LP	9/5/2022
2.1	Nature&Wildlife	LP	27/5/2022
2.2	ČIGRA	LP	3/11/2021
2.2	Vezi narave	LP	17/5/2022
2.2	Carnivora Dinarica ⁷	LP/PP	16/5/2022 27/5/2022
3.1	+Health	LP	8/11/2021
3.1	CrossCare	LP	5/11/2021
3.1	2SoKrog	LP	15/11/2021
3.1	EMERGENCY EuroRegion	LP	16/5/2022
3.1	ENRAS	PP	16/5/2022

Table 5 List of conducted interviews with Programme bodies

PB	Country	Date of the interview
MA	Slovenia	4/11/2021
JS	Slovenia	16/11/2021
NA	Slovenia	11/11/2021
NA	Croatia	4/11/2021

⁷ One Project Partner was interviewed for two projects – Nature&Wildlife and Carnivora Dinarica



Online surveys

In order to evaluate the indicators and impact of implemented projects within the Interreg programme, the evaluation team conducted an online survey via *Lime Survey* programme with lead beneficiaries of projects (Lead/Project Partners) from 38 projects. The survey was answered by 186 participants. The purpose of the survey is twofold: to assess the relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the project outputs and results, and to evaluate beneficiaries' experience with the implementation of the programme.

Case studies

In order to conduct an in-depth analysis of the impact or potential impact of the Programme, the evaluators selected four projects, one from each specific objective and conducted a case study. By using the case study method, evaluators thoroughly analysed selected phenomena, processes and institutions and especially contributed to verification of the overall effects of Programme implementation. In addition to that, success factors (best practice elements) were searched for and, when found, highlighted in terms of recommendations for the future Programme implementation.

The characteristic of this method is that it is performed in a natural environment, that is, in a realistic context and in a dynamic relationship between researchers and research participants. The following criteria was used when selecting projects for case studies:

- Balanced distribution among SOs (i.e. at least one project per each SO);
- Balanced geographical distribution of Lead Partners and partnerships;
- Diversity of budget and partnership size.

Selected projects were FRISCO 2.2 (SO 1.1), KRASn'KRŠ (SO 2.1), Vezi narave (SO 2.2) and CrossCare (SO 3.1).

Focus group

On two occasions evaluators presented key findings and results to the Programme Authorities (MA/JS) and National Authorities (for Croatia and Slovenia). Key findings and results were presented on the 9th Programming Task Force Meeting, held on the 26th January 2022, and 12th Monitoring Committee meeting of the CP Interreg V-A Slovenia-Croatia, held on the 20th April 2022. Members of Programme and National Authorities provided comments that were taken into account in the revised version of the document.



2. Findings and conclusion per evaluation criterion

2.1. RELEVANCE

EQ1 How are the project objectives, outputs and results aligned with the expectations of the Programme as set in the CP (intervention logic, intervention codes)?

In answering this EQ, the evaluators are focused on comparing CP's intervention logic with the specific objectives, results and outputs of the implemented projects. For this purpose, a reconstruction of the CP's intervention logic has been undertaken per each specific objective and an overview of the implemented projects and their objectives, outputs and results has been prepared.

In accordance with the ETC regulation⁸, point (b) (vii) of Article 8 (2), the CP has set out categories of intervention based on a nomenclature adopted by the Commission. The correspondence of CP's priority axes with the intervention codes is shown in the following graph.

Figure 5 Correspondence between priority axis and intervention codes

PRIORITY AXIS 1: Integrated flood risk management in transboundary river basins	PRIORITY AXIS 2: Preservation and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources	PRIORITY AXIS 3: Healthy, safe and accessible border areas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Code 87 Adaptation to climate change measures and prevention and management of climate related risks e.g. erosion, fires, flooding, storms and drought, including awareness raising, civil protection and disaster management systems and infrastructures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 075 Development and promotion of commercial tourism services in or for SMEs • 85 Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, nature protection and green infrastructure • 86 Protection, restoration and sustainable use of Natura 2000 sites • 90 Cycle track and footpaths • 91 Development and promotion of the tourism potential of natural areas • 92 Protection, development and promotion of public tourism assets • 93 Development and promotion of public tourism services • 94 Protection, development and promotion of public cultural and heritage assets • 95 Development and promotion of public cultural and heritage services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 112 Enhancing access to affordable, sustainable and high-quality services, including health care and social services of general interest • 119 Investment in institutional capacity and in the efficiency of public administrations and public services at the national, regional and local levels with a view to reforms, better regulation and good governance • 120 Capacity building for stakeholders delivering employment, education and social policies and sectoral and territorial pacts to mobilise for reform at national, regional and local level

⁸ REGULATION (EU) No 1299/2013 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 17 December 2013 on specific provisions for the support from the European Regional Development Fund to the European territorial cooperation goal



A high level of consistency between intervention codes and the CP's specific objectives is observed. The compliance of the intervention codes with the CP's objectives is obvious in the very wording of SOs, while some of the codes are transposed in the indicative activities (i.e. cycle tracks and footpaths).

In general, in relation to the output and result indicators set at the Programme level, it has to be noticed that very specific indicators have been introduced in the 2014-2020 period. As stressed by a representative of the Programme bodies, on the one hand such a practice allowed for more result orientation, but on the other hand some of the (potential) beneficiaries did not understand the meaning of some of the indicators (referred to common output indicators, especially under the investment priority 6d) as they were based on very specific methodology.

SO 1.1 Flood risk reduction in the transboundary Dragonja, Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla, Drava, Mura and Bregana river basins

SO 1.1 has been implemented through four directly approved strategic projects:

- FRISCO1 aimed at non-structural measures which set the preconditions for the following three structural measure projects and
- FRISCO 2.1, FRISCO 2.2 and FRISCO 2.3 related to the implementation of structural flood protection measures.

Table 6 Overview of specific objectives, main project outputs, main project results and main project deliverables⁹ of the projects implemented within SO 1.1

SO 1.1. Flood risk reduction in the transboundary Dragonja, Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla, Drava, Mura and Bregana river basins					
<i>Project name and project partners</i>	<i>ERDF Funds – allocated / paid</i>	<i>Specific objectives of the implemented project</i>	<i>Main project deliverables (with location)</i>	<i>Main project outputs</i>	<i>Main project results</i>
FRISCO1 Hrvatske vode Ministrstvo za okolje in prostor RS Agencija RS za okolje	3,215,001.09 / 3,134,822.53	Flood risk reduction in the targeted river basins	Joint Tool 1 – flood risk management database Joint Tool 2 - Target Area Study Joint Model 1 - Improved Hydraulic Model	Database of information - flood risk management related data; Cross-border harmonized flood risk management study Improved hydraulic model	Reduction of the vulnerability Increased professional capacity for transboundary risk management

⁹ Specific objectives of the implemented projects and main project outputs have been listed identically as in project applications in the eMS for all SOs. On the other hand, the columns "main project results" and "main project deliverables" present only the most important results and deliverables and do not list all the results and deliverables from the application forms.



<p>Direkcija RS za vode</p> <p>Državna uprava za zaščito i spašavanje</p> <p>Državni hidrometeorološki zavod</p> <p>Uprava RS za zaščito in reševanje</p> <p>Inštitut za hidravlične raziskave</p> <p>MUP</p>			<p>Joint Model 2 - Improved Forecasting Model</p> <p>Joint Map 1 - Improved Flood Hazard Map</p> <p>Joint Map 2 - Improved Flood Risk Map</p> <p>Structural projects documentation</p>	<p>Improved flood forecasting and early warning system</p> <p>Improved flood hazard map for the basin</p> <p>Improved flood risk map for the basin</p> <p>Set up of the alarm systems</p> <p>Education activities</p> <p>Printed material</p>	<p>Increased institutional capacity for conducting public awareness</p> <p>Increased public awareness for self protection measures</p>
<p>FRISCO 2.1</p> <p>Direkcija RS za vode</p> <p>Hrvatske vode</p>	<p>1,426,746.24 / 1,405,422.83</p>	<p>Flood risk reduction in the Sotla/Sutla basin</p>	<p>Construction works and installation of equipment at the Vonarje dam implemented (Vonarje)</p>	<p>Renovation of Vonarje dam</p>	<p>Reduction of the probability and area of flooding</p>
<p>FRISCO 2.2</p> <p>Direkcija RS za vode</p> <p>Hrvatske vode</p>	<p>2,545,915.90 / 2,267,768.60</p>	<p>(FRISCO 2.2) Flood risk reduction in the Mura basin</p>	<p>Embankment construction works implemented (Benica)</p> <p>Dike reconstruction works implemented (Sveti Martin na Muri)</p>	<p>Benica flood embankment</p> <p>Reconstructed dike in Sveti Martin na Muri</p>	<p>Flood risk reduction in the Mura basin</p>
<p>FRISCO 2.3</p> <p>Direkcija RS za vode</p> <p>Hrvatske vode</p>	<p>2,939,757.18 / 2,937,897.94</p>	<p>(FRISCO 2.3) Flood risk reduction measure on the Drava basin; Flood risk reduction measure on the Kupa</p>	<p>Dike reconstruction works implemented (Otok Virje-Brezje)</p> <p>Channel and flood protecting wall construction works implemented (Mala Vas)</p> <p>Flood protecting wall construction works implemented (Hrvatsko, Kuželj)</p>	<p>Reconstructed Otok Virje-Brezje dike</p> <p>Channel on Drava with new upstream embankment and with the construction of flood protecting wall in Mala Vas village</p> <p>Flood protecting walls in Hrvatsko settlement</p> <p>Flood protecting walls in Kuželj settlement</p>	<p>Flood risk reduction in the Drava basin</p> <p>Flood risk reduction in the Kupa basin</p>



Considering the intervention logic of SO 1.1 as shown below, the objectives, outputs and results of the two FRISCO projects as listed above are fully aligned with the CP. The consistency is obvious also in the contribution to the output and result indicators as defined on the level of the CP.

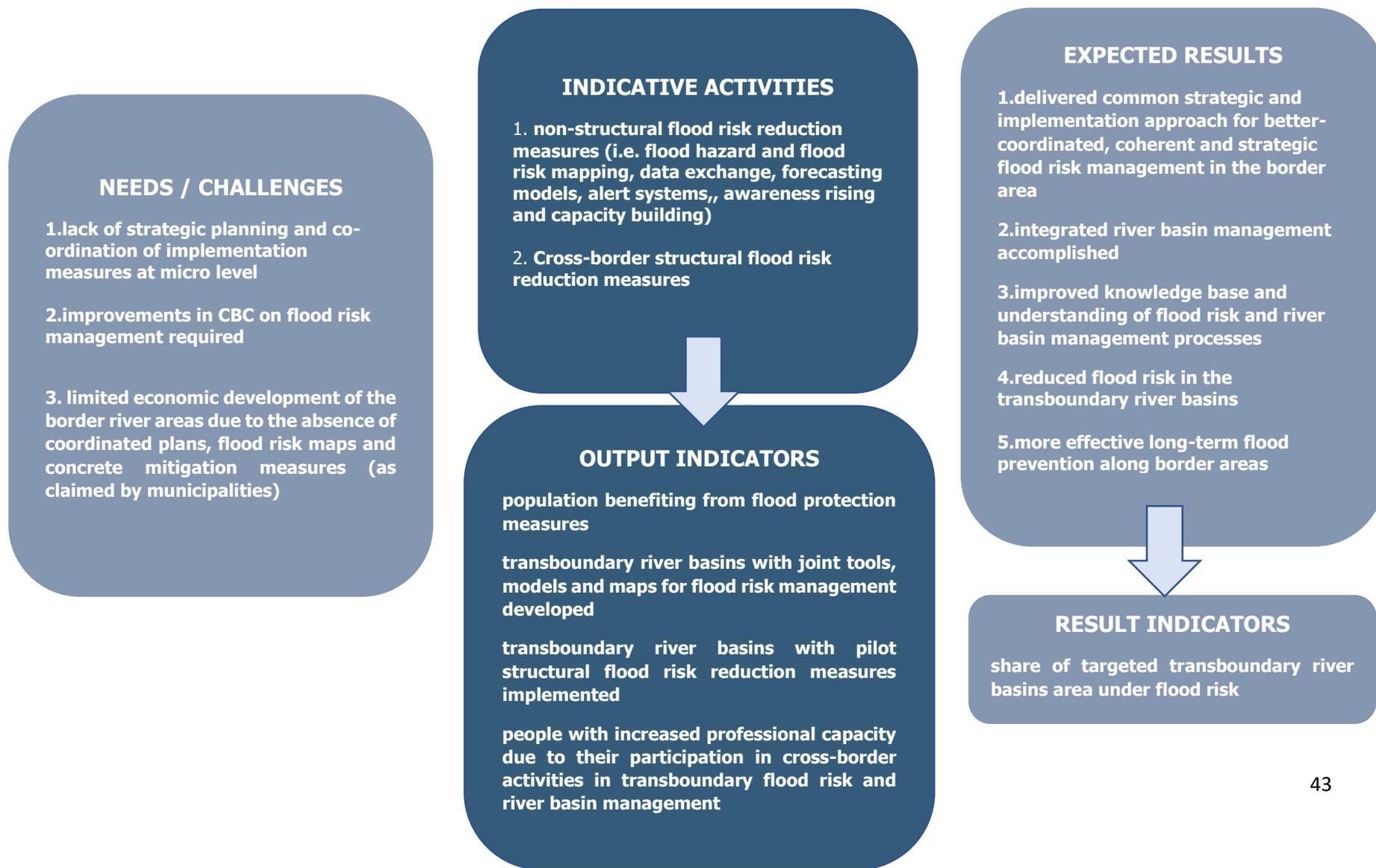
The intervention logic itself is very focused, consistent and fully aligned with the needs identified in the Programme area.

Output indicators related to SO 1.1 directly follow the main indicative activities and can give a good insight into the immediate project achievements. Adding Programme specific output indicators in addition to the common output indicator *CO20 The population benefiting from flood risk protection measures* allows better monitoring of the progress of achieving the SO 1.1, as the mentioned common output indicator is defined in a way that it grasps the overall change achieved. The result indicator is suitable for measuring the overall change achieved within SO 1.1.



Figure 6 The intervention logic for SO 1.1

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1.1: Flood risk reduction in the transboundary Dragonja, Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla, Drava, Mura and Bregana river basins tourism





SO 2.1 Active heritage preservation through sustainable tourism

This SO is primarily focused on the need for smart valorisation and active preservation of heritage through its integration into local economies and cross-border sustainable tourism products/destinations.

Projects within SO 2.1 are related to:

- the development of new heritage-based tourism products and destinations;
- small-scale investments in heritage infrastructure and visitor infrastructure;
- the arrangement of interpretation centres;
- innovative approaches to the interpretation of natural and cultural heritage;
- capacity building for the purpose of active conservation of heritage;
- improving capacities of tourism stakeholders in relation to heritage tourism;
- promotion campaigns;
- raising awareness of service providers and local population on opportunities for the sustainable use of heritage.

All these activities led to preserving some of the PA's most important cultural and natural heritage sites and their integration into wider cross-border tourist products. This way, the quality, sustainability, and attractiveness of the tourist offer based in natural and cultural heritage has been achieved.



Table 7 Overview of specific objectives, main project outputs, main project results and main project deliverables of the projects implemented within SO 2.1

SO 2.1 Active heritage preservation through sustainable tourism					
Project name and project partners	ERDF funds (Allocated / paid)	Specific objectives	Main project deliverables (with location)	Main project outputs	Main project results
Mala barka 2 Primorsko-goranska županija Turistička zajednica Primorsko-goranske županije Pomorski i povijesni muzej Hrvatskog primorja Rijeka Udruga i Ekomuzej "Kuća o batani" Občina Izola Turistično združenje Izola Občina Piran Pomorski muzej - Museo del mare "Sergej Mašera" Pirano	1,839,786.75 / 1,804,050.70	Preserve maritime heritage Establish a new tourist destination Develop cross-border cultural and tourism products	Guidelines for the development of sustainable tourism in the destination Mala barka Centers of excellence established in Rovinj and Piran Joint Master Plan for the Development of Cultural Tourism on Maritime Heritage with 7 Destination Action Plans Renovated small boats and making a replica of the boat A study with technical descriptions of traditional boats Establishment of the Academy of Maritime Crafts and Skills with eight basic types of workshops (Rijeka) A network of promotion centers established and equipped - new promotion and interpretation centers in Mali Lošinj - Nerezine, Krk, Rovinj and Piran joined the network of existing centers Promotional campaign for the promotion of cultural and tourist destinations and tourist products Modeling of joint cross-border tourist itineraries Maritime heritage base in Slovenia and Croatia created A virtual museum of maritime heritage created Arranged and equipped interpretation and info center in Izola	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centers of excellence New common destination <i>Mala barka</i> Arranged interpretation centers in Mali Lošinj-Nerezine, Krk, Izola and Portorož Functional and arranged interpretation center in Izola Modelling of joint tourist itineraries Established network of promotion centers Successfully implemented promotional campaign 	Increased number of visitors in the border area Increased number of permanently protected artifacts of maritime tangible and intangible heritage Increased tourism infrastructure based on maritime heritage Increased number of educated children and visitors on maritime crafts and skills Entire coastal border area recognized as one tourist destination Permanently protected rich maritime tangible and intangible heritage of the border area through valorisation on the principles of sustainability



			Arranged and equipped info center in Portorož		
ENJOYHERITAGE			Initial analysis of the state of visitor management, the existing management system and the offer of natural and cultural heritage		
Občina Slovenska Bistrica			A joint strategy for the interpretation and sustainable management of natural and cultural heritage	Innovative approaches to the interpretation of natural and cultural heritage	Attractively presented natural and cultural heritage
Grad Ozalj			Development of three common innovative user monitoring tools for the protection and sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage	Innovative cross-border product and programs for young people and families	Developed cross-border tourism product which includes interpretation trails and adventure packages aimed primarily at families and young people
Javna ustanova za upravljanje zaštićenim dijelovima prirode Krapinsko-zagorske županije	1,038,312.39	Develop a common cross-border tourism product	Pilot area animation and interpretation plan	Arranged Visitor Center Lovrić Prekriški,	Improved awareness of young people about the importance of protecting natural and cultural resources
Javna ustanova "Park prirode Žumberak - Samoborsko gorje"	1,019,380.20	Raise awareness of the importance of heritage protection	Adventure programs for target groups	Arranged Hušnjakovo Circular Trail	Successful promotion of tourism in rural areas in the hinterland of cities and preservation of the population of rural areas or villages
Općina Vrsar		Increase the attractiveness and recognizability of the area	Arrangement of the Bistrica trail, the circular path Hušnjakovo, the thematic interpretive path of St. Romuald, the visitor center Loviće Prekriški, the trail Gdje voće zri in Loviće Prekriški	Arranged object - reconstruction of Tumuli	
Zavod za turizam Maribor – Pohorje			Action plan for establishing a production platform	Arranged Trail of St. Romuald	Increased youth enthusiasm for natural sciences
Zavod Republike Slovenije za varstvo narave			Developed cross-border tourism product		
			Training of local providers, guides and interpreters		
DETOX			Construction and craft works on Tumul 139 (Budinjak)		
Občina Lenart			Restored and digitized books of the Count Bombelles Library (Varaždin)	New cross-border product - EtnoTour travel package and mobile application	Increased number of visitors to cultural heritage sites and landmarks
Gradski muzej Varaždin	772,181.21	Heritage preservation through 42 EthnoTour workshops	Database with descriptions of ethnological heritage	Portal development, description of cultural heritage and restoration of the old library	Connected knowledge about culture, history, cultural heritage and landmarks in a smart, fun, innovative and educational way
Univerza v Mariboru, Fakulteta za elektrotehniko, računalništvo in informatiko	675,492.83	Revitalization of 6 cultural monuments	Arrangement of the ethnological and museum collection of Grafonž's (traditionally equipped) and Kapl's household (Sveta Ana municipality)	Cross-border EtnoTour workshops and ethnological events	
		Development of 1 new sustainable tourism product	Internet portal and tourist mobile application		
			Cross-border tourist EthnoTour package		



<p>Općina Vinica</p> <p>Občina Sveti Andraž v Slovenskih goricah</p> <p>Općina Donja Voća</p> <p>Občina Sveta Ana</p>			<p>Digitization of General Maister's collection and arranged Memorial House with the collection of Rudolf Maister (Lenart municipality)</p> <p>Ethno households arranged (in Vinica, Sv. Andraž, 3D ethno household of experiences in Voća, Sv. Ana)</p> <p>Joint Tourist Information Center equipped in Sv. Andraž</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arranged plateaus and access to cultural heritage facilities • Arranged memorial house Zavrh 42 • Arranged traditional Vinica ethnic household and its environment • Renovated traditional economy, roads and parking lots • Arranged traditional households 	
<p>MISTERION</p> <p>Občina Semič</p> <p>Općina Kamanje</p> <p>Občina Metlika</p> <p>Lokalna akcijska grupa VALLIS COLAPIS</p> <p>KOMPAS NOVO MESTO d.o.o</p>	<p>1,051,950.63</p> <p>1,050,608.58</p>	<p>Increase the attractiveness of heritage presentation</p> <p>Design a green cross-border tourism product</p>	<p>A thorough basis for the presentation of the nature of Bela Krajina developed</p> <p>Created teaching materials for students of different ages</p> <p>Thematic events - storytelling, transmission of traditions, performances and gastronomy of the entire partner area</p> <p>Archeological excavations in the Archaeological park Vrlovka (Kamanje)</p> <p>Archaeological park Vrlovka (Kamanje) arranged and conceptual project for the further development of the park elaborated</p> <p>Promotional films presenting archaeological heritage, archeological findings and the new tourism product</p> <p>Arranged educational trail Obrh</p> <p>Arranged carst educational trail between Lebice and Krupa with built sidewalk and suspension bridge over Krupa</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved attractiveness of heritage in the project area • Improving the capacity of tour guides and the local environment, related to the newly designed tourist product • New cross-border tourist product • Aware local population of opportunities for sustainable use of heritage and communication in tourism • Supported enterprises receiving grants • Investment in the renovation of the museum in Semič • Infrastructural arrangement of the educational trail Obrh 	<p>Improved heritage potential of the border area of karst caves and karst springs</p> <p>Developed sustainable cross-border tourist product</p> <p>Increased number of visitors in the area</p> <p>Assured development of green tourism</p> <p>Increased recognizability of the area</p> <p>Achieved possibility of creating green jobs with the prevention of depopulation</p>



			<p>Renovated museum building in Semič where three arranged permanent exhibitions are located (serving also as entry point for exploring nature of Bela krajina)</p> <p>Trained guides - training with active participation in animation workshops</p> <p>Guidelines for the inclusion of heritage in tourism products</p> <p>Business plan for management and marketing of cross-border tourism product developed</p> <p>Mobile application for smartphones</p>	<p>Investment in the construction of a suspension bridge over the river Kupa</p>	
<p>Prebujanje/ Buđenje</p> <p>Općina Goričan</p> <p>Občina Šentilj</p> <p>Turistička zajednica Međimurske županije</p> <p>Zavod za turizem Maribor - Pohorje, javni zavod</p>	<p>840,431.69</p> <p>788,713.50</p>	<p>Sustainable cultural and tourist offer</p> <p>Activate and valorize tourism potential</p>	<p>Equipped RTCs at the old border crossing in SLO and CRO</p> <p>Developed and implemented joint educational program</p> <p>Joint business plan developed</p> <p>Tourist packages that include cultural and tourist facilities in both countries</p> <p>Developed Marketing plan, brochure, catalog, promotional video, interactive maps, tourist information boards / billboards, souvenirs</p> <p>Researched cultural assets in CRO and SLO</p> <p>Arranged and equipped location of the archeological site Ceršak - Gradišće</p> <p>Equipped location of the archeological site "Župnikov vrt" and "Necropolis under tumuli" (Goričan)</p> <p>Reconstructed 5 tumuli in Goričan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the number of tourists Fully functional and accessible site Ceršak Available and presented locality Necropolis under Tumuli Infrastructure ready for RTC operation in Croatia and Slovenia Functional regional tourist centers New tourism cross-border products Persons trained to work in the RTC 	<p>Improved public cultural-tourist infrastructure and offer along the old border crossings of Šentilj and Goričan municipalities</p> <p>Established 2 RTCs</p> <p>Increased recognizability of the areas' natural and cultural heritage</p>
<p>ŽIVA COPRNIJA / ŽIVA ŠTRIGARIJA</p>	<p>787,676.69</p> <p>772,326.69</p>	<p>Increase visits to the hinterland of Pohorje and Istria</p>	<p>Conducted research of storytelling heritage</p> <p>A joint strategy for preserving the storytelling tradition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Study visit to the Scottish Storytelling Centre 	<p>Increased recognizability of the area and natural and cultural heritage</p>



<p>Razvojni informacijski center Slovenska Bistrica</p> <p>Beletrina, zavod za založniško dejavnost</p> <p>Znanstvenoraziskovalni center Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti</p> <p>Etnografski muzej Istre</p> <p>Udruga Val kulture</p> <p>Općina Pićan</p>		<p>Improve knowledge of mythological heritage</p> <p>Enable the active preservation of the mythological tradition</p>	<p>Development of Živa coprnija of Pohorje and Istria path</p> <p>Digital guide Živa coprnija at a glance</p> <p>Picture book The Story of Pohorje and Istria</p> <p>Original souvenirs</p> <p>Prepared program content of the Živa coprnija product</p> <p>Established platform Živa coprnija / network of all interested stakeholders</p> <p>Marketing strategy</p> <p>The 1st Coprnija festival live!</p> <p>Plan of the permanent center for the preservation of storytelling</p> <p>Developed educational modules focused on practical aspects of preservation and presentation of storytelling heritage</p> <p>Workshops for tourism workers, performers, museums, educators and young people</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-border integral cultural-touristic product • Storytelling of Pohorje and Istria for the purpose of active preservation of biological heritage • Improving the capacity of tour guides, teachers and young people related to active preservation of preservation of mythological heritage and ensuring the sustainability of the heritage (Podravska, Istarska) 	<p>Increased number of visitors</p> <p>Improved knowledge of target groups for the purpose of active preservation</p> <p>Established environment for active preservation of mythological heritage and ensuring the sustainability of the tourist product</p> <p>Improved environment for economic development and networking based on the area's biological heritage</p> <p>Permanently preserved mythological heritage</p>
<p>ZELENO ŽELIMO</p> <p>Kmetijska gozdarska zbornica Slovenije - Kmetijsko gozdarski zavod Murska Sobota</p> <p>ITC - Inovacijsko tehnološki grozd Murska Sobota</p> <p>Zavod Marianum Veržej</p>	<p>711,037.75</p> <p>706,782.67</p>	<p>/ Establishment and implementation of a joint product</p>	<p>Preparation of microproducts Nature and movement, Handicrafts, Wine, Gastronomy and connected into a common tourist product KULTNATURA</p> <p>Prepared 20 different examples of programs (itineraries)</p> <p>Joint quality standards and recommendations on the maximum carrying capacity of each micro-product</p> <p>New tourist offer integrated into 4 tourist centers (Veržej, Dobrovnik, Ludbreg, Varadin)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing the number of tourists • Investment in the visitor infrastructure • Investment maintenance of info center • Small-scale investment in Batthany castle • Cross-border rural tourism product • Participants involved in capacity building activities 	<p>Increased attractiveness of the cross-border area due to the new tourism product</p>



<p>Zavod za okolje in turizem Dobrovnik</p> <p>Grad Ludbreg</p> <p>Hrvatska gospodarska komora</p> <p>Turistička zajednica grada Varaždina</p> <p>Uživam tradicijo</p>			<p>Presentation pavilion built in Camp Trio - SLO</p> <p>Modernised info center on Bukovnik Lake</p> <p>Arranged exhibition and presentation space of the existing wine cellar in the Bathany castle in Ludbreg</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism providers involved in trainings 	
<p>Biotehniški izobraževalni center Ljubljana</p> <p>PARNAS Zavod za kulturo in turizem, Velike Lašče</p> <p>Grm Novo mesto - center biotehnike in turizma</p> <p>Naj Tura d.o.o.</p> <p>Javna ustanova "Park prirode Žumberak - Samoborsko gorje"</p> <p>Udruga za zdrav život i zdravu prirodu "Trbuhovica" Prezid</p> <p>Turistička zajednica općine Vrsar</p> <p>Zagorska razvojna agencija d.o.o. za promicanje regionalnog razvoja</p>	<p>1,354,644.98</p> <p>1,311,868.91</p>	<p>Increase the expertise of target groups</p> <p>/Establish a common culinary transversal</p> <p>Interactive marketing for culinary transversal</p>	<p>Prepared and performed education programme for heritage interpreters in secondary and tertiary educational institutions and informal education programmes</p> <p>Report on the establishment of heritage communities</p> <p>Joint strategy of culinary transversal (Central and southeast Slovenia, Zagorje, Žumberak-Samoborsko gorje, Gorski kotar and Istria)</p> <p>8 sample models of culinary participation programmes</p> <p>Long-term participation action plan</p> <p>Handbook for the inclusion of heritage communities</p> <p>Transversal sustainable marketing plan</p> <p>Trilingual web/mobile app</p> <p>Reconstruction of school vineyard cottage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An innovative way of presenting a culinary transversal based on cultural and natural heritage Arranged infrastructure for visitors in Prezid - centre for visitors to Gorski Kotar Renovated school building on Trška gora, which is a monument of special importance Established joint culinary transversal and tourist product UŽIVAM TRADICIJO Trained young people from high schools, universities and other participants in non-formal education about cultural and natural environment Educated users of web/mobile applications with educational content 	<p>Increased knowledge, capacity and expertise of target groups</p> <p>Established joint cross-border culinary destination with a common brand and tourist product</p> <p>Increased number of visitors</p>
<p>ECool-Tour</p>	<p>704,955.99</p> <p>698,147.39</p>	<p>/Activate local potentials</p>	<p>Methodology for the activation and development of local potentials in the field of eco-social agriculture,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased number of visitors 	<p>New cross-border tourism product that will connect the natural and cultural values of the area and establish a</p>



<p>Mozaik društvo za socialno vključenost so.p.</p> <p>ACT Grupa</p> <p>Združenje Center alternativne in avtonomne produkcije, socijalno podjetje</p> <p>Lokalna akcijska grupa Međimurski doli i bregi</p>		<p>Develop a new joint tourism product</p> <p>Ensure sustainability, marketing and ICT support</p>	<p>sustainable tourism and the preservation and use of natural and cultural heritage</p> <p>Analysis of the potential for a common product</p> <p>Strategic plan for the design of the tourism product</p> <p>Shaping business models for cooperation for each region/County (Pomurska, Podravska, Međimurska)</p> <p>Arranged interpretation path on the Korenika eco-social farm</p> <p>17 new modules / services - cultural heritage with experiences in nature (in Slovenia - Vrbnjak eco farm, organic farm Pri Baronu, eco farm Valentan, Seed Library and Urban eco garden in Maribor; Educational and interpretive path, Cultural heritage with experiences in nature, Arrange your own vegetable garden, Indigenous and traditional Slovenian animals, Theater and music workshop, Eco festival. In Croatia: Social Agricultural Cooperative Domači vrt, Guided tour of the Zrinski Garden in Bernarda's Garden, Organic Production Workshop, Presentation and workshop of the Seed Bank, Guided tour of the Opeka Arboretum, Guided tour of orchards of old varieties, Cross - border fair "From the home garden")</p> <p>Product Sales/Placement System</p> <p>Sustainable management and marketing model of the joint tourism product</p> <p>App for connecting providers and consumers</p> <p>Promotion and sales webpage</p> <p>Toolkit for transferring the model</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New cross-border tourism model of joint management and sale of product • Landscaped terrain • Number of persons involved in the activities • Strengthening the capacity to manage tourism modules <p>sustainable tourism products and services</p> <p>Improved quality of the tourist offer</p> <p>Increased attractiveness of the area</p> <p>Increased number of visitors to the area of cultural and natural heritage</p>
<p>KRASn'KRŠ</p> <p>Znanstvenoraziskovalni center Slovenke</p>	<p>1,296,073.40 / 1,245,102.69</p>	<p>Modernisation and linking of the tourist offer</p> <p>Active heritage protection</p>	<p>Tool for determining the hotspots of karst heritage</p> <p>Inventory of hotspots in the cross-border area</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-border research and interpretive concept of karst heritage • Established interpretation centers and polygons at <p>Preserved natural and cultural heritage in the cross-border area of the karst landscape</p>



<p>akademije znanosti in umetnosti</p> <p>Komunalno stanovanjsko podjetje d. d. Sežana</p> <p>Javni zavod Park Škocjanske jame</p> <p>Zavod Trajnostnega turizma, Ljubljana</p> <p>Prirodoslovni muzej Rijeka</p> <p>Općina Punat</p> <p>Muzej d.o.o. savjetovanje i upravljanje u kulturi i turizmu</p>	<p>Interpretation and tourist promotion of heritage</p>	<p>Interpretive strategy of karst heritage</p> <p>Manual for interpretation of karst heritage</p> <p>Interpretive plan</p> <p>Interpretation center of karst vegetation (Sežana)</p> <p>Interpretation polygon Living karst museum (Sežana)</p> <p>Natural History Center Škocjan 3</p> <p>Interpretation center with thematic paths (Škocjanske jame)</p> <p>Interpretation point Karst and biotic diversity (Rijeka)</p> <p>Interpretation center "Wilderness overlooking the sea" (Rijeka)</p> <p>Interpretation polygon-educational trail Vučja stopa (Platak)</p> <p>Reconstruction of the Interpretation centre 'Stari toš u Puntu'</p> <p>Interpretation polygon for coastal karst (Punat)</p> <p>Assembler of existing tourist offers</p> <p>Cross-border study of good practices</p> <p>Cross-border sustainable concept destination</p> <p>"4Karst" cross-border tourist products</p> <p>"KarsTrail" cross-border tourist products</p>	<p>the destination KRASn'KRŠ area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpretation tools in interpretation centers and polygons • Cross-border sustainable tourist destination KRASn'KRŠ • Cross-border sustainable tourism products • Education and integration of stakeholders in tourism in a cross-border destination • Arranged new interpretation center for karst vegetation • Arranged interpretation center Stari toš in Punat 	<p>Increased number of visitors in the</p>
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			"SmarTKarst" platform		
			Digital catalogue of tourist products		
Claustra+					
Javni zavod Republike Slovenije za varstvo kulturne dediščine			Guidelines for the development of the destination CLAUSTR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted promotion of cultural and green tourism products 	Established Claustra cultural and green tourism product
Zavod Ivana Cankarja za kulturo, šport in turizem Vrhnika			Modeling of cultural and tourist itineraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased visibility and accessibility of cultural and tourist content 	Improved knowledge base and capacities for sustainable use of cultural and natural heritage
Narodni muzej Slovenije		Development of a network of participants in the tourism product	Established consortium CLAUSTR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of archaeological remains 	Improved visibility of the cultural and natural heritage
Zavod Republike Slovenije za varstvo narave	1,512,989.90	/ Increasing visibility and revitalization	Plan for the promotion of a new cultural and tourist product	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arranged access to cultural heritage 	Improved visibility of the cultural and natural heritage
Hrvatski restoratorski zavod	1,464,088.71		Increasing attractiveness and accessibility	Education of guides and tourist workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of didactic info points
Primorsko - goranska županija			Digital manual for guides and tour operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Didactic info points and traveling exhibition 	Increased physical and information accessibility to cultural and natural heritage
Pomorski i povijesni muzej Hrvatskog primorja Rijeka			Mobile application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new destination of cultural and green tourism 	Increased public awareness and involvement in the activities of preservation and management of cultural and natural heritage
Prirodoslovni muzej Rijeka			Promotional material for tour operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established CLAUSTR consortium and conducted training of tour guides and tourism workers 	
Turistička zajednica Kvarnera			Feasibility study (treatment of archeological remains)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Archaeological/restoration camps and cleaning campaigns 	
RIVIERA4SEASON S2		Increasing the number of visitors to rural heritage sites	Production of cross-border tourist product FEEL&TASTE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved cross-border cultural tourism product 	Preserved identity of the rural areas of both rieras and their natural and cultural heritage
Občina Piran	714,159.63	/ Education to exploit the potential of heritage	Tourist itineraries in rural area of Riviera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of 6 cross-border tourist itineraries 	Increased visits, better quality of visitor experience and long-term sustainability
Grad Opatija	695,560.43		Greater international recognition of heritage	Implementation of itineraries in rural area of Portorož and Opatija	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educated tourism providers and informed of the heritage area target groups



<p>Univerza na Primorskem Univerzita del Litorale</p> <p>Turistička zajednica grada Opatija</p> <p>Sveučilište u Rijeci, Fakultet za menadžment u turizmu i ugostiteljstvu</p>			<p>Establishment of a Promotion centre of riviervas (Portotož and Opatija)</p> <p>Council for sustainable development of tourism in the destination</p> <p>Arranged info and tasting centre Padna</p> <p>Arranged interpretation centre in Volosko</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation of traditional knowledge and customs • Performance of events in rural areas at a higher level • Renovated Tourist Information Tasting Center in Padna • Arranged interpretation center in Volosko • Arranged traditional road to Veprinac 	<p>Improved public awareness</p> <p>Improved knowledge and capabilities of local providers</p>
<p>kulTura</p> <p>Grad Jastrebarsko</p> <p>Turistička zajednica grada Jastrebarskog</p> <p>Občina Črnomelj</p> <p>Razvojno informacijski center Bela krajina</p> <p>Univerza v Ljubljani</p> <p>Libertas međunarodno sveučilište</p>	<p>1,118,806.54</p> <p>1,093,789.20</p>	<p>Preservation of the cultural heritage of two small towns</p> <p>Interpret and show the heritage of small towns</p> <p>Develop a cross-border culture product</p>	<p>Product concept kulTura</p> <p>Cross-border mobile application kulTura</p> <p>Implemented training program</p> <p>Marketing plan with arrangements</p> <p>Tourist map kulTura</p> <p>Implemented advertising campaign kulTura</p> <p>Info centre Jaska (Jastrebarsko)</p> <p>Erdody Park Pavilion (Jastrebarsko)</p> <p>Reconstructed streets and square in the historical core of Črnomelj</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased visits to the historic city centers of Jaska and Črnomelj • Small size infrastructure for visitors to Jaska • Preserved urban heritage in part of the historic city center of Črnomelj • Functional new cross-border product kulTura 	<p>Increased preservation, recognizability and tourist tour of the forgotten history of small background historical towns along the Slovenian-Croatian border</p>
<p>In cultura veritas</p> <p>Zagrebačka županija</p> <p>Udruga hrvatskih putničkih agencija</p> <p>Muzejski dokumentacijski centar</p>	<p>852,819.44</p> <p>814,172.20</p>	<p>Design a new tourist destination</p> <p>Improve the offer of the cultural heritage of the destination</p> <p>Ensure the sustainability of the destination</p>	<p>Methodology for the implementation of consultative workshops</p> <p>Plan for establishment of CB tourist destination</p> <p>Museum visitor tracking system established (Zagreb)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of visitors • Investment in heritage infrastructure and visitor infrastructure • One new tourist destination • Strengthened stakeholder capacities 	<p>Strengthened capacities of stakeholders to present and sell tourist destination offers and attract visitors</p> <p>Increased number of museum visitors</p> <p>Improved knowledge base and capacities</p>



<p>Razvojna agencija Sotla</p> <p>Občina Šmarje pri Jelšah</p> <p>Kmetijsko gozdarska zbornica Slovenije – Kmetijsko gozdarski zavod Maribor</p>			<p>Improved and digitised museum offer related to the winemaking tradition in City museum Jastrebarsko, Museum Sveti Ivan Zelina, Samobor Museum and Baroque Museum Šmarje pri Jelšah</p> <p>Digital catalogue of the complete cultural and wine offer of the CB area developed, available also as mobile application and on 'Turistomati' and smart benches</p> <p>Travel guide</p> <p>Promotional videos</p> <p>Monograph of wine varieties</p> <p>Decorated and equipped wine cottage (Šmarje pri Jelšah)</p>		<p>Improved cultural and natural heritage recognition</p> <p>Developed new tourist destination with several tourist products based on key cultural heritage sites and a comprehensive promotional campaign implemented</p>
<p>Inspiracija</p> <p>Občina Trbovlje</p> <p>Razvojno informacijski center Slovenska Bistrica</p> <p>Labin Art Express XXI</p> <p>Riječka razvojna agencija Porin d.o.o.</p> <p>Muze d.o.o.</p> <p>Naj Tura d.o.o.</p> <p>Turistička zajednica Grada Labina</p> <p>Urbanex, d.o.o. za građevinarstvo Split</p> <p>Subjekt d.o.o.</p>	<p>1,277,550.00 / 1,262,123.44</p>	<p>Revitalise 4 areas of industrial heritage</p> <p>Increase the knowledge and connectivity of tourist bidders</p> <p>Increase the number of visitors and recognition of industrial towns</p>	<p>Local interpretation plans (Trbovlje, Slovenska Bistrica, Labin and Rijeka) and Interpretation masterplan</p> <p>Participant involvement plan – workshops and trainings for tourist providers (Trbovlje, Slovenska Bistrica, Labin and Rijeka)</p> <p>INSPIRATION tourism product strategy</p> <p>Thematic packages of cross-border products for visitors</p> <p>Information centres in Trbovlje and equipment (Trbovlje, Rijeka, Labin)</p> <p>Arranged information and interpretation centres/points and escape rooms in Labin, Rijeka, Trbovlje and Slovenska Bistrica</p>	<p>Establishment of a joint cross-border integral cultural-tourism product</p> <p>INSPIRATION</p> <p>Improved participants' knowledge of industrial, mining and factory heritage for the (Grajska pristava), craft workshops, breakthrough of tourism mills and sawmills in Slo. Bistrica and</p> <p>Revitalization of industrial heritage areas in Trbovlje, Slovenska Bistrica, Labin and Rijeka</p> <p>Increased visit to revitalized cultural heritage areas in Trbovlje, Slo. Bistrica, Labin and Rijeka</p>	<p>Revitalized centers of four towns with a rich industrial heritage: the central part of the towns of Trbovlje and Labin with mining facilities and monuments, the castle, buildings within the castle (Grajska pristava), craft workshops, mills and sawmills in Slo. Bistrica and the dock-factory part in Rijeka</p> <p>Increased knowledge and connection of local providers</p> <p>Increased number of visits to the heritage area</p>



			<p>Revitalization of the castle grounds (Slovenska Bistrica)</p> <p>Setting up a mobile museum multimedia machine (Labin)</p> <p>Implementation of thematic packages for target groups</p> <p>Inspiration Product Test Report</p> <p>Implementation of promotional activities</p> <p>Joint long-term cooperation plan</p>		
<p>Mitski park</p> <p>Občina Hrpelje-Kozina</p> <p>Općina Mošćenička Draga</p> <p>Sveučilište u Rijeci, Fakultet za menadžment u turizmu i ugostiteljstvu</p> <p>Visokoškolsko središće Sežana d.o.o.</p> <p>Univerza na Primorskem/Univerista' del Litorale</p> <p>Turistička Zajednica Općine Mošćenička Draga</p>	<p>633,292.50</p> <p>618,911.87</p>	<p>Improve the quality of cultural heritage</p> <p>Strengthen sustainable tourism</p> <p>Strengthen common competencies and knowledge</p>	<p>Mythic landscape monograph with guidelines for creation of one unique tourist destination</p> <p>Collection of materials of folk traditions</p> <p>2 visitor centers established (Mošćenička Draga and Hrpelje-Kozina)</p> <p>"Mythic" park in Trebišća (path Trebišća-Perun) and Rodik (2 paths) arranged and marked with stone signposts and sculptures</p> <p>Expert manual on the possibilities of using stone</p> <p>Program of animation activities</p> <p>"Treasure hunting" in the area of CMP</p> <p>Innovative application for CMP guidance</p> <p>Usage of used phones made available by CMP for tourists without smartphones</p> <p>Cross-border tourism products</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A company that will provide interpretation knowledge and develop the Cross-border Mythic Park (CMP) animation program Tourist products for the sustainable use of cultural and natural heritage Cross-border tourist destination Mitski and Park Persons who will be trained on the topics of the Cross-border mythical park A small-scale investment in the infrastructure for arranging a visitor center in the area of 	<p>Improved quality of cultural heritage</p> <p>Strengthened sustainable tourism</p> <p>Strengthened common competencies and knowledge</p>



<p>Arhej d.o.o., arheološke raziskave in druge intelektualne storitve</p> <p>INKUBATOR d.o.o., ekonomske, organizacijske in tehnološke storitve, Sežana</p>			<p>Tourism product promotion plan</p> <p>Guidelines for cross-border product management and marketing</p> <p>Educated local residents, companies, tourism and agency staff, and special guides about the Mythical park and its offer</p>	<p>the Municipality of Hrpelje-Kozina (SI)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small-scale investment in infrastructure for the creation of a visitor center in the area of the Municipality of Moščenicka Draga (HR) 	
<p>Prehistory adventure</p> <p>Općina Donja Voća</p> <p>Občina Zreče</p> <p>Muzej Turopolja</p> <p>Občina Radenci</p> <p>Arheološki muzej u Zagrebu</p> <p>Univerza v Ljubljani (Filozofska fakulteta)</p>	<p>612,246.44 584,043.72</p>	<p>Transfer of knowledge from profession to practice</p> <p>/Activation of 3 protected heritage areas</p> <p>Development of 1 new sustainable tourism product</p>	<p>Field research and site processing</p> <p>Database for interpretation</p> <p>Bases for ICT interpretation</p> <p>AR equipment for internal presentation (Museum of Turopolje)</p> <p>Outdoor info kiosk (Museum of Turopolja)</p> <p>Augmented reality mobile application</p> <p>Training ground (Radenci)</p> <p>Thematic path (Radenci)</p> <p>Archaeological path (Zreče)</p> <p>Adventure exhibition (Museum of Turopolje)</p> <p>Popular science exhibition</p> <p>Prehistoric site of Vindija (Donja Voća); Information sign (Donja Voća, Radenci)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantive revitalization of three units of protected heritage (Zreče, Donja Voća, Radenci) • One new tourism product practice through 86 events • "Prehistory Adventure" activities • Arrangement of the access road to Vindija Cave (Donja Voća) • "Prehistory Adventure" interpretation training ground (Radenci) 	<p>Transfer of professional knowledge into practice through 86 events</p> <p>Activation of three areas of protected heritage</p> <p>Development of one new sustainable tourist product</p>



			<p>Educational workshops (Donja Voća, Zreče, Museum of Turopolje, Archaeological Museum Zagreb) and archaeological camp</p> <p>Prehistoric cinema with educational movies (Zreče)</p> <p>"Prehistory Adventure" tourism product</p> <p>Culinary product design</p> <p>Educational workshops for tourism providers, workshops on green tourism</p> <p>Arranging access road; Arrangement of the access point (Donja Voća)</p> <p>Landscaping of a prehistoric plateau (Radenci)</p>		
<p>NATURE & WILDLIFE</p> <p>RRA Zeleni kras, d.o.o.</p> <p>Občina Pivka</p> <p>Javni zavod za kulturo, turizem in medgeneracijsko sodelovanje Snežnik</p> <p>Jezerski hram, Zavod za ohranjanje naravne in kulturne dediščine, Cerknica</p> <p>Javna ustanova Nacionalni park Risnjak</p> <p>Lokalna razvojna agencija PINS d.o.o.</p>	<p>835,290.12</p> <p>827,663.56</p>	<p>Improve the conditions of natural heritage areas</p> <p>Boost the area's green economy</p> <p>Raise stakeholder awareness and knowledge</p>	<p>Analysis of the supply and market situation for the development of cross-border products</p> <p>Facilities for observing/photographing animals</p> <p>KOLAČNIK and RACNA GORA observatory in Loška dolina</p> <p>Observatory for large animals in Risnjak National Park</p> <p>Bird observatory in Zeleni vir</p> <p>Thematic trail of the Pivka crossing lakes and thematic trail in Zeleni Vir</p> <p>Educational thematic trail "Inhabitants of the forest" (Loška valley)</p> <p>ICT corner for large animals Risnjak</p> <p>Interactive ornithology classroom Cerknisko jezero</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New cross-border tourist products and cross-border tourist destinations Small-scale investments in visitor infrastructure in the cross-border area Encouraged visit of areas and points of natural heritage included in the project Increased number of people involved in capacity building activities 	<p>Increased number of visitors in the natural heritage area of the project</p> <p>Increased number of visitors to protected areas and points included in the project</p>



<p>Riječka razvojna agencija PORIN d.o.o.</p> <p>Subjekt d.o.o.</p>			<p>Observation deck on the tree of Poljana II and observation tower on the tree of Poljana I</p> <p>New tourism product Explore the Wondernature</p> <p>Marketing strategy of the destination</p> <p>Internet application for mobile devices</p> <p>mplementation plan of the cross-border destination</p> <p>Licensed tourist guides</p> <p>Trained guides-interpreters</p> <p>Workshops and other events for tourism providers</p>		
<p>Mine tour</p> <p>Grad Labin</p> <p>Razvojni center Srca Slovenije, d.o.o.</p> <p>Zavod za gradbeništvo Slovenije</p> <p>Turistička zajednica Istarske županije</p> <p>Občina Litija</p> <p>Labin Art Express XXI</p> <p>Turistična zveza Slovenije</p>	<p>972,929.08</p> <p>955,212.18</p>	<p>Improve the conservation of mining heritage</p> <p>/Strengthen sustainable mining heritage tourism</p> <p>Improve the capacity of tourism stakeholders</p>	<p>Professional foundations for special guidelines in investments at the locations of renovated mine facilities</p> <p>Interpretation contents</p> <p>Digitized archival and museum material</p> <p>3D-model of the mine</p> <p>Exhibition on mining heritage</p> <p>Cross-border tourism product MINE TOUR</p> <p>Visitor Management Plan</p> <p>Marketing business model</p> <p>Tour guide</p> <p>Renovation of the mining tower Šoht in Labin</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-border sustainable tourism products for the promotion of mining cultural and natural heritage • Tourist visits on the established network of cultural assets of the mining cultural and natural heritage • Stakeholders of sustainable tourism,Improved capacity of stakeholders of involved in training for sustainable tourism and culture the promotion of mining heritage • Small-scale pilot investment for the preservation of the cultural heritage of mining in Šoht in Labin • Small-scale pilot investment for the protection of the natural 	<p>Improved revitalization, preservation and promotion of two mining monuments of cultural and natural heritage</p> <p>Improved capacity of stakeholders of sustainable tourism and culture</p> <p>Increased number of visitors to cultural and natural heritage areas</p>



			Arrangement of mine corridors in Sitarjevec Mine (Litija)	heritage of the Sitarjevec mine in Litija	
LIVING CASTLES					
Međimursko veleučilište u Čakovcu			Video mapping projections, holographic projections and projections of virtual glasses and other interfaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for employees and tourist participants • New cross-border integrated product 	
Raziskovalno izobraževalno središče Dvorec Rakičan			Workshops for developing offers – families and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement in educational activities and ensuring a stimulating environment 	An innovative and complete concept of
Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Bistra Ptuj	1,236,470.80	Preservation and evaluation of cultural heritage	Cross-border cultural experience offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the number of tourists/visitors of cultural heritage 	a cross-border tourist product
Razvojna agencija Savinjske regije d.o.o.	1,218,008.81	/Improve and stimulate environmental development	Cross-border experience offer - groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing and sustainability training 	Increased recognition and attendance of the program area
Gradski muzej Varaždin		New product and increasing tourist offer	Corporate identity of the brand and slogan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical implementation of the investment - thematic exhibition "Čakovec Old Town and Zrinski" 	Improved capabilities of persons, organizations and stakeholders involved in project activities
Muzej Čakovec			Joint marketing plan		
Muzeji Zagorja			A tool/toolkit to support travel agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical implementation of the investment - Multimedia museum space 	
Proteus d.o.o.			Functional multi-purpose "living" hall		
Kaštelir			Arranged space for the thematic exhibition "Čakovec Old Town and Zrinski"		
Občina Komen			Multimedia museum space		
Občina Izola				ONE new cross-border destination of sustainable tourism and THREE new products of sustainable tourism	Preserved natural and cultural heritage through the revival of 4 selected castles and 8 botanical educational trails in their surroundings
Univerza v Mariboru	1,203,872.84	Valorization, protection and revitalization of hill forts	Plan with measures for sustainable management of castles	500 Persons involved in education and training	Raised awareness of the importance of natural and cultural heritage with the construction of the road "Gradina from Karst to Kvarner"
INŠTITUT IRRIS za raziskave, razvoj in strategije družbe, kulture in okolja	1,183,110.36	Development of innovative complete tourism products	Reconstruction – 3D digital representations of life on the ramparts	Increase in the number of visitors to the project locations near VP	
Istarska županija			3D models of castles	Capacity building of 40 tourist guides through education	Increased knowledge about useful plants from the area of the mountains and their surroundings
Općina Lanišće			Itinerary - geographical map	Info-interpretation point OL INFO-INTERPRETATION POINT OK	Increased number of visitors



<p>Grad Mali Lošinj</p> <p>JU "Park prirode Učka"</p> <p>Javni zavod Komenski Kras</p> <p>Općina Mošćenička Draga</p>			<p>Designing innovative tourist products</p> <p>Kašteliri from Karst to Kvarner - an adventure trail</p> <p>Established 4 educational and recreational and 4 didactic trails (Štanjel, Ozida, Korte, Rašpor)</p> <p>Genetic bank of at least 50 species of useful plants</p> <p>Codex for picking useful plants</p> <p>Macrobotanical Remains Report</p> <p>Report on the field collection of data on the use of plants</p> <p>Report on folk names and traditional use of plants</p> <p>Experimental plots of plantations of protected plant species</p> <p>Social entrepreneurship for sustainable rural development-education</p> <p>Research on the course of a tourist visit</p> <p>Load analysis</p> <p>Lanišće – Center for the Promotion of Castles</p> <p>Contents for a tourist guide about castles, contents for a botanical guide, contents for brochures</p> <p>Mobile/web application – Kašteljeri ROAD</p> <p>Content for a short documentary film</p> <p>Product marketing strategy</p>	<p>INFO-INTERPRETATION POINT OI-KORT</p> <p>INFO-INTERPRETATION POINT MOŠĆENIČKA DRAGA</p>	
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			<p>Establishment of a consortium for the revitalization of castles</p> <p>Preparation of the concept for staging life on the hillfort</p> <p>Creation and implementation of training for tourist guides</p> <p>Info-interpretation point OL - maintenance works and equipment</p> <p>Arrangement of the INFO-INTERPRETATION POINT OK- ŠTANJEL, OI-KORT and OMD</p>		
RIDE&BIKE II			<p>Joint strategy of the RIDE&BIKE destination</p> <p>Traced and digitized RIDE&BIKE themed routes</p> <p>Innovative interpretation RIDE&BIKE points</p>		
Zagorska razvojna agencija					
Turistička zajednica Krapinsko-zagorske županije					
Turistička zajednica "Savsko-sutlanska dolina i brigi"	744,151.66				
Razvojna agencija Kozjansko	688,175.55				
Razvojna agencija Sotla					
Javni zavod za kulturo, šport, turizem in mladinske dejavnosti Sevnica					
		<p>Development of new RIDE&BIKE tourism products</p> <p>Standardization of RIDE & BIKE offer</p> <p>Innovative promotion of RIDE & BIKE products</p>	<p>Activated sections of RIDE&BIKE routes</p> <p>Defined innovative RIDE&BIKE itineraries</p> <p>Pilot bike-sharing system (Šetnjur)</p> <p>Pilot certification of equestrian route (Krapinsko-zagorska County)</p> <p>Action plan for long-term destination cooperation</p> <p>Defined RIDE&BIKE standards</p> <p>Cavalry caravans</p> <p>Study tour for tourism ambassadors</p> <p>Digital "multichannel" campaigns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shaped sustainable tourism products of active tourism offer based on the interpretation of heritage Decorated visitor infrastructure Educated and trained tourist staff Guaranteed promotion of the improved cross-border RIDE&BIKE destination 	<p>Increase in the number of visits in the cross-border tourist RIDE&BIKE destination</p>



Projects implemented within SO 2.1 also show high level of alignment with the CP intervention logic. The projects respond well to the identified needs and give clear contribution to output and result indicators at Programme level.

Again, the intervention logic is very focused and consistent. It fully responds to the needs and challenges of the PA.

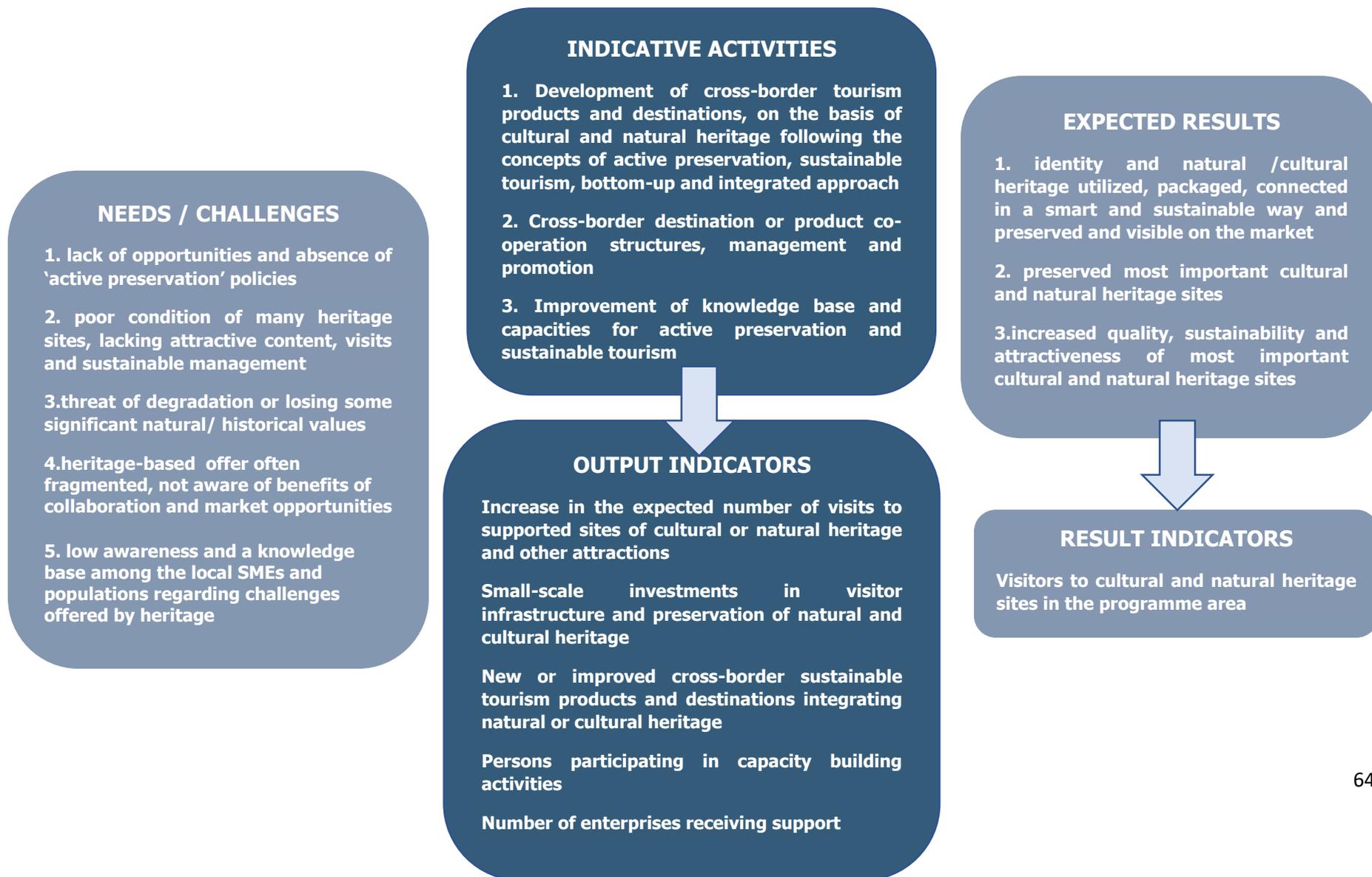
The Programme specific output indicators cover the expected immediate achievements, whereas the selected common output indicator (*CO09 Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural or natural heritage and attractions (visits/year)*) anticipates the expected magnitude of change. The other common output indicators *CO01 Number of enterprises receiving support*, respectively *CO02 Number of enterprises receiving grants* reflect the intention of the CP to stronger involve SMEs because of their role in economic development of the area and the employment potential, in particular outside the largest employment centers.

The result indicator captures the most relevant indicator of change – the actual number of visits to cultural and natural heritage sites in the Programme area.



Figure 7 The intervention logic for SO 2.1

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE SO 2.1: Active heritage preservation through sustainable tourism





SO 2.2 Protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services

This SO is primarily focused on the conservation and restoration of biodiversity for future generations and raising awareness of the role that nature plays in the wellbeing of people and in long-term risk prevention.

Projects within SO 2.2 were related to:

- improving habitat conditions, permanently providing adequate conditions for the access and use of Natura 2000 area;
- ensuring favourable conservation status of specific species in the entire project area;
- establishing mechanisms for joint management of cross-border protected area;
- reducing risks which are endangering specific species;
- improving skills and competencies to implement biodiversity conservation and nature protection;
- raising awareness of target groups on biodiversity and ecosystem services;

Table 8 Overview of specific objectives, main project outputs, main project results and main project deliverables of the projects implemented within SO 2.2

SO 2.2 Protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services					
Project name and project partners	ERDF funds (Allocated / paid)	Specific objectives	Main project deliverables (with location)	Main project outputs	Main project results
LIKE Istarska županija Zavod Republike Slovenije za varstvo narave Udruga BIOM Društvo za opazovanje in proučevanje ptic Slovenije Univerza na Primorskem,	1,299,120.68 1,218,840.95	Established cross-border protection mechanisms Raised awareness of the importance of adequate protection Better habitat conditions and conservation status of species	Guidelines for joint project area management of karst edge area (NATURA 2000 area) Baseline documentation for the proclamation of Čićarija Regional Park Study program for the implementation of the camp on Čićarija (education of students) Educational and research workshops (Lanišče, Rijeka, Čićarija) for children and families Database with georeferenced sites of <i>Serratula lycopifolia</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established mechanism for joint project area management • Provided preconditions for the formal establishment of the Čićarija Regional Park • Increased quality of environmental content in the educational systems of the project area • Increased capacity, skills and knowledge of educators, teachers, teachers and other educators • Improved habitat conditions for indicator species <i>Serratula lycopifolia</i> and <i>Emberiza hortulana</i> • Improved skills and competencies of people to implement biodiversity conservation 	Contribution to the favorable conservation status of the eastern sub-Mediterranean dry grasslands and endangered species in this Park Contribution to the favorable conservation status of N2000 habitat types of carbonate rocks with hazmophytic vegetation Created adequate conditions for climbing tourism in Osp with the application of protection measures and solving problems between the population and recreationists



<p>Università del Litorale</p> <p>Prirodoslovni muzej Rijeka</p> <p>Javna ustanova Natura Histrica</p> <p>Mestna občina Koper – Comune città di Capodistria</p>			<p>Evaluated existing monitoring plan of <i>Serratula lycopifolia</i></p> <p>Study of habitat ecology and biological quality of <i>Serratula lycopifolia</i></p> <p>Proposed management plan for <i>Emberiza hortulana</i> and educated staff for monitoring the population of <i>E. hortulana</i></p> <p>Removed woody vegetation on 60 ha (between Movraž and Rakitovc)</p> <p>Mown test lawn on 0.6 ha (Žbevnica, NP Učka)</p> <p>Educated professional and amateur staff and locals</p> <p>Protected grasslands under the rock on an area of 1 ha (Osp)</p> <p>Removed invasive species (Žbevnica, NP Učka, Rakitovac, Hrastovlje)</p> <p>Implementation of ex-situ protection of Tommasini's merinka (Rijeka)</p> <p>Cross-border Management Plan of Tommasini's merinka</p> <p>Conducted research on the impact of climbing on birds</p> <p>Climbing routes set in permitted zones (Buzetski kanjon)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> new area for spreading the range (<i>S. lycopifolia</i> and <i>E. Hortulana</i>) on a surface of 61.6 ha Permanent establishment of a favorable state of preservation of Tommasini's merinka Increased number of educated professionals, students and sports climbers about life in rock crevices New climbing routes for science and recreation Favourable conservation status of Griffon vulture (<i>Gyps fulvus</i>) in the entire project area Increased number of educated professional and amateur staff in the project area – <i>Gyps fulvus</i> Permanently provided adequate conditions for access and use of the Natura 2000 area in Osp 	<p>Neutralised recreational pressure on protected N2000 habitats and karst edge species</p> <p>Raised awareness of target groups, raised quality of educational content and capacities of experts to transfer knowledge</p> <p>about the importance of biodiversity and the benefits of ecosystem services</p>
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			<p>A study on the impact of paragliding on griffon vultures (<i>Gyps fulvus</i>) and the improvement of conditions in its habitat, training of staff for monitoring</p> <p>Arranged parking areas, set up signs and information boards and established info points (Osp)</p>		
<p>ČIGRA</p> <p>Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti</p> <p>Nacionalni inštitut za biologiju</p> <p>Društvo za opazovanje i proučavanje ptice Slovenije</p> <p>Udruga BIOM</p> <p>Javna ustanova „Zeleni prsten“</p> <p>Prirodoslovno-matematički fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu</p>	<p>478,981.98 / 469,279.35</p>	<p>Increasing the degree of conservation of tern</p> <p>Determining the dynamics of tern populations</p> <p>Drafting a cross-border action plan</p>	<p>Increased nesting area of terns – 5 nesting grounds arranged in Rakitje, Ormož, Ptuj, Hruščica</p> <p>Natura 2000 area extended to Rakitje (152,55 ha)</p> <p>New Natura 2000 Standard Form for inclusion in the EU Natura 2000 database</p> <p>Proposal to amend the Ordinance on protection of birds in the area of the ecological network</p> <p>Developed cross-border protocol for monitoring continental populations of red-billed terns in Croatia and Slovenia</p> <p>Database on the state of tern populations</p> <p>Education for conducting quality monitoring of terns</p> <p>Scientific paper on tern movement and genetics</p> <p>Draft cross-border action plan for the protection of terns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased area of favourable nesting grounds for terns Increased surface of the Natura 2000 ecological network Cross-border monitoring protocol Tern Movement Database, Tern Genetic Database, reports and scientific papers Drafted cross-border action plan for the protection of continental tern populations 	<p>Ensured favourable conditions in nesting grounds by preventing succession on the islands and setting up a nesting platform on the gravel pit near Hruščica</p> <p>Increased survival rate of the young increases</p> <p>Raised awareness of the local population and tourists about the endangerment of colonies</p> <p>Established measures for coordinated management of the Drava and Sava habitats in the program area in order to preserve gravel islands and reefs</p> <p>Increased degree of conservation of red-billed terns in all three Natura areas and small terns in one nesting area</p>



<p>Carnivora Dinarica</p> <p>Univerza v Ljubljani</p> <p>Zavod za gozdarstvo Slovenije</p> <p>Občina Pivka</p> <p>Javna ustanova Nacionalni park Risnjak</p> <p>Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Veterinarski fakultet</p> <p>WWF Adria - Udruga za zaštitu prirode i očuvanje biološke raznolikosti</p> <p>Grad Vrbovsko</p> <p>Primorsko-goranska županija</p>	<p>1,983,897.98</p> <p>1,949,825.63</p>	<p>Improving large carnivore management</p> <p>/Reducing the risk for large carnivores</p> <p>Raising awareness and strengthening guidance</p>	<p>Report on harmonization of wolf and lynx management</p> <p>Report on the passability and connectivity of large carnivores</p> <p>Acquired set of supplies and equipment for telemetry of large carnivores</p> <p>Large Carnivore Ecosystem Services Report</p> <p>Acquired gas chromatograph with auxiliary equipment (Zagreb)</p> <p>Acquired set of didactic material</p> <p>Established didactic corner about large carnivores in elementary schools</p> <p>Carried out training for teachers and local stakeholders</p> <p>Carried out practical workshops for locals</p> <p>Carried out demonstrational measures:</p> <p>Developed farm of good practices of coexistence between man and large carnivores</p> <p>Installed guardrails at 'hot spots' (Gorski Kotar)</p> <p>2 Shepherd dogs trained and donated to agricultural producers</p> <p>Installed traffic signals (Gorski Kotar, north Lika)</p> <p>Designed route regime for visitors in NP Risnjak</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved system and cooperation of and Snežnik institutions in the management of large carnivores between Slovenia and Croatia Widespread knowledge of large carnivore measures for cross-border ecosystem services in the northern management of wolves between Slovenia and Croatia Increased knowledge of the professional public and residents about the importance and ways to protect large carnivores by human activities in the Improved cross-border habitat of large carnivores Tested demonstrational measures to improve the conservation conditions of large carnivores Activated center for directing and raising visitors' awareness of the coexistence of people and large carnivores 	<p>Improved wolf, lynx and bear conservation status for the N2000 area of the Notranjska trikotnik, Gorski kotar and North Lika, Javornik</p> <p>Reduced endangerment of large carnivores by human activities in the transboundary project area N2000</p> <p>Greater awareness of the general and importance and ways of protecting large carnivores</p> <p>Increased awareness of ecosystem services of large carnivores in the cross-border area N2000 Gorski kotar and North Lika, Javornik-Snežnik and Notranjski trikotnik</p>
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			<p>Guidance equipment on the Leska educational trail (NP Risnjak)</p> <p>Acquired equipment for directing visits on the track along the Kupa river (Vrbovsko)</p> <p>Snežnik/ Mašun Visitor Channeling System</p> <p>Acquired Pivka routing equipment</p> <p>Installed fence for lynx orphaned cubs (Gorski Kotar, north Lika)</p> <p>Installed trash cans protected from bears (Javorniki -Snežnik, Notranjski trikotnik, Pivka, Gorski kotar, Vrbovsko)</p> <p>Arranged center for directing and raising visitors' awareness of the coexistence of man and large carnivores (Pivka)</p>		
Vezi narave					
Občina Grosuplje			Created professional basics for otter management in rivers Sutla and Kupa		
Občina Rogaška Slatina			Defined population of fish and shellfish in the river Sutla		
Zavod Republike Slovenije za varstvo narave		Improving the conservation status of target species	Opened canal by creating dead sleeves (Rogaška Slatina, Krapinsko-zagorska County)		
Javna ustanova Nacionalni park Risnjak	2,170,821.80 / 2,112,831.35	Improving joint management of N2000 areas	Arrangement of the cost structures natural measures (Rogaška Slatina, spring of Kupa)		
Grad Vrbovsko		Raising awareness of the nature importance for the people	Planted coasts and clearings (Rogaška Slatina)		
Udruga Hyla			Arrangement of the otter crossing (Rogaška Slatina, Krapinsko-zagorska County)		
Javna ustanova za upravljanje zaštićenim dijelovima prirode					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented program of measures for improving the conservation status of otters in the area of Sutla and Kupa Implemented program of measures for improving the condition of beetles in the area of Sutla and restoration of target species on the protected Natura 2000 area Implemented program of measures for improving the conservation status of amphibians in the area of Radensko field and Sutla Implemented program of measures for structures improving the status of butterflies in the area of Radensko polje, NP Risnjak and Sutla Implemented measures for restoring the Kamačnik spring Implemented concept of guiding visitors and interpreting nature Established Sutla Nature Protection Center



Krapinsko-
zagorske županije

Cleaned spring of the Kupa river (NP Risnjak)

Planted oak trees by river Sutla

Mapped presence of beetles by river Sutla

Amphibian conservation bases - Radensko polje

Guidelines for managing amphibians in river Sutla

Held actions in nature for amphibians – river Sutla, Radensko polje, NP Risnjak

Written management guidelines - Radensko polje, Sutla and Risnjak

Held workshops for teachers, farmers, landowners, locals

The concept of guidance and interpretation for Kamačnik

The concept of directing and interpreting Zelenjak

Established Nature Interpretation Centre Šica (Žabja hiša) (Radensko polje)

Established Nature Protection Centre Sutla (Rogaška Slatina, Savinjska region)

- Developed and implemented training program on ecosystem services for selected target groups



Projects within SO 2.2 in terms of project objectives, outputs and results are in line with the expectations of the Programme as set in CP and they fully correspond to the logic of intervention at the Programme level for that specific objective.

The intervention logic is consistent and in line with the needs identified in the Programme area.

Output indicators set at the level of investment priority 6d and related to SO 2.2 directly follow the main indicative activities and can give a good insight into immediate project achievements. The complexity of indicators under the investment priority 6d, as well as difficulties in collection of data related to the result indicator 6dRI1 and 6dRI2 have been highlighted within the previous Evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness, and confirmed within this draft Impact Evaluation (more can be found within EQ5).



Figure 8 The intervention logic for SO 2.2

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE SO 2.2: Protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services

NEEDS / CHALLENGES

1. public awareness of ecosystem concepts is low
2. uncontrolled pressures on land (i.e. agriculture, infrastructure, expansion of settlements)
3. excessive use of natural resources
4. increased visits to areas under protection
5. introduction and spreading of invasive alien species
6. climate change

INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES

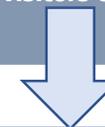
1. Capacity building actions for increasing the participation, awareness, knowledge and acceptance among target groups on nature protection and ecosystem services
2. Development of joint coordinated approaches, methods, tools and new solutions in planning, monitoring and management of Natura 2000 and other species and habitat types relevant for CB area.
3. Implementation of monitoring surveys of Natura 2000 habitat types or species as well as other habitats and species relevant for CB area.
4. Identification, mapping, evaluation and enhancement of ecosystem services with joint pilot studies of ecosystem values and development of methodologies for regional green accounting or other Payment for Ecosystem Service (PES) systems.

OUTPUT INDICATORS

- Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status
- Implemented practical demonstrations of measures in nature in support of biodiversity
- Joint studies and tools for assessing and promoting ecosystem services developed
- Persons with improved practical skills and competences for implementation of biodiversity protection measures and valorisation of ecosystem services

EXPECTED RESULTS

1. improved conservation status (CS) of cross-border Natura 2000 species and habitats types which are of common interest for preservation
2. improved knowledge of species and habitats, joint management, channelling of visitors, intensive involvement of local population and improved interpretation of nature
3. increased acceptance and understanding of biodiversity preservation and ecosystems among locals and visitors of the programme area



RESULT INDICATORS

- Average degree of conservation status of habitat types and species of Natura 2000 sites in programme area-species
- Average degree of conservation status of habitat types and species of Natura 2000 sites in programme area -habitat



SO 3.1 Building partnerships among public authorities and stakeholders for healthy, safe and accessible border areas

This SO is primarily focused on the new or strengthened existing cross-border structures that will enable cross-border delivery of services in public interest or improve access to such services in peripheral border areas with significant gap in service delivery.

Projects within SO 3.1 were focused on the sectors of:

- establishing and strengthening cross-border structures and networks in the fields of:
 - social care services,
 - health and
 - rescue and safety services
- capacity building of staff providing services in the above fields;
- increasing level of cross-border cooperation in the above fields;
- developing and testing the use of an innovative models of work in the above fields.

Table 9 Overview of specific objectives, main project outputs, main project results and main project deliverables of the projects implemented within SO 3.1

SO 3.1 Building partnerships among public authorities and stakeholders for healthy, safe and accessible border areas

<i>Project name and project partners</i>	<i>ERDF Funds (Allocated / paid)</i>	<i>Specific objectives</i>	<i>Main project deliverables (with location)</i>	<i>Main project outputs</i>	<i>Main project results</i>
Demenca aCROsSLO Dom upokojencev Izola - Casa del pensionato Isola Dom za starije i nemoćne osobe "Atilio Gamboc" Umag Obalni dom upokojencev	349,951.26 / 340,041.53	Establish a permanent cross-border structure Improve the level of knowledge and expertise of persons Stigma reduction	Analysis of existing methods of work with persons with dementia Education plan for internal staff of homes for the elderly Recommendations for optimizing living conditions for people with dementia Implementation of pilot optimizations in homes for the elderly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained staff providing social care services for people with dementia in the border area • Established cross-border cooperation of institutions in the field of work with people with dementia • Improved skills of designers who influence the creation of the environment for people with dementia • Improved skills and competencies for working 	Trained staff providing social care services for people with dementia in the border area Cross-border cooperation of institutions in the field of work with people with dementia to transfer innovations, in this field, in practice Improved skills of designers who influence the creation of the environment for people with dementia



<p>Koper – Casa costiera del pensionato Capodistria</p> <p>Grad Umag</p> <p>Hrvatska udruga za Alzheimerovu bolest</p> <p>Nacionalni inštitut za javno zdravje</p>			<p>Education of designers who influence the creation of the environment for people with dementia</p> <p>Optimization plan for the home help service</p> <p>Training of staff which allows transition from medical to psychosocial care for people with dementia</p> <p>Guidelines for recognizing early symptoms of dementia</p> <p>Piloting optimized home help service</p> <p>Infrastructural optimization of the three homes for elderly people with dementia</p>	<p>with people with dementia in people providing home help in the border area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualified people who meet people with dementia on a daily basis 	<p>tia, to implement appropriate solutions to optimize living conditions for people with dementia</p> <p>Improved skills and competencies in people providing home help in the border area</p> <p>Reduced stigma of dementia and risk of social exclusion of patients in the border area</p>
<p>STAR</p> <p>Občina Hrpelje-Kozina</p> <p>Obalni dom upokojujencev Koper - Casa costiera del pensionato Capodistria</p> <p>Inštitut Antona Trstenjaka za gerontologijo in medgeneracijsko sožitje</p> <p>Dom za starije osebe Kantrida Rijeka</p> <p>Primorsko - goranska županija</p>	<p>605,998.13 / 587,380.25</p>	<p>Cross-border social protection network for the elderly</p> <p>New forms of long-term care</p> <p>Training for the development of long-term care</p>	<p>Cross-border comparative study of social care services for the elderly</p> <p>Cross-border long-term care deinstitutionalisation program</p> <p>Training module for internal staff in autonomous work teams operating at the level of individual household communities</p> <p>Education program for family caregivers</p> <p>Education of informal family caregivers</p> <p>Volunteer education program</p> <p>Volunteer education</p> <p>Training program for network organizers (local networks of quality aging programs)</p> <p>Education of network organizers</p> <p>Pilot establishment of a day center in the municipality of Hrpelje – Kozina</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cross-border program for the development of deinstitutionalization of long-term care Professional education for caregivers Trained professional workers for pilot implementation of 2 forms of deinstitutionalization of care 	<p>Designed common cross-border plan and concrete solutions to improve availability and diversity</p> <p>Acquired new knowledge and proposed development opportunities for institutional and non-institutional family care in partner regions</p> <p>Increased awareness, skills and competencies of long-term care actors</p> <p>Improved quality, diversity, and availability of services in the programme area</p> <p>Established system for deinstitutionalization of long-term care</p>



Equipment for the established day center

ICT system for remote protection

Education on new methods of work for professionals

Pilot household community in Rijeka

Equipment for the established household community

ICT system for remote protection

Education on new methods of work for professionals

Exchange of knowledge and good practices gained through
the two pilot activities

Pilot activities' Evaluation report

Accomplished forms of
deinstitutionalization in the non-
urban area as well

Increased involvement and
empowerment of target groups



<p>+ Health</p> <p>Klaster zdravstvenog turizma Kvarnera</p> <p>Nastavni zavod za javno zdravstvo Primorsko-goranske županije</p> <p>Dom zdravlja Primorsko-goranske županije</p> <p>Medicinski fakultet Sveučilište Rijeci</p> <p>Univerza Mariboru</p> <p>Zdravstveni dom Ilirska Bistrica</p> <p>Zdravstveni dom Ljutomer</p> <p>Splošna bolnišnica Novo mesto</p>	<p>731,629.42 / 720,625.32</p>	<p>Creating partnerships and strengthening human resources</p> <p>Establishment of a cross-border health destination</p>	<p>Cross-border study on the needs of the final beneficiaries related to health services</p> <p>Cross-border study on the existing infrastructure and services in the health sector</p> <p>Map (geolocation) of services as an IT application</p> <p>Cross-border study on stakeholder cooperation</p> <p>Cross-border study on management models of health institutions</p> <p>Joint study on cross-border procedures in health sector</p> <p>Cross-border Health+ Centre of Excellence</p> <p>Strategy and Action plan of the cross-border Health+ destination</p> <p>Quality standards for the Health+ destination</p> <p>Study on the performed certification of stakeholders</p> <p>Education of staff of health institutions related to the Health+ certificate</p> <p>Piloting new cross-border management models and procedures in the health sector</p> <p>Piloting telemedicine activities</p> <p>Simulation-based education on the use of medical devices (e.g. simulation of defibrillator use)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutions of Project Partners participating in the cross-border cooperation structure • Institutions participating in the cross-border cooperation structure – Cross-border Center of Excellence +Health • Members of Project Partners involved in the development of new management models and cross-border procedures • People involved in the development of a cross-border health destination • People involved in knowledge transfer and pilot projects 	<p>Increased level of cross-border cooperation quality between institutions and stakeholders in the health sector with the aim of developing new cross-border procedures and uniform certification of institutions</p> <p>Raised level of cooperation quality and efficiency of stakeholders in the health sector in the cross-border area, which will achieve more up-to-date and better health services</p> <p>Reduced cross-border differences in the quality of health and related services, especially in remote and inaccessible areas</p> <p>Improved quality of life throughout the cross-border area and preventing emigration</p> <p>Direct contribution to the immediate improvement of health services in the cross-border area through implemented pilot projects, transfer of best practices and education/training of stakeholders and target groups</p> <p>Raised level of participation quality of the widest spectrum</p>
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<p>2SoKroG</p> <p>Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Bistra Ptuj</p> <p>Razvojna agencija Savinjske regije d.o.o.</p> <p>Center ponovne uporabe d.o.o., SO.P.</p> <p>Javna ustanova za regionalni razvoj Varaždinske županije</p> <p>Centar za socialnu skrb Čakovec</p> <p>Regionalna razvojna agencija Medimurje REDEA</p> <p>Zavod Republike Slovenije za zaposlovanje</p>	<p>488,705.06 / 472,334.13</p>	<p>Strengthening partnerships for social activation</p> <p>Improving institutional social activation</p> <p>Improving social activation for better health</p>	<p>Capitalisation of available results related to social activation in CB area</p> <p>Identification of beneficiaries' profiles and needs analysis</p> <p>Guidelines for strengthening partnership for social activation approach</p> <p>Guiding principles for the development of social activation programmes</p> <p>Innovative models for introducing social activation</p> <p>Piloting social activation model</p> <p>Report on transferring social activation model into practice</p> <p>Cross-border programme for strengthening capacities of public institutions' staff</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthened partnerships between public authorities and stakeholders to introduce a social activation approach Transfer of 2SoKroG model into practice to improve public services in the field of social activation Improved institutional capacity Improved knowledge and skills in the field of social activation 	<p>Established and strengthened cross-border cooperation structures and vertical integration in the field of social activation</p> <p>Developed and tested innovative models in the field of public social activation services for strengthening vulnerable target groups for social activation and employment in social entrepreneurship and other adapted labour markets in the border area</p> <p>Developed competencies and skills of public bodies in the field of social activation</p> <p>Developed cross-border transfer of results, experiences and practices with other regions and areas of interest</p> <p>Improved on-time visibility of citizens for various risks of slipping into poverty and social exclusion</p>
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<p>CrossCare</p> <p>Zavod za oskrbo na domu Ljubljana</p> <p>Mestna občina Ljubljana</p> <p>Center za pomoč na domu Maribor</p> <p>Dom Zdravlja Čakovec</p> <p>Ustanova za zdravstveno nego u kući Zagreb</p> <p>Grad Zagreb</p>	<p>894,418.99 / 833,441.50</p>	<p>Better access to health and social care service</p> <p>Raising employee competencies and skills</p>	<p>Adopted programme on integrated approach to home care service</p> <p>Written agreement on long term cooperation</p> <p>Developed ICT platform on integrated approach to home care Trained occupational therapists</p> <p>Cross-border transfer of knowledge and good practices through joint workshops</p> <p>Developed piloting models of work therapy, health care and dietetics</p> <p>Optimised process of implementing an integrated approach to home care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established new cross-border cooperation structure Implemented new service of integrated approach to care for the elderly in the home within the structure of cooperation Raised level of professional competencies and skills 	<p>Established cooperation between partner institutions in the field of health and social protection</p> <p>Conducted numerous workshops, joint education, employee education, as well as transfer of practices, knowledge, experiences and working methods for the implementation of assistance activities</p> <p>Developed comprehensive and tested programme for the implementation of an integrated home care approach</p>
<p>EMERGENCY EuroRegion</p> <p>Splošna bolnišnica Izola / Ospedale generale di Isola</p> <p>Opća bolnica Pula</p> <p>Nastavni zavod za hitnu medicinu Istarske županije – Istituto formativo per la medicina d'urgenza della Regione Istriana</p> <p>Zdravstveni dom Izola / Casa della sanità Isola</p>	<p>797,713.74 / 757,252.11</p>	<p>Cross-border emergency medicine network development</p> <p>Optimization of professional training in the network</p>	<p>Designed and introduced common cross-border protocol</p> <p>Built heliport near General Hospital Izola</p> <p>Purchased ambulance vehicle (Istarska County)</p> <p>Demonstration of the cross-border protocol implementation (individually and in the case of mass accidents)</p> <p>Conducted evaluation of the common cross-border protocol operability</p> <p>Established common cross-border training model</p> <p>Jointly certified courses for hospital and pre-hospital EMS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Network in the cross-border area Trained network employees for preparing patients for helicopter transport Trained employees in the health care of life-threatening patients in the cross-border area 	<p>Permanent and very well-functioning cross-border network of four health cross-border institutions in the field of EMS that will ensure the development and long-term implementation of an innovative common model of optimal EMS for life-threatening patients in the cross-border area</p> <p>Unified and improved training of EMS employees</p>



Cross-border group for vocational training of acute coronary syndrome - GH Pula and GH Izola

Jointly performed invasive heart procedures (GH Pula)

Signed written agreement on permanent cooperation

Conducted training for helicopter transport



<p>HITRO</p> <p>Grad Duga Resa</p> <p>Občina Črnomelj</p> <p>Gasilska zveza Črnomelj</p> <p>Vatrogasna zajednica Grada Duge Rese</p>	<p>686,939.03 / 686,658.62</p>	<p>Establishment of a new cross-border cooperation structure</p> <p>Development of skills and competencies</p> <p>Raising awareness of the cross-border area population</p>	<p>Adopted bilateral charter</p> <p>Set up joint rescue team</p> <p>Adopted plan of action for protection</p> <p>Equipped protection and rescue team (personal protective equipment, search and rescue suits, lighting equipment, liaison equipment - hand and mobile radio stations, rescue tools and equipment, rain protective equipment, dry flood rescue suits, pager, hand navigation device - GPS)</p> <p>Purchased group equipment for rescuing from the ruins (geophone, group equipment for rescuing from the ruins, technical equipment for traffic marking, gas detector)</p> <p>Purchased group flood rescue equipment (lifeboat)</p> <p>Purchased equipment for temporary accommodation of evacuees (tent)</p> <p>Certificates obtained for rescue in floods and from the ruins</p> <p>First aid courses passed</p> <p>Earthquake and flood rescue exercises carried out</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newly created cross-border structure in the field of protection and rescue Equipped and trained joint cross-border protection and rescue team Improved service delivery skills 	<p>Signed bilateral charter on mutual assistance in case of natural and other disasters in the cross-border area between the City of Duga Resa and the Municipality of Črnomelj</p> <p>Defined action plan of operational civil protection forces in the cross-border area</p> <p>Established, trained and equipped joint cross-border operational protection and rescue team that will enable the provision of protection and rescue services in the cross-border area in cases of natural and other disasters</p> <p>Implemented promotional campaign, lectures and promotional-educational workshops for the public on safety and behavior in cases of natural and other disasters and responsible behavior towards nature and the environment</p>
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<p>ENRAS</p> <p>Institut "Jožef Stefan"</p> <p>Institut medicinska istraživanja i medicinu rada</p> <p>Gasilska zveza Slovenije</p>	<p>440,299.98 / 434,583.87</p>	<p>Improved cooperation for nuclear safety</p> <p>Increased skills and knowledge</p>	<p>Established training programme for intervention units for safe rescue in nuclear and radiological accidents</p> <p>Field training of intervention units for safe rescue in nuclear and radiological accidents</p> <p>Carried out evaluation of the training</p> <p>Created online knowledge base</p> <p>Prepared guidelines for the establishment of a quality system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved skills and competencies of intervention units Established cross-border structure for interventions in the event of nuclear or radiological accidents 	<p>Improved cooperation of cross-border intervention units in mediation in the event of nuclear and radiological accidents (improved coordination and cross-border communication)</p> <p>Improved knowledge and competencies of the intervention units, achieved through a joint training program and exercises of cross-border rescue services</p>
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Projects within SO 3.1 in terms of project objectives, outputs and results are in line with expectations of the Programme as set in CP. They correspond to the logic of intervention at the Programme level for that specific objective as shown below. The area of intervention *Connectivity and mobility* has not been evaluated within this Impact evaluation¹⁰.

Output indicators set at the level of investment priority 11 and related to SO 3.1 represent a combination of common and programme specific output indicators. The programme specific output indicators are directly matched with indicative activities.

The result indicator 11RI “*Level of cooperation quality in the field of health, social care, safety and mobility services within the programme area*” is not appropriate for measuring the change occurred within SO 3.1 considering that the expected results encompass 1) new or strengthened existing cross-border structures for enabling cross-border delivery of services in public interest or improving access to such services in peripheral border areas and 2) better utilization of existing human resources and improve the quality, diversity and accessibility of services in programme area. It is unclear how the level of cooperation quality (without defining the stakeholders of such cooperation) in the respective fields is connected with the “healthy, safe and accessible border areas” and how it responds to the detected needs and challenges.

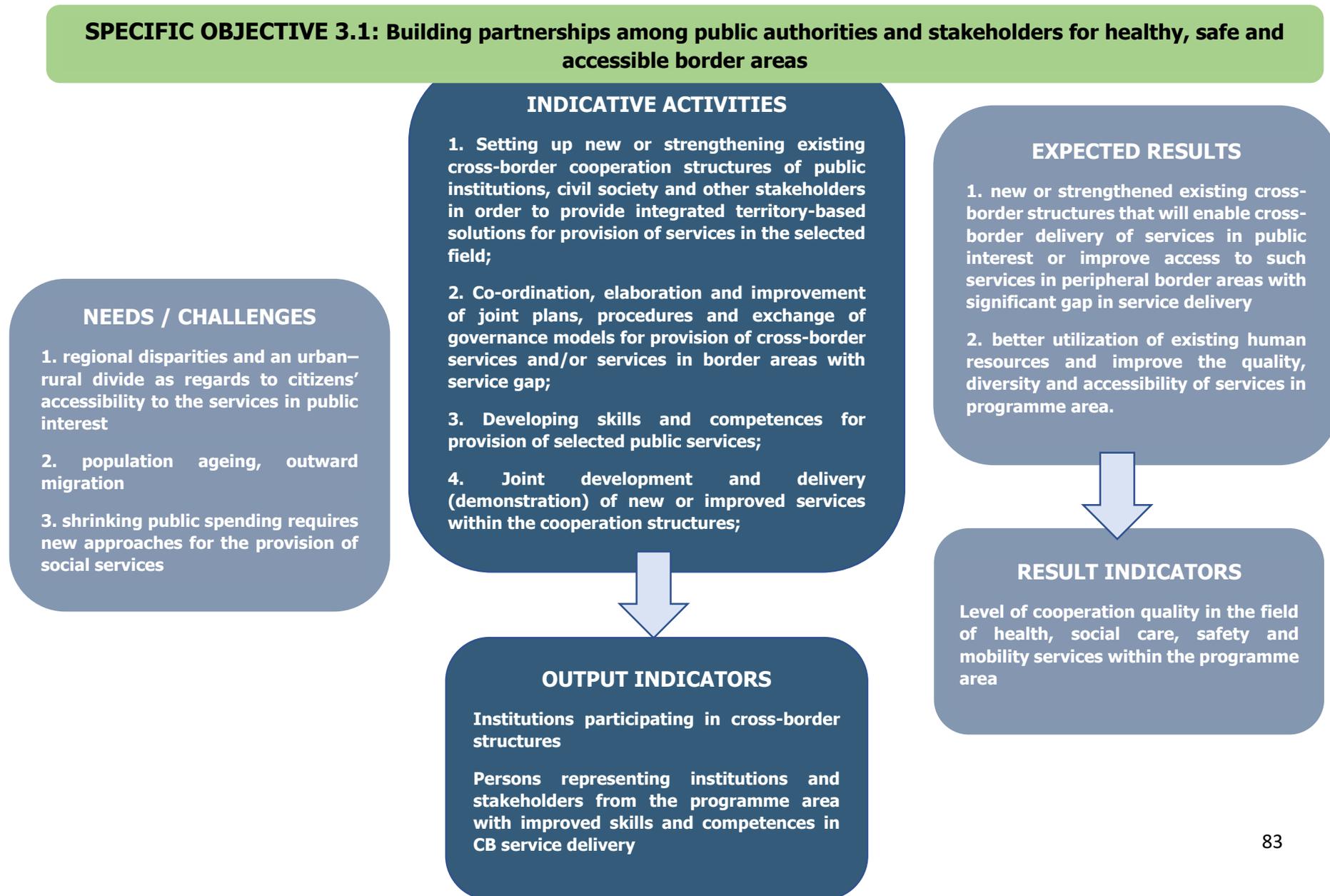
In addition, as stressed in the previous Evaluation of Efficiency and Effectiveness Report¹¹, the methodology of collecting data regarding the indicator 11RI is not suitable as it does not target only beneficiaries of projects within the CP. The wording of the indicator is rather vague and does not allow precise measuring.

¹⁰ No projects aimed at improving cross-border mobility were subject of this Impact evaluation. The project IstraConnect as the only project addressing the area of cooperation *Connectivity and mobility* was approved only in the fourth deadline for the submission of projects and was in the very beginning of implementation by the moment of finalization of this Report.

¹¹ MK Projekt d.o.o.: Evaluation of Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Cooperation Programme INTERREG V-A Slovenia – Croatia 2014-2020, July 2019



Figure 9 The intervention logic for SO 3.1





Key findings

- Overall, the implemented projects are very well aligned with the intervention logic of the CP. The specific objectives at the project level are in line with the specific objectives at the Programme level. All of the implemented projects contributed to output and result indicators as defined by the CP.
- A high level of consistency between intervention codes and CP's specific objectives has been observed.
- Adding programme specific output indicators in addition to the common output indicators within SO 1.1, SO 2.1 and SO 2.2 allows better monitoring of the progress of achieving CP's specific objectives, as the common output indicator are mainly defined in a way that they grasp the overall change achieved.
- The complexity of indicators under the investment priority 6d, as well as difficulties in collection of data related to the result indicators 6dRI1 and 6dRI2 have been confirmed within this draft Impact Evaluation (more can be found within EQ5).
- Regarding the result indicator RI11 it is unclear how the "level of cooperation quality" is connected with the "healthy, safe and accessible border areas" and how it responds to the detected needs and challenges of the SO 3.1. The wording of the result indicator 11RI is rather vague and the methodology for collecting data on this indicator is not adequate.

EQ7 How well did guiding principles lead the projects towards the expectations of the Programme?

Guiding principles were introduced in 2014-2020 Programme period in the CBC SI-HR Programme as a help for better implementation of the thematic objectives. Guiding principles were defined in the Programme as a list of the most important instructions for potential applicants, in order to specify what has to be achieved by the Programme through funded projects.

These principles are conceived as an additional help for potential applicants to put the emphasis on the specific topic in their project applications and through project implementation in order to effectively fulfil project and Programme objectives.

The Programme listed two kinds of guiding principles: on the one hand, all specific objectives had obligatory principles, and on the other hand, most specific objectives had additional principles defined within the CP which demonstrate higher relevance in regard to the achievement of specific objectives (hereinafter referred to as "additional principles"). The specific objective 1.1 had only obligatory principles, while SO 2.1, SO 2.2 and SO 3.1 had both types of principles.

SO 1.1 guiding principles

Analysis of the four project applications and project progress reports of the projects from the specific objective 1.1 has shown that the projects have followed required guiding principles.



Guiding principles were obligatory in this specific objective and the project applicants responded to each of the required guiding principles. All applications mentioned the coordination with the mainstream programmes of Slovenia and Croatia and macro-regional strategies. As an added value, project applications highlighted the fact that projects will benefit from the existing tools and capacity building of the Lead/Project Partners that was developed under previous projects, and use database management, modelling and mapping as ICT added values. All projects described their way to contribute to climate change adaptation and the reduction of floods through data collection and exchange of practices. The analysis of project progress reports show that the guiding principles have been implemented (i.e. the cross-border harmonised flood risk management study has been elaborated, identifying optimal long-term structural and green infrastructure measures of flood risk management in six transboundary river basins, CP cross-cutting issues have been integrated in the projects). In addition, the findings derived from the interviews with the beneficiaries also confirm that the expectations of the Programme were clearly defined and the projects achieved all set indicators, which wouldn't have been possible without responding to the guiding principles.

SO 2.1 guiding principles

The specific objective 2.1 included 22 projects and their project applications and project progress reports served as sources for the analysis of the implementation of guiding principles. Part of the projects under this specific objective were a follow up of the projects implemented in the previous Programme period. The analysis has shown that all evaluated projects under this specific objective have included required guiding principles of the Programme. Project applicants were also implementing the additional principles, from which the most emphasis was put on ICT as the cross-cutting issue for the implementation of web platforms, mobile apps and 3D holograms in order to promote the tourist offer. Capacity building was also an element that was present in all projects. All projects have also stated that they contribute to the balance between the preservation and sustainable use of natural resources. All of the applications have considered the appropriate visitor management (through visitor management guidelines) and the integration of cultural heritage with tourism stakeholders (e.g. integration of winemaking heritage with stakeholders like museums, wineries, tourist boards etc.). Projects have also described the idea of upgrading the existing initiatives in order to achieve long-term sustainability. All projects have integrated the additional principles, which suggests that the listed guiding principles had a significant impact on the project applicants leading their projects towards the expectations of the Programme.

SO 2.2 guiding principles

The analysis of the four project applications and project progress reports under the specific objective 2.2 has shown that projects have followed the required guiding principles and that they helped them to achieve the objectives of the Programme. All projects contributed to the fulfilment of additional principles. As it was mentioned in their project applications, but later on was seen through the project implementation, projects had a positive impact on the degree



of Natura 2000 species and habitat types conservation – e.g. by conservation of the bird tern, which is a target species for conservation in three Natura 2000 sites. Project ČIGRA also implemented four demonstration actions in the nature with the aim of improving habitat conditions for terns nesting. In all project applications, the applicants focused on R&D and ICT (communication with the public via social networks) as added values of the projects. Innovative methods for the supervision of habitats by using drones and climbers strengthened the capacities of target groups in project LIKE, while through project ČIGRA new research has been created. According to the four analysed project applications from this specific objective, guiding principles had an impact on the design of the projects, which has led them towards the expectations of the Programme.

SO 3.1 guiding principles

The analysis of eight project applications and their project progress reports from the specific objective 3.1 has shown that all required guiding principles have been taken into account by the projects. Among the required guiding principles, project applicants put the most emphasis on the description of their priority fields and sustainable cooperation structure. Furthermore, all project applications have also responded to the additional principles. Within this specific objective, six projects were conducted within the priority area of healthcare and social services, two projects within the area of safety, while there were no projects within mobility area which are the subject of this Report. Each cross-border structure had to improve either provision of cross-border services or provision of services targeted at peripheral/rural areas, while new structures or services had to be followed by a demonstration action. This was all successfully implemented through all eight projects. The additional principle connected to the cross-cutting issues was mostly tackled through the implementation of the ICT methods that were used to improve implementation of new services or for knowledge transfers (e.g., ICT equipment was used as a tool within project Demenca aCROsSLO to reduce administration in the implementation of the "home help" program and in project HITRO through acquired satellite internet system which enabled secured communication procedure in the civil protection system), through capacity building of the working staff (e.g., educational workshops within project 2SoKroG and capacity building of the healthcare professionals within project EMERGENCY Euro Region) and through R&D with educational institutions (e.g., within project +Health two Project Partners were universities). Projects had impact on the development of the sustainable cross-border cooperation structures and on the vertical integration of institutions. Projects within SO 3.1 have focused on the improvement of the situation of vulnerable target groups (elderly, youth, women and disabled people) in the area of social services, improvement of access to health services as well as on strengthening cooperation in the field of safety. All project applications have also emphasized vertical integrations of all involved institutions. The analysis of guiding principles under SO 3.1 suggests that offered guiding principles had an important role in leading the project applicants towards Programme objectives.

Interviews with the representatives of the Programme bodies have shown that the addition of the guiding principles in this Programme period was a success and that they had an impact on



the fulfilment of Programme objectives. Furthermore, the interviewed representatives of the Programme bodies have stated that these principles helped to define what needs to be achieved through the Programme, and in this respect the guiding principles were seen as a useful tool in defining what needs to be evaluated in the project applications.

Key findings

- Analysis of project applications and project progress reports under specific objective 1.1 has shown that the projects have followed required guiding principles and that those principles helped them to design and implement their project in line with the expectations of the Programme.
- Analysis of project applications and project progress reports under specific objective 2.1 has shown that all evaluated projects under this specific objective have included required guiding principles of the Programme, and every project has also integrated all of the additional principles. In the phase of implementation the projects have responded to the guiding principles and the additional principles.
- Analysis of the project applications and project progress reports under specific objective 2.2 has shown that projects have followed the required guiding principles, as well as the additional principles.
- Analysis of project applications and project progress reports under specific objective 3.1 has shown that all required guiding principles have been taken into account by the project beneficiaries and that all of the projects have also successfully implemented the additional principles.
- The addition of required guiding principles and additional principles in this Programme period can be considered a success because of their impact on the fulfilment of Programme objectives, both from the perspective of the beneficiaries as well as the representatives of Programme bodies. The conclusion of the evaluators is that the guiding principles have enabled a clear strategic focus under all SOs.

EQ11 How is the Programme perceived by the target groups, especially relevant stakeholders and general public?

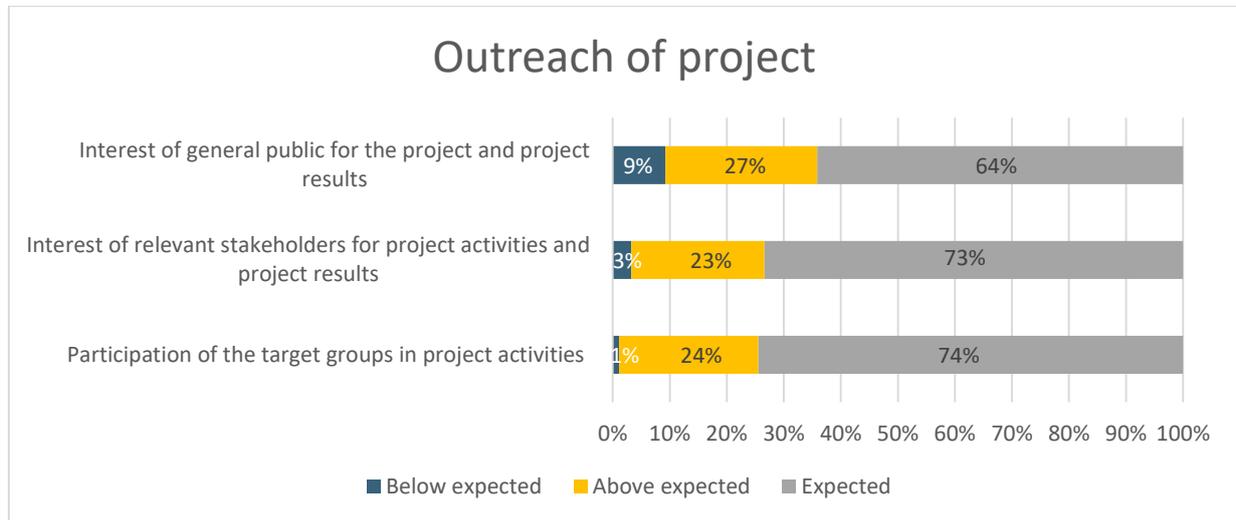
This EQ relates to the conclusions of EQ10 and will use its findings. An analysis of stakeholders' and target groups' participation and involvement in project activities were undertaken. Beneficiaries were asked about the outreach of their activities, interest of the stakeholders and general public and/or any possible feedback from stakeholders and general public.

According to the results of the web survey, approximately three quarters of Lead/Project Partners (74%) pointed out that the participation of the target groups in project activities was as expected, while 24% said that it was above expected. Only 1% of the respondents stated that the participation of the target groups in project activities was below expected.

Almost three quarters (73%) of the respondents said that the interest of relevant stakeholders for project activities and project results was as expected, 23% said that it was above expected and only 3% said that it was below expected.

64% of the respondents pointed out that the interest of general public for the project and project results was as expected, 27% said that it was above expected and 9% said that it was below expected.

Figure 10 Outreach of project



Source: Online survey

According to the survey results, the Programme is accepted very well by beneficiaries. Most of the respondents believe that CP is well prepared and well-focused on existing needs (also confirmed by several participants in the interview), but some of the respondents have mentioned restoration of cultural heritage, development of modern technologies, social entrepreneurship and cross-border traffic connection as additional areas that should be covered.

Beneficiaries participating in the Programme are, despite minor difficulties, satisfied with the Programme and mainly plan to participate also in the next Programme period. On the other hand, more needs to be done in the area of communication with the general population.

Interviewed representatives of the Programme bodies also pointed out that the communication on the Programme level with general population can be much better and that there is a lot of room for improvements in this regard. To improve communication, promotion on social media should be considered (Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.) and it must be regularly updated to achieve the desired effect. It was also noted that even though there is a good recognition of project in the local environment, more could be done to get better publicity and recognition at the national level.

To summarize, we can say that 98% of Lead/Project Partners said that the participation of target groups in project activities is in line with expectations or has exceeded them, 96% of respondents believe that the interest of relevant stakeholders in project activities and project results is in line with expectations or has exceeded them and 91% of them believe that the interest of the general population for projects and project results is in line with expectations or has exceeded them. One of the Lead Partner representatives said that they achieved unexpected positive results in reaching target groups (civil servants) who came in large



numbers to all of their trainings and social activation workshops, so they often had to limit registrations when registering for the event. 690 participants participated in 10 different forms of education, of which over 430 were civil servants from social welfare centres, employment services and the Ministry of Labour. This shows that there is a desire for new knowledge from social activation that would be useful in their work, since such thematic education is a rarity in both countries, because the approach to social activation is something new.

Based on all findings, we can conclude that general public is more difficult to reach than (potential) beneficiaries and Programme partners and expert public; therefore, new ways of promotion and visibility of the Programme should be considered.

Key findings

- The Programme was accepted very well by beneficiaries and they were mainly satisfied with the Programme and plan to participate also in the next Programme period. Beneficiaries considered that the selected Programme priorities and areas of intervention responded well to the needs in their areas.
- The Programme was accepted very well by the target groups and other relevant stakeholders which can be confirmed with the fact that almost all of the Project Partner representatives in the survey highlighted that participation of target groups and relevant stakeholders was as expected or above expected.
- According to the Project Partners, general public is more difficult to reach, therefore, more needs to be done in the area of communication with the general population through new ways of promotion and visibility of the Programme, such as social media platforms.

EQ12 Synergy with other EU programmes (in particular with nationally implemented ESI funds, Interreg and centralised EU programmes) and initiatives (EU strategy for the Danube region, EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region, EU Strategy for the Alpine region)

In answering this evaluation question, evaluators will show how the Programme (through implemented projects) contributes to relevant EU programmes, initiatives and strategies. The source of information is application forms, as the contribution to relevant strategies had to be described by Lead/Project Partners, but also progress reports and survey which will allow the identification of achieved outputs and results. The most relevant strategies for this CP are the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, EU Strategy for the Alpine Region and EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) addresses a wide range of issues; these are divided among 4 pillars and 11 priority areas:

- 1) Pillar A. Connecting the Danube Region (PA1 Mobility and intermodality, PA2 More sustainable energy, PA3 Culture and tourism, people to people)



- 2) Pillar B. Protecting the environment in the Region (PA4 Water quality, PA5 Environmental risks, PA6 Biodiversity, landscapes, quality of air and soils)
- 3) Pillar C. Building Prosperity in the Danube Region (PA7 Knowledge society – research, education and ICT, PA8 Competitiveness of enterprises, PA9 People and skills)
- 4) Pillar D. Strengthening the Danube Region (PA10 Institutional capacity and cooperation, PA11 Security and organised crime)

Most of the projects (89%) in the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia – Croatia 2014-2020 are in synergy with EUSDR. These projects cover half of the priority areas.

Considering Pillar A, a lot of projects (ECoolTour, CLAUSTRA+, Prebujanje/Buđenje, Živa Coprnija, KRASn'KRŠ, Uživam tradicijo, KulTura, Riviera4Seasons2, DETOX, Inspiracija, Mitski park, Prehistory Adventure, MINE TOUR, LIVING CASTELS, Kaštelir, Ride&BikeII) contributed to PA3 by smart usage of cultural heritage, additionally as a foundation for local and regional development, promotion of an attractive tourist and cultural destinations and creation of sustainable/green tourism products. Projects under SO 3.1 (Demenca Acrosslo, +Health, 2SoKroG) contributed to Pillar D, specifically to PA10, by strengthening institutional capacity to address major social challenges like elderly care.

A great contribution to Pillar B was made through PA5 and PA6. Some projects (FRISCO 1, FRISCO 2.1, FRISCO 2.2, FRISCO 3.1, EnjoyHeritage) worked on new strategies of environmental risk management, which has an impact on the conservation of natural diversity, while other projects (ČIGRA, LIKE, Carnivora Dinarica, Vezi Narave) focused on biodiversity and implementing measures for the conservation of specific habitats. Some projects (DETOX, +Health) focused on new research and education, which contributed to PA7 in Pillar C.

The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) provides an opportunity to improve cross-border cooperation in the Alpine States, as well as to identify common goals and implement them more effectively through transnational collaboration. Better cooperation between the regions and States is needed to tackle different challenges: economic globalisation, demographic trends, climate change and the energy challenge. EUSALP consist of three general action-oriented thematic policy area and one cross-cutting policy area:

1. Economic Growth and Innovation
 - 1.1. Fair access to job opportunities, building on the high competitiveness of the Region
2. Mobility and Connectivity
 - 2.1. Sustainable internal and external accessibility to all
3. Environment and Energy
 - 3.1. A more inclusive environmental framework for all and renewable and reliable energy solutions for the future
4. Governance, including Institutional Capacity
 - 4.1. A sound macro-regional governance model for the Region (to improve cooperation and the coordination of action)

Even though Croatia is not a country included in this strategy, while Slovenia is, many projects (66%) included EUSALP in their Application Form, when explaining the context of their project.



Some projects (Misterion, EnjoyHeritage, Carnivora Dinarica) are oriented towards the third policy area, as their activities focus on environmental protection. The third policy area also deals with ensuring sustainability in the Alps, by preserving the Alpine heritage and promoting sustainable use of natural and cultural resources. Most of the projects (Mala barka 2, Detox, Riviera4Seasons2, Claustra+, Uživam tradicijo, In cultura veritas, NATURE&WILDLIFE, Mitski park, Inspiracija, MINE TOUR) indicated that this is a link between them and EUSALP. Some projects contribute to the first thematic area, economic growth and innovation, by creating new jobs for young entrepreneurs through new start-ups and businesses in rural areas (ZELENO ŽELIMO) or by developing new services that will stimulate the innovation potential of companies (EMERGENCY EuroRegion).

The general objective of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) is to promote economic and social prosperity and growth in the region by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity. With four EU members and four non-EU countries, the strategy will contribute to the further integration of the Western Balkans. EUSAIR has 4 pillars:

- 1) Blue growth
- 2) Connecting the region
 - i. Transport
 - ii. Energy networks
- 3) Environmental quality
- 4) Sustainable tourism

Almost half of the projects (45%) in the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia – Croatia 2014-2020 are in synergy with EUSAIR. The vast majority of these projects (e.g. Mala barka 2, Riviera4Seasons2, CLAUSTRAP+, Misterion, ZELENO ŽELIMO, KRASn'KRŠ, KulTur) are aimed toward the fourth pillar – sustainable tourism. These projects promote sustainable tourism, meaning their activities are planned to overcome the problem of seasonality, increase the usage of innovative technology in the tourism sector, develop new tourist strategies and promote the sustainable tourism sector. Other projects (e.g. Carnivora Dinarica) are aimed toward the third pillar, environmental quality, as they contributed to the preservation, protection and improvement of the quality of the environment.

Additionally, almost half of the projects (42%) are connected to previous Interreg projects, whether they are connected to a project in other Interreg programmes (mostly Interreg SI-HU, IT-SI) or a project from a previous Programme, SI-HR 2007-2013. Projects like Mala barka 2, CLAUSTRAP+, Misterion, KRASn'KRŠ and Riviera4Seasons2 are all a continuation of successful projects from the previous Programme period. Some projects are in synergy with other projects funded from ESI funds. This synergy was emphasized by all FRISCO projects, stating that projects will complement other projects that are being prepared for co-financing under other ESI funds to maximize the overall objective of reducing flood risks throughout both countries, including all transboundary river basins.

Other projects focused their synergy more on national strategies and laws like the Resolution on the National Programme for Culture RS 2014-2017, the RS Resolutions on the National



Social Welfare Programme for the period 2013-2020, the Law on Social Welfare of the Republic of Croatia, the National Strategy for the Development of Basic Health Activities in Slovenia until 2020, the National Health Development Strategy in the Republic of Croatia 2012-2020, the National Plan for the Development of Clinical Hospital Centres, Clinical Hospitals, Clinics and General Hospitals in the Republic of Croatia 2014-2016, Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia until 2020, Strategy for sustainable growth of Slovenian tourism 2017-2021, Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Tourism for the period 2018-2020, Action Plan for the Development of Cultural and Green Tourism, and other regional strategies. The following table presents key principles of some mentioned strategies, which are contributed by projects from CP SI-HR 2014-2020.

Table 10 Key principles of national strategies contributed by CP SI-HR 2014-2020 projects

Strategy	Key principles
Tourism Development Strategy (Croatia)	Partnership Ecologically responsible development Tourism in the entire area
Strategy for sustainable growth of tourism (Slovenia)	Smart mobility Promoting the development of SMEs Green (sustainable) tourism Sustainable model for visitor management Integration of cultural heritage
National Programme for Culture (Slovenia)	Quality preserved and modern presentation of cultural heritage for a larger number of visitors and greater recognition of heritage.
Action Plan for the Development of Cultural Tourism (Croatia)	Improved knowledge, skills and competencies of cultural tourism stakeholders for the development of products, entrepreneurship in tourism and providing quality service.

Besides the above-mentioned relevant EU and national strategies, the evaluators checked synergies with other EU programmes and strategies. The LIFE Programme is the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action. The general objective of the LIFE Programme is to contribute to the shift towards a sustainable, renewable energy-based, climate-neutral and resilient economy in order to protect, restore and improve the quality of the environment, including air, water and soil, and to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and tackle the degradation of ecosystems, including by supporting the implementation and management of Natura 2000 network, thereby contributing to sustainable development. One project from SO 2.2, ČIGRA, directly contributes to two LIFE projects, project LIFE11 NAT / SI / 000882 LIVEDRAVA "Restoration of the river ecosystem of the lowland part of the Drava in Slovenia" and project LIFE14 / NAT / HR / 000115 "DRAVA LIFE – Integrated River Management". These projects aim to preserve and increase bird populations nesting on lowland rivers through flood habitat management while raising the cooperation of relevant stakeholders and informing the public about Natura 2000 habitats and improving the ecological



status of the Drava River and its ecosystems. Projects' activities will result in the preservation and improvement of natural tern nesting sites (river banks), which is in synergy with the provision of artificial nesting sites within the project ČIGRA, that further improve nesting conditions of terns in Croatia. One project from SO 2.1, NATURE&WILDLIFE, is a continuation of a previous LIFE project called LIFE DINALP BEAR (LIFE13 NAT/SI/000550) which worked on the protection and management of brown bears. Another project from SO 2.2, Carnivora Dinarica, uses the results of previous LIFE projects: URSUS ARCTOS (LIFE002 NAT/SLO/8585 2002-05), CROWOLFCON (LIFE02 TCY/CRO/014), LIFE DINALP BEAR, LIFE WOLFALPS EU (LIFE18 NAT/IT/000972), LIFE Lynx (LIFE16 NAT/SI/000634).

Horizon Europe is another EU programme, which focuses on research and innovation in developing, supporting and implementing EU policies while tackling global challenges, like climate change, but is also helping to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosts the EU's competitiveness and growth. Horizon Europe supports creating and better dispersing of excellent knowledge and technologies. In addition to Horizon, Creative Europe is an EU programme that aims to respond to challenges the cultural and creative sectors face in terms of fragmentation, globalisation and the digital shift, a lack of data and a shortage of private investment. There are two general objectives of Creative Europe: 1) to safeguard and promote European cultural and linguistic diversity (as prescribed by the EU Treaty) and 2) to strengthen the competitiveness of the sector. Although the content of these programmes can be connected to activities implemented in the Cooperation Programme INTERREG V-A Slovenia – Croatia 2014-2020, not one beneficiary recognized this synergy while submitting their application form.

Additionally, the evaluation team identified the synergies of project activities with one more strategy – Europe 2020, a ten-year strategy that puts forward three mutually reinforcing priorities:

1. **Smart growth:** developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation;
2. **Sustainable growth:** promoting a more resource-efficient, greener and more competitive economy;
3. **Inclusive growth:** fostering a high-employment economy delivering social and territorial cohesion.

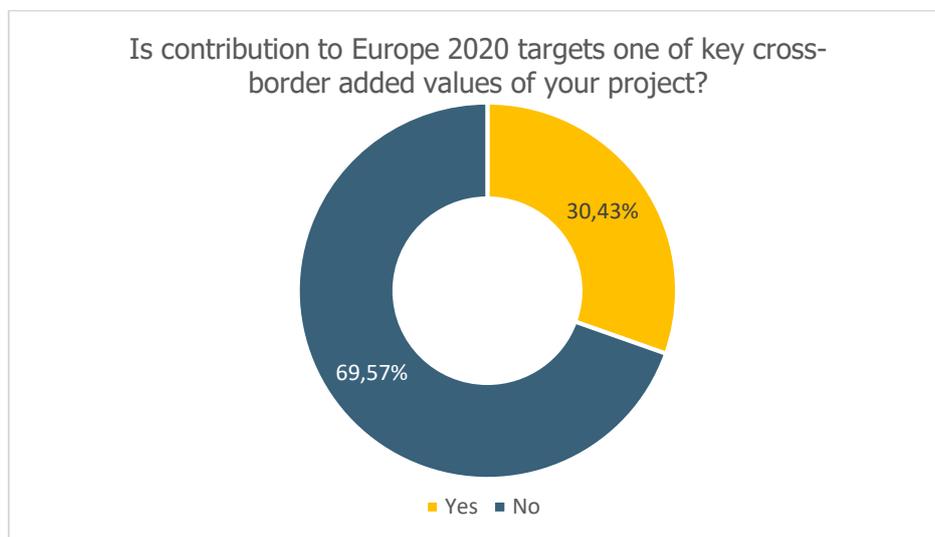
In order to achieve the above-mentioned priorities, five ambitious targets have been set, covering the areas of employment, research and development, climate change and energy sustainability, education, and the fight against poverty and social exclusion.¹² The fifth period of Interreg (2014-2020) is based on 11 investment priorities (research and innovation, information and communication technologies, the competitiveness of SMEs, low-carbon economy, combating climate change, environment and resource efficiency, sustainable transport, employment and mobility, social inclusion, better education and training, better public administration) which are contributing to the delivery of the Europe 2020 strategy goals.

¹² European Commission (2010): Communication from the Commission – EUROPE 2020 – A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth: <https://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/COMPLET%20EN%20BARROSO%20%20%20007%20-%20Europe%202020%20-%20EN%20version.pdf>

In the initial phase of project preparation, the beneficiaries had to describe their project's contribution to relevant strategies and policies, in particular those related to the project or Programme area. Even though the Europe 2020 strategy was not specifically mentioned in the Application Form (only EUSDR, EUSAIR, and EUSALP were mentioned), 37% of the beneficiaries mentioned their contribution to the Europe 2020 strategy. While some beneficiaries mentioned that their project will merely contribute to achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy, other Beneficiaries explained in more detail the connection of their project to the Europe 2020 strategy.

When asked in the survey whether a contribution to Europe 2020 targets was a key cross-border added value of their project, only 30.43% of participants answered affirmatively.

Figure 11 Contribution to Europe 2020 Strategy



Source: Online survey

However, application forms and project reports available in the eMS system, as well as conducted interviews with Lead/Project Partners, clearly show many examples of projects contributing to Europe 2020 objectives, as shown in the table below.

Table 11 Smart, sustainable and inclusive growth – project contribution

Growth	Project	Europe 2020 contribution
SMART	ZELENO ŽELIMO	The project focused on developing cross-border tourism products based on food, wine, active lifestyle and craftsmanship from the hinterland (small farms and family-owned SMEs). All this is backed up by the touristic product called "KULTNATURA" which is being promoted through novelty ICT technologies and communication channels. (Competitiveness of SMEs, Information and Communication technologies)



	ŽIVA COPRNIJA	A digital guide was developed in the project for more information on each tourist trail location, which is free to download from various websites. (Information and Communication technologies)
	DETOX	Through the project new smart products were implemented, such as a 3D hologram display of traditional liveness and e-library. (Research and innovation, Information and communication technologies)
	NATURE&WILDLIFE	One of the activities in this project was raising awareness and knowledge of local SMEs in order to stimulate the green economy and promote the preservation of local heritage. (Competitiveness of SMEs)
SUSTAINABLE	ENJOYHERITAGE	Raising public awareness about sustainability to preserve and protect the environment and nature. The project searched for ways to re-attract young people, who in their spare time are less and less active, back to nature, to encourage them to live in rural areas and be able to recognize and exploit the potential for development and new employment opportunities. (Environment and resource efficiency)
	Prebujanje / Buđenje	The project aimed to contribute to the sustainable development of tourism in the border area by diversifying, improving and strengthening the competitiveness of existing cultural and tourist facilities in the region. This was achieved by the awakening and valorisation of existing unused archaeological sites and by the development of innovative and attractive cross-border cultural and tourist products. (Environment and resource efficiency)
	In cultura veritas	The project aimed to develop solid cooperation and sustainable tourism product and worked on preserving the environment, i.e. the use of green infrastructure and technology was encouraged. (Low-carbon economy, environment and resource efficiency)
	Prehistory Adventure	By giving cultural and natural heritage new interesting green content and thus attracting new visitors, this project stimulated their long-term economic contribution. (Environment and resource efficiency)
INCLUSIVE	STAR	Establishing alternative non-institutional forms of social welfare for elderly people. (Social inclusion)
	+Health	Cross-border exchange of knowledge and resources — transfer of best practices, pilot projects and implementation of joint training will contribute to the development of new cross-border procedures that will increase efficiency and quality of health care in remote



		and inaccessible areas. (Better education and training, Social inclusion)
	LIKE	The project strengthened cooperation between public authorities, local people and members of civil society organisations that contributed to inclusive growth. (Social inclusion)
	HITRO	Cities from Croatia and Slovenia organized cross-border operational protection and established rescue teams that will enable the provision of protection and rescue services in cases of natural and other disasters. (Better public administration)

Based on the overview above, but also on the EQ3 in the part related to the achievement of project results, the conclusion of the evaluators is that the projects implemented under Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia – Croatia 2014-2020 contributed to some extent to the Europe 2020 strategy. There is a contribution to SMART growth in every SO, but the strongest contribution can be seen within SO 2.1, where projects developed new sustainable heritage-based products, that have significantly enriched the tourist offer, but also made a strong contribution to connecting individual tourist providers. The projects used new and available communication and information technology in order to provide smart products. The contribution to SUSTAINABLE growth can be seen under SO 1.1, SO 2.1 and SO 2.2, through improving the environmental quality (SO 1.1, SO 2.2), ensuring biodiversity (SO 2.2) and growth of heritage potential (SO 2.1). The strongest contribution to INCLUSIVE growth can be seen within SO 3.1, where mostly non-profit organisations activated in projects to not only establish new networks of social and health systems, but also to improve the existing ones. By activities conducted under SO 3.1 health and social inequality were tackled and beneficiaries improved access and quality of provided services. Additionally, two projects (HITRO and ENRAS) contributed to better public administration through cross-border collaboration, developing and improving protection services for the local population.

Even though the contribution to relevant EU programmes, initiatives and strategies cannot be denied after analysing project activities and objectives, the survey results showed devastating results. When asked whether the result of their project was a contribution to relevant macro-regional strategies (EUSDR, EUSAIR, EUSALP), the vast majority of participants answered negatively. It looks like the beneficiaries are not aware of their project's contribution to relevant EU programmes and strategies. To support this thesis, we have survey results. Only 20% of participants from SO 1.1 confirmed that this actually was the result they achieved, with an additional 15% of participants from SO 2.1 and 14% from SO 3.1. However, not one participant from SO 2.2 confirmed that.



Key finding

- There can be found a synergy with EUSDR and EUSALP under every SO, while a lot of projects contributed in some way to fulfilling the strategies' objectives. Contribution to EUSAIR can be found in projects from SO 1.1, SO 2.1 and SO 2.2 Synergy with LIFE Programme was most pronounced in SO 2.2. Additionally, a synergy with Europe 2020 strategy was found, contributing to smart (most pronounced in SO 2.1), sustainable and inclusive (most pronounced in SO 3.1) growth.
- Almost half of the projects are connected to previous Interreg projects, whether it is to a project in another Interreg Programme (SI-HU, IT-SI) or to a project from a previous SI-HR Programme. Some projects are in synergy with other projects funded from ESI funds.
- Most of the projects contribute to key principles of national strategies and laws.
- Mostly projects from SO 2.2 (and one from SO 2.1) are in synergy with different LIFE projects. Contribution to Horizon Europe was not recognized by beneficiaries, but projects activities are connected to the objectives of Horizon.
- Even though it was not recognized as one of the key cross-border added value of their projects, contribution to Europe 2020 targets was clearly visible in many projects. Projects contributed to smart (raised competitiveness of SMEs, smart usage of information and communication technologies, written research), sustainable (low-carbon economy, increased environment and resource efficiency) and inclusive growth (increased social inclusion, improved public administration, provision of better education and training).
- All projects contributed to some extent to different EU programmes and strategies. But even if beneficiaries recognized the synergy with relevant EU programmes and strategies in the first phase of the project cycle (project planning), they were not aware of it after the project was completed, which was suggested by the survey results.
- Being informed about other EU programmes and being aware of how the project connects with relevant programmes and strategies would not only improve the project's sustainability, but also strengthen the impact the project might have in reaching other objectives.

2.1. EFFECTIVENESS

EQ2 What are the success factors that contribute to achieving the programme's objectives? And what are the barriers? What are the recommendations for improving the results of the programme?

The analysis below is focused on identifying success factors and barriers to achieving the Programme's objectives on project and programme level. Most of the findings are related to conclusions and comments of project beneficiaries gathered through interviews or comments provided by the representatives of Programme bodies.

Recommendations for improving the results of the Programme are not derived only from success factors and barriers but are spread along the evaluation questions within the criterion of effectiveness. For this reason, within the chapter 3. *Recommendations*, all the

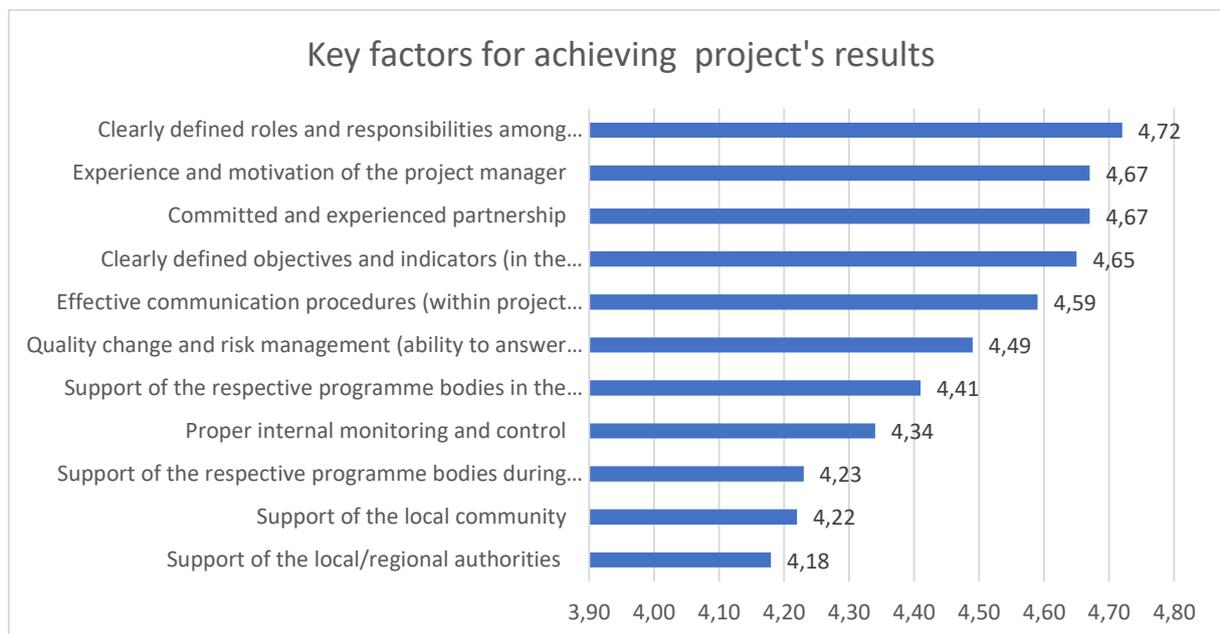


recommendations that refer to improving the results of the programme were connected with the criterion “effectiveness”.

Success factors (project level)

Success factors that contribute to achieving the project results and thus objectives were analysed through on-line survey answers of Lead/Project Partners and through interviews with project beneficiaries. The analysis of the on-line survey has shown that all offered factors are relevant to achieving project objectives, as their average mark is above 4.0 (on the scale 1 – fully irrelevant, 5 – very relevant). The highest average mark was noted for the factors: clearly defined roles and responsibilities among partners (4.72), followed by committed and experienced partnership and experience and motivation of the project manager, both rated with 4.67. Clearly defined objectives and indicators (4.65), effective communication procedures (4.59), quality change and risk management (4.49), support of the respective Programme bodies during implementation phase (4.41) were also very important for the successful implementation. The lowest average mark, although still recognized as very important, was given to: proper internal monitoring and control (4.34), support of the respective Programme bodies during the application phase (4.23), support of the local community (4.22) and support of the local/regional authorities (4.18).

Figure 12 Key factors for achieving project results (project level)



Source: Online survey

Other noted answers mentioned involving the interested private sector in the partnership, well-prepared network of stakeholders in the field and their support and secured funds for pre-financing as an additional very relevant success factors for achieving project objectives.

Interviews with the representatives of Lead/Project Partners of the CBC SI-HR projects have confirmed the results of the web survey, highlighting the most important success factors for



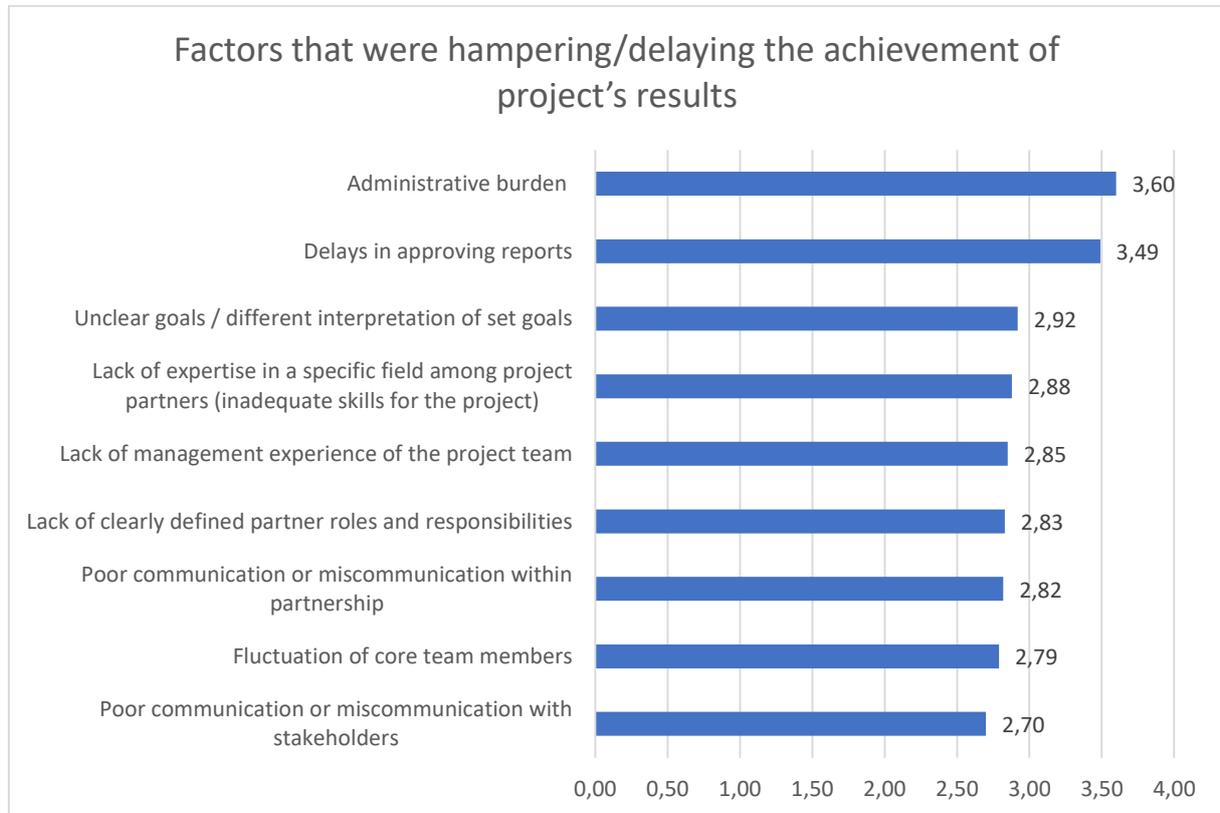
achieving project objectives. One of the most represented success factors was committed and experienced partnership. A few of the Project Partner representatives stressed out that the reason that the expected objectives were achieved was the good and professional cooperation of all Project Partners. It was important that all partners had knowledge in the field of project management, in the field of project implementation and they all knew very well the content which was implemented.

Moreover, a few representatives of Project Partners mentioned effective communication, proper internal monitoring (of activities and of set goals) and innovation of employees as very important success factors for achieving the project objectives. A few of the interviewed representatives have also stated that the support of the local community and local authorities is the most important success component of the project implementation.

Barriers (project level)

On-line survey with Lead/Project Partners also included a question connected with the barriers that were hampering the achievement of project objectives. The analysis of the survey has shown that most of the listed barrier factors were somewhat irrelevant or neither irrelevant nor relevant, as their average mark is between 2.70 and 3.60 (on the scale 1 – fully irrelevant, 5 – very relevant). The highest barriers average mark was noticed for the factors: administrative burden (3.60), delays in approving reports (3.49) and unclear objectives / different interpretation of set objectives (2.92), followed by lack of expertise in a specific field among Project Partners (2.88), lack of management experience of the project team (2.85), and lack of clearly defined partner roles and responsibilities (2.83). The lowest average mark for barrier factor was given to: poor communication or miscommunication within partnership (2.82), and fluctuation of core team members (2.79) and poor communication or miscommunication with stakeholders (2.70).

Figure 13 Factors that were hampering or delaying the achievement of project's results (project level)



Source: Online survey

Other noted answers mentioned COVID-19 pandemic and political measures. One project partner from Croatia mentioned different interpretation of cost category of a specific cost in the implementation phase, which led to delayed reimbursement of this specific cost.

The interviews with the representatives of the Project Partners have also confirmed the barriers that were highlighted through the web survey with Project Partners. Half of the interviewed Project Partners have emphasized COVID-19 as a barrier that had an impact on the project implementation, causing delays or changing the modality of implementation of some activities (as further explained within EQ3).

The procedures related to state aid connected with involving SMEs within SO 2.1 have been highlighted in few interviews as a barrier – representatives of Lead/Project Partners stated they abandoned the idea of involving SMEs as the state aid rules are too restrictive and demotivating for SMEs.

A few of the representatives of the Project Partners also emphasized that administrative burden was very significant when they had to cooperate with national authorities in both countries, which has led to delays in project implementation.



Moreover, a few representatives of Lead/Project Partners noted that it was sometimes difficult to cope with the eMS system which can seem complicated at first and sometimes can be very slow.

Delays in payment were also highlighted by several Project Partner representatives, in some cases leading to risks for the successful business operations.

Table 12 Most significant success factors and barriers on the project level

Success factors	Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective cooperation (including high commitment and clearly defined roles and responsibilities among partners) and communication of project partners and their previous experience • Clearly defined objectives and indicators • Quality risk and change management • Proper internal monitoring • Support of the Programme bodies • Support of the local authorities and local community • Well prepared network of stakeholders and their support • Involving the interested private sector in the partnership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative burden and delays in approving reports (followed by delays in reimbursement of costs to the projects) • Unclear objectives / different interpretation of set objectives • COVID-19

Success factors (Programme level)

Interviews with Programme bodies have shown that there are different success factors that had a large impact on the achievement of Programme objectives. The most highlighted success factor was the cooperation of Programme bodies, which was assessed as very effective and contributed to the achievement of Programme results. Secondly, the interviewed representatives of Programme bodies have highlighted the expertise of all involved institutions and stakeholders both on project and Programme level, which had a great impact on the successful implementation of the Programme and the achievement of Programme objectives.

Next important success factor were the indicators that were set and in general stronger orientation towards results in the current Programme, which has led to higher quality of the projects. Narrowing down the specific objectives towards the expected Programme results has been achieved even better through the introduction of guiding principles, which was also mentioned as a success factor. One of the representatives of Programme bodies highlighted that the guiding principles were more beneficial than specific indicators because with the guiding principles they could more easily achieve Programme results and objectives.



Another recognized success factor is the new eMS system that was introduced in this Programme period, which had its flaws, but compared to the previous IT system it is much better and it's a great tool both for Programme bodies and Lead/Project Partners.

Moreover, although COVID-19 had negative effects on the implementation of some projects, one of the interviewed representatives of Programme bodies has stated that the transition to on-line type of communication had a lot of positive effects on the saving of time and the increase of communication channels.

Barriers (Programme level)

Conducted interviews with the representatives of Programme bodies pointed out some barriers that were making the implementation of the Programme difficult at some points. Firstly, the lack of staff was leading to delays in processes. Representative of Programme bodies mentioned that they were overburdened due to simultaneous work on different tasks – work on the current Programme, in the monitoring committee, in the programming task force group for the new Programme and other activities.

In addition, an important problem connected with the implementation of the CBC SLO-HR project was COVID-19 which has interrupted a few projects during their final phase of the project implementation and which had an impact on the administrative processes of Programme bodies. One of the representatives of Programme bodies mentioned that COVID-19 affected the Programme on a medium scale, especially projects and their implementation. There is also a problem with the sustainability of the projects during the epidemic, mostly in the field of tourism and crossing the borders, because of great dependence on the situation and the current restrictions.

One of the interviewed representatives of Programme bodies has stated that the communication with the public needs to be better in order to achieve even better Programme results, e.g. using more social media like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or Instagram.

Table 13 Most significant success factors and barriers on the Programme level

Success factors	Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation of Programme bodies • Expertise of all involved institutions and stakeholders (both on project and Programme level) • Introduction of guiding principles and specific indicators which allowed strong orientation towards expected Programme results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ eMS system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of staff leading sometimes to delays in processes • COVID-19 • Insufficient communication with the general public

The below presented lessons learnt were collected during interviews with beneficiaries and representatives of Programme bodies. They are divided on the Programme level and Project



level, where those at Project level are further subdivided into general and SO-related lessons learnt.

Lessons learnt - Programme level

- Dealing with an **unpredictable situation** like living in the pandemic caused by COVID-19 has prepared Programme bodies to face other unexpected situations. Because of COVID-19, the PBs changed their ways of communication and work with beneficiaries to adapt to the new situation.
- Having more **workshops** with potential beneficiaries is needed. In this Programme period, the applicants had difficulties with understanding interventional logic, so workshops should focus even more on that problem. Additionally, it would be good to have different workshops for applicants that are beginners and for applicants that have already taken part in the Interreg programme. Moreover, workshops should have even more examples from concrete projects.
- This Cooperation Programme is implemented in **three languages**. Sometimes, due to poor translation, a misunderstanding would happen. If something is being translated between three official Programme languages, the context might be lost, and the meaning might not be the same. The problem caused by incorrect translation can be very serious, and one has to be very careful when translating.
- More focus should be put on the **visibility** of the projects and especially projects results. It would be interesting to see **after the project implementation what each project achieved**. Additionally, it would be significant if the focus could be put on project synergies, thus explaining the capitalisation of results.
- **Indicators** should take into account the nature of Interreg, rather than having indicators that are common for all ESI funds. Indicators in the new Programme period will be simplified, which on the one hand is considered good practice for easier monitoring, while on the other hand, it might make monitoring the actual programme achievements more difficult.
- Even though the **IT system** was extremely improved, some changes and additional improvements need to be made, mostly focused on simplifications that would make it even easier for Programme bodies to monitor and track the process of the Programme.
- Poor **quality of project reports** submitted in eMS, which need frequent additions, is slowing down the work of the PBs and thus prolonging the time required to approve the project reports.
- There should be a **stronger connection** between Cooperation Programme and relevant national bodies, in order to bring the results of successful projects into the wider application. National bodies should provide support to beneficiaries in implementing projects, that is not only declarative.

Lessons learnt - Project level



General

- The **project proposal** should be elaborated to the best extent possible even before applying for the financing. In that case, project proposals are already ready when a Call for Proposals is open, and they need just some adjustments before sending them.
- Relationship with **Project Partners** is one of the most important factors in project implementation. It is important to have partners that have the required skills and knowledge, that are cooperative and that finish their tasks on time. The lack of expertise by partners might lead to difficulties in project implementation. Lead Partners should observe the work of partners and they should interfere if partners start slacking. Responsibilities and roles must be clearly defined between partners, and it must be assured that there are no different interpretations of set objectives.
- Timely and structured **planning** is a key success factor, as well as good communication not only with Project Partners, but with supervisors (Programme bodies) and the general public. The Lead Partner must have a project manager that will be experienced, that will monitor activities and results indicators on time, while at the same time being in touch with every project partner.
- Not having **secured funds** for pre-financing makes the implementation of the project very difficult. Some Project Partners had to take a bank loan to overcome periods before financial payments. Beneficiaries like NGOs and smaller organizations from the private sector find this to be a big problem and some of them are not willing to participate anymore in this Programme due to the fact that they are not financially secure.
- By involving the interested **private sector** in the partnership and having a well-prepared network of stakeholders in the specific field and their support will be of great help in achieving project objectives. The private sector is usually better informed about innovative methods and tools, as well as new problems emerging. Their input on a specific sector or problem is very valuable. Stakeholders' involvement should be encouraged because it was shown that they form a crucial part in promoting the sustainability of project results. Additionally, the support of the **local community** and local authorities is important as well, since these projects have a local character.
- Beneficiaries have dealt with very strict **regulations** regarding the approval of items from their projects' reports. There's room for simplification of some procedures, but the most important thing is that beneficiaries feel **trusted** by their project managers and Programme bodies. Even though beneficiaries understand the need to check every spending on the projects by the Project Manager, they sometimes feel like being interrogated. Beneficiaries also noted that they've recognized the need for the Programme bodies to be more flexible when changing activities in a project.

Specific lessons learned for SO 2.1

- The collaboration with small and medium enterprises was complex because of the state aid regulations. As highlighted in several interviews with beneficiaries, the procedures related to state aid are unclear to beneficiaries and have led in some cases to abandon



the idea of involving SMEs as Project Partners or to different than planned budgeting of certain project activities.

- Border areas are often facing the problem of young people leaving and moving to more urban areas. These border areas have a lot of potentials to develop, but there is no sustainability if there are no people who will live there and continue with activities, thus promoting their area. Additionally, if there is a plan to develop the border area and attract people to visit it, there needs to be enough accommodation units.

Specific lessons learned for SO 2.2

- If the project were to achieve meaningful results, state institutions for nature conservation should play a greater role and have much more responsibility. Additionally, the duration of projects is usually too short to achieve greater effects in the environmental protection domain. Nature protection would require continuous support that exceeds ongoing projects or continuity should be taken into account when financing projects.

Specific lessons learned for SO 3.1

- One of the problems in project implementation is the rigidity of systems and procedures. The legislation of both countries is hindering doctors' participation in EU projects due to a limited number of working hours.
- Civil servants do not have the proper knowledge and skills to solve the social problems of the most vulnerable groups. They need to be educated and trained, thus gaining the required competencies and skills.
- There is a great demand for services focused on helping people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, as well as for services targeting their family members (e.g. informal carers). Additionally, medical staff should be trained to recognize the early stages of diseases that cause dementia.
- In relation to new services, more time is needed for testing developed solutions on a larger scale, which means that the duration of the projects should be extended.
- Agreement between hospitals in both countries should be supported by the relevant ministries, which should provide financing as well. Without national support, these agreements are damned on project implementation of services.

Key findings

- The most important success factors that had an impact on the achievement of project results and thus objectives on the project level were: effective cooperation of project partners and their previous experience and commitment, clearly defined objectives and indicators, support of Programme bodies, internal monitoring, risk management and communication procedures, involvement of private sector in the partnership, support of the local authorities and local community and well prepared network of stakeholders and their support.
- The most important barrier factors that were hampering the achievement of project results and thus objectives on the project level were: administrative burden and delays



in approving reports (followed by delays in reimbursement of costs to the projects), unclear objectives / different interpretation of set objectives and COVID-19.

- The most important success factors on the Programme level that had an impact on the achievement of Programme objectives were: effective cooperation of Programme bodies, expertise of all involved institutions and stakeholders (both on project and Programme level), introduction of guiding principles and specific indicators which allowed strong orientation towards expected Programme results and the new eMS system.
- The most important barrier factors that were hampering the achievement of Programme objectives were: lack of staff, COVID-19 and insufficient communication with the public.
- Lessons learnt on the Programme level are about the need to have more workshops for potential beneficiaries, put more focus on the visibility of projects results, simplify the IT system, improve the quality of project reports, for stronger connection between the Cooperation Programme and relevant national bodies, adjusted indicators according to Interreg Programme, rather than ESI funds.
- Lessons learnt on the Project level are about the need to have elaborated project proposals in advance, good relationship with Project Partners, timely and structured planning, good communication, secured funds, support of the local community and local authorities, involved private sector and feeling of security.
- Specific lessons learnt by SOs are about the need for simpler state aid regulations for collaboration with SMEs (2.1), more inhabited border areas and more accommodation units in border areas (SO 2.1), longer duration of projects to achieve greater effects (SO 2.2), a greater role of state institutions for nature conservation (SO 2.2), less rigid state legislation (SO 3.1), educating medical staff to recognize the early stages of diseases that cause dementia (SO 3.1), more time to test developed solutions (SO 3.1) and support from relevant ministries for agreement between hospitals from Croatia and Slovenia (SO 3.1).

EQ3 What is the progress of the programme towards achieving the targets of the specific objectives in terms of delivered outputs, results, activities, target groups, types of beneficiaries and indicators?

The answer to this EQ has been further subdivided into the chapters related to the structure of beneficiaries, review and analysis of target groups, review and analysis of activities, review of delivered outputs and review of delivered results.

When assessing the progress towards achieving the targets of the CP in the fields mentioned above, it is necessary to take a look at the current status of the financial allocation per priority axis/specific objective.



Table 14 Financial allocation per priority axis/specific objective

PA	Allocated ERDF funds	Paid ERDF funds ¹³	Paid funds as % of allocated funds
1	€ 10.127.420,52	€ 9.745.908,59	96,23
2	€ 28.044.452,87	€ 27.228.111,47	97,09
3	€ 4.995.655,61	€ 4.832.317,33	96,73

Source: Data received by the JS on the 20th of October 2022

Structure of beneficiaries

There were different beneficiary types eligible to apply for the CP. Next table show eligible beneficiary types by SOs.

Table 15 Eligible beneficiary type

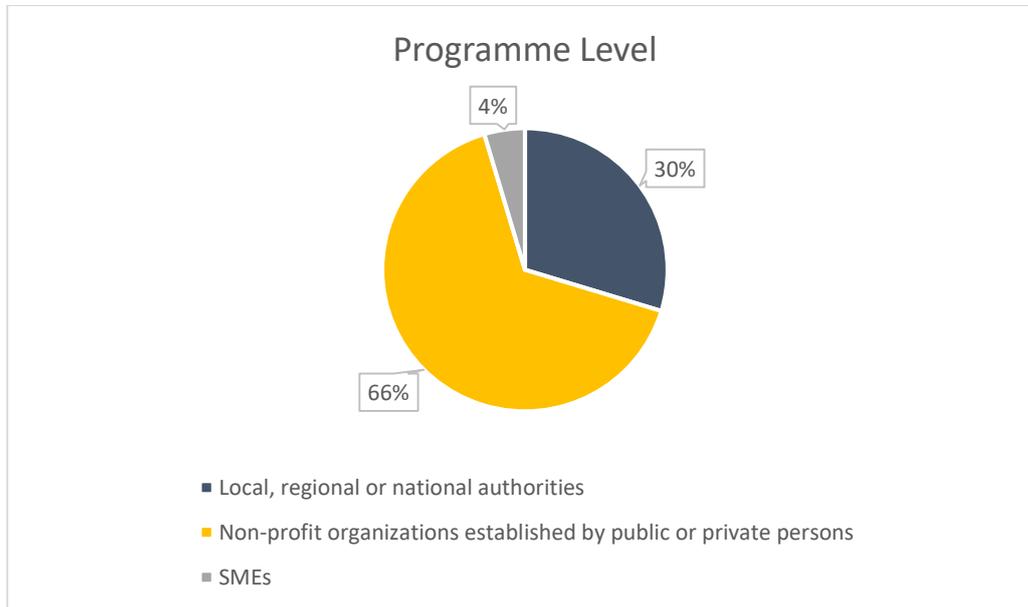
SO	Eligible beneficiary type
1.1	National, regional and local authorities responsible for water management, flood risk prevention, hydrometeorology and civil protection
	Non-profit organizations established by public or private persons in the field of water management, flood risk prevention, hydrometeorology and civil protection
2.1	Local, regional or national authorities
	Non-profit organizations established by public or private persons active in the field of cultural or natural heritage, sustainable tourism development or related activities
	SMEs
2.2	Local, regional or national authorities
	Non-profit organizations established by public or private persons active in the field of nature protection
3.1	Local, regional or national authorities
	Non-profit organizations established by public or private persons operating in the field of health or social care, security and cross-border public transport

The following figure shows the distribution of beneficiary type on the Programme level.

¹³ Two projects (one from PA1, and the other from PA2) are having their final progress reports reviewed at the moment of writing this Report.



Figure 14 Beneficiary distribution on the Programme level

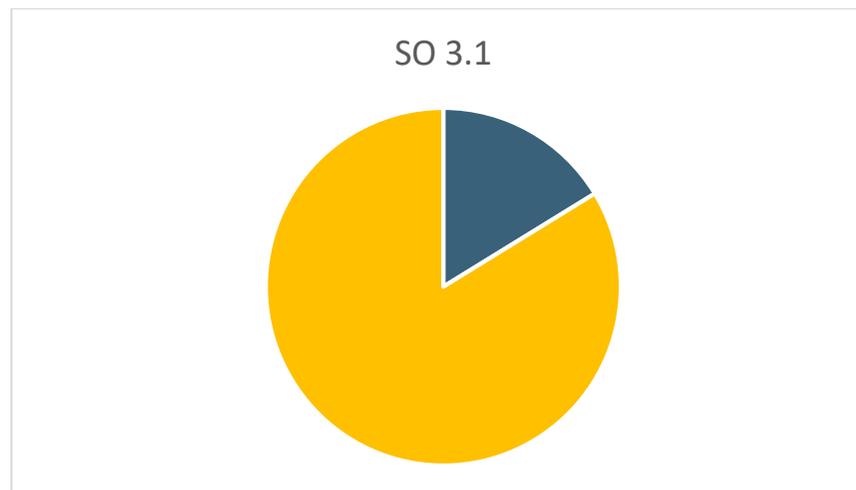
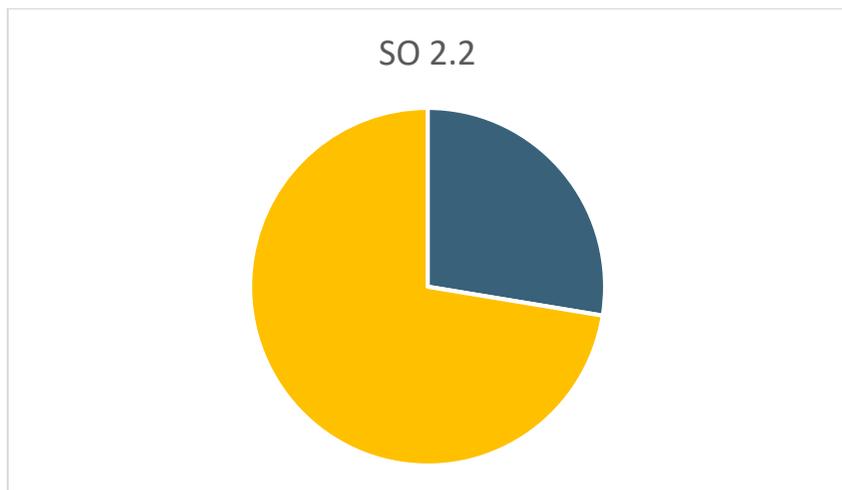
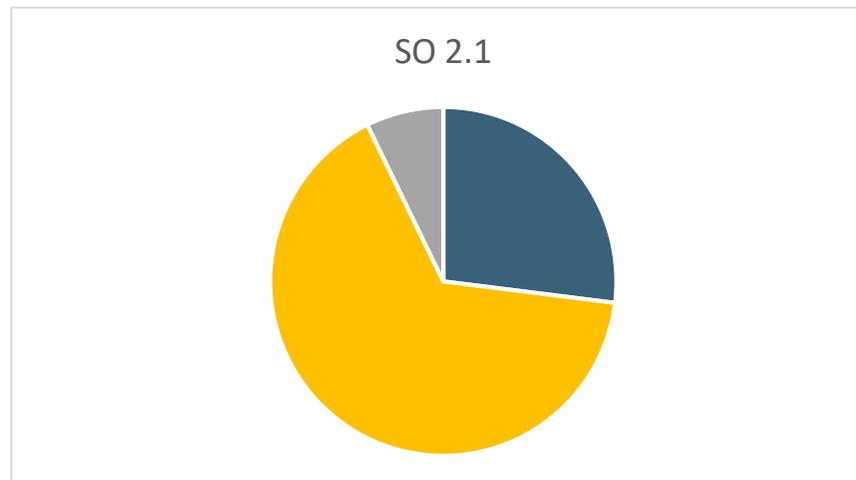
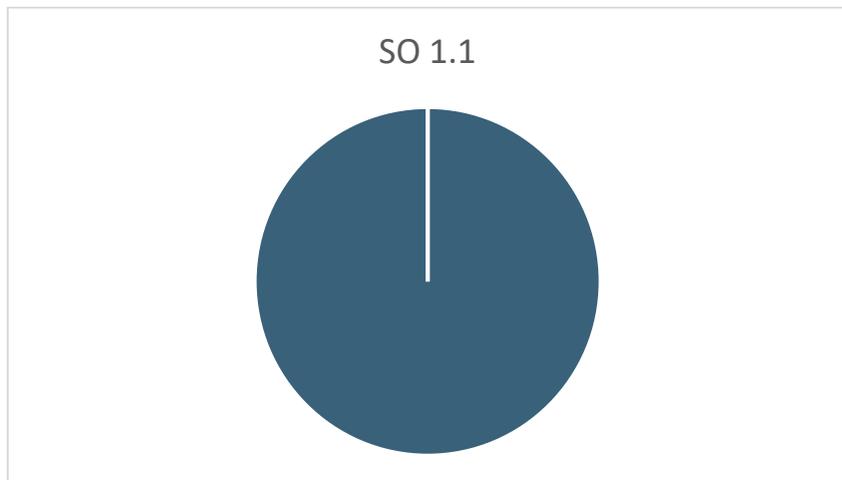


Since SMEs were acceptable beneficiaries only in one SO, they are the smallest group type. The biggest group is non-profit organizations, with 157 NGOs in three SOs. At last, there were 71 local, regional or national authorities involved in the projects. The next figures show the most represented beneficiary types by SO.



Figure 15 The most represented beneficiary by SO

■ Local, regional or national authorities ■ Non-profit organizations established by public or private persons ■ SMEs



Source: Application Form - eMS



Review and analysis of target groups

There were 14 main target groups reached through 38 projects:

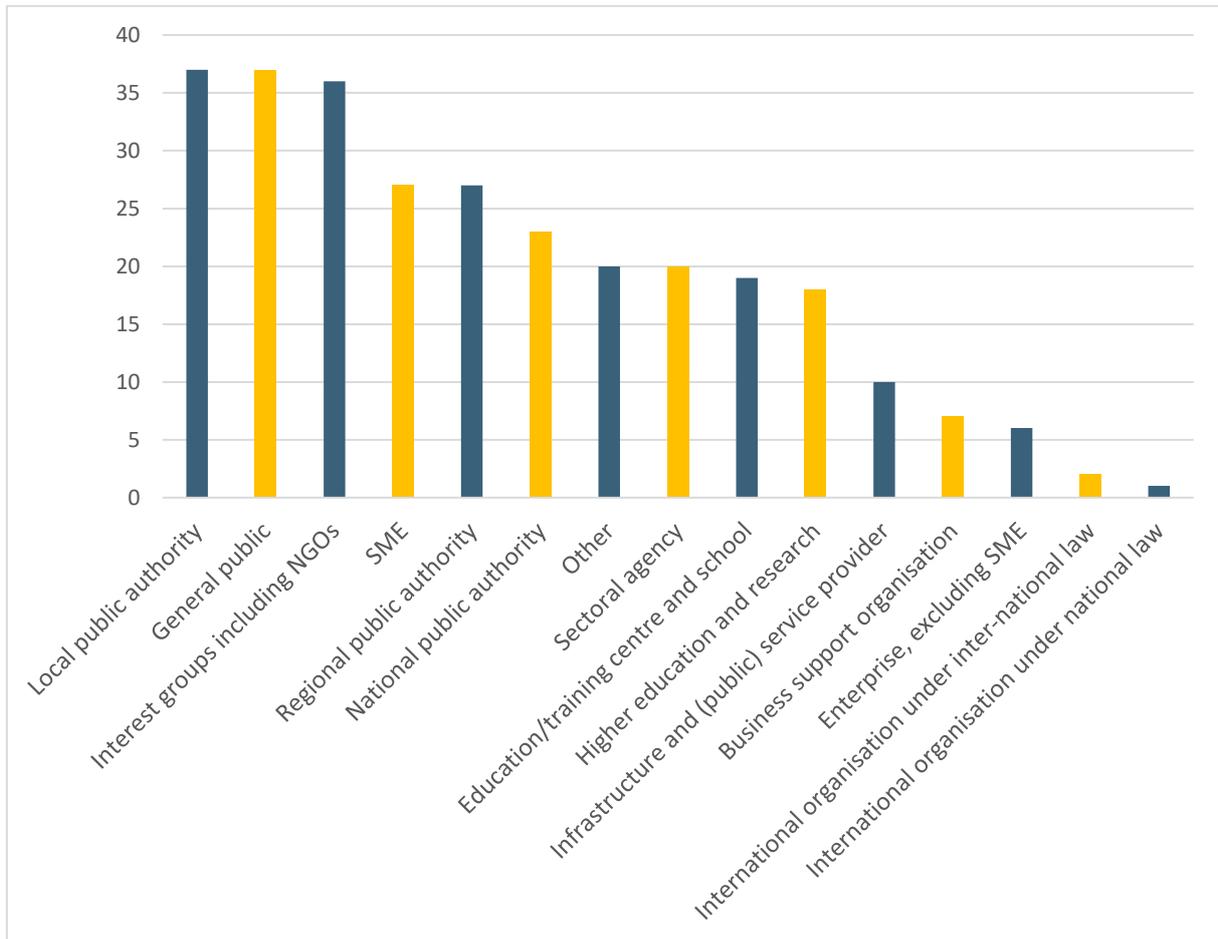
- Local public authority
- Regional public authority
- National public authority
- General public
- Sectoral agency
- Interest groups including NGOs
- Higher education and research
- Education/training centre and school
- International organisation under inter-national law
- International organisation under national law
- Enterprise, excluding SME
- SME
- Business support organisation
- Infrastructure and (public) service provider

Besides the above-mentioned target groups, some beneficiaries stated they have reached “Other” target groups, which were not mentioned in the Cooperation Programme, such as:

- Tourists and visitors
- Owners of cultural heritage buildings in the partner area
- Hotel workers, local tourist guides, potential entrepreneurs
- (Tourist) Agricultural holdings
- Various service providers and/or institutions
- Farmers and landowners

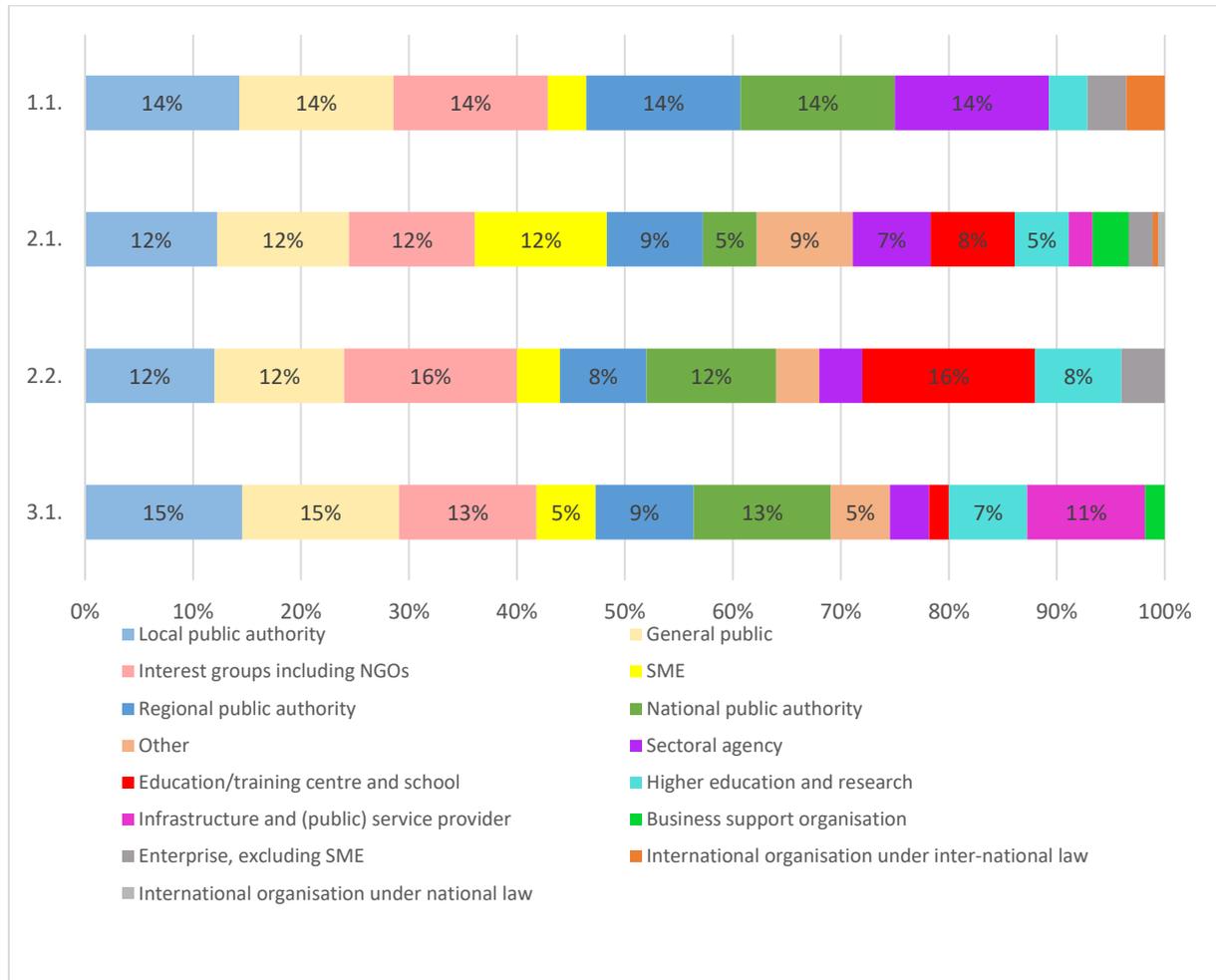
The beneficiaries set out their planned values of reaching target groups in their project application. On the Programme level, all target groups were reached, while four target groups have surpassed their planned values by more than double - general public, higher education and research, business support organisation and other. Beneficiaries and representatives of Programme bodies agreed that target values were realistically planned, thus enabling the easy realization of the target groups values. The following figure presents the most represented target groups on the Programme level by appearance in projects.

Figure 16 The most represented target groups on the Programme level



Some target groups were dominantly represented in Specific objectives. For example, education/training centre and school and enterprise, excluding SME, were mainly represented in SO 2.1, while infrastructure and (public) service provider was mainly represented in SO 3.1. The following figure presents the most represented target groups by SO, which was also measured by appearance in projects.

Figure 17 The most represented target groups by SO



Review and analysis of activities

The Cooperation Programme set out a list of indicative activities that will be supported for each SO. Those activities were shown in the intervention logic for each SO, as shown in the answer to EQ1. In answering this question, the evaluation team went through all implemented activities for 38 projects and looked at how the project's activities contributed to indicative ones. The next table shows which projects contributed to which indicative activity.

Table 16 Contribution to indicative activities

	INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES	PROJECTS THAT CONTRIBUTED
SO 1.1	Non-structural flood risk reduction measures of the target area	FRISCO 1
	Structural flood risk reduction measures of the target area	FRISCO 2.1, FRISCO 2.2, FRISCO 2.3



SO 2.1	Development of cross-border tourism products and destinations, on the basis of cultural and natural heritage following the concepts of active preservation, sustainable tourism, bottomup and integrated approach	Mala barka 2, DETOX, ENJOY HERITAGE, Riviera4Seasons2, CLAUSTRA+, ECool-Tour, Prebujanje, ZELENO ŽELIMO, ŽIVA COPRNIJA, MISTERION, Krasn'Krš, Uživam tradicijo, KulTura, In cultura veritas, INSPIRACIJA, MITSKI PARK, Prehistory Adventure, NATURE&WILDLIFE, MINE TOUR, LIVING CASTLES, Kaštelir, RIDE&BIKE II
	Cross-border destination or product co-operation structures, management and promotion	ZELENO ŽELIMO, Uživam tradicijo, ENJOY HERITAGE, KulTura, In cultura veritas, CLAUSTRA+, Mala barka 2, Riviera4Seasons2, Prebujanje, DETOX, Živa coprnija, ECool-Tour, MISTERION, Krasn'Krš, INSPIRACIJA, MITSKI PARK, NATURE&WILDLIFE, MINE TOUR, LIVING CASTLES, RIDE&BIKE II, Kaštelir, Prehistory Adventure
	Improvement of knowledge base and capacities for active preservation and sustainable tourism	Mala barka 2, DETOX, Prebujanje, ENJOY HERITAGE, Riviera4Seasons2, CLAUSTRA+, ECool-Tour, ZELENO ŽELIMO, ŽIVA COPRNIJA, Krasn'Krš, Uživam tradicijo, MISTERION, In cultura veritas, KulTura, INSPIRACIJA, MITSKI PARK, Prehistory Adventure, NATURE&WILDLIFE, MINE TOUR, LIVING CASTLES, Kaštelir, RIDE&BIKE II
SO 2.2	Capacity building actions for increasing the participation, awareness, knowledge and acceptance among target groups on nature protection and ecosystem services	ČIGRA, LIKE, Carnivora Dinarica, Vezi narave
	Development of joint coordinated approaches, methods, tools and new solutions in planning, monitoring and management of Natura 2000 and other species and habitat types relevant for CB area	ČIGRA, LIKE, Carnivora Dinarica, Vezi narave



	Implementation of monitoring surveys of Natura 2000 habitat types or species as well as other habitats and species relevant for CB area	ČIGRA, LIKE, Carnivora Dinarica, Vezi narave
	Identification, mapping, evaluation and enhancement of ecosystem services with joint pilot studies of ecosystem values and development of methodologies for regional green accounting or other Payment for Ecosystem Service (PES) systems	ČIGRA, LIKE, Carnivora Dinarica, Vezi narave
SO 3.1	Setting up new or strengthening existing cross-border cooperation structures of public institutions, civil society and other stakeholders in order to provide integrated territory-based solutions for provision of services in the selected field	Demenca aCROsSLO, 2SoKroG, +Health, STAR, CrossCare, EMERGENCY EuroRegion, HITRO, ENRAS
	Co-ordination, elaboration and improvement of joint plans, procedures and exchange of governance models for provision of cross-border services and/or services in border areas with service gap	2SoKroG, +Health, Demenca aCROsSLO, EMERGENCY EuroRegion, CrossCare, HITRO, ENRAS
	Developing skills and competences for provision of selected public services	CrossCare, 2SoKroG, EMERGENCY EuroRegion, HITRO, ENRAS
	Joint development and delivery (demonstration) of new or improved services within the cooperation structures	Demenca aCROsSLO, STAR, +Health, CrossCare, EMERGENCY EuroRegion, HITRO, ENRAS
	Promotion of active involvement of different groups of citizens	Demenca aCROsSLO, 2SoKroG

Four projects within SO 1.1 are mutually connected, since FRISCO 1 laid the foundations for each next project. In the first project, the beneficiary was focused on non-structural measures to reduce flood risk, while in the other three the focus was moved to structural measures. Within SO 2.1, all projects were focused on developing cross-border tourism products and destinations, based on cultural and natural heritage and mostly on improving knowledge base and capacities for active preservation and sustainable tourism, and less on management and promotion of cross-border structures. All four projects from SO 2.2 were focused on all indicative activities. Within SO 3.1, project activities were evenly dispersed, and they cover all indicative activities.

It must be mentioned that all activities have been conducted, while only some were adjusted due to COVID-19. Nineteen projects finished with their activities after the start of a pandemic in the beginning of 2020 – CrossCare, 2SoKroG, In cultura veritas, KulTura, Prehistory Adventure, ENRAS, FRISCO 2.2, FRISCO 2.3, RIDE&BIKE II, INSPIRACIJA, MITSKI PARK,



Carnivora Dinarica, NATURE&WILDLIFE, MINE TOUR, LIVING CASTLES, Kaštelir, VEZI NARAVE, EMERGENCY EuroRegion and HITRO. The pandemic mostly affected their activities like project meetings, conferences, workshops, model testing, study visits, tourist fairs and trainings. Nevertheless, in coordination with the Joint Secretariat, all project objectives and outputs were reached by adjustments – some activities were held online (or “hybrid”), some were postponed, some were held in a smaller scale, while other beneficiaries repurposed the budget with approval of the Joint Secretariat. COVID-19 not only affected the implementation of activities, but also the sustainability of activities and results (further elaborated in EQ13), as well as the possible impact of projects and their activities (as mentioned in EQ4 and EQ9).

Review of delivered outputs

The evaluators also used AIR 2020 and AIR 2021 for showing the level of achievement of indicators at the Programme level. The next table shows the achievement of specific output indicators, as represented in AIR 2021 and in the table Overview of project indicators in relation to programme indicators_ACHIEVEMENT_sept 22, that was delivered by the Client.



Table 17 Specific output indicators

ID	Indicator	CUMULATIVE VALUE 2021 - ACTUAL ACHIEVEMENT	CUMULATIVE VALUE – ACTUAL ACHIEVEMENT BY SEPT 2022 ¹⁴	Target Value - 2023	% of Programme target (ACTUAL ACHIEVEMENT) by the end of 2021	% of Programme target (ACTUAL ACHIEVEMENT) by the end of Sept 2022
CO20	Population benefiting from flood protection measures	2231	2772	1500	148,73%	184,80%
5b-1	Transboundary river basins with joint tools, models and maps for flood risk management developed	6	6	6	100,00%	100,00%
5b-2	Transboundary river basins with pilot structural flood risk reduction measures implemented	1	4	4	25%	100,00%
5b-3	People with increased professional capacity due to their participation in cross-border activities in transboundary flood risk and river basin management	31	31	20	155,00%	155,00%
CO09	Increase in expected number of visits to supported sites of cultural or natural heritage and attractions (visits/year)	836061	943878	50000 visits/year	203,50% ¹⁵	215,63% ¹⁶
6c-1	Small scale investments in visitor infrastructure and preservation of natural and cultural heritage	61	73	15	406,67%	486,67%

¹⁴ As highlighted above, the last available data on the achievement of specific output indicators (September 2022) have been used as well to give more precise insight into the level of achievement of Programme targets.

¹⁵ The actual achieved value of the indicator CO09 for 2021 compared to the actual achieved value for 2020 (734310 visits, source: AIR 2020) shows an increase of 101751 visits. Considering that the target value is set as an increase of 50000 visits per year, this means that the actual achievement of this indicator for 2021 compared to 2020 is 203,50%.

¹⁶ Although the data for 2022 is not available yet, the value achieved in the first 9 months of 2022 already exceeded the targeted yearly increase in the expected number of visits.



6c-2	New or improved cross -border sustainable tourism products and destinations integrating natural or cultural heritage	57	64	20	285,00%	320,00%
6c-3	Persons participating in capacity building activities	16675	17960	500	3335,00%	3592,00%
CO01	Number of enterprises receiving support	5	8	7	71,43%	114,29%
CO02	Number of enterprises receiving grants	5	8	7	71,43%	114,29%
CO23	Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status	3409,75	34169,97	31000	11,00%	110,23%
6d-1	Implemented practical demonstrations of measures in nature in support of biodiversity	18	29	10	180,00%	290,00%
6d-2	Joint studies and tools for assessing and promoting ecosystem services developed	13	14	3	433,33%	466,67%
6d-3	Persons with improved practical skills and competences for implementation of biodiversity protection measures and valorisation of ecosystem services	1136	1792	250	454,40%	716,80%
11-1	Institutions participating in cross -border structures	116	116	45	257,78%	257,78%
11-2	Persons representing institutions and stakeholders from the programme area with improved skills and competences in CB service delivery	2201	2201	300	733,67%	733,67%

Source: AIR 2021; Table Overview of project indicators in relation to programme indicators: ACHIEVEMENT_sept 22



All of 16 indicators were achieved, while 9 of them have surpassed their target value by more than double. A detailed overview of project objectives, outputs, results and deliverables was presented within EQ1.

Review of delivered results

This section provides a quantitative overview of the achievement of result indicators on the Programme level. Values achieved 2021 in the table below are the values available from the relevant reports for 2020, as the frequency of reporting for all the result indicators covers the years 2018, 2020, 2023. The description of results and their effects is further part of the EQ4 where the evaluators followed the suggested approach in the ToR and prepared the answer according to the defined indicative questions for each SO.

Table 18 Result indicators

ID	Indicator	Values achieved 2018	Values achieved 2021	Target Value - 2023	% of Programme target
5bRI	Share of targeted transboundary river basins area under flood risk	6,47%	5,89%	5%	84,89%
6cRI	Visitors to cultural and natural heritage sites in the programme area	5,919,310	/	5,750,000	n/a
6dRI1	Average degree of conservation status of habitat types and species of Natura 2000 sites in programme area-species	2,050	2,038 ¹⁷	2,052	99,32%
6dRI2	Average degree of conservation status of habitat types and species of Natura 2000 sites in programme area habitat	2,070	2,079	2,072	100,34%
11RI	Level of cooperation quality in the field of health, social care, safety and mobility services within the programme area	2,6	2,03	3,33	60,96%

Source: AIR 2021

The indicator 5bRI is at 84,89% of achievement according to data for 2020. However, considering the fact that the FRISCO projects have finished with project implementation in 2021, this indicator did not take into account all the results achieved within implemented structural FRISCO projects, so the indicator is expected to be met by 2023. The indicator

¹⁷ 2021 value is lower than 2019 because changes were made in Natura 2000 in SI in 2016 and in CRO in 2015 and 2019 (some species were added, some excluded), in addition in SI some species were assessed with lower scores).



6dRI2¹⁸ is completely achieved, while the indicator 6dRI1 is missing only 0.68% to reach the target value. Indicator 11RI scored lower than two years before, which is a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic since organisations could not meet and the cooperation among them faced some challenges. The data for indicator 6cRI was not available for 2020 and 2021¹⁹, so there is only data from 2019. But if we take into account the data from 2019, it is clear that the target level has been reached and that the final percentage of achievement will be above 100%. Considering the indicator 11RI, the probability of reaching the target value for 2023 cannot be assessed.

Key findings:

- The achievement of the Programme specific objectives has progressed very well and it is expected that all target values will be reached by the end of the Programme.
- Out of 16 indicators, half of them have achieved or by far surpassed their target value for 2023 already by the end of September 2021 which indicates that the thresholds were set very conservatively (except for the output indicator CO23 as further elaborated within EQ5). Due to the fact that AIR 2021 was published before all projects were finished, evaluators used projects progress reports to determine whether the other 4 indicators will achieve their target value. Forecasts show that all output indicators will be achieved by the end of the Programme.
- The achievement of Programme result indicators has progressed very well. Two result indicators have reached the target value for 2023, while one result indicator is really close to reaching its target value (it's missing less than 0,7 %). The result indicator 5bRI is considered reached although the data on this will be available in 2023. Considering the result indicator for PA3 (11RI), the probability of reaching the target value for 2023 cannot be assessed due to mentioned inadequacy in data collection.
- The only represented beneficiary in SO 1.1 was local, regional or national authority. The most represented beneficiaries in other SOs were non-profit organisations.
- The most represented target groups on the programme level include local public authority, general public, interest groups including NGOs, SME and regional public authority. Local public authority and general public are represented in 37 out of 38 projects, followed by interest groups including NGOs that are represented in 36 out of 38 projects. Such a finding implies the importance of these target groups for the sustainability of the project results.
- Considering the intensity of involvement of specific target groups in projects under specific objective, education/training centre and school and enterprise, excluding SME, were mainly represented in SO 2.1, while infrastructure and (public) service provider was mainly represented in SO 3.1.

¹⁸ The indicators 6dRI2 and 6cRI relate only to species and habitat types which were the subject of the implemented projects (as shown in Table 8. Overview of specific objectives, main project outputs, results and deliverables of the projects implemented within SO 2.2).

¹⁹ The last report was made in 2018. The next report will be available in 2023 for the year 2022.



EQ5 Identification of gaps between what was achieved and what are the remaining/emerging needs of the area at the time of the evaluation.

Besides looking at the achievement of indicators within EQ3, the evaluation team looked for the needs, identified by the CP, that were not addressed in full or at all. The analysis of interviews but also of the survey results allowed for identifying gaps or recognizing new needs and challenges that would need to be addressed, but were not foreseen in the CP.

SO 2.1

Many beneficiaries identified the need for a greater focus on marketing activities and the promotion of new tourist products/destinations. Through interviews and an online survey, the evaluation team gathered inputs from the Lead/Project Partner, who see this as a big problem, because they believe that the project effects would be better if that part is strengthened. This could also be improved by better cooperation with local/regional tourist associations, which should take it upon themselves to promote new tourist products/destinations.

Regarding active heritage preservation through sustainable tourism, some beneficiaries emphasized the following:

- the need for a modern and innovative interpretation of heritage, as well as further digitalization of cultural heritage;
- the need to improve access to heritage for all, including vulnerable groups;
- the need to create visitor studies, and more scientific research about cultural heritage;
- the need for joint management (plans) – e.g., a better connection of travel agencies in both countries;
- the need to raise awareness among the general public about the importance of responsible behaviour of individuals towards limited natural resources and the environment in general;
- the need to train and educate tourism professionals, service providers and guides;
- the need to create a comprehensive database of cultural and natural heritage in the CB area;
- the need for effective cooperation of educational institutions and NGOs in order to activate heritage communities and
- the need to create better connections between new and existing tourist offers (e.g. connecting projects tourist products with the existing thematic and cultural routes), as well as connecting the deliverables from similar projects.

All of this was not stressed out enough in the current Programme period and the beneficiaries are hoping it would be included in the next one. Some beneficiaries also mentioned that larger financial allocations are needed for investments in cultural and tourist infrastructure and others indicated that more emphasis should be put on the private sector in the next Programming period, i.e. activation of the local service providers and local entrepreneurs.

Beside the needs stressed by the beneficiaries and taking into consideration the available project documentation, survey results and interviews, within SO 2.1 further gaps were



identified in relation to the sustainability and the achievement of stronger effects of project results:

- the lack of cross-border promotion of newly developed tourist offer (as the new offer is being further actively promoted primarily on the local level covering the respective region/County rather than the whole cross-border destination)
- synergies between projects are not visible and were mentioned only in few cases (e.g. between projects Kaštelir and KRAS'n'KRŠ; Kaštelir and Mitski park). Synergies between projects should be stronger encouraged as they generate value and can contribute to efficiency and sustainability of individual projects.
- further enriching the user experience (also through ICT tools) in order to create new business opportunities, more jobs and even new job profiles (not only in the tourism sector, but also in the fields of creative and cultural industry, especially for young population in more remote or less developed regions).

SO 2.2

A gap was recognized by a member of a Programme body, identifying problems related to the use of common output indicators defined in the regulatory framework, which in some cases turned out to be less adapted to the needs of the CP and hard to measure. Specifically, an indicator for SO 2.2, the surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status (CO23), was not easy to measure and some beneficiaries had problems understanding it. Moreover, it was not easy to achieve due to the fact that its target value was set too high, as already mentioned. Another member of a Programme body mentioned that they had more problems with getting the projects within 6D, because it is still a specific area, it requires more and is simply more demanding professionally.

Some beneficiaries pointed out the need for joint cross-border spatial planning to improve restoring biodiversity and promote ecosystem services. It would be of great significance if there were standardized monitoring and management for different species in the whole CB area.

Additionally, protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services is something that requires more time than the projects lasted in this CP. Many beneficiaries emphasized that project duration is usually too short to have any impact. This specific area would require continuous support that goes beyond ongoing projects or the need to ensure continuity should be taken into account when financing project activities.

Some beneficiaries noted that there's a need to cooperate with the responsible state institution (e.g., the Ministry of agriculture/environmental protection) to promote different activities and measures for the protection of biodiversity, as well as a need for state institutions to have a greater role and responsibility in the protection of biodiversity. One survey participant pointed out his dissatisfaction with the fact that the legal bases for nature protection are relatively well defined, but the support for their implementation is weak, especially regarding the role of public institutions dedicated to nature protection.



A further recognized need was building additional infrastructure for the cause of protecting biodiversity, which requires additional financial allocations. Moreover, the already built infrastructure needs to be further maintained and in some cases renovated. Working with people was not recognized as a biodiversity protection activity, but as a communication activity, although it is aimed at improving attitudes that are necessary for the protection of biodiversity. As a communication activity, it had a lower allocation available for funding, than it would have if it were a nature protection activity.

SO 3.1

In this specific objective, the evaluation team noticed that the field of cross-border public transport and sustainable mobility services has been the least addressed in this Cooperation Programme. In total 11 projects were approved for financing in SO 3.1 through four deadlines – 6 projects regarding health care and social care, 4²⁰ projects regarding rescue services and only one project focused on cross-border sustainable mobility services – IstraConnect. However, this project was approved for financing only in the fourth deadline for the submission of projects, meaning it started in June 2022 and thus was not a part of this evaluation.

Some beneficiaries noted that there should be an increase in the use of available IT resources and increased awareness of local people and tourists in the area of cross-border health destinations. Additionally, a lack of strengthening the partnership was expressed, which should be addressed more, especially between public and private institutions in the fields of health, civil society and media in the area of a cross-border health destination. One survey participant expressed the need to establish intergenerational cooperation in the field of cross-border health destinations. Educations should be encouraged, both for the local population (about the importance of health interventions) and health care workers (about early recognition of diseases). When a family member is an informal caregiver of a sick or infirm person, he should have access to an increased number of services. In the social care field, more focus should be set on the elderly, e.g. promoting the ageing of users in their home environment.

Moreover, some beneficiaries expressed concern because new or strengthened cross-border structures should be implemented on (inter)national levels and their financing should be regulated by a legal act, but the responsible institutions are taking too much time to implement and regulate it. If no official agreement between Slovenia and Croatia is concluded, beneficiaries will be forced to apply for another similar project in order to continue with the service.

Key findings

- Some indicators were hard to understand, and in case of one indicator target value was set too high. It was specifically noted in achieving indicators for SO 2.2, indicator CO23 Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status.

²⁰ Two projects, MAX AID and CRO-SI-SAFE, were approved only in the fourth deadline for the submission of projects, meaning they were not part of this evaluation.



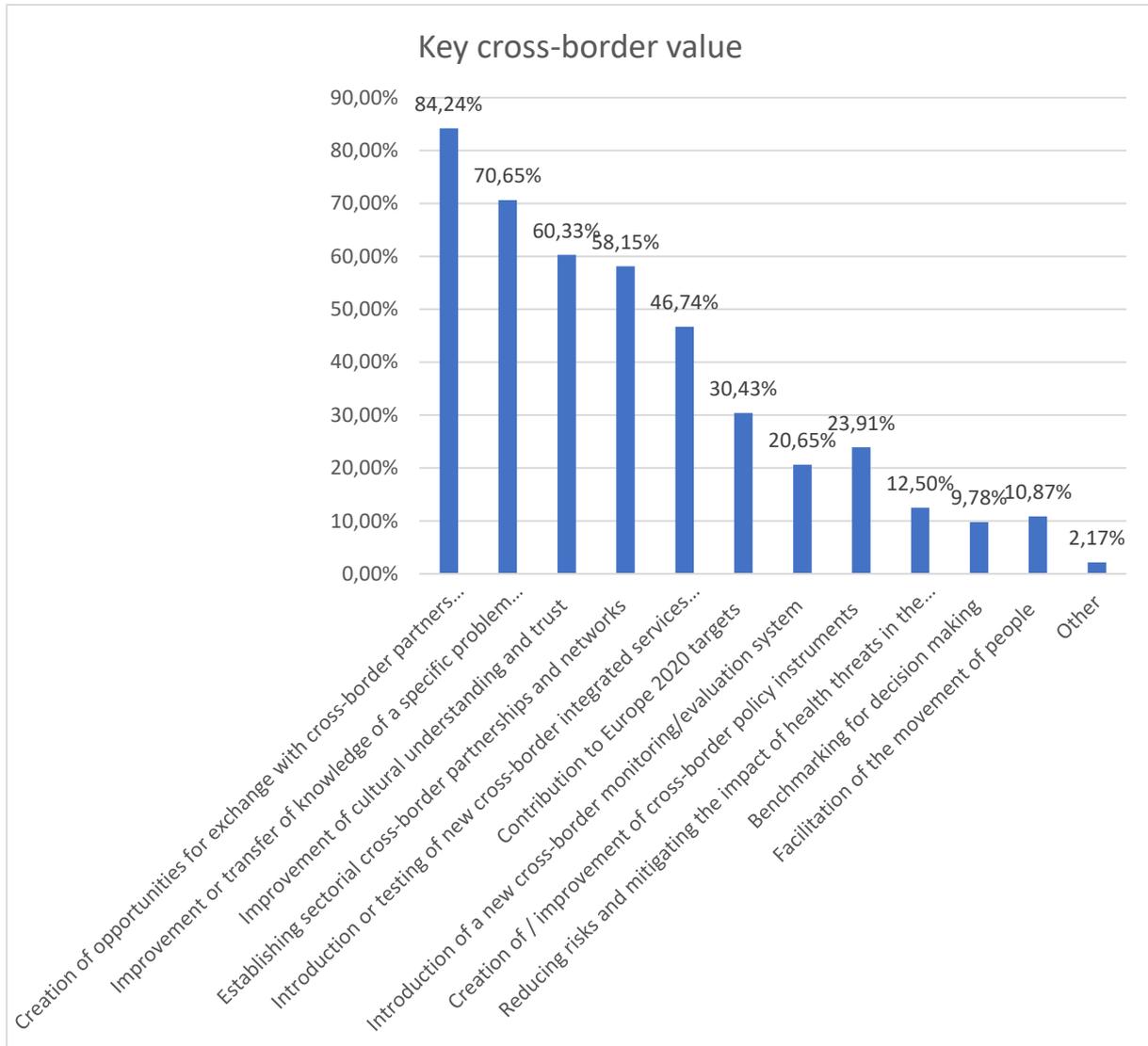
- In SO 2.1 beneficiaries recognized gaps like weak focus on marketing activities, while some remaining needs are a modern and innovative interpretation of heritage, further digitalization of cultural heritage, improved access to heritage for all (including vulnerable groups), visitor studies, scientific research about cultural heritage, a better connection of travel agencies in both countries, raising awareness among the general public about the importance of responsible behaviour of individuals towards limited natural resources and the environment in general, comprehensive database of cultural and natural heritage in the CB area, better connections between new and existing tourist offers, larger financial allocations for investments in cultural and tourist infrastructure. A lack of cross-border promotion of new offer and the unexploited potential for synergies between projects hinder generating more value for the cross-order area and creating new business opportunities and new jobs.
- Needs recognized by beneficiaries and members of Programme bodies in SO 2.2 are joint cross-border spatial planning, standardized monitoring and management for different species in the whole CB area, longer project duration for ones focused on protecting and restoring biodiversity, continuity, better cooperation with the responsible state institution, building additional infrastructure and maintaining the already built one.
- Within SO 3.1 field of connectivity and mobility has been addressed the least – with only one approved project in the fourth deadline.
- In SO 3.1 beneficiaries recognized gaps like a lack of strengthened partnership between public and private institutions in the fields of health, civil society and media, not enough focus on the elderly and slow implementation by the responsible institutions. The mentioned remaining needs are better usage of available IT resources, increased awareness of local people and tourists in the area of cross-border health destinations, intergenerational cooperation and more education for the local population and health care workers.

EQ8 How well was the integrated approach to territorial development followed?

The integrated approach to territorial development as one of the core principles of Interreg programmes has been respected in all the projects implemented within SO 1.1. The below analysis showcases the most important aspects in the implementation of the stated principle.

In order to investigate whether the cross-border cooperation led to an integrated, cross-border approach to territorial development, the beneficiaries were asked to identify key cross-border added value of their projects. On the level of the Programme the majority of beneficiaries stressed the creation of opportunities for exchange with cross-border partners and for promotion of international networks (84,24%) as well as improvement or transfer of knowledge of a specific problem common to cross-border territories (70,65%); followed by improvement of cultural understanding and trust (60,33%) as well as establishing sectorial cross-border partnerships and networks (58,15%).

Figure 18 Key cross-border value



Knowledge transfer and stronger connections and partnerships across the border were also often mentioned in the interviews as important intangible results of the implemented projects.

SO 1.1

Within the evaluation process, four projects within SO 1.1 have been implemented – FRISCO 1, FRISCO 2.1, FRISCO 2.2 and FRISCO 2.3; the last three actually representing the continuation of the FRISCO 1 project. As the subject of SO 1.1 is integrated flood risk management in transboundary river basins and the interventions deal with the pre-defined border river basin's territory, a cross-border integrated approach is in the very nature of the SO and thus indispensable for successful flood risk prevention. The project's (and Programme) objectives could only be achieved through a common understanding of the objectives of flood risk management of mutual interest and the identification of mutual benefits for the areas in the transboundary river basins. Strategic projects within SO 1.1 were also recognized by some



of the representatives of Programme bodies as examples of good practice in applying the integrated approach to territorial development.

The FRISCO projects respected integrated approach in both the planning and implementation phase. In line with the Floods Directive, the flood risk management planning has been done following the river basin approach and taking into account the economic development, climate change, spatial planning and sustainable solutions for flood risk mitigation. Within the implementation of the strategic FRISCO projects, the integrated flood risk management included coordinated planning and improvement of hydraulic and forecasting models, improvement and cross-border harmonisation of flood hazard maps, flood risk management database and cross-border harmonised flood risk management study, data exchange and alert systems as well as the implementation of the structural measures.

The projects were implemented through a multidisciplinary approach which required the involvement of experts from both sides of the border in different fields – hydrologists, hydraulics engineers and other experts in the field of water management and flood risk management – and their joint cooperation on the national and transboundary level within the FRISCO 1 project. Furthermore, apart from the institutions responsible for flood risk and river basin management, projects' activities, i.e. capacity building activities and communication activities, were aimed at other relevant institutions such as civil protection, spatial planning²¹ and nature protection authorities.

In analysing long-term flood risk management measures, special attention was given to the application of measures of green infrastructure, i.e. nature-based solutions, which preserve the values of ecosystems and their services and provide additional benefits to the society, at the same time having a significant role in mitigating the impacts of weather and climate change associated with natural disasters.

SO 2.1

According to the definition of the CP, "integrated cross-border sustainable tourism product means a set of heritage attractions/services/accommodations/transportations/events which take the form of a cross-border route, itinerary, trail, offer, package etc., either physical (based on physical infrastructure) or conceptual (linking places/destinations/attractions/experiences) and which all share a common link, feature, topic or theme. Each element of the tourism product is prepared to satisfy the need of the tourist/visitor and provide a quality of experience. The product shall cover or be developed in both countries and promote a concrete (not general) cross-border product having an international market potential" .

Following this definition, all the projects implemented within SO 2.1 have contributed to the development of integrated cross-border sustainable tourism products. Integration of heritage preservation with sustainable tourism is the subject of every project implemented within 2.1, as every single project has developed at least one cross-border heritage-based sustainable

²¹ The expected impacts of the integration of spatial planning and flood risk prevention have been further elaborated within EQ9.



tourism product. In some cases, the element/feature around which the tourism products have been created is truly transboundary and the interest and engagement of partners from both sides of the border continue to exist even after the project has finished (e.g. CLAUSTRA+, KRASN'KRŠ, NATURE&WILDLIFE). However, desk research also led to the conclusion that, to some extent, the integrated approach to territorial development was understood as separate conduction of jointly developed activities (or, i.e. establishing separate "bodies" in each of the regions in charge of some specific task relevant for the whole area), but without truly integrating activities across the border. Such a finding was also confirmed during interviews with the representatives of Programme bodies.

The CP called for a smart valorisation and active preservation of heritage through its integration with local economies and CB sustainable tourism products/destinations. The latter was achieved mainly through connections with previously implemented projects and/or as the follow-up of projects implemented in the previous Programme period. Cross-border partnerships established within the projects can be seen as clusters of stakeholders coming from different sectors (integration of the local authorities' level with sectoral organisations and NGOs from both countries in most of the cases) and different disciplines. Their joint work during the development of cross-border tourism projects and the synergies between them represented a success factor in achieving project results. In most cases, such cross-border partnerships created an obligation for these partnerships to further cooperate in the area of the sustainable development of tourism in the region, either through signing agreements/memorandum or through establishing consortia, platforms and networks (see Table 21).

Local economic operators from both sides of the border were involved mostly as target groups with the intention to strengthen their capacities for providing tourism services and joint market presence. In some cases, they are actively involved in the provision of services within the new products (e.g. ECool-Tour, NATURE&WILDLIFE). Several projects have raised the issue of the need for stronger marketing and promotion within the project and involving partners experienced in these fields.

Cross-border cooperation allowed the development of common, cross-border strategies for the sustainable management of developed heritage-based tourist products and destinations (e.g. Uživam tradicijo, CLAUSTRA+, NATURE&WILDLIFE). The joint development of common cross-border tourism products has resulted in a better quality of the offer of individual areas and greater visibility – a result that could not have been achieved with the local approach. Key elements of the improved quality of tourism products that was based on integrated approach encompass increased quality and variety of contents, a better quality and outreach of promotion of the new tourist destination and exchange of knowledge. The development of tourist destinations was closely linked to their natural environment and cultural distinctiveness.

SO 2.2

As identified in the CP, maintaining and restoring biodiversity of many of Natura 2000 species and habitats in the Programme area significantly depends on a cross-border approach: cross-



border measures such as joint monitoring and management, but especially measures aimed at attaining favourable conservation status of habitats and species can significantly contribute to a better functioning of habitats, species and ecosystems. Within SO 2.2 four projects (ČIGRA, LIKE, VEZI NARAVE and Carnivora Dinarica) have been implemented.

In all four projects, the cross-border approach enabled solving recognized problems of a geographical region, not an administratively limited area – projects were focused on N2000 habitats and species present on both sides of the border. Joint analysis and interpretation of data gathered on both sides of the borders enabled accurate insight into the status of habitats and species. The partners of both countries worked together to gather new knowledge, analyse pressures, conduct and define joint innovative monitoring. The exchange of good practices, application of different monitoring methods and new approaches between partners from both countries was crucial in achieving set goals (e.g. the transfer of the Slovene practice of encouraging scientific work performed by citizens in cooperation or under the guidance of professional staff of partner institutions which develops a sense of responsibility and motivation to engage in the best interests of the wider community to Croatia; transfer of knowledge related to genetic monitoring to Croatian partners etc.).

Results such as joint monitoring protocols, harmonised measures for transboundary management of specific species, joint analysis of ecosystem services or the draft cross-border action plan could be developed only through cross-border cooperation. Without cross-border cooperation, the long-term goal of reducing recreational pressure on the area's ecosystems and managing endangered habitats and species in the cross-border could not be achieved.

The whole cross-border area has significant tourist potential which has been detected by the project beneficiaries and the activities were designed in order to put natural potentials in the function of tourism and recreation, while protecting natural phenomena.

SO 3.1

Setting up new or strengthening the existing cross-border cooperation structures which include public institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders in order to provide integrated territory-based solutions for provision of services in the cross-border area is the main aim of SO 3.1. Eight projects within SO 3.1 are the subject of this evaluation.

Strengthening the existing cross-border cooperation structures was supported by a cross-border multidisciplinary approach – the involvement of Project Partners such as universities or faculties that could provide scientific and documentary work was coupled with the involvement of other partners who were able to supplement their work with research and information directly from their experiences (e.g. doctors, nurses). This way, the projects were able to develop integrated solutions. Furthermore, projects were also dealing with the institutionalization of cross-border cooperation by signing agreements/contracts on future cooperation.

The transfer of best practices between cross-border partners was perceived as one of the main factors for a better utilization of existing human resources and improved quality, diversity and



accessibility of services in the Programme area, followed by a joint development of innovative solutions. The exchange of knowledge and practices has been highlighted in the interviews as one of main factors of success. The cross-border approach has also enabled the standardizing of certain procedures (e.g. a coordinated cross border response in the event of nuclear/radiological emergency).

Common strategic documents were developed (e.g. the Strategy and Action plan of the development of cross-border health destination, which allow a better provision of health services (+Health); Joint cross-border protocol for delivery of emergency service (EMERGENCY EuroRegion). In relation to this aspect, it needs to be emphasized that different legal framework and administration systems have been hampering the acceptance of such cross-border documents by the national authorities.

Key findings:

- In general, it can be concluded that the cross-border integrated approach has been followed in both the planning and implementation phase, but rather to a different level. The implemented strategic projects within SO 1.1. show high level of cross-border integrated activities, outputs and results, and were thus emphasized as good practice examples in this respect. Similar can be concluded for SO 2.2 projects.
- Within SO 2.1 it was observed that in some cases the integrated approach to territorial development was understood as a separate conduction of jointly developed activities (or, i.e. establishing separate “bodies” in each of the regions in charge of some specific task relevant for the whole area), but without truly integrating activities across the border. Such a finding was also confirmed during interviews with the representatives of Programme bodies.
- Integrated approach within SO 3.1 has enabled the exchange of knowledge and best practices and thus contributed to the quality of developed solutions. The majority of beneficiaries within all SOs stressed the creation of opportunities for exchange with cross-border partners and for promotion of international networks as the most important cross-border value, followed by the improvement or transfer of knowledge of a specific problem common to cross-border territories.

EQ10 What is the progress in the implementation of the Communication Strategy and the achievement of the set objectives?

In answering this evaluation question, evaluators analysed implemented activities and the level of achievement of the Communication Strategy targets by comparing achieved outputs and results with the indicators set in the Communication Strategy (CS).

The Communication Strategy aims to increase the awareness about the Programme and the Cohesion policy and EU funds among the general public, stakeholders, the expert public (political public), the media and beneficiaries and highlight the role, achievements and impact



of the Cooperation Programme and its projects and informing potential beneficiaries about funding opportunities under the Cooperation Programme.

Informational and communicational actions have been undertaken to notify the wider public and political public in the Programme area and beyond about the funded and implemented projects, including general and specific project information. The Programme website, as a key tool for ensuring Programme visibility, was visited continuously by the (potential) beneficiaries, Programme partners and other interested public. The website is well structured, beneficiaries assess it as good in terms of the usefulness of information, transparency and general impression. This communication tool was used and further developed to provide even more information for (potential) beneficiaries and other interested public. In addition, many projects developed their own websites or subpages with all the necessary information on the implementation of the project as well as information on the Programme. As a more interactive tool, informative/annual events, conferences, workshops and face-to-face meetings offered important opportunities for information exchange between Programme structures and different target audiences with greater inclusion of the general and expert public as well as the political sphere.

Achievement of the set objectives

Based on the available data, the conclusion is that the achievement of objectives of the Communication Strategy is progressing very well. Most indicators have already been achieved or slightly surpassed their target values (e.g. knowledge of the Programme website with 104%²² of the achieved value, number of workshops performed with 108.3%²³ of the achieved value; number of events performed with 137,5%²⁴; number of participants at events with 158,88%²⁵). Some indicators have already significantly exceeded their target values (e.g. number of visits to the website with 999.13%²⁶ of the achieved value, number of participants at workshops with 426%²⁷ achieved value) and number of mailing list contacts with 116%²⁸ achieved value²⁹. One indicator - number of created information materials (e.g. printed brochures, leaflets, etc.) – is missing less than 10% (90%³⁰ of achieved value).

According to conducted interviews with Lead/Project Partners, they pointed out that communication on a Programme level was good, and they also stated that there is room for improvement. Some beneficiaries didn't even hear about Interreg through official channels, but they were informed by acquaintances. The Programme lacks more self-promotion which can be achieved through commercials, publications on social media and blog.

They listed the Programme web site as the most used communication tool, but they stated it has more value for beneficiaries than general public. Only one respondent mentioned, in

²² Reported in 2019.

²³ By the end of September 2022.

²⁴ By the end of September 2022.

²⁵ By the end of September 2022.

²⁶ By the end of September 2022.

²⁷ By the end of September 2022.

²⁸ By the end of September 2022.

²⁹ The number of mailing list dropped after 27 July 2018, due to the GDPR regulations.

³⁰ By the end of September 2022.



addition to the web site, also leaflets, public promotional (on-line) events, social networks, and international online conferences as used communication tools.

Interviewed representatives of the Programme bodies pointed out that the communication on a Programme level with general population can be much better and that there is a lot of room for improvements in this regard. One of the representatives of Programme bodies mentioned that it wasn't possible to do more in this programming period due to lack of capacity, but they are planning to improve it in the next programming period.

Because of the frequency of reporting, the last available data (from 2019) for the indicator *Recognizability of the CP Interreg SI-HR* was 30% and the assumption is that the current value is slightly higher. In conducting interviews with representatives of project beneficiaries, it was often pointed out that the recognizability of the Programme is very good among their target groups and the general public. It can be concluded that the strong promotion on the project level has significantly contributed also to the visibility on the Programme level. One interviewee, a representative of a local authority, stated that after the successful implementation of the project within the 2014-2020 Programme period, locals kept coming and suggesting what else could be financed within available EU funding opportunities.

To improve communication on the Programme level with general population, promotion on social media should be considered (Facebook, Youtube, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.).

Table 19 The achievement of Communication objectives

Communication objective		Indicator	Unit of measurement	Initial value	Target value at the end of programme period	2022**	Achieved indicators %
General objective	Enhancing the public awareness of the EU support for projects in the area of CBC	Recognizability of the CP Interreg SI-HR	Percentage	0	60	18*	30%
		Knowledge of the programme website	Percentage	81	90	93,5*	104%
		Number of visits to the website	Visits	0	10.000	99.913**	999,13%
Specific objective	Motivate (potential) beneficiaries / communicate the possibilities to use the EU Funds	Number of workshops performed	Workshops	0	12	13**	108,3%
		Number of participants at workshops	Participants	0	250	1.065**	426%
		Number of mailing list members	Addressee	0	500	580**	116%



Specific objective	Inform target audiences of the practical benefits of the projects implemented and their impact on day to-day life of the citizens in the cross-border area	Number of created information materials (e.g. printed brochures, leaflets, etc.)	Issues	0	1.000	900**	90%
		Number of events performed	Events	0	8	11**	137,5%
		Number of participants at events	Participants	0	800	1.271**	158,88%

Source: JS

Note: The number of mailing list contacts dropped after 27 July 2018, due to the GDPR; all persons already subscribed to the mailing list had to subscribe again (from 610 to 299)

*Frequency of reporting 2019, 2023 (reported in 2019)

**Data up to 30 September 2022

Key findings

- The achievement of the Communication Strategy objectives at the end of the Programme period 2014-2021, based on the indicators achieved as well as on findings from the on-line survey and interviews, is assessed as high, but some additional improvements should be made in communication with the general population.
- The only indicator far from achieving its target value is *Recognizability of the CP Interreg SI-HR* (according to the last available data from 2019). Based on the conclusions from the interviews with Programme bodies, general public is more difficult to reach than (potential) beneficiaries and Programme partners and expert public.
- As confirmed by interviewed beneficiaries, the strong promotion on the project level significantly contributed also to the visibility of the Programme as a whole.

2.2. SUSTAINABILITY

EQ6 Which thematic field supported by the Programme has the best potential for the capitalisation of results achieved in this Programme?

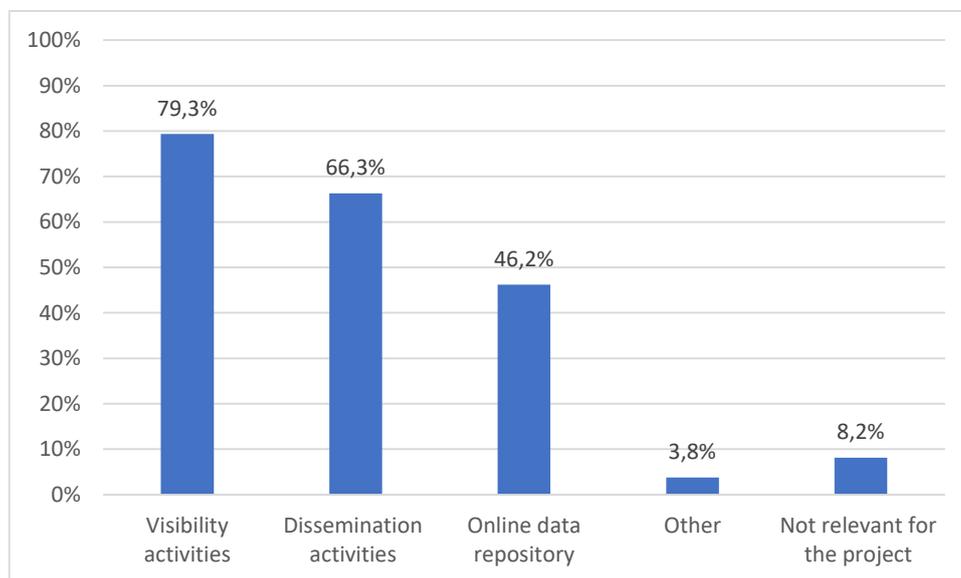
Potential for capitalisation was examined at the level of four thematic fields supported by the Programme (corresponding to four specific objectives):

- Flood risk reduction in the transboundary Dragonja, Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla, Drava, Mura and Bregana river basins (SO 1.1);
- Active heritage preservation through sustainable tourism (SO 2.1);
- Protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services (SO 2.2);
- Building partnerships among public authorities and stakeholders for healthy, safe and accessible border areas (SO 3.1).



For each of the four thematic fields, the potential for capitalisation was examined through the lens of **accessibility and transferability of knowledge** obtained by specific projects, **accessibility of project results**, and their **potential for reusing/upscaling**. In that regard, the survey with Lead/Project Partners provides a valuable insight into knowledge accessibility and transferability and accessibility of project results. Vast majority of respondents (169 out of 184, or 91,8%) gave an answer suggesting that accessibility of knowledge obtained and possibilities for the transfer of knowledge/best practices/lessons learnt during and after project implementation are somehow relevant for their projects. As it is shown in the graph below, the most frequent way of ensuring knowledge/results accessibility and transferability was by carrying out visibility activities during the project implementation phase. This answer was pointed out by 79,3% of the respondents. Two-thirds of respondents (66,3%) also indicated that knowledge/results accessibility and transferability was ensured by conducting dissemination activities during the project implementation phase. Another possibility for ensuring accessibility and transferability, and perhaps the most useful way of doing that, is by setting up an online data repository with well-structured and most recent data available. This answer was pointed out by almost a half of all respondents (46,2%). For many projects such data repositories were supposed to be available through their websites, but in practice most of them do not have any recent activity recorded and project results and outputs are not updated.

Figure 19 Accessibility and transferability of knowledge/project results

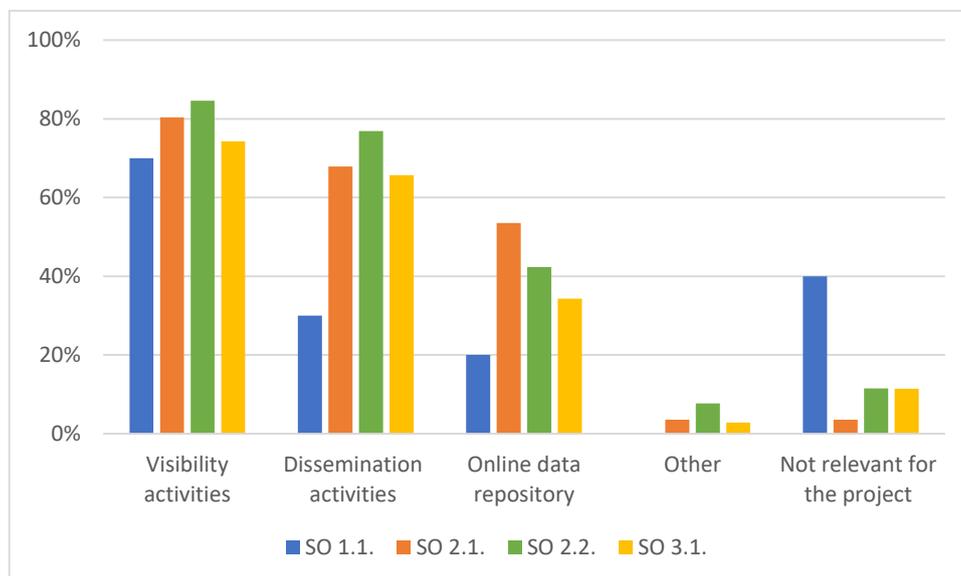


Source: Online survey

Looking at the results by each specific objective (shown in the graph below), we see rather similar results, with a few noteworthy differences. Within SO 1.1, which diverges the most from the pattern seen in the graph above, 70% indicated that they have ensured accessibility and transferability of knowledge and project results through visibility activities. Significantly less respondents pointed out dissemination activities and online data repository as ways of ensuring accessibility (30% and 20%, respectively). One outlier result is that 40% of

respondents deemed accessibility and transferability of knowledge and project results irrelevant for their projects, which can be explained by specific, tailor-made infrastructural measures and activities implemented in four transboundary river basins (Kupa/Kolpa, Sutla/Sotla, Drava, Mura). Within SO 2.1, visibility activities were the most preferred way of ensuring accessibility (80,4%), followed by dissemination activities (67,9%), and online data repository (53,6%). In addition, four respondents (3,6%) did not consider this relevant, while the same number of respondents stated other ways of ensuring accessibility, such as transferring knowledge and project results through new project activities and through social media. Regarding SO 2.2, both visibility and dissemination activities were pointed out by an overwhelming majority of respondents (84,6% and 76,9%, respectively), while online data repository was indicated by 42,3% of respondents. Three respondents (11,5%) did not find accessibility and transferability of knowledge and project results relevant for their projects, while two (7,7%) answered with other ways of ensuring it, for instance through regular activities of project partners. Finally, within SO 3.1, visibility and dissemination activities were once again two most frequent ways of ensuring accessibility and transferability of knowledge (74,3% for the former, 65,7% for the latter). Building an online repository was pointed out by 34,3% of respondents, four respondent (11,4%) did not find it relevant for their projects, while one respondent (2,9%) sees the potential for providing accessibility and transferability of knowledge and project results in personal interactions with project participants, who have acquired valuable experience and knowledge during the project implementation and are determined to share it.

Figure 20 Accessibility and transferability of knowledge/project results by specific objective



Source: Online survey

Another important aspect of capitalisation potential is the actual willingness of Lead/Project Partners to apply for a new project in order to capitalise on project results. In our survey, 78% of all respondents answered affirmatively to that question, which indicates a high level of determination, and inclination to use the project results for further improvements. As shown in the graph below, the level of willingness is high when asking Lead/Project Partners of

projects within SO 2.1, SO 2.2 and SO 3.1, thus showing more determination to capitalise on the project results in the 2021-2027 implementation period. Once again, the survey answers of Lead/Project partners of projects within SO 1.1 give an outlying result, with 60% of respondents stating their unwillingness to capitalise on the project results by applying for a new project in the 2021-2027 implementing period.

Figure 21 Willingness to apply for a new project in order to capitalise on the project results



Source: Online survey

A more in-depth insight was given in interviews with Lead/Project Partners, who then had the chance to explain more thoroughly their projects' potential for capitalisation.

When it comes to SO 1.1, Lead/Project partners indicate in the interviews, contrary to the above mentioned survey results, that they are ready to explore further the possibilities for capitalisation in the form of a new project, but with uncertainty regarding the funding source. Furthermore, they explain that the emphasis was put on the accessibility of knowledge that is crucial for project partners, and on transferring knowledge to other stakeholders in the Programme area, but also in the wider region. For instance, the obtained knowledge which can then be accessed and transferred includes important insights for setting up early alarm and warning systems for floods, as well as forecast models. Also, there is a great potential for data sharing, which is especially important for areas which are located downstream from



Dragonja, Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla, Drava, Mura and Bregana river basins. An important aspect of knowledge accessibility for projects within SO 1.1 is also sharing the information about flood risks with potential investors, which increases certainty and reduces the risk of harmful consequences for economic activity. Regarding project results, it is important to make a distinction between structural and non-structural measures. The former includes results such as physical barriers serving as flood protection and their potential for capitalisation is entailed in providing a good basis for possible upscaling or further enforcement of flood protection systems. This capitalisation potential has already been proven by projects FRISCO 2.1, FRISCO 2.2 and FRISCO 2.3, which have implemented necessary structural measures that were previously detected in FRISCO 1. On the other hand, the non-structural measures, resulting in forecast models and early warning systems, have a significant potential for capitalisation by their application in other areas and improving their precision and preparedness.

Potential for capitalisation of projects within SO 2.1 is evidenced in several aspects that all contribute to ensuring accessibility and transferability of knowledge and project results. Firstly, there is a significant potential for reusing and upscaling of project results, as 81% of Lead/Project Partners have expressed their willingness and readiness to submit an application for another project in order to capitalise on the results. Secondly, the accessibility of knowledge obtained during the project implementation is ensured through networks of stakeholders which were set up as parts of several projects. These networks, which are often cross-sectoral, serve as knowledge-transfer hubs and have the potential of igniting ideas for future projects and future partnerships. Another way of ensuring accessibility and transferability of knowledge and project results is by joining already existing networks and bringing to the table new insights and ideas, as was the case with the project partners of INSPIRACIJA, who joined the European Route of Industrial Heritage (ERIH) network.

Regarding the projects within SO 2.2, the potential for capitalisation stems from the possibility to reuse the knowledge obtained in the project and its results for preserving other ecosystems and species in the Programme area by submitting applications for new projects in the future. This is evidenced by 85% of respondents who would like to implement new projects if the opportunity arises. Also, within this SO, there is a substantial potential for the capitalisation of knowledge and results for scientific and academic work. One of the beneficiaries emphasised the importance of projects supported by the Programme for their scientific work, because they are scientists, conducting a scientific project, and they care for nature protection. It was, therefore, quite natural to capitalise on these results in the form of scientific work. An example from VEZI NARAVE project, where developed education materials for teachers were integrated into the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport's KATIS system (Catalogue of further education and training programs for professionals in education), shows that project results and knowledge can be transferred to higher levels of authority and be reused on a much greater scale.

When it comes to projects within SO 3.1, the potential for capitalisation is seen primarily through the implementation of new projects, as 74% of Lead/Project Partners indicated that they would be willing to submit an application in the future. Additional potential for capitalisation is detected in future commercialisation of certain services that were developed



during the project implementation phase, especially in the health tourism sector. An important aspect of the capitalisation of results within 3.1 would be to support good policymaking by transferring knowledge and results generated by the projects towards the decision makers on different levels of government. Even though in some cases the decision makers have been involved as associated partners, capitalisation of results is hindered by the lack of additional support in terms of adopting strategic documents that were developed as a result of project activities.

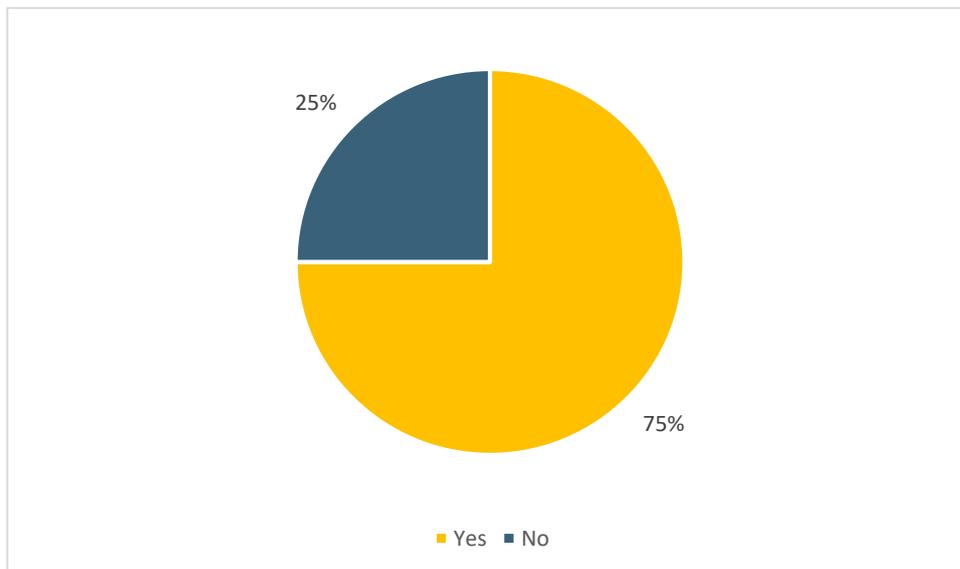
Key findings

- Possibility of capitalisation of project results had an immense impact on project planning and project implementation. Projects within all specific objectives, or thematic fields, took into account the means of capitalisation and its benefits.
- In assessing the potential of capitalisation, it was important to consider the accessibility and transferability of knowledge obtained by the project and its results. After taking a closer look at the survey results and interviews with lead and project partners, our assessment is that there is a substantial potential for capitalisation across all four specific objectives, as evidenced above, with SO 2.1 and 2.2 leading the way and showcasing examples of good practice. Capitalisation potential within SO 3.1 is strongly related to further resolving of legal and administrative barriers (as stressed within EQ9).
- Accessibility and transferability of knowledge and project results was mainly ensured by conducting visibility and dissemination activities, and by building an online data repository, usually on projects' websites. However, in practice, only a handful of projects updates regularly their websites, and project results and outputs are often not available, thus creating a notable obstacle for capitalisation.
- Projects within SO 1.1 ensured accessibility and transferability of developed mechanisms for early warnings on flood risks and forecast models, paving the way for their use in other river basin areas.
- Projects within SO 2.1 expressed strong willingness to apply for new projects in the 2021-2027 implementation period. Accessibility and transferability of knowledge and project results was ensured through creation of stakeholder networks, serving as knowledge hubs for sharing data and information and for fostering new project and capitalisation ideas.
- Lead/Project partners of projects within SO 2.2 are most inclined to pursue new project applications in the 2021-2027 implementation period. Capitalisation potential can be fulfilled in the form of scientific work based on project results, and also by upscaling and reusing project results and outputs on a level higher than the project partnership.
- Projects within SO 3.1 see the capitalisation potential primarily through implementing new projects in the 2021-2027 period. Accessibility and transferability of knowledge and project results could be further strengthened by greater support of local and regional authorities when it comes to adopting and implementing strategic documents developed as part of SO 3.1 projects.

EQ13 How will the project outputs and results be sustained?

The sustainability of project outputs and results is substantial for achieving the highest possible impact of every project, as some results can only be fully achieved in the long term. For that reason, we have analysed plans of beneficiaries for the continuation of project activities beyond the official end date of the project, as well as realisation of those plans, which was examined through interviews with Lead/Project partners. We have also investigated what the challenges for the sustainability of project outputs and results are, and who owns the project results, in order to assess the prospect of benefits continuing over time.

Figure 22 Planned continuation of project activities beyond the duration of the project



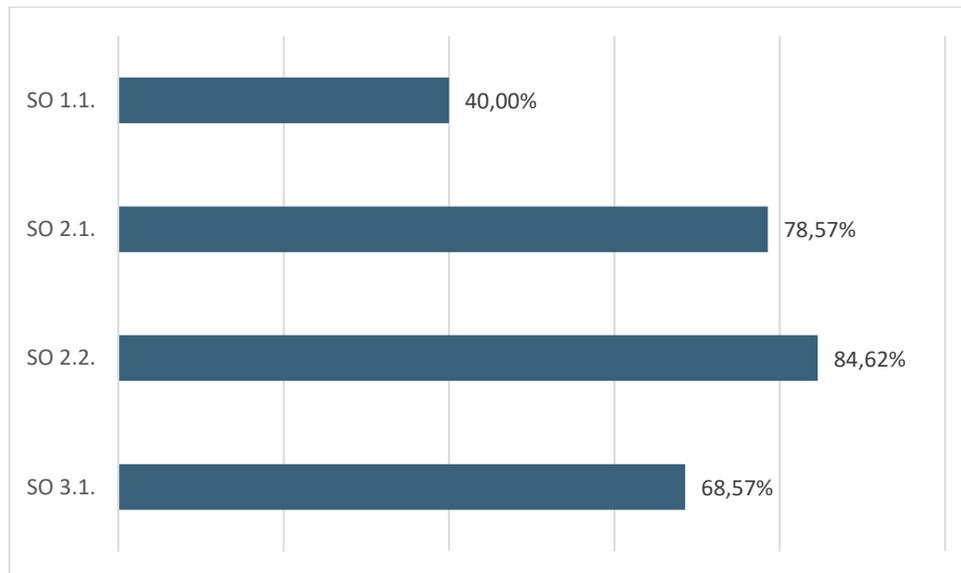
Source: Online survey

According to our survey, exactly three-quarters of Lead/Project Partners (75%) have planned to continue with the project activities beyond the duration of the project, which shows a high level of awareness among the beneficiaries of the significance of sustaining project outputs and results. Some of the arguments for continuing project activities, as stated in the interviews, are continued, reinforced and enlarged partnerships, deliberation and fruition of new project ideas, improvement of products and services developed within the project, and greater sensibility of the general public to issues that are addressed by specific projects funded by the Programme. On the other hand, the main reasons for not continuing project activities are mostly connected to financing issues, staff capacity, or, to a minor extent, disinterest of the project partners. In the short term, the biggest challenge for sustainability of project outputs and results was the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in the Programme area, which halted the continuation of many activities that required travel or physical presence of a larger number of people. According to the survey, the keenest on continuing project activities beyond the duration of the project were Lead/Project partners of projects within SO 2.2 (84,62%), followed by respondents from SO 2.1 (78,57%), SO 3.1 (68,57%), while only a minority of respondents from SO 1.1 (40%) answered positively to continuing project activities. Some have already detected new EU funding opportunities within different programmes (INTERREG,



LIFE) and submitted applications for new projects (e.g. Lead/Project partners of ENRAS, INSPIRACIJA and VEZI NARAVE projects), thus ensuring continuation of project activities and sustainability of results from the previous period.

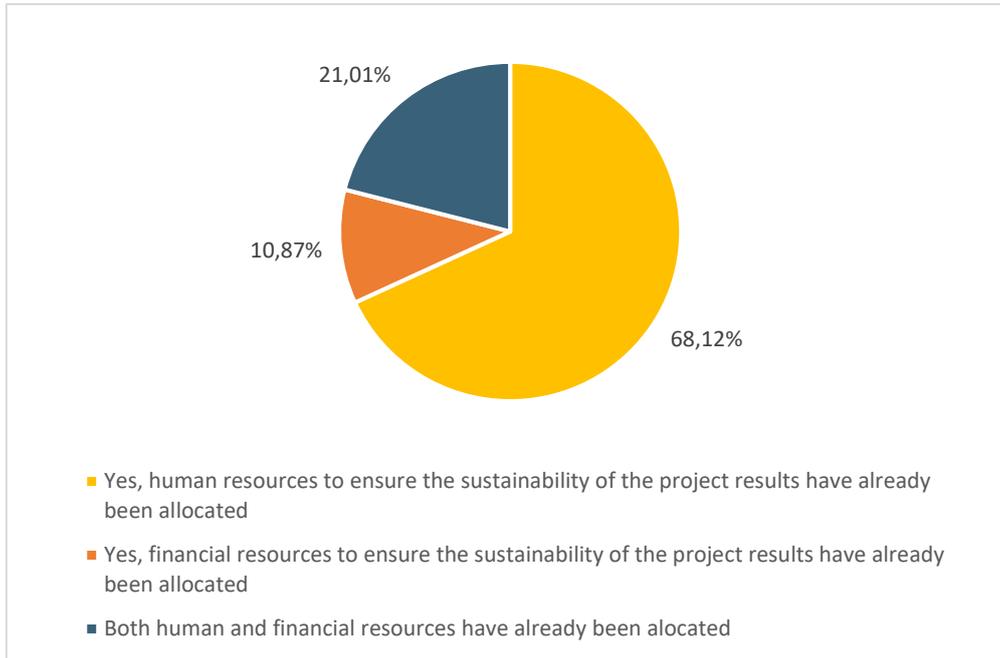
Figure 23 Share of respondents planning to continue project activities beyond the duration of the project



Source: Online survey

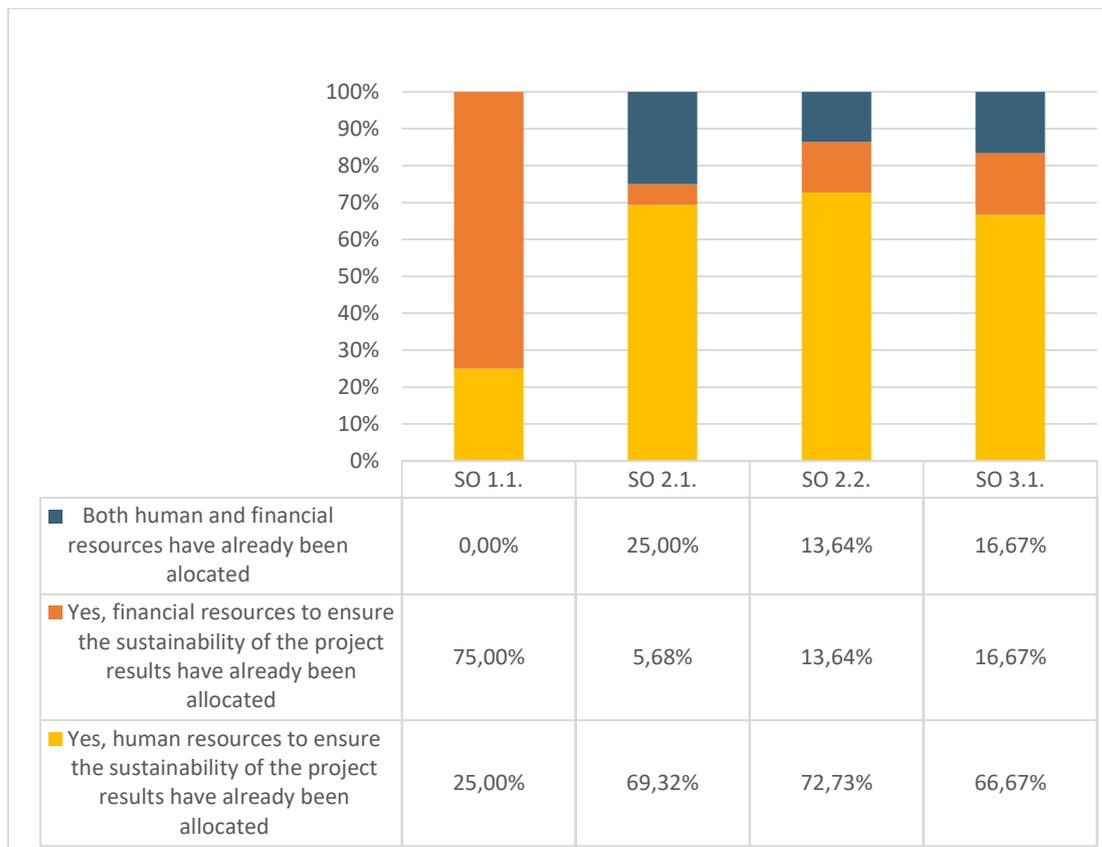
When it comes to a more long-term planning of continuation of project activities, it is crucial to allocate sufficient financial and human resources. The survey showed that 21,01% of those respondents who have planned to continue with project activities beyond the duration of the project, have now secured both financial and human resources necessary to ensure the sustainability of the project results. Looking at the results on the level of each SO, the highest share of respondents stating they have ensured both human and financial resources is from SO 2.1 (25%), followed by respondents from SO 3.1 (16,67%) and SO 2.2 (13,64%). None of the respondents from SO 1.1 claimed they have ensured the needed financial and human resources, which falls in line with their views and answers on capitalisation discussed in the answer to EQ 6. One example of ensured sustainability of project results by securing both financial and human resources is project CrossCare, which resulted in new employments of healthcare workers financed by local communities. However, most respondents indicated that there is a problem with ensuring either financial or human resources, with 68,12% stating that they have secured human resources, but not financial, and 10,87% stating the opposite. Majority of respondents from SO 2.1, 2.2 and 3.1 stated they have ensured human resources to ensure sustainability of project results (69,32%, 72,73% and 66,67%, respectively), while only the majority of respondents from 1.1 stated they have done so when it comes to financial resources (75%). This shows that there is a great deal of financial uncertainty which undermines planning for the continuation of project activities, and ultimately the sustainability of project outputs and results.

Figure 24 Allocation of human and financial resources for continuation of project activities



Source: Online survey

Figure 25 Allocation of human and financial resources for continuation of project activities

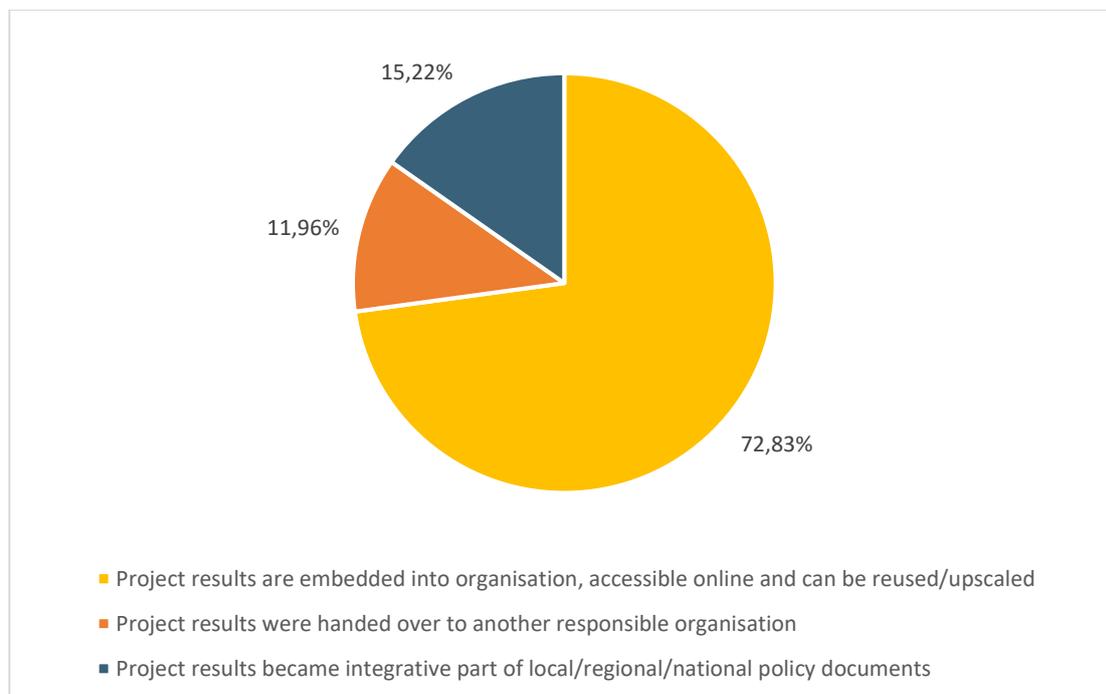


Source: Online survey



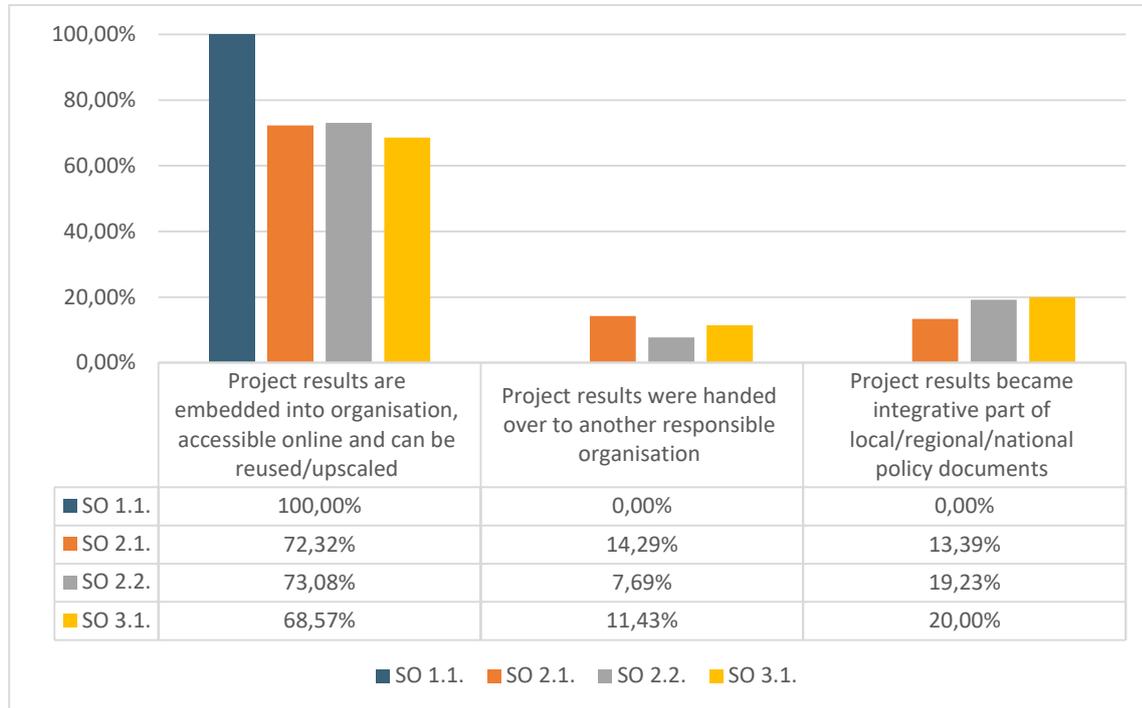
Another important aspect of ensuring the sustainability of project outputs and results is their ownership. The assumption is that this is a less constrained starting position for achieving sustainability if the beneficiaries have incorporated the project results in their organisation and their business processes. According to the survey, 72,83% of Lead/Project Partners responded that the project results are embedded into organisation, accessible online and can be reused/upscaled, which provides solid foundation for their further utilisation and improvement. Looking at these results on the SO level, the majority of respondents from all four SOs indicated that Lead/Project partners own the project results (the highest share recorded for SO 1.1, 100%). A little more than 15% of the respondents stated that their project results became an integral part of local/regional/national policy document (the highest figure is for SO 3.1, 20%), while 11,96% indicated that the project results were handed over to another responsible organisation (most frequently chosen by respondents from SO 2.1, 14,29%). Hereby, it is important to take into consideration the structure of project partnerships, which shows that nearly all projects included local/regional/national public authorities as Lead or one of the Project Partners. It could have been assumed that such structure of project partnerships would ensure even greater integration of strategic documents developed within the projects into local/regional/national policy documents, however the majority of Lead/Project partners experienced difficulties with transferring strategic documents into official policy documents. In addition, some projects resulted with a formal partnership between the project partners, public authorities and other organisations, thus setting up a cooperation network which will facilitate further common use of project outputs and results, and their sustainability. One example of good practice is project CLAUSTR+, which resulted in forming a consortium of 40 partners, which has paved the way for forging future project partnerships.

Figure 26 Ownership of project results



Source: Online survey

Figure 27 Ownership of project results by SO



Source: Online survey

Investments in infrastructure represent an important anchor for sustainability. This is relevant for SO 1.1, SO 2.1 and SO 2.2. The interview participants highlighted that the new infrastructure enables continuation of project results and activities. In one case issues related to maintenance costs of new infrastructure has been raised.

Lastly, all projects have strong capacity building effects, which also positively impacts the sustainability of project outputs and results. Cooperation between different partners enhances professional skills of the project staff. Capacity building is also reflected in the improvement of the institutional capacities of all beneficiaries, which facilitates the application of future projects and their implementation.

On the other hand, certain shortcomings have also been noted. There is an evident gap in sustainability of project results in projects within SO 2.1 when it comes to cross-border promotion of new tourist products and synergy between different projects within this SO (also mentioned in the answer to EQ 5). Sustainability of project results within SO 2.2 could be most jeopardised by lack of financial and human resources, while it could be strengthened by more projects reusing and upscaling the results (as shown in the example of VEZI NARAVE, discussed in the answer to EQ 6). Finally, project results achieved within SO 3.1 are owned the least by Lead/Project partners. Lack of political support, in terms of translating a positive change achieved by projects in a specific project area into policy documents on different levels, represents the biggest obstacle for sustainability of project results within SO 3.1.



Key findings

- Even though most beneficiaries have uncertain perspective when it comes to allocating financial resources for ensuring sustainability of project outputs and results, our assessment is that all other conditions for achieving sustainability have largely been met. More than 20% of Lead/Project partners indicated that they have ensured both financial and human resources needed for ensuring sustainability of project results, with the highest share of such cases recorded within SO 2.1.
- Majority of projects within SO 2.1, SO 2.2 and SO 3.1 have secured the necessary human resources, but not the financial ones, while the opposite applies to projects within SO 1.1.
- Lead/Project partners of projects within SO 2.2 showed the most interest in continuing project activities beyond the duration of their projects, followed by Lead/Project partners of projects within SO 2.1 and SO 3.1. The least interest was recorded from Lead/Project partners of projects within SO 1.1. In addition, some have already submitted applications for new projects, with the aim of continuing project activities and building upon already achieved project results.
- The investments in the infrastructure represent an important anchor for sustainability (relevant for SO 1.1, SO 2.1 and SO 2.2).
- Overall outlook for sustainability of project results and outputs is positive. However, in cases where sustainability is connected with high costs and thus requires further external funding, insufficient financial resources might have a significant adverse effect on sustainability. Similar can be concluded for the lack of political backing which in some cases hampers the continuity of results.

2.3. IMPACT

EQ4 What change was achieved in the programme area in terms of meeting the needs and challenges of the programme area as identified in CP 2014-2020 (considering the scope and characteristics of the programme)?

In order to better distinguish between EQ4 related to the change achieved in terms of meeting the needs and challenges of the Programme area as identified in CP and the EQ9 related to the assessment of the territorial impact, the evaluators elaborated the occurred change (short-term and/or mid-term effects) within EQ4, while EQ9 gives an overview of the territorial distribution of this change as well as insights into expected or potential long-term impact.

Some of the changes are clearly recognizable at the present moment and these are described below. However, in some cases it is not possible to directly attribute the full range of change occurred to the interventions implemented under the CP, as the external factors also play a part in it (an example is the recent adoption of the new spatial plan of the Municipality of Podčetrtek which foresees the construction of the future Tourist-recreational centre Vonarsko



jezero). Also, in some examples, project beneficiaries emphasized in the interviews that they cannot differentiate between the contribution of their regular work and the result of the project.

The change achieved can be described with the level of achievement of the Programme result indicators (see Table 17). In addition, the evaluators were assessing the change based on the project progress reports, survey results, interviews with project beneficiaries, through taking into consideration the data on socio-economic situation of the cross-border region and by any other relevant factors that the team came across during desk research. In doing so, a holistic approach to assessing the change achieved has been applied, which examines economic, social and environmental effects of the interventions (within SO 2.1 also cultural effects have been investigated). The CP has identified following key needs and challenges of the cross-border area, along with the needs and problems identified at the level of each SO (which are presented within the below theory of change models developed per each SO):

- Substantial regional disparities and the rural-urban divide;
- Tackling unemployment and improving conditions for smart growth;
- Maintaining the Programme area's environmental quality, diversity and identity and adapting to climate change;
- Ensuring equal access to social, health, rescue services for populations in the Programme area and making the area safe and attractive to live in.

The change (short-term and mid-term effects) that can be attributed to the Programme is rather moderate and local at this moment, which is expected considering the scope of the Programme, but even more considering the Programme budget.

Evaluators do see a significant potential for further capitalization, multiplication and replication of project results, and thus achieving stronger short-term and long-term impact, but the connection with the present interventions is rather vague and based on a number of assumptions. In order to avoid overclaiming impact, the evaluators are focused on short-term and mid-term impacts which can be attributed to the Programme based on the theory of change models as a tool for showcasing the causal links between activities, outcomes and impact, and which were directly confirmed by the beneficiaries of the Programme. Taking into account all potential external factors that might also be considered as contributors to the (potential) impact exceeds the scope of this evaluation.

For each SO, a theory of change has been developed, showcasing the causal chain based on the CP. The theory of change is linking inputs with activities (measures proposed for achieving the expected results) and the expected results as well as with short term, mid-term and long-term effects (impact).

SO 1.1

Interventions within SO 1.1 can be seen as an important contributor to activating rural areas, as the achieved reduction of the flood risks is a prerequisite for planning economic activities in a certain area. All six of the transboundary river basins which are the subject of the FRISCO projects mainly relate to rural areas.

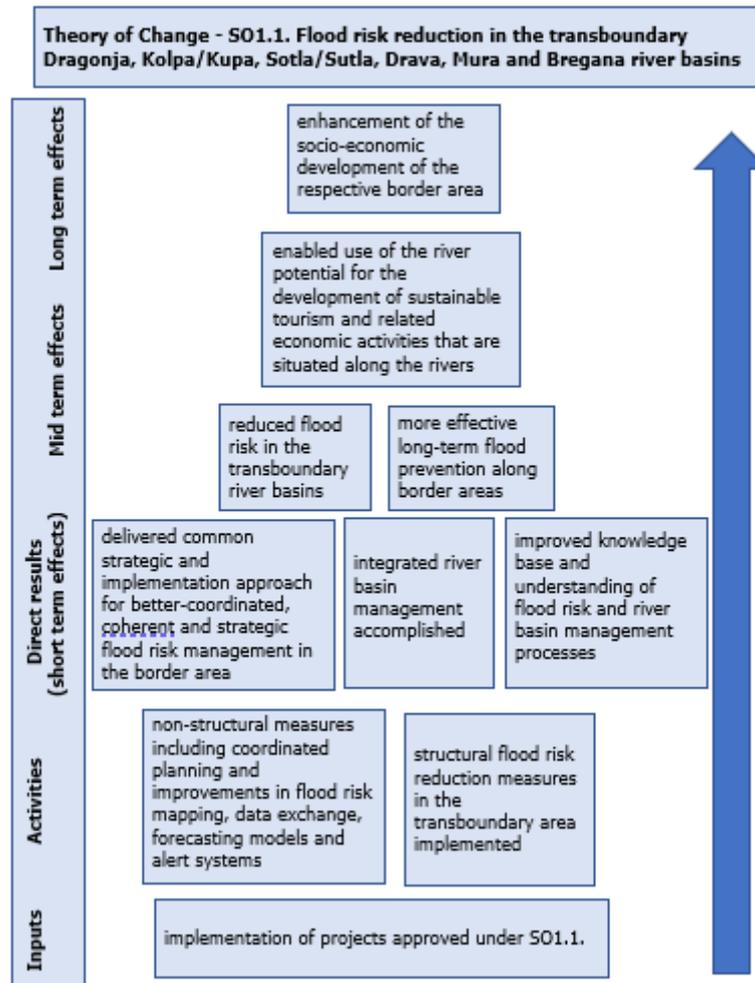


Following is a summary of short term and mid term effects achieved through the implementation of the four strategic FRISCO projects:

- increased knowledge and expertise of involved project partner's experts in the field of transboundary water management and cross-border cooperation research work and very large data exchange (*economic effect*)
- increased professional capacity for the transboundary risk management (*economic effect*)
- reduction of flood risk and flood-related damage in view of affected population, economic activities and cultural and natural heritage in both countries - flood risk reduced related to all 6 transboundary river basins to a minor degree, while in relation to the most critical points of Sotla/Sutla, Mura, Kolpa/Kupa and Drava river basins flood risk has been reduced significantly through the implementation of structural measures (*economic, social and environmental effect*)
- an example of the contribution of the modernized Vonarje dam to strategic planning at the Municipality level related to tourism plans has been observed. Namely, the evaluators found that the Municipality Podčetrtek gave concrete form to constructing the future Tourist-recreational centre Vonarsko jezero through the recent adoption of the municipal spatial plan. Although the idea of the revitalisation of the lake arose before the FRISCO2.1 project was implemented, the modernisation of the Vonarje dam has provided the necessary precondition for the concretization of such plans (*economic effect*)
- increased institutional capacities for public awareness activities related to flood risks (*economic, social and environmental effect*)
- raised awareness of the public on flood risks (*economic, social and environmental effect*)
- adaptation to challenges posed by the present climate change (*economic, social and environmental effect*).

The above list clearly shows that the change achieved corresponds with the theory of change model for SO 1.1, up to the level of the expected mid-term effects.

Picture 2 Theory of change for SO 1.1



Following is a detailed overview of the effects (short- and mid-term) of projects implemented within SO 1.1.

- ***Delivery of a common strategic and implementation approach for better-coordinated, coherent and strategic flood risk management in the border area which contributed to the integrated river basin management and more effective long-term flood prevention along border areas***

The strategic project FRISCO1 was aimed at two key purposes: to improve coordinated flood risk management and reduce flood risks through the implementation of non-structural measures, and to prepare documentation for the optimal structural measures that will be implemented in subsequent strategic project or projects.

The project was implemented by the most relevant national institutions in charge of the project contents – national sectoral agencies in charge of the development of tools, maps and models related to flood risk management and suggesting and implementing structural measures and public authorities in charge of providing the legal basis.



According to desk research results, but also confirmed by the survey results and the interview with Hrvatske vode (Lead Partner of the FRISCO 1 project), a common strategic and implementation approach for better-coordinated, coherent and strategic flood risk management in the border area has been delivered. A set of joint models (improved hydraulic and forecasting models), maps (improved and cross-border harmonised flood hazard maps) and tools (flood risk management database and cross-border harmonised flood risk management study) for each of the six target transboundary river basins (Kupa/Kolpa, Sutla/Sotla, Drava, Mura, Dragonja and Bregana) have been designed and alarm systems have been set up, allowing for more effective flood prevention along border areas. Awareness rising and capacity building activities for different target groups have been implemented and better understanding of flood risk prevention measures and water management processes has been achieved. The knowledge among general public (workshops for locals and elementary schools pupils) in the area of all six transboundary river basins on self-protection measures in case of floods has been raised.

Integrated river basin management has been delivered through joint approach to the elaboration of the aforementioned models, maps and tools, but especially through the cross-border harmonised flood risk management study, identifying optimal long-term structural and green infrastructure measures of flood risk management in six transboundary river basins. For the transboundary river basins where structural measures have been undertaken (the Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla, Drava and Mura), a study documentation has been prepared.

- ***Reduced flood risk in the transboundary river basins due to improved knowledge base and understanding of flood risk and river basin management processes and the implementation of structural and non-structural measures***

Flood risk decrease can be estimated by the assessment of reduced average annual flood damages as a result of implemented flood risk reduction measures (structural or non-structural). Non-structural measures implemented within the FRISCO 1 project (i.e. joint tools, maps and models, building of knowledge and expertise in the field of transboundary water management, cross-border cooperation research work and large data exchange with higher quality of knowledge and skills of involved Project Partner's experts) primarily reduced the vulnerability as they resulted in better forecasting, knowledge, awareness, etc. By the end of 2021, as a consequence of participating in FRISCO project activities 31 persons gained increased professional capacity in transboundary flood risk and river basin management.

A significant decrease of the existing flood risk in four transboundary river basins (Sutla/Sotla, Mura, Drava, Kupa/Kolpa) has been achieved through the implementation of the structural measures within the three FRISCO strategic projects, as these primarily addressed the reduction of the probability and area of flooding. The implemented projects contributed to the reduction of flood risk and flood-related damage in view of affected population, economic activities and cultural and natural heritage in both countries. In relation to the Sotla/Sutla river basin (FRISCO 2.1), a key structural flood risk reduction element has been implemented.



Within FRISCO 2.2 the Sveti Martin embankment on the Mura (Croatian side of the river), and the construction of the high-water embankment near Benica (Slovenian side of the river) have been reconstructed in order to reduce the flood risk in the Mura River Basin. Finally, FRISCO 2.3 dealt with the reconstruction of the Otok Virje – Brezje dike, setting up a channel on Drava opposite of Mala vas village with new upstream embankment on Drava and on Kolpa river basin in Hrvatsko and Kuželj, which significantly reduced the flood risk in the cross-border river basin of the Drava and Kolpa/Kupa river. According to AIR 2021, by the end of 2021 more than 2,230 people³¹ have benefited from flood protection measures as a consequence of implemented non-structural measures (e.g. upgraded remotely monitored system) and structural measures.

Within the online survey beneficiaries were asked to assess the contribution of their project to flood risk reduction in the transboundary river basins. The results show that 80% of beneficiaries assessed the contribution as large, 10% as medium, while 10% considered their project to be the only contributor to the improvement.

- ***Contribution to the enhancement of the socio-economic development of the respective border area including the use of potential for the development of sustainable tourism and related economic activities situated along the rivers***

The contribution of the implemented measures to the enhancement of the socio-economic development of the respective border area can currently be assessed only in respect of the increased quality of life of the local population and partially in respect of the meaning of such interventions for future development plans of the local communities, especially with regard to tourism.

As pointed out during the interview with the LB of three FRISCO projects, the reduction of flood risk through structural measures improved the quality of life in the CB area which is an important socio-economic effect. Following examples were given: in relation to Drava river, the road leading to the border crossing is now protected. Through construction of a protective wall in Kuželj another road connection between Slovenia and Croatia is now secured in case of Kupa/Kopa flooding. Such effects might have a wider impact as well, but are especially important for locals who practically transit all the time.

In respect of the local development plans, it seems that the effects of the implemented measures are at present more visible in Slovenia. Based on the interview with Hrvatske vode, on the Slovenian side, a database called Water Atlas, representing the first publicly released web browser which contains a graphic presentation of the updated content of the water cadastre and water rights, is being filled with the results of realized projects. Water Atlas is being consulted by local governments in case of potential investments in a certain area in order to determine whether a risk of flood exists in a specific area. On the Croatian side, flood hazard maps are publicly available as well on the Hrvatske vode website, but local governments seem not to be aware

³¹ Data as per progress report submitted by the FRISCO 2.1 beneficiary.



of the need (or benefit) to consult them systematically, i.e. for the purpose of strategic planning (except for in the process of obtaining certain permits).

Desk research shows an example of the contribution of the implemented structural flood risk reduction measures to the development of sustainable tourism in Slovenia. The evaluators found that the Municipality Podčetrtek gave concrete form to constructing the future Tourist-recreational centre Vonarsko jezero through the recent adoption of the municipal spatial plan. Although the idea of the revitalisation of the lake arose before the FRISCO 2.1 project was implemented, the modernisation of the Vonarje dam has provided the precondition for development opportunities for nearby municipalities (e.g. the municipality of Rogaška Slatina and the municipality of Podčetrtek, as they are most directly affected by the future revitalisation of the Vonarje lake). As the Vonarje Dam is placed in the rural border region, the FRISCO 2.1 project results are thus expected to contribute to the enhancement of the socio-economic development of rural settlements alongside the Sutla river.

- ***Contribution of the Programme to the implementation of the Flood Risk Directive and national Flood Risk Management Plans at the local level within the transboundary river basins between Slovenia and Croatia and better coordination of updated national Flood Risk Management Plans due in 2022***

The Floods Directive 2007/60/EC (FD) aimed at achieving integrated management of floods in Europe entered into force on 26 November 2007. The main goal is to reduce and manage the risks that floods pose to human health, environment, cultural heritage, and economic activities.

Strategic project FRISCO 1 contributed to cross-border harmonised implementation of the FD on the assessment and management of flood risks in six river basins. The Project's objectives and results have been achieved through cross-border cooperation – in line with the FD on the assessment and management of flood risks, flood risk management planning has been done following the river basin approach, i.e. entire basins have been analysed, flood hazard maps and flood risk maps at the level of river basin districts have been designed and optimal flood risk management measures have been defined and implemented³² (within the FRISCO 2.1, FRISCO 2.2 and FRISCO 2.3 projects).

The implementation of projects has advanced bilateral cooperation in the field of water management through the Permanent Bilateral Slovenia-Croatia Commission for Water Management and its sub-commissions.

FRISCO 1 has contributed to Flood Risk Management Plans at the local level in Slovenia and Croatia by updating, improving and cross-border harmonising of flood hazard maps as well as updating, improving and cross-border harmonising of flood risk maps. These results have significantly advanced the flood risk management at transboundary level.

In respect to the preparation of the updated national Flood Risk Management Plans, for the Slovenia-Croatia cross-border area flood hazard maps and flood risk maps developed within the FRISCO 1 project can be used by the competent national agencies. Furthermore, flood risk

³² With the exception of structural measures identified within FRISCO 1 which relate to the rivers Dragonja and Bregana which have not been addressed within this CP.



management measures that have been defined for this area can be transmitted into national plans.

SO 2.1

The main change achieved within SO 2.1 is the increased potential of natural and cultural heritage of the Programme area for sustainable economic development and economic diversification of the cross-border region with regards to sustainable tourism.

As the projects within this SO created significant economic, social, environmental and cultural effects, and considering that the potential for capitalization has been assessed as high within this SO, interventions under SO 2.1 could have significant positive impact on activating the potential of less developed regions, under the assumption that the results are at least sustained or further upgraded. Such an assessment has been confirmed also by the majority of the interviewed representatives of Programme bodies.

As the majority of interventions were implemented mainly in the rural areas, following change occurred related to lagging behind areas (but also relevant for urban settlements of cities and city municipalities) that directly arose from the implementation of the projects and refer to the whole Programme area:

- Fragmented tourist offer has been connected which contributed to the quality of tourism offer based on natural and cultural heritage (*economic effect*);
- Sustainable heritage-based tourism offer of the project area has been diversified (e.g. new tourism products related to industrial heritage, culinary heritage, maritime heritage etc.) (*economic and cultural effect*);
- Some of the important natural and cultural heritage sites on both sides of the border have been preserved (*cultural and environmental effect*);
- Newly developed tourism products have been promoted, which, along with the visibility activities has contributed to a better recognizability of the new tourist offer (judged by the achieved number of visits³³) (*economic and cultural effect*);
- Heritage interpretation mostly based on modern technologies brought the value of heritage closer to the wider population, especially the young population (*cultural and economic effect*);
- Contribution to maintaining the identity of the CP (through developed tourism products based on the connection of identity and natural/cultural heritage) and strengthening social cohesion within local communities (*social effect*);
- Raised institutional capacities and improved intersectoral and intrasectoral cooperation of stakeholders related to heritage based tourism, which in some cases led to the expansion of cooperation on other areas or to the joint development of new project proposals (*economic effect*);

³³ As previously noted, the increase in the number of visitors is partially an estimation provided by the Tourist offices in the project area and does not reflect the actual number of visitors. Such an approach has been approved by the JS due to the COVID pandemic.



- Knowledge and models of designing and presenting heritage-based tourism offer developed and available for replication (*economic and cultural effect*);
- Increased knowledge and awareness of local tourism stakeholders (local authorities, tourist offices, NGOs) and local tourism providers (tourism businesses such as catering and accommodation providers, crafts, tourist guides etc.) on the opportunities of heritage as a driver of sustainable tourism (*economic effect*);
- Increased involvement of local tourist providers in the tourism offer of the cross-border area (*economic and social effect*);
- Raised awareness and knowledge among target groups about sustainable management of natural and cultural heritage and raised possibilities of creating green jobs with the prevention of depopulation in the long run (*economic and social effect*);
- Positive impact (increase in income) on the local communities considering that, within the implemented projects mostly local contractors were hired for works contracts (*economic and social effect*)³⁴.

The increased number of visits to cultural or natural heritage sites (836,061 visits in total³⁵) most likely did arise from the implementation of the interventions within the Programme to a large extent. This assumption is based also on the beneficiaries' perception. However, it is not possible to attribute the full range of this effect to the Programme (except in the cases of new infrastructure developed within the projects), as the motivation of visitors has not been explored³⁶. As previously explained within EQ3, the total number of visits includes also „virtual visits“. It is questionable whether there would have been such an increase in the number of “physical” visits in non-pandemic circumstances.

No negative effects could be identified so far. This could be explained by the nature of tourism that the CP is dealing with, as the sustainable tourism *takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities*³⁷.

The below theory of change model shows the expected short, medium-term and long-term effects of the projects implemented within SO 2.1.

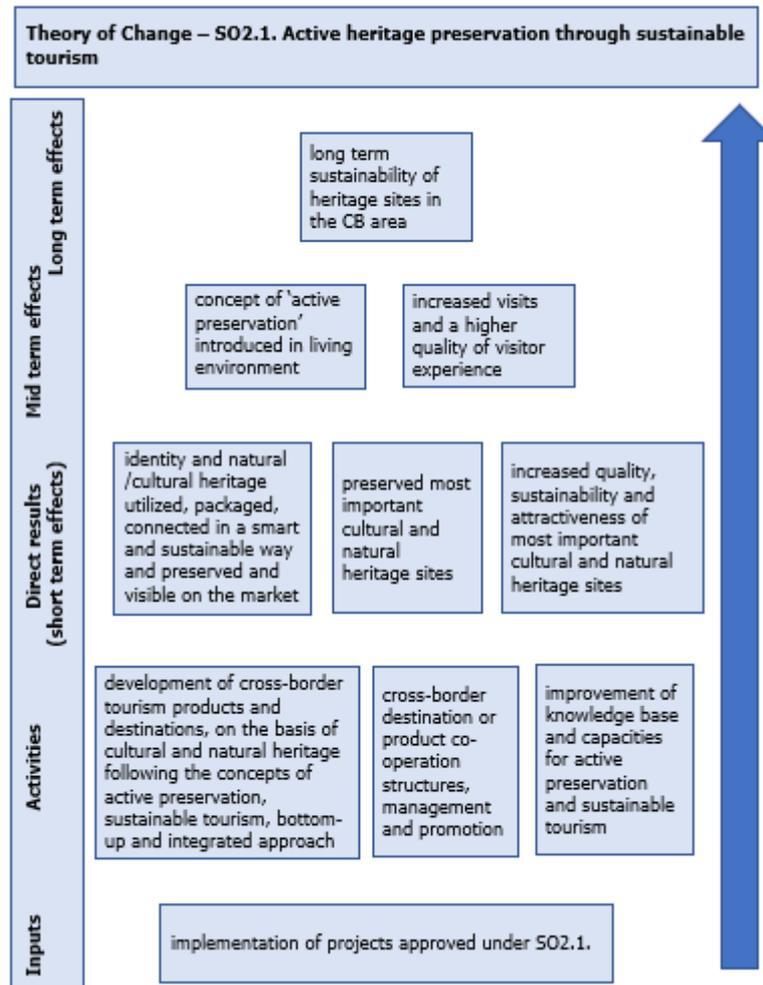
³⁴ This effect has been identified within interviews. It could be described as added value as well.

³⁵ By the end of 2021, according to AIR 2021.

³⁶ This is a good example of how the „Impact Assessment Framework“ developed prior to the implementation of Programme could have helped in the assessment of the project and Programme effects.

³⁷ A definition of sustainable tourism by the [UN Environment Program](#) and [UN World Tourism Organization](#)

Picture 3 Theory of change for SO 2.1



The evaluation team concluded that the change achieved so far within 2.1 correlates with the identified expected impact. However, the achievement of long-term effects is difficult to assess at the present moment due to consequences of COVID pandemic which in the majority of cases led to (according to some interviewees – only temporary) reduction or postponement of planned post-project activities.

Furthermore, it has to be highlighted that the results and change achieved at present rather show effects on the local level than on the cross-border level. This is due to the fact that in most cases the newly developed tourism offer is being managed, promoted and further developed locally and not cross-border. There are several reasons for this as emphasised by the project beneficiaries during interviews: partners in charge of management and promotion are mostly tourism offices acting as local/regional destination management organisations established and financed by the local/regional governments. In turn, the tourism offices are expected to work on the promotion of the local (County/region related) tourism offer. Therefore, at this moment, in most cases there is no evidence that the new tourism products will truly integrate the cross-border area and its offer. As emphasised by the beneficiaries,



further funding of cross-border promotion activities would contribute to resolve this issue. Potentially stronger connections between tourism offer on the both sides could be supported with the Croatian Schengen entry, as the abolition of border checks will probably lead to stronger movement of people from the cross-border area for tourist purposes.

A detailed overview of the effects (short- and mid-term) of projects implemented within SO 2.1 is presented below.

- ***Contribution of the programme to preservation of its most important cultural and natural heritage sites and increasing their quality, sustainability and attractiveness***

Desk research shows that 61³⁸ small scale investments in visitor infrastructure and preservation of registered natural and cultural heritage in the Republic of Croatia and Republic of Slovenia have been undertaken. The Programme contributed to the preservation of:

- archaeological sites (Prebujanje/Buđenje, CLAUSTRA+, Misterion),
- carst environment (KRASn'KRŠ and Misterion),
- ethnological/mythological heritage (DETOX, Živa coprnija/Živa štrigarija, MITSKI PARK),
- natural and cultural heritage in connection with green tourist offer of the hinterland (ZELENO ŽELIMO),
- maritime heritage (Mala barka2),
- (pre)history heritage (PREHISTORY ADVENTURE, LIVING CASTLES, KAŠTELIR),
- industrial heritage (INSPIRACIJA, MINETOOURS)
- culinary heritage, customs and traditional crafts (ECool-Tour, Uživam tradicijo),
- cultural heritage and winemaking tradition (In cultura veritas)
- cultural heritage of small towns (kulTura)
- natural and cultural heritage (ENJOYHERITAGE, Riviera4Seasons2, RIDE & BIKE)
- natural heritage (NATURE&WILDLIFE).

According to survey results, 77% of respondents state that their project has contributed to the preservation of the most important cultural and natural heritage sites. The same percentage of respondents (77%) state that their project has increased the quality, sustainability and attractiveness of the most important cultural and natural heritage sites.

The contribution to the preservation of the most important cultural and natural heritage sites in the CB area has been emphasised during the interviews as well. The guiding principles for the implementation of the interventions involved authenticity, minimal intervention, reversibility and sustainability. Interventions were designed to preserve the value of cultural and natural heritage and to be compliant with the conditions set by competent authorities for the protection of natural and cultural heritage.

³⁸ By the end of 2021, according to AIR 2021; whereas the forecast provided by the beneficiaries amounts 73 small scale investments.



Related to the contribution of the Programme to increase of quality, sustainability and attractiveness of most important cultural and natural heritage in the cross-border area, 74% of survey participants believe their projects have achieved this result. Several interview participants have highlighted the above expected interest for the new tourism product.

- ***Involvement of cultural and creative industries (SMEs acting as project partners) in the development of cultural heritage-based tourism products***

The involvement of SMEs as Project Partners within the Programme can be assessed as moderate – eight³⁹ SMEs participated in seven projects in the role of project partners. The analysis of project applications and project reports led to the conclusion that the main contribution of SMEs as Project Partners was the following:

- the projects Uživam tradicijo and Misterion benefitted from the knowledge and competencies of the involved SME in the production of innovative, high-quality tourist products with a local note;
- the projects Uživam tradicijo and Misterion benefitted from the promotion and marketing expertise of the involved SME in domestic and foreign markets;
- the project KRASn'KRŠ benefitted from experience of the involved SME in the innovative interpretation of natural and cultural heritage and storytelling, as important tools for understanding local, national, regional and European identities. Another SME has been involved as a Project Partner as the SME is managing the Botanical Garden within which an interpretation centre of karst vegetation has been established;
- within the project INSPIRACIJA the involved SMEs⁴⁰ were in charge of interpretation and presentation of cultural and natural heritage as well as involvement and connecting of different local stakeholders in the fields of entrepreneurship, culture and tourism;
- SME involved in the project MITSKI PARK was in charge of raising awareness of local stakeholders in relation to their heritage and its potential, but also fostering perception of the heritage as part of their own identity;
- The project NATURE&WILDIFE involved SMEs⁴¹ with expertise in the development of tourist products and event organisation;
- The project LIVING CASTLES involved SME with expertise in coordination and selling of tourist products.

Survey results suggest high importance of involving cultural and creative industries (as project partners, other stakeholders that were consulted or similar) in the development of cultural heritage-based tourism products. 62% of respondents stated that the cultural and creative industries) have been involved in the development of cultural heritage-based tourism to a high or extremely high level, and another 34% state the involvement level has been moderate. When asked to assess their contribution to developing cultural heritage-based tourism

³⁹ Three SMEs have been involved in more than one project.

⁴⁰ Altogether 4 SMEs have been involved as project partners due to the fact that two SMEs have stepped out of the partnership and have been replaced with two new SMEs who took over their tasks and responsibilities.

⁴¹ SMEs as a project partner has been involved during the project duration in order to replace another project partner who stepped out of the partnership.



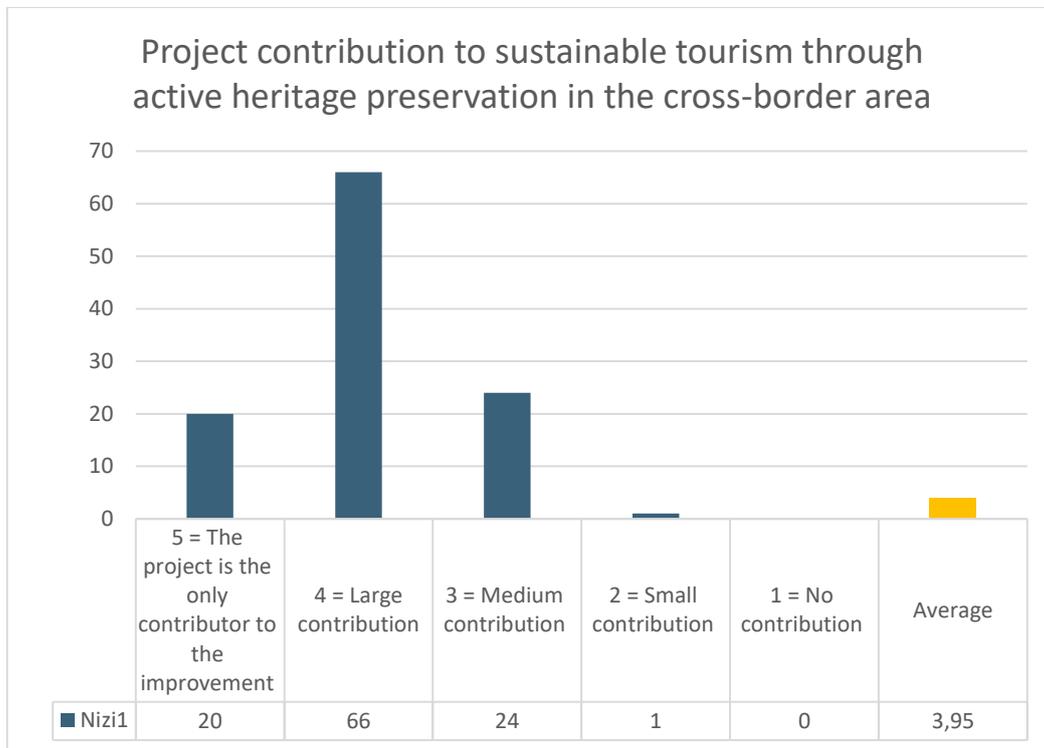
products, the majority of respondents (72%) considered the contribution as large or even crucial.

It is important to emphasize that during the interviews several beneficiaries have called for more involvement of entrepreneurs in project implementation in order to take over some more business-related aspects of the projects. In one of the interviews the extreme importance and added value of the involved SME has been highlighted (KRASn'KRŠ). The conditions under which SMEs could participate in the Programme implementation were described as limitative and not motivating for SMEs (in respect of large delays in payments which in three cases led to abandonment of project partnership) and were further connected with limited impact of the implemented projects. On the other hand, some of the representatives of Programme bodies seem to be sceptical in relation to the involvement of SMEs as project partners. One of the Programme bodies representatives stated that they see them more as service providers, due to their lack of capacity to work in the cooperation programmes and the fact that their services delivered within the project are being reimbursed after a significant period of time. Lack of sustainable impact in case of SMEs as project partner was also mentioned as an argument against stronger involvement of SMEs as project partners.

- ***Contribution of the programme to the increase of sustainable tourism offer that derives from active preservation and sustainable use of resources.***

As per survey results, 78% of respondents state that their project has increased sustainable tourism offer that derives from active preservation and sustainable use of resources, whereas desk research shows that all implemented projects have contributed to active preservation and sustainable use of resources. When asked to assess the range of their project's contribution to sustainable tourism in the cross-border area through active heritage preservation, majority of respondents (almost 60% or 66 project partners) declared the contribution was large.

Figure 28 Project contribution to sustainable tourism through active heritage preservation in the cross-border area



Source: On-line survey

Within 22 implemented projects, 57⁴² new or improved heritage based cross-border sustainable tourism products in the form of unique thematic tours, packages, itineraries, routes or tourism offer by connecting natural and cultural resources with crafts and arts, local suppliers, SMEs and tourism operators have been developed, as opposed to the CP target value for 2023 which amounted 20. A number of interpretation centres and info centres has been established. Bearing in mind the total Programme allocation for the respective PA, it can be concluded that the Programme contributed significantly to the increase of tourism offer based on heritage and with respect to active preservation and sustainable use of resources.

Several interviewees (all of them representatives of local authorities) declared that the project has paved the way for the further development of sustainable tourism offer in their area (e.g. PREHISTORY ADVENTURES, MINE TOURS) through setting up the necessary infrastructure, which is extremely important for the future development of the local communities. Thus, these projects were recognised as most important projects on the level of local communities on Croatian side, creating potential also for the international recognizability of the targeted natural and cultural heritage sites.

Furthermore, some of the interviewees pointed out that the implemented projects have contributed to the local economy, i.e. local tourism providers have increased sales, but as no records were kept on the reasons for such results, the effects cannot be accounted solely to the projects, but are considered to be a consequence of synergetic effects of different factors.

⁴² By the end of 2021, AIR.



The project RIDE&BIKE empowered one bike enthusiast to start his own business and is now running a tourist agency which among other organises bike tours. The perception of the interviewee was that more and more cyclotourists are coming to the area, but there is no statistics or any kind of measurement which could clearly show the increase in numbers.

- ***Heritage and traditions as inspiration for innovation. Increased awareness and capacity of local SMEs and populations regarding the challenges offered by heritage as a consequence of capacity building activities***

93% of respondents state that cultural and natural heritage and traditions (customs, indigenous products, storytelling, traditional crafts etc.) inspired them for innovation to a large extent. Innovation was often perceived in the technical sense – the respondents explain it as the digitalization of the offer of the project area (web platforms for the presentation of the offer, mobile applications, 3D holograms, VR, etc.). Furthermore, innovation was explained through innovative approach to heritage interpretation and/or presentation (e.g. *in situ* presentation of the “visible” heritage through interpretation signs coupled with *in situ* presentation of the “invisible” heritage – underground mosaics – through mobile application within the project Uživam tradicijo) or simply through the effort to develop heritage tourism, i.e. popularisation of heritage, as so far heritage has often been perceived as a burden and not a potential, as pointed out in one of the interviews.

According to survey results, 53% of respondents state that better awareness and capacity of local SMEs and populations regarding the challenges offered by heritage has been achieved. Some of the projects directly addressed better recognition of the potential that heritage can bring among local population (i.e. ENJOYHERITAGE, CLAUSTRAP+) as the consequence of capacity building activities, but some beneficiaries also reported better recognisability of heritage potential among local population simply based on the visibility of the activities implemented (i.e. Prebujanje/Buđenje). Other projects involved education and integration of tourism stakeholders in a cross-border destination (i.e. ENJOYHERITAGE, Živa coprnija/Živa štrigarija, Riviera4Seasons2, MITSKI PARK, NATURE&WILDLIFE etc.) and encouraged local producers to appear on the market and unite through a common product.

A good example of increased interest and awareness of the potential of heritage is the project INSPIRACIJA. As declared during the interview, through symposia and workshops for different target groups the project significantly raised awareness that industrial heritage is a potential for tourist product development and for the development of a certain tourist destination. At the same time, several local stakeholders became involved in this story, which they will now continue and maintain.

- ***Contribution of the programme to the utilisation, creation of joint tourism products, connecting of identity and natural/cultural heritage in a smart and sustainable way, contribution to the valorisation and increased visibility on the market***



73% of respondents state that their project has contributed to the utilisation, creation of joint tourism products, connecting of identity and natural/cultural heritage in a smart and sustainable way. As an example of connecting identity with natural/cultural heritage, the project Prebujanje/Buđenje can be emphasized. In this project, beneficiaries managed to revive the forgotten memory of the heritage, which consequently led to returning of identity to the local community.

Increased valorisation and visibility on the market as a result of the implemented project has been confirmed by 65% of respondents. An interesting example of the increased visibility is the project Inspiracija dealing with industrial heritage, as the project partners became members of the ERIH (European Route of Industrial Heritage), the tourism information network of the most important industrial heritage in Europe.

The issue of increased visibility on the market has suffered most from the COVID pandemic, as the beneficiaries were not able to implement promotion activities as planned, but often online and on a smaller scale (e.g. MITSKI PARK, KAŠTELIR), whereas the promotion is one of the most important elements for the success of a tourist product.

The newly developed tourism products are in most cases available via digital platforms which were predominantly used as the main tool for marketing and promotion within the projects. In some cases, regional tourist offices are responsible for sustainable management, valorisation and promotion of existing and new cultural and tourist facilities throughout the regions. In other cases, special consortia have been set up during project implementation which are now in charge of marketing the tourist products in line with the principles of sustainable development (i.e. CLAUSTRA consortium). Interpretation centres also serve as a tool for cross-border promotion of the newly developed tourist offer.

A good example of a sustainable cross-border product is Explore the Wondernature developed within the NATURE&WILDLIFE project, aimed at exploring and getting to know Gorski Kotar in Croatia and Zeleni kras in Slovenia. The product consists of 16 one-day itineraries and connects ornithology, speleology, forestry, fishing, hiking, visiting cultural heritage sites, but also nurturing and preserving old crafts and customs. Within the project, tourist guides (also within project partners' institutions) and heritage interpreters have been educated and are still involved in this activity after project completion. An important added value is that the product involves around 30 local experience tourism and hospitality providers.

- ***Contribution to a better connection between advanced tourist destinations and the hinterland, and better connection of existing tourism products with the newly developed heritage-based tourism products***

The survey results show that 66% of respondents state that their project has contributed to a better connection of existing tourism products with the newly developed heritage-based tourism products. The contribution to a better connection between advanced tourist destinations and the hinterland was confirmed by 50% of respondents, meaning that there is plenty of room for improvement in terms of strengthening the connection between existing



and new tourism offer. Desk research shows that the majority of projects claims to establish synergies with other EU projects in the same or surrounding area in terms of upgrading the results of previous projects, using specific methodologies or similar.

During one of the interviews (KRASn'KRŠ) it was pointed out that the involvement of peripheral areas suffers from the lack of (especially young) people due to strong depopulation, which seriously hinders any initiative. Another limitation is the lack of accommodation in such areas. KRASn'KRŠ, Riviera4seasons2, Živa coprnija/Živa štrigarija and ZELENO ŽELIMO can be pointed out as good practice examples of connecting advanced tourist destinations with the hinterland. The project Prebujanje/Buđenje is a good example of integrating the new tourism product in the existing tourist offer (Ecomuseum Međimurje malo) which is recognized at the national level.

- ***Contribution of the programme to expanding the tourism season, increased visits and higher quality of visitor experience***

Coastal destinations have the most pronounced seasonal concentration of tourist activities. Therefore, expanding the tourism season through newly developed tourist offer based on cultural heritage is especially relevant for coastal regions – i.e. de-seasoning of the destination was one of the main goals of the Riviera4seasons2 project. The heritage and tradition of rural areas were the inspiration for the creation of a cross-border tourist product of the two riviera, which connects tourist attractions with protected areas and small tourism providers in rural areas.

Impact on extending the main season is also expected as a consequence of the new tourism offer developed through MITSKI PARK project, which is especially relevant for the coastal part of the project area (municipality of Moščenicka Draga).

The Programme contribution to increased visits can be measured through the result indicator 6cRI Visitors to cultural and natural heritage sites in the Programme area. With the cumulative value of 5,919,310 visits in 2018, the Programme result indicator has not only been achieved, but also surpassed. Some of the projects (e.g. CLAUSTRAP+) reported that the interest for the newly developed tourist destination exceeded the expectations of the project team.

Some of the interviewees stated that the project did have positive effect on expanding the tourism season in terms of additional offer, and thus attracting visitors, but only in relation to local visits, without broader impact. The increased number of visits beyond the summer tourist season is assumed to be partially influenced also by the project activities due to strong media exposure of the project (e.g. MINE TOURS).

Survey results show that 54% of respondents believe the project they implemented has contributed to expanding the tourism season, increased visits and higher quality of visitor experience. Such a result is most probably a consequence of the COVID pandemic, as the majority of interviewees stressed its influence on the planned follow-up activities and sustainability of the projects. Also, as *tourism* is one of the *sectors* most affected by the Covid-19 *pandemic*, some of the interviewees stated the tour operators have been focused on their survival rather than showing interest for new products and longer-term planning.



- ***Contribution to bottom-up and integrated approach that links different sectors, people and stakeholders***

As per the analysis of application forms and progress reports, most of the projects have achieved a bottom-up approach by involving local partners in the projects and through consultations with other relevant local stakeholders, i.e. service providers, tourism workers, NGOs etc. in order to develop solutions in cooperation with those who will ultimately implement them.

A good example of involving local stakeholders is the project ECool-Tour where each of the official Project Partners had a network of unofficial stakeholders in its local community and involved them in the implementation of activities. An interesting example of a bottom-up initiative has been observed within the Prebujanje/Buđenje, where the local priest was very enthusiastic about the project and got very involved in the project implementation. His involvement contributed significantly to the acceptance and feeling of ownership of the project results among the local community. The local mayor supported the project strongly and involved the local school as well.

In the case of project Uživam tradicijo in cooperation with education institutions involved as project partners, heritage related contents became part of the regular formal education.

The majority of projects was implemented with the involvement of local and/or regional governments, NGOs, sectoral agencies, SMEs. Half of the implemented projects involved higher education institutions. Interdisciplinary approach was in place in the majority of projects (e.g. Claustra+, Riviera4Seasons2, KRASn'KRŠ, ZELENO ŽELIMO, Mala barka 2, Živa coprnija, Prebujanje, KAŠTELIR, Prehistory Adventure, NATURE&WILDLIFE, MITSKI PARK etc.). Product and territorial approach were mostly overlapping as the projects were developing joint, cross-border tourism products. The majority of projects resulted in signing agreements/contracts or creating networks devoted to further joint development and/or promotion of heritage based sustainable tourism products.

The survey results do not fully correspond to the above conclusions based on desk research and interviews. When asked whether their project contributed to the development of a bottom-up and integrated approach that links different sectors, people and stakeholders in sustainable tourism development, only 39% of respondents confirmed this. Such a finding might suggest an issue with the wording of this question or indicate different understanding of this question. On the other hand, some of the beneficiaries have highlighted that the projects have strengthened not only the relationships between official project partners, but also the connections with associated partners and other relevant local stakeholders (on both sides of the border).

SO 2.2

The main change achieved within SO 2.2 is the increased potential of nature protected areas of the Programme area for sustainable use of the cross-border region with regards to sustainable tourism. Four projects have been fully implemented within SO 2.2.



Following is an overview of change that occurred as a consequence of the implemented projects:

- Improved habitat protection and conservation status of species listed below contributing (in the longer run) to preservation of biodiversity and ecosystem stability in the cross-border area:
 - *Serratula lycopifolia*, *Emberiza hortulana*, Tommasini's merinka, Griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*) through the implementation of demonstration measures⁴³ between Movraž and Rakitovc, Žbevnica, Osp, NP Učka, Hrastovlje, Rijeka (Obalno-kraška region, Istarska, Primorsko-goranska County) (*environmental effect*);
 - Continental tern through the implementation of 5 demonstration measures in Rakitje, Ormož, Ptuj, Hrušćica (Podravska region and Zagrebačka County) (*environmental effect*);
 - wolf, lynx and bear in the cross-border Natura 2000 area through the implementation of demonstration measures on the area of Notranjski trikotnik, Gorski kotar, Northern Lika, Javnornik, Snežnik (Primorsko-notranjska region and Primorsko-goranska County) (*environmental effect*);
 - otter, beetles, butterflies, amphibians through implemented demonstration measures on the rivers Sutla and Kupa, Risnjak National Park, Radensko Polje Nature Park and in the canyon of the river Kamačnik (Primorsko-goranska, Krapinsko-zagorska County, Osrednjeslovenska, Savinjska region) (*environmental effect*);
- Common coordinated approaches, methods, tools and solutions in planning, monitoring and management of Natura 2000 habitat developed and implemented (*environmental effect*);
- Increased acceptance of terns among target groups and recognition of terns as part of their environment but also tourist offer (Istarska, Primorsko-goranska County, Obalno-kraška region) (*environmental and economic effect*);
- Reduced pressure on habitats by the introduced visitor channeling and neutralization of recreational impact on protected Natura 2000 habitats and karst edge species (Istarska, Primorsko-goranska County, Obalno-kraška region) (*environmental effect*);
- Surface of Natura 2000 area extended to Rakitje (152,55 ha) (*environmental effect*);
- Improved co-existence of large carnivores and residents as a consequence of effective cross-border management of wolf, lynx and bear population, implemented measures for the protection of human property and raised awareness of residents on ecosystem services (*environmental and social effect*);
- Strengthened institutional cooperation and improved knowledge base for large carnivores management in the cross-border area (Primorsko-notranjska and Primorsko-goranska County) (*environmental effect*);

⁴³ Demonstration measures are listed within EQ1 – main project deliverables.



- Increased knowledge of general and expert public on the importance and modalities of large carnivores protection (Primorsko-notranjska and Primorsko-goranska County) (*environmental and social effect*);
- Teachers educated through the project continue to use the knowledge and created material in their further work; nature protection days introduced in schools, which together with other similar events, continue raising awareness of children in relation to nature protection (Primorsko-notranjska and Primorsko-goranska County) (*environmental and social effect*);
- Changed perception of farmers and landowners towards NATURA 2000 which is no longer considered as disadvantage (Primorsko-notranjska and Primorsko-goranska County) (*environmental and social effect*);
- Improved access to information, transfer of information and knowledge related to nature protection and protection of biodiversity for different target groups (younger and older visitors, families, retirees) through established nature protection centres (Savinjska, Osrednjeslovenska region, Primorsko-goranska, Krapinsko-zagorska) (*environmental and social effect*);
- Data collected through preliminary research activities are being monitored, complemented and updated further on through other projects or by professional institutions responsible for individual areas, ensuring constant interaction and complementarity of stakeholders (*environmental effect*);
- Increased knowledge on sustainable methods of natural resource management (e.g. agricultural advisors, farmers and landowners gained specific knowledge related to mowing operations in order to conserve biodiversity) (Primorsko-goranska, Krapinsko-zagorska, Osrednjeslovenska, Savinjska region) (*environmental and social effect*);
- Raised awareness of direct connection with the nature and ecosystem among the public and thus the importance of nature protection (*environmental and social effect*).

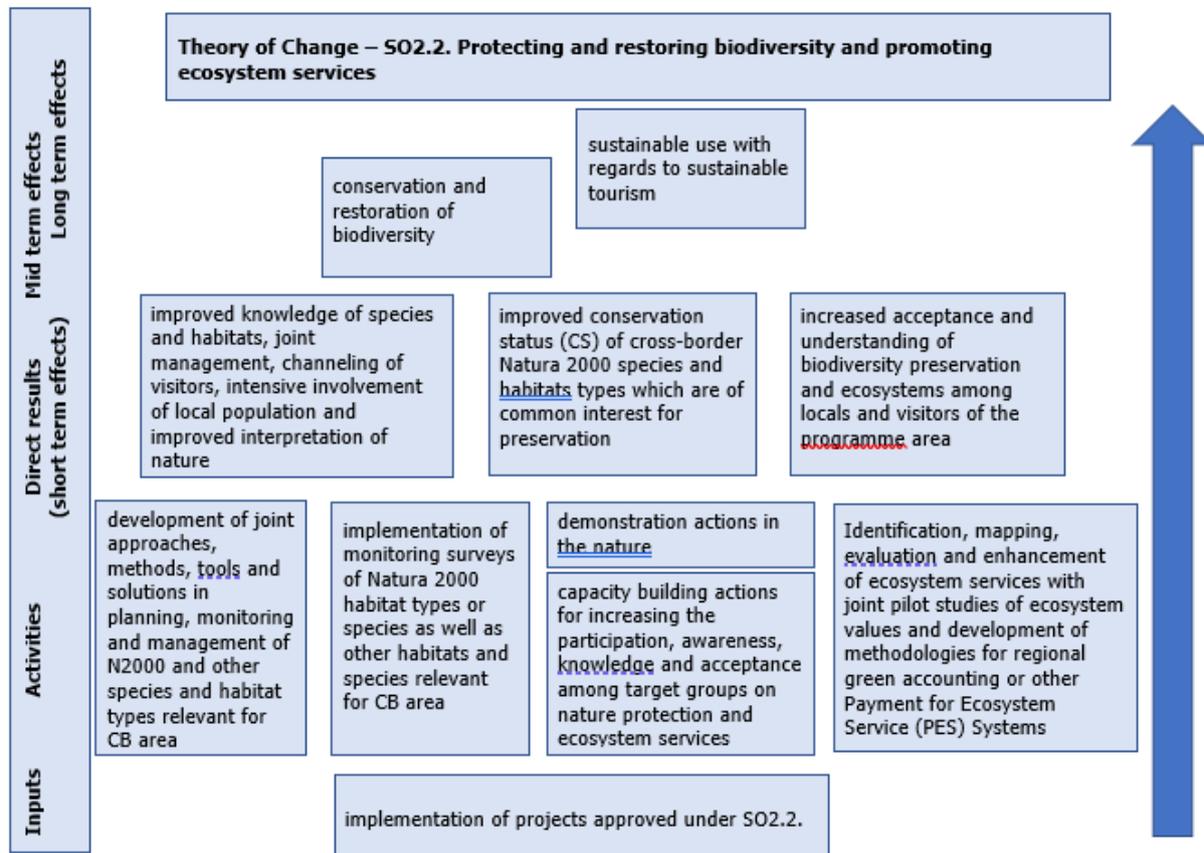
In addition to the changes related to the specific needs of the project area, beneficiaries reported strengthened cooperation and networking of relevant stakeholders, new opportunities arising from the implemented projects in terms of new potential partnerships and projects for continuation and multiplying effects of the current project.

In some cases, the projects have established important foundations for strong long-term environmental and socio-economic effects, but which are not measurable at this moment. An example is the project LIKE where the impact is expected to grow after the proclamation of Čičarija Regional Park, for which baseline documentation has been prepared involving also socio-economic aspect of the future regional park (e.g. protection as opportunity for branding and raising value of the destination, its products and services which in turn brings benefits to local population and the economy as a long-term impact).

In one case the beneficiary highlighted financial issues related to the maintenance of the new infrastructure. It seems that the period of implementation has not been sufficient (also partially

due to the COVID pandemic) to gain firm basis for further work towards self-sustaining infrastructure and created contents.

Picture 4 Theory of change for SO 2.2



Considering the achieved effects and change visible at present moment, the conclusion is that these correspond with the expected change as presented in the above Theory of change model. Below is a detailed explanation of the change occurred as a consequence of the four implemented projects within SO 2.2.

- ***Improved knowledge of targeted species and habitats, joint management, channelling of visitors, intensive involvement of local population and improved interpretation of nature.***

Activities implemented within SO 2.2 actively contributed to improved knowledge of species and habitats, joint management, channelling of visitors, intensive involvement of local population and improved interpretation of nature. By developing common coordinated approaches, methods, tools and new solutions in planning, monitoring and management of Natura 2000 habitat (rivers Sotla, Drava, Kolpa and Sava (by Hruščica), Risnjak National Park, Radensko polje area, Kamačnik canyon, Čičarija hills, Snežnik plateau, Notranjski trikotnik, Gorski kotar and northern Lika), knowledge of different species (wolves, lynxes, bears, amphibians, otters, butterflies, griffon vultures, terns etc.) and habitats were greatly improved



in all projects. The knowledge was also improved by leaflets, multimedia and public exposures, that communicated about the importance of the natural values protection for the general public, and in particular for the population of rural areas. Each projects' beneficiaries highlighted the improving and transferring of knowledge about a specific problem common to a cross-border territory as an added value of this Cooperation Programme.

Intensive involvement of the local population is expressed in the project LIKE, where the general public was a target group, whose target value was surpassed (107%). Locals actively participated in the discussion and were motivated to propose solutions to achieve common goals for managing the area in workshops as part of the activities. Similarly, local population was involved in the project VEZI NARAVE, where beneficiaries focused on engaging with local farmers and landowners. They were very successful, which confirms not only the surpassed value of the target group (123%), but also the statements of beneficiaries that confirm the efficient collaboration with local farmers and landowners in the project. Beneficiaries of the project ČIGRA did not have general public as a target group, but they have highlighted that the involvement of local population has been improved after the project was finished. For example, local schools are organizing visits to their targeted area and pupils are able to hear lectures about birds and their habitats.

This Cooperation Programme directly contributed to Birds Directive targets by promoting joint management between two countries.

The project Carnivora Dinarica worked on strengthening joint management of large carnivores in the northern Dinarides area by connecting responsible institutions from both countries as well as involving associated partners on the institutional level in charge of transposing the recommended measures into national policies and implementation programmes. The success of it can be evaluated only in the future since the first joint meeting regarding formation of a cross-border group for the large carnivora management, should occur in the summer of 2022. The Slovenian Ministry responsible for environmental protection has taken the initiative to set this meeting in motion.

One of the activities in the project LIKE was setting up new climbing routes that were established in the permitted zones, thus preventing visitors from unknowingly endangering protected habitats. Both projects ČIGRA and Carnivora Dinarica focused on changing the visitors' behaviour by raising awareness about species endangerment. A cross-border centre was established in project Carnivora Dinarica that will continue to guide and raise visitors' awareness about the co-living of humans and large carnivores.

In relation to improved interpretation of nature, nature protection and interpretation centres have been established - Bobrov center in Rogaška Slatina, Nature protection Centre "Žabja hiša" in Radensko polje and the Visitor center Dina in Pivka (Interactive exhibition about large carnivores and coexistence with them) serving as central place of the CB Dinaric area for distribution of tools and knowledge on large carnivores. According to one interviewee, the aim is to encourage visitors to think for themselves how they can contribute to nature and biodiversity protection. Huge number of visitors after project completion has been reported and the feedback of the visitors is very positive. The Centre has established connections with



other similar education centres in Slovenia and Croatia in order to strengthen information and knowledge transfer among visitors and residents.

Nature interpretation was further supported by arranging of educational paths and info points (e.g. interpretation equipment on educational path Leska).

- ***Contribution of supported demonstration actions to the preservation of biodiversity***

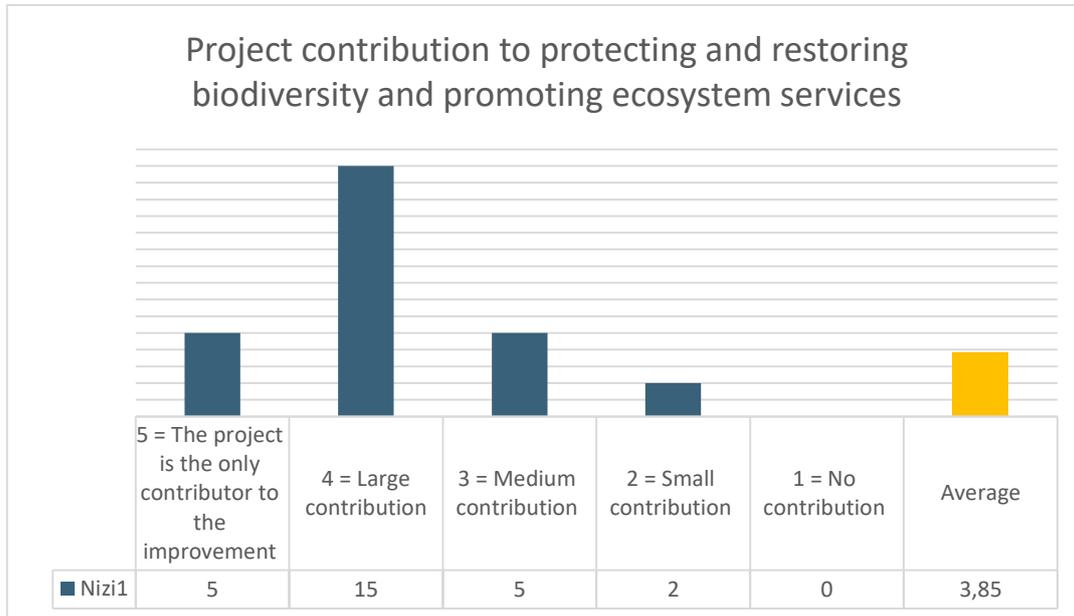
A significant contribution to the conservation of biodiversity is expected through the demonstration actions in nature, which already significantly increased the acceptance and understanding of the conservation of biological diversity and ecosystems among local people and visitors (as assessed by project beneficiaries).

All four projects implemented demonstration actions. The project LIKE contributed to the conservation of biodiversity by creating new climbing routes, securing the new area for expanding the area of *S. lycopifolia* and *E. Hortulana* and by permanently ensuring adequate conditions of access and use of N2000 area in Osp. The project ČIGRA focused on increasing the area of favourable nesting sites for terns. The project Carnivora Dinarica implemented ten different demonstration actions that were mainly targeting local population living in the habitats of large animals. By providing help and education to the local population, this project indirectly contributed to the preservation of biodiversity. The project is an example of successful cooperation with locals living in the protected area in implementing demonstration measures – one of the interviewee declared high satisfaction of the local population as the implemented measures directly reduced damages caused by large carnivores on human property. The project VEZI NARAVE also contributed by nine different demonstration actions, such as removal of foreign invasive plant species in butterfly habitats or arrangement of the underpass for the safe crossing of amphibians.

According to the survey results, 70%⁴⁴ of respondents agreed that the demonstration actions in nature contributed to the preservation of biodiversity. Survey participants were further asked to assess the level of contribution of their projects to protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services.

⁴⁴ If we take into account only the answers from LPs, then the percentage is 100%.

Figure 29 Project contribution to protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services



Source: On-line survey

The graph above clearly shows that the majority of beneficiaries believe the projects made large contribution to protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services. However, considering the nature of the implemented measures, the true effects will be visible in a few years and under the assumption of continued monitoring of targeted species.

- Increased acceptance and understanding of biodiversity preservation and ecosystems among locals and visitors of the programme as a consequence of actions promoting awareness of the significance of nature conservation***

Besides the demonstration actions contributing to the conservation of biodiversity, the actions promoting awareness of the significance of nature conservation are also important in increasing the acceptance and understanding of biodiversity preservation and ecosystems among locals and visitors of the Programme area.

Within projects LIKE and VEZI NARAVE, actions promoting the awareness of the significance of nature conservation have been directed to the local population, but also to specific target groups – climbers/recreational athletes (LIKE) and farmers/landowners (VEZI NARAVE). Climbers benefited by setting new climbing routes that they establish themselves in the permitted zones in cooperation with Project Partners. The construction of new parking lots, information and signpost tables is significant to local people, so climbers no longer interfere with private properties or unknowingly threaten protected habitats. The project LIKE implemented a media campaign that conveyed a message about the need to jointly manage the karst edge in a positive and easy-to-understand way for people that simultaneously raised awareness, but also encouraged activity. Video clips and other promotional materials were played on websites and social media with the intention to change the behaviour of climbers



and other types of sports recreational athletes. Farmers and landowners participated in workshops in order to bring closer good management practices for grasslands and forests to them. Additionally, they were educated about time-adjusted mowing of different habitats, which positively affects condition of different species and helps to preserve these species in the long term. Mentioned education was recognized by the beneficiaries as a continuous need that should be further developed.

Both projects ČIGRA and Carnivora Dinarica wanted to change the behaviour of the local population and tourists, increase the safety of different colonies and large animals, and reduce the impact of this type of threat on terns, bears, wolves and lynxes in Natura areas by raising awareness of the significance of nature conservation. In project ČIGRA a series of activities was implemented to raise awareness, like lectures for target groups of users (fishermen, concessionaires, visitors, students and young people), productions of movies, Open Day events, ornithological camps, thematic numbers of popular and scientific ornithological journals and publications on the web and in the media. In project Carnivora Dinarica local population was contacted through web articles, social media, pamphlets and local magazines, educational points were set up in 4 schools (Vrbovsko, Delnice, Gerovo, Mrkopalj), while expert population was reached by publishing research articles and summaries. From the start, all these activities introduced the public to different species, while drawing their attention to the issue of habitat preservation and the impact of human activities on the survival of different species.

When the survey participants were asked if increased participation, awareness, knowledge and acceptance among target groups on nature protection and ecosystem services was one of the results of their project, 89%⁴⁵ of them answered affirmatively. Beneficiaries of the project LIKE also noted that there were some unexpected results – better knowledge of the bird species that were examined in the project raised new questions of preservation that were unknown before the start of the project, that reflected the need for continuous work that exceeds the duration of a single project. Beneficiaries of the project VEZI NARAVE, during the implementation of scheduled activities, felt the need to implement additional activities (e.g. monitoring of moths) that were successful among the participants and attracted additional visitors. Therefore, in both cases it resulted in the application of new projects and addressing new activities through other projects, thus delivering an additional positive impact on animal populations that underpinned the Interreg project.

As pointed out in one of the interviews, through the work of interpretation centres the effects of continuing information and knowledge transfer towards different groups (e.g. elderly, children, families, younger population etc.) can be observed. Another interviewee stressed that the most important change achieved by the project was the change in the attitude of the public, i.e. increased awareness and acceptance of ecosystems, supported by enormous media visibility of the project. People got more receptive to biodiversity and nature protection issues.

⁴⁵If we take into account only the answers from LPs, then the percentage is 100%.



SO 3.1

Common strategic documents were developed, e.g. the Strategy and Action plan of the development of cross-border health destination, which allow a better provision of health services (+Health) across the border. In relation to this aspect, it needs to be emphasized that different legal framework and administration systems have been hampering the acceptance of such cross-border documents by national authorities. As a consequence, the strategic documents are not accepted yet.

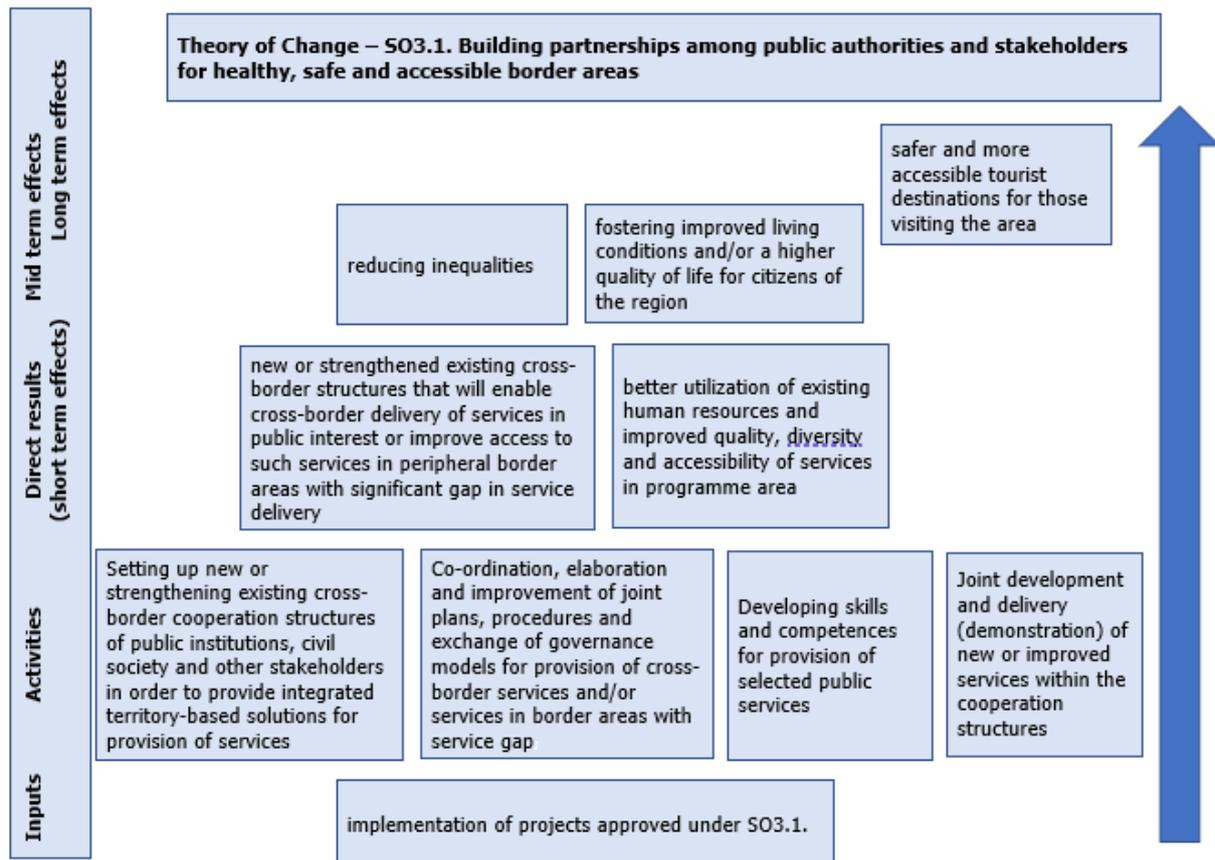
Following is an overview of the short-term and mid-term effects that occurred as a consequence of the implementation of projects within SO 3.1:

- increased potential of vulnerable groups for the participation in the labour market through innovative approaches (social activation model) in the provision of social care services in Podravska, Savinjska, Međimurska and Varaždinska County (*social and economic effects*);
- established affordable long-term care community-based service combining health and social care services for the elderly provided in their homes in City of Zagreb, Međimurska, Osrednjeslovenska, Podravska (*social effects*);
- increased inclusion of the elderly through improved access to integrated deinstitutionalized long-term elderly care in Obalno-kraška (municipality of Hrpelje-Kozina) and Primorsko-goranska County (City of Rijeka) (*social effects*);
- improved access to (primary and specialist) health services for people living in rural border areas by developing cross-border procedures for the provision of health services in the closest medical centre regardless of the border in Primorsko-goranska, Primorsko-notransjka, Jugovzhodna, Obalno-kraška region (*social and economic effects*);
- reduced stigma and improved care for people with dementia through transition from a medical to a psychosocial way of caring in Istarska (City of Umag area) and Obalno-kraška region (City of Izola area, City of Kopar area) (*social effects*);
- reduced differences in the availability of emergency medical services between rural and urban border settlements through cross border optimization of emergency medical services in Istarska County and Obalno-kraška region (*social effect*);
- increased readiness for an appropriate, coordinated cross border intervention in the event of natural disaster (flood and earthquake) and raised resilience of local population in case of natural or other disaster in Karlovačka County (Duga resa area) and Jugovzhodna region (Črnomelj area) (*social, economic and environmental effect*);
- increased readiness for an appropriate, coordinated cross border intervention in the event of nuclear/radiological emergency throughout whole Programme area and increased awareness and knowledge among local population on how to react in such case (*social and economic effect*).

The above summary shows that the change achieved, namely safer cross-border area in the events of natural or nuclear disasters as well as increased accessibility and quality of social care and health services, is in line with the expected impact as defined in the Cooperation Programme.

In addition to the changes listed above, all implemented projects raised institutional capacities and the level of professional competencies and skills for provision of public services, strengthened cross-border cooperation of relevant institutions and fostered knowledge transfer across border. In some cases new cross-border cooperation structures have been established involving partnerships between public authorities and stakeholders (as shown in Table 21, EQ9) for continuing cooperation between beneficiaries from both sides of the border. These social and economic effects represent a good foundation for achieving the expected long-term effect – namely, healthy, safe and accessible border areas.

Picture 5 Theory of change for SO 3.1



In assessing the change occurred within SO 3.1 it has to be kept in mind that these interventions were the most dependent on the political and administration environment and support. All of the implemented projects resulted with strengthened cross-border cooperation of relevant institutions, knowledge transfer and built capacities of relevant target groups, which means that on the institutional level (in terms of organisations “equipped” for continuous



provision of the developed service) the precondition for achieving the expected impact within SO 3.1 has been achieved.

However, given the limited duration⁴⁶ and limited scope, the piloting actions implemented under SO 3.1 had also limited and thus local influence. Under the assumption of implementing the piloted model on larger scale and continuous further capacity building of service providers, numerous positive effects could be expected (e.g. larger scale of implementing the newly developed social activation model would lead to stronger social activation in areas where it would be implemented, resulting also with effects such as improved quality of life of involved beneficiaries, more efficient integration into the labour market and in long term changes in the social policy in terms of stronger focusing of resources on social activation of beneficiaries).

A most important precondition, namely establishing newly developed models at a systemic level, which would provide a basis for the permanent implementation in practice and thus lead to strong impact on the whole Programme area, has not been met so far. Cross-border strategic documents and procedures have been developed (e.g. long-term care deinstitutionalization development program, protocol for emergency medical services), but not accepted on the national level yet. One interviewee highlighted that although the Agreement on further cooperation has been signed, it does not define further steps, roles and responsibilities as the relevant national structures on Croatian side did not show sufficient readiness and initiative for institutionalizing of standardized operational procedures, but the support was rather declarative. Such examples are very illustrative in terms of missed opportunity for generating stronger impact.

Change achieved within SO 3.1 is explained below in detail.

- ***Strengthened existing cross-border structures that will enable cross-border delivery of services in public interest or improve access to such services in peripheral border areas with significant gap in service delivery***

All projects that were evaluated in this report contributed to building partnerships among public authorities and stakeholders for healthy, safe and accessible border areas. Five projects (Demenca aCROsLO, STAR, +Health, CrossCare, EMERGENCY EuroRegion) focused their activities to improve access to health and social care services, either by creating new cross-border structures that will provide these services or by improving existing models of providing services. Two projects (ENRAS, HITRO) were focused on improving the safety of the local population during nuclear or natural disasters (e.g. earthquakes, floods) by development and improvement of the cross-border system of civil protection. The last project, 2SoKrog was primarily focused on developing new skills and competencies of public authorities to use innovative models of social inclusion.

One of the reasons why this Programme was able to contribute, to some extent, to the above-mentioned results was the fact that people from different sectors took part in these projects.

⁴⁶ Some of the services are being provided also after project completion, but on local level.



That was mentioned as an added value – the project activities were a result of teamwork; there were Project Partners like universities or faculties that could provide scientific and documentary work, and then there were partners that supplemented their work with research and information directly from their experiences (e.g. doctors, nurses).

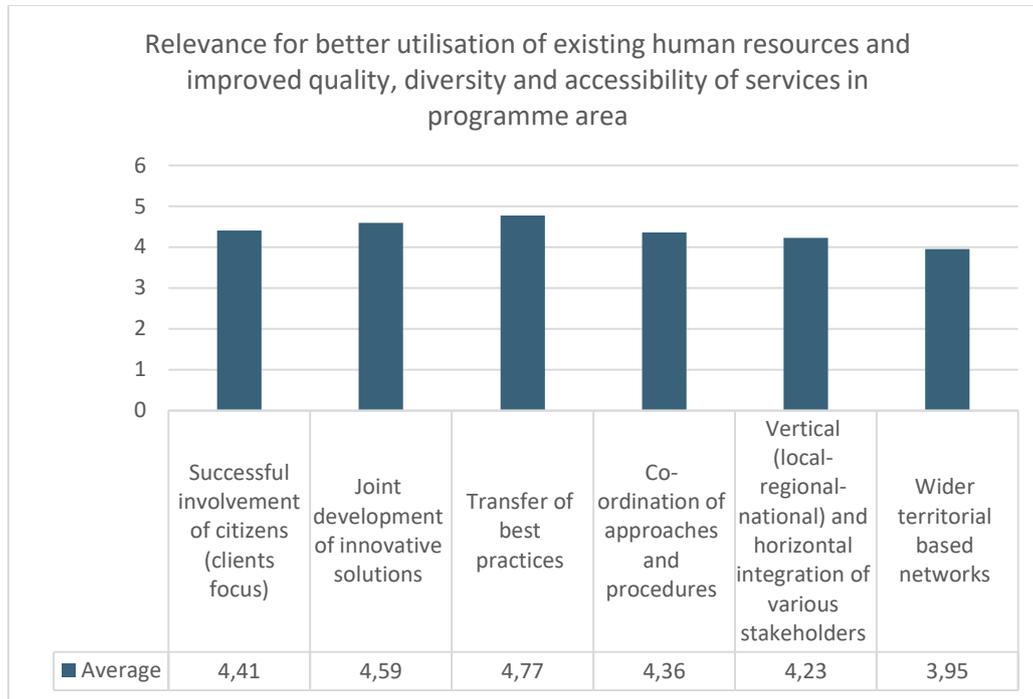
According to survey results, 60% of participants agreed that their project resulted in strengthened existing cross-border structures that will enable cross-border delivery of services in public interest, while 49% of participants think their project resulted in a new structure. Additionally, this Programme contributed to reducing inequalities, as 54% of the participants stated it was their projects' result. These three results were the highest rated results⁴⁷.

- ***Better utilization of existing human resources and improved quality, diversity and accessibility of services in the programme area***

According to survey results, wider territorial-based networks, vertical (local-regional-national) and horizontal integration of various authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and stakeholders, co-ordination of approaches and procedures, transfer of best practices, joint development of innovative solutions and the successful involvement of citizens supported by the Programme were extremely relevant for a better utilization of existing human resources and improved quality, diversity and accessibility of services in the Programme area. When asked to grade all these factors, survey participants gave the highest mark to transfer of best practice and joint development of innovative solutions.

⁴⁷ If taking into account only the answers from LPs, the sequence of results is a bit different. In this case, the three highest results are strengthened existing cross-border structures that will enable cross-border delivery of services in public interest, reduced inequalities and improved access to services in public interest in peripheral border areas with significant gap in service delivery. All three results are mentioned by 63% of participants.

Figure 30 Factors that contributed to better utilization of existing human resources and improved quality, diversity and accessibility of services in programme area



Source: On-line survey

The fact that the result “transfer of best practice” received such a high score is not surprising since it was also confirmed by the interviews with Project Partners. One of the beneficiaries explained, confirming that the quality and diversity of services was improved in their area, how the transfer of best practise affected the project CrossCare – over 10 joint cross-border educations were conducted that brought new experiences, transfer of good practices and transfer of new knowledge. The interviewee explained how they gained knowledge in the field of physiotherapy from the other side that they have not had before, because they were looking at it from the other angle, in the other direction. It was also mentioned that without the cooperation of both sides, this project wouldn’t have been so successful. The local public authority, which was a Project Partner in this project, actually contributed to the sustainability of projects activities by financing new employees, which was an unexpected result.

The quality of services was improved by coordination of approaches and procedures, e.g. in project ENRAS partners collaborated to create training materials, which was followed by 63 individual and 9 joint field trainings where Croatian and Slovenian intervention groups had the chance to share knowledge and exchange best practices.

The accessibility of services in the Programme area has been improved by the joint development of innovative solutions, like in the project STAR where two innovative forms of long-term care were established and thus improved the access to this service for people in the municipality of Hrpelje-Kozina and the city of Rijeka. The project +Health developed new procedures that would considerably improve the access to (primary and specialist) health



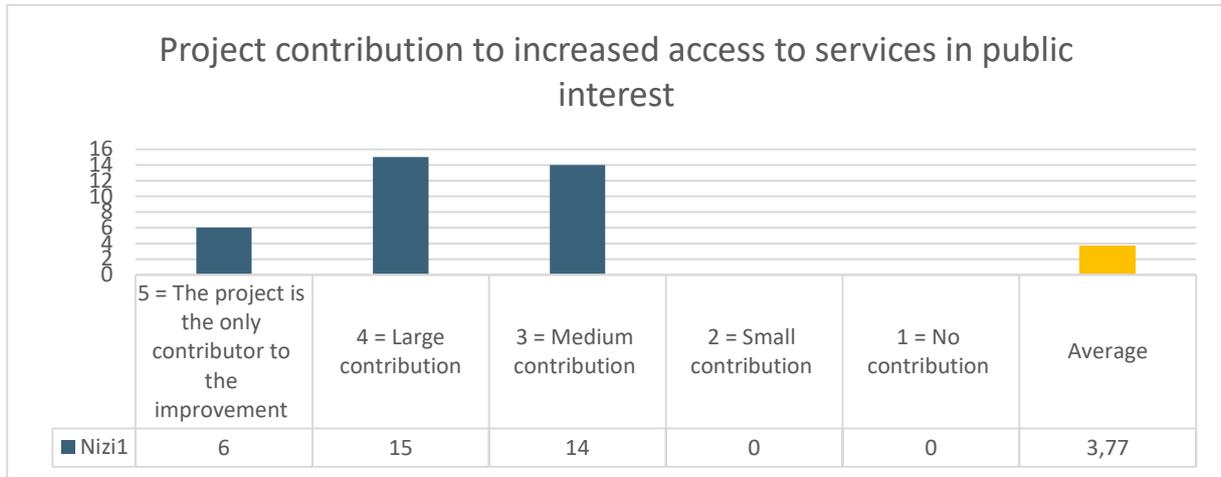
services for people living in rural areas as well as for people who live in Croatia, but are closer to Slovenian health care institutions (and vice versa). Even though these procedures were developed as a project result, they have not been yet accepted by the national authorities. Without national recognition, sustainability can be assured only through the continuation of the project.

The project 2SoKrog dealt with the problem of long-term unemployment, social exclusion and weak motivation for life changes by people who are unemployed or socially excluded. The projects' activities (workshops and training for social workers from Slovenia and Croatia) resulted in better utilization of existing human resources. In one of the interviews, it was confirmed that in both countries, the regulation of social issues is the same, i.e. social transfers to socially excluded target groups, which is a passive social policy. But their project approach offered an active social policy. The cross-border approach was also important for the exchange of experiences, the transfer of good practices, including exchanges. There were two unexpected positive results that came out of this project – a large number of civil servants participating in workshops that were interested in implementing an innovative model of social inclusion and employment of new people through the project, that additionally contributed to the better human resource utilization. In Slovenia, the Ministry of Labour launched a pilot national Programme in scope of which social activation is being further implemented.

A text-book example of better utilization of existing human resources can be found in the project EMERGENCY EuroRegion, which strived to establish a well-functioning cross-border network of four health institutions in order to ensure long-term implementation of an innovative EMS model. The project is the first example of formal cross-border cooperation between emergency services. The developed cross-border protocol for delivery of emergency service resulted with the cross-border optimization of emergency services which reduced the travel time to the nearest hospital in case of emergency. Thus, the project significantly contributed not only to better care for patients, but also to saving lives in the mentioned area. However, this new solution is still implemented as only a non-formal structure, and negotiations between Slovenian and Croatian Ministry of Health are underway and are moving towards the signing of an international agreement on providing emergency medical assistance to residents and visitors in the northeastern part of Istria (Croatia) in the nearest hospital (Izola in Slovenia). Despite of this, the optimized emergency services protocol continues to be implemented.

In order to assess the contribution of the Programme to increased access and quality of public services in the cross-border area, survey participants were asked to estimate how much their project contributed to increased access to services and increased quality of services. On a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being “no contribution at all” and 5 being “the project is the only contributor”, the average grade was 3,77 for increased access.

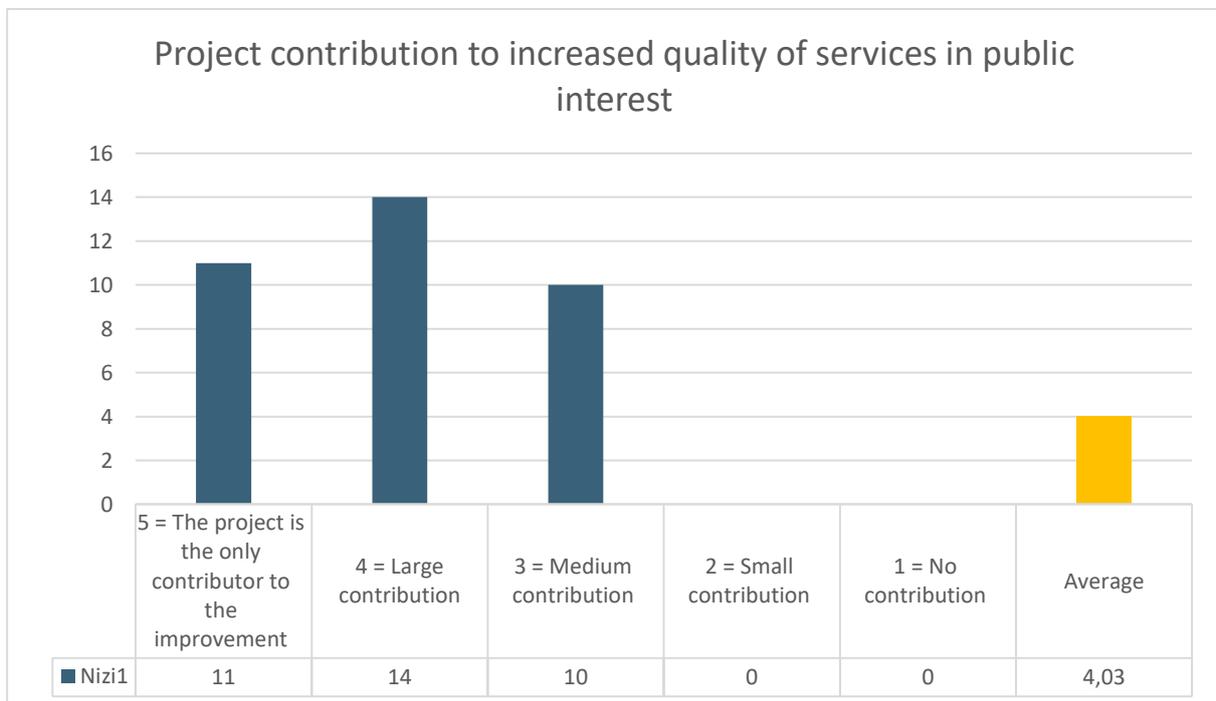
Figure 31 Project contribution to increased access to services in public interest



Source: On-line survey

The contribution of the Programme to the quality of services has been rated higher – the average mark was 4,03. It should be mentioned that no one estimated their project contribution as small or as no contribution at all, for both the increase of accessibility and quality of public services.

Figure 32 Project contribution to increased quality of services in public interest



Source: On-line survey



- *Contribution of the programme to reducing inequalities (horizontal issue), fostering improved living conditions and/or a higher quality of life for citizens of the region (e.g. improved health care for specific population groups etc.) as well as safer and more accessible tourist destinations for those visiting the area.*

Most of the projects implemented within SO 3.1 contributed greatly to reducing inequalities by steering project activities (in)directly to people at risk of social exclusion, e.g. elderly, sick people, people living in rural and peripheral areas, long-term unemployed people. This was mentioned in their project application forms, but it was also confirmed by the survey results. When asked if the result of their project was reducing inequalities, 63% of the participants answered affirmative, which was the highest score in that question.

The common challenge of the Program area is the trend of aging population, who are mostly living in hard-to-reach areas. Four projects (Demenca aCROsSLO, Star, CrossCare, +Health, EMERGENCY EuroRegion) developed new management models and cross-border procedures to improve different social care and health care services, while also educated and trained people who work with elderly and sick people. Participants of the project Demenca aCROsSLO specifically worked to de-stigmatize the dementia, so that people with this disease and their families are not a marginal part of society. Their project contributed to improving health care for people with dementia and introduced the transition from medical to psychosocial care for people with dementia based on extensive training, but also provided support to their families by providing service "house help". The project 2SoKrog was focused on re-socializing people who are unemployed and long-term beneficiaries of social assistance. They also provided education and training to improve the competencies and skills of civil servants in the provision of public services in the field of social welfare and employment services.

Projects ENRAS and HITRO were focused on improving living conditions for people living in the area with security challenges - in the event of natural disaster (e.g. areas near rivers or seismically active areas) or nuclear/radiological emergency (due to presence of Krško nuclear power plant or usage of radioactive substances) a joint cross border intervention will be coordinated, but local people were also educated about ways of behaving in such situations. These two mentioned projects indirectly contributed to safer tourist destinations, even though their primary objective was to ensure safer living area and to increase the sense of security among the local population.

Besides the above mentioned effects, a few interviewees highlighted that their project have improved quality of life throughout the cross-border area and preventing emigration, as well as improved on-time visibility of citizens for various risks of slipping into poverty and social exclusion.

Cross-border added value

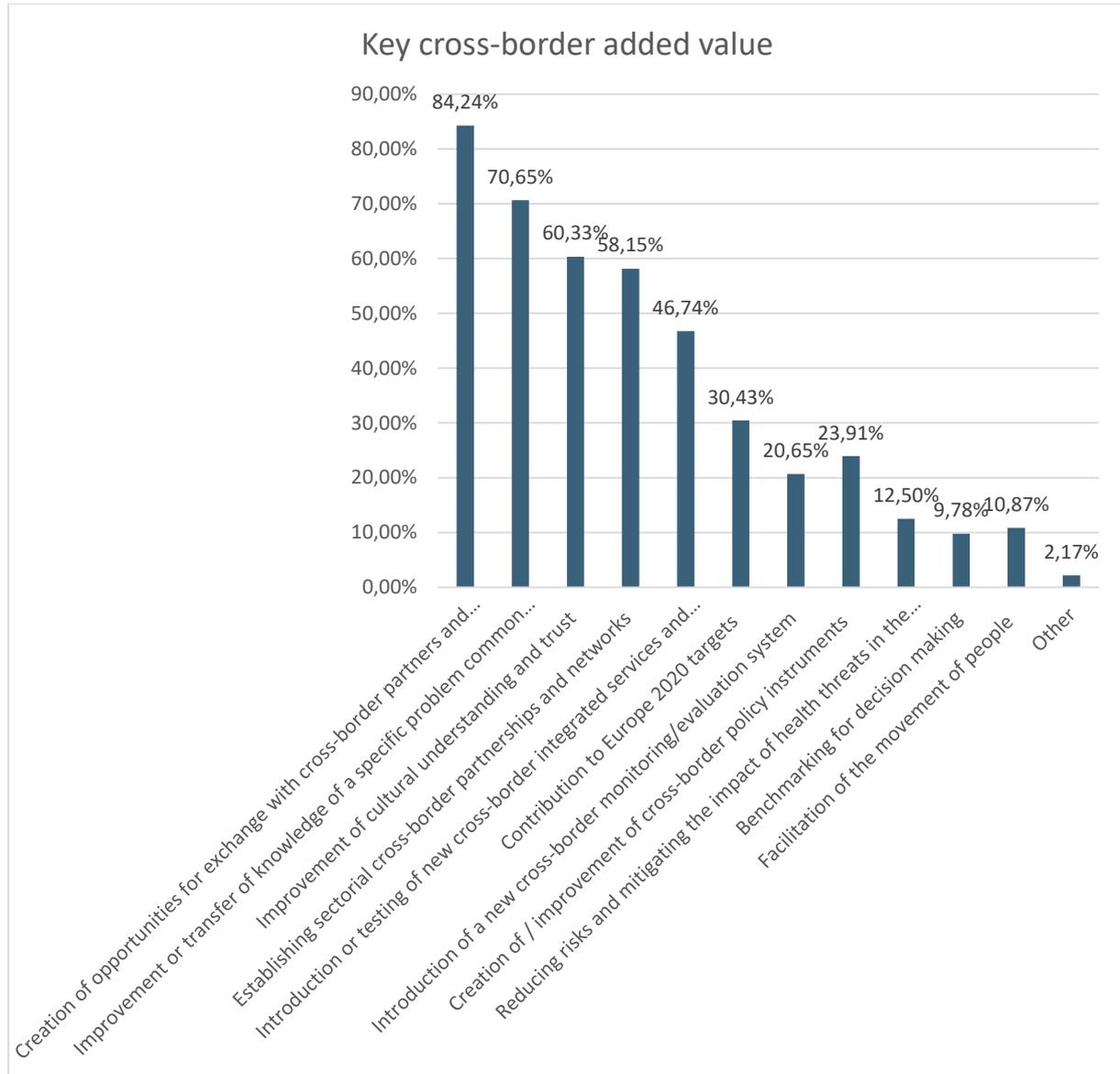
An additional insight into the change achieved due to the implementation of projects is possible by taking a closer look at the key cross-border added value identified by survey participants.

The majority of participants declared that the implementation of the projects allowed creation of opportunities for exchange with cross-border partners and for promotion of international networks (84,24%). Improvement or transfer of knowledge of a specific problem common to



cross-border territories was pointed out by 70,65% of participants, improvement of cultural understanding and trust by 60,33%, establishing sectorial cross-border partnerships and networks by 58,15% and the introduction or testing of new cross-border integrated services and products by 46,74%.

Figure 33 Key cross-border added value on the Programme level



Source: On-line survey



Key findings

- The change (short-term and mid-term effects) that can be attributed to the Programme is moderate and local at this moment. Such a finding is expected considering the timeframe, the scope of the Programme, but also considering the Programme budget.
- Predominance of short-term effects (with the exception of investment in infrastructure which represent a good foundation for longer term effects) can be observed with the emphasis on increased knowledge and strengthened cooperation of stakeholders. The occurred change related to strengthened cross-border cooperation and the increase of knowledge and skills of partners involved is relevant for all SOs (but also of target groups), which in some cases allows for a further use of tools, models and methods of work developed within the projects
- Within PA 1 and PA2 new physical infrastructure was put in place which contributed to the visibility and recognizability of change achieved among the local population.
- With regard to different types of effects, interventions within SO 2.1 have achieved the most versatile economic, social, cultural and environmental effects.
- Considering their effects, implemented interventions (especially those within PA 1 and 2) can be seen as an important contributor to activating rural areas under the assumption that the change occurred is sustained and/or upgraded.
- Environmental effects achieved within SO 2.2, but also SO 2.1 contribute locally to maintaining the Programme area's environmental quality, diversity and identity.
- SO 3.1 produced positive change in the field of accessibility and quality of public services, but insufficient political backing represents a barrier to producing sustainable effects and increasing the impact of the implemented projects. Within some of the projects cross-border strategic documents have been developed by relevant institutions for a specific thematic and based on the successful models of work tested within the projects. Still, these have not been accepted on the national level yet.
- As both, the SO 2.1 and SO 2.2 interventions resulted with the similar main change, namely with the increased potential of natural and cultural heritage/nature protected areas of the Programme area for sustainable use of the cross-border region with regards to sustainable tourism, further synergies of these two fields shall be in the focus of the next Programme.
- As an important cross-border value, the beneficiaries identified also the improvement of cultural understanding and trust which is an intangible benefit but important in light of readiness and motivation for further effective cooperation.



EQ9 Evaluation of the first territorial impact (per priority axes/specific objective), how well was the territorial balance respected? Can this territorial impact be measured also through the concept of possible functional areas (existing or potential) in relevant sector of the programme linked to the connections of actors and, if yes, how?

The Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia – Croatia has a clear territorial dimension and covers several dimensions of territorial development – economic competitiveness, environmental sustainability and social cohesion. The analysis below is trying to give an overview of the (potential) impact of the CP implementation involving the territorial dimension.

The review according to types of territories (which ones are addressed, where partner organisations are located) has been conducted, clearly showcasing the territorial cooperation intensity on the one hand and the distribution of regions taking part in the projects, but also the location of implemented activities on the other.

Considering the scope of the Programme, but even more considering the Programme budget, as already mentioned in EQ4, the (expected) impact that can be attributed to the Programme is rather moderate and local at this moment. Taking into account all potential external factors that might also be considered as contributors to the (potential) impact exceeds the scope of this evaluation. Another important limitation of the impact evaluation refers to fact that the Programme indicators monitor output and result indicators, but no framework for impact assessment has been designed within the Programme.

Taking into consideration the timing of this evaluation exercise as well as the lack of impact assessment framework which would allow more precise tracking of the impact on the territory and the target groups, the evaluators prepared a spatial analysis of the (expected) impact based on the location of project activities and taking into consideration project results and the change achieved (where possible).

In describing project outputs and results in the application form, the beneficiaries do not always clearly state where exactly in the project area the project outputs will be “placed” and in some cases it is not possible to assess which exact territory will be influenced by a specific project activity or result. For this reason, for the purpose of this Draft report, the evaluators are considering the whole project area as influenced by the majority of outputs and results developed under specific project. Results of the spatial analysis have been presented on the level of NUTS3 regions.

SO 1.1

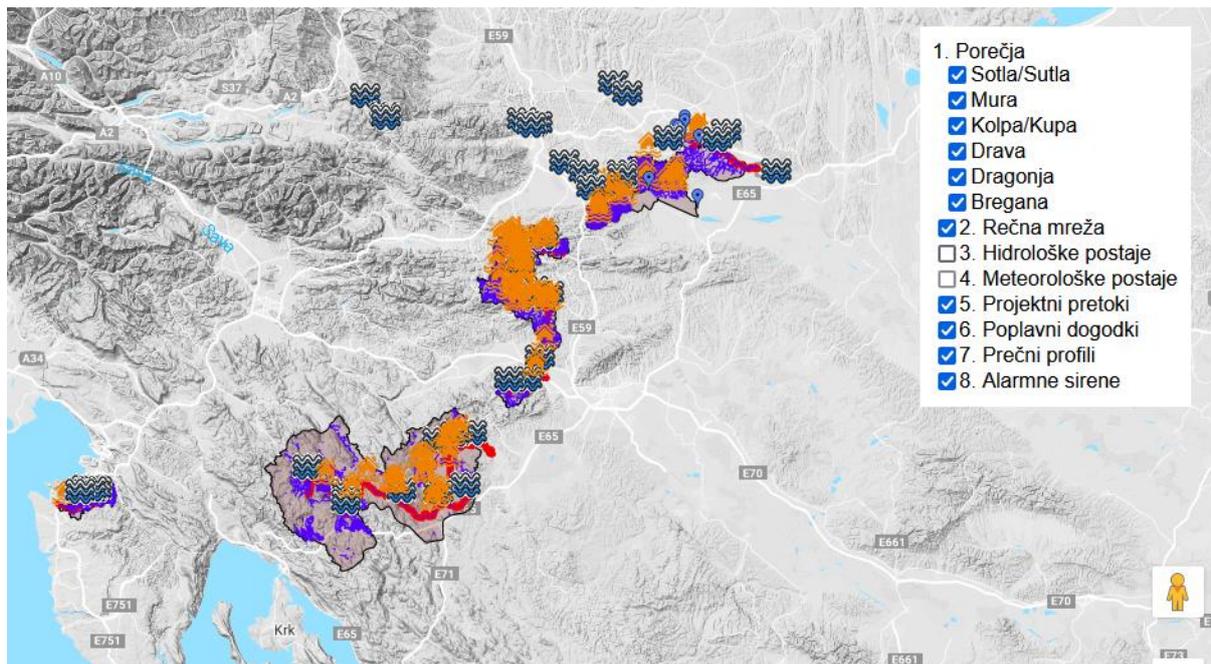
Within the four strategic projects implemented, eight project partners⁴⁸ were involved, three from Croatia (all from the City of Zagreb) and five from Slovenia (all from the

⁴⁸ Initially, there were nine Lead/Project Partners within SO 1.1, but as the former National Directorate for civil protection and rescue services of the Republic of Croatia (DUZS) became part of the Ministry of Interior, the territorial distribution map shows the distribution of eight project partners.

Osrednjeslovenska region), all of them being national institutions in charge of flood risk management and related thematic. Considering the role of the Lead partner, one project was led by a Croatian partner and three by a Slovenian partner.

Considering the territorial dimension of the (potential) impact, the map below shows the area directly affected by the implemented projects. Project results of FRISCO1 are spread throughout the whole Programme area and it is thus expected that they will contribute equally to the expected impact on the whole area.

Picture 6 Transboundary rivers with an illustration of implemented measures within FRISCO1 project



Source: <https://frisco-project.eu/hr/preglednik/>, last visit: 24th November 2021

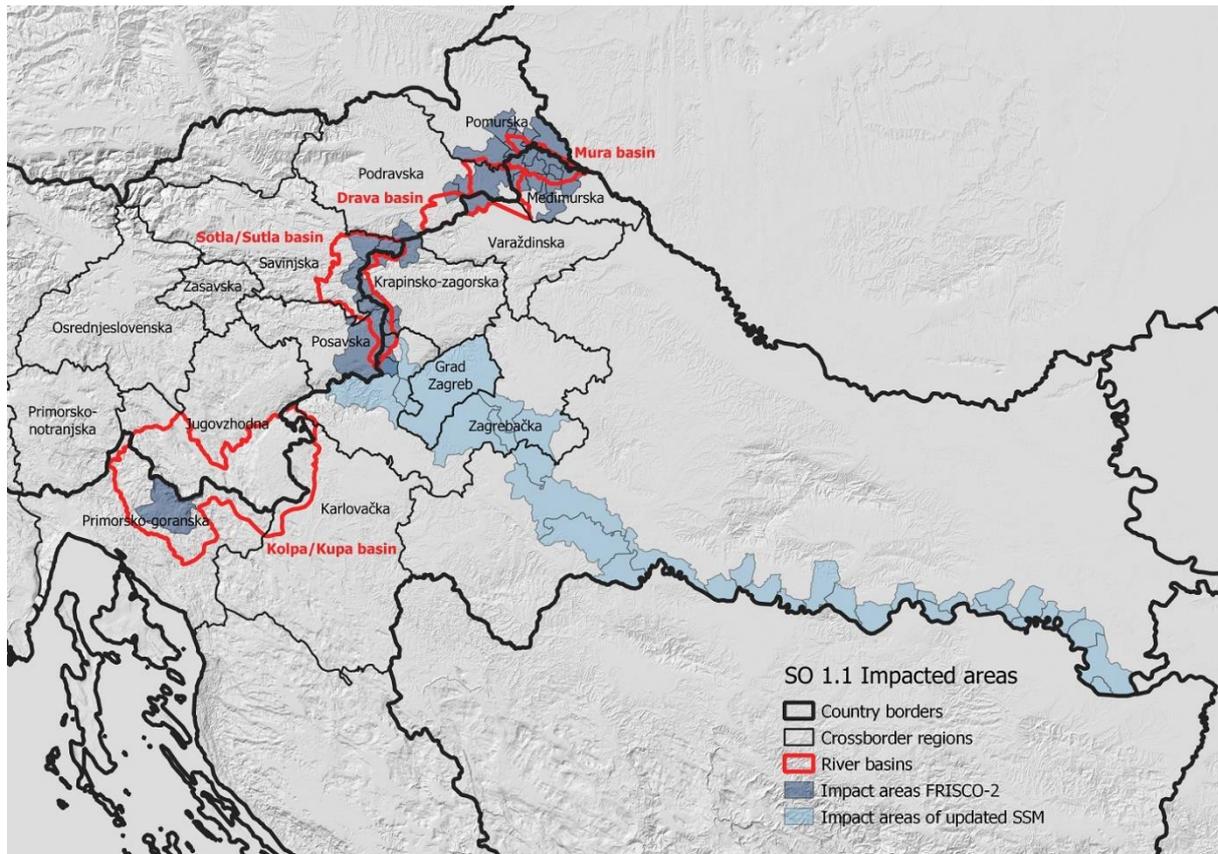
Effects of the FRISCO1 project can be tracked also outside the project area, as the data gathered within the preparation of forecasting models for the Sutla/Sotla, Bregana and Kupa/Kolpa river basins have been used for updating the hydrological-hydraulic model for the Sava river basin (the so called "Sava Super Model" (SSM)), previously prepared by the Sava Commission. Thus, the area of impact stretches from the border with the Republic of Slovenia to the border with the Republic of Serbia.

Taking into consideration the structural measures implemented within FRISCO 2.1, FRISCO 2.2 and FRISCO 2.3 projects, the area strongest influenced by the FRISCO structural projects in respect of reduced flood risk and flood-related damage in view of affected population, economic activities and cultural and natural heritage in both countries cover:

- within Mura river basin: municipalities of Štrigova, Sv. Martin na Muri, Selnica, Gornji Mihaljevec, Sv. Juraj na Bregu, Šenkovec, Vratišinec, Podturen, Belica, Mursko Središće and Čakovec (Croatia) and municipalities of Beltinci, Črenšovci, Odranci, Ormož, Ljutomer, Razkrižje, Velika Polana and Lendava (Slovenia)

- within Sutla/Sotla river basin: from the source of Sutla/Sotla on the forested southern hill slope of Macelj hill below the peak of Veliki Belinovec and all the way to the mouth of the Sava near the village of Jesenice
- within Drava and Kupa/Kolpa river basin: settlements of Hrvatsko and the area of Otok Virje-Brezje (Croatia) and Kuželj and Mala Vas (Slovenia)

Picture 7 Area of impact in relation to reduced flood risk in the transboundary river basins (SO 1.1)



Source: Own elaboration (Disclaimer: Map of the programme area is without prejudice to the border between the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Croatia. Nothing in this document could prejudice the final delimitation between Croatia and Slovenia and the graphics and depictions of the border are exclusively for the purpose of this document.)

In order to assess the contribution of implemented projects to the flood risk reduction in the transboundary Dragonja, Kolpa/Kupa, Sutla/Sotla, Drava, Mura and Bregana river basins, project beneficiaries were asked to rate the contribution of their projects via online survey on a scale from 1 to 5. The majority of beneficiaries rated the contribution as large (mark 4, 80% of answers), 10% as medium (mark 3), while one participant believed the implemented project was the only contributor to the improvement (10% of answers). In addition, some of the interviewed stakeholders underlined that the strategic projects have a significantly higher potential to produce the expected impacts and to contribute to cross-border socio-economic development.

Taking into account the results achieved by the four strategic FRISCO projects, as well as the information received through interviews, the potential for achievement of the expected long-



term impact within SO 1.1 is assessed as moderate to high⁴⁹ at the local level. Such an assessment relies on the change already achieved, but also on the potential synergies with the (expected) effects of the SO 2.1. Under the assumption that such plans will be realized, the expansion of related economic activities can be expected in the long run, producing concrete economic benefits for the local communities.

Another potential impact stream is to be expected within agriculture as the implemented structural measures shall protect flooding of surrounding agricultural areas on both sides of the border. However, at present moment such (potential) impacts are not measurable.

PA2

As both SO 2.1 and SO 2.2, in regard to the expected impact, are oriented towards seizing the potential of nature protected areas, natural and cultural heritage for sustainable economic development and economic diversification of the Programme area, in particular with regards to sustainable tourism, the potential for achieving its long-term effect impact is being evaluated jointly for both SOs by the end of this chapter. The specific aspects of each SO (the contribution to sustainable tourism through active heritage preservation for SO 2.1 and the contribution to protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services within SO 2.2) as mid-term effects have been evaluated separately.

Within the 26 projects related to PA2 (SO 2.1 and SO 2.2) altogether 144 project partners were involved in project implementation. Out of these, there were 71 Slovenian partners and 73 Croatian partners, and it can be concluded that the distribution of partners is very well balanced. When looking at the role of the Lead Partner, more projects were led by Slovenian beneficiaries (15) compared to 11 projects led by Croatian beneficiaries.

Considering the distribution of projects per involved region (by the location of the project partners), the distribution of regions/Counties taking part in the projects shows that in Slovenia as well as in Croatia, the regions where the capitals are placed are the most represented - Osrednjeslovenska region took part in 14 projects and City of Zagreb in 12 projects⁵⁰. Such a finding corresponds with the fact that the majority of (national) institutions with the specific sectoral competence for project-related thematic is located in countries' capitals. In other terms, the fact that Osrednjeslovenska region and City of Zagreb are the most represented regions does not indicate on where to expect the strongest impact, but shows where the specific expertise (on institutional or other level) is mostly located. As an illustrative example, the project KRASn'KRŠ can be given – although the project area covers also Osrednjeslovenska region (Znanstvenoraziskovalni center Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti located in Ljubljana as project partner) and City of Zagreb (project partner Muze d.o.o. savjetovanje i upravljanje u kulturi i turizmu located in Zagreb), these two regions are not being affected by the implemented activities and they are not part of the newly developed tourist destination, but the involvement of these project partners served to transfer knowledge and specific

⁴⁹ As the long-term effects of the SO relate to revitalisation of sustainable tourism, further elaboration of positive and negative factors that could influence the expected impact are elaborated under SO 2.1.

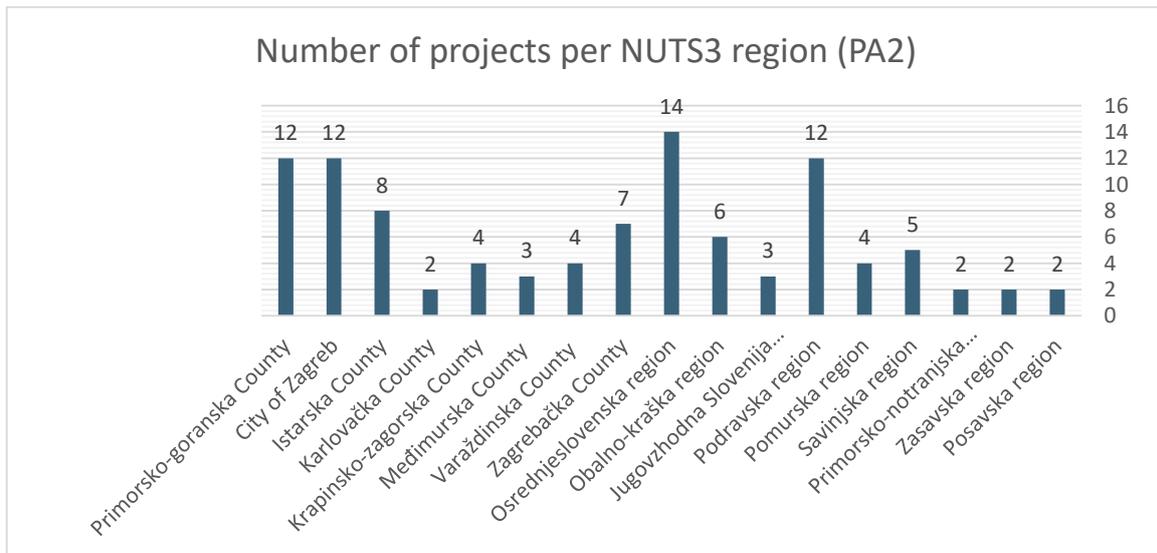
⁵⁰ On Croatian side, within PA2 Primorsko-goranska County took part in 12 projects as well.



expertise to other project partners and local areas (although the impact on the two project partners surely exists in terms of strengthened capacities and broadened network of contacts and potential future partners).

Apart from Osrednjeslovenska region, on the Slovenian side the majority of projects took place in Podravska, Obalno-kraška and Savinjska region, whereas in Croatia, apart from City of Zagreb, most of the projects were implemented in Primorsko-goranska, Istarska and Zagrebačka County.

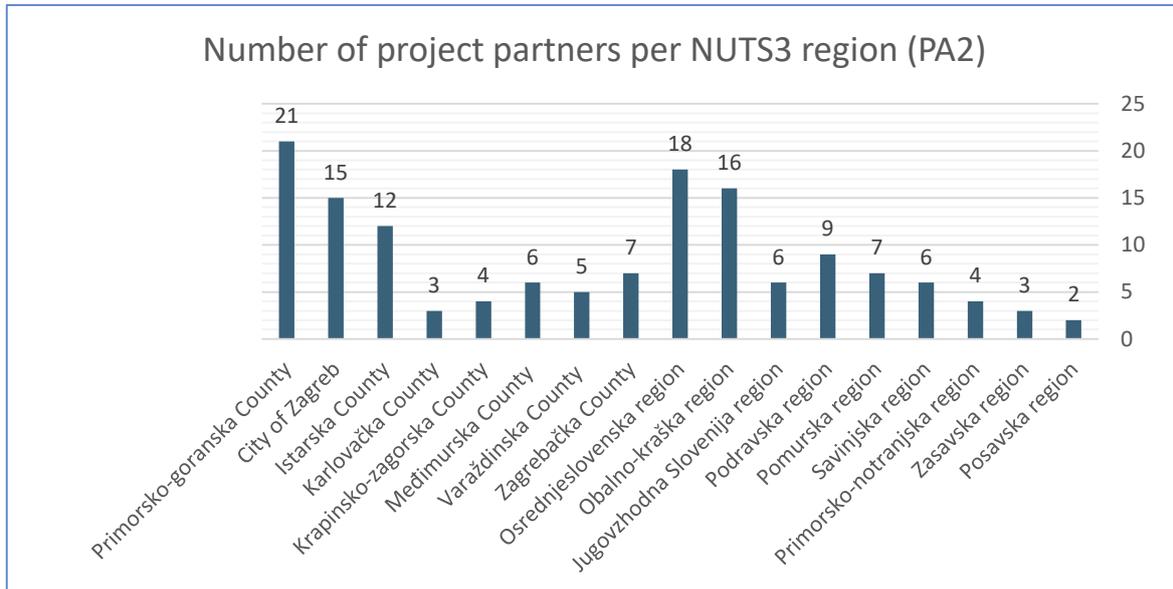
Figure 34 Number of projects per NUTS3 region within PA2



Source: Own elaboration

Considering the number of partners from a certain region that were taking part in projects within PA2, the distribution mostly follows the above. Five regions of the PA are represented with 10 or more project partners coming from a certain region: in Slovenia, most partners came from Osrednjeslovenska and Obalno-kraška region, while in Croatia most of the project partners came from Primorska-goranska, City of Zagreb and Istarska County. The listed regions can be considered the most affected in terms of strengthened capacities for the implementation of EU funded projects.

Figure 35 Number of project partners per NUTS3 region within PA2



Taking into account the number of projects implemented in a certain region/County as well as number of Project Partners coming from a certain region/County, the cross-border cooperation intensity within PA2 seems to be stronger in the southwestern part of the Programme area.

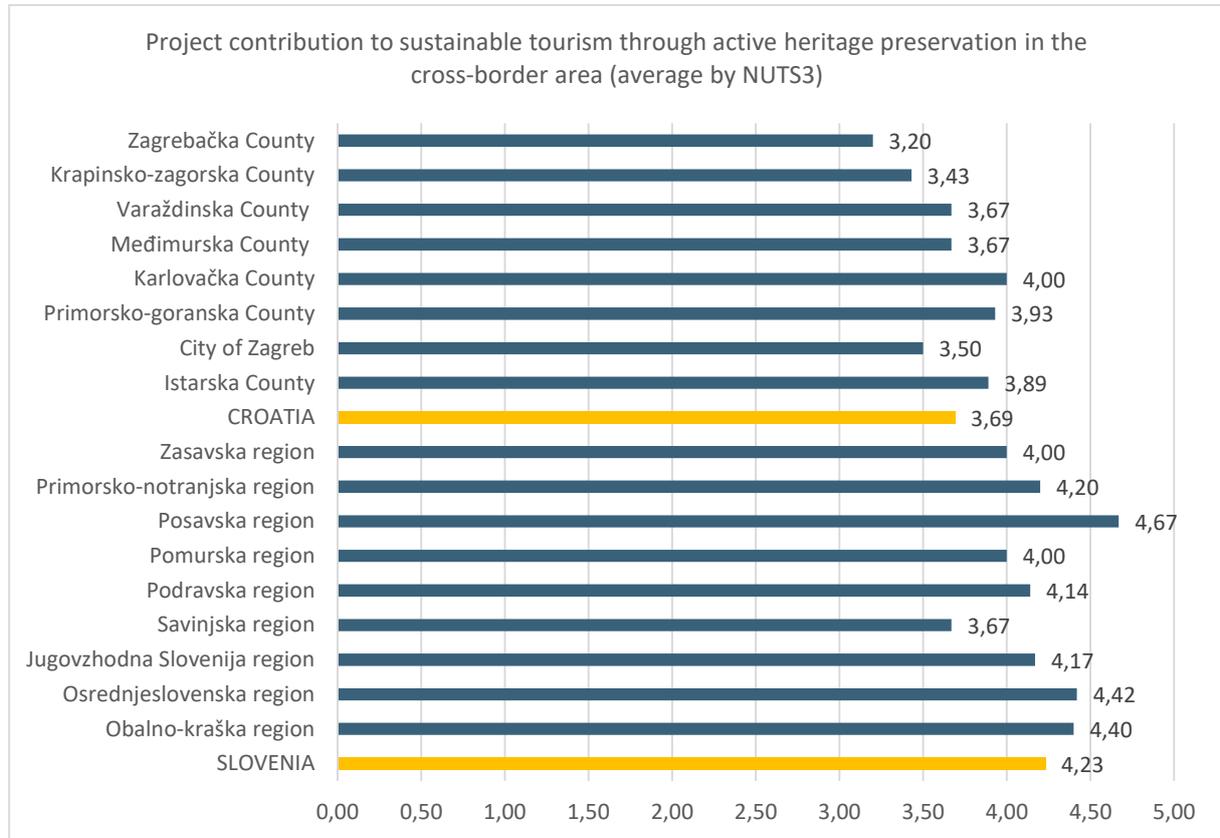
SO 2.1

According to assessment of the impact conducted within online-survey, interviews with beneficiaries and the analysis of project documentation, implemented projects within SO 2.1 resulted with the change as described in EQ4.

In assessing the contribution of the implemented projects to sustainable tourism through active heritage preservation in the cross-border area, in the online survey beneficiaries from Slovenia rated the contribution significantly higher than those from Croatia - average mark on Slovenian side was 4,23⁵¹, while on Croatian side average mark was 3,69. In several interviews, beneficiaries from Croatia have shared their perception that project partners on Slovenian side are "better organised" which might have affected the aforementioned result. Furthermore, in describing the potential for longer term impact of their projects, the interviewed Croatian beneficiaries were in general more negative compared to their Slovenian colleagues, especially when it comes to strategic embedding of their results on the national level.

⁵¹ On a scale from 1 to 5 (1= No contribution; 2=Small contribution; 3=Medium contribution; 4=Large contribution; 5=The project is the only contributor to the improvement)

Figure 36 Project contribution to sustainable tourism through active heritage preservation (SO 2.1)



Source: On-line survey

On the level of the NUTS 3 regions, beneficiaries from Posavska, Osrednjeslovenska and Obalno-kraška regions in Slovenia rate the contribution the highest, while on the other hand, beneficiaries from Savinjska, Pomurska and Zasavska⁵² regions believe that their projects have contributed less to sustainable tourism through active heritage preservation.

In Croatia beneficiaries from Karlovačka, Primorsko-goranska and Istarska County rate the contribution the highest. Beneficiaries from Zagrebačka County, City of Zagreb and Krapinsko-zagorska County feel that their projects have contributed less to sustainable tourism through active heritage preservation.

In order to further explore the territorial dimension of effects of projects implemented within SO 2.1, the evaluators conducted a spatial analysis of the newly developed tourist destinations/products within implemented projects, with the following assumption: the higher the number of newly developed tourism destinations a specific region/County is a part of, the higher the probability of the expected impact on this specific region/County and the target groups. The reasoning for such a criterion in explaining the potential impact (according to the Theory of change for SO 2.1) and identifying most affected regions is twofold: on the one hand, as already highlighted, no impact assessment framework has been developed within the Programme which would allow more precise measurement of impact, and on the other hand,

⁵² Between 1 (Zasavska region) and 22 (Osrednjeslovenska region) responses have been collected in the survey on Slovenian side. On Croatian side, between 5 (Karlovačka County) and 26 (City of Zagreb) responses have been analysed.

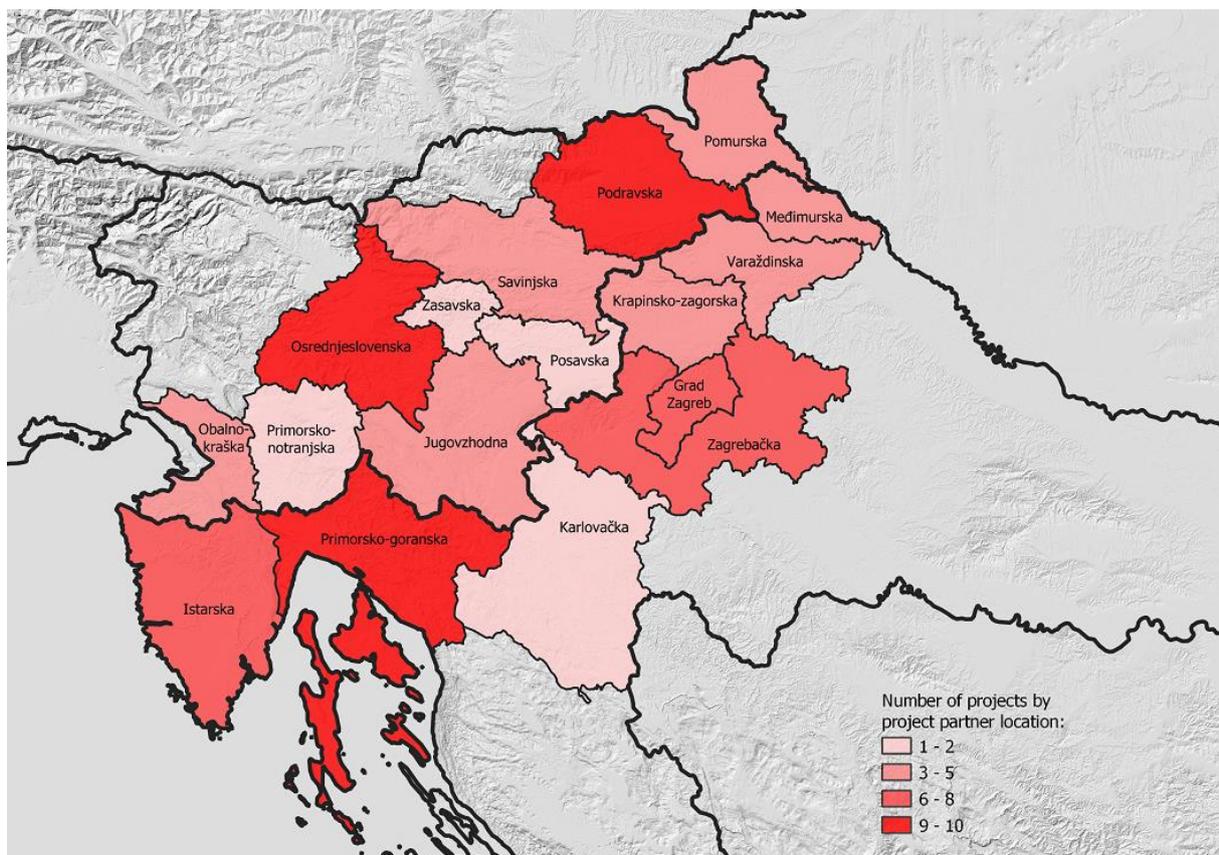
all the established tourist destinations contribute to long term sustainability of heritage sites in the CB area (which is the expected impact of the SO 2.1 as outlined in the OP) as they:

- have implemented the principle of active preservation of cultural/natural heritage sites;
- have developed new sustainable tourism offer based on natural/cultural heritage;
- have developed destination management models important for the sustainability of the new offer⁵³;
- have involved capacity building activities of different target groups as an important precondition of long term effects of the intervention.

Thus, the established tourist destinations and products within SO 2.1 directly contributed to introducing the concept of "active preservation" in living environment and increasing visits (as shown through the achievement of the result indicator 6cRI).

The Pictures 8 and 9 below show the relationship between involved regions based on the criterion of the location of project partners and the spatial analysis of the newly developed tourist destinations/products on the cross-border territory based on the criterion of the location of implemented activities, i.e. the integration of regions/Counties in the new tourism offer.

Picture 8 Distribution of regions / Counties as per taking part in the projects within SO 2.1

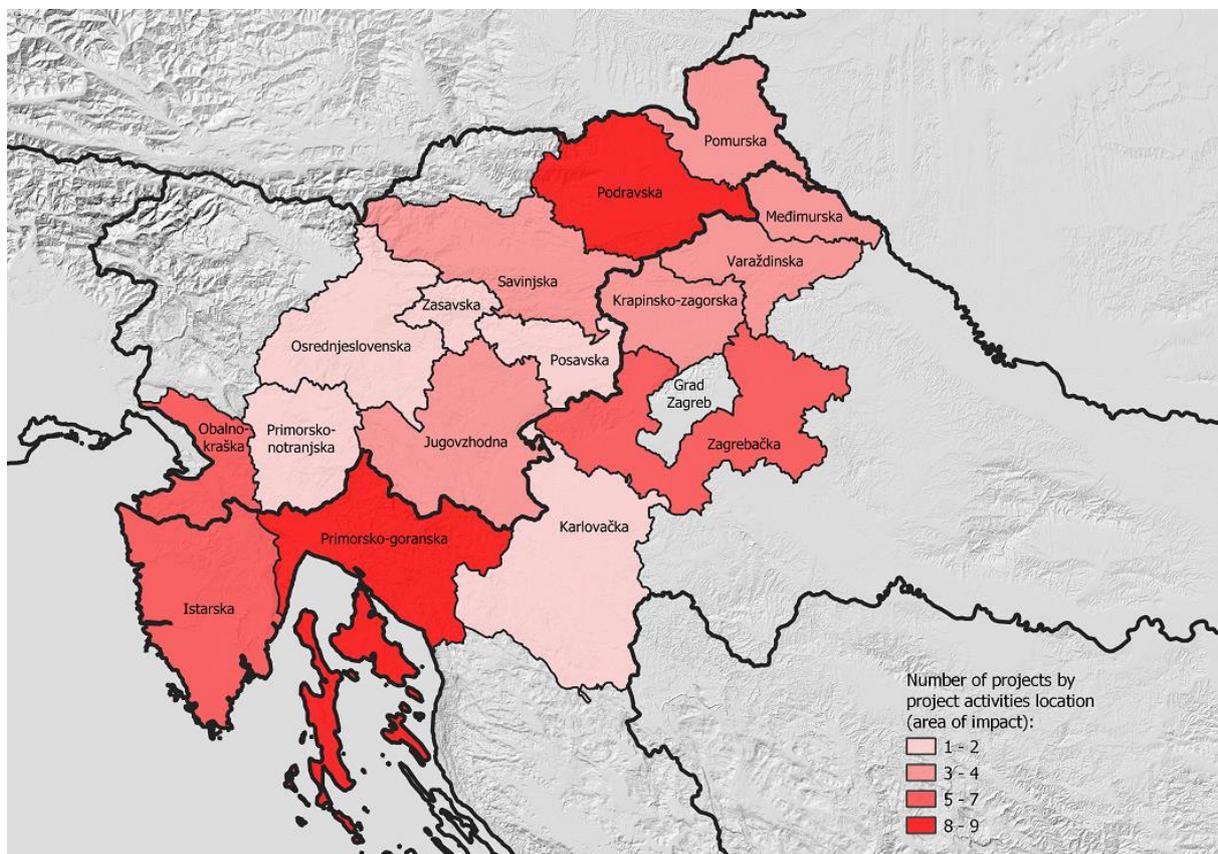


⁵³ Although the models have been developed, interviews with beneficiaries showed that the COVID pandemic has negatively impacted further joint work on the promotion and marketing of developed tourist products. Some of the Beneficiaries were positive in respect of resuming joint activities after the pandemic (although aware that continuity is important in such processes).

Source: Own elaboration (Disclaimer: Map of the programme area is without prejudice to the border between the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Croatia. Nothing in this document could prejudice the final delimitation between Croatia and Slovenia and the graphics and depictions of the border are exclusively for the purpose of this document.)

The territorial distribution of regions taking part in projects shows strong representation of regions where the capitals are placed - Osrednjeslovenska region and City of Zagreb. However, as explained above on the example of project KRASn'KRŠ, these two regions are in most cases not part of the newly developed tourist destinations/products, but the project partners from these regions were involved to support other partners with their knowledge and expertise. Thus, although recognizing that the partners from these two regions have been affected by the projects mainly through further strengthening their capacities and broadening network of contacts and potential future partners, these two regions are not considered stronger affected as shown on the chart below.

Picture 9 Area of impact in relation to active preservation and sustainability of heritage sites (SO 2.1)



Source: Own elaboration (Disclaimer: Map of the programme area is without prejudice to the border between the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Croatia. Nothing in this document could prejudice the final delimitation between Croatia and Slovenia and the graphics and depictions of the border are exclusively for the purpose of this document.)

As shown on the chart above, in Slovenia, Podravska region is leading the way in active preservation and increased quality, sustainability and attractiveness of heritage sites, followed by Obalno-kraška region. The least affected regions involve Primorsko-notranjska, Osrednjeslovenska, Zasavska and Posavska region. The most affected regions in relation to active preservation and sustainability of heritage sites in Croatia are Primorsko-goranska,



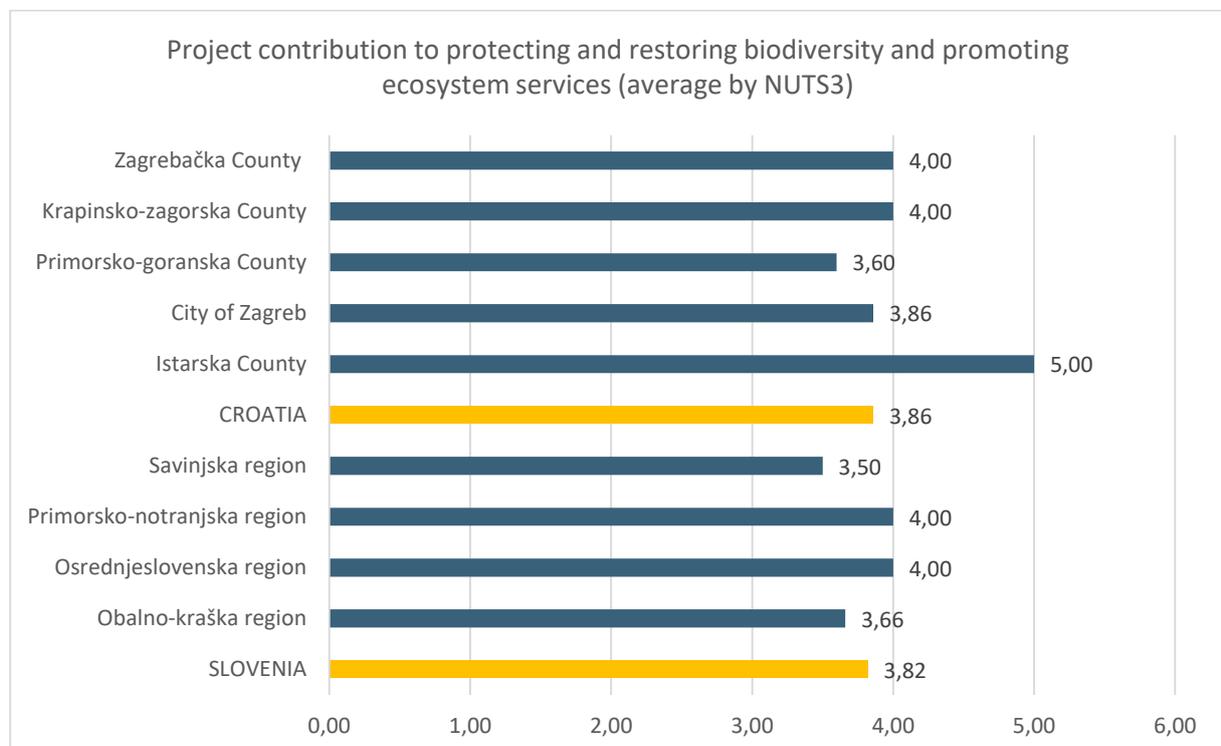
Istarska and Zagrebačka County. The least affected is Karlovačka County, whereas City of Zagreb in territorial respect is not considered affected.

SO 2.2

In relation to SO 2.2, four projects have been implemented aimed at protecting biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services. Although the projects resulted in common coordinated approaches, methods and solutions for monitoring and management of Natura 2000, increased knowledge of species and habitats and improved habitat conditions and conservation status of specific species, so far the impact mainly stayed local (although knowledge transfer to regions outside the project area took place as well - e.g. by inviting eminent experts on participation on the workshops, broader promotion of the VEZI NARAVE project, networking and knowledge transfer on different NATURA2000 areas has been enabled). As highlighted by one of the interviewees, on the local level, everything is doable, but when trying to transfer newly developed solutions on the national level, getting support for this process is not possible, as the decision-makers on the national level do not show interest in (at least what they believe to be) local problems.

In order to evaluate the impact of the projects within SO 2.2 on the territorial level, the beneficiaries of projects were asked to assess the contribution of their projects to protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services.

Figure 37 Project contribution to protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services (SO 2.2)

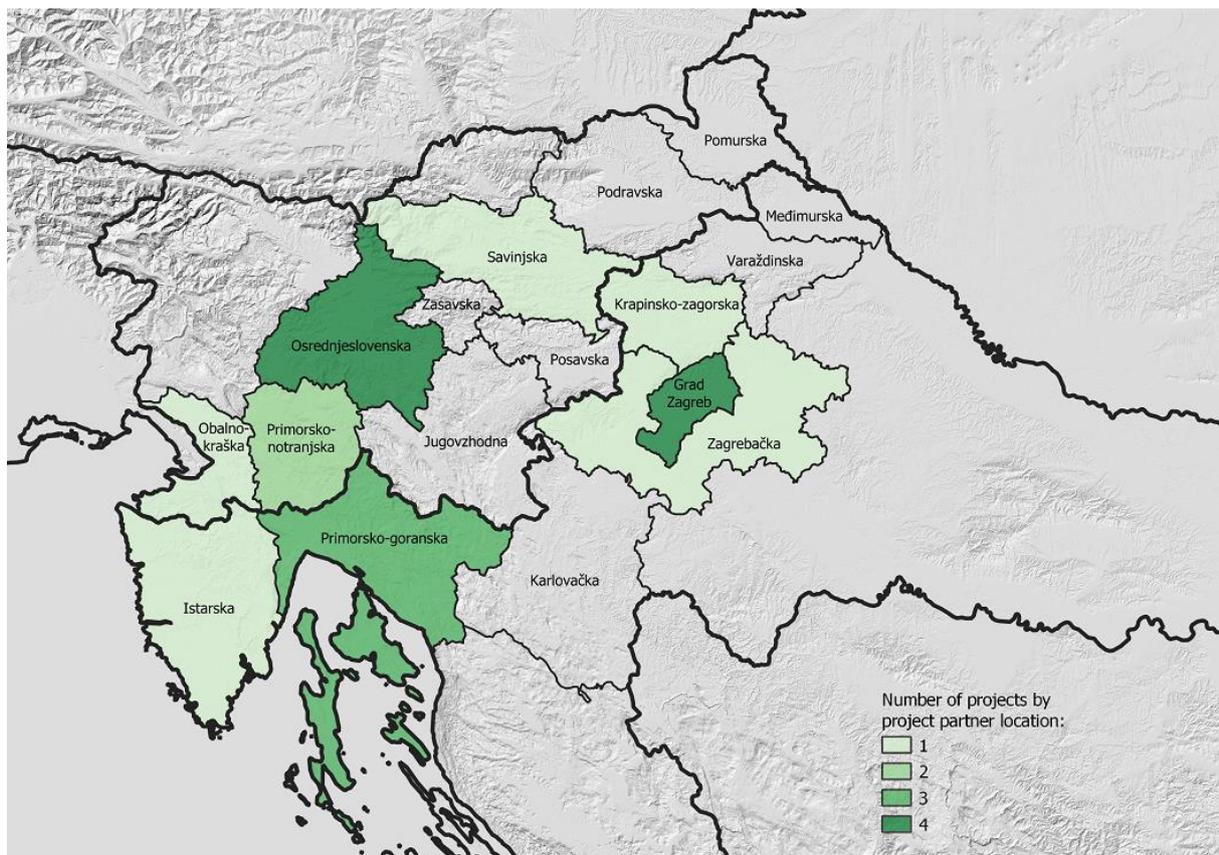


Source: On-line survey

When interpreting the above results, small sample size has to be kept in mind. On the level of the NUTS 3 regions in Slovenia and in Croatia, the average mark is almost the same when considering the whole project area.

The charts below show the involvement of regions/Counties in the four implemented projects by the location of project partners (Picture 10), as well as the area of impact of these projects (Picture 11). The assessment related to the area of impact is based on the location of activities (e.g. implementation of demonstration measures) which resulted in improved habitat conditions and conservation status of targeted species and increased knowledge of species and habitats, but involves also areas which were not part of the projects, but are expected to be affected by the project activities⁵⁴. On the other hand, City of Zagreb and Osrednjeslovenska region, although strong represented in the projects (judged by the location of project partners) are not perceived as affected in terms of expected impact within SO 2.2, again due to the reason that partners from these two regions were providing necessary knowledge and expertise to other partners and these two regions were mostly not affected by the project activities (Osrednjeslovenska is considered affected in one project).

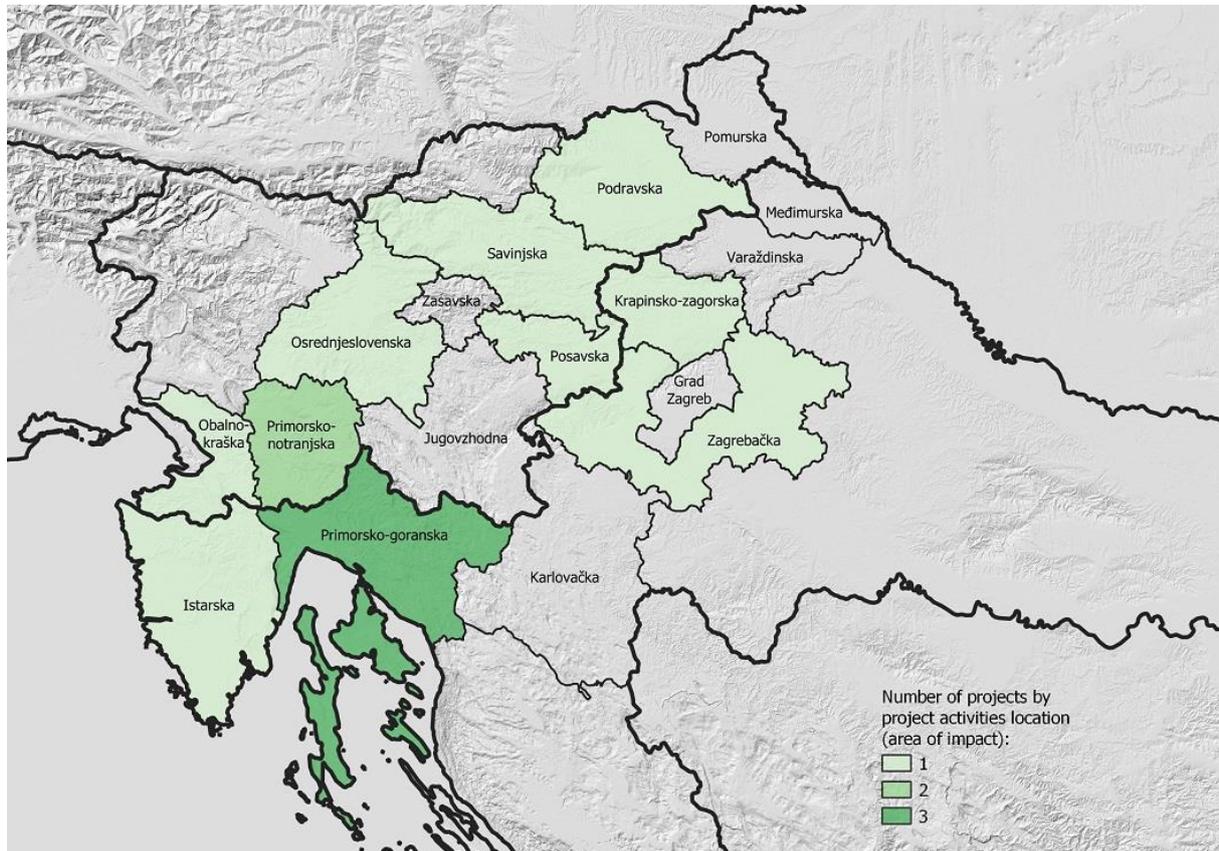
Picture 10 Distribution of regions / Counties as per taking part in the projects within SO 2.2



⁵⁴ Although Posavska region does not represent project area in terms of the two implemented projects within SO 2.2, the Cross-border Action plan for the protection of the continental tern population developed under the project ČIGRA recognizes this region as one of the target areas for the protection of terns as the hydroelectric power plant Brežice represents an important nesting ground for terns and thus the measures of the Action plan relate also to this area.

Source: Own elaboration (Disclaimer: Map of the programme area is without prejudice to the border between the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Croatia. Nothing in this document could prejudice the final delimitation between Croatia and Slovenia and the graphics and depictions of the border are exclusively for the purpose of this document.)

Picture 11 Area of impact in relation to protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services (SO 2.2)



Source: Own elaboration (Disclaimer: Map of the programme area is without prejudice to the border between the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Croatia. Nothing in this document could prejudice the final delimitation between Croatia and Slovenia and the graphics and depictions of the border are exclusively for the purpose of this document.)

Although only four projects have been implemented under SO 2.2 the concentration of joint CB activities in two regions can be observed - Primorsko-goranska County in Croatia and Primorsko-notranjska region in Slovenia. These two regions are considered the most affected in terms of contribution of the Programme to protecting biodiversity and ecosystem services as the majority of demonstration activities have been implemented in this area. The rest of the project area, excluding regions which were not involved in projects at all, seem to be equally affected by the Programme.

Overview of connections of actors within PA2

Some of the Lead/Project Partners within PA 2 have been involved in more projects. Following table presents such cases.



Table 20 Overview of partners participating in more than 1 project within PA2

Project partner	Involved in projects	SO
Primorsko-goranska County	Mala barka 2	2.1
	CLAUSTRA+	2.1
	CARNIVORA DINARICA	2.2
Zavod Republike Slovenije za varstvo narave	ENJOYHERITAGE	2.1
	CLAUSTRA+	2.1
	LIKE	2.2
	VEZI NARAVE	2.2
Pomorski i povijesni muzej Hrvatskog primorja Rijeka	Mala barka 2	2.1
	CLAUSTRA+	2.1
Prirodoslovni muzej Rijeka	CLAUSTRA+	2.1
	KRASn'Krš	2.1
	LIKE	2.2
Gradski muzej Varaždin	DETOX	2.1
	LIVING CASTLES	2.1
Javna ustanova "Park prirode Žumberak - Samoborsko gorje"	ENJOYHERITAGE	2.1
	Uživam tradicijo	2.1
Javna ustanova Nacionalni park Risnjak	NATURE&WILDLIFE	2.1
	CARNIVORA DINARICA	2.2
	VEZI NARAVE	2.2
Občina Piran	Mala barka 2	2.1
	Riviera4seasons2	2.1
Grad Vrbovsko	CARNIVORA DINARICA	2.2
	VEZI NARAVE	2.2
Univerza na Primorskem Universita` del Litorale	Riviera4seasons2	2.1
	LIKE	2.1
Zavod za turizem Maribor – Pohorje	ENJOYHERITAGE	2.1
	Prebujanje/Buđenje	2.1
Društvo za opazovanje in proučevanje ptic Slovenije	LIKE	2.2
	ČIGRA	2.2
Udruga BIOM	LIKE	2.2
	ČIGRA	2.2
Univerza v Ljubljani	kulTura	2.1
	PreHistory Adventure	2.1
	CARNIVORA DINARICA	2.2
Istarska County	Kaštelir	2.1
	LIKE	2.2



The above table gives a good insight into territorial capacities in relation to sustainable tourism and nature protection.

In following cases, the same two Partners are involved in the same two projects:

- Primorsko-goranska County and the museum Pomorski i povijesni muzej Hrvatskog primorja Rijeka are both taking part in projects Mala barka 2 and CLAUSTRAP+. Considering that these two partners also took part in the Mala barka project in the previous Programme period, it seems that this is an experienced and proven partnership for cultural heritage projects in the Primorsko-goranska County.
- The institute Zavod Republike Slovenije za varstvo narave and Prirodoslovni muzej Rijeka are both taking part in projects CLAUSTRAP+ and LIKE.
- Javna ustanova Nacionalni park Risnjak and Grad Vrbovsko are both taking part in projects CARNIVORA DINARICA and VEZI NARAVE.
- Društvo za opazovanje in proučevanje ptic Slovenije and the NGO BIOM are both project partners in projects LIKE and ČIGRA.

Along with the institute Zavod Republike Slovenije za varstvo narave, involved in four projects related to nature protection, Javna ustanova Nacionalni park Risnjak involved in three projects, Javna ustanova "Park prirode Žumberak – Samoborsko gorje" as well as Društvo za opazovanje in proučevanje ptic Slovenije and the NGO BIOM involved in two projects each, these institutions/organisations show greatest capacity and potential for dealing with nature protection projects in the Programme area.

Following is an overview of established networks and partnerships in the project implemented under PA2 which gives a good insight into territorial capacities.

Table 21 Overview of established networks and partnerships within projects implemented under PA2

SO	Project	Model of cooperation	
2.1	CLAUSTRAP+	Consortium	The mission of the Consortium is an integrated approach to management and tourism valorisation of heritage. It connects experts, local people and entrepreneurs in a network of 40 members that aims to develop the tourist product in a sustainable way. Creating synergies with other projects and partners interested in this thematic is an important topic of the Consortium.
2.1	Mala barka 2	Centre of Excellence	The Centre of Excellence has been established within the project in order to ensure sustainability, capacity building and further development of the new tourist product.
2.1	Riviera4Seasons2	Memorandum of Cooperation; Council	By signing the Memorandum of Cooperation both Tourist Offices have established two promotion centres. The Council for sustainable development of tourism in a cross-border destination was established.
2.1	Prebujanje	Agreement	Two local public authorities will be responsible for the continuation of RTC's activities and the maintenance of



			infrastructure, while all partners signed an agreement to ensure further cross-border cooperation and work on the sustainable development of tourism in the region.
2.1	Živa coprnija	Platform	The tourist product will therefore be created through the cooperation of all stakeholders of the area who will be connected to the Platform, which will, after the completion of the project, also take care of its active preservation.
2.1	ECool-Tour	Network	During the implementation of the project, networking was encouraged, intensified and formalised, which leads to a more lasting connectivity between Project Partners after the project is completed.
2.1	Misterion	Platform	A common platform for further development of the tourist product was developed during the project.
2.1	KRASn'Krš	Network	Four interpretation centres created a network for the future development of project products.
2.1	ZELENO ŽELIMO	Network	Partners have established a cross-border network during the project implementation that allows for knowledge and experience to be transferred. This network is the basis for further cooperation after finishing the project.
2.1	In cultura veritas	Agreement	Two Project Partners (sectoral agency and local public authority) concluded agreements on the use of museum equipment.
2.1	Inspiracija	Network	The project partners joined the already existing European thematic network ERIH (European Route of Industrial Heritage).
2.1	MINE TOUR	Agreement	Signed agreement on long-term cooperation between project partners in the development and marketing of cross-border tourist products.
2.1	LIVING CASTLES	Memorandum	Project partners signed a Memorandum of Participation, defining future steps and obligations of partners, with which the sustainability of the project and the tourist product should be ensured.
2.1	MITSKI PARK	Agreement	Signed agreement on the sustainability of direct effects and results by municipalities that were project partners.
2.2	VEZI NARAVE	Network	Vezi narave network of points has been established aimed at the improvement of the species' condition through further communicating ecosystem services.

The majority of interviewees confirmed that the partnerships established within the projects continue to exist after project implementation, although the impact of COVID pandemic on further joint work has been stressed.

Some of the projects within current Programme period (2014-2020) represent a continuation of projects/partnerships from the previous Programme period. An example is the project



RIDE&BIKE II as a continuation of previous project (RIDE&BIKE⁵⁵) which was implemented by the exact same partners. Another example is the project CLAUSTRA+ as a continuation of the CLAUSTRA project, although in this case the partnership has undergone some changes.

The potential for thematic expertise in a certain field in the PA is recognizable in the case of the CLAUSTRA consortium which continues to grow even after the project has been finalised. Its main aims are encouragement, coordination, long-term care and support in the development and implementation of activities and projects in the field of the Late Roman barrier system *claustra Alpium Iuliarum*. The Consortium brings together and coordinates the stakeholders of this heritage. With a clear vision and a defined annual plan, the Consortium is focused on small steps which are realised by the local partners bottom-up.

Another example of “hub” is the Centre of Excellence established within Mala barka 2, as a continuation of the previously established Centre within the Mala barka project.

Under the assumption that the project results are sustained, it is expected that the Programme area will benefit in the long run from tourism based on sustainable use of natural and cultural resources by improving its economic stability and recognizability. Factors that could contribute to the achievement of the expected impact cover the following aspects:

- Change already occurred as elaborated in the EQ4, assuming that it is sustained or even upgraded;
- The area along the transboundary rivers is mainly rural with quite good tourism offer and great potential for further development of green tourism;
- The Programme area is well accessible by international transport routes and
- The COVID pandemic has shifted the trend towards demand for proximity-based tourism, less crowded destinations in nature, and the open air;⁵⁶
- The Croatian Schengen entry is expected to lead to stronger movement of people from the cross-border area for tourism purposes but also to increased number of tourists from other Schengen countries to Slovenia-Croatia cross-border area.

On the other hand, the following obstacles need to be taken into consideration as well:

- Poor regional road infrastructure of the Programme area along with underdeveloped public transport and limited cross-border connections;
- Significant population decline in the Croatian part of the PA and
- Ageing of population in the whole PA.

SO 3.1

The expected long-term impact of SO 3.1 is the reduction of inequalities, improved living conditions and/or a higher quality of life for citizens of the region (e.g. improved health care

⁵⁵ This project has been implemented within the previous Programme period (2007-2013), from 1.2.2015 till 30.4.2016.

⁵⁶ First assessment of post-pandemic trends, available under <https://www.hotrec.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/SWD2021-164-final-1.pdf> (last visit: 29 November 2021)

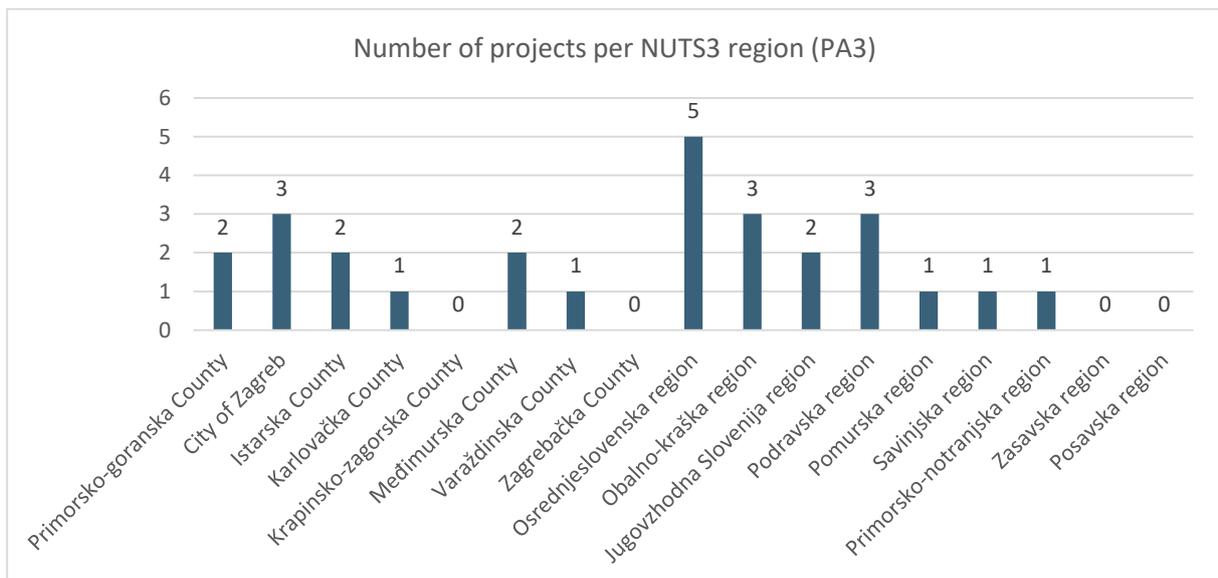


for specific population groups, etc.) as well as safer and more accessible tourist destinations for those visiting the area. This shall be achieved through the provision of new, enhanced or improved existing public health care, social care services, safety (civil protection, rescue and emergency services) and cross-border sustainable mobility services.

Within the eight projects related to SO 3.1, 43 partners took part, quite well balanced between Slovenia (23 partners) and Croatia (20 partners), with five Lead Partner roles on Slovenian side, and three Lead Partners coming from Croatia.

The distribution of regions taking part in the projects (by the location of the project partners), shows that in Slovenia Osrednjeslovenska, Obalno-kraška and Podravska region are the most represented. In Croatia, the City of Zagreb, Primorsko – goranska, Istarska and Međimurska counties take part in more than one project. Again, as explained in case of PA2, the overrepresentation of Osrednjeslovenska region and City of Zagreb clearly shows where the specific expertise (on institutional level) is mostly placed. An example is the project DEMENCA ACROSSLO, involving partners from both, Osrednjeslovenska region (Nacionalni inštitut za javno zdravje) and City of Zagreb (Hrvatska udruga za Alzheimerovu bolest), whereas the activities are being implemented in Istarska and Obalno-kraška region.

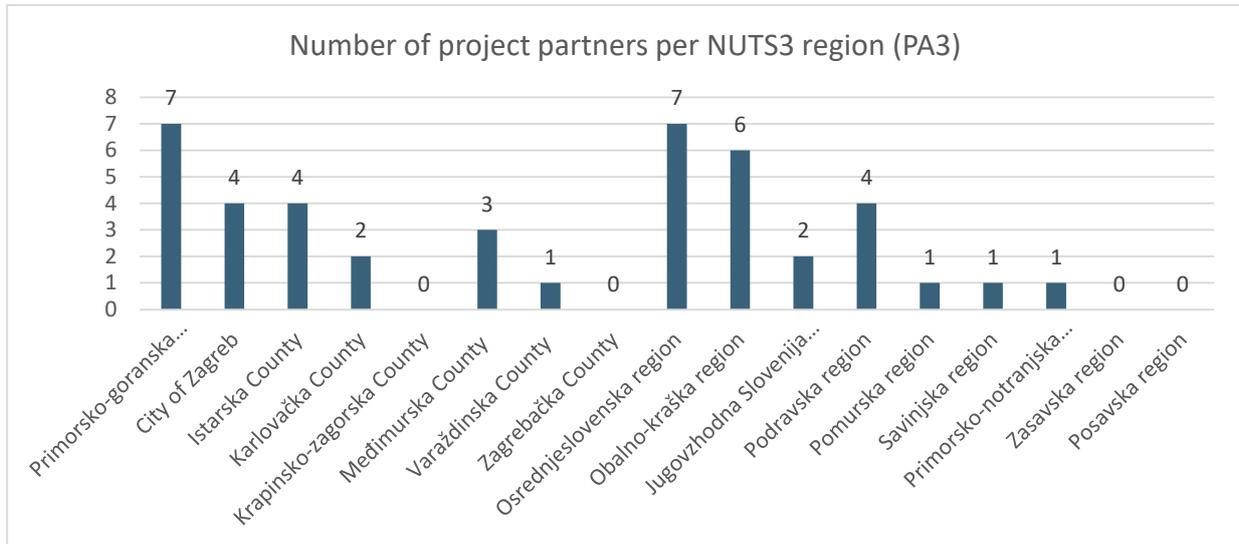
Figure 38 Number of projects per NUTS3 region within PA3



Source: Own elaboration

Considering the number of partners from a certain region, the distribution mostly follows the above except in the case of Primorsko-goranska County. In Slovenia, most partners are located in Osrednjeslovenska, Obalno-kraška and Podravska region. In Croatia Primorsko-goranska County is leading the way, followed by City of Zagreb and Istarska County.

Figure 39 Number of project partners per NUTS3 region within PA3



Cross-border cooperation intensity within SO 3.1 measured by the number of projects implemented in a certain region/County combined with the number of Project Partners coming from a certain region/County seems to be the strongest in the northern part and in the southwestern part of the Programme area.

In order to assess the territorial impact of the eight projects implemented within SO 3.1, beneficiaries were asked to rate the contribution of their projects to increased access (Figure 40) and quality (Figure 41) of services in public interest. Regarding the increase in access, the beneficiaries in Slovenia rated the contribution significantly higher than those from Croatia - average mark on Slovenian side was 4,00⁵⁷, while on Croatian side average mark was 3,64. Similar as in PA2, such difference could be connected with the fact that Slovenian partners were LBs in the majority of projects. Again, in respect of transposing the results of the projects on the national level, Croatian partners are more pessimistic judged by their statements in the interviews.

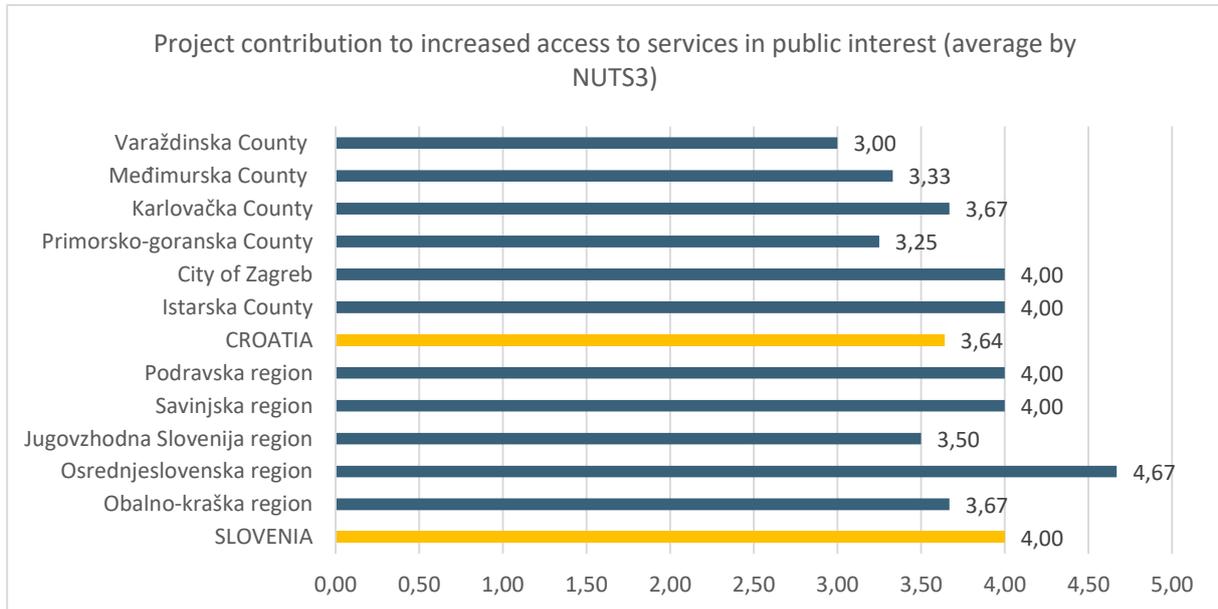
Furthermore, interesting is the case of Osrednjeslovenska region – partners coming from this region are highly inclined to evaluate the contribution as large or even declaring the project would be the only contributor to change. Such an assessment might be connected to the fact that in Osrednjeslovenska region mostly partners providing expertise are placed, while in other regions partners who actually provide public services are placed. It seems that the perspective of the “service providers” differs significantly from the perspective of the “expertise providers”.

On the NUTS3 level, in Croatia beneficiaries from City of Zagreb (again, mainly “expertise providers”) and Istarska County rated the contribution the highest. In Slovenia, beneficiaries from Podravska and Savinjska⁵⁸ region rated the contribution the highest.

⁵⁷ On a scale from 1 to 5 (1= No contribution; 2=Small contribution; 3=Medium contribution; 4=Large contribution; 5=The project is the only contributor to the improvement)

⁵⁸ Only one answer from Savinjska region has been noted as only one project partner was located in this region.

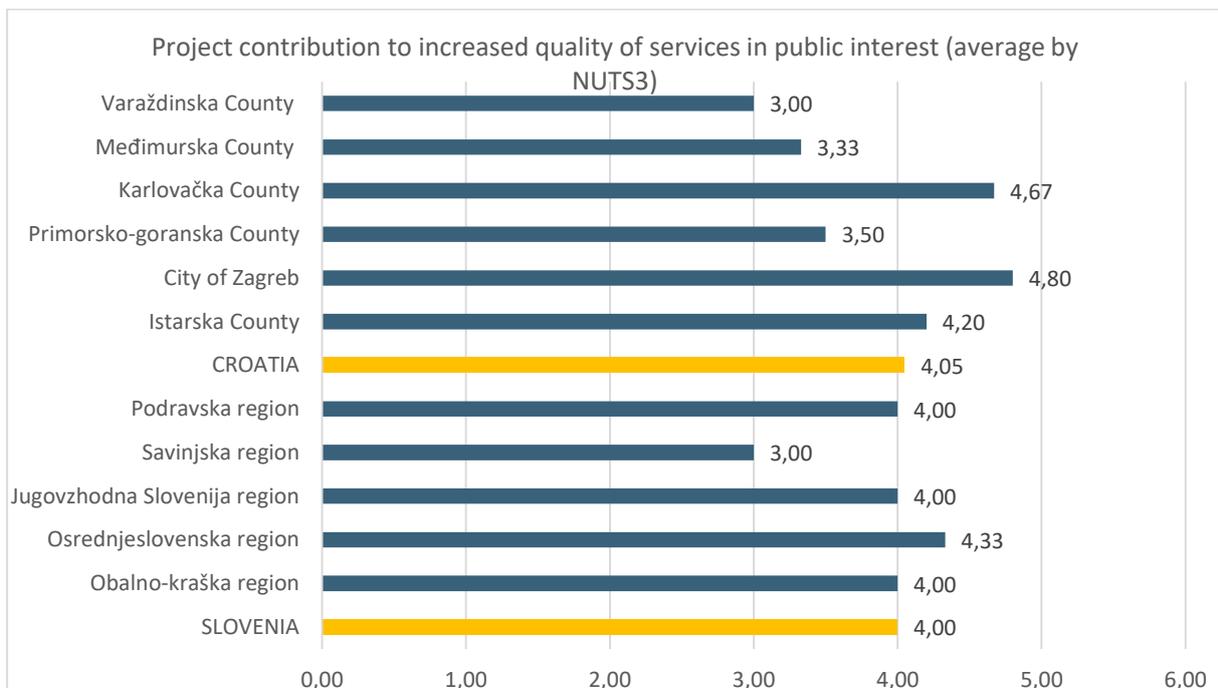
Figure 40 Project contribution to increased access to services in public interest (SO 3.1)



Source: On-line survey

In respect to the increased quality of the services, partners from both countries assessed the contribution of projects as large, as shown on the figure below. In Croatia beneficiaries from City of Zagreb and Karlovačka County rated the contribution the highest, while in Slovenia partners from Osrednjeslovenska gave the highest mark.

Figure 41 Project contribution to increased quality to services in public interest (SO 3.1)

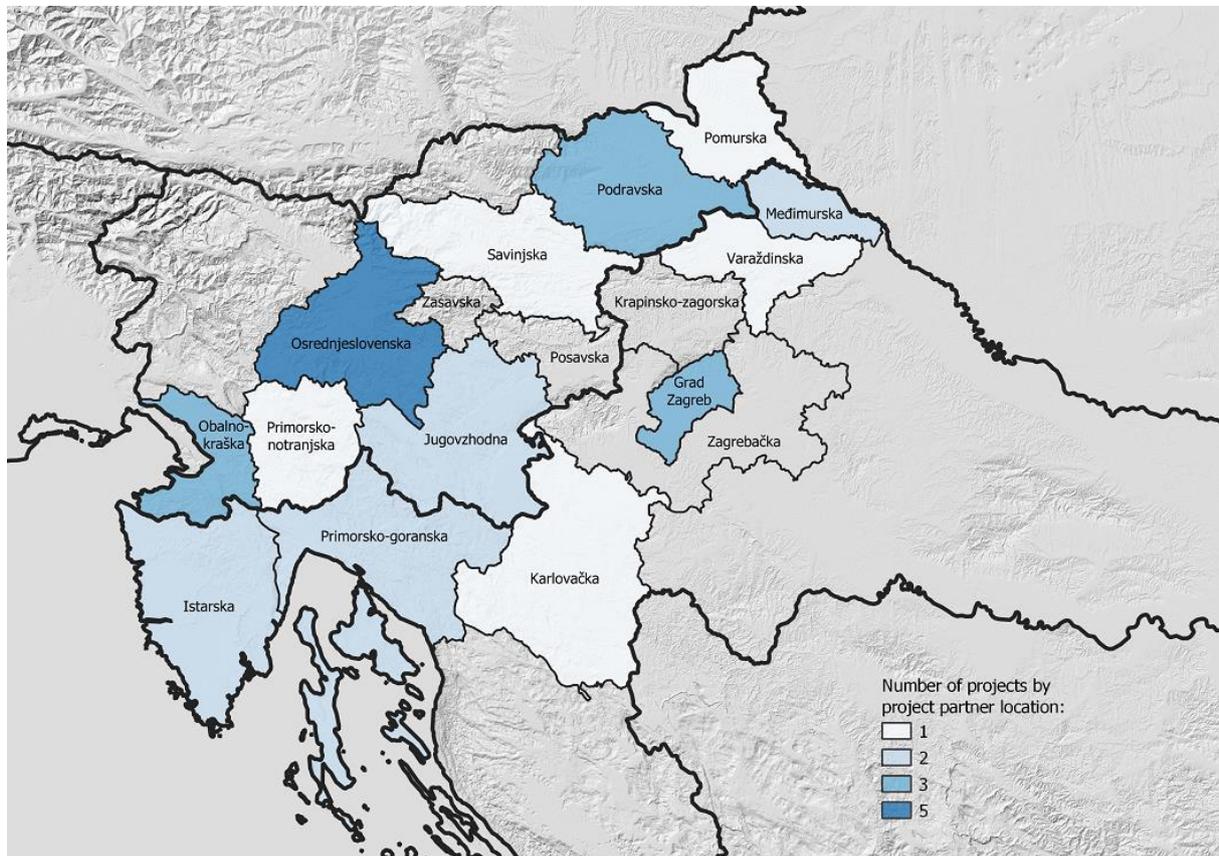


Source: On-line survey



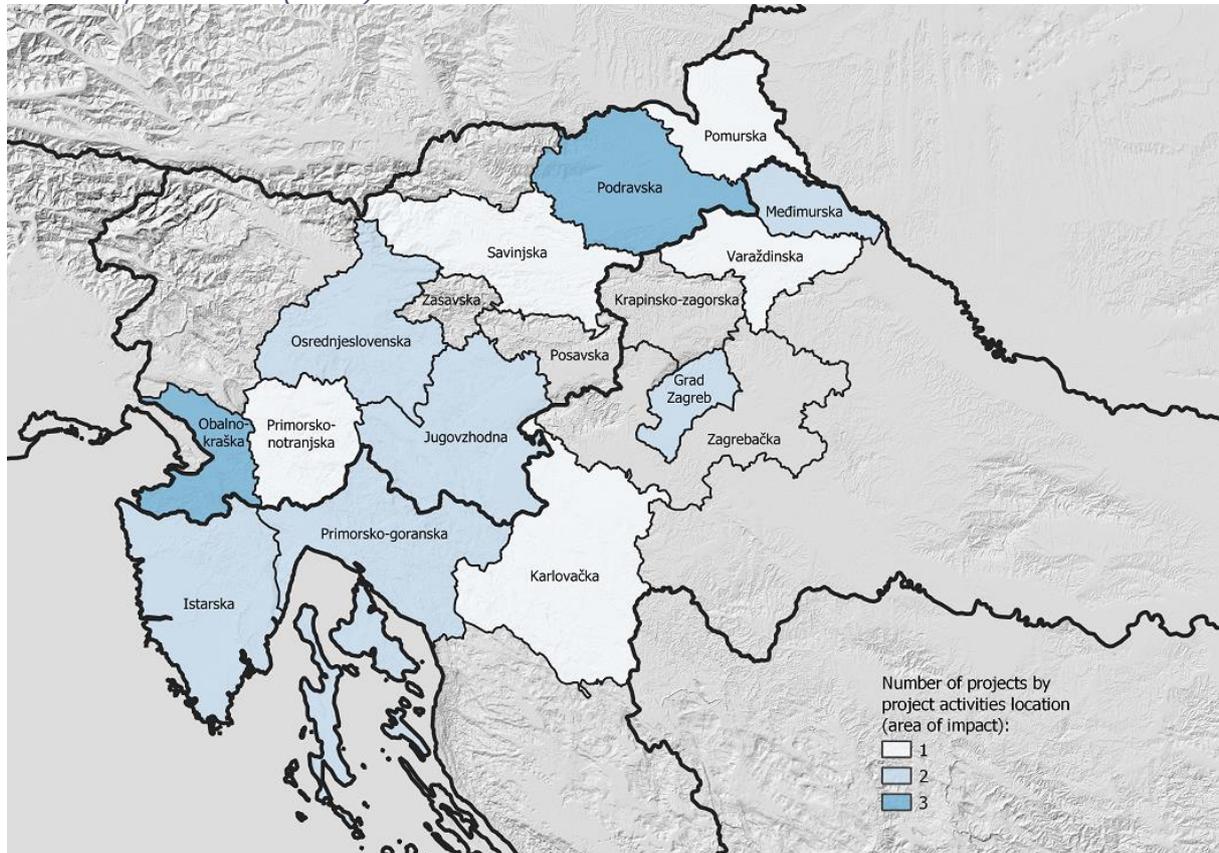
The below pictures display the relationship between regions/Countries involved in the project implementation (Picture 12) and the area of impact of the implemented projects judged by the location of the implemented activities (Picture 13).

Picture 12 Distribution of regions / Counties as per taking part in the projects within SO 3.1



Source: Own elaboration (Disclaimer: Map of the programme area is without prejudice to the border between the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Croatia. Nothing in this document could prejudice the final delimitation between Croatia and Slovenia and the graphics and depictions of the border are exclusively for the purpose of this document.)

Picture 13 Area of impact in relation to strengthened capacities and cross-border structures for the delivery of services in public interest (SO 3.1)



Source: Own elaboration (Disclaimer: Map of the programme area is without prejudice to the border between the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Croatia. Nothing in this document could prejudice the final delimitation between Croatia and Slovenia and the graphics and depictions of the border are exclusively for the purpose of this document.)

As shown above, regions/Countries most affected in terms of strengthened capacities of institutions and organisations involved in provision of services in public interest and strengthened cross-border structures that are expected to enable cross-border delivery of services in public interest include Podravska and Obalno-kraška region on Slovenian side, whereas in Croatia the impact is more evenly distributed among involved regions.

Related to connections of actors in specific sectors, following is an overview of networks and models of cooperation relevant for the sustainability and long-term effects of the implemented projects within SO 3.1.

Table 22 Overview of established networks and partnerships within projects implemented under PA3

SO	Project	Model of cooperation	
3.1	+Health	Agreement	During project implementation a cross-border Centre of Excellence +Health was established which gathers Project Partners as well as other relevant institutions within the project area. The Centre acts as a support structure for the establishment and promotion of the cross-border health destination "+Health".



3.1	2SoKrog	Agreement	A bilateral agreement was signed by 23 public bodies with defined activities after the project was completed
3.1	STAR	Agreement	During the project, a Cross-border Expert Committee was established. It prepared a document with proposals and the Cross-Border Deinstitutionalisation Development Programme, including the guidelines for the further and integrated deinstitutionalised development of the long-term elderly care and the participation of the institutions involved after the completion of the project. The Agreement on Cooperation which highlights an exchange of good practices and experiences of stakeholders has been signed.
3.1	CrossCare	Contract	The Lead Partner (infrastructure and (public) service provider) and all Project Partners (local public authorities and infrastructure and (public) service providers) signed the Long-Term Cooperation Contract.
3.1	Demenca aCROsLO	Agreement	Two Cross-border Working Groups have been established, the Multidisciplinary Group and the Social Work Group, by signing the Agreement on participation in cross-border working groups. The role of the WGs is to monitor the situation in the care system for people with dementia even after the completion of the project and to propose possible improvements of the system in Slovenia and Croatia. In addition, the City of Umag signed the Agreement on Accession to the International Initiative "Dementia Friendly Community" ⁵⁹ .
3.1	Emergency EuroRegion	Network	Established network of partner institutions in the cross-border area for the provision of high-quality and fast emergency services for all residents and visitors in the cross-border area of the Obalno-kraška Region and Istarska County.
3.1	HITRO	Bilateral charter	By signing the charter, the partners took formal commitment to further strengthening of public administration through promotion of legal and administrative cooperation and ensuring transfer of knowledge and practice, long-term cooperation and cross-border organization of joint exercises, as well as further joint development of cross-border protection and rescue system.
3.1	ENRAS	Agreement	Signed agreement on the establishment of a new cross-border structure to encourage cross-border cooperation in the field of protection, which will be financed by

⁵⁹ Main goals of the initiative are the recognition and diagnosis of dementia symptoms and the education of doctors and other medical, health and support staff as part of the improvement of health and social services.



			partners: Representatives of PPs became member of the Sub-commission of the Permanent Slovenian-Croatian Commission for implementing the Agreement between Slovenia and Croatia.
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Similar as in PA2, project beneficiaries declared the networks and partnerships established within projects are still functional and the cooperation is ongoing (in form of joint meetings, joint preparation of new proposals or similar). In case of the project HITRO, the signed bilateral charter represents a formal continuation of already existing one, but allows faster response in case of emergency.

Taking into consideration that at the present moment the occurred change encompasses pilot approaches, raised institutional capacities, strengthened cross-border networks and strategic documents developed but not accepted at the national level, it can be concluded that a solid basis for further development of such services has been established. One of the interviewees emphasized that even if the developed procedures were not accepted at the national level, local provision of such services can be continued as the improved access to health services is an important aspect of the quality of life.

It can be concluded that within SO 3.1 generating long-term effects and greater impact will depend on further resolving of legal and administrative barriers to stronger cross-border cooperation.

Key findings

- In general, the distribution of Lead/Project Partners under each of the SOs is quite well balanced, except for SO 2.2 where all 4 projects were led by Slovenian beneficiaries. Somewhat more projects were led by Slovenian LBs also within other SOs.
- In Croatia, the distribution of projects among eight participating counties is more balanced than in Slovenia, although in both countries all NUTS3 regions eligible to participate in the Programme have been involved in at least 2 projects.
- Overrepresentation of regions where the capitals are placed (Osrednjeslovenska and City of Zagreb) has been observed within all three PA's. In Slovenia more than 1/3 of all Lead/Project Partners come from Osrednjeslovenska region, while in Croatia almost 1/4 of all Partners is located in the City of Zagreb. Such a distribution clearly shows the concentration of the research, development and educational capacities in the two regions.
- Regarding the number of implemented projects as well as the number of project partners per NUTS3 region, in Slovenia Osrednjeslovenska, Podravska and Obalno-kraška region are leading the way, in both PA2 and PA3. In Croatia, within PA2 City of Zagreb, Primorsko-goranska and Istarska County represent the most "active" regions, based on the location of project partners. Within PA3 the representation of regions by the location of partners is quite evenly distributed – somewhat more involved were City of Zagreb, Primorsko-goranska, Istarska and Međimurska counties. The least



represented regions within PA2 are Karlovačka and Međimurska County in Croatia and Primorsko-notranjska, Zasavska and Posavska region in Slovenia. Within PA3 Karlovačka and Varaždinska were least represented in Croatia (Krapinsko-zagorska and Zagrebačka counties were not involved in projects at all), while in Slovenia Pomurska, Savinjska and Primorsko-notranjska participated in one project each (Zasavska and Posavska were not participating in projects).

- The representativeness of NUTS3 regions in project implementation corresponds to a great extent with the level of economic development meaning that a significant share of Programme budget is being allocated to the most developed urban regions.
- The cross-border cooperation intensity (judged by the number of projects implemented in a certain NUTS3 region combined with the number of Project Partners coming from a certain NUTS3 region) within PA2 is stronger in the southwestern part of the Programme area, while in PA3 the cooperation was more intense in the northern part and in the southwestern part of the Programme area.
- Slovenian project beneficiaries rated the contribution of implemented projects to Programme objectives significantly higher than their Croatian counterparts within SO 2.1 (4,23 out of 5 in Slovenia, 3,69 in Croatia), while within SO 2.2 and SO 3.1 there were no significant differences. In SO 2.1 project beneficiaries from Posavska, Osrednjeslovenska and Obalno kraška in Slovenia and Karlovačka, Primorsko-goranska and Istarska County in Croatia rated the contribution the highest. On the other hand, project beneficiaries from Zagrebačka, Krapinsko-zagorska and City of Zagreb in Croatia and Savinjska, Pomurska and Zasavska in Slovenia believe their projects have contributed less to sustainable tourism through active heritage preservation. Within SO 2.2, based on small sample size, project beneficiaries from Primorsko-notranjska and Osrednjeslovenska in Slovenia gave highest marks and beneficiaries from Savinjska lowest, while in Croatia partners from Istarska rated the contribution the highest and partners from Primorsko-goranska the lowest. The contribution of projects to increased quality and accessibility of public services within SO 3.1 was rated the highest in Osrednjeslovenska and Podravska region; in Croatia beneficiaries from City of Zagreb, Karlovačka, and Istarska County gave highest marks.
- The assessment of impact based on the location of implemented activities within PA1 is evenly distributed over all 6 river basins in relation to non-structural measures (FRISCO 1), while the implementation of structural measures affected following NUTS3 regions: Pomurska, Podravska, Savinjska, Posavska and Jugovzhodna in Slovenia, and Međimurska, Varaždinska, Krapinsko-zagorska, Zagrebačka and Primorsko-goranska County. Within SO 2.1 most affected regions/Counties in Slovenia include Podravska and Obalno-kraška region; in Croatia Primorsko-goranska County seems to be the most affected, followed by Istarska and Zagrebačka County. The least affected regions include Zasavska, Posavska, Osrednjeslovenska and Primorsko-notranjska regions in Slovenia and City of Zagreb and Karlovačka County in Croatia. Within SO 2.2 again Primorsko-goranska County is the most affected judged by the location of project activities, and in Slovenia Primorsko-notranjska region. The most affected regions within SO 3.1 in Slovenia are Obalno-kraška and Podravska region. Pomurska, Savinjska and Primorsko-notranjska were less affected. In Croatia, the impact is more



evenly distributed among Istarska, Primorsko-goranska, Međimurska and City of Zagreb, with Varaždinska and Karlovačka County being least affected.

- The combination of beneficiaries' assessment of effects achieved with the territorial distribution of project activities and results (location of activities) shows correspondence in following cases: within SO 2.1 most affected regions are Obalno-kraška in Slovenia and Primorsko-goranska and Istarska County in Croatia; within SO 2.2 Primorsko-notranjska is most affected combining the two criteria and in SO 3.1 Podravska region in Slovenia and Istarska County in Croatia are the most affected.
- At this moment, a contribution towards strengthening possible functional areas cannot be confirmed. However, some kind of territorial "hubs" (clustering of partners around specific thematic fields within more than one project) could be identified. In some cases, some of the projects within current Programme period represent a continuation of projects/partnerships from the previous Programme period (relevant for SO 2.1).
- The evaluators identified limitations of the impact evaluation in terms of timing but also related to the fact that the Programme indicators monitor output and result indicators, but no framework for impact assessment has been designed within the Programme.
- In describing project outputs, beneficiaries do not always clearly show where exactly in the project area will the outputs be "placed" and therefore it is not always possible to assess which exact territory will be influenced by specific project outputs.



3. Recommendations

Based on the key findings defined in the previous sections, the evaluators defined recommendations directly deriving from these. The table below contains recommendations for the Programme period 2021-2027 divided into recommendation on strategic level and recommendations on operational level.

In addition, the justification for each recommendation proposed is being provided in form of a connection with a relevant key finding. The relation with DAC criteria⁶⁰ is presented as well.

At the present moment, the Programme capacities in terms of human resources for implementing the Programme seem to be extremely tight (as observed during interviews with Programme bodies' representatives) and for this reason some of the below recommendations might not be applicable without increasing human resources of the Programme.

⁶⁰ OECD DAC criteria provide a normative framework used to determine the merit or worth of an intervention (policy, strategy, programme, project or activity). They serve as the basis upon which evaluative judgements are made. Available at <http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.html>



Table 23 Recommendations

Level	Recommendation	Justification (Connection with key finding)	Connection with DAC criteria
Strategic level	The intervention logic was consistent and should be followed in the same way during the next Programming period.	The implemented projects are very well aligned with the intervention logic of the CP. The evaluators could not identify any inconsistencies. All implemented projects contributed to output and result indicators as defined by the CP. A high level of consistency between intervention codes and CP's specific objectives has been observed.	Relevance
Strategic level	Put stronger focus in the new Programme on mobility and connectivity projects	Within the 2014-2020 Programme period only one project related to connectivity and mobility has been contracted, whereas the public transport and especially sustainable mobility options in peripheral and remote areas remain underdeveloped.	Relevance
Operational level	The guidance documents for the next Programme period should keep the practice of detailed and precise requirements for projects to be approved under each priority in the new IP (i.e. in the form of guiding principles implemented within this Programme period or similar) to ensure	The addition of required and additional guiding principles in this Programme period was a success because of their impact on stronger result orientation and the fulfilment of Programme objectives. For this reason, the evaluators advise to continue with a similar practice also in the	Relevance



	that projects are fully in line with the expectations of the next IP.	next Programme period.	
Operational level	Further simplification and reduction of administrative burden (i.e. through simplified cost options where applicable) in order to speed up the process of approving reports and reimbursing costs	The most important barrier factors on the Programme level that were hampering the achievement of project results were delays in approving reports and administrative burden.	Effectiveness
Operational level	Consider longer duration of projects related to SO 2.2 and SO 3.1.	Longer duration of projects would enable greater effects in the environmental protection domain (SO 2.2) and allow more opportunities for testing developed solutions on a larger scale under SO 3.1.	Effectiveness
Operational level	More specific explanation of state aid legal framework with prominent examples (in workshops for potential applicants or on the Programme's website) is needed with regard to involving SMEs as project partners.	The procedures related to state aid connected with involving SMEs have been highlighted as a barrier (leading either to abandoning the idea of involving SMEs as Project Partners or to different than planned budgeting of certain project activities).	Effectiveness
Operational level	For better reaching general public, it is recommended to use channels such as social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc.). To maintain the visibility, social network channels need constant updates and a developed strategy.	The achievement of Communication strategy objectives is progressing very well, but some additional improvements should be made in communication with the general population. The only indicator far from achieving its target value is	Effectiveness



		<i>Recognizability of the CP Interreg SI-HR</i> (according to the last available data from 2019 Evaluation of efficiency and effectiveness Report, obtained on the basis of the survey).	
Operational level	In the new Programme period consider putting stronger emphasis on the capitalisation of project results achieved within the 2014-2020 Programme period.	Predominance of short-term effects has been observed, where in case of infrastructure issues with sustainability have been raised. It seems that one cycle of funding has not been sufficient to ensure self-sustaining infrastructure and contents, which is partially also a consequence of the COVID pandemic.	Sustainability
Operational level	In order to foster capitalisation within new Programme period, the accessibility of projects' results should be improved by building a more systematic data repository.	Projects within all specific objectives took into account the means of capitalisation and its benefits. Good capitalisation potential was observed in all four specific objectives, but in many cases projects' results have not been systematically presented and made available.	Sustainability
Operational level	Stronger cooperation and synergies between similar projects should be encouraged through facilitating thematic workshops and thus contributing to forming thematic networks.	Lack of synergies between projects of similar thematic or projects implemented in the same geographical area has been observed. This represents missed opportunity for generating stronger effects and thus	Impact



		contributing to sustainability of interventions.	
Operational level	The IP should be very clear in describing the expectations towards the integrated approach to territorial development per each of the proposed interventions. Additionally, within workshops for potential applicants more focus could be put on this topic.	Within the SO 2.1 it was observed that in some cases the integrated approach to territorial development was understood as separate conduction of jointly developed activities (or, i.e. establishing separate "bodies" in each of the regions in charge of some specific task relevant for the whole area), but without truly integrating activities across border. Such a finding was also confirmed during interviews with the representatives of Programme bodies.	Impact
Strategic level	For projects aimed (among other) also at elaboration of joint cross-border plans and strategies stronger involvement of decision-makers at national levels (i.e. as asociated partners) is needed in order to achieve better impact (i.e. to integrate newly developed strategies or models of work into the national strategic umbrella).	As a major barrier to increasing the impact of the CP interventions the evaluators identified insufficient political backing. Projects often result in social innovation or development of strategic document related to a specific field, but without the political support, these are not further capitalised or not to that extent which would be possible with the stronger political support.	Impact
Strategic level	Consider a strategic approach for a stronger involvement of	The representativeness of regions/Counties in the projects strongly	Impact



	peripheral, rural areas in the new Programme period to avoid mostly concentrating future projects in the most developed regions.	corresponds with their level of economic development (especially under SO 2.1).	
Strategic level	More focus should be put on strengthening the existing networks and partnerships in the new Programme period (rather than creating new ones), as they show more potential for stakeholder gathering and thus stronger influence also on national level.	In general, judging on the change occurred so far, and under specific assumptions, good prospects for the achievement of the expected impact exist. At this moment, a contribution towards strengthening possible functional areas cannot be confirmed. However, in some cases longer-term partnerships have been observed: some of the projects within current Programme period represent a continuation of projects/partnerships from the previous Programme period (relevant for SO 2.1)	Impact
Operational level	In order to better follow territorial impacts of the (future) Programme, it is recommended to add if possible to the application form a notice on where exactly in the project area the project outputs will be "placed" as an obligatory element (whenever possible).	In describing project outputs, beneficiaries do not always clearly show the territorial dimension of the outputs and in some cases, it is not possible to assess which exact territory will be influenced by specific project outputs.	Impact



4. Work plan and project team involvement

This chapter describes the operative structure of our project team, professional relations within the team, and how we will ensure the implementation of activities arising from the project task. We also provide a detailed description of the professional qualifications of our team leader and senior experts, their role in the project team and the transparent distribution of their tasks and responsibilities. The role of junior expert that will provide technical and management support, including the structure of administrative-logistical support through which we will further optimize the project management processes, is also presented.

For the purpose of this project, the structure of the project team is entirely based on the principle of multi-disciplinarity and complementarity, supported by the engagement of renowned experts in accordance with their experience in given key areas. This multi-disciplinary approach has so far resulted in a series of successfully implemented projects, many of which included complex evaluation procedures within strategic planning, regional and rural development and national policies, both in Croatia and abroad. Therefore, we believe that the combination of our expertise, as well as our rich professional experience, is the biggest guarantee for success and accomplishment of the purpose of this project task.

WYG Consulting Ltd., based in Zagreb, has a wide profile of experts in the socio-economic and technical sector, and has so far implemented more than 200 projects in Croatia and the South East European region, from multi-million contracts to smaller projects. Our users are public administration bodies, companies, universities and faculties, NGOs and other public and private institutions.

4.1. Roles of project team members

In this part we describe in detail our project team, their knowledge and experience, and how we fully satisfy the complex requirements of the project task and thus secure successful implementation of procurement objectives. Below we provide an overview of the operational structure of the project team, a schematic overview of the established functions, and descriptions of expert qualifications and the required experience. Detailed presentation of the above-mentioned elements will confirm the high expertise of the entire project, which also implies constant access to the required expertise, as well as continuous support of logistics. We also note that all our experts who will carry out the evaluation will respect the principles of impartiality and independence in order to ensure credible and objective evaluation results.

As can be seen from the structure below, the Team leader will be responsible for day-to-day management of the project. Also, the implementation of the project requires strong, yet flexible management and administrative-logistical support, which will ensure quality and smooth implementation of all activities, especially from the technical point of view. This support will be provided by experienced administrative-logistical personnel, while the entire operational framework will be managed by the Team leader.



Table 24 Formal structure of the project team

Position	Expert name	Role
Team leader	Mladen Vojković	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Holding an initial project meeting – „Kick off meeting“ ▪ Mobilisation of non-key experts ▪ Identification of data sources ▪ Developing a detailed evaluation methodology ▪ Drafting and submitting the Inception Report ▪ Preparation of desk analysis (focus on SO 3.1) ▪ Mapping key stakeholders ▪ Organisation of tasks related to conducting interviews, surveys and analysis of case studies ▪ Preparation and submission of the draft final version of the Impact Evaluation Report (focus on SO 3.1)
Senior expert 1	Jelena Kljaić Šebrek	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identification and assessment of different data sources ▪ Production of Repository ▪ Development of the methodology for evaluating the impact of the Interreg IPA Programme ▪ Preparation of the Inception Report ▪ Preparation of desk analysis (focus on SO 2.1, SO 2.2 and SO 3.1) ▪ Participates in drafting and final document evaluation reports (focus on SO 2.1, SO 2.2 and SO 3.1)
Senior expert 2	Emma Zimprich Budanović	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identification and assessment of different data sources ▪ Production of Repository ▪ Development of the methodology for evaluating the impact of the Interreg IPA Programme ▪ Preparation of the Inception Report ▪ Conduction of interviews ▪ Preparation of desk analysis (focus on SO 1.1, SO 2.1, SO 2.2 and SO 3.1) ▪ Participates in drafting and final document evaluation reports (focus on SO 1.1, SO 2.1, SO 2.2 and SO 3.1)
Senior expert 3	Vanja Hazl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identification and assessment of different data sources ▪ Production of Repository ▪ Development of the methodology for evaluating the impact of the Interreg IPA Programme ▪ Preparation of the Inception Report ▪ Preparation of desk analysis (focus on SO 3.1) ▪ Conduction of interviews ▪ Participates in drafting and final document evaluation reports (focus on SO 3.1)



<p>Senior expert 4</p>	<p>Antonia Gverić</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Identification and assessment of different data sources ▪ Production of Repository ▪ Development of the methodology for evaluating the impact of the Interreg IPA Programme ▪ Preparation of desk analysis (focus on SO 1.1, SO 2.1 and SO 3.1) ▪ Participates in drafting and final document evaluation reports (focus on SO 1.1, SO 2.1 and SO 3.1)
<p>Senior expert 5</p>	<p>Bianka Logožar</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preparation of desk analysis (focus on SO 2.1 and SO 3.1) ▪ Participates in drafting and final document evaluation reports (focus on SO 2.1 and SO 3.1) ▪ Conduction of interviews
<p>Junior expert and Project coordinator</p>	<p>Mona Manojlović</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support for the drafting of the Inception Report ▪ Support in the preparation of the evaluation methodology ▪ Assistance in analysing the data obtained, defining the conclusions and findings of the evaluation ▪ Conduction of interviews ▪ Assistance in drafting the final Impact Evaluation Report ▪ Coordination of administrative and logistical support of the project office ▪ Communication to the expert team and to the Client in terms of administration/logistics ▪ Responsible for financial management, invoicing and payments and cash management ▪ Responsible for the transfer and organisation of all project deliveries ▪ Responsible for organising project events



Table 25 Involvement of project team members by activities

Phase/Activity	Project Team Member
1. INCEPTION PHASE	
Activity 1.1. Holding an initial project meeting Delivery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick-off meeting with the Client • Minutes from the initial meeting 	Responsible persons: Mladen Vojković Mona Manojlović Other members provide inputs.
Activity 1.2. Identification of data sources and preparation of a detailed methodology for impact assessment Delivery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repository of available programming documents • A detailed methodology for impact assessment has been developed 	Responsible persons: Mladen Vojković Vanja Hazl Jelena Kljaić Šebrek Other members provide inputs.
Activity 1.3. Preparation of Inception report Delivery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inception report (draft) has been prepared and sent for commenting 	Responsible persons: Mladen Vojković Mona Manojlović Other members provide inputs.
Activity 1.4. Revising of Inception report according to delivered comments Delivery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inception report has been approved 	Responsible persons: Mladen Vojković Jelena Kljaić Šebrek Other members provide inputs.
2. IMPLEMENTING PHASE	
Activity 2.1. Desk analysis of available documentation Delivery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written analysis of available documentation 	Responsible persons: Emma Zimprich Budanović Vanja Hazl Antonia Gverić Other members provide inputs.
Activity 2.2. Mapping of key stakeholders Delivery:	Responsible persons: Emma Zimprich Budanović Vanja Hazl



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mapped key stakeholders by different categories 	<p>Jelena Kljaić Šebrek</p> <p>Other members provide inputs.</p>
<p>Activity 2.3. Preparation and implementation of semi-structured interviews</p> <p>Delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interview carried out 	<p>Responsible persons: Mladen Vojković Vanja Hazl Mona Manojlović</p> <p>Other members provide inputs.</p>
<p>Activity 2.4. Preparing and conduct of the survey</p> <p>Delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared and conducted survey 	<p>Responsible persons: Mladen Vojković Vanja Hazl Mona Manojlović</p> <p>Other members provide inputs.</p>
<p>Activity 2.5. Preparation of the draft Impact Evaluation on completed projects</p> <p>Delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Impact Evaluation report has been prepared 	<p>Responsible persons: Mladen Vojković Vanja Hazl Emma Zimprich Budanović</p> <p>Other members provide inputs.</p>
<p>Activity 2.6. Presentation of the draft Impact Evaluation at MC meeting</p> <p>Delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Impact Evaluation report has been presented 	<p>Responsible persons: Mladen Vojković Vanja Hazl Mona Manojlović</p> <p>Other members provide inputs.</p>
<p>Activity 2.7. Upgrade of the Impact Evaluation with the rest of projects and presentation to MC</p> <p>Delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact Evaluation report has been prepared and upgraded 	<p>Responsible persons: Mladen Vojković Vanja Hazl Mona Manojlović</p> <p>Other members provide inputs.</p>
3. FINAL PHASE	
<p>Activity 3.1. Preparation of final Impact Evaluation Report</p> <p>Delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared Evaluation report 	<p>Responsible persons: Mladen Vojković Vanja Hazl Mona Manojlović</p> <p>Other members provide inputs.</p>
<p>Activity 3.2. Approval of final Impact Evaluation Report</p> <p>Delivery:</p>	<p>Responsible persons: Mladen Vojković</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approved Evaluation report	Other members provide inputs.
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5. Implementation Timeline

This section outlines an indicative work plan and activities to be implemented over the 17 months overall implementation of this Contract. The main purpose of the elaboration of the work plan is to show that, when considering the proposed approach to this task, the needs and expectations of the Contracting Authority have been placed first and that a plan that is realistically feasible has been carefully prepared and which guarantees a timely realization of expected results within the given framework of anticipated entries of working days of our experts.



Table 26 An overview of the schedule of activities throughout the duration of the contract

An overview of the schedule of activities throughout the duration of the contract is shown in the following table:

Activity		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
		2021					2022											
		Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1.	Inception phase																	
1.1.	Holding a kick-off meeting																	
1.2.	Identification of data sources and preparation of a detailed methodology for impact assessment																	
1.3.	Preparation of Inception Report																	
	Submitted Inception Report																	
1.4.	Revising of Inception Report according to delivered comments																	
2.	Implementation phase																	
2.1.	Desk analysis of available documentation																	
2.2.	Mapping of key stakeholders																	
2.3.	Preparation and implementation of semi-structured interviews																	
2.4.	Preparing and conducting of the survey																	



Annex 1. Case study – CrossCare

Project Description	
Name	An integrated approach to home care for the elderly (ENG) Integriran pristop oskrbe starejših ljudi na domu (SLO) Integriran pristup skrbi za starije osobe u kući (CRO)
Acronym	CrossCare
Total Budget	1.052.257,68 EUR
EU co-financing	894.418,99 EUR
Duration	1.9.2018. – 31.8.2020. (24 months)
SO	3.1 Building partnerships among public authorities and stakeholders for healthy, safe and accessible border areas
Partners	
N. of Partners	6 partners
Lead Partner	Ljubljana Home Care Institution (SLO)
Other Partners	City of Ljubljana (SLO) Domiciliary Help Center Maribor (SLO) Health Center Čakovec (CRO) Institution for Home Care Zagreb (CRO) City of Zagreb (CRO)

1. Project summary

The common challenge of the Programme area that this project addressed was the trend of aging population. The need to formally organize the area of the domiciliary care for the elderly is increasing partly because of the aging population and partly because of modified socially-cultural norms. The main common goal of the project was to establish a new structure of cross-border cooperation to ensure an integrated approach to home care for the elderly, which is primarily focused on developing a programme for implementing an integrated approach to home care, which combines social and health services into a complete comprehensive solution. Key objectives of this project were: Better access to health services and social protection and Raising employee competencies and skills.

The purpose of establishing a new inter-institutional cross-border cooperation structure between Project Partners was to establish cooperation between partner institutions in the field of health and social protection, which resulted in the development of a comprehensive, substantively completed and realistically tested programme for implementing an integrated approach to care for the elderly. The Project Partners joined forces in a consortium of a new cross-border cooperation structure with the main goal of mutual transfer of knowledge, information and good practices. Therefore, this project contributed to the Programme-specific



objective 3.1 "Building partnerships among public authorities and stakeholders for healthy, safe and accessible border areas".

2. Progress of activities

The first activity that this project conducted was the development of an integrated home care programme for the elderly that developed a new, comprehensive and above all, innovative service, which combines social and health care services. The second activity was the establishment of the cross-border cooperation which was conducted through six meetings of Project Partners and that resulted with an Agreement on long-term cooperation defining the cross-border structure of cooperation, its operation, rights and duties of relevant Project Partners and other stakeholders. The third activity was connected with design of an ICT platform which served as a tool that facilitates the work of professional staff and facilitates an overview of the performed activities. The fourth activity of this project was the joint training of occupational therapists where a proportionate share of education was also devoted to practical presentation. The fifth activity included mutual trainings conducted through several events transferring the good practices within the partnership. The sixth activity was linked to the internal trainings given the specific needs of employees based on the activities they performed as part of the project. The seventh activity was the demonstration of new services in which the planned methods, expert foundations and sustainability of the new approach was tested. The last activity was the optimization that focused on the optimized process for implementing an integrated approach to home care. All project activities were successfully conducted.

In the fourth reporting period, the project was faced with the emergence of the COVID-19 virus. Project Partners were prevented from carrying out the activities such as the final conference in Zagreb and the implementation of the project partner meeting. In order to achieve all of the goals that were set in the project application, Project Partners adapted to the situation and conducted the activities through an on-line application with the help of short films. The final conference was also held through an on-line application with over 300 participants.

The project has experienced a slight delay in some project activities in the first reporting period because there were some deviations connected with hiring educated and highly qualified staff which resulted in loss of staff costs. Namely, it was in some cases very difficult to find suitable professional candidates that have experience in the specific field, e.g. the problem in this case was that the Beneficiary committed to hire physiotherapists and occupational therapists with at least three years of work experience in the specific field, which was very difficult to achieve in Maribor. As hiring occurred few months later, the use of funds in the next reporting period was higher than planned.

The representative of the Lead Partner has also stated in the interview that there was a problem with payment delay, because the first report was filed in January and they received the funds almost eight months later. Moreover, the representative noted that it was sometimes



difficult to cope with the eMS system which can seem complicated at first and sometimes can be very slow.

3. Project results and impact

This project has managed to achieve all expected results and exceed one of them. The first main project result was the establishment of a new cross-border cooperation structure which involves six institutions. The second project result was the implementation of a new service of an integrated approach to home care for the elderly within the cooperation structure and this result was also fully achieved. The last project result was raising the level of professional competencies and skills, which exceeded the planned indicator of 140 persons, reaching 266 persons with improved skills and competences.

The target groups of this project included national public authorities, sectoral agencies, infrastructure and (public) service providers, higher education and research institutions, SMEs, local public authorities, interest groups including NGOs and general public. Moreover, all set target values of the target group coverage were met or exceeded. The expected impact on the target groups was to improve their competencies and skills which will result in the quality and quantity of service delivery, with special emphasis on offering a comprehensive service.

The key cross-border added value of this project is the contribution to the reduction of inequalities in and between regions in the cross-border area, as all professionals employed by Project Partners equally participated in the development of their competencies and the creation of a single work programme, while the beneficiaries got the opportunity of equal access to home care, according to their needs. According to web survey results, other cross-border added values include establishing sectoral cross-border partnerships and networks, improving cultural understanding and trust, improving or transferring knowledge about a specific problem common to the cross-border territory and the introduction or testing of new cross-border integrated services and products.

4. Sustainability and capitalisation

Sustainability of the project was primarily ensured by the Programme for the implementation of integrated home care services. Furthermore, the transferability of immediate effects and results was enabled by the Programme for the implementation of integrated home care services (independently or through the ICT platform). Namely, the Programme can be used by practically any institution inside and outside the Programme area. The established structure of cooperation will also operate sustainably, which was supported by the concluded Agreement on Cooperation which highlights an exchange of good practices and experiences of stakeholders.

The representative of Project Partners highlighted the fact that the City of Zagreb, City of Ljubljana and City of Maribor provided additional financing and thus ensured the sustainability. The City of Zagreb ensured further financing of five employees employed through the project after the project was finished, while the City of Ljubljana gave funds to Ljubljana Home Care



Institution for financing an occupational therapist. City of Maribor is financing newly hired occupational therapist and physiotherapist in the Domiciliary Help Centre Maribor.

One of the Project Partners has mentioned in the web survey that they would apply for a new project in the implementation period 2021-2027 to capitalize on the results of this project.

Regarding capitalisation of project results, the project was aimed at creating an expert basis for the normative regulation of the home care service in Slovenia, the new long-term care act. During the interview the representative of Lead Partner could not provide information whether the developed integrated approach to home care for the elderly which combines social and health care has been incorporated into the final proposal of the new act.

5. Horizontal issues

Regarding sustainable development, the biggest contribution of the project was connected with the social components of sustainable development, as the project contributed to the reduction of inequalities in the field of social and health protection. The project created new jobs and the project results can serve as a tool for achieving sustainable implementation of activities.

Moreover, the Lead/Project Partners employed highly qualified professional staff, selected solely on the basis of their knowledge, positive professional and work references. All members of the professional staff were available to beneficiaries, regardless of origin, race or religion, and beneficiaries have accepted them in such roles.

All Project Partners were committed to equality between men and women. Both genders participated in the project to the same extent and beneficiaries did not have any problems when it comes to working with a male or female expert.



Annex 2. Case study – KRASn'Krš

Project Description	
Name	Ohranjanje in valorizacija dediščine ter razvoj trajnostnega turizma v čezmejni kraški pokrajini / Zaštita i valorizacija baštine te razvoj održivog turizma u prekograničnom krškom krajoliku
Acronym	KRASn'KRŠ
Total Budget	1,524,792.25 EUR
EU co-financing	1,296,073.40 EUR
Duration	30 months; 01.09.2017.-29.02.2020.
SO	2.1 Active heritage preservation through sustainable tourism
Partners	
N. of Partners	7
Lead Partner	Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, LP (SI)
Other Partners	Utilities and housing company L.C. Sežana, PP (SI) Public Agency Škocjan Caves Regional Park, PP (SI) Institute Factory of sustainable tourism, Ljubljana, PP (SI) Natural history museum Rijeka, PP (HR) Municipality of Punat, PP (HR) Muses Ltd consulting and managing in culture and tourism, PP (HR)

1. Project summary

This project addresses three issues that are common to karst landscapes and areas in both Programme countries. Firstly, it stems from the need to actively reverse the trends of deterioration of natural resources and intensive depopulation, especially in rural areas. Secondly, it aims to address the challenge of modernising tourist services in the area. And thirdly, this project addresses the fragmentation of tourist offers and the lack of connections between already well-known destinations and its hinterland.

The project's key objective is the preservation of natural and cultural heritage of karst landscapes by establishing a common sustainable tourist offer in four typical karst landscape types and their heritage: lowland, contact, Alpine, and maritime karst. Inherently to the main objective, the project aims to achieve three specific objectives: 1) modernising and linking tourist offers, 2) active heritage preservation, 3) heritage interpretation and tourist promotion.

Karst landscape is common to both Croatia and Slovenia and its natural and cultural heritage, history and tradition encompass influences and inputs from both countries, which is why a cross-border approach was indispensable for dealing with the three above-mentioned issues.

This project contributes to SO 2.1, Active heritage preservation through sustainable tourism, by preserving natural and cultural heritage of karst landscapes, and simultaneously increasing their sustainability, attractiveness and visibility as tourist destinations.



2. Progress of activities

The project started on 1 September 2017 and the official end date was 29 February 2020. Fortunately, as all project activities ended right before the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in the area, there were no difficulties for project implementation caused by the pandemic. However, most of organised school visits to the four Interpretation centres that were planned after the official end of the project had to be cancelled due to the start of the pandemic.

Project Partners have reported some delays in submitting two progress reports, due to delays in reporting from all project partners, but also delays in implementing certain implementation work packages on time. According to the final progress report, work package T1 was finalised two months after the planned date (extended from September 2019 to November 2019), due to prolonged terrain evaluation of karst hotspots. Work package T2, which included the establishment of four Interpretation centres (IC), formally ended in July 2019, but due to very demanding coordination and cooperation work between the four ICs, activities in this work package continued, with the approval of JS, beyond its formal completion. Implementation of work package I2 was slightly delayed due to the insufficient organisational and financial capacity of the responsible Project Partner (Municipality of Punat), which was solved by enhancing the cooperation with other project partners. However, these delays did not have any negative influence on the overall project implementation as all planned activities were concluded by 29 February 2020.

Identified challenges include organisational and financial capacity of project partners, obtaining necessary building permits, and finalising certain activities within the planned timeframe. All challenges were successfully solved, and valuable lessons were learnt for future project planning, such as early detection of possible organisational and financial issues and the benefit of joint problem-solving when such issues arise (as it was the case with implementing the work package I2). Another valuable lesson that was learnt during the project, as indicated by one of the Project Partners in the interview, is that project results can easily be transferred to other areas: "The interpretation planning process itself can be carried out anywhere outside the karst landscape. My colleagues and I have used this knowledge in many other projects, because we have learnt this through this project and through Interpret Europe courses."

3. Project results and impact

The project managed to achieve all the expected results, with the key result being an increased recognisability of karst heritage, reflected in the increased number of visitors in the area, four Interpretation centres and polygons, four heritage areas and their hinterlands. Another key result are increased job opportunities in the area (mainly in tourist sector) and enhanced cooperation through an integrated approach of preserving heritage and promoting karst landscapes as tourist destinations. Some of the early achievements of the project were: the preparation of expert texts, photographs and references that will be exhibited in Interpretation



centres, the identification of karst hotspots (places that are assessed to have potential for developing quality tourist offers), and setting up an official Facebook page. In the later stages of the project, new tourist offers and products were developed, such as KarstTrail (biking and hiking trails connecting karst hotspots) and 4Karst (these products connect and market the joint tourism offer of all four interpreted types of karsts). Also, one of the most notable results is the Handbook for heritage interpretation, which provides valuable insights into the heritage interpretation terminology and the process of heritage interpretation planning.

Project Partners have not reported any results which were not initially foreseen, whether positive or negative.

One factor that has accelerated the achievement of project results is the involvement of private sector in the project, which has led to a more productive and faster implementation, better project results and their sustainability. Hereby, it is noteworthy to emphasise the contribution of one of the project partners, Muses Ltd consulting and managing in culture and tourism. Their contribution was crucial for preparing the interpretation strategy, Handbook for heritage interpretation, IC inventory, and in helping with digital and promotion activities. On the other hand, some hindering factors were very strict public procurement rules and overburdening of project coordinators.

The project targeted eight groups of stakeholders and all target values were fulfilled: four local and one regional public authority in four areas where ICs were established; seven infrastructure and (public) service providers, such as museums, parks and public institutions; 17 higher education and research institutions; 30 education/training centres and schools; 15 SMEs; 15 interest groups including NGOs; and more than 100,000 people through social media and local, regional and national TV coverage. The impact on these groups is reflected mainly in improved tourist offer, increased number of visitors, but also in increased knowledge and awareness of the importance of preserving natural and cultural heritage of karst areas.

Three key cross-border added values were identified, and these are the following: improvement/transfer of knowledge about a specific issue that is common to the cross-border area; introduction/testing of new cross-border integrated services and products; introduction of a new cross-border monitoring/evaluation system.

4. Sustainability and capitalisation

Project Partners have plans to continue with project activities beyond the duration of the project, and they have secured necessary human resources. However, financial resources are still lacking, so they are more than willing to apply for another project in the 2021-2027 period in order to capitalise on the results of this project. The project results are owned by the project partners, they are available online and they can be reused/upscaled. The greatest potential for sustainability, according to one representative of project partners, lies in four heritage interpretation plans and the skills that were acquired during the process of conceptualising them.

One key factor for sustainability and capitalisation is the continuation and enhancement of already established cross-border partnership and cross-sector cooperation network between



different stakeholders, which was achieved by setting up a cross-border functional karst landscape area. Sustainability and capitalisation potential has already realised in reusing project results and transferring knowledge to project Kaštelir, also funded by the Programme⁶¹. KRASn'KRŠ and Kaštelir projects achieved a great synergy by sharing data, skills and ideas between the two project teams. Also, the project team of Kaštelir could draw inspiration from the KRASn'KRŠ project results, which facilitated the implementation of their project activities and visualisation of their future project results.

5. Horizontal issues

The project contributes positively to sustainable development, as it deals with the active preservation of nature and cultural heritage. Also, by activating natural and cultural heritage as tourist destinations, the project increases awareness of the local population about their identity and environment. Furthermore, by instigating sustainable tourism activity, the project contributes to the green and sustainable economic growth of the project area. The project's positive contribution to equal opportunities and non-discrimination is reflected in project events that were open and accessible to everyone, while gender equality has been considered during every stage of project preparation and implementation, including equality of genders within the project team and in hiring any additional staff during the project implementation.

⁶¹ Project Kaštelir is not covered by this Draft final report, but it will be in the final version of Impact Evaluation which will be submitted in September 2022.



Annex 3. Case study – Frisco 2.2

Project Description	
Name	Cross-Border Harmonized Flood Risk Reduction 2.2 - Structural Measures in the Mura river basin (ENG) Čezmejno usklajeno zmanjševanje poplavne ogroženosti 2.2 - gradbeni ukrepi na porečju Mure (SLO) Prekogranično usklađeno smanjenje rizika od poplava 2.2 - građevinske mjere na slivu Mure (CRO)
Acronym	FRISCO 2.2
Total Budget	2.995.195,18 EUR
EU co-financing	2.545.915,90 EUR
Duration	1.9.2018. – 31.8.2021. (36 months)
SO	1.1 Flood risk reduction in the transboundary Dragonja, Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla, Drava, Mura and Bregana river basins
Partners	
N. of Partners	2 partners
Lead Partner	Directorate for Waters of the Republic of Slovenia (SLO)
Other Partners	Croatian Waters (CRO)

1. Project summary

The common challenge of the Programme area that this project addressed was improvement of environmental conditions and adaptation to climate change. The need to improve the flood defence system is increasing because the climate change is expected to result with even more extremes which are connected to floods that are major threat to the people and their settlements. The main common goal of the project was to reduce the flood risk in the cross-border region by construction and reconstruction of the high-water embankments to protect the Benica and Sveti Martin na Muri settlements and its inhabitants from flood risk. Key objective of this project was flood risk reduction in the Mura river basin which was achieved through construction of a Benica and reconstruction of Sveti Martin na Muri high-water embankment that will prevent the repetitive threat of floods on 295 people and their property.

As threat of floods on transboundary river basins is increased by insufficient cooperation in the flood risk management, purpose of developing inter-institutional cross-border cooperation structure between Project Partners was to benefit from the joint development and implementation of the proposed structural measure in the project area and to build on the activities conducted through FRISCO 1 project. Having significant experience working on similar projects, Project Partners joined forces with the main goal of improvement of flood defence system and transfer of knowledge. Therefore, this project contributed to the Programme-specific objective 1.1 Flood risk reduction in the transboundary Dragonja, Kupa/Kolpa, Sutla/Sotla, Drava, Mura and Bregana river basins.



2. Progress of activities

The first activity that this project conducted under Work package 1 was conducting procurement process for construction works and construction supervision for the construction of the Benica flood embankment. Second activity within this Work package was construction of the embankment that includes the construction of a new embankment, upgrading of parts of existing embankments, drainage, transit ramps, access roads and other works. Finally, the third activity was connected with management and coordination of WP1 in order to ensure successful implementation of the investment package. First activity under Work package 2 was connected to preparatory activities that include the finalization of the procurement process for construction works and construction supervision of the dike reconstruction in Sveti Martin na Muri. Moreover, second activity of WP2 was connected to reconstruction work of the dike that implies the height increase of existing dike and achieving the required degree of water sustainability of the dike. Third activity under this Work package referred to management and coordination of the whole Work package in order to effectively monitor and coordinate the whole process. All project activities were successfully conducted.

The project has experienced a delay in WP Management, WP Communication and WP1 activities from the first reporting period due to unavailable funding secured from the Republic of Slovenia budget as it was suspended in September 2019. As Lead Project Partner is public institution and direct state budget user, those project activities had to be postponed to the period after the adoption of the 2020 budget of the Republic of Slovenia. Due to these circumstances, Project Partners have submitted a proposal for the extension of the project duration for 12 months which was approved before the fourth reporting period.

In the fourth reporting period, the project was faced with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic that has also affected the dynamics of the project activities. Project Partners were prevented from carrying out the activities such as events and conferences. In order to achieve all of the goals that were set in the project application, Project Partners adapted to the situation and conducted the activities through online meetings/videoconferences, targeted online promotional campaigns and online presentation of results. During the interview with the representative of Lead Partner, representative stated that they managed to find other ways to reach target groups with help of the Programme instructions, therefore, they contacted them using on-line brochures and through the project website with the most important information about the project activities.

3. Project results and impact

This project has managed to achieve all expected results. The first main project result was the construction of the Benica dam in Slovenia which reduced the flood risk to the settlement and ensured flood safety. The second project result was dike reconstruction in Sveti Martin na Muri that improved the flood defense system of the settlement Sveti Martin na Muri in Croatia. According to the survey with representatives of project partners, most significant external factors that have led project progress towards project results are dedicated and experienced project partners, clearly defined goals and indicators and effective communication.



The target groups of this project included local public authorities, regional public authorities, national public authorities, sectoral agencies, interest groups including NGOs and general public. Moreover, all set target values of the target group coverage were met or exceeded, except of one regional public authority and two sectoral agencies. The expected impact on the target groups was to reduce the flood risk, increase regional development, expand tourism and strengthen local economy. By reducing the risk of floods, this project has managed to increase the quality of life of the local community who benefited from the conducted measures: in Benica 3,2 km of local municipal roads are protected and bridges in the project area are now safe for transit, floodplains on agricultural land are reduced by 96ha, 28 houses with agricultural buildings are protected - in total 95 inhabitants have benefitted from the structural measures while also considering the flooding of Ledava. In Sveti Martin na Muri the high-water embankment is now defending 62 structures (family houses and farm buildings, football stadium) with 200 people living there and approx. 45 ha of agricultural land. As the Lead Partner emphasized in the interview - the local population sometimes felt forgotten considering the constant threat of floods, therefore, they were very satisfied with investing in flood protection measures in their settlements which was visible through their strong involvement in project events.

By investing into flood protection, local economy will in the future profit through lower expenditures connected to floods which can then have positive impact on the regional development and tourism in the project area. It is furthermore important to highlight that the implemented activities are expected to achieve environmental effects, as the Mura river basin represents a protected and rich habitat. These effects have not been measured within the project, but were recognised in the integral study on the flood risk management of the FRICO1 project. Another important effect of the intervention is the contribution towards adaptation to expected climate change.

According to the conducted survey with representatives of Project Partners, the key cross-border added value of this project is establishing sectoral cross-border partnerships. Same was confirmed in the interview with representative of the Lead Partner who stated that institutional cooperation between the Project Partners and with the Programme bodies was efficient and that it grew with each new project. Other identified cross-border added values were improving cultural understanding and increased knowledge transfer related to a specific problem common to the cross-border territory. Within the project, knowledge was transferred to the target groups through project events, newspaper articles, e-mails and project web site. The interviewee concluded that this project updated hydrological data which is a key input in development of all future measures on both sides of the border.

4. Sustainability and capitalisation

Sustainability of the project was primarily ensured by Project Partners in charge of operating and maintaining built structures in their countries after the project, using their regular sources of funding and thereby ensuring the continuous operation and flood-reducing effect of the measure. This is in line with the [Directive 2007/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2007 on the assessment and management of flood risks, which](#)



highlights that competent institutions from different member states have to work together on the solutions and plans, but each country has to implement the measure on their territory according to their legislation.

This project contributed to the durability of the previous FRISCO1 project, which developed flood protection models and plans that were implemented within this Project. Furthermore, data that was gathered through the implementation of this project was already used for updating models developed in FRISCO 1. This is an example of how the outputs and results of the FRISCO projects are being constantly re-used, revised and upgraded.

The transferability of immediate effects and results was enabled by ensuring that all project outputs are described on the project web site, in national and local newspapers and through organised workshops and conferences during the project for all relevant stakeholders outside the partnership.

According to the survey with representatives of Project Partners, they stated that they will continue project activities beyond the duration of the project. Lead Partner stated that they are planning a new project to further capitalize on the results of the implemented FRISCO projects.

5. Horizontal issues

Regarding sustainable development, the biggest contribution of the project is connected with mitigating climate change effects and natural disasters due to decreased risk of flooding, as a consequence of the implemented construction measures in the settlements of Benica and Sveti Martin na Muri.

The Project Partners conducted all activities in accordance with the principles of equal opportunities and have not generated discrimination of any kind while implementing project activities. At all public events and other activities for the general public, Project Partners put special attention to elimination of discrimination and promotion of accessibility.

All Project Partners were committed to equality between men and women in the targeted area. Both genders benefited from the project to the same extent and target groups did not have any problems when it comes to gender discrimination.



Annex 4. Case study – Vezi narave

Project Description	
Name	Vezi narave / Veze prirode
Acronym	VAZI NARAVE
Total Budget	2,553,908.00 EUR
EU co-financing	2,170,821.80 EUR
Duration	30 months; 01.09.2018.-28.02.2021.
SO	2.2 Protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services
Partners	
N. of Partners	7
Lead Partner	Municipality of Grosuplje, LP (SI)
Other Partners	Municipality of Rogaška Slatina, PP (SI) Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, PP (SI) Public Institution National Park Risnjak, PP (HR) Town of Vrbovsko, PP (HR) Association Hyla, PP (HR) Public institution for the management of protected areas in Krapinsko-zagorska County, PP (HR)

1. Project summary

This project addresses three issues that are all part of an over-arching challenge of conserving and restoring biotic diversity for future generations and raising awareness of nature's impact on human well-being. The first issue is the lack of joint harmonised cross-border measures for the improvement of target species in poor condition. The second one refers to the lack of inter-sectoral collaboration in the introduction of modern, sustainable methods of natural resource management. Finally, the third issue addressed by this project is poor awareness of the relevance of nature conservation and its benefits for the long-term quality of life and diminished natural risks in the protected area.

The project's key objective was to ensure the durability of the conservation and restoration of target species (otter, stag beetle, great Capricorn beetle, marsh fritillary, large copper, amphibians) in Natura 2000 areas of the Sutla/Sotla and Kupa/Kolpa rivers, Risnjak National Park, the Radensko polje area, and the Kamačnik canyon, amounting to 3,159 ha of surface area which were covered by demonstration activities. Inherently to the main objective, the project aimed to achieve three specific objectives: 1) improve conservation conditions for target species, 2) increase efficiency and sustainability of joint management of Natura 2000 areas, 3) raise awareness of nature conservation and protection and its importance for human well-being.

Cross-border partnership was needed for addressing the issues mentioned before as endangered species and areas span across the state borders, so wildlife protection measures



coming only from one country cannot make a significant difference and reach the set objectives. Common approach was necessary, especially in the light of long-term benefits of joint planning of nature protection measures, such as knowledge and data exchange between nature protection experts, more efficient management of protected areas and more specific knowledge and experience of stakeholders in local communities in the two countries.

This project contributed to SO 2.2 Protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services, by implementing five programmes of nature protection measures, raising awareness about importance and relevance of nature protection and setting up sustainable basis for long-term conservation of biodiversity in the project area.

2. Progress of activities

The project started on September 1, 2018 and the official end date was February 28, 2021. All project activities were successfully conducted and implemented, however, with slight changes and delays from the initial implementation plan. Majority of plan deviations were caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as project meetings taking place online and delays in outdoor demonstration activities due to pandemic restrictions. Also, final ceremonies and official opening of nature protection centres were postponed in order to attract more visitors and have a greater reach in the public. In addition, slight delays were recorded in demonstration activities for all target species during the second reporting period (September 1, 2018 – February 28, 2019), due to overgrown vegetation and bad weather.

One of the biggest challenges for the project partners was how to engage in conversation with local farmers and persuade them into accepting all the benefits of increased nature protection and amount of protected area, even though that directly interferes with their daily farming activities and their land use interests. Project partners were quite successful in conducting a constructive dialogue with the farmers and convincing them in the overall benefits of the Project, as well as the benefits of nature and wildlife protection, which resulted in an even larger area covered by nature protection measures (3.099,10 ha planned, 3.185,08 ha achieved). Another challenge was to change plans for demonstration activities on the Sutla/Sotla River, which flows right on the border between two countries, as wired fence was set up alongside the border. Consequently, demonstration activities could not be conducted in the area closer than 50 metres from the fence, and alternative locations had to be negotiated with the Slovenian ministries of home and foreign affairs, namely on the riverbanks of three nearby tributaries of the Sutla/Sotla River.

3. Project results and impact

The project managed to achieve all the expected results, with the key result being improved conditions for all target species in the project area. Conditions were improved by conducting demonstration activities in several areas where target species have their natural habitat (Kupa and Sutla/Sotla rivers, Radensko Polje, NP Risnjak, Kamačnik). Demonstration activities differed depending on the target species. For instance, demonstration activities for otters included opening canals / barriers, arranging otter structures on the shores, planting shores, arranging otter crossings, cleaning the Kupa/Kolpa River source, which resulted in improved



habitat conditions for otters on a land surface of 100 ha. Likewise, demonstration activities for other target species resulted in an increased area of improved habitat conditions and better conservation status. Other project results include a program of workshops for teachers, farmers and other landowners and the local population on understanding ecosystem services which was developed and implemented through 12 workshops in Croatia and Slovenia. Furthermore, this project set up two educational trails (Kamačnik canyon and Zelenjak valley) which resulted in raised awareness of the natural wealth and value of the two sites and in decreased threats to natural biodiversity in the area. Also, the project resulted in establishing the Šica Interpretation Center ("Žabja hiša") and the Sutla/Sotla Nature Conservation Center, providing an infrastructural setting for educational, scientific and promotional activities, thus contributing to increased knowledge on biodiversity, endangered species, their habitats and acceptable and unacceptable people's behaviour when out in nature.

Project partners have not reported any major results which were not initially foreseen, whether positive or negative, apart from exceeded targets when it comes to certain target groups, surface area covered by demonstration activities and consequently improved conditions for target species, and increased number of visitors in the sites where infrastructural interventions have been made (Kamačnik, Zelenjak, Šica Interpretation Center, Sutla/Sotla Nature Conservation Center).

One significant factor that has facilitated the achievement of project results is the positive attitude of the local farmers and agriculture stakeholders, and their understanding of the project idea and its benefits as a result of implemented activities. Project partners have put in a lot of effort to engage with them, communicate the project idea and show them how this project can be beneficial for them as well and thus the initial resistance of the local farmers has been gradually replaced by quality and constructive cooperation. This change of perception among the farmers and landowners can also be seen as one of the most valuable results of this project.

The project targeted five groups of stakeholders and all target values were fulfilled: 11 local public authorities; 65 teachers and education professionals; 52 representatives of interest groups including NGOs; 184 individuals grouped as 'other', which included local farmers landowners and other agriculture stakeholders; and nearly 1,9 million people reached through social media and local, regional and national TV and radio coverage. The effects on these groups, as communicated in the interview and progress reports, are reflected mainly in increased knowledge and awareness of local population and farmers on the importance of preserving nature and biodiversity. Project partners build this assessment on overwhelmingly positive feedback that they have received from all targeted groups.

Three key cross-border added values were identified, and these are the following: creation of opportunities for exchange with cross-border partners and for promotion of international networks; establishing sectorial cross-border partnerships and networks; and improvement or transfer of knowledge of a specific problem common to cross-border territories. More concretely, as pointed out in the survey, the project partners consider the establishment of a network of VEZI NARAVE points as the most important cross-border added value, consisting



of two nature conservation centres in Slovenia and the establishment of educational trails in Croatia.

Since this project was the first international and cross-border project for the Lead Partner, the most valuable learnt lesson and experience was the whole process of putting project idea into practice, learning how to deal with the administrative process of such a project, but also learning how to engage with local stakeholders and local community and present the main issue that the project intends to tackle, as well as the main benefits that will come from the project results.

4. Sustainability and capitalisation

Project partners have plans to continue with project activities beyond the duration of the project, and they have secured necessary human resources. However, financial resources are still lacking, so they are more than willing to apply for another project in the 2021-2027 period in order to capitalise the results of this project. New project activities, as stated by project partners in the survey, would most likely be centred around identification of territorial/sectoral needs (through research, studies) and formulation of new policies/solutions to address a specific need (e.g. action plans, strategies etc.). In addition, new project activities would also contribute to maintaining the existing (e.g. Žabja hiša) and building new infrastructure, which is currently depending on limited funding provided in the budgets of local and regional authorities. Also, potential future activities would build upon the state of preservation of natural habitats in the area and the level of vulnerability of endangered species. As the project area is part of NATURA 2000 network, the relevant institutions continue with this project's activities beyond the project duration and should thus sustain the achieved levels of preserving biodiversity, also by using the knowledge and infrastructure gained through this project. Development of management guidelines for target species represent an important resource for further work of the relevant partners.

Project partners have put great emphasis on transferability of results which was secured through establishing two interpretation centres in Slovenia, which serve as focal points for promoting the project results and sharing them with other stakeholders. Project results can be shared and upgraded within other EU funded programmes. For example, at the site of the interpretation centre Žabja hiša (Slovenia), there are plans to arrange educational trails similar to the ones established in Kamačnik and Zelenjak (Croatia) by using funds made available from the LIFE programme. Also, developed programmes for teachers, farmers and landowners can be reused and implemented within other territorial and project contexts. Teachers educated through the project continue to use the knowledge and created material in their further work. In Slovenia, developed educational material for teachers have been integrated into the KATIS system (Catalogue of further education and training programs for professionals in education, managed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport⁶²) which ensures the continuation of this result.

⁶² Available at: <https://paka3.mss.edus.si/katis/Uvodna.aspx>



One challenge for the sustainability of project activities can arise from the structure of project partnership. On the Slovenian side of the partnership, the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation is involved as project partner, but its Croatian counterpart (Institute for Environmental and Nature Protection) is not included. This circumstance could lead to greater sustainability and capitalisation potential in Slovenia, as opposed to Croatia. This disbalance is mitigated by enhanced cooperation among Croatian project partners and other potential partnering institutions and organisations, as well as by intensified knowledge and data sharing between the Slovenian and Croatian project partners. It is also promising for sustainability and capitalisation that, according to the Lead Partner, new potential partnering organisations have already reached out expressing their interest in reusing and upscaling project results in new project activities.

5. Horizontal issues

The project contributed positively to sustainable development, as it dealt with conservation of nature and biodiversity. Also, by raising awareness of importance and relevance of the goods and benefits people receive from conserved and protected ecosystems. The project's positive contribution to equal opportunities and non-discrimination was reflected in project events that were open and accessible to everyone, while gender equality has been considered during every stage of project preparation and implementation, including equality of genders within the project team.



Annex 5. Biographies of experts

Team Leader – Mladen Vojković

Mladen Vojković has 15 years of experience in human resources development, public administration reform and regional development and 12 years of experience in monitoring and evaluating projects, programmes and politics. He was in charge of monitoring CARDS 2004 projects Local Partnerships for Employment - Phase 2 and PHARE 2005 - Evaluation of Active Labor Market Measures. As team leader and evaluator, he has participated in numerous project evaluations in the field of employment, institutional development, management, cross-border cooperation, horizontal principles and etc.

Senior expert – Antonia Gverić

Antonia Gverić, MSc in Economics, works for WYG savjetovanje since 2012 on preparation and implementation of projects financed through WB, UNDP, EU funds, etc. Experienced in public procurement, project evaluations, grant applications, feasibility studies with financial analysis and CBA, applications for major projects in various sectors: transport, environment, water and wastewater, flood protection system, energy, RDI, infrastructure for educational purpose, entrepreneurship. She worked with public institution and bodies (Croatian Waters, Croatian roads, various faculties, universities, and ministries) as well as representatives of JASPERS. Type of services provided: socio-economic context, demand analysis, option analysis, financial analysis (including analysis of source of financing; financial sustainability; financial affordability of the service to the users; determination of the prices for service/product), cost benefit analysis and risk assessment (risks in phase of preparation and implementation), institutional capacity building of public bodies.

Senior expert – Jelena Kljaić Šebrek

Jelena Kljaić Šebrek has more than 10 years of experience in preparing and implementing projects funded from European Union funds (IPA program, Structural Instruments, Union Programs, Territorial Programs cooperation, Integrated Territorial Investment). She gained work experience working as a manager of a large number projects in which she was in charge of coordinating project activities and leading project teams. She also works as an expert in the development of strategic documents and feasibility studies and as an expert in technical assistance projects. She has extensive experience in project evaluation in the field of research and development. Jelena has been a lecturer for many years in the field of preparation and implementation of projects financed from EU funds. She holds a PhD in quantitative economics.

Senior expert – Vanja Hazl

Vanja Hazl is experienced expert with more than 30 years of professional experience in the field of socio-economic development, labour market and employment. She gained work experience in providing technical assistance to government working as a team leader or member of the project teams in several EU funded projects. She possesses analytical and document drafting skills, proven through more than 20 published publications, various analysis



and reports. Since 2005 Vanja was member of more than 10 different domestic and international evaluation teams.

Senior expert – Emma Zimprich Budanović

Emma Zimprich Budanović is a part of the WYG team since March 2018. specialised in environmental consultancy with a degree from Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb. She has been employed first as an expert associate in environmental protection and then as a consultant in Advisory Services. She has participated in the implementation of projects funded by EU and she was involved in preparation of more than 20 environmental impact assessments including studies and feasibility studies related to water and wastewater treatment facilities and environment in general. She also has experience in developing environmental permits and preparation of safety reports in the form of taking preventive measures necessary to reduce risks and prevent major accidents and measures to limit the impact of major accidents on humans, material goods and the environment.

Senior expert – Bianka Logožar

Bianka Logožar is a part of the WYG team since 2014. She has 12 years of experience in the preparation and implementation of projects financed by EU funds and strategic planning. She coordinated and worked on the development of local and regional development strategies, sectoral development plans and rural development strategies. She has been working on the preparation and implementation of external project evaluations and strategic development documents for more than 6 years, and she also has experience working as an evaluator of project proposals within the IPA IV Human Resources Development component. In addition, she conducted numerous trainings for beneficiaries from local and regional authorities, CSOs, educational institutions and other stakeholders related to the methodology of project preparation, all aspects of project implementation, training on structural funds and training on strategic planning and monitoring and evaluation of strategic documents. She has also worked as an expert on technical assistance projects related to the preparation and implementation of the ITU mechanism (integrated territorial investments) and strengthening the capacity of beneficiaries and public bodies for the preparation and implementation of projects financed from the European Social Fund.

Junior expert – Mona Manojlović

Mona Manojlović has been employed as a junior consultant at WYG Consulting since August 2020, where she is working on the preparation and implementation of projects financed from EU funds. Mona's work focuses on evaluation projects (evaluation of the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the Operational Programme Effective Human Resources 2014-2020). As part of numerous projects, she focused on drafting analyses of the socio-economic context, drafting case studies and collecting and processing quantitative and qualitative data. She is also in charge of coordinating teams of experts and managing projects in the domain of evaluations. Mona owns a Master's degree in political science from the Faculty of Political Sciences at the University of Zagreb.



Annex 6. Survey questionnaire

The survey will be conducted in the LimeSurvey programme, a professional online survey tool used by WYG Consulting Ltd. in its research and analyses. **The middle part of the questionnaire (questions 7-22) differs, depending on the specific objective under which a specific project has been implemented.**

1. How would you rate the progress of your project towards its results?
 - In line with the planned timeline
 - Behind schedule
 - Finalised in time
 - Finalised with delays

2. To what extent has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on the capacity of your project to deliver the foreseen activities?
 - we have been able to deliver in full, with no substantial change of our plans
 - we have been able to deliver in full, by changing our delivery model
 - we have been able to deliver but with some delays
 - we had to cancel some activities, no longer relevant/doable

3. Please indicate the relevance of the below factors for achieving your project's results (*1=fully irrelevant, 2= somewhat relevant, 3=neither relevant nor irrelevant, 4=somewhat relevant, 5= very relevant*).
 - Committed and experienced partnership
 - Clearly defined objectives and indicators (in the Cooperation programme, as well as on project level)
 - Clearly defined roles and responsibilities among partners
 - Experience and motivation of the project manager
 - Proper internal monitoring and control
 - Quality change and risk management (ability to answer to unexpected situations)
 - Effective communication procedures (within project team and with stakeholders)
 - Support of the local/regional authorities
 - Support of the local community
 - Support of the respective programme bodies during the application phase
 - Support of the respective programme bodies in the implementation phase



Any other success factor not listed above? If so, please indicate:

4. Please indicate possible factors that were hampering/delaying the achievement of your project's results. (1=fully irrelevant, 2= somewhat relevant, 3=neither relevant nor irrelevant, 4=somewhat relevant, 5= very relevant)

- Lack of management experience of the project team
- Lack of expertise in a specific field among Lead/Project Partners (inadequate skills for the project)
- Unclear goals / different interpretation of set goals
- Lack of clearly defined partner roles and responsibilities
- Poor communication or miscommunication within partnership
- Poor communication or miscommunication with stakeholders
- Fluctuation of core team members
- Delays in approving reports
- Administrative burden

Any other barrier not listed above? If so, please indicate:

5. How would you rate the quality of the cross-border partnership?

- very good
- good
- acceptable
- poor
- very poor

6. How would you rate the outreach of your project? (1=below expected, 2=expected, 3=above expected):

- Participation of the target groups in project activities
 - Interest of relevant stakeholders for project activities and project results
 - Interest of general public for the project and project results
-



SO 1.1

7. What are the results achieved by your project so far? (*multiple answers possible*)

- delivery of a common strategic and implementation approach for better-coordinated, coherent and strategic flood risk management in the border area
- contribution to integrated river basin management and more effective long-term flood prevention along border areas
- improved knowledge base and understanding of flood risk and river basin management processes
- reduced flood risk in the transboundary river basins
- contribution to implementation of the Flood Risk Directive and national Flood Risk Management Plans at the local level within the transboundary river basins between Slovenia and Croatia and better coordination of updated national Flood Risk Management Plans due in 2022
- contribution to relevant macro-regional strategies (EU strategy for the Danube region, EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region, EU Strategy for the Alpine region)

Something else? Please indicate:

8. On a scale from 1 to 5 please estimate how much has your project contributed to the flood risk reduction in the transboundary Dragonja, Kolpa/Kupa, Sotla/Sutla, Drava, Mura and Bregana river basins:

- 1 = No contribution
- 2 = Small contribution
- 3 = Medium contribution
- 4 = Large contribution
- 5 = The project is the only contributor to the improvement

9. In implementing your project, were you able to recognize any new needs and challenges (related to flood risk reduction in the respective area) that would need to be addressed, but were not foreseen in the Cooperation programme? (not including COVID-19)

If so, please indicate:



SO 2.1

10. What are the results achieved by your project so far? (multiple answers possible)

- contribution to preservation of most important cultural and natural heritage sites
- increase of quality, sustainability and attractiveness of most important cultural and natural heritage sites
- increase of sustainable tourism offer that derives from active preservation and sustainable use of resources
- contribution to utilisation, creation of joint tourism products, connecting of identity and natural/cultural heritage in a smart and sustainable way
- contribution to valorization and increased visibility on the market
- contribution to better connection between advanced tourist destinations and the hinterland
- contribution to better connection of existing tourism products with newly developed heritage-based tourism products
- contribution to expanding the tourism season, increased visits and higher quality of visitor experience
- better awareness and capacity of local SMEs and populations regarding the challenges offered by heritage
- contribution to the development of a bottom-up and integrated approach that links different sectors, people and stakeholders in sustainable tourism development
- contribution to relevant macro-regional strategies (EU strategy for the Danube region, EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region, EU Strategy for the Alpine region)

Something else? Please indicate:

11. On a scale from 1 to 5 please estimate how much has your project contributed to sustainable tourism through active heritage preservation in the cross-border area:

- 1 = No contribution
- 2 = Small contribution
- 3 = Medium contribution
- 4 = Large contribution
- 5 = The project is the only contributor to the improvement

12. In how far did heritage and traditions serve as inspiration for innovation within your project?

- Extremely



- Very
- Moderately
- Slightly
- Not at all

Please describe (optional):

13. To what level have cultural and creative industries (as project partners, other stakeholders that were consulted or similar) been involved in the development of cultural heritage-based tourism products within your project?

- Extremely
- Very
- Moderately
- Slightly
- Not at all

In case they have been involved, please indicate how do you assess their contribution to developing cultural heritage-based tourism products?

- 1 = No contribution
- 2 = Small contribution
- 3 = Medium contribution
- 4 = Large contribution
- 5 = Their involvement has been crucial for developing cultural heritage-based tourism products

14. In implementing your project, were you able to recognize any new needs and challenges (related to active heritage preservation) that would need to be addressed, but were not foreseen in the Cooperation programme? (not including COVID-19)

If so, please indicate:

SO 2.2

15. What are the results achieved by your project so far? (*multiple answers possible*)

- increased participation, awareness, knowledge and acceptance among target groups on nature protection and ecosystem services



- development of joint co-ordinated approaches, methods, tools and new solutions in planning, monitoring and management of Natura 2000 and other species and habitat types relevant for CB area
- demonstration actions in nature which contributed to the preservation of biodiversity
- contribution to relevant macro-regional strategies (EU strategy for the Danube region, EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region, EU Strategy for the Alpine region)

Something else? Please indicate:

16. On a scale from 1 to 5 please estimate how much has your project contributed to protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services:

- 1 = No contribution
- 2 = Small contribution
- 3 = Medium contribution
- 4 = Large contribution
- 5 = The project is the only contributor to the improvement

17. In implementing your project, were you able to recognize any new needs and challenges (related to protecting and restoring biodiversity and promoting ecosystem services) that would need to be addressed, but were not foreseen in the Cooperation programme? (not including COVID-19)

If so, please indicate:

SO 3.1

18. What are the results achieved by your project so far? (*multiple answers possible*)

- new cross-border structures for the delivery of services in public interest
- strengthened existing cross-border structures for the delivery of services in public interest
- cross-border delivery of services in public health care
- cross-border delivery of social care services
- cross-border delivery of services in safety including civil protection
- cross-border delivery of rescue and emergency services
- cross-border sustainable mobility



- improved access to services in public interest in peripheral border areas with significant gap in service delivery
- reduced inequalities
- contribution to relevant macro-regional strategies (EU strategy for the Danube region, EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region, EU Strategy for the Alpine region)

Something else? Please indicate:

19. On a scale from 1 to 5 please estimate how much has your project contributed to **increased access** to services in public interest:

- 1 = No contribution
- 2 = Small contribution
- 3 = Medium contribution
- 4 = Large contribution
- 5 = The project is the only contributor to the improvement

20. On a scale from 1 to 5 please estimate how much has your project contributed to **increased quality** of services in public interest:

- 1 = No contribution
- 2 = Small contribution
- 3 = Medium contribution
- 4 = Large contribution
- 5 = The project is the only contributor to the improvement

21. Please indicate the relevance of the below factors for better utilization of existing human resources and improved quality, diversity and accessibility of services in programme area (*1=fully irrelevant, 2= somewhat relevant, 3=neither relevant nor irrelevant, 4=somewhat relevant, 5= very relevant*):

- wider territorial based networks
- vertical (local-regional-national) and horizontal integration of various stakeholders
- co-ordination of approaches and procedures
- transfer of best practices
- joint development of innovative solutions
- successful involvement of citizens (clients focus)



22. In implementing your project, were you able to recognize any new needs and challenges (related to enabling healthy, safe and accessible border areas) that would need to be addressed, but were not foreseen in the Cooperation programme? (not including COVID-19)

If so, please indicate:

23. Has your project achieved any **unexpected** results (positive or negative) that were not initially planned?

- Yes
- No

If so, can you indicate them?

Please indicate

24. What is the key cross-border added value of your project? (*multiple answers possible*)

- creation of opportunities for exchange with cross-border partners and for promotion of international networks
- establishing sectorial cross-border partnerships and networks
- improvement of cultural understanding and trust
- improvement or transfer of knowledge of a specific problem common to cross-border territories
- creation of / improvement of cross-border policy instruments
- introduction or testing of new cross-border integrated services and products
- introduction of a new cross-border monitoring/evaluation system
- contribution to Europe 2020 targets
- reducing risks and mitigating the impact of health threats in the border region
- economies of scale
- benchmarking for decision making
- facilitation of the movement of people

Something else? Please indicate:

25. In what way has the project contributed to sustainable development? (multiple answers possible)



- research and development related to environment protection
- innovation related to environment protection
- sustainable use of resources
- resource efficiency
- contribution to environmental change adaptation
- contribution to climate change adaptation
- contribution to risk prevention and management

Something else? Please specify:

26. In what way has the project contributed to inclusive development (equal opportunities and non-discrimination)? (multiple answers possible)

- by increasing employment opportunities of vulnerable groups
- by ensuring accessibility of delivered products/services/infrastructure to all citizens
- by supporting knowledge and skills development of vulnerable groups
- by promoting gender equality

Something else? Please specify

27. On a scale from 1 to 5 please assess the **(expected) impact (mid- or long-term)** of your project on the project target groups / targeted areas for the following aspects: (1= No impact; 2 = Small impact; 3 = Medium impact; 4 = Large impact; 5= the project is the only contributor to the (expected) change)

- enhancement of the socio-economic development of the respective border area
- improved potential for development of sustainable tourism and related economic activities
- improved living conditions and/or a higher quality of life for citizens of the region
- safer and more accessible tourist destinations for those visiting the area

28. Have you planned to continue project activities beyond the duration of the project? (multiple answers possible)

- Yes, human resources to ensure the sustainability of the project results have already been allocated
- Yes, financial resources to ensure the sustainability of the project results have already been allocated
- No



29. Would you apply for a new project in the 2021-2027 implementing period to **capitalize** on the results of your project?

Yes/No

If yes, in which of the following categories would your activities be located?
(multiple answers possible)

- Identification of territorial/sectoral needs (through research, studies)
- Formulation of new policies/solutions to address a specific need (e.g. action plans, strategies etc.)
- Implementation of policies / solutions (e.g. testing, piloting)
- Evaluation and monitoring of previously implemented solutions

Something else? Please indicate:

30. How did your project ensure the **accessibility** of knowledge obtained and **possibilities for the transfer** of knowledge/best practices/lessons learnt during and after project implementation?

- by building a well-structured data repository available online
- by activities of dissemination during the project implementation phase
- by visibility activities during the project implementation phase
- not relevant for the project

Something else? Please indicate

31. What is the **ownership** of project results and are the results obtained by your projects accessible, i.e. can they be re-used/upscaled?

- project results are embedded into organization, accessible online and can be re-used/upscaled
- project results were handed over to another responsible organization
- project results became integrative part of local/regional/national policy documents

Something else? Please indicate



32. Do you have any suggestions for the future programming and implementation period (2021-2027) that could lead to improved impact considering the needs and challenges of the cross-border area?

Please indicate (optional):



Annex 7. Interview Guide: Interviews with PBs

The majority of questions is aimed at the most important programme bodies as listed in the Inception Reports (MA, JS, NA), while questions oriented towards specific programme body are written in *italic*.

1. *Did your body check whether the planned activities under each specific objective are adequate in relation to specific indicators and expected results of relevant investment priority and specific objectives in the context of initial values and target values? How were the target values of the indicators set? (MA and NA/MC)*
2. To what extent has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on the implementation of the CP and the Communication Strategy? Can you propose how to mitigate this impact in the future?
3. Have any changes in programme procedures been introduced as result of recommendations provided by the two evaluation processes so far? If so, were they effective in speeding up and improving the management process?
4. *How would you assess the capacities of the programme bodies at the beginning and at the end of CP implementation period for implementing the respective tasks? In what aspects were the capacities improved? (MA, JS, NA, FLC)*
5. *How did the shift towards increased result orientation (attributing highest importance to strategic aspects of the project assessment) influence the quality of interventions financed under the CP? (JS, NA, MA)*
6. *Did the interventions produce the intended result? To what extent are you satisfied with the project results so far regarding CP's targets in terms of delivered outputs, results, activities, target groups, types of beneficiaries and indicators? Is there any field in which the achievement of set targets is not progressing well? If so, can you identify reasons for such a condition? (JS, MA and NA)*
7. *How were the guiding principles for the selection of operations defined? To what extent did these additional requirements help in achieving CP's objectives? (MA and NA)*
8. Please describe the most relevant success factors that contribute to achieving programme objectives (in terms of quality of cooperation and communication with relevant stakeholders, capacity building possibilities including TA, possibilities for exchange of knowledge and lessons learnt with other ETC programmes, legal factors, quality of applications...). What worked better than in the previous implementation period (2007-2013), what are the most tangible improvements?
9. Please describe the barriers/impediments with regard to the Programme implementation. Are there any setbacks compared to the implementation of the previous Programme?
10. *To what extent was the integrated approach to territorial development followed in the interventions within the CP? Do you see some further possibilities for combining thematic and territorial approach in future programme interventions? (JS, NA, MA)*



11. *How would you assess the cross-border cooperation intensity between programme authorities and between project partners, compared to the situation at the beginning of the current implementation period? In what way do programme bodies influence the territorial balance on the project level? **(JS, NA and MA)***
12. *In your opinion, how well was the visibility of the programme ensured? Which actions or tools were the most successful in achieving the objectives? What other communication activities/tools would you have preferred to be used in order to reach the objectives? To what extent does the Communication strategy support also the effective communication among programme bodies? **(JS and MA, MC, NA)***
13. *In your opinion, how is the programme perceived by the target groups, especially relevant stakeholders and general public?*
14. *How is the coordination and synergy of programme implementation with other programmes and EU strategies assured? How would you assess the contribution of the Programme to the Europe 2020 Strategy?*
15. *How do you assess the potential for sustainability of programme results in the long run? Bearing in mind that the next programme period (2021-2027) puts strong emphasis on the capitalization of results, which of the specific objectives and related interventions would have the best potential for capitalization of results and why?*
16. *What else needs to be ensured in order to achieve better sustainability of the programme results?*
17. *How would you describe the impact (significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects) of the CP on the target area under each specific objective? In your opinion, is the change occurred a direct consequence of the Programme implementation? Do you see any unintended effects (positive or negative, not foreseen in the CP) of the interventions implemented by the Programme?*
18. *How do you facilitate coordination between similar or complementary projects in order to increase the impact of interventions? **(JS and MA, NA – individual consultations)***
19. *Were the strategic projects able to increase the impact of the programme as compared to regular projects? If so, are these projects preferable? **(JS, MA and NA)***
20. *What should be improved in the 2021-2027 implementation period based on the lessons learnt in this period?*
21. *Please describe the activities undertaken so far in the elaboration of the new programme. Have you consulted stakeholders concerning future programme indicators? **(MA)***



Annex 8. Interview Guide: Interviews with LPs and PPs

1. How would you rate the achievement of the results of your project? What were the most important reasons for (not) achieving the expected project outputs and results? What are the lessons learnt with regard to achieving the project results?
2. To what extent has the Covid-19 pandemic impacted on the implementation of your project and achievement of outputs and results?
3. Were you able to reach set indicators on the project level? Were the output indicators in the CP defined clearly?
4. Were you able to reach target groups as planned? How was the intervention perceived by the target groups?
5. How would you rate the role of your partners with regard to achieving project outputs and results? In case of SMEs acting as project partners, please rate their contribution to project results.
6. How would you assess the quality and intensity of the cooperation with your cross-border partners in general? What were the key factors in case of successful cooperation? What were the barriers? Can you compare it with the situation before project implementation period? Are there any plans for the continuation of your cooperation?
7. What was the added value of the cross-border approach? Please describe. In how far was the cross-border approach significant in achieving the project results?
8. Has your project achieved any unexpected (positive or negative) results? Can you identify any factors that influenced this?
9. In your opinion, how well was the integrated approach to territorial development followed in the interventions in your field? Do you see some further possibilities for combining thematic and territorial approach in future programme interventions in your field of work?
10. Would you say that the project results are sustainable? If so, why?
11. How would you rate the potential for capitalization of results achieved in your project? In your opinion, what would be the most appropriate means for the capitalisation of results? What kind of support should be granted within the next implementation period (2021-2027) in order to facilitate the capitalization of achieved results?
12. Can you assess the impact (significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects) of your project on the target groups/ target area at this moment? Would you say that the change occurred, if any, is a direct consequence of your project or can you identify other factors that contributed to this change? What could be the long-term benefits for the target groups / target area?
13. Do you see any unintended mid-term effects (positive or negative, but not foreseen) of your project? Can you identify any factors that influenced this?
14. Can you assess whether the Programme is progressing well in achieving its objectives under the respective specific objective? If so, from your point of view, what are the most relevant success factors that contribute to achieving Programme objectives? Can you identify any barriers/impediments with regard to the Programme implementation?



15. Can you assess the potential of the CP to deal with recognized needs and challenges in your field of work? Are there any needs in your field of work that, in your opinion, are not adequately addressed by interventions? If so, can you suggest what should be changed in order to better address such needs?
16. In how far are you acquainted with the implementation and results of the previous implementing period (2007-2013)? Can you compare it with the current one? What worked better in this implementation period than in the previous one, what are the most tangible improvements? Are there any setbacks compared to the implementation of the previous Programme?
17. How well was the visibility of the CP ensured? In your opinion, which are the most effective communication tools used by the Programme authorities? Would you say you were well informed about the CP and calls for proposals? Why?
18. Can you suggest potential improvements for the programming period 2021-2027?



Annex 9. Socio-economic overview

PROGRAMME AREA

17 NUTS 3 regions

The Cooperation Programme Slovenia-Croatia (CP) comprises 17 NUTS 3 regions – statistical regions in Slovenia and counties in Croatia:

- **Slovenia:** Pomurska region, Podravska region, Savinjska region, Zasavska region, Posavska region, Jugovzhodna Slovenija region, Osrednjeslovenska region, Primorsko-notranjska region, Obalno-kraška region;
- **Croatia:** Primorsko-goranska County, Istarska County, City of Zagreb, Zagrebačka County, Krapinsko-zagorska County, Varaždinska County, Međimurska County and Karlovačka County.

In line with the Article 3 of the ETC Regulation to ensure coherence of the cross-boarder area, the City of Zagreb, Osrednjeslovenska and Zasavska regions were added to the 14 NUTS 3 regions along the Slovenia-Croatia border. Osrednjeslovenska region and the City of Zagreb were included since the 2007-2013 period, primarily because of their close vicinity and concentrations of economic, research, developmental and educational capacities that were expected to significantly contribute to the development of the entire cross-border area. Zasavska region in Slovenia was included in the programme area with the intention to increase the territorial coherence of the cross-border area and to better seize CBC potentials.

Sparsely populated area - 3.819 million people⁶³ lived across 31,728 km² in 2020/2021

The programme area (PA) covers 31,728 km² of which 46.6% belongs to Slovenia and 53.4% to Croatia. The PA encompasses a significant share of the Slovenian territory – as much as 73%. As for Croatia, the PA includes 30% of its territory. Apart from the City of Zagreb and Osrednjeslovenska region, the PA is relatively sparsely populated. Average population density is 120.4 inhabitants/km². Mountainous regions like the Dinaric area, Jugovzhodna Slovenija and Primorsko-notranjska regions, Karlovačka and northern parts of the Primorsko-goranska counties are characterized by the smallest number of inhabitants per km².

2 capital cities, 332 municipalities and 8457 settlements, 50% of population live in city municipalities

There are 332 municipalities and 8457 settlements located in the PA. Both capital cities - Zagreb with 769,944 (2021) and Ljubljana with 285,604 inhabitants (2021) - are considered as its most competitive and growing centres. Due to the past polycentric spatial planning concept, the entire PA has a well-developed network of urban centers acting as regional or sub-regional hubs for services, employment and economic activity. The most significant ones are Rijeka (109.775), Maribor (113.778), Velika Gorica (61.707), Pula-Pola (52.920), Karlovac (50.080), Koper-Capodistria (53.292), Celje (49.007), Varaždin (44.364), Samobor (37.832),

⁶³ For Croatia, DZS 2020 population estimate, for Slovenia, SURS 2021 Q3



Novo mesto (37.398), Velenje (33.715), Čakovec (27.590), Zaprešič (24.429) Ptuj (23.404), Murska Sobota (18.622) and Sveta Nedelja (18.468).⁶⁴

Small towns and medium-sized cities have important functions as transport links to the surrounding suburban areas and rural hinterland, as service providers and pools of labour force. Nearly 50% of the population lives in city municipalities / urban centres representing a major driving force for the PA; the remaining half resides in smaller and medium sized towns or in dispersed rural settlements. **For the purpose of this CP all areas outside urban settlements of cities/city municipalities⁶⁵ are considered rural or/and peripheral areas.**

CONNECTIVITY

The programme area is relatively well accessible by international transport routes

The PA is located at the intersection of important international transport routes. Sections of the Pan-European Transport highway and railway Corridor X (Graz-Maribor-Zagreb, Salzburg-Ljubljana-Zagreb) and Corridor V (Rijeka-Zagreb-Budapest, Trieste/Koper-Ljubljana-Budapest) pass through it. Corridor V is burdened by heavy transit traffic, while both corridors face increased traffic flows during the summer tourist season.

The PA has 58 border crossings. There are six international airports (Rijeka, Zagreb, Pula/Pola, Ljubljana, Maribor, Portorož) and seven international border crossings for maritime transport. Two important Adriatic ports, Rijeka (HR) and Koper (SI), serve as entry point for goods entering the EU and in addition to Slovenia and Croatia, supplying mostly Central European countries. The trends indicate that the volume of transshipment of these ports is constantly increasing.

Internal accessibility of regions varies, poor condition of the transport infrastructure

There are considerable differences in accessibility within the PA. The 54,553 km road network represents the main transport infrastructure for the majority of the territory. Urban centres and regions along highway corridors X and V are in advantaged position comparing to areas more distant from the highway. The existing regional road infrastructure's condition can be described as relatively poor because of limited available funds for modernisation and maintenance. As such, it severely negatively influences transport safety. Local and regional rail connections are underdeveloped, especially in comparison to other EU countries. Common shortcomings include a lack of connectivity to neighbouring countries, interoperability and low safety levels. Maritime transport is essential for accessing the islands since only the island of Krk is connected to the mainland with a bridge. Poor ferry links between islands and to the mainland, seasonal high density of traffic and inadequate carrying capacity of transport architecture negatively reflect on living standards and are one of the drivers of outmigration

⁶⁴ For Croatia, DZS 2021 population census, for Slovenia, SURS 2021 Q3

⁶⁵ City municipalities in slovenian part of the programme area are: Ljubljana, Maribor, Ptuj, Celje, Novo mesto, Koper, Murska Sobota and Velenje. Cities in croatian part of the PA are: Zagreb, Rijeka, Velika Gorica, Pula/Pola, Karlovac, Sisak, Varaždin, Samobor, Čakovec, Zaprešič and Sveta Nedelja.



and depopulation of the islands.

Underdeveloped public transport and limited cross-border connections

Public transport in the border regions is underdeveloped, inefficient, unevenly distributed and concentrated mainly in or near several large urban centres. Urban public transport is heavily oriented to bus transportation (only Zagreb has a tram network). However, certain cities have begun to introduce new concepts to promote the use of public city transport, such as e-mobility, price subsidies, and the like. Transport connections and access to peripheral and/or tourist areas and protected areas are inadequate. They are characterized by low frequencies and inappropriate timetables poorly matched with the needs of daily commuters and visitors. Cross-border public bus transport is left to open market and only profitable commercial lines connecting major cities operate, while local cross-border public transport is practically non-existent.

Despite seven rail CB lines, the actual public rail connections are insufficient. Some local CB lines were cancelled and many more are under threat of termination since the number of passengers remains relatively low.

Internet penetration improved, gaps in quality

Slovenia and Croatia made significant progress in Internet penetration in the last decade, however both MS are still lagging behind the European Union (EU) average in share of access to broadband and level of Internet usage. The basic services on copper network are well spread across the CB area while only larger urban areas have optic fibre networks. This results in an obvious gap in quality of access (e.g. Internet speed) between urban and peripheral regions. While in Slovenia 89% of households are already connected to broadband, the share in Croatia is 81%. Low income, lack of computer skills or simply the absence of need, are the main reasons why households are not connected to internet. A digital gap is evident also in level of usage of Internet among individuals and enterprises.

In the current health emergency context generated by COVID-19, Internet access with minimum quality standards proves to be fundamental. The isolation and/ or social distancing measures imposed in most countries underscore the need to accelerate Internet access policies by expanding the infrastructure that supports it, facilitating access to suitable devices, and promoting digital literacy. Internet access at a time of crisis is critical. The pandemic has forced workplaces to switch to remote methods that are possible thanks to Internet access, underscoring the relevance of connectivity for some people's working and professional development. Moreover, the Internet has become a vital medium for children and adolescents accessing the benefits of formal and non-formal education.

PEOPLE AND PUBLIC SERVICES

Unfavourable demographic trends on the Croatian side of the PA

Population decline is one of the most significant negative indicators in the PA. In the period 2014-2020, marked by the economic crisis, the population in the PA decreased by 2.174



people⁶⁶. During that period, Slovenian side experienced a population growth (+ 33.173 people) while the situation in Croatia was marked by a significant population decline (- 35.347 people). Apart from Pomurska and Zasavska regions, the population increased in all regions on the Slovene side, while on the Croatian side the population was growing only in the City of Zagreb and Istarska County. Primorsko-goranska, Karlovačka and Varaždinska County were most affected by the decrease of population. A scarcity of jobs, growing unemployment and an overall worsening of the economic situation during the 2014-2020 period intensified migration flows from rural to urban areas and also to other countries. Job creation and combating poverty are the main challenges to halt outmigration.

Diversity of national and ethnic minorities

In Slovenia Italian and Hungarian national minorities are living in the PA. The Roma ethnic community is estimated to exceed the registered data. Constitution of Croatia protects 22 ethnic minorities, including the Slovenian. A well established Slovenian community lives in the Croatian section of the PA as well as a numerous Croatian community lives in Slovene section of the PA. CB programme represents an important opportunity for the cross-border cooperation (CBC) of the members of minorities/autochthonous communities in neighboring country.

Ageing of the population

Population aging is characteristic for the entire PA. The population aged 15 or less exceeded the population aged 65+ only in Zagrebačka and Međimurska counties. The lowest average age of population was in Međimurska (40), while Karlovačka and Pomurska have the oldest population with an average age of 44 years and the highest ageing index 149 and 142 respectively. The transition to an aged society brings serious financial challenges to all institutions in any economy. Ageing of the population increases the need for social care services.⁶⁷ The impact of population aging is multifaceted - changes in patterns of saving and investment, shortage in labor supply, lack of adequate welfare system and possible decline in productivity and economic growth.

Education network well developed in the main urban centres

Zagreb, Ljubljana, Koper, Maribor, Rijeka, Pula and Varaždin are the PA'a main educational centres. In Croatia, in 2019, the three-year downward trend in the number of graduate students that preceded was interrupted. Observed by counties, the largest increase in the number of graduate students was recorded in the City of Zagreb, while among the counties in which the decline continued, the Primorsko-goranska County stood out the most. When longer-term trends are observed, the number of graduates is higher than ten years ago, but also significantly lower than their number in 2012. In 2019 the number of graduates that successfully completed tertiary education in Slovenia was the fewest in the last ten years. The largest drop in the number of tertiary education graduates in 2019 occurred in the fields of business, administration and law (by 13.2%) and arts and humanities (by 6.4%). Nevertheless,

⁶⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/data/database>



the students in Zagreb, Ljubljana, Koper, Maribor and Rijeka represent an important human capital. However, one of the main concerns is that educational systems insufficiently reflect requirements of the labour market. Challenges in tertiary education also relate to efficiency of study and quality of the education, reflected in lower satisfaction of both the students and employers.

Lifelong learning centres are relatively well spread in the area, however the share of population aged 25-64 participating in education and training was around 3% on the Croatian side, well below the EU average, and 14% on the Slovene side. As expected, the share of residents participating in non-formal or formal education, which is the highest among young people, declines with age. Socially excluded were underrepresented in lifelong learning activities. Limited participation of the adult population in education and training in Croatia, as well as unsatisfactory level of quality and relevance of programmes, poses an obstacle to improving the employability and the qualification level of the labour force. The key problem is the lack of motivation due to limited supply side of Lifelong Learning (LLL) measures, flexibility and lack of successful learning experience.

Differences in the access to health services and health inequalities

Primary health care services and general hospitals are relatively well distributed across the area. The greatest disparities exist in availability of medical doctors. With the exception of the City of Zagreb, Primorsko-goranska, Obalno-kraška and Osrednjeslovenska all other regions/counties are below national averages; with weakest availability in Zagrebačka and Primorsko-notranjska counties, Zasavska and Spodnjeposavska regions. Appropriateness of local health infrastructure and range of services vary.

Lack of health care workers is a structural problem restricting availability of health care, especially in rural areas and on islands, but also in small towns. For economic reasons the scope of health services in these areas could further reduce. There is a need for greater efficiency and effectiveness of the health network systems in the PA, where common approaches to improved managements systems (e.g. sharing of the infrastructure and equipment, use of Information and communication technologies (ICT) solutions, mobile services and others) should be explored further.

Health inequalities as a consequence of the socio-economic differences affecting the lifestyle of the population exist in the PA. Despite improvements, not only does health inequity persist but it is also increasing, especially in relation to differences in health status within the regions and population groups. Common concerns relate to risk behaviours of the population such as poor dietary habits, physical inactivity, smoking, misuse of alcohol and drugs. Ageing of the population and health care for the elderly as well as preserving the health of the workforce is another common challenge. The cooperation between health institutions across border is still low, even though some CBC projects were supported.

Ensuring access to healthcare is critical to prevent illnesses and deaths from COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 cases in health systems that have deteriorated during the pandemic. Many resources and staff are being diverted from their normal activities to test and provide treatment



for COVID-19 cases. Supplies are limited and people fear accessing healthcare providers. Reduced access to care, surgeries, and other hospital services, combined with fear of exposure to the virus, have led to a significant drop in access. The health threat caused by this virus also has particular implications for the vulnerable population—i.e., people living with disabilities, migrants, homeless, etc. Vulnerable-based proactive strategies need to be developed to cope with their specific needs. Additionally, the pandemic has brought serious mental health effects, worsening psychological distress at all ages.

Social services for the elderly and excluded groups present challenge for the CB area

Around 23% of the population in Croatia and 15% in Slovenia were at the risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2020, while the EU-28 average was 22%. This marks a significant improvement since 2013 when those rates were around 30% for Croatia and 20% for Slovenia. Various target groups are in need, the elderly, long-term and young unemployed, disabled persons, low-income families, single parent families and others. Overall, the quality, scope and delivery mechanism of social services provided to users most affected by poverty and social exclusion are not well adapted to their diversified needs and the changing environment, such as ageing of population, increased number of users, and different user profiles. There is a strong urge to further develop integrative social activation programmes increasing inclusion and empowerment of target groups at the risk of poverty or social exclusion, including health risk and employment potential. The PA has a significant number of civil society organisations active in different spheres (sport, culture, social, humanitarian and others) providing an important potential for creation of community partnerships with public sphere for development of new governance models and promotion of social innovation.

The Coronavirus has had a major impact on the provision of social services to people who benefit from such services on a day-to-day basis: older persons, persons with disabilities, homeless persons, persons in or at risk of poverty, those with abusive partners or family members, vulnerable children and young people, refugees and asylum seekers, as well as people with addictions. COVID-19 has exacerbated existing challenges in social services— such as underfunding and staff shortages – which puts at risk the continuity of social service provision.

CB disaster rescue system requires modernisation

With increased risk of natural and man-made disasters and with regard to large nature protected areas, low population density in remote border areas and increased tourism flows, the importance of cross-border co-operation in prevention, preparedness and response to emergency events raises.

Slovenia and Croatia have well established collaboration in the field of civil protection following the bilateral agreement on co-operation in protection against natural and man-made disasters concluded in 1999 and managed by national civil protection administrations and implemented also through permanent bilateral commission for disaster management. New technologies, change of generations, climate change related appearance of extreme events and institutional



arrangements require further improvements and modernisation. Several barriers jeopardizing better CB disaster management were identified on-the-spot: a need for improvement of coordination and CB communication, standardisation and modernisation of technical equipment and access to detailed GIS maps covering PA, familiarization with rescue plans of neighbouring country, improvement of self-help of local population in emergency situations, joint trainings and exercises of CB rescue services etc.

The cooperation between rescue services is already high and has potential to be further upgraded in particular in the areas of capacity building for the voluntary rescue services and their better functional integration with the professional services.

More than a year and a half after devastating earthquakes struck the City of Zagreb and its surrounding areas, people are still affected by the consequences, including the loss of lives as well as massive damage to the citizens' and businesses' property, medical, educational, cultural, religious and other objects and the infrastructure. A number of them still use their damaged houses and buildings, while others have been provided with temporary housing. State-organized rebuilding and renovation process has been slow-paced. Other issues include difficulties in the access to information related to rebuilding, the procedures themselves, the ambiguities regarding the deadlines and the scope of the rebuilding as well as unresolved property issues.

Public utility services with positive effect on environment

The water supply, wastewater treatment as well as waste management is under the responsibility of local governments. Significant progress has recently been achieved in Slovenia due to substantial SF investments. Similar investment cycle has started in Croatia.

In 2021, about 90% of population in Slovenia has access to public water supply systems while in Croatia the average is 94%, with lower shares in rural regions. The public water system in both countries still faces extremely high losses (around 27% for Slovenia and 50% for Croatia in 2020).

The territory is generally rich in water resources, but its quality differs. In Slovenia, 55% of the total surface water bodies have good ecological status, while in Croatia only 23%. In 2018 54.6% of the Croatian and 71.5% of the Slovenian populations were connected to the sewage systems. Another threatening water-issue are floods, occurring more often in Croatia than ever before. The prepared projects address those issues and usually include installation of wastewater pipes, repair or replacement of old water pipes, construction of water pump stations and wastewater purification systems, and integration of remote-control systems.

Both countries witness a downward trend in waste generation, however considerable differences exist in the PA. The rate of recycling is growing while the depositing of solid waste is decreasing. Around 56% of the total municipal waste in 2020 in Croatia is still being land filled, in Slovenia 6,4%.



ECONOMY

Disparities in the regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP); Osrednjeslovenska region and City of Zagreb created around half the programme area GDP

Almost 50% of the GDP of the programme area in 2021 was created in the two most dynamic regions: Osrednjeslovenska and City of Zagreb. Looking at the GDP per capita, the highest in Osrednjeslovenska with 32,620 € (2021) exceeds the lowest of Krapinsko-zagorska (7,919 €) by four times. Besides Osrednjeslovenska and City of Zagreb, above national average GDP per capita were recorded only in Obalno-kraška, Primorsko-goranska and Istarska counties, which are all traditional tourism regions. Consequently the discrepancies are reflected also in average salary, which in Croatia (€1,330 gross in 2021⁶⁸) is 36% lower compared to Slovenia (€2,084 gross in 2021⁶⁹).

The global health crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the economy of most countries, including the Republic of Croatia. Countries had to take a number of measures to mitigate the economic consequences of the pandemic. The measures for restricting the movement of people and conducting the economic activity have affected the aggregates of quarterly national accounts as well as the quality and availability of many data sources that are commonly used in estimating the gross domestic product. Croatia's GDP growth of more than 16% in Q2 2021 shows that the country's economy is recovering faster than expected, and that confirms that the government has responded strongly to the crisis, ensuring economic stability in the current pandemic.

Likewise, the COVID-19 pandemic put an end to several years of healthy growth in Slovenia. As in other countries, the economy has been strongly affected by containment measures and the collapse in international trade. At the same time, large-scale support measures have been put in place to limit the damage on companies and employment. These include short-term work schemes to support people who were temporarily laid off and payment of social contributions for those who continued to work.

Services/tourism dominate in the cities and coastal parts, industry/manufacturing in continental regions

Regional GVA structure of economic activities shows that trade, accommodation and transport services are most developed in Obalno-kraška, Zagrebačka, Istarska, Primorsko-goranska, Osrednjeslovenska and City of Zagreb. Some of the strongest tourism, trade, transport and communication corporations have seats within the programme area.

Tourism is an important economic activity of the PA. 'Sea and sun' is the dominant tourism product with high concentration of tourist arrivals to coastal parts compared to non-coastal regions and coastal areas hinterlands. Other important products include wellness and health, food and wine, karst caves, city tourism, cultural tourism, business tourism, winter tourism, yachting and cruising. Various forms of outdoor tourism have been developed recently, such as hiking, biking and water with accompanied visitor infrastructure. High seasonality and

⁶⁸ www.dzs.hr

⁶⁹ www.stat.si



shortening of the length of stay is characteristic for most tourism products. Potential for the development of sustainable tourism activating natural and cultural heritage in the border area was not yet sufficiently tackled. Green tourism is a priority set in both national tourism development strategies.

There are many Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) and other small tourism providers active in this sector. Product and territorial integration is needed of the variety of small fragmented tourism offers and local brands, which are not adequately visible and marketed, in order to increase effects on the local economy. One of the challenges is directing tourists from most visited attractions and tourist centres to the hinterlands or surrounding areas worth visiting. E-marketing systems have become a necessity, however still insufficiently developed and used.

After a disastrous 2020, the tourism sector in Croatia has bounced back in 2021, beating all expectations. Accounting for roughly a fifth of economic output, tourism is vital to the Croatian economy. Last year, when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, shutting down businesses and borders, overnight stays fell by more than a half compared to 2019, dragging the sector back to the levels of two decades ago. Increased investments as well as preconditions that were created for the tourism industry to achieve results above all expectations, with 12 million tourist arrivals since the start of 2021 and more than 75 million bed nights, an increase of 67% and 77% respectively compared to 2019. In Slovenia, the August 2021 number of foreign tourists in Slovenia was twice higher than in the same month of 2020. Before the COVID-19 outbreak, tourism represented about 10.6 percent of the country's GDP, which fell to 6.5 percent in 2020, according to the Ministry of Economy. Tourism has not yet recovered this year due to a very limited international travel.

Share of industry in the regional GVA structure is dominant in Jugovzhodna Slovenija, Posavska, Zasavska regions, Međimurska, Krapinska and Varaždinska counties. Several large companies are operating as global players in automotive, pharmaceuticals, electric and similar appliance producers, food processing as well as metal processing and manufacturing industries. Some traditional industries such as textile are still present in Varaždinska and Međimurska counties and Pomurska region, while urban university areas generate higher number of start-ups and growing SMEs in ICT, multimedia and creative industries. Individual sectors are organised in clusters and supported by technology parks (e.g. Ljubljana, Varaždin) or technology-innovation centres (e.g. Celje, Čakovec, Rijeka). Although wood processing has a long tradition, it is characterized by low productivity, profitability and level of finalization and lag in technological development.

In spite of these facts and recovery of the EU economy, the performance of economic sectors in Slovenia and Croatia still lags behind.

Above average shares of agriculture and forestry in most parts of the PA

Apart from Osrednjeslovenska, Obalno-kraška and Zasavska region, City of Zagreb, Primorsko-goranska and Istarska counties the share of agriculture and forestry in all other regions is above national averages. The highest share of GVA in this sector was created in Međimurska



County. Small size of agricultural holdings results in low productivity and a weakened economic viability. Many agricultural holdings combine income by employment in other sectors or by operating supplementary activities on farms. Organic production has increased. Furthermore, food products with geographical origin and breeding of animals of indigenous origin have gained importance.

74% of forests in Slovenia are private property and thus very fragmented. On the contrary, 80% of Croatia's forests are state owned, whereby an average size of private forest holdings is only 0.43 ha due to fragmentation and continuous size degradation. Increasing productivity in the forestry sector and adding value in processing remains the challenge for both countries.

SMEs create the largest share of all business entities in the programme area, potential for entrepreneurial development not exploited

SMEs provide an important economic foundation and employment potential of the area, in particular outside the largest employment centres. Internationalisation of small businesses is still weak. Business support organisations in the PA are relatively well distributed, with higher range of services offered in main business centres and although improved, they mainly provide low value-added support services and advice to entrepreneurs. They need to develop and deliver products supporting enterprises along the entire growth cycle and specialised by sectors. The potential of the young people for entrepreneurship is not sufficiently activated.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, to keep small and medium sized businesses afloat, the EU released emergency funding in the form of favourable loans and guarantees. It also made the rules on obtaining support from existing European funds more flexible, so that more companies could benefit faster. And to cover employee wages and pensions during the downturn in business, Croatian SMEs received almost €800 million in grants. More than 100,000 businesses in Croatia received EU financial support. This has helped preserve almost 650,000 jobs since the start of the crisis. Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, Slovenia has introduced certain measures to support companies operating in Slovenia. The Parliament has adopted several emergency laws, which also include support measures for companies. In addition, the Slovenian Export and Development Bank ("SID Banka") and the Slovene Enterprise Fund ("SPS") also adopted measures to provide support to the companies. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the Commission has adopted support measures under the state aid Temporary Framework and EU state aid rules. These measures aim to help citizens and companies and mitigate the significant economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic.

City of Zagreb and Osrednjeslovenska region provided most of the programme area jobs

Besides the capital regions, Podravska region and Primorsko-goranska County contributed second largest share of employment. The majority of people is employed in legal entities and others in trade, crafts or freelance. The area has 35,000 employed farmers, of which nearly 80% on the Slovene part. Maintaining the jobs and improving the skills of employed to cope with the quickly changing technological and market developments is the area's challenge in addition to adapting the work environment to cope with the workforce ageing.



Youth and long-term unemployment remains the main challenge

The economic and financial crisis contributed to the loss of 92,500 jobs and increased the number of unemployed. The highest unemployment rates in 2021 were recorded in Primorsko-goranska (8.5%) and Karlovačka County (8.3%) on Croatian and Pomurska region (13.8%) on Slovene side. Structural and long-term unemployment is the main challenge. This risk is high among unemployed with vocational education, older unemployed and unemployed persons with no prior employment experience.

According to the latest available data, the youth unemployment is alarming. The unemployed aged 15-29 represented approximately 9% of all unemployed on the Slovene and mainly exceeded 16% on the Croatian side. Overall lack of jobs as well as difficult transition from education to employment is problematic.

Both countries face above average share of grey economy, which for Slovenia was estimated at 20.1% and 22.9% for Croatia, while the EU average was 18.4% of GDP (2015).

Fragmented Research & Development (R&D) infrastructure

The science and research network in the PA is quite strong, its core in the public sphere is represented by university organizations and public (research) institutes located mainly in Zagreb, Ljubljana, and Maribor. Existing research and innovation potential differs between the countries. In Croatia, majority of R&D equipment and infrastructure (including e-infrastructure) is out-dated, scattered and fragmented and investments of businesses in R&D is low, while Slovenia sees advantages in a relatively good scientific quality of research capacities and infrastructure, international embedding, resound research system as well as high share of enterprise investment in research. Fragmentation and insufficient cooperation between all development and innovation actors and lack of focus of research activities on areas of comparative advantages are the main weaknesses in addition to effectiveness and efficiency of Research and Innovation.

Recommendations for increasing the resilience of the PA

- **Accelerate digitization**

Digital resilience has recently been elevated to a global priority for governments, businesses, development agencies and society at large, due to the vital and versatile role technology is playing to support COVID-19 response and recovery. In addition to the medical and healthcare solutions, technologies help society and economy to cope with adverse social and economic impacts, provide opportunities for innovation, and enhance resilience. Governments are also devoting more attention to emerging digital technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), blockchain and 5G infrastructure, the latter of which is critical to support enhanced mobile broadband, Internet of Things (IoT) devices and AI applications. The virtuous circle between digital innovation and digital transformation is a fundamental driver of new business models and markets, and digital technologies hold the potential to strengthen the science and research



systems that are proving so critical to countries' COVID-19 response and recovery.

- **Strengthen economic resilience by developing sound labour market measures**

It is important to develop coherent policy packages, combining temporary and permanent measures, to address the labour market challenges triggered by the pandemic and bridge the skill shortages that are likely to hold up economic growth during the recovery. The measures should be based on a mapping of skills needs across economic sectors and regions. Social partners should be closely involved in the design and implementation of these policies.

- **Foster the sustainable, resilient and low-carbon economy**

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed structural problems of the current economic model, confirming the need to rethink development towards a development model with greater equality, and a more solidarity-based economy. Promoting more sustainable consumption and production and transition to a circular, more resilient and low-carbon economy should be the main objectives. The circular economy has the potential to generate significant material costs savings. Traceability and transparency can empower responsible choices, help retain value in supply chains, and overcome vulnerabilities, in high impact industries (e.g. textiles, food, building and construction, electronics and ITC, plastics, packaging).

- **Encourage lifelong learning**

After Covid-19 job losses, lifelong learning is vital. It will be crucial to invest part of the resources devoted to the recovery to lifelong learning programmes, involving all key stakeholders and with a focus on vulnerable groups, particularly young people, the NEET (neither in employment, education or training) and those whose jobs are most at risk of transformation. The impacts of coronavirus have further highlighted the importance of continuous competence building. A person who loses their job also loses the opportunity to build their competence through their work. The longer one's unemployment lasts, the more important it is to maintain and develop one's competence.

- **Employing better targeting methods for social programs**

Several methods exist to target social programs to the desired population. These should be judged on the basis of three criteria: i) targeting efficiency, ii) leakage, and iii) administrative costs. Considerations of political feasibility should also be made. The design of the scheme needs to avoid providing disincentives to work effort and hence to moving off benefit, so as both to preserve public resources that are especially scarce at a time of falling output and to avoid development of welfare dependency that would be detrimental to the resumption of growth.

- **Increase public participation in crisis policymaking**

Following the outbreak of COVID-19, governments took unprecedented measures to curb the spread of the virus. Public participation in decisions regarding (the relaxation



of) these measures has been notably absent. Researches have shown that participants felt that they could express nuanced opinions, communicate arguments, and appreciated the opportunity to evaluate options in comparison to each other while being informed about the consequences of each option. This increased their awareness of the dilemmas the government faces.

- **Encourage city-to-city and municipality-to-municipality partnerships and twinnings**

Town twinning initiatives, which are increasingly seen as an important tool for cooperation, knowledge transfer and socio-cultural and economic exchange, are today counted in tens of thousands. In essence, the term ‘town twinning’ has been employed to connote cooperative agreements between cities, towns and even counties which are not neighbours but located at a considerable distance and even in separate countries to promote economic, commercial and cultural ties. This “diplomacy from below” puts towns and municipalities at the forefront and is perceived as having a significant potential to promote friendly relations, networking, cross-border projects and the exchange of best practices that could contribute to COVID resilience.

- **Redefine priorities and increase public sector efficiency**

The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated the importance of whole-of-government responses. National plans for response, recovery and preparedness should be designed around their community’s most pressing needs and clearly state their priorities and key points for action. Drivers of public sector efficiency can be summarized in the following: strong political leadership, institutional capacity building, targeted incentives, increased transparency and clever use of technology.



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