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INTERREG VI-A ITALY-SLOVENIA 2021-2027

**STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL
ASSESSMENT**

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

Non-technical summary

April 2022

This chapter summarizes the main results and outcomes of the SEA process for the Interreg VI-A Italy-Slovenia 2021-2027 Programme (IP).

For more details, please refer to relevant chapters of the Environmental Report.

Overview of the Programme

The Interreg VI-A Italy-Slovenia 2021-2027 Programme (IP) is a programme in the framework of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) and funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The purpose of such Cross-Border programmes is to support Member States to implement joint projects, address joint challenges and overcome border obstacles.

The Programme area extends over a total surface of 19,841 km² and has a total population of approximately 3 million inhabitants. It covers 5 Italian NUTS 3 regions (Venice, Udine, Pordenone, Gorizia and Trieste) and 5 Slovenian NUTS 3 regions (Primorsko-notranjska, Osrednjeslovenska, Gorenjska, Obalno-kraška and Goriška).

The IP highlights six main areas where to intervene to improve the living conditions of all agents and the population of the Programme area. They are:

1. Research and Innovation;
2. Energy, Climate change and Sustainable Development;
3. Labour Market, Human Capital and Linguistic Minorities, Healthcare;
4. Connectivity and Transports;
5. Natural and Cultural heritage and Tourism;
6. Governance.

Priorities (POs) and Specific Objectives (SOs) are described in the next table, along with funding.

Priorities	Specific Objectives	Financial endowment
PO 1 - A more competitive and smarter Europe	SO 1.1 - Developing and enhancing research and innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies	€ 6.439.065,00 (9,7%)
PO 2 - A greener, low-carbon transitioning towards a net zero carbon economy and resilient Europe	SO 2.4 - Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, and resilience, taking into account eco-system based approaches	€ 9.342.721,00 (14,1%)
	SO 2.6 - Promoting the transition to a circular and resource efficient economy	€ 5.294.208,00 (8,0%)
	SO 2.7 - Enhancing protection and preservation of nature, biodiversity and green infrastructure, including in urban areas, and reducing all forms of pollution (also includes the POSEIDONE strategic project)	€ 10.171.344,00 (15,4%)
PO 4 - A more social and inclusive Europe	SO 4.6 - Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation (also includes the ADRIOCYCLETOUR strategic project and another one for the joint management and sustainable development of the Classical Karst Area)	€ 29.853.250,00 (45,0%)

ISO 1 – Better Cooperation Governance	ISO 1 (b) - 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	€ 3.659.845,00 (5,5%)
	ISO 1 (c) - Build up mutual trust, in particular by encouraging people-to-people actions	€ 1.500.000,00 (2,3%)
<i>Total</i>		€ 66.260.433,00 (100,0%)

The Interreg VI-A Italy-Slovenia 2021-27 Programme will coordinate with the existing priorities under EUSALP and EUSAIR macro-regional strategies to create synergies with regular projects and their flagship projects. Furthermore, IP shows clear complementarity and potential to exploit synergies with other programmes and frameworks like European Green Deal, Alpine space, Adrion, Italy-Austria, Slovenia-Croatia, etc.

IP will also be committed to ensuring the respect of the horizontal principles outlined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union including gender equality, non-discrimination, accessibility and sustainable development throughout preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of projects taking into account the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the "do no significant harm" principle.

For more details about the IP, please refer to chapter 1 of the Environmental Report.

Methodological approach, alternatives and the SEA process

The SEA was conducted in accordance with the *EU Directive 2001/42/EC* and the *SEA Protocol*. The relevant frame for assessments was set up by the environmental aspects outlined in the SEA Directive and the subsequently identified relevant environmental objectives which are potentially impacted by the programme.

The IP has been agreed upon by National delegations, deciding that it is best suited for the needs of the area, and effective within its available budget. Therefore, there were no programme level alternatives of the Interreg Italy-Slovenia 2021-2027 Programme that were considered within this SEA Report. The event of not implementing the programme (i.e. the "zero alternative") is quite unlikely. In this situation the baseline conditions of the programme area would remain the same, i.e. the positive and adverse programme implementation impacts would not occur and currently identified trends would most likely continue.

The goal of this particular SEA was to further strengthen environmental considerations in the IP through proposed enhancement measures and to mitigate any identified negative impacts on environment through proposed mitigation measures, which could take form of additionally proposed activities to be supported by the IP or modification of already proposed activities by the IP.

Impacts were assessed on the basis of changes in impact indicators in regard to the state of the environment and the importance of these changes, the level at which environmental protection objectives were taken into account during the IP preparation and other evaluation criteria.

Potential impacts identified in the scoping phase were more precisely defined in the Environmental Report and assessed based on the following impact assessment key:

+2	+1	0	-1	-2	T+	T-
Significant positive impact	Non-significant positive impact	Very limited impact or no impact	Non-significant adverse impact	Significant adverse impact	Transboundary positive impact	Transboundary negative impact

Finally, mitigation and enhancement measure were proposed. The SEA team was engaged early on in the programming process and was able to establish a constructive cooperation with all stakeholders. SEA team was also invited to follow and contribute to Task Force meetings. Subsequently, the SEA team was able to closely monitor the programming process. This resulted in its' regular inputs at key moments of the programming process.

As a result of all above presented activities, we can report that a significant number of proposed mitigation measures, enhancement measures and recommendations were already integrated in the final draft version of the IP (final draft version 5, dated with 31st March 2022) – clearly reflecting the added value of the SEA in the programming process.

However, this environmental report represents only one of several steps of the whole SEA process:

Steps of the SEA process	Schedule	Status
Kick off meeting	December 2020	Completed
Integrating SEA into the programming process timeline	January-May 2021	Completed
Scoping and consultations with environmental authorities	June-October 2021	Completed
Draft Environmental Report	November 2021-March 2022	Completed
Internal revision of the Draft Environmental Report & coordination with the Programming team	March 2022	Completed
Final Draft Environmental Report	March 2022	Completed
Approval of the Final Draft Environmental Report by Responsible Environmental Authorities	April 2022	Ongoing
Consultations of responsible Environmental Authorities and the public on Environmental Report	May 2022	-
Documentation of consultations and final Environmental Report	June 2022	-
Environmental statement	After IP adoption	-
Expected end of the process	June-July 2022	-

Conclusions of the Scoping process

The scoping processes involving all responsible environmental authorities from the programme area was started in June 2021. Predominantly positive impacts of IP on environment were recognized during the scoping, with three points of concern or potentially negative impact exposed:

- increased pressures to environment due to increased tourism;
- potential negative impact of new small-scale infrastructures;
- potentially adverse impacts on tangible and intangible attributes of cultural and natural heritage.

In both countries a written scoping procedure was carried out and in Slovenia an on-line workshop was also organized. Based on received responses and comments the final version of Scoping Report was prepared in October 2021. The SEA team used the inputs from the scoping procedure to define environmental objectives of the Environmental Report and indicators used to assess impacts of the IP on the environment.

Environmental aspects, issues and concerns

Based on conclusions from scoping, all environmental aspects and all identified environmental issues and concerns have been made the subject of the SEA assessment. The analysis of environmental policy frameworks on international and national levels resulted in definition of the following environmental issues and concerns.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS	ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND CONCERNS
Air	Air pollution
Climate	Climate change mitigation (GHG emission reductions, renewable energy, energy efficiency)
	Climate change adaptation (adaptive capacity and adaptation measures)
Water	Protection and restoration of water ecosystems and wetlands
	Hydro-morphological pressures
	Pollution pressures on surface water and links to human health
	Pollution pressures on groundwater and links to human health
	Water abstraction and its pressures on surface water bodies and groundwater
Soil and land use	Ensuring sustainable use of land and soil
	Preventing loss of soil and soil pollution
Biodiversity and Natura 2000	Protection and preservation of biodiversity and natural ecosystems
	Protection and preservation of Natura 2000 species and habitats
	Promotion of green infrastructure and ecosystem-based management
Cultural heritage	Protection and preservation of cultural heritage
	Promotion of participatory management of cultural heritage
Landscape	Protection and preservation of landscapes
	Protection and valorization of geodiversity and geological heritage

Population and human health	Impacts of noise pollution on human health and well-being
	Solid and hazardous Waste
	Public health and environmental health
	Impacts of climate change (floods) on human health and well-being
	Impacts of noise pollution on human health and well-being

This list was the basis for the preparation of the current state of environment in the area, as well as the environmental assessments of the “zero alternative” (ZA) and the IP.

The current state of the environment and the zero alternative

The SEA team relied on publicly available data, monitoring reports and own GIS and statistical analysis to describe the current state of the environment and Zero Alternative (ZA) trends per individual environmental segments. Analysis was focused on pre-identified key indicators, later on also used in the potential impact assessment process.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS	INDICATORS	STATE OF ENVIRONMENT & ZERO ALTERNATIVE TRENDS	
		ITALY	SLOVENIA
Air	Average emission levels of the main air pollutants (NOx, PM10, PM2,5, O3, SO2)	↗ ↔	↗ ↔
Climate	Greenhouse gas emissions	↘ ↔	↗
	Share of renewable energy in gross final energy consumption	↔	↗
	Final energy consumption	↗	↗
Water	Ecological and chemical status of surface water bodies	↘ ↔	↘ ↔
	Chemical status of groundwater bodies	↔	↔
	Quantitative status of groundwater	↔	↔
	Water Exploitation Index	↔	↔
Soil	Land take	↘	↘
	Land use/cover change by categories	↘	↘
	Area of functionally de-graded areas	↘	↘
	Quality of soil and soil pollution	↘	↔
Biodiversity	Development of nature protection areas (by categories)	↔	↗
	Favourable condition of species of European interest	↘	↘
	Favourable condition of habitats of European interest	↗	↗
Landscape and cultural heritage	Registered units of cultural heritage	↗	↘
	Intangible cultural heritage	↗	↘
	Extension of protected landscapes	↗	↗
	Risk of agri-cultural land abandonment	↔	↘
	Landscape fragmentation	↘	↘
Human health and well-being	Number of people exposed to air pollution	↗ ↔	↗
	Population exposed to excessive noise levels	↔ ↘	↗
	Generated solid waste per capita	↘	↘
	Selected solid waste	↗	↗
	'Equivalent personnel' for every thousand 'equivalent patients'	↔ ↘	↘
	Number of people affected by flood risk	↔ ↘	↗

State of environment trend and zero alternative (ZA) foreseen development:

↑ Improving trend; ↗ Partially or gradually improving trend; ↔ Unchanged trend; ↘ Partially or gradually deteriorating trend; ↓ Deteriorating trend

Impact identification and assessment

Potential impacts identified in the scoping phase were reconsidered and more precisely defined and described. It was concluded that the IP is expected give contribution to many positive impacts on all environmental aspects. However, the following potentially negative impacts have been identified:

- Increased air pollution and higher risk to public health due to higher emission levels of

the air pollutants (CO, NMVOC, NOx, PM10, PM2.5) due to increased traffic flows, especially in touristic areas.

- Increased pressures to environment due to increased and dispersed tourism flows (increased energy consumption, increased traffic flows, soil loss and sealing, increased waste production and water pollution, increased natural resources consumption, disruption of flora/fauna in protected areas and Natura 2000).
- Potential negative impact of new infrastructures (soil loss and sealing, hydro-morphological damages to surface waters, fragmentation).
- Diverse impacts on tangible and intangible attributes of cultural and natural heritage due to increased tourism flows and with-it interlinked need for more tourist infrastructure and new tourism products/services.

Impacts were assessed on the basis of changes in impact indicators in regard to of the state of the environment and the importance of these changes, the level at which environmental protection objectives were taken into account during the IP preparation and other evaluation criteria.

As evident from the overview provided below, the IP is clearly oriented towards sustainable development and search for green solutions by design. Since all projects and their potential actions with an “investment character” need to be implemented in line with national level legislation and standards, no potentially significant adverse impact was foreseen even for the realistic worst/case scenario of the IP programme implementation. The transboundary effects of the proposed IP are exclusively positive.

IP SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS														
	Air		Climate			Water		Soil and land use		Biodiversity		Landscape		Pop. and human health	
SO 1.1	0		+1			0		+1		0		0		+1	
SO 2.4	0		+2	T+		+1	-1	+1	-1	+1	-1	+1	-1	+2	T+
SO 2.6	+1		+1			+1		+1		+1		+1		+1	
SO 2.7	+2		+1			+1	T+	+1		+2		+2		+2	
SO 4.6	+1	-1	+2	-1	T+	+1	-1	-1		+2	-1	+2	-1	+2	-1
ISO 1b	+1	T+	+1			0		0		0		0		+1	T+
ISO 1c	0		0			0		0		0		+1		+1	

No significant negative impacts have been identified in the SEA for any of seven SOs of the Interreg VI-A Italy-Slovenia 2021-2027 Programme, and only non-significant negative impacts have been identified for two out of seven SOs. Furthermore, the whole IP is placing a strong emphasis on improving the environmental situation and addressing key environmental and sustainability concerns.

For identified non-significant negative impacts mitigation measures have been foreseen, as well as recommendations for further enhancement of identified positive impacts of the IP. Many of

them were already addressed and integrated into the IP, as described in chapter 1.5. Those that remain are:

Proposed mitigation measures	Targeted SO / Environmental aspects
<p>The IP should encourage all applicants applying to SO 2.4 and 4.6 to use “<i>environmental sustainability by design</i>” approach through the project selection process.</p> <p>Applicants should explain whether and how their proposed actions take into the consideration potential increase of tourist flows, improvement of the sustainability of their tourism offer and/or contribute to reduction of carbon footprint of their tourism products/services (e.g. new tourism products/services based on sustainable mobility solutions or public transport, systemic efforts to reduce or optimize tourism flows, etc.), as well as effective and sustainable use of natural re-sources or contribute to regeneration of the environment and ecosystem services – for example in the dedicated section of the project application templates.</p> <p>Subsequently, the IP should prefer to co-finance projects with sustainable solutions integrated in project design.</p>	<p>2,4 and 4.6</p> <p><i>Air,</i></p> <p><i>Climate,</i></p> <p><i>Water,</i></p> <p><i>Soil,</i></p> <p><i>Biodiversity and Natural heritage,</i></p> <p><i>Landscape and Cultural heritage,</i></p> <p><i>Population and human health</i></p>
<p>Consider and assess the impact of ADRIONCYCLETOUR infrastructure on the local water system.</p>	<p>4.6</p> <p><i>Water</i></p>

Proposed enhancement measures and recommendations	Targeted SO / Environmental aspects
The IP should encourage the applicants to consider potential linkages between actions within ISO 1b (non-urban multimodal transport) and SO 4.6 (ADRIONCYCETOUR).	4.6 and ISO 1b <i>Air,</i> <i>Climate</i>
The following action could be added to SO 2.6 (or any other SO, if considered a better fit from the IP programming team) as an IP enhancement measure: "Promoting business networks embedding climate change mitigation and adaptation (along with other relevant environmental factors) into existing business operations and core corporate decision-making processes (e.g. product development, etc.)".	2.6 <i>Climate</i>

Based on all above findings, the final conclusion of this Environmental Report is that impacts of the implementation of the Interreg Italy-Slovenia 2021-2027 Programme on environment will be predominantly positive, while identified non-significant negative impacts can be mitigated by proposed mitigation measures.

Appropriate Assessment was also conducted as an integral part of the SEA process linked to Interreg Italy-Slovenia 2021-2027 Programme. The main indication provided is the acknowledgement that no IP objective nor prospected action is incompatible with the Habitat and Birds Directives. For more information on the Appropriate Assessment and its findings, please refer to Annex 1 to this Environmental Report

Proposed monitoring

Since no significant negative impacts have been identified in the SEA for any of seven SOs of the Interreg VI-A Italy-Slovenia 2021-2027 Programme, no mandatory monitoring measures are necessary to be implemented.

However, to measure the enhancement of the IP impact and to ensure coherence with assessments of the SEA we recommend monitoring measures that are linked to the most sensitive and mostly affected aspects:

- Number of the studies of the carrying capacity of the protected areas, prepared as a part of supported projects.
- Number of visitor management plans in protected areas, prepared as a part of supported projects.
- Number of newly developed sustainable tourism products/services/activities, developed as a part of supported projects.
- Number of sustainable mobility/accessibility strategies targeting tourists as one of key target groups, developed as a part of supported projects.

We also recommend that the monitoring of possible environmental effects is ideally reflected throughout the project cycle, as presented in detail in chapter 8.

Do No Significant Harm principle assessment

The DNSH principle is aimed to ensure that Cohesion funds support activities and investment in line with climate and environmental standards and objectives of the European Union, asking to assess the degree of harmfulness of actions and investments on six environmental fields:

1. Mitigation of climate change;
2. Adaption to climate change;
3. Quality of fresh and marine water;
4. Circular economy, with emphasis on waste prevention and recycling;
5. Pollution of air, soils and water;
6. Protection of biodiversity.

The SEA Environmental Report takes care of the DNSH, ensuring that whatever relates with the six mentioned environmental objectives for DNSH is evident and easily detectable in the environmental report itself.

Following the Italian national guidelines and considering the specific issues highlighted in the SEA, we find out a substantial compliance of the IP to the DNSH principle assessment: in just two out of seven SOs, the compliance degree is lower than 100%. They are SO 2.4, with a non-full compliance degree ranging from 80% for biodiversity to 90% for water, and SO 4.6 (non-full compliant for any DNSH environmental objective, from 75% for Pollution and Water to 85% for biodiversity).

	SO 1.1	SO 2.4	SO 2.6	SO 2.7	SO 4.6	ISO 1b	ISO 1c
1. Climate – Mitigation	100%	100%	100%	100%	80%	100%	100%
2. Climate Adaption	100%	100%	100%	100%	80%	100%	100%
3. Water	100%	90%	100%	100%	75%	100%	100%
4. Circular economy	100%	100%	100%	100%	80%	100%	100%
5. Pollution	100%	85%	100%	100%	75%	100%	100%
6. Biodiversity	100%	80%	100%	100%	85%	100%	100%

The list of proposed measures to re-establish a 100% compliance are the same mitigation measures reported in the SEA, namely: encouraging all candidates applying to SO 4.6 to use “environmental sustainability by design” approach; requiring the explanation of potential infrastructures impact on environmental items at the local level for ADRIONCYCLETOUR.