



INSTITUTE OF THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
FOR NATURE CONSERVATION



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MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT
AND SPATIAL PLANNING



AlpGov workshop:

»Networking for Ecological Connectivity and Green Infrastructure«

Nature reserve Škocjanski zatok, Koper, Slovenia
19th of September 2017

Report



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Workshop was prepared by the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation (Zavod RS za varstvo narave), EUSALP Action Group 7 co-lead, in cooperation with the Slovenian Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning.

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Workshop was organised within the Mediterranean Coast and EU Macro-Regional Strategies Week 2017.



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Summary

A networking event was organised by EUSALP action group 7 that focuses on the theme of ecological connectivity. Workshop was prepared within the AlpGov project («Implementing Alpine Governance Mechanisms of the European Strategy for the Alpine Region») with the aim to address relevant target groups and stakeholders and involve them in developing concrete activities and strategic initiatives for implementation of EUSALP AG7 goals. Main objectives were focusing on the theme of ecological connectivity and using the opportunity for joint identification of implementation initiatives.

There were 49 participants from EUSALP and EUSAIR countries (Austria, Slovenia, Italy and Croatia) at the event. Experts from different government organisations (ministries for environment, spatial planning, water and other, regional governments, agencies), nongovernment organisations, universities and also regional development agencies and private companies were present. During morning presentations spotlight was shed on ecological connectivity and green infrastructure. Experts focused on experiences and possibilities of introducing ecological connectivity in practice (protected areas within Alpine Convention area), landscape planning (integrating the concept into spatial plans on different levels – national/Slovenia, regional/ Friuli Venezia Giulia) involving cross sectoral and stakeholder involvement (River Corridors/Drava river, spatial plan Pinzgau/Land of Salzburg). Afternoon session was an intense opportunity for networking. In the Implementation Initiatives Market («I'm In Market») participants identified ideas on challenges, possible solutions and potentials partners in future activities. Four maps were produced and finally merged to one map that highlights the main suggestions. Another round of discussions focused on specific issues including stakeholders' involvement and ecosystem services.

Participants were very engaged in discussion and some important conclusions derived from it. It is clear that both concepts, ecological connectivity and green infrastructure, are important and it is necessary to develop them further in a collaborative manner in order to be possible incorporating them in spatial planning processes on local, national and macro-regional level. It should be more clear who is responsible for running the planning processes on different levels. Trainings and capacity building can empower relevant organisations to be able to lead the processes in green infrastructure implementation. Although scientific knowledge can still be improved, there is a sufficient knowledge to take action. A cross sectoral communication is needed for better understanding among spatial planners and other experts (e.g. biologists). A map of priority areas for establishing ecological connectivity should be developed for the EUSALP. Participants were highly supporting the idea of preparing a follow-up of the workshop on both concepts and recommend that the possibility of financing through programs that support EUSALP actions should be explored. The workshop is a good example of expert cooperation from different fields while adopting Declaration on Alpine green infrastructure at the Ministerial Conference in Munich (October 2, 2017) would demonstrate additional political support for it.

Workshop was organised by the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation (Zavod RS za varstvo narave – ZRSVN), the EUSALP Action Group 7 co-lead, in cooperation with the Slovenian Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning.

Link to ZRSVN web page with presentations and PDF report:

http://www.zrsvn.si/sl/informacija.asp?id_meta_type=73&id_informacija=888

Background

Implementation of EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) was launched in 2016 and concrete implementation steps are on the way, including activities within the project AlpGov - »Implementing Alpine Governance Mechanisms of the European Strategy for the Alpine Region« (Interreg Alpine Space Programme project, 06/2016 – 06/2019). Initiating strategic initiatives is one of the main challenges for reaching concrete implementation of EUSALP goals. Therefore, a networking event was organised by EUSALP Action Group 7 (ecological connectivity) to enter into a dialogue with strategic implementation partners, according to EUSALP working plan and AlpGov project.

Workshop is planned to be one of several dialogue events within the AlpGov project, that aim at addressing in a strategic way relevant target groups and stakeholders and involve them in developing concrete activities and strategic initiatives for implementation of EUSALP AG7 goals.

One of the biggest challenges, also in the eastern part of the Alpine Region and in connections to Adriatic-Ionian region, is assuring cooperation of different actors for implementation of cross border and transnational ecological connectivity. Working towards common understanding of the concepts and visions and harmonisation of implementation methods is and will be a challenging process. Another challenge, aligned to the goals of EUSALP action plan, is reaching out of the region, towards other mountain regions (e.g. Dinaric Arc). Cooperation with other macro-regional strategies (EUSAIR, EUSDR) and initiatives offers opportunities for that.

Objectives

According to the mission statement of EUSALP Action Group 7 one of the main objectives is to trigger tangible implementation initiatives and liaise with implementation partners from relevant sectors to make Green Infrastructure visible and close the gaps in the trans-European “matrix for life”. (See also www.alpine-region.eu/action-group-7).

The event aimed at focusing on the theme of ecological connectivity and **identification of ideas and potential partnerships** for implementation of different initiatives (possibly in the next program period). Workshop was **an opportunity for dialogue** between different organisations interested in implementation of projects on ecological connectivity and green infrastructure, focusing on the east part of the Alpine Region but with open possibilities for the wider EUSALP implementation.

Specific objectives:

- Deepening the understanding of the concepts of ecological connectivity and green infrastructure;
- Sharing knowledge on past and current experiences, projects, activities, partnerships, needs for action and possible capitalisation on existing projects and partnerships;
- Discussion and identification of challenges on multi-functionality and connectivity of green infrastructure, spatial planning and cross-sectoral cooperation, relations between ecological connectivity and ecosystem services, key stakeholders for implementing an ecological connectivity project;

Target group and participants

To reach the objectives of the workshop, relevant stakeholders from EUSALP and EUSAIR territory were invited to the event. In the process of joint mapping of stakeholders, we listed actors and organisations that would be potentially **interested on future cooperation and joint project planning** on ecological connectivity and green infrastructure.

Invitations were sent to representatives of potentially interested stakeholders from Slovenia, Italy, Austria and Croatia. We included government organisations, expert and research institutions, development agencies, association of landscape planners and other. Invitations were additionally sent to members of EUSALP Action group 7 and representative of EUSALP government structures (Action groups Leads, executive board etc.).



There were 49 participants present at the workshop, representatives from different organisations, from ministries to development agencies and private companies:

Alps-Adriatic-Alliance; Center za pospeševanje podjetništva Piran; Cut production d.o.o.; Direkcija Republike Slovenije za vode; DOPPS - BirdLife Slovenia; Facility Point EUSAIR Izola - JZP IZOLA; Federal State Agency of Salzburg, Department of Environment, Nature Conservation and Trade; Fondazione Edmund Mach, Provincia Autonoma di Trento; Inspira komunikacije; Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation; ISPRA - The Italian National Institute for Environmental Protection and Research; IUCN Commission on Education and Communication; Mariborska razvojna agencija; RS Ministry of Foreign Affairs; RS Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning; MUSE - Museo delle Scienze; Oikon Ltd., Department of Environmental Engineering; Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention; Provincia autonoma di Trento; Regionalna razvojna agencija Ljubljanske urbane regije; Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia; Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia, Landscape and biodiversity Service, Pianificazione; Slovenian Water Agency; RS Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy; University of Ljubljana, Biotechnical Faculty, Department of Landscape Architecture; University of Ljubljana, Faculty for Forestry; University of Vienna, Department of Conservation Biology, Vegetation - and Landscape Ecology; Urban Planning institute of the Republic of Slovenia; Wildlife Ecology Inc.; Zelena infrastruktura d.o.o. / Green Infrastructure Ltd.

Workshop sessions

Morning session

Welcome speech by Mitja Bricelj, EUSAIR TSG 3 coordinator set the working frame of cooperation between countries of Alpine and Adriatic-Ionian macro-regions.

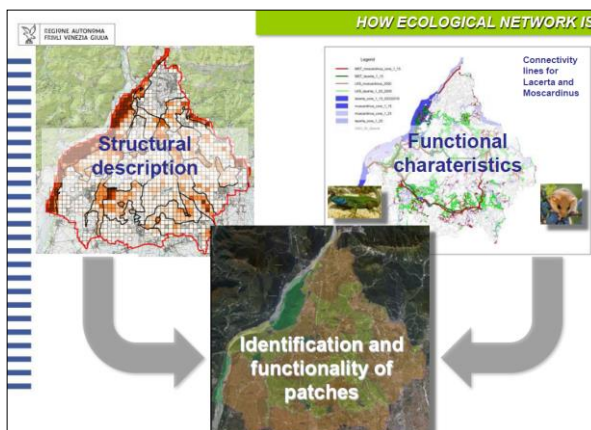
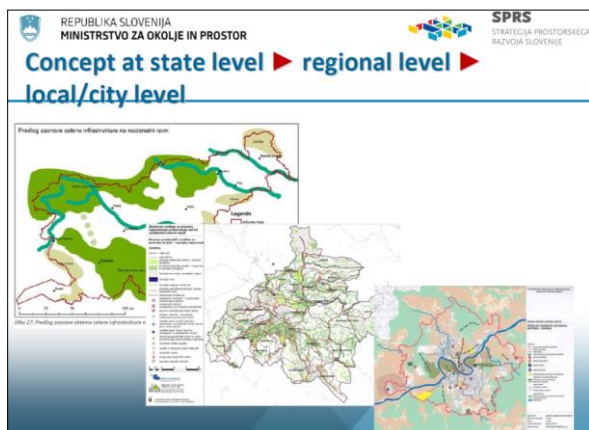


The aim of the morning session was to build a common understanding of the concepts of Ecological Connectivity and Green Infrastructure, experiences and good practices.

Experts from different countries and different backgrounds focused on previous implementation and experiences (nature conservation within Alpine Convention area), landscape planning (integrating the concept into spatial plans on different levels – national/Slovenia, regional/ Friuli Venezia Giulia), spatial connectivity analysis (brown bear habitats and migration patterns), cross sectoral planning (River Corridors/Drava river) and by stakeholder involvement (spatial plan Pinzgau/Land of Salzburg).

Presentations and abstracts – See Annexes 4-13.





Afternoon session

1. Work groups

The aim of this session was to deepen the understanding on challenges and opportunities regarding the implementation of Ecological Connectivity and Green Infrastructure concepts.

Four groups focused on specific issues and discussions were supported by facilitators from specific background:

- Concepts of Ecological Connectivity and Green Infrastructure (Nadja Penko Seidl)
- Ecological Connectivity in the Alps/ Alpine region (Blanka Bartol)
- Cross-sectoral cooperation & Stakeholder involvement (Aleš Bizjak)
- Ecosystem Services & Ecological Connectivity (Suzana Vurunić)



Notes from discussion – See Annex 14

2. »I'm In Market« - Implementation Initiatives Market*

The aim of this session was networking of different actors and joint identification of problems and challenges on ecological connectivity in the region, identifying possible solutions and key stakeholders, also with the view of having a role as potential partners in future activities or projects.



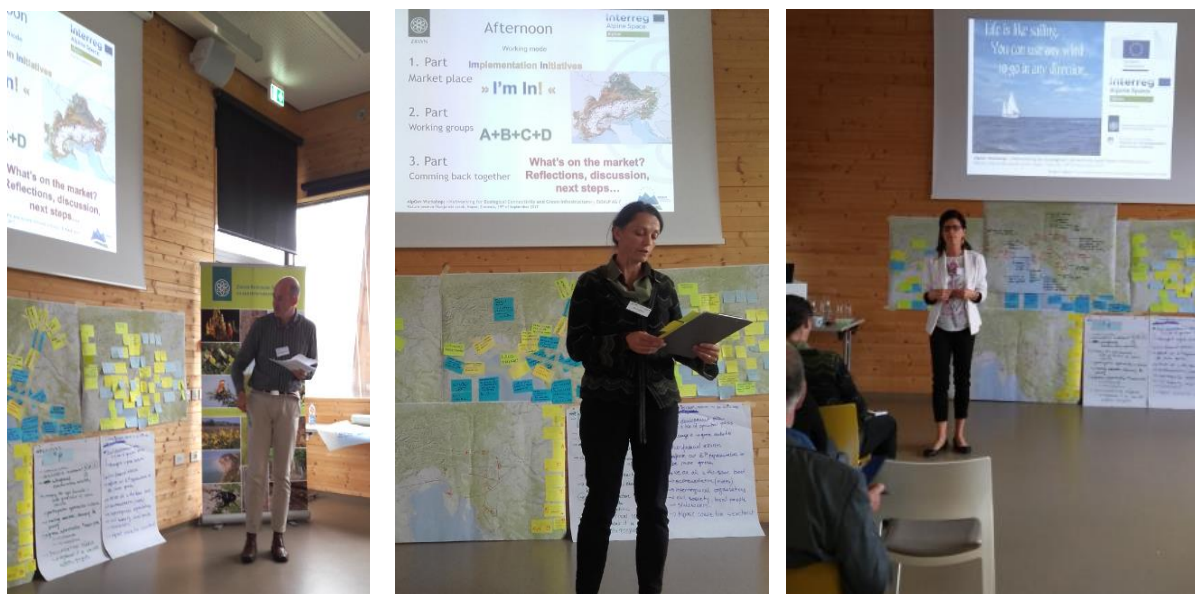
Afternoon session was an intense opportunity for networking and discussion. **Four maps** were produced and many ideas identified. Maps were finally **merged to one map** that highlights the main suggestions.



Notes from discussion and maps – See Annex 15 and 16.

* The name of the session has derived from three ideas: (a) discussing implementation initiatives could also be called project proposals but this would narrow the intended scope too much , (b) creating a sense of a market place – “stands” as points of gathering and networking offer a possibility for exchange of ideas and (c) I’m In! as an abbreviation for “implementation initiative” but at the same time a statement that encourages a sense of ownership and creates interest of a stakeholder to support the idea and join in preparation.

Conclusions, recommendations and next steps – Summary



Participants were very engaged in discussion and some important conclusions derived from it:

- It is clear that both concepts, ecological connectivity and green infrastructure, are as important and necessary to be developed further and implemented.
- Both should be properly included in spatial planning processes on local, national and macro-regional level, whereas proper means and form should be further investigated and developed.
- It should be more clear who is responsible for running the process of communication and green infrastructure planning and implementation on different levels.
- Trainings and capacity building could empower relevant organisations (e.g. development agencies) to be able to take over the role of leading the processes in green infrastructure implementation.
- Although scientific knowledge can still be improved, there is a sufficient knowledge to take action.
- A cross sectoral communication and ‘translations’ are needed for better understanding among spatial planners and other experts (e.g. biologists).
- There is a need to develop a map of priority areas for ecological connectivity for the EUSALP.
- A follow-up workshop on both concepts should be prepared, exploring the possibility of financing it through programs that support EUSALP actions.
- The workshop is a good example of expert cooperation and exchange while necessary political support is ensured by adopting Declaration on Alpine green infrastructure at the Ministerial Conference in Munich (October 2, 2017).

Notes from discussion and detailed conclusions – See Annex 17.

It is of great importance that this kind of workshop offers the exchange and discussion among experts from different fields of expertise. Workshop gave attention to different aspects of reality, among other the three crucial ones that were focused on throughout the day:

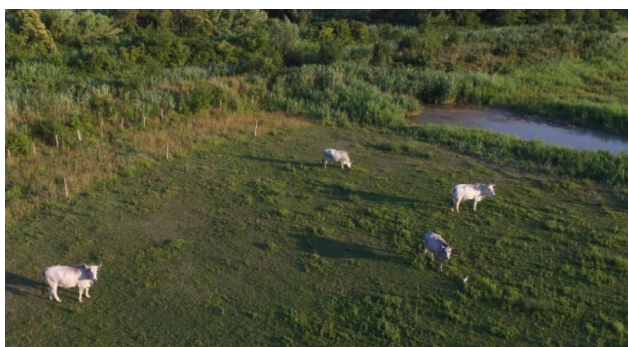
- 1) Everything is happening within the given physical reality – in space, on terrain → The concepts have to be implemented on the ground and we need awareness of territorial dimension. **Spatial planning** is to be used as a main 'tool' to enable inclusion in strategic concepts thus enable actual implementation in the processes later on.
- 2) We live in the »multifunctional reality« → The concepts of ecological connectivity and green infrastructure can be implemented by seeking multifunctionality and synergies among different sectoral needs instead of overriding one another. .
- 3) Both concepts should be developed and implemented as there would be »no borders« - borders should be taken into account but join solutions developed → **Cross-border cooperation** is needed as well as **reaching out to other (macro)regions**.

While the expert work and discussions are the base of looking for the solution, implementation will only be possible with the political support. One of the first steps is a Ministerial declaration on »Alpine Green Infrastructure for nature, people and economy« adopted on EUSALP Conference, October 2nd, 2017 in Munich).

All points from discussion and conclusions should be further promoted and used as proposals and guidelines throughout the Alpine Region.

Organisation of the Workshop

Workshop was organised in the visitors' centre of **Škocjanski zatok nature reserve**, a semi natural area that perfectly illustrates basic characteristics of efficiently managed green infrastructure that supports biodiversity, provides for several other functions (floods prevention, recreation and education) and demonstrate cross sectoral synergies (nature conservation, water management, tourism).



<http://www.skocjanski-zatok.org/en/>

Notes and observation on organisational aspects:

- Event was prepared with the clear focus on objectives, among others to support the future collaboration and raise motivation among relevant actors.
- Workshop was organised in two parts and included (1) lectures and overview on existing expertise and experiences to enable focusing on selected thematic issues and (2) carefully designed interactive sessions as an opportunity for participants to give input, share ideas and discuss relevant challenges and possible solutions.
- Target group was carefully selected. Mapping of stakeholders was prepared together with previous partners and other EUSALP AG 7 members. Mapping was designed within the proposed geographical frame (eastern part of Alpine region with connection to Dinaric mountain region) so to assure best focus and feasible number of potential participants.
- There was a special attention given to prepare a content (presentations) with speakers that would fit to the planned objectives and would be relevant to the target group.
- Many of the participants are experts involved in transnational cooperation and work on different project. With this respect, the date for the event was carefully planned invitations were sent well in advance. Additional reminders and clear documentation that communicated event objectives and target group helped to raise motivation for participation.

Feedback from participants gave clear indications that this kind of the events are very welcomed by stakeholders. They are opportunities to support cross border and cross sectoral cooperation. EUSALP (and other EU macro-regional strategies) give good frame for organising such events.

Thanks

There are many people who are responsible for the positive experience and colourful results of the AlpGov workshop in Koper. Our thanks go to:

- dr. Darij Krajčič, director of the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, for supporting the work within EUSALP co-leadership of Action Group 7 and implementation of the AlpGov project activities;
- all speakers and facilitators who did great job in the sense of preparation, coordination, communication and overall engagement before and during the workshop;
- all of the 49 participants from four countries, for their input and engagement in the intense discussion during the whole day;
- Guido Plassmann and Katalin Czipán, EUSALP AG7 members, for their help with preparation of the workshop;
- EUSAIR Facility point (both government and municipality level) for the promotion through the Mediterranean Coast Week activities;
- dr. Mitja Bricelj, EUSAIR TCG3 coordinator, for his constant efforts for cooperation and networking and bringing common issues to the table and
- Bojana Lipej and her colleagues at Škocjanski zatok Nature Reserve for warm welcome and all the support in organisation of the place.

Tina Trampuš and Blanka Bartol

Personally, I'd like to thank to those who in my opinion made this workshop and it's preparation an inspiring and warm story:

- Blanka Bartol, EUSALP AG7 member, for agreeing on the idea to prepare the event together and doing a marvellous job;
- Alessandro Gretter, EUSALP AG7 member, for his enthusiasm and warm engagement in bringing together the relevant actors from Italy;
- my colleagues Tjaša Djokić, Tina Centrih Genov and Jasna Rebec, for help with organisation;
- my boss Robert Turk, for all support with the work on EUSALP and AlpGov and finally
- my colleague Mateja Nose Marolt, for all kind of support on the organisational and logistic issues, bright ideas and engaging discussions and for simply being always there for me.

Tina Trampuš



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