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STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT (SEA)

APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT -draft version

of the Interreg Programme Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027



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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.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In parallel to the preparation of the Interreg Programme Slovenia–Croatia for the programming period 2021–2027, a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Appropriate Assessment (AA) within it is being conducted. Both assessment aim to contribute to the integration of nature protection considerations and ensure a high level of nature protection in the preparation and adoption of the programme.

2. PLAN DATA OR PLAN-RELATED DATA ON THE INTERVENTION IN THE ENVIRONMENT

Table 1: Basic information about the Programme

Title	Interreg programme Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027
Version	Draft version 3, January 2021
Managing Authority	Government Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Development and European Cohesion policy; European Territorial Cooperation and Financial Mechanism Office; Cross-border Programmes Management Division
Implementation period	2021–2027 (additional 2 years for the finalisation of funded projects)

2.1. Vision and mission of IP

The programme area between Slovenia and Croatia has identified several potentials, needs and challenges that clearly show that the territory is ahead of important transitions that can be jointly addressed. The programme is focusing on a limited number of thematic areas and will pool resources to drive the change and take opportunity for increased level of cooperation capacity, new development and common solutions to identified challenges.

The Interreg Programme Slovenia-Croatia aims at achieving a preserved, resilient, and connected cross-border region where sustainable development is recognised and used as a main tool in reaching economic viability, safety, biodiversity protections, and social well-being of all inhabitants. The Programme envisages mutual learning and joint actions leading to a change in all its priorities, primarily to re-connect across the border, to understand the current joint needs and threats of a rapidly changing reality, and to work together to improve resilience and adaptability of people, organisations, and communities, assisting the programme area in becoming greener and more digital, and thus fit for the future.

All of the Programme's actions respect the horizontal principles of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, gender equality, non-discrimination including accessibility, sustainable development including UN Sustainable Development Goals and “do no significant harm” principle. Activities aimed at increasing the social and environmental responsibility of all stakeholders are given special attention, which will have a long-term impact that is positive for

future generations. Additionally, the Programme supports social innovation and social tourism by fostering equality and equity among stakeholders and individuals.

The Programme contributes to the European Green Deal targets in terms of environmental sustainability by promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, as it faces the unavoidable impacts of climate change. Apart from climate change, the program seeks to eliminate the negative impacts of humans on the environment by conserving biodiversity and halting the degradation of ecosystem services through enhanced protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity, and green infrastructure, as well as reducing all forms of pollution in accordance with the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 as a central element of the European Green Deal.

2.2. Entire space or area covered by the plan

Within the IP Slovenia-Croatia 2021 – 2027 programme area lay 8 of Croatia NUTS 3 regions: Primorsko-goranska, Istarska, Zagrebačka, Krapinsko-zagorska, Varaždinska, Međimurska and Karlovačka county and City of Zagreb. As well as 9 Slovenian NUTS 3 regions: Podravska, Pomurska, Savinjska, Zasavska, Posavska, Jugovzhodna Slovenija, Obalno-kraska, Osrednjeslovenska, Primorsko-notranjska region 2021-2027. The programme area encompasses 31,728 km² (SI: 73%: HR: 30%²) with 3,8 Mio. inhabitants (SI: 1,7 Mio., HR: 2,1 Mio.).

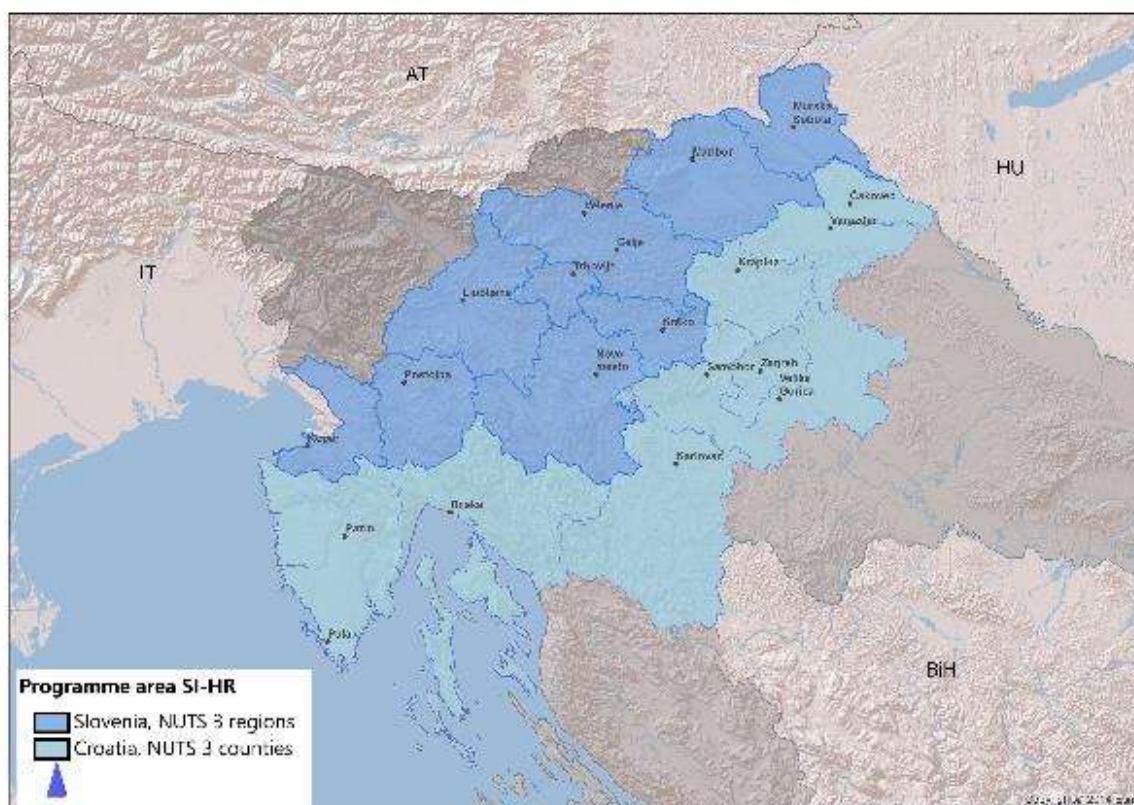


Figure 1: Programme Area (Source: <http://www.si-hr.eu>)

2.3. Determining the allocation of land use, its scope and guidelines, arrangement of activities in space or spatial guidelines and the spatial extent of all planned interventions in nature

The IP Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 is a document of strategic nature and therefore does not consider the locations of individual measures. IP Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 also does not determine any allocation of land use.

2.4. Size and other general data on all planned interventions in the environment

2.4.1. Complementarity and synergies with strategies and other funding opportunities

Complementarity and potential synergies of European, national, regional strategies and programmes with the Interreg Programme Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 have been taken into account in the programming process. Parts of the programme area overlap with other Interreg cross-border programmes (Italy – Slovenia, Slovenia – Hungary, Slovenia – Austria, Croatia - Serbia, Hungary – Croatia, Croatia – Bosnia and Herzegovina – Montenegro) and transnational programmes (Alpine space, Danube and Central Europe).

During programming synergies and complementarities were sought also with EU macro-regional strategies (MRSs). The most important MRS covering the analysed territories are the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region. It will be even more important to seek for synergies and complementarities also during the phase of implementation.

2.4.2. Priorities

Table 2: Selected policy objectives and the Interreg-specific objectives with specified activities, thematic fields and expected results

Priority/Specific objective	The aim of the SO	Types of actions
Priority 1: A green and adaptive region		
SO 1.1 Promoting climate change adaptation, disaster risk prevention and	The aim of this specific objective is to enhance the preparedness of local communities and responsiveness of rescue response units by joint trainings and unified equipment, the establishment of joint protocols (concrete and	Type of action 1: Strengthening of risk preparedness and response capacities in the cross-border area Type of action 2: Increasing the resilience to climate-change effects in the programme area

Priority/Specific objective	The aim of the SO	Types of actions
resilience, from an ecosystem-based approach	comprehensive plans), and co-ordination mechanisms, so that units from both countries will be able to jointly respond to the same disaster and adapt to different climate change-related and other shared risks along the entire cross-border area, including the capacity building of different target groups to protect against shared risks. The activities must be aligned with responsible authorities for provision and co-ordination of protection, rescue, and relief in case of natural and other disasters from both countries.	
SO 1.2: Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution.	The aim of the specific objective is to enhance, develop, or introduce green infrastructure as strategically planned network of natural and semi-natural areas with other environmental features designed and managed to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services, particularly addressing the biodiversity loss as a key environmental threat in the programme area. Cross-border cooperation for improved protection, restoration, and management of the environment will be boosted (incl. Natura 2000 and other protected areas and areas of ecological importance). Actions will be focused to mitigation of impacting threats (e.g., pollution, climate change, invasive species, biodiversity loss, habitat fragmentation) and good cross-border landscape management as the key to improving biodiversity in the programme area.	Type of action 1. Strategically planned green infrastructure for provision of environmental and socio-economic benefits Type of action 2 Improved protection and preservation of endangered habitats, species, and landscapes in the programme area
SO 2.1: Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in	The aim of the specific objective to facilitate the recovery of tourism and culture in the Programme area by greening of tourism, supporting shift from quantity towards quality, increasing diversify	Type of action 1 Supporting sustainable tourism and green transition of public and private organizations through pilot and demonstration actions, collaborative

Priority/Specific objective	The aim of the SO	Types of actions
economic development, social inclusion and social innovation	cultural tourism products, and supporting cultural tourism entrepreneurship and innovation. Special attention will be given to rural border areas to unlock their hidden potentials and abilities to offer demand-driven products and services, while conserving their cultural uniqueness and protecting the natural environment. All the actions supported by this priority will contribute to strengthening communities, increasing competitiveness, and job creation in the Programme area.	learning and awareness-raising of tourists and all stakeholders in tourism, and culture Type of action 2 Enhancing resilience and recovery of tourism and culture by development and upgrade of joint cross-border tourism products and services
SO 3.1 - ISO 1: Enhance efficient public administration by promoting legal and administrative cooperation, and cooperation between citizens, civil society actors, and institutions, in particular with a view to resolving legal and other obstacles in border regions;	The aim of the specific objective is to support public administration in its role as an initiator/coordinator of processes aimed at improving the quality of services and developing of innovative solution in the area of health care, social inclusion and welfare, energy efficiency, and accessibility in the border region. A place-based and participatory approach, sustainability, digitalisation, and inclusion are the guiding principles when implementing the activities within this priority. The cross-border cooperation and resolving legal and other obstacles is crucial when taking into account the functional relations between the different actors and activities in the border area.	Type of action: Improvement of the quality and diversity of the services and development of innovative solutions in the areas of health care, social inclusiveness and welfare, accessibility and energy efficiency in the border regions by overcoming legal and administrative obstacles
SO 3.2 - ISO 1: Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people to people actions	The aim of the specific objective is to build trust and understanding among people living in the cross-border area by supporting joint cross-border events, intergenerational cooperation, and joint learning and awareness-raising.	Type of action: People-to-people projects to improve cultural and social relations, and to get actively engaged in the community

2.5. Financing plan

Table 3: Total financial appropriations by fund and national co-financing

Policy objective No	Priority	Fund (as applicable)	Basis for calculation EU support (total eligible cost or public contribution)	EU contribution (a)=(a1)+(a2)	Indicative breakdown of the EU contribution		National contribution (b)=(c)+(d)	Indicative breakdown of the national counterpart		Total (e)=(a)+(b)	Co-financing rate (f)=(a)/(e)	Contributions from the third countries (for information)
					without TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a1)	for TA pursuant to Article 27(1) (a2)		National public (c)	National private (d)			
2	Priority 1	ERDF	Total eligible cost	16.520.746	15.230.000	1.290.746	4.130.187	3.658.320	471.867	20.650.933	80,00	0,00
4	Priority 2	ERDF	Total eligible cost	17.703.124	16.320.000	1.383.124	4.425.781	3.833.507	592.274	22.128.905	80,00	0,00
ISO1	Priority 3	ERDF	Total eligible cost	5.120.623	4.720.555	400.068	1.280.156	1.241.424	38.732	6.400.779	80,00	0,00
	Total	ERDF	Total eligible cost	39.344.493	36.270.555	3.073.938	9.836.124	8.733.251	1.102.873	49.180.617	80,00	0,00
	Total	All funds	Total eligible cost	39.344.493	36.270.555	3.073.938	9.836.124	8.733.251	1.102.873	49.180.617	80,00	0,00

2.6. Estimated period for Plan implementation

The estimated period for implementing the IP Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 is from 2021 to 2027 with additional 2 years for the finalisation of funded projects.

2.7. Need for natural resources

The IP Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 supports foremost “soft actions”. Due to the construction of green infrastructure and climate change adaptation infrastructure the demand for mineral resources will slightly increase.

2.8. Projected emissions, waste and waste management

Projected emissions

There are energy efficiency actions provided for under Interreg programme Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 which will cumulatively slightly contribute to reducing emissions to the air (especially greenhouse gas emissions and partly other pollutants as well). On the other hand, a slight increase of emissions originating from traffic can be foreseen. Some of the interventions which are provided for in the Programme are going to constitute new sources of noise, due to potential increase of road traffic density.

Waste

By implementing the Interreg programme Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027, an insignificant increase of construction waste is expected due to the construction pilot infrastructure. Increase of waste generated as a result of increased visitor numbers in the programme area is also possible.

3. DATA ON PROTECTED AREAS

3.1. Protection objectives of the protected area and factors which contribute to the area's conservation value

The objective of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) (hereinafter the Habitats Directive) is to contribute to ensuring biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats and wild animal and plant species in European territory of Member States. The measures which were adopted based on this Directive are aimed at maintaining or restoring a favourable conservation status of natural habitats as well as wild animal and plant species in the interest of the Community.

The objective of the Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC) (hereinafter the Birds Directive) is the conservation of all wild birds in the EU by laying down the rules for their protection, management and control. It includes birds, their eggs, nests and habitats. Under the Birds Directive, measures must be taken in order to preserve, maintain or restore sufficient biodiversity and habitat* surface areas for all bird species.

The Interreg Programme Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 concerns primarily the cross-border territory of Slovenia and Croatia, therefore, the objectives based on the legislature of both countries.

In Slovenia under the first paragraph of Article 6 of the Decree on special protection areas (Natura 2000 areas), protection objectives at Natura sites should be set based on the ecological needs of individual species and habitat types the Natura site was designated for in order to preserve, maintain or improve existing features of inanimate and animate nature that which contribute to a favourable status of plant and animal species as well as habitat types.

Harmonised protection objectives must be taken into account if a Natura site includes several habitats of species or habitat types the Natura site was designated for.

The protection objectives of Natura 2000 sites and factors, which contribute to the value of the conservation, are set out in the Natura 2000 management programme (PUN, 2016) (hereinafter PUN 2020) for the period 2015 to 2020. Protection objectives which generally refer to each species or habitat type in each Natura 2000 site are defined in Annex 6.1 of the Natura 2000 management programme but stem from the protection objectives in accordance with the Decree on special protection areas (Natura 2000 areas).. The defined objectives must be taken into account when assessing plans and individual interventions. Given the state of nature, detailed protection objectives specify if the current status should be maintained, restored or improved, all so that the species or habitat types would remain in or be returned to a favourable conservation status.

Pursuant to ZON, the protection objectives of protected areas are set out in the conservation act an individual protected area was established with, or protection objectives are defined in the management plan for individual protected areas if a plan is prescribed.

In Croatia the protection objectives for the Natura 2000 network have been adopted for sites under the Birds Directive (Ordinance on conservation objectives and conservation measures of target bird species in Natura 2000 sites OGNN 25/20, 38/20). An ordinance is being drafted for each ecological network site which will prescribe conservation objectives and conservation measures under the Habitats Directive. They are incorporated into Natura 2000 network management plans / draft plans as well as sectoral natural resource management plans. For the purpose of managing ecological network areas, the Ordinance on conservation objectives and conservation measures of target bird species in ecological network areas (OG 25/20, 38/20) was adopted, while an ordinance defining objectives and measures for conservation of other species and habitat types is being drafted for each ecological network area.

3.2. Depiction of protection areas, protected zones, protected areas, degraded and other areas where a different arrangement is laid down due to environmental protection, nature conservation, protection of natural resources or cultural heritage

3.2.1. Natura 2000 sites

In the Slovenian part of the Programme Area there are 307 Natura 2000 sites. 273 are designated under the Habitats Directive and 34 under the Birds Directive. The total surface area of Natura 2000 sites is 778 555 ha. This represents 53% of the Programme Area surface. Some sites are overlapping, as more than half of the surface areas proposed under the Habitats Directive are within the proposed special conservation areas under the Birds Directive.

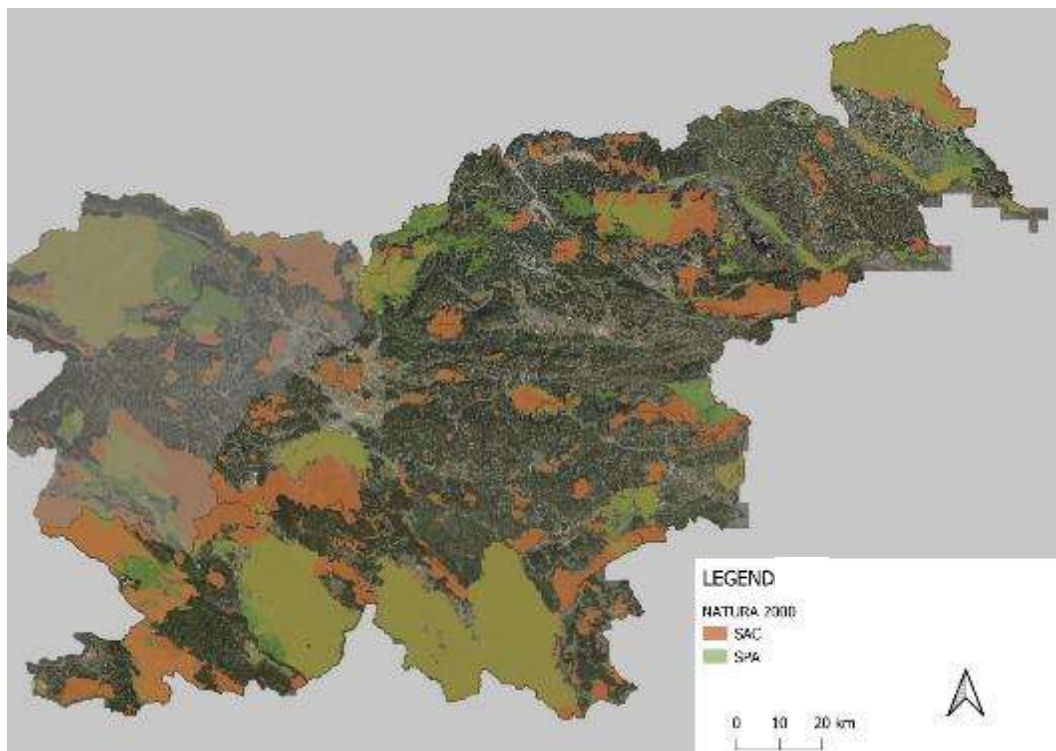


Figure 2: Depiction of Natura 2000 sites in the Slovenian part of the Programme Area.

In Croatia there are 271 Special Areas of Conservation (SAC areas) and 13 Special Protection Areas (SPA areas), covering 559,996 ha that represent one third of the programme area.

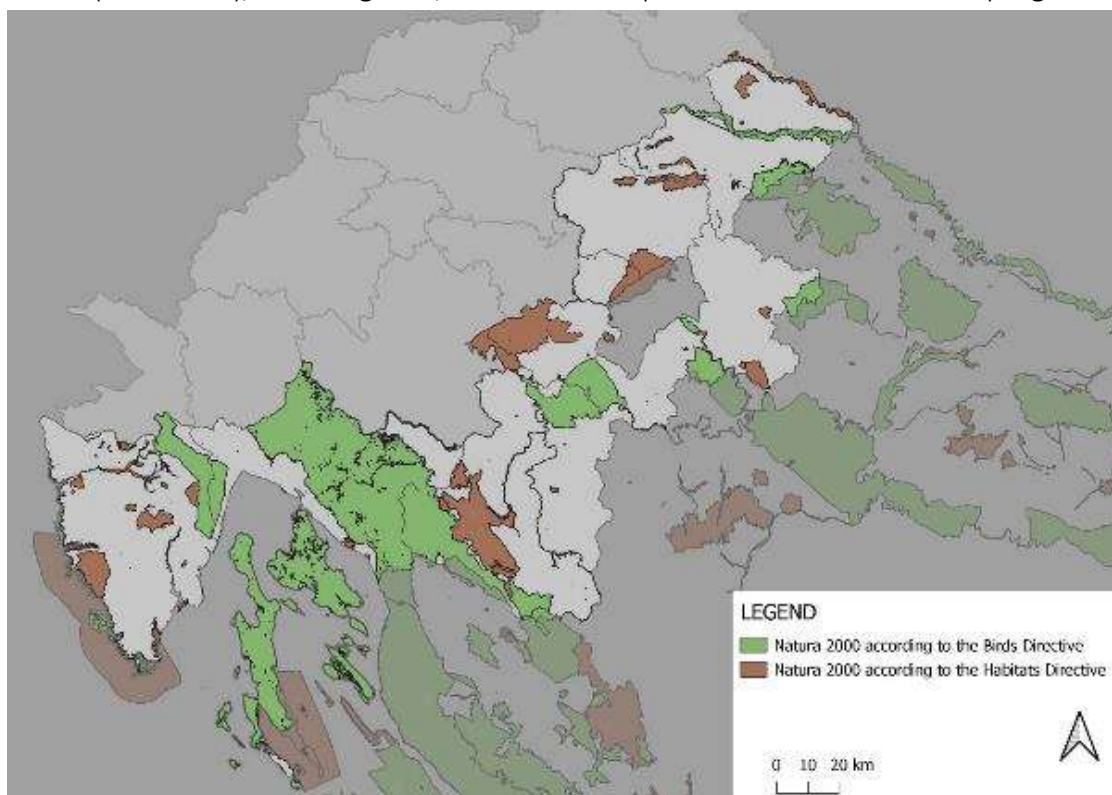


Figure 3: Depiction of Natura 2000 sites in the Croatian part of the Programme Area

3.2.2. Protected areas and proposed areas for protection

Within the programme area in Slovenia (1.46 million ha) there are 50 parks that are protected natural areas either on national or local level due to outstanding natural features, as well as cultural, 5 regional parks and 45 landscape parks, together covering an area of 155,457 ha.

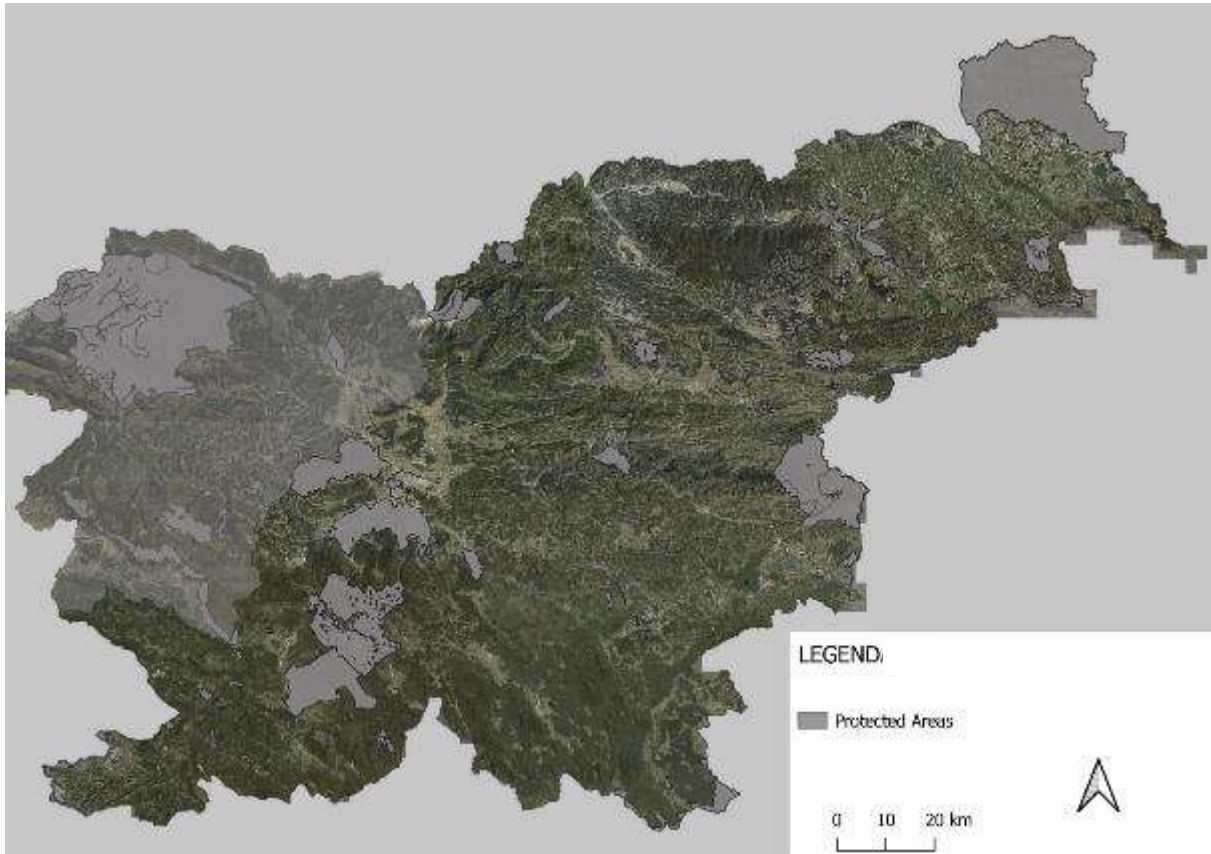


Figure 4: Depiction of protected areas in the Slovenian part of the Programme Area

Within the programme area in Croatia there are 24 parks that are protected natural areas either on national or local level due to outstanding natural features, as well as cultural 3 national park, 1 regional park and 4 nature parks and 16 forest parks, together covering an area of 109,064 ha.

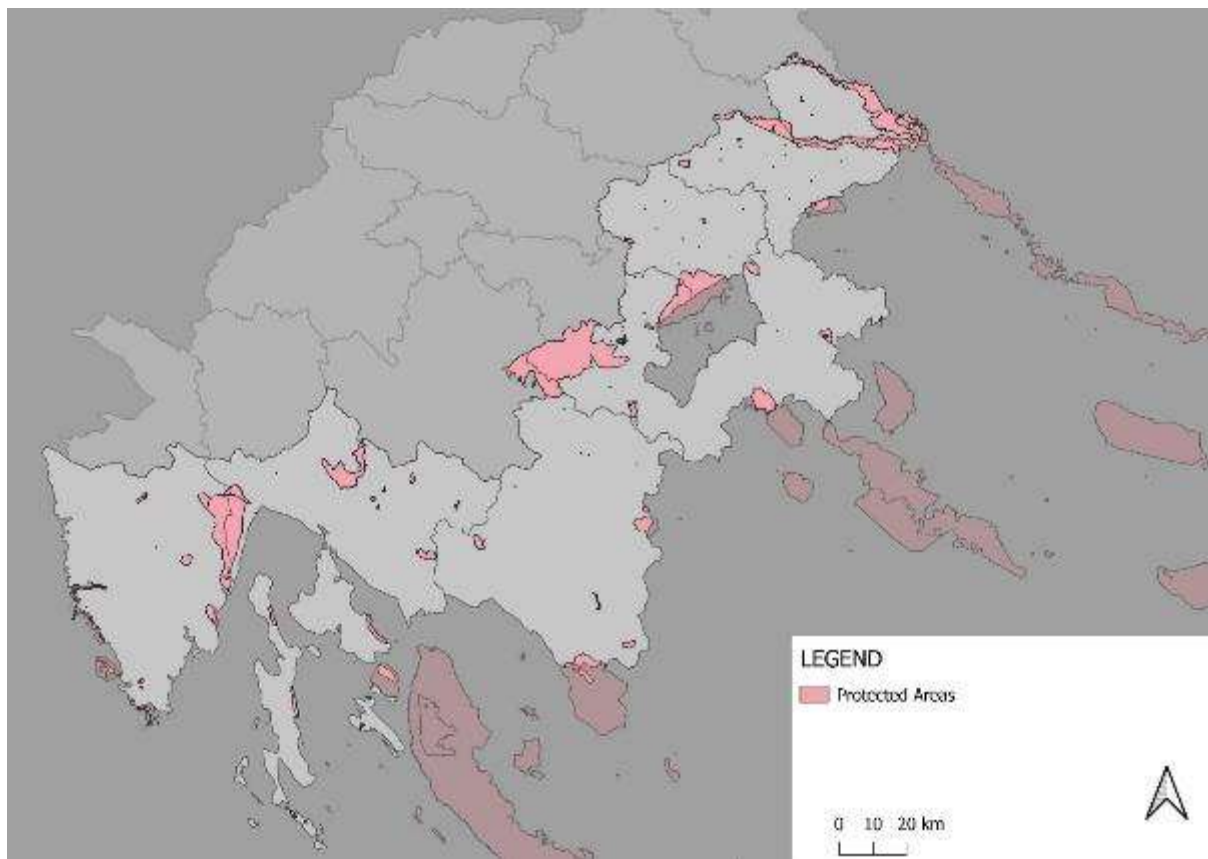


Figure 5: Depiction of protected areas in the Croatian part of the Programme Area

3.2.3. Natural values

In Slovenian part of the programme area there are 3.464 parts of nature have the status of natural values that cover 137.079 ha, representing 9% of the of the programme area in Slovenia (source ARSO WFS).

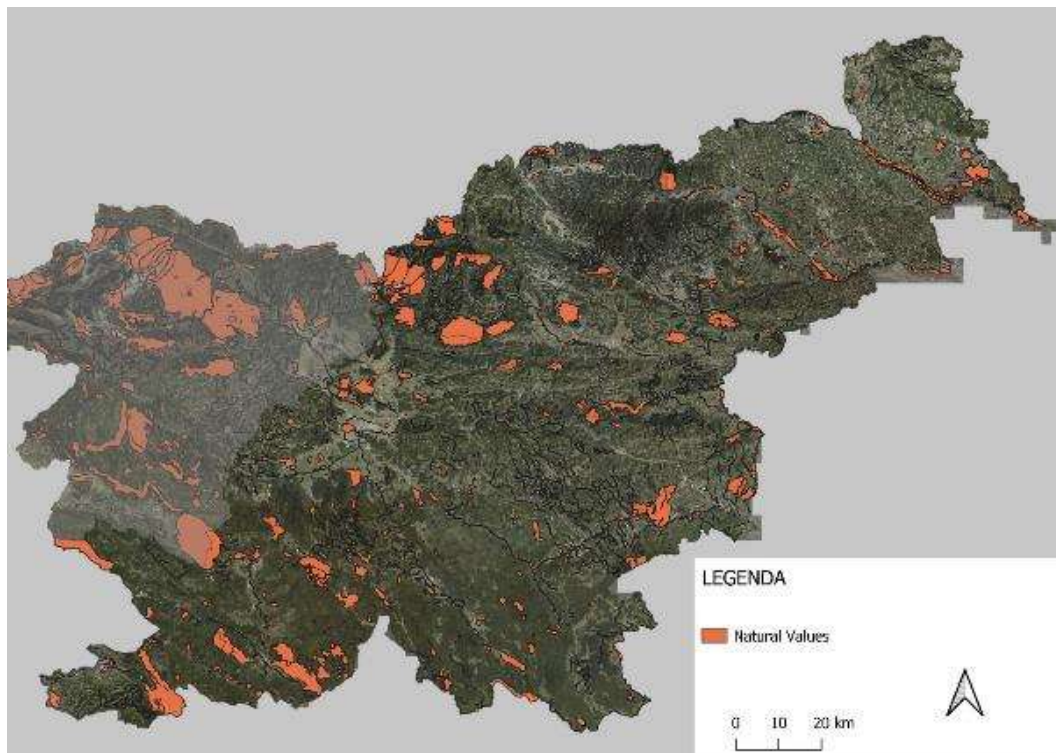


Figure 6: Depiction of natural values in the Slovenian Part of the Programme Area

The areas of expected natural values are shown in the figure below.

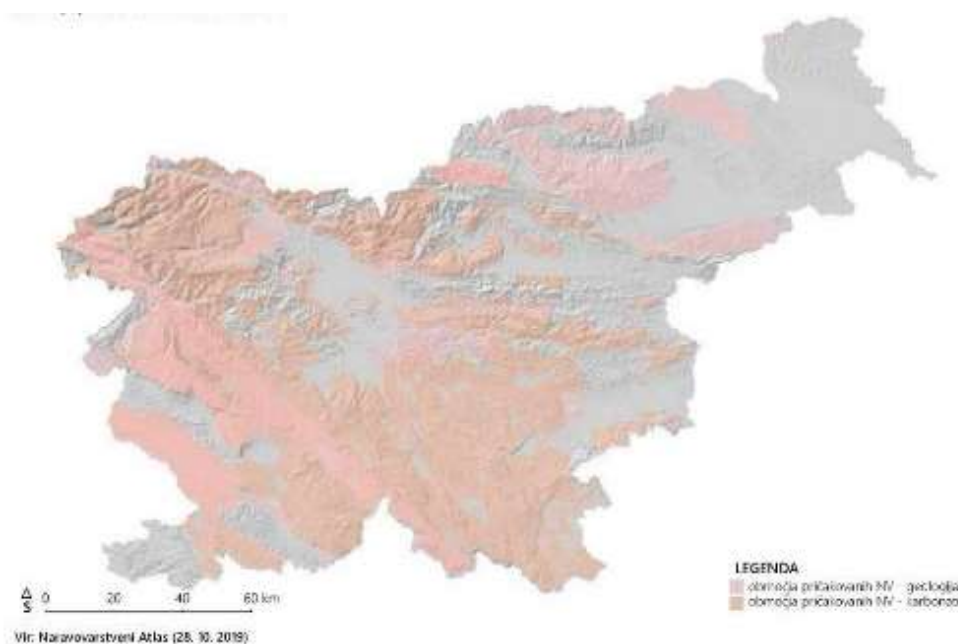


Figure 7: Depiction of areas of expected natural values in the Slovenian part of the Programme Area

3.2.4. Natural values are not registered in Croatia, per Nature Protection Act of Croatia (NN 80/13, 15/18, 14/19, 127/19). Ecologically relevant areas

In Slovenian part of the Programme area there are 277 ecologically important areas, that cover 907 005 ha and represent 62% of the Slovenian part of the programme area.

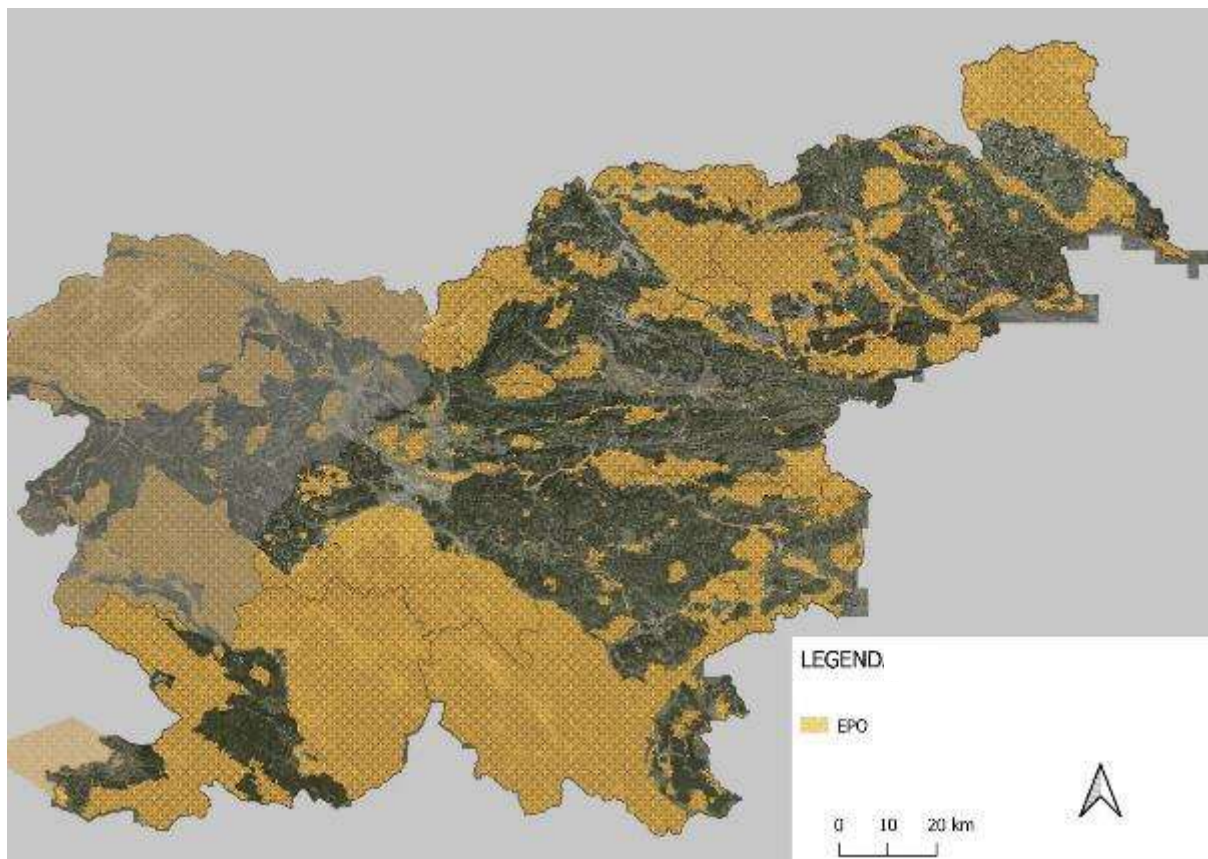


Figure 8: Depiction of ecologically relevant areas (EPO) in the Slovenian part of the Programme Area

Ecologically relevant areas are not registered in Croatia, per se. In Croatian part of the programme area there are 271 Special Areas of Conservation (SAC areas) and 13 Special Protection Areas (SPA areas), covering 559,996 ha that represent one third of the programme area, and 24 parks that are protected natural areas either on national or local level due to outstanding natural features, as well as cultural 3 national park, 1 regional park and 4 nature parks and 16 forest parks, together covering an area of 109,064 ha. Figures are given in chapters 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.

3.2.5. Protection forests and forest reserves

In Slovenia, there are currently 1681 protection forests covering an overall area of 98,762 ha and 170 forest reserves covering an overall area of 9,508 ha.

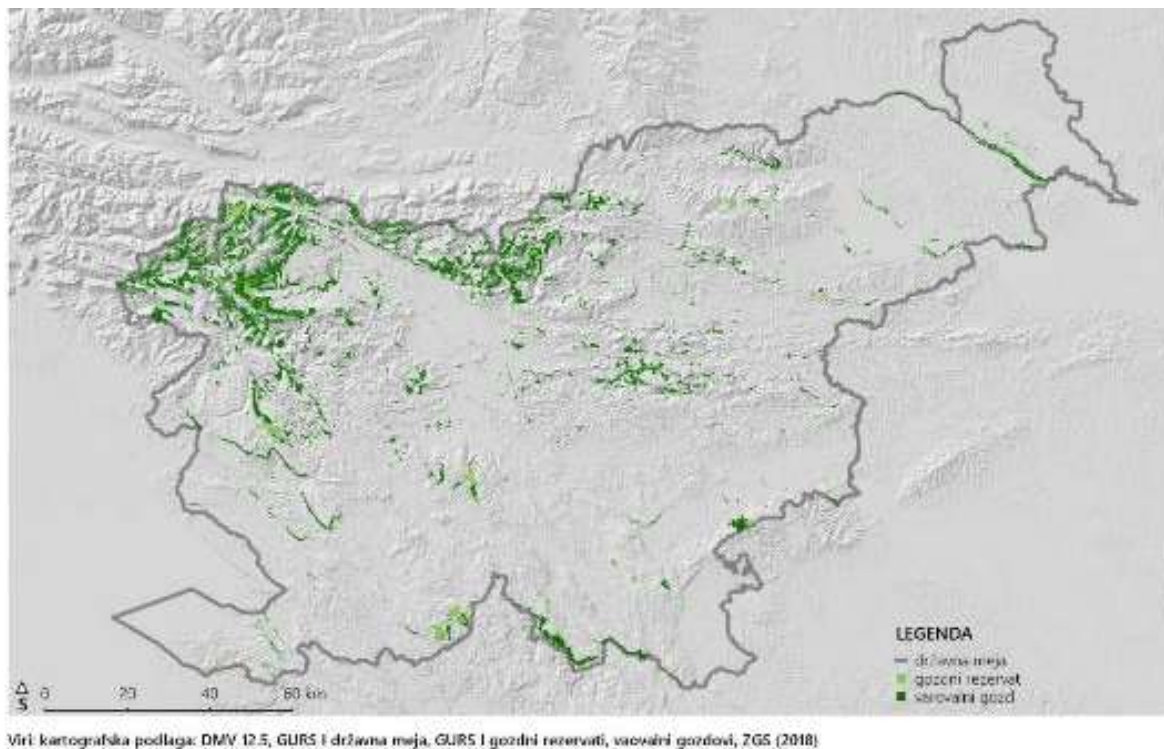


Figure 9: Depiction of forest reserve and protection forest areas in Slovenia

Forests of the observed area belong to the two vegetational belts: The Mediterranean in the southwest (all of Istria County and islands and coastal areas of the Primorsko-goranska County) and the Euro-Siberian (the remaining area in the inland). Therefore, they are characterized by very high biodiversity due to the excessive differences in habitat conditions.

The largest forest complexes can be found in the western Dinaric Alps (Gorski Kotar area) with predominant tree species common beech and fir¹. Most of the forests are of high silvicultural form and only a minor part pertains to various forms of degraded forest types (coppices, maquis), so the state of forests is generally good. The most afforested area is the high mountains of the Primorsko-goranska county, while northern counties such as Međimurska, Varaždinska, and Krapinsko-zagorska mostly comprise agricultural land with a lesser amount of forests.

¹ State Institute for Nature Protection (2006): Biodiversity in Croatia, p. 32.

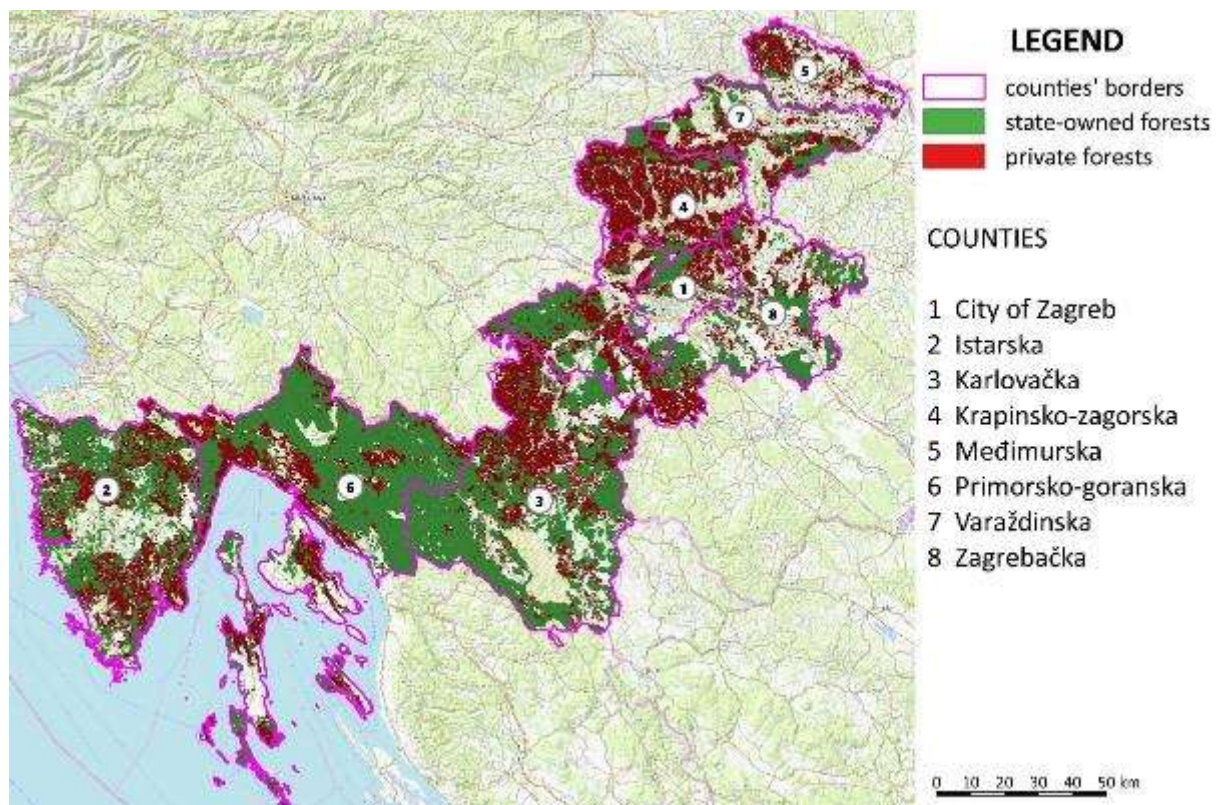


Figure 10: Forest areas on the observed ROI (Source: WFS of the Ministry of Agriculture, WMS of Croatian Forests Ltd.)

According to the Forest Act (Official Gazette 68/18, 115/18, 98/19, 32/20) forests are classified in three categories: Management forests (which made about 52% of total forest area in 2016)

- Protection forests (which made about 30% of total forest area in 2016)
- Forest with special purpose (which made about 18% of total forest area in 2016)

3.2.6. Water protection areas

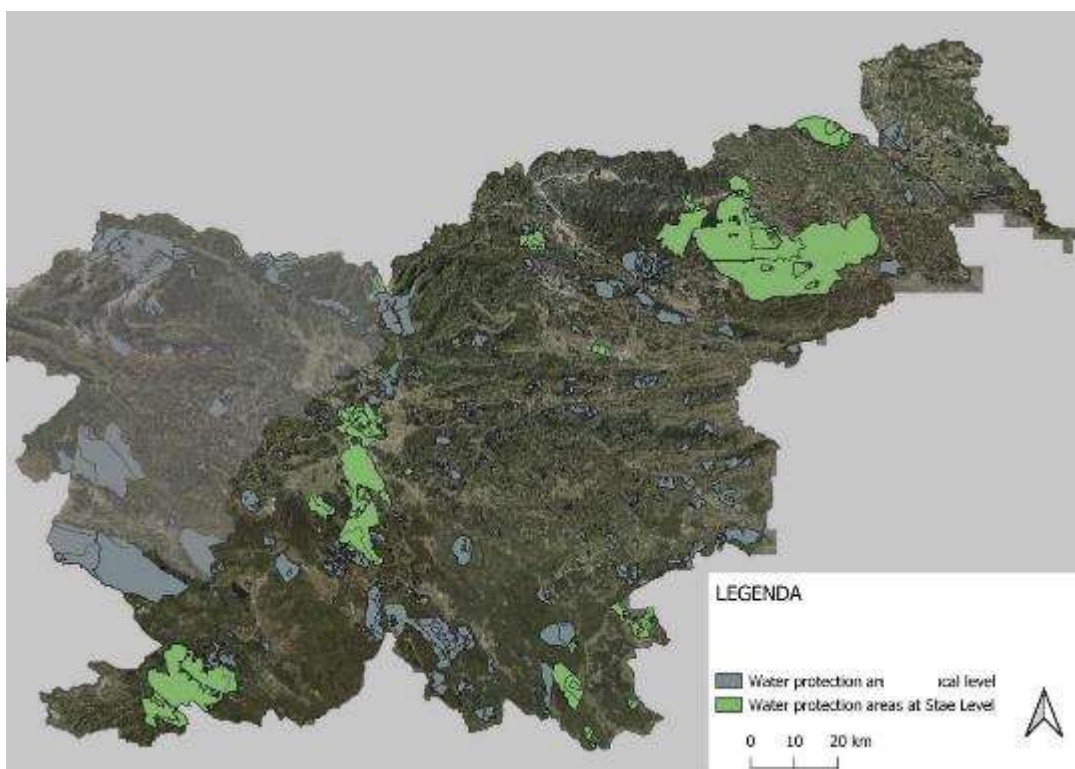


Figure 11: Depiction of water protected areas in the Slovenian part of the Programme Area

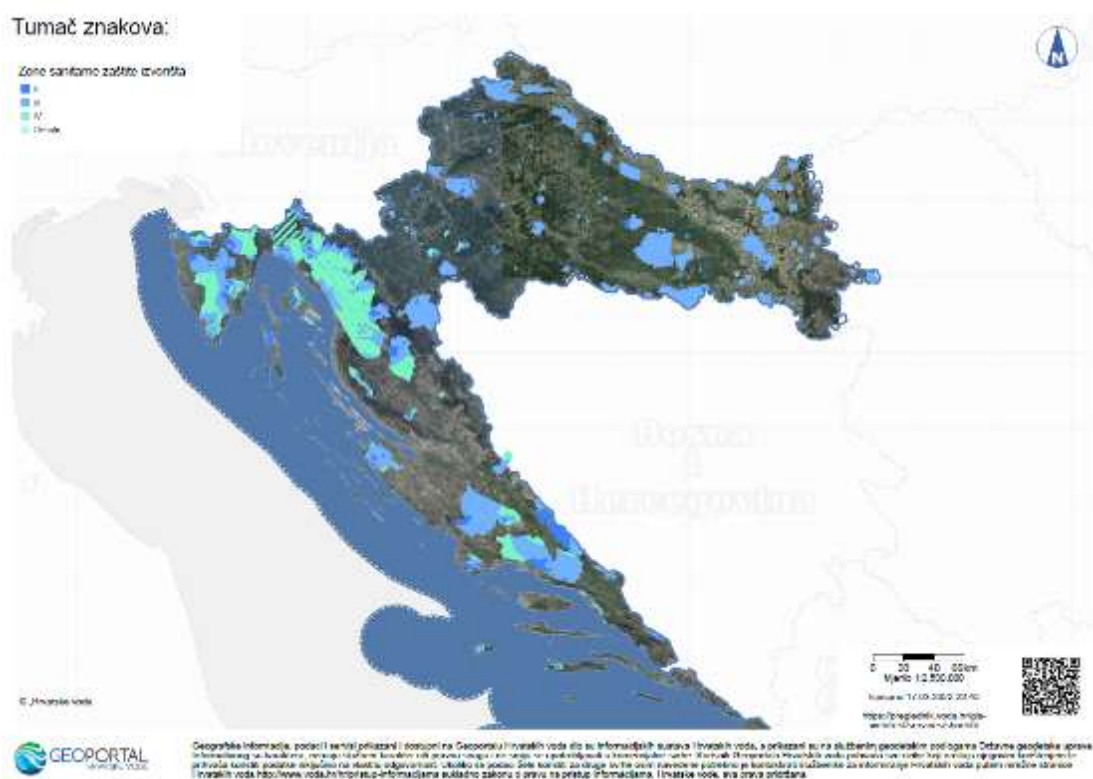
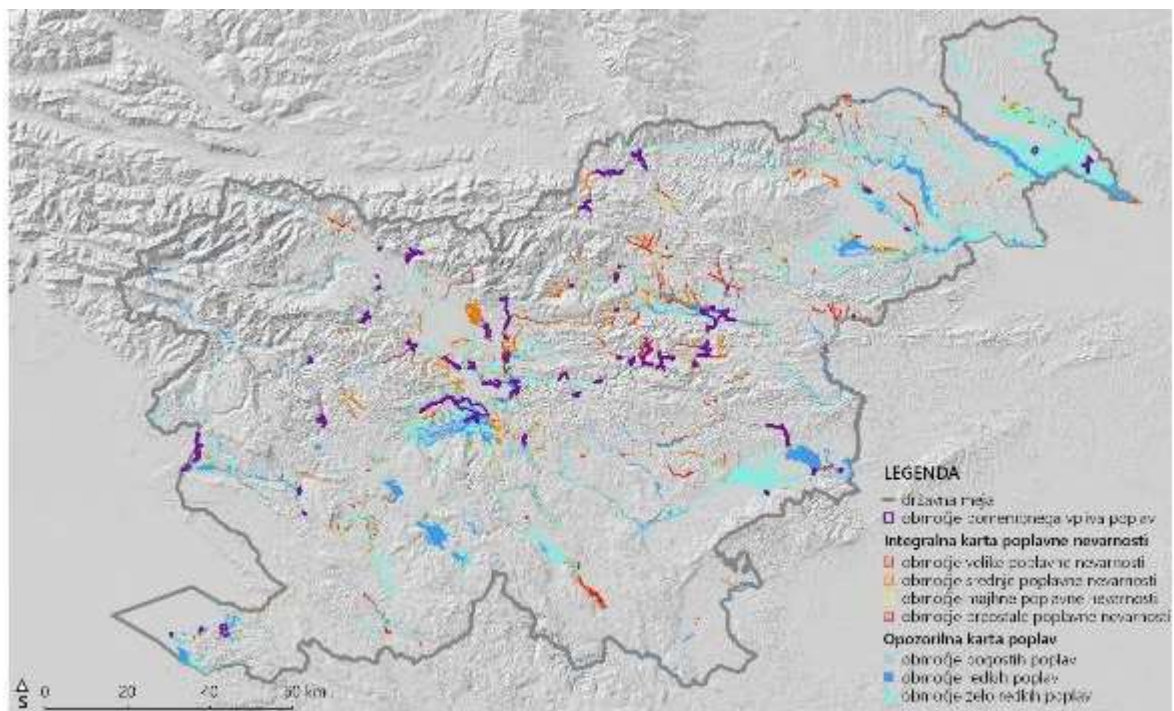


Figure 12: Drinking water protection zones in Croatia Area

3.2.7. Floodplains, erosion and landslide areas



Viri: kartografska podlaga: DMV 12.5. GURS | državna meja: GURS | OKP: KRPN, OPVP, Atlas voda (28. 10. 2019)

Figure 13: Depiction of flood hazard areas

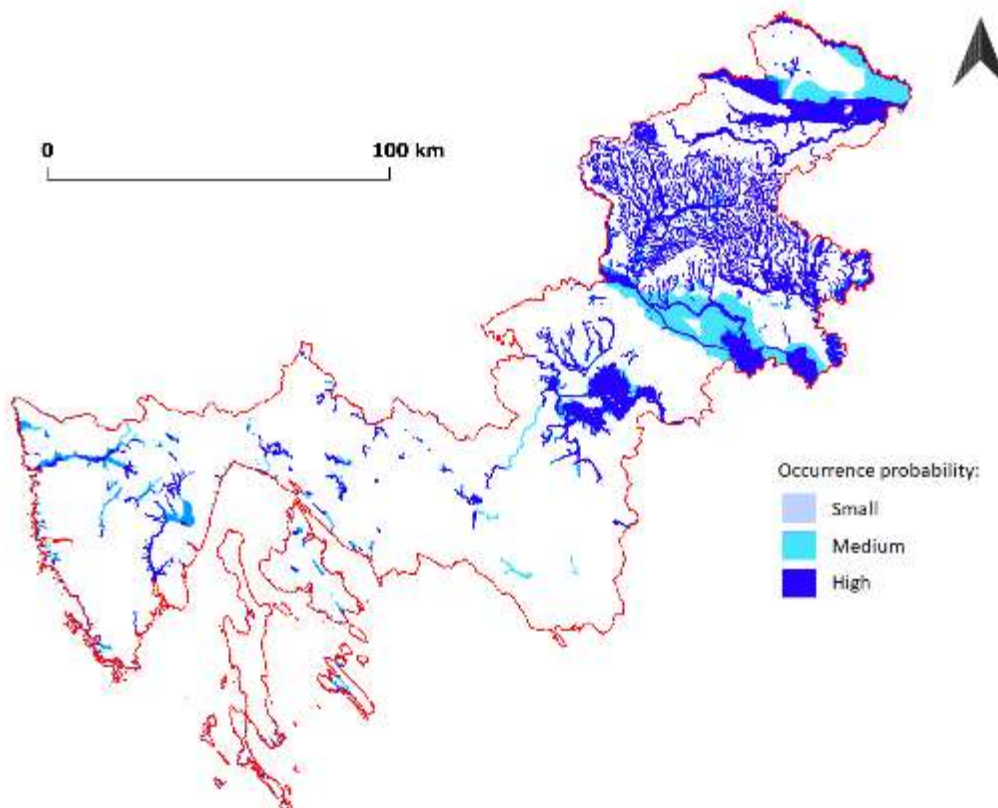
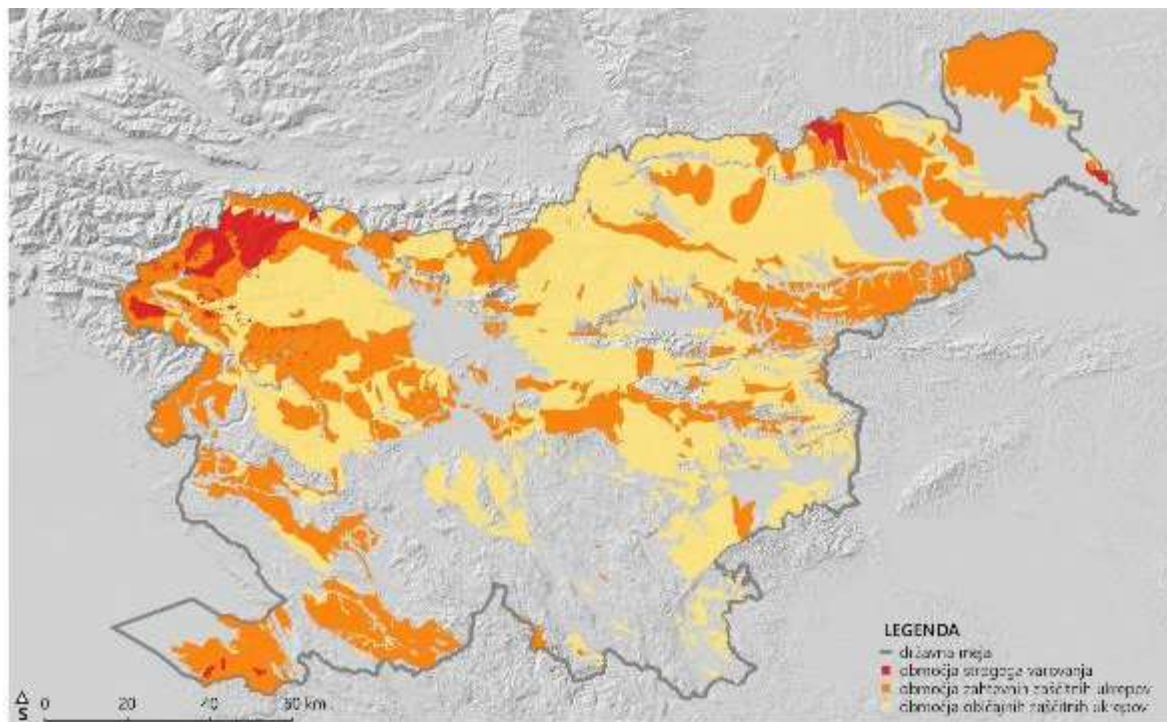


Figure 14: Depiction of flood hazard areas in Croatia



Viri: kartografska podlaga: DMV, GURS | državna meja, GURS | Opozorilna karta erozije, eVode (28. 10. 2019)

Figure 15: Depiction of erosion areas

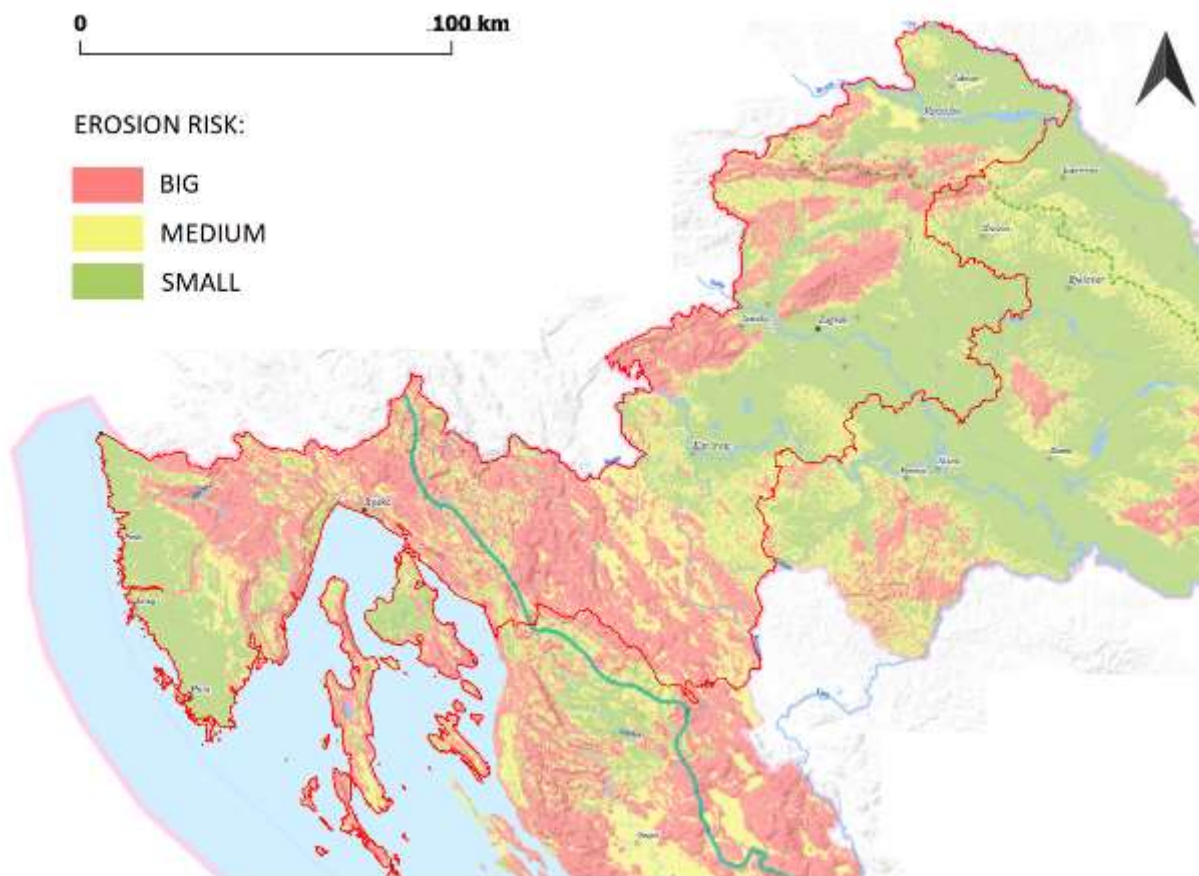
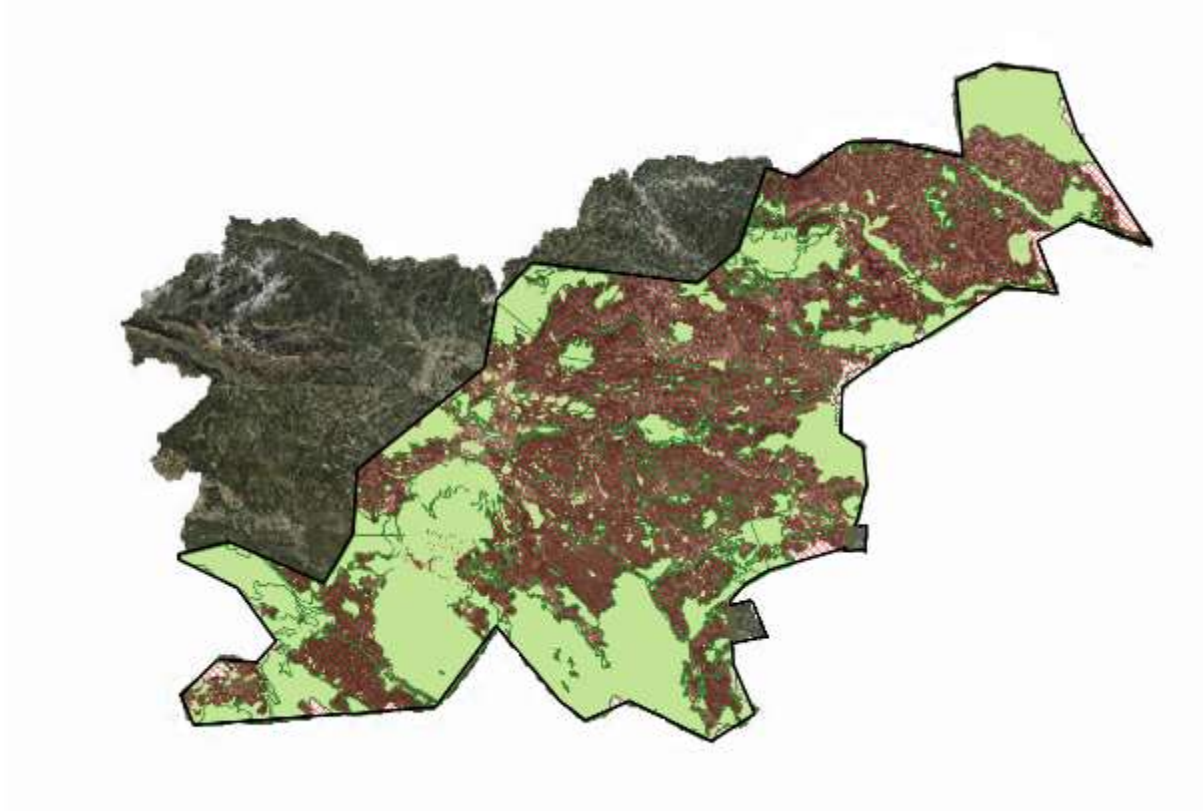


Figure 16: Depiction of erosion areas in Croatia

3.2.8. Cultural Heritage

Current status in Slovenia

The programme area is rich with tangible and intangible (living) cultural heritage. In total 22,340 units of tangible cultural heritage are present in Slovenian part of the programme area. Out of these 6,591 are protected as cultural monuments. (eVRD, 2021) More detailed data on number of units per type of cultural heritage is presented in the table below.



Source: ARSO, 2021a; eVRD, 2021

Figure 17: Depiction of cultural heritage in Slovenia

Current status in Croatia

The program area, as well as the entire territory of the Republic of Croatia, is rich in tangible and intangible cultural heritage in the category of protected and preventively protected. A total of 2 342 units of tangible cultural heritage are present in the Croatian part of the programme area. Of these, 1 844 are protected as Individual cultural heritage. (Register of Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Croatia, 2021).

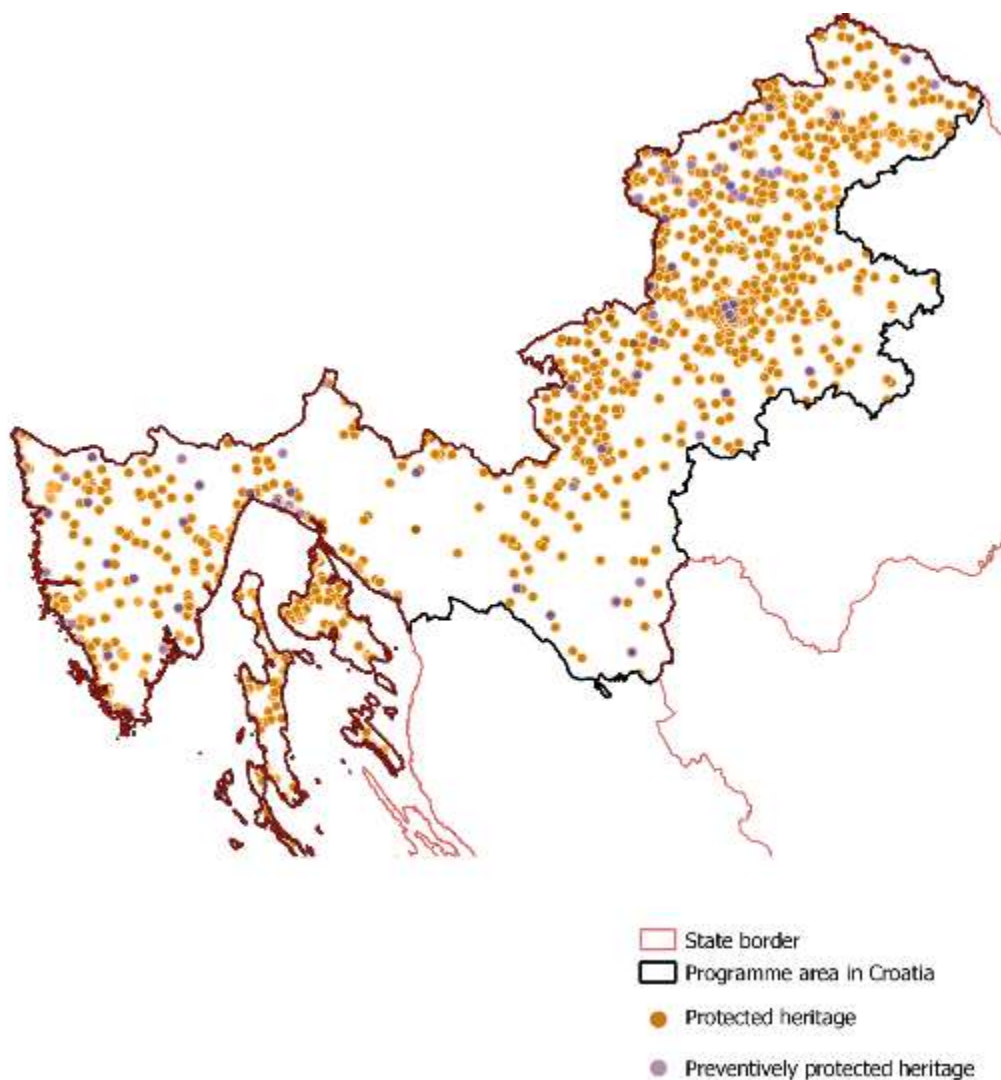


Figure 18: Depiction of cultural heritage in Croatia

3.3. Summary of applicable legal regimes in protected zones or parts thereof

Natura 2000

Protection guidelines for Natura sites are derived from the Decree on special protection areas (Natura 2000 areas). The Decree specifies that interventions and activities in Natura sites should be planned in such a way as to ensure to the fullest extent:

- The conservation of the natural range of habitat types and habitats of plant and animal species;
- The conservation of the relevant characteristics of abiotic and biotic components of habitat types, their specific structures and natural processes or proper use;

- The conservation or improvement of habitat quality for plant or animal species, especially those parts of the habitat that are essential in the most important life stages, such as breeding sites, overwintering in groups, hibernation, migration and feeding of animals in particular;
- The conservation of the habitat connectivity of plant and animal species populations and its possible restoration if it is ever interrupted.

When carrying out interventions or activities planned in accordance with the preceding paragraph, all possible technical and other measures must be implemented in order to minimise the adverse effects on habitat types, plants and animals as well as their habitats.

The time for carrying out the interventions, activities and other actions must be adapted to the life cycles of animals and plants as much as possible and in such a way as to:

- For animals, interventions or activities to be carried out must be adapted as to not coincide or coincide as little as possible with the periods in which animals require peace or cannot retreat, especially during breeding activities, while raising their offspring, during the development of non-movable or poorly movable developmental forms during and hibernation;
- For plants, they must be adapted as to allow the plants' setting, natural planting and other forms of propagation.

Non-native animal or plant species or genetically modified organisms may not be introduced to Natura sites.

When carrying out interventions or activities in potential Natura sites which planned in accordance with the guidelines of the preceding paragraph, all possible technical and other measures must be implemented in order to minimise the adverse effects on habitat types, plants and animals as well as their habitats.

Protected areas

Protection guidelines for protected areas are derived from the Nature Conservation Act. It specifies that the interventions and activities must be carried out in protected areas in accordance with the code of conduct laid down in the conservation act of the protected area based on which it was established.

3.4. Data on acquiring nature conservation guidelines or technical groundwork and level of compliance in the plan, especially in regard to mitigation measures

Nature protection guidelines were not obtained.

3.5. Depiction of actual land use areas

The IP Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 is a document of strategic nature and therefore does not consider the locations of individual measures. IP Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 also does not determine any allocation of land use. This renders the depiction of actual land use irrelevant.

3.6. Species and habitat types a Natura site is designated for, including data listed on the standard form for data on a Natura site

The subject of this appendix is the assessment of the plan at strategic level in accordance with the protection objectives specified in Chapter 3.1 and not an impact assessment of individual qualifying species of HTs. The precise locations of the interventions are not set out in the operational programme, so lists and data on qualifying species and habitat types are therefore not relevant. Qualifying species and habitat types for individual Natura 2000 sites are laid down in the Decree on special protection areas (Natura 2000 areas). Data on each individual Natura 2000 site is collected in a standard form for a Natura 2000 site and are available in the Nature Conservation Atlas (source: <http://www.naravovarstveni-atlas.si>).

In Croatian legislation, qualifying species and habitat types for individual Natura 2000 sites are laid down in the Decree on the ecological network and competences of public institutions for the management of ecological network areas (Natura 2000 sites). Data on each individual Natura 2000 site is collected in a standard form for a Natura 2000 site and are available in Natura 2000 – standard data form (<https://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/Natura2000/>). Results of the Report of the Republic of Croatia according to Art. 17 of the 2019 Habitats Directive are available at <https://www.eionet.europa.eu/article17/> and contain review on biogeographical assessment of conservation status of species and habitats at state level.

3.7. Site management plans and guidelines derived therefrom

In Slovenia the Natura 2000 sites are governed by PUN 2020 which, inter alia, lays down:

- Detailed protection objectives and measures to guarantee the objectives in Natura 2000 sites (appendix 6.1 PUN 2020 “Objectives and measures”)
- A list of plans for natural resource use – plans that might be directly necessary for the protection of Natura sites (forest management plans, hunting ground plans and hunting management plans, fishing area plans)
- Research activities in basic applied sciences which are urgently required for improving knowledge on the ecology of plant and animal species as well as habitat types
- Monitoring the indicators of the status of species and habitat types

The protected area management plan is defined in Article 60 of ZON as a programme act for the definition of development policies, the method of implementing the protection, the use and management of protected areas, and detailed policies for the protection of natural values

in a protected areas taking into account the development needs of the local population. The authority that adopted the conservation act adopts the protected area management plan based on the conservation act. If it is the state, the government must adopt it by a decree. For the time pending the adoption of the first management plan, the founder may lay down temporary management guidelines.

In Croatia Natura 2000 sites are governed by public institutions for the management of a national park or nature park and public institutions for the management of other protected areas and / or other protected parts of nature (JU) (Nature Protection Act (NN 80/13, 15/18, 14/19, 127/19)). The Decree on the ecological network and the competencies of public institutions for the management of ecological network areas (NN 80/19) determines the competence of public institutions that manage protected areas and ecological network areas for the management and adoption of ecological network management plans. According to the Report on the state of nature in the Republic of Croatia for the period from 2013 to 2017, Management plans for protected areas have been adopted for almost 66% of the total area of protected areas in Croatia. Among them, only five plans are also Natura 2000 management plans. Others plans for protected areas and Natura 2000 plans are underway.

3.8. Description of the existing initial state of the area

The IP Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 is a document of strategic nature and therefore does not consider the locations for the implementation of individual measures. The state of Natura 2000 Species and Habitat Types will be considered at the implementation level.

The conservation status of species in Slovenia

Pursuant to Article 17 of the Habitats Directive (IRSNC, 2019a), the Report identifies the following end state of qualifying species in Annex II of the Habitats Directive in Slovenia.

- 30% of all species have a good conservation status
- 38% of all species have an unfavourable, insufficient conservation status
- 14% of all species have an unfavourable, poor conservation status
- The conservation status could not be determined for 18% of all species

The conservation status of qualifying species by phylum is shown in the Figure below.

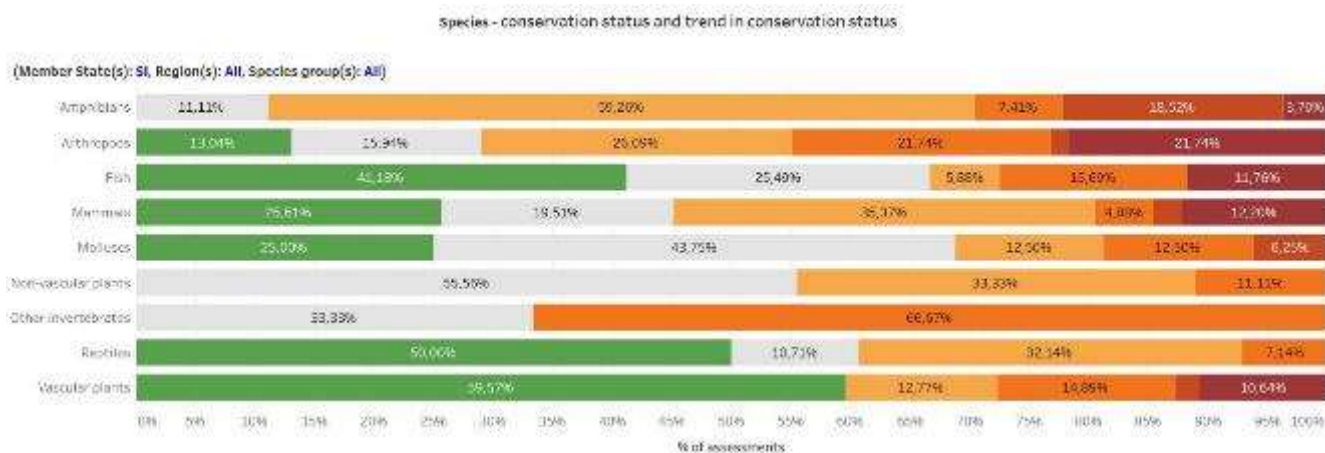


Figure 19: The conservation status of qualifying species categorised by phylum in 2019 in Slovenia

The conservation status of species in Croatia

Pursuant to Article 17 of the Habitats Directive (IRSNC, 2019a), the Report identifies the following end state of qualifying species in Annex II of the Habitats Directive in Croatia.

- 7,62% of all species have a good conservation status
- 23,81% of all species have an unfavourable, insufficient conservation status
- 21,9% of all species have an unfavourable, poor conservation status
- The conservation status could not be determined for 46,67% of all species

The conservation status of qualifying species by phylum is shown in the Figure below.

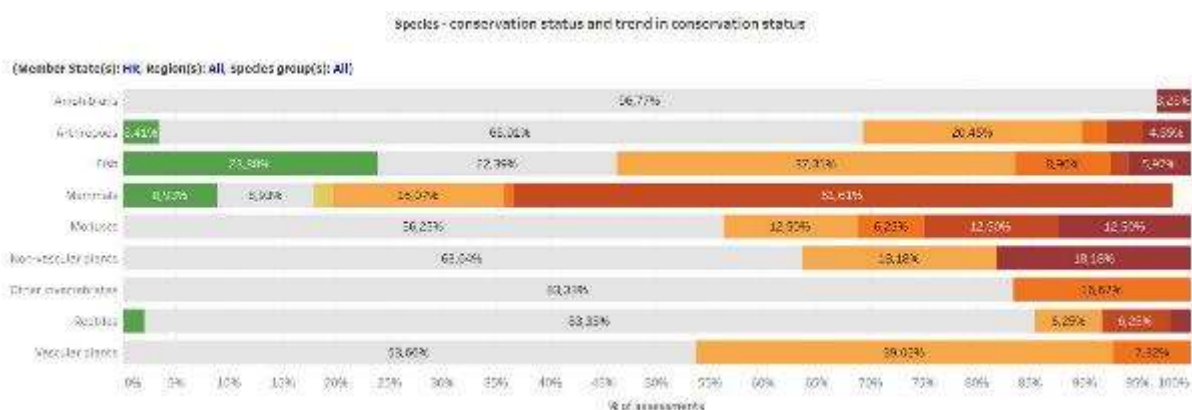


Figure 20: The conservation status of qualifying species categorised by phylum in 2019 in Croatia

The conservation status of Birds in Slovenia

According to the Summary report under Article 12 of the Birds Directive, EU Member States must report on the implementation of national provisions adopted on the basis of the directive. The reporting frequency is 6 years. The report's main focus is on the status and trends of bird populations from the Directive in Natura 2000 sites and areas throughout the country.

In Slovenia, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Environment is responsible for reporting, the reporting coordinator is the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, and the technical part of the report was in large part drawn up by the Society for Observation and Study of Birds of Slovenia (DOPPS-Birdlife Slovenia).

The 2018 report shows the short-term trends for population sizes of 210 nesting birds. The trend:

- Rising for 16% of bird populations
- Stable for 19% of bird populations
- Declining for 19% of bird populations
- Fluctuating for 2% of bird populations
- Uncertain for 12% of bird populations
- Unknown for 32% of bird populations.

The conservation status of Birds in Croatia

According to the Summary report under Article 12 of the Birds Directive, EU Member States must report on the implementation of national provisions adopted on the basis of the directive. The reporting frequency is 6 years. The report's main focus is on the status and trends of bird populations from the Directive in Natura 2000 sites and areas throughout the country.

The report for Croatia shows the short-term trends for population sizes of 231 nesting birds. The trend:

- Rising for 3% of bird populations
- Stable for 7% of bird populations
- Declining for 1% of bird populations
- Fluctuating for 4% of bird populations
- Uncertain for 1% of bird populations
- Unknown for 83% of bird populations.

The conservation status of Habitat Types in Slovenia

In Slovenia according to the Summary report under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive (IRSNC, 2019a), the following end state of qualifying habitat types was identified:

- 38% of all qualifying HTs have a favourable conservation status,
- 32% of all qualifying HTs have an unfavourable, insufficient conservation status,
- 30% of all qualifying HTs have an unfavourable, poor conservation status.

Short-term assessments trends for the conservation status of qualifying HTs were also established. These are:

- In 1% rising,
- In 61% stable,
- In 35% declining,
- And in 3% unknown.

The most favourable conservation statuses were determined in heath and sclerophyll bushland as well as coastal and offshore HTs and bedrock. The habitat types of inland freshwaters are in the poorest condition (Figure 16).

The conservation status of Habitat Types in Croatia

Habitat types associated with water bodies are freshwater habitats, bogs, mires and fens as well as some forest habitats. According to the Summary report under Article 17 of the Habitats Directive (IRSNC, 2019a), karst intermittent lakes and poljes are the only HTs that were given a favourable conservation status in the continental biogeographical region. An unfavourable conservation status has been identified for transition mires, guilds of white beak-sedge on peat moss, hard-water springs, flowing water vegetation and Illyrian oak-hornbeam forests. Poor conservation status was identified for swamp sawgrass stands, alkaline fens, guilds of Eurosiberian amphibians with annuals, underwater mats of *Chara* spp, pioneer guilds of gravel sites in mountain rivers and streams and Alpine rivers, woody vegetation with the bitter willow (*Salix eleagnos*) along their banks, oak-ash-elm forests along large rivers and Central European black alder and ash trees along flowing waters.

According to the Report on the state of nature in the Republic of Croatia for the period from 2013 to 2017, the best conservation status of natural non-forest habitats has been identified for the class of scarce and poorly overgrown land areas, where habitats with reduced conservation are only 2%. Class Grasslands, bogs and tall greens contain the worst conservation status of habitats, out of which 16% are rated with average to poorly conservation status. Analysis of previous assessments of endangered species shows that 40% of them are classified in one of three categories of high risk of extinction. The most endangered are corals, freshwater fish, fresh and brackish water crabs and cave fauna. Also, 23% of nesting bird species and 17% of amphibians and reptiles face a high risk of extinction.

Protected areas

The IP Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 is a document of strategic nature and therefore does not consider the locations for the implementation of individual measures. The state of Protected Areas will be considered at the implementation level.

3.9. Key features of habitats or species in the area

The subject of this Appropriate Assessment is the IP Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 at strategic level in accordance with the objectives specified in Chapter 3.1 and not an impact assessment of individual qualifying species of HTs. As the locations of the interventions in the IP Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 are not known, data on the key features of habitats or species are therefore not relevant.

3.9.1. Data on seasonal impacts and impacts of natural disturbances (droughts, floods) on key habitats or species in the area

The IP Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 is a document of strategic nature and therefore does not consider the locations for the implementation of individual measures. As a consequence data on seasonal impacts and impacts of natural disturbances (droughts, floods) on key habitats or species in the area is irrelevant. If necessary, individual measure will be assessed at the implementation level.

4. DATA ON IDENTIFIED IMPACTS (PERMANENT AND TEMPORARY) AND ASSESSMENT THEREOF

4.1. Definition of identified adverse impacts of the Plan on protection objectives of individual protected areas, their integrity and connectivity, including cumulative impacts

The impacts of the plan were identified based on the Rules on the assessment of acceptability of impacts caused by the execution of plans and activities affecting nature in protected areas.

Within the Programme there are three specific objectives with potential impacts on nature in protected areas and Species and Habitats of Community interest.

Priority 1 - A green and adaptive region

Specific objective 1.1 – Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience, from an ecosystem approach

Under this SO following fields will be addressed: risk awareness, damage prevention, and response in the cross-border area, climate change resilience to weather extremes, climate change adaptation measures for resilient communities, climate-proof spatial planning. The SO aims to improve the safety of citizens from adverse climate change effects and natural disasters and improve plans and capacities for climate adaptation on a community level.

Type of actions 1 Strengthening of risk preparedness and response capacities in the cross-border area can include exchange and harmonisation of data, risk mapping with protocols, establishment of information flows, development of cross-border response units (including rescue plans, protocols, and mechanisms of civil protection), training and capacity building. Under *Type of actions, 2: Increasing the resilience to climate change effects in the programme area* possible actions are: preparing and coordinating cross-sectoral integrated cross-border climate adaptation action plans, pilot and/or demonstration activities focused on strengthening the resilience of the cross-border area, supporting the elaboration of inclusive (interdisciplinary) cross-border spatial planning background documents responding to identified climate threats; capacity building focused on sustainable implementation of defined action plans on regional/local level and introduction and development of nature-based solutions for integrated water management by considering ecosystem restoration, natural water retention measures and other green (or blue) infrastructure measures that reduce flood risk threats

“Soft actions” supported will have no direct impact on nature in protected areas and Species and Habitats of Community interest. Some direct positive effect on nature in protected areas or even Species and Habitats of Community interest) can only be expected as a consequence of better protection against climate change threats that will introduce and develop nature-based solutions for integrated water management by considering ecosystem restoration, natural water retention measures and other green (or blue) infrastructure measures that reduce flood risk threats.

Some negative impacts can be expected if the Programme supports building of small-scale infrastructure and the acquisition of necessary equipment and tools for implementation of pilot actions (i.e., under the implementation of cross-border pilot actions focused on strengthening resilience). Also, risk prevention may prioritise reducing the vulnerability of human settlements. On one hand if the nature protection legislation is being complied with no significant impacts can be expected. On the other this can lead to nature in protected areas and Species and Habitats of Community interest being more exposed to climate change. Since the SO takes into account the ecosystem approach and given the envisaged scope of these interventions (pilot projects) and the mandatory compliance with environmental legal and spatial frameworks, less significant negative impacts can be expected during implementation.

No large-scale construction with potential significant negative impacts is foreseen in the context of the programme.

We recommend the following enhancement measures for improved positive impacts on nature in protected areas and Species and Habitats of Community interest:

Under Type of action 1.2: Increasing the resilience to climate-change effects in the programme area During the planning of measures that will increase the resilience to climate change effects nature in protected areas and Species and Habitats of Community interest should be taken into account together with the protection of society. Actions for fostering the resilience of habitats to climate-change effects should be awarded through the project selection criteria (contributes to a positive evaluation). Actions for the enhanced resilience of society should not have indirect negative impacts on nature in protected areas and Species and Habitats of Community interest.

Priority 2 - Resilient and sustainable region

Specific objective 2.1 – Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

The aim of the specific objective to facilitate the recovery of tourism and culture in the Programme area by greening of tourism, supporting shift from quantity towards quality, increasing diversify cultural tourism products, and supporting cultural tourism entrepreneurship and innovation. Special attention will be given to rural border areas to unlock their hidden potentials and abilities to offer demand-driven products and services, while conserving their cultural uniqueness and protecting the natural environment. All the actions

supported by this priority will contribute to strengthening communities, increasing competitiveness, and job creation in the Programme area. Two types of actions are targeted:

Type of action 1 Supporting sustainable tourism and green transition of public and private organizations through pilot and demonstration actions, collaborative learning and awareness-raising of tourists and all stakeholders in tourism, and culture: The indicative activities include development of joint pilot and demonstration actions to support green transition of public and private stakeholders in tourism and culture and development of new or “greening” of existing cross-border products, services or solutions that contribute to the sustainability and accessibility of touristic products and services. Cross-border awareness and collaboration would be performed for supporting environmentally and socially responsible tourism and culture, tourists and visitors. Joint cross-border collaboration platforms and joint learning actions for supporting environmentally and socially responsible tourism, culture, and creative industries will be also supported. Cross-border trainings of public and private organisations for integrated sustainable destinations management by enhancing knowledge and skills supporting transition to resilient tourism destinations will be supported. Digital skills may be involved to enhance transition for circular business models.

Type of action 3.2 Enhancing resilience and recovery of tourism by development and upgrade of joint cross-border tourism products and services for enhancing resilience:

The indicative activities include increasing diversity of cross-border tourism in accordance with newly arising COVID-19 circumstances, adjusting tourism and cultural organisations to demands of the modern visitors by preventing mass tourism, supporting cross-border demand driven digitalisation, development of cross-border tourism regions/destinations and increasing the quality of offer, upgrading of joint cross-border tourism products by supporting valorisation and interpretation of cultural and natural heritage, developing joint tourism products by leveraging existing infrastructure for tourism purposes in rural destinations, joint cross-border pilot actions for development, enhancing and promotion of health tourism, oenological and gastronomical offer for development of agrotourism and farm to fork schemes, joint cross-border actions for supporting social innovations and cultural and creative industries, and creativity in tourism and culture

The programme will most likely support mostly “soft actions” with no significant direct impact on the environment.

Non-significant negative impacts can result as a consequence of tourism development. Physical disturbances as a result of trampling well as the increase of noise levels, additional waste and wastewater, additional new infrastructure in Protected Areas and Natura 2000 Sites are possible. Main negative impacts could hence be connected to development of outdoor tourism that could exceed carrying capacity of an area.

Some positive impacts can also be expected as a result of the on increase of the environmental and social responsibility of public and social responsibility of organizations in culture and

tourism sectors, greening of existing touristic products and upgrading of joint cross-border tourism products by supporting valorisation and interpretation of natural heritage. The size of these positive impacts on nature in protected areas and Species and Habitats of Community interest will depend on the type and scope of supported interventions.

To enhance the positive effects, we propose that within the application documentation for the call for proposals, it should be defined that for the projects that increase or can potentially increase the number of visitors in Protected Areas, it is expected to take into the consideration a carrying capacity of project specific protected area(s) or Natura 2000 site(s) as a part of the project proposal. The application form should also contain explanation on how visitor management will be implemented.

Where the projects would potentially increase the number of visitors in protected areas, a requirement from the call for proposals should be to provide sustainable solutions for visitor management.

In cases where a small-scale visitor infrastructure is planned with the project, it is recommended to give an advantage to infrastructure aimed at controlled guiding of visitors through the area.

Where possible public transport in tourism should be promoted.

Parking lots and organizing group transport to more visited tourist attractions should be arranged.

Alternative means of transport should be promoted.

Based on the above it may be concluded that the impact of the programme on nature in protected areas and Species and Habitats of Community interest. will be **Non-significant (B rating)**.

4.2. Alternative solutions

Alternative solutions were not assessed.

4.3. Interpretation of the possibilities of mitigating adverse impacts with listing appropriate mitigation measures and reasons for choosing a specific mitigation measure

Damage mitigation measures are not needed. We propose the following enhancement measures:

Priority 1 - A green and adaptive region

Specific objective 1.1 – Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience, from an ecosystem approach

- During the planning of measures that will increase the resilience to climate change effects nature in protected areas and Species and Habitats of Community interest should be taken into account together with the protection of society. Actions for fostering the resilience of habitats to climate-change effects should be awarded through the project selection criteria (contributes to a positive evaluation). Actions for the enhanced resilience of society should not have indirect negative impacts on nature in protected areas and Species and Habitats of Community interest.

Priority 2 - Resilient and sustainable region

- *Specific objective 2.1 – Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation* Where the projects would potentially increase the number of visitors in protected areas, a requirement from the call for proposals could be to provide sustainable solutions for visitor management. The mentioned challenge should be described within the project proposal.
- Where the projects would potentially increase the number of visitors in protected areas, a requirement from the call for proposals should be to provide sustainable solutions for visitor management.
- In cases where a small-scale visitor infrastructure is planned with the project, it is recommended to give an advantage to infrastructure aimed at controlled guiding of visitors through the area.
- Where possible public transport in tourism should be promoted.
- Parking lots and organizing group transport to more visited tourist attractions should be arranged.
- Alternative means of transport should be promoted.

4.4. Determining a time frame for implementing mitigation measures, listing the implementers thereof and method of monitoring the performance of mitigation measures implemented

Mitigation measures were not defined.

4.5. List of potentially planned or considered nature conservation initiatives which may affect the FUTURE state of the area

In 2016, the Natura 2000 Management programme for Slovenia for the period 2015-2020 (PUN2000) was adopted providing baselines for the managements of Natura 2000 sites. The Decree on special protection areas (Natura 2000 areas) (Official gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 49/04, 110/04, 59/07, 43/08, 8/12, 33/13, 35/13, 39/13, 3/14, 21/16, 1) was also amended and modified in 2016 and prologued by the government of Slovenia in January 2021

Based on PUN 2000, there are several projects being carried out in Slovenia aimed at conserving biodiversity and protected areas. The majority of the most important projects are available at http://www.natura2000.si/aktualno/projekti?tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=list&tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&cHash=7d265df9611828046b086f3e186fd0bc.

Regional Park Pohorje is being planned.

In Croatia an Ordinance on the ecological network (natura 2000) and competences of public institutions for the management of ecological network areas was adopted in 2019 (OG 80/19). For the purpose of managing ecological network areas, the Ordinance on conservation objectives and conservation measures of target bird species in ecological network areas (OG 25/20, 38/20) was adopted, while an ordinance defining objectives and measures for conservation of other species and habitat types is being drafted for each ecological network area. The Natura 2000 network is not yet complete, especially in the part related to marine habitats and migratory marine species, which need to be further explored and valorized. Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development in partnership with Croatian Environment and Nature Agency in 2017 started the implementation of the project "Development of a framework for management of the Natura 2000 ecological network" through which management plans will be developed in the period from 2018 to 2022 for at least 40% of the ecological network in Croatia.

Regional Park Čićarija is being planned.

5. LIST OF DATA SOURCES OR METHOD OF DATA OBTAINMENT AND METHODS USED IN IMPACT AND ASSESSMENT FORECASTING

5.1. Sources

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5.1.1. Methods used

The data used in the report was acquired from literature publicly available on websites. The effect of implementing the IP Slovenia-Croatia 2021-2027 on protected areas and Natura 2000 network were assessed in accordance with the Rules on the assessment of acceptability of impacts caused by the execution of plans and activities affecting nature in protected areas (Official gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, No. 130/04, 53/06, 38/10 and 3/11).

A – No impact/positive impact

B – Non-significant impact

C – Non-significant impact under conditions (due to mitigation measures)

D – Significant impact

E – Devastating impact

Size class A, B, C »INTERVENTION IMPACTS ARE NOT ADVERSE«.

Size class D, E »INTERVENTION IMPACTS ARE SIGNIFICANT AND ADVERSE«.

Existing publicly available data on the state of wild plant and animal species, their habitats and habitat types was used in drawing up the assessment.

In drawing up this Appendix, Article 25a of the cited Rules was also considered which states that, for operative programmes and other plans or parts thereof, which are not plans regarding spatial planning and, based on their description, it is not possible to assume all planned interventions either, as the descriptions do not include any specific intervention locations or the type of intervention is apparently not sufficiently detailed, in the assessment of the acceptability, the matrix in Annex 6 of these Rules shall not be effectuated. In such cases, expert evaluations for preserving a favourable conservation status of species and habitat types must be provided for specific content of these Rules in line with provision of the preceding Article. The matrix in Annex 6 of these Rules must be effectuated in such cases in the assessment of the acceptability at the level of more detailed plans or interventions. The impact assessment and evaluations are therefore provided based on expert evaluation and without matrices.

6. LIST OF COMPILERS AND POTENTIAL SUBCONTRACTORS OF THE APPENDIX FOR THE APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

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