



CITIZEN'S SUMMARY 2019

Cooperation Programme
Interreg V-A Slovenia-Croatia
for the programme period 2014–2020
June 2020

1. BACKGROUND

The Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Croatia aims at **promoting sustainable, safe and vibrant border area** by fostering smart approaches to preservation, mobilization and management of natural and cultural resources for the benefit of the people living and working in or visiting the area.

The vision of the programme (connected in green) highlights the overall direction to sustainable development. Primary focus is on seizing its natural and cultural values to deliver innovative, smart and effective solutions that help preserve and improve the quality of environment and its diverse identity on one hand, and activate its socio-economic potentials on the other. Ensuring safe and vibrant area is of outmost importance for the people and is addressed by increasing the capacities for institutional cooperation at all levels.

This is the fifth Annual Implementation Report (AIR) for the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Croatia for programming period 2014-2020. It reports on the progress achieved under the CP in implementing the programme during the calendar year 2019.

The report was prepared by the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy, acting as the Managing Authority (MA) of the programme in cooperation with the Joint secretariat (JS) and programme partners. The Monitoring Committee (MC) approved the Annual Implementation Report 2019 via written procedure due to the COVID-19 situation on 30 June 2020.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COOPERATION PROGRAMME

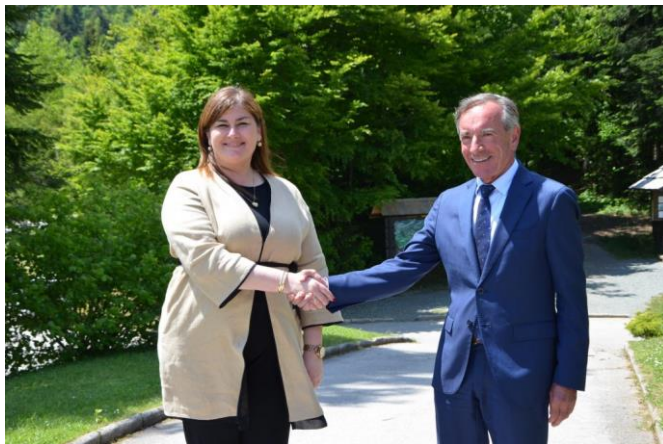
All programme structures and both Member States, Slovenia and Croatia were very much involved in the implementation of the Cooperation Programme in the year 2019.

In 2019 the implementation of the programme ran very actively with all of the approved projects (4 strategic FRISCO projects and 34 approved projects within the 1st, 2nd and 3rd deadline of the Open Call) implementing their activities, which resulted in sending payment requests to the European Commission (EC) etc. The MA and JS met two times with the programme partners (National Authorities (NAs), Certifying Authority (CA), First Level Control (FLC)) at the Bilateral technical meetings (BTM) to discuss the topics related to programme implementation.

On 3 June 2019 a programme **event “Together for protection of biodiversity”** and **meeting of the Slovenian and Croatian Minister** in the Risnjak National Park was organised. Slovenian minister responsible for Development, Strategic Projects and Cohesion dr. Iztok Purič and Croatian minister from the Ministry of Regional Development and EU funds Gabrijela Žalac took this opportunity to exchange experience in managing and implementing cross-border cooperation programmes. They both agreed that **cross-border projects** are having **significant impact on the quality of life** and on the **protection of the environment** in border regions with solving common challenges and making use of developmental potential recognized in the border area.

Projects presented at the event were: project Carnivora Dinarica for conservation of large carnivores in the northern Dinarides, project ČIGRA for maintaining a stable population of terns on gravel habitats

along the Sava and Drava rivers, project LIKE for establishing an effective management and monitoring mechanism of the N2000 area and project VEZI NARAVE for ensuring the durability of conservation and restoration of target species in Natura 2000 areas of the Sotla and Kolpa river, the Risnjak National Park, the Radensko Polje area and the Kamačnik canyon.



Programme event "Together for protection of biodiversity" and meeting of Slovenian and Croatian Minister in National Park Risnjak

On 4 June 2019 the MC members met on their 8th meeting where among other topics Evaluation of effectiveness and efficiency was presented and discussed and Annual Implementation Report for the year 2018 was approved.

The 9th MC meeting was organised on 3 December 2019 where MC members discussed, among other topics, the Effectiveness and efficiency evaluation recommendations, were updated about and discussed the implementation of strategic projects FRISCO1, FRISCO2.1, FRISCO 2.2 and FRISCO 2.3 and visited project CrossCare in Ljubljana.

The first meeting of the Programming task force group for the programming of the Interreg Programme Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 was organised on 18 September 2019 where discussion and approval of the Rules of Procedure (RoP), discussion on the overall strategic approach for the further CBC cooperation (state of art of the Interreg regulation, introduction to the programming, discussion and decision on the future Managing Authority, etc.), presentation of the EC Border Orientation Paper and presentation and discussion of the main elements of ToR for the external experts that will support the programming process took place.

The second meeting of the Programming task force group for the programming of the Interreg Programme Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 took place on 4 December 2019.

As part of a **study visit** the MA and JS together with MAs and both JSs of Interreg Programmes Slovenia-Austria and Slovenia-Hungary hosted representatives of the Interreg V-A Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Finland-Estonia-Latvia-Sweden (Central Baltic) 2014-2020 on 27 February 2019. This international meeting was held in order to **exchange experience in managing cross-border cooperation programmes** in the period 2014-2020.

WHAT HAS CHANGED?

By the end of 2019 38 projects were approved and implementing activities (14 projects out of 38 fully implemented their activities in 2019) which are improving the quality of life in the programme area. Citizens in the involved regions are benefiting from the following concrete **results of the implemented activities** covering programme indicators:

- Joint tools, models and maps for flood risk management were developed for six transboundary river basins, flood risk reduction measures will be implemented on 4 transboundary river basins and more than 1600 people are planned to benefit from flood protection measures that are implemented through FRISCO projects.
- From the approved projects within PA2 the achieved value of increased number of visits to cultural or natural heritage sites was 228.108, 23 small scale investments in visitor infrastructure and preservation of natural and cultural heritage were performed, 4 new or improved cross-border sustainable products were developed and 2869 persons participated in capacity building activities by the end of 2019.
- 152,55 ha of surface area of habitats attained a better conservation status and 45 persons gained improved practical skills and competences for the implementation of biodiversity protection measures and valorisation of ecosystem services.

- Within PA3 65 institutions participated in new cross-border structures and 915 persons gained improved skills and competences in CB service delivery.

3. IMPLEMENTATION OF PRIORITY AXES

On 15 February 2019 the ceremonial signing of the Subsidy contract for the last strategic project FRISCO 2.3 took place. With the signing of the FRISCO 2.3 project Subsidy contract **all available funds** within the Priority axis 1 and also all available programme funds were **allocated and committed** as all Subsidy contracts for the 38 approved projects (34 approved projects within the 1st, 2nd and 3rd deadline of the Open Call altogether and 4 strategic projects) were signed and projects were implementing their activities.

In 2019 FRISCO1 (Priority axis 1) project fully implemented its activities delivering the following main outputs: a set of joint models, maps and tools for each of the six target transboundary river basins (Kupa/Kolpa, Sutla/Sotla, Drava, Mura, Dragonja and Bregana) with associated design documentation for optimal structural measures for four river basins (excluding Dragonja and Bregana), improved physical alert systems and outputs of awareness raising/capacity building activities.

In 2019 also the first strategic project implementing the structural flood risk reduction measures FRISCO2.1 fully implemented its activities with modernization and upgrading of the Vonarje Dam, which is a key structural flood risk reduction element in the Sutla/Sotla river basin. The main project output directly reduces the share of transboundary river basins under flood risk.

Within the Investment priority 6c (Priority axis 2) 9 projects fully implemented their activities by the end of 2019 (1 project was administratively concluded).

Regarding the Investment priority 6d (Priority axis 2) all 4 contracted projects were implementing their activities in 2019 and regarding the Investment priority 11 (Priority axis 3) three projects fully implemented their activities by the end of 2019 (2 projects were administratively concluded).





Ceremonial signing of the Subsidy contract for strategic project FRISCO 2.3

ID	Priority axis	Key information on the implementation of the priority axis with reference to key developments, significant problems and steps taken to address these problems
A.1	1. Integrated flood risk management in transboundary river basins	<p>In 2019 within Priority axis 1 the strategic projects FRISCO1, FRISCO2.1, FRISCO 2.2 and FRISCO 2.3 containing flood risk reduction measures were in full implementation. The implementation of FRISCO projects in terms of progress in performing the activities and following the financial plan was closely monitored by the MA/JS, National Authorities and Monitoring Committee due to the fact that the progress of the FRISCO projects was not completely in line with the initial plan and in order to discuss the reasons for deviations. The partnership of the project presented the solutions in order to improve the project implementation.</p> <p>By the end of 2019 4 projects were approved altogether, implementing project activities in the amount of 10.026.555,11 EUR ERDF which represents 100% of available funds within the priority axis (PA) 1.</p>
A.2	2. Preservation and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources	<p>Within the Open Call 26 projects were contracted and in implementation in the amount of 28.045.826,82 EUR ERDF (99,9 % of available funds) by the end of 2019. Altogether 22 projects are within the Investment priority 6c which shows very high interest of projects in conserving, protecting, promoting and developing natural and cultural heritage and 4 projects within the Investment priority 6d dealing with protecting and restoring biodiversity.</p> <p>At this stage no significant problems have been identified in the implementation of PA 2.</p>
A.3	3. Healthy, safe and accessible border areas	<p>Within the Open Call 8 projects were contracted in the amount of 4.995.655,63 EUR ERDF (99,9 % of available funds) by the end of 2019.</p> <p>At this stage no significant problems have been identified in the implementation of PA 3.</p>
A.4	4. Technical assistance	<p>The allocation of the TA funds aims at ensuring efficient and smooth implementation of the cooperation programme and at a proficient</p>

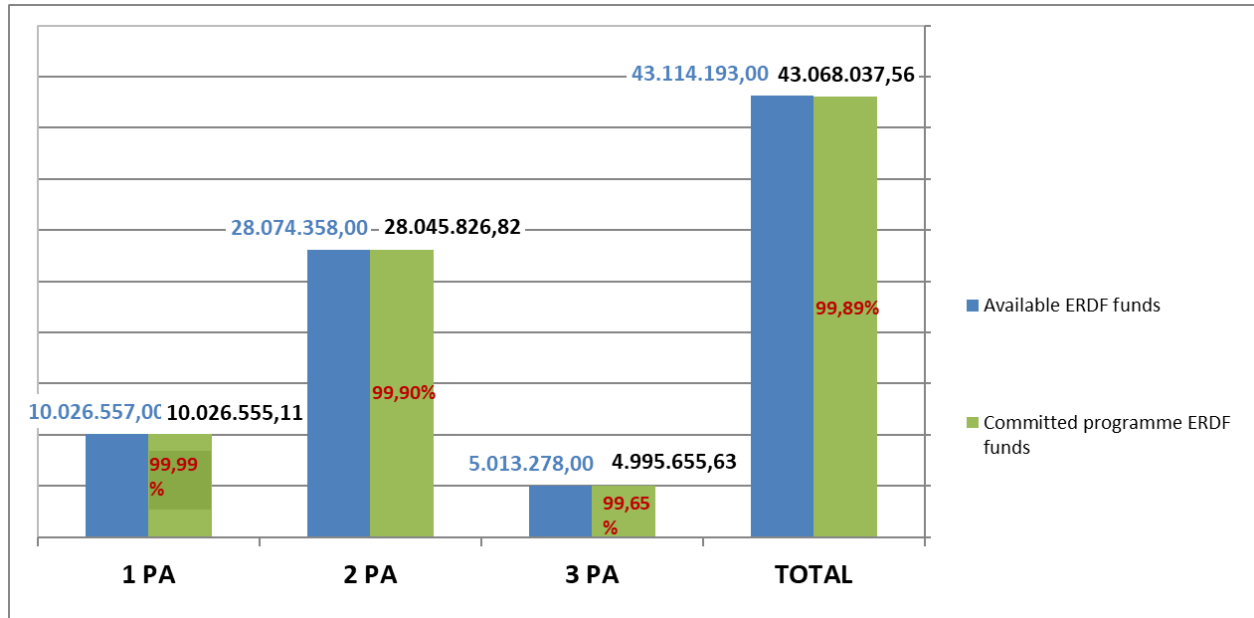
operation of all bodies which are needed for the frictionless and successful programme implementation, e.g. MA, JS, FLC in Slovenia and Croatia, CA, Audit Authority (AA) in Slovenia/Audit Body in Croatia (AB), NA in Slovenia and NA in Croatia. The TA is divided into 6 projects and the total ERDF amount for all TA projects is 3.000.000 EUR.

In 2019 the following activities were implemented within the TA projects:

- implementation, management and monitoring of the programme,
- organisation of two MC meetings (update on the current stage of programme implementation, Annual Implementation Report 2018, irregularities, audits, update on information and publicity activities - EC Day 2019, etc.),
- on 3 June 2019 the event "Together for protection of biodiversity" and a meeting of Slovenian and Croatian Ministers in the Risnjak National Park was organised,
- two BTM meetings were organised, namely on 13 March 2019 in Globočice and on 18 September 2019 in Podčetrtek, to discuss topics related to the programme implementation,
- an event was organised under the auspices of the EC Day initiative (30 September 2019) in Krapina,
- advising/supporting the LPs/PPs of the implementing projects and checking the LPs progress reports,
- site visits for the approved projects were carried out according to the Site visit plan for 2019,
- preparation of written procedures for the MC,
- preparation or update of programme documents,
- ceremonial signing of the contract for FRISCO 2.3 project was organised on 15 February 2019 in Ljubljana,
- two meetings of the Programming task force group for the programming of the Interreg Programme Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 were organised on 18 September and 4 December 2019,
- programme website has been updated with news, FAQs, information on programme and project implementation, etc.

At this stage, no significant problems have been identified in the implementation of PA 4 (Technical Assistance).

Share of the programme ERDF funds committed within the 1st and 2nd, 3rd deadline of the Open Call (PA2 and PA3) and strategic FRISCO projects (PA1)



4. OTHER INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY MEASURES IN 2019

In addition to the ceremonial signing of the FRISCO 2.3 project contract and the “Together for protection of biodiversity” event and in line with the Communication strategy another major annual event of the programme was carried out on 30 September 2019 in Krapina, Croatia in the frame of the European Cooperation Day 2019. The event **promoted joint cultural and natural heritage from Slovenia and Croatia**. The aim was to **present successful cross-border projects** dealing with the preservation of cultural and natural heritage implemented with ERDF funds. More than 100 participants from Slovenia and Croatia arriving with organised bus transportation had a closer look at some of the projects implemented within the programme (ENJOYHERITAGE, Uživam tradicijo, INSPIRACIJA and CrossCare).

A short video of the 2019 EC day was made which can be seen on the following link: <http://www.si-hr.eu/si2/2019/10/11/ob-dnevu-evropskega-sodelovanja-2019-smo-se-podali-skozi-zgodovino-za-ohranjanje-dediscine-kratek-film-utrnikov-dogajanja/>

In the frame of the programme website 47 news on activities, events and relevant information were published in 2019 (20 programme news and 27 project news). The section within the programme website where news on project activities and results are being published was updated with project news throughout the year.



European Cooperation Day 2019

5. REIMBURSEMENT OF FUNDS

By the end of 2019 38 Subsidy contracts (without TA projects) were signed in the amount of 43.068.037,56 EUR ERDF funds, which represents 99,9 % of the funds available for projects. Including the 6 Technical Assistance (TA) projects (altogether 44 projects) **the programme has committed 99,9 % of all available funds.**

In relation to the financial data total eligible expenditure incurred by beneficiaries and certified to the Commission by the end of 2019 amounts to 15.095.873,94 EUR.

By the end of 2019 **14 projects fully implemented their activities** but only for 3 projects final reports were submitted and checked by the end of 2019 therefore in relation to the indicator data the progress can be mostly measured only on the level of the selected projects.

MORE INFORMATION

The latest programme news and information on events implemented within the programme are available on the programme website: www.si-hr.eu



The screenshot shows the homepage of the Interreg Slovenia-Croatia programme. The header includes the logo and navigation menu. The main content area is divided into five columns:

- COOPERATION PROGRAMME INTERREG V-A SLOVENIA - CROATIA**: Description of the programme and a call to action for 'INTERREG V-A SLOVENIA - CROATIA'.
- OPEN CALL**: Information about the open call system and a call to action for 'OPEN CALL'.
- NEWS**: Information about news and events related to the programme and a call to action for 'NEWS'.
- INTERACTIVE MAP**: Information about the interactive map and a call to action for 'INTERACTIVE MAP'.
- EMS**: Information about the electronic monitoring system and a call to action for 'EMS'.

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