

Managing Authority:

Veneto Region

Area for Economic Policies, Human Capital and Programming of European Funds

Directorate for Joint Programming

Organisational Unit Italy-Croatia Managing Authority

Interreg VI A Italy – Croatia 2021-2027 Programme

Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive Statement

(In accordance with article 9.1.b of Directive 2001/42/EC)

SEA DIRECTIVE STATEMENT
(In accordance with article 9.1.b of Directive 2001/42/EC)

The Interreg VI A Italy – Croatia 2021-2027 Programme went through a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), as required by Art. 55(4) Regulation (UE) No 1303/2013 and defined by the Directive 2001/42/EC.

Article 9(1)(b) of Directive 2001/42/EC (“SEA Directive”) requires that Environmental Authorities (EAs) and the public are informed about the result of the SEA consultation process through “a statement summarizing how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme and how the environmental report prepared pursuant to Article 5, the opinions expressed pursuant to Article 6 and the results of consultations entered into pursuant to Article 7 have been taken into account in accordance with Article 8 and the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with”.

Integration of environmental consideration in the Interreg VI A Italy – Croatia 2021-2027 Programme

The Programme area has diverse marine, coastal and inland ecosystems. Natural risk due to climate change are increasing in the whole area with particular regard to phenomena such as flood events and coastal erosion. Moreover, inland and maritime biodiversity loss and pollution represent critical issues of the CBC area. The Programme contributes to the European cohesion policy, which pursues harmonious development across the Union by strengthening economic, social, and territorial cohesion in order to stimulate growth. The decision to have Policy Objective 2, 'Greener Europe' provides an initial response of concentration on specific environmental objectives. Likewise, for the other four policy objectives, an attempt was made to direct the proposed actions towards maximum environmental sustainability and enhancement. For example, by providing a strong focus on technological innovation with the development of research and innovation capacities and the adoption of advanced technologies, as well as on production and circular processes (policy objective 1). Also, by fostering sustainable tourism (policy objective 4), cross-border initiatives to improve sustainable, climate-resilient, intelligent and intermodal mobility (policy objective 3) and legal and administrative cooperation, as well as strengthening the institutional capacity to promote macro-regional, basin and other territorial strategies (Interreg specific objective 1). This was possible because of the intervention strategy of the Interreg VI A Italy - Croatia 2021-2027 programme that is in line with the objectives of the European Green Deal and the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, and in good synergy with both the Italian National Strategy for Sustainable Development (NSSD) 2017/2030 and the Strategy for Sustainable Development in Croatia. Furthermore, the Interreg programme shows overall good synergy with the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development.

The SEA process

The assessment procedure of the Interreg VI A Italy – Croatia 2021-2027 Programme began with the Scoping phase on August 6, 2021, which was concluded on September 30, 2021. This was followed by the drafting of the Environmental Report (ER) and the related Non-Technical Summary.

The assessment follows the SEA Directive methodological prescriptions. First of all, the analyses are referred to the Italy-Croatia Programme area (chapter I). In the assessment procedure, the relevant environmental objectives and related indicators (mentioned in chapter VI), identified during a preliminary scoping phase, have been used. They represent the basis for the description of the environment's state and its development trends in the Programme's area (chapter III), as well as for the assessment of likely significant effects of the Programme on the environment (chapter VII), which

has been carried out through a qualitative approach. Significant issues related to climate change and associated risks in inland and marine ecosystems, water quality and supply, soil quality and management, air quality, natural/cultural heritage and landscape, technological risks, health and sanitary risks and nuisances, and energy and waste management have been addressed. Eventually, cumulative effects of the Programme on the environmental issues have been detailed, highlighting interdependencies and effect-chains (chapter VII). Finally, mitigation and orientation measures to reduce, prevent and mitigate the negative effects of the plan, or enhance its positive effects have been reported in the ER (chapter VIII).

Consultations with environmental authorities and public consultations

The preliminary consultation under the scoping phase started on the 6th of August and ended on the 14th of September. The bodies with environmental competence of the Autonomous Region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, Veneto, Emilia Romagna, Marche, Abruzzo, Molise, Apulia, and Croatia sent their suggestions.

A summarized list of the opinions expressed by the Bodies with environmental competence is reported below:

- Integrating data sources from European, national and regional plans, programmes, strategies and directives;
- Incorporating new environmental themes with related indicators;
- Integrating the analysis of alternatives, the assessment of effects and the monitoring system.

The suggestions and opinions have been taken into consideration and integrated into the Environmental Report, and entirely reported in the appendix 4.

The Environmental Report and the relative Non-Technical Summary that, together with the documents constituting the Programme proposal, were filed for forty-five (45) consecutive days from the date of publication of the notice to the public on 30 November 2021 until 14 January 2022, in compliance with Italian and Croatian regulations (Italian Legislative decree 152/06 and Law 233/21, and Croatian Environmental Protection Act Official Gazette 80/13, 153/13, 78/15, 12/18 and 118/18). The documentation was made available and deposited for public consultation at the following link by the Authority proposing the Programme: <https://www.italy-croatia.eu/web/it-hr-interreg-2021-2027/consultation>.

Following the filing, publicity and participation procedures provided for in the consultation phase of the drafts, no comments were received from the public or stakeholders on the contents of the Programme and of the Environmental Report, while the reasoned opinions expressed by the Environmental Authorities of Croatia and of the seven Italian Regions included in the cooperation area and the evaluations of the comments are included in an 'addendum', titled "SEA, DNSH and outcomes from the consultation", which then has been submitted to European Commission together with the IP. The addendum also reported the analysis of compliance with DNSH, which has been carried out for each of the seven Programme Specific Objectives. During the implementation phase of the Programme, compliance with the DNSH principle will be checked at project level, ensuring that no project with a potentially harmful effect is funded under the Interreg Programme. The Managing Authorities will establish specific guidelines to support project development and selection, which will be approved by the Monitoring Committee according to Article 30 of the Interreg Regulation. The recommendations and opinions expressed by the Environmental Authorities and the explanation on how they have been taken into account are reported synthetically in the table enclosed (see annex I).

In conclusion, the contributions given by the consultation to the improvement of the Interreg Programme and of the Environmental Report revealed to be positive and allowed to provide useful integrations to these documents.

Programme choices in the light of the alternative analysed

Directive 42/2001/CE in article 5(1) and article 9(1b) requires an analysis of the alternatives and a justification of choices made.

The presentation on the potential alternatives and justification of the Programme choices has been included in the ER (chapter X). The risk of significant negative effects means that alternatives must be considered within the Programme to give decision makers the opportunity to select options which eliminate or reduce environmental impacts and which improve the global environmental footprint of the Programme. During the SEA procedure, different alternative scenarios were considered, based on the allocation of resources. The current strategy proposed (scenario “C”) must be considered as a good alternative compared to other Programme options discussed during the preparation phase because it represents a compromise between the needs of the CBC area and the environmental performance of the Programme, and it allows for a more balanced financial allocation among the priorities. The environmental assessment revealed that the Programme has overall positive effects on environmental issues.

Monitoring system

Environmental indicators have also been suggested for the SEA monitoring system (ER Chapter IX) and will be fine-tuned by Managing Authority. A monitoring system is integral to the SEA procedure. The proposed monitoring system takes into account the environmental context as well as output and performance indicators. These are all able to monitor unexpected environmental effects from the Programme intervention during its implementation phase. Most of these indicators will be based on information already available in the Programme monitoring system; while a few will be quantified based on information collected from beneficiaries.

All the information collected at different levels, from the monitoring system and other relevant databases, will be included and analysed in an environmental report, periodically drafted and made available to the Joint Secretariat and Managing Authority for decision making. This report should be discussed in monitoring committees, especially during the Programme review, to prompt decisions regarding re-programming or adjustment of the Strategy to obtain more sustainable development of the area under the cooperation objective.

Annex I – List of observations coming from the public consultation

The annex includes a table which reports schematically the indications and suggestions received to the ER and the related evaluation, allowing, for each of them, to identify the promoter, the assessment provided, and the possible resulting integration of the Interreg Programme and of Environmental Report. The observations accepted related to the ER have been integrated into the addendum, titled “SEA, DNSH and outcomes from the consultation”, considered as a separate document and submitted to the EC together with the IP. The list of observations not accepted is entirely reported in the addendum.

List of accepted observations		
Region	Observation	Observation evaluation
Veneto	<p>Prior to the approval of the Programme: The Environmental Report must be integrated with the contents of the document "Interreg VI-A Italy-Croatia Programme 2021-2027, Response to the observations received from public consultation". This document indicates the opinions expressed by the Veneto region environmental authority. Recommendations produced in the Environmental Report and in the supplementary annexes on the mitigation measures will be considered during the definition of the methodology and of the criteria used to select projects. Guidelines, selection criteria, and environmental rewards must be formulated in accordance with the Environmental Authorities of the Programme for those projects that envisage sustainability actions. Otherwise, in the event of environmental constraints or critical issues, "exclusion criteria" will be used. The environmental monitoring plan must consider the recommendations for the definition of the indicators proposed in the ER. Moreover, it must include the responsibilities and coordination scheme of the contact persons, the reporting time schedule and the final set of indicators chosen in accordance with art. 18 of the Consolidated Law on Environment (<i>Testo Unico Ambiente</i>). If changes are made to the strategy or actions during the programme implementation, it is necessary to proceed with the SEA screening (according to part II of Legislative Decree 152/2006 and subsequent amendments). The Environmental Statement (<i>Dichiarazione di Sintesi</i>) should be pursuant to Article 17 of Legislative Decree 152/2006, and subsequent amendments illustrating how the environmental considerations have been integrated into the Programme should be drafted. Moreover, the results of the consultations and the choice of the Programme considering the alternatives identified should be included as well. Information on the final decision according to Article 17 of Legislative Decree 152/2006 should be published. Tasks and roles of the EA should be defined in the evaluation of project proposals and an appropriate assessment of environmental aspects should be ensured. Forms of collaboration with the regional EA for the integration of the environmental component in the implementation phase of the Programme should be activated. Compliance with the appropriate assessment procedure must be guaranteed (Articles 5 and 6 of Presidential Decree 357/97 and subsequent amendments) for interventions of material dimension by the SO; guaranteed compatibility with the Ministerial Decree of the MATTM n.184 / 2007 and DGR n.2371 / 2006, n.786 / 2016, n.1331 / 2017 and n.1709 / 2017; interventions excluded (fulfilment of obligations under article 5 of Presidential Decree 357/97).</p> <p>During the implementation phase of the Programme: When evaluating project proposals, it is important to ensure an adequate assessment of both environmental aspects and external/internal coherence with the planning. Projects should be linked with the current state of landscape planning in the Veneto Region. What is indicated in the technical investigation (34/2022) for the appropriate assessment should be incorporated. The investigation contains the requirements for the actions of the cross-border cooperation programme that can be implemented through material interventions on Natura2000 sites.</p>	<p>The observations received from public consultation, as reported in the "Interreg VI A Italy-Croatia Programme 2021-2027, Response to the comments received from the public consultation" have been integrated into the addendum Annex III "Proposal for the integrate the environmental report" and Annex IV "Suggestions for establishing guidelines for integrating environmental aspects for project selection and Programme implementation".</p> <p>The observations that could not be integrated are listed in the table "List of observations not accepted" reported in the addendum Annex I.</p> <p>The observations related to the Programme guidelines have been integrated into the addendum Annex IV.A "Suggestions for priorities to be assigned and orientation measures (intervention selection framework)".</p> <p>The provisions deriving from the 'VInCA' opinion have been integrated into the addendum Annex V "Appropriate assessment".</p>

List of accepted observations		
Region	Observation	Observation evaluation
Apulia	It is noted that the general "priority" objectives and the specific objectives of the Programme are defined clearly and effectively. Moreover, the environmental context analysis of the CBC area is carried out thoroughly, partly attributed to updated statistical data and studies. The list of the issues addressed seems reasonably complete. However, it would have been useful to integrate the list of documents with the analysis of the programme at regional level. From the analysis, it emerges that the Programme actions related to investments in infrastructure might cause the greatest impact on the environment. Hence, if it is decided to carry out these actions at a certain stage of the Programme implementation, it is recommended to provide an appropriate assessment of the environmental effects, thus integrating it in the report.	Environmental topics were added based on data availability and on relevance to the objectives of the cross-border programme. A list of Plans and Programmes suggested in the consultation phase is shown in the addendum Annex III.C (Point IV "Integration to the framework on the Regional Plans"). Concerning mitigation measures and structural investments, see the addendum Annex IV.A "Suggestions for priorities to be assigned and orientation measures (intervention selection framework)". The observations that could not be integrated are listed in the table "List of observations not accepted" reported in the addendum Annex I.
Marche	It is suggested to implement mitigation and orientation measures indicated in chapter VIII of the Environmental Report. In addition, Orientation Measures for sustainability concerning SO 3.2, SO 2.7 and SO 4.6 (Conero Regional Park) are proposed. Possible negative interactions might derive from interactions between habitats / species and pilot actions at local level (SO 3.2) and tourist flows on protected habitats (SO 4.6). These aspects must be considered when defining the criteria for the types of eligible interventions and the methods of implementation, moreover, they need to be assessed at the single projects level eligible for funding if the need to carry out an appropriate assessment emerges, in line with the specific legislation. Regarding Environmental Monitoring: where possible, indicators selected for SEA monitoring should be included in the Programme monitoring system; the indicators/methodologies used for performance evaluation should be indicated as well, even on a preliminary basis. Regarding result and performance indicators, the structure of a database should be established, paying particular attention to the definition of the sources, the metrics and the methodology used for the evaluations, to avoid any irregularity in the data and interpretations.	Regarding guidelines and intervention criteria, see the addendum Annex IV.A "Suggestions for priorities to be assigned and orientation measures (intervention selection framework)". With regards to monitoring, see the addendum Annex III.A "Environmental indicators". The observations that could not be integrated are listed in the table "List of observations not accepted" reported in the addendum Annex I.
Emilia Romagna	Guidelines within the implementation calls for the Programme Italy-Croatia 2021-2027 are suggested. Indications on the promotion of interventions and projects relating to the actions of the Programme Italy-Croatia 2021-2027 are provided as well. The Management Body for Parks and Biodiversity Delta del Po agrees on the need to provide for mitigation measures that comply with the guidelines identified in the environmental appropriate assessment and to promote additional actions.	Concerning the guidelines and intervention criteria, see the addendum Annex IV.A "Suggestions for priorities to be assigned and orientation measures (intervention selection framework)". The observations that could not be integrated are listed in the table "List of observations not accepted" reported in the addendum Annex I.
Molise	The judgment on the Strategic Environmental Assessment procedure is positive. Indications on the criteria to select the interventions and on monitoring are provided. Furthermore, the Programme does not seem to have significant direct and/or indirect negative effects on habitats, species of flora and fauna of community interest, or on abiotic components within and near Natura 2000 sites, provided that the sites concerned are subjected to the appropriate assessment according to the procedure established by DGR 304/2021, and that the content of the single action sheet described in the conservation measures approved by the Molise Region with DGR 772/2015 is taken into account.	Concerning the guidelines and intervention criteria, see the addendum Annex IV.A "Suggestions for priorities to be assigned and orientation measures (intervention selection framework)". While for the additions to 'VIncA', see the addendum Annex V.

List of accepted observations		
Region	Observation	Observation evaluation
Friuli Venezia Giulia	<p>The contents of paragraph V.I.c of the ER regarding the recent "European Soil Strategy for 2030" adopted by the European Commission (November 2021) should be taken into account and updated. Moreover, Table 21 in chapter 3.8 of the Italian version should be revised.</p> <p>It is essential that the Programme implements the mitigation and orientation measures proposed in chapter VIII.I p. 149 -152 of the ER, not only through their implementation in the Programme Actions, but also in the drafting of the calls. This can be done through mandatory indications, limitations, technical specifications and rewarding criteria to increase the sustainability and integration of the environmental component (for example, attaching a higher weight to the scores given to projects with a greater environmental value). Appropriate prioritisation mechanisms should be provided to finance the actions which favour the implementation of the planning for the Eastern Alps basin district with reference to the measures included in the Water Management Plan and the Flood Risk Management Plan for the planning period 2021-2027, adopted by the resolution of the Permanent Institutional Conference (Conferenza Istituzionale permanente) of December 20th, 2021.</p> <p>The integration of the proposed monitoring measures is requested, and additional selection criteria for projects that fall within the Natura 2000 sites are reported.</p>	<p>The EU Soil Strategy for 2030 has been integrated into the addendum Annex III.C "External coherence with international, European and national legislation/planning".</p> <p>Revision of table 21 of the ER was carried out in Annex III.B "Context analysis".</p> <p>With regards to the indications in the drafting of calls for tenders, see additions to addendum Annex IV.A "Suggestions for priorities to be assigned and orientation measures (intervention selection framework)".</p> <p>The observations that could not be integrated are listed in the table "List of observations not accepted" reported in the addendum Annex I.</p> <p>Regarding the request for integration to the proposed monitoring measures, see the addendum Annex III.A "Environmental indicators".</p> <p>Regarding the additions to the selection criteria for Natura 2000 sites, see additions in Annex V of the addendum.</p>
Abruzzo	<p>Water Management and Quality Service: it does not detect elements to produce observations.</p> <p>Municipality of Fossacesia: currently there are no elements that should impede the Interreg Programme VI A Italy-Croatia 2021-2027. However, in order to check any interference of the Programme with the municipal territory, the right to express a final opinion is reserved for when more detailed aspects will be provided.</p> <p>Municipality of Lanciano: there are no impediments to the aspects of competence. It is recommended to wait for a more advanced phase for the analysis of the procedural aspects and design/projects investigations, with particular regard to the protection provisions contained in the regulation approved with Presidential Decree no. 357/97 and subsequent amendments related to the verification of urban planning and compliance with the appropriate assessment.</p> <p>Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga National Park Authority: the analysis expresses a favourable opinion, as the Interreg Programme is recognised to promote European cohesion in economic, social, and territorial terms with the aim of stimulating growth. At the same time, the aforementioned positive opinion is bound to the preventive drafting of the appropriate assessment for all interventions on a local scale which are not yet specified, and which may have direct or indirect interference with the Natura 2000 Areas present in the Park.</p>	<p>See the addendum Annex V for additions to 'VInCA'.</p>

List of accepted observations		
Region	Observation	Observation evaluation
Croatia	<p>It is necessary to list additional official documents of the Republic of Croatia in the SEA and to integrate and confirm various information in the context analysis. It is also requested to modify some information contained in Chapter VII.3. 'Elements for the Appropriate Assessment'. Finally, a comment on the Programme is proposed: on page 13 it is stated that the availability of the Republic of Croatia to the introduction of 5G networks is extremely low. However, this proves not to be true, given that Croatia has assigned the spectrum for 700 MHz (758-788 / 703-33), 3600 MHz (3400-3800 MHz) and 26 GHz (26.5-27.5 GHz) frequency bands for fifth generation mobile networks, bringing 5G availability to 100%. The spectrum assignment procedure was conducted by the Croatian Network Regulatory Agency (HAKOM) through a public auction procedure which ended on August 12th. 2021.</p> <p>Furthermore, even before the 5G spectrum assignment, electronic communications operators had launched a commercial 5G service through Dynamic Spectrum Sharing (DSS) technology, enabling the application of 5G technology in existing 4G networks. Therefore, the part of the text concerning the assessment of connectivity, broadband infrastructures availability, and new generation broadband networks needs to be harmonised with the analysis of DESI 2021 Country profile for Croatia: https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/dae/redirection/document/80477</p>	<p>Regarding the plans and strategies indicated, see the addendum Annex III.C "External coherence with international, European and national legislation/planning".</p> <p>As for the additions to the 'VInCA', see attachment V of the addendum.</p> <p>As for the additions and answers on the context analysis, see the addendum Annex III.B "Context analysis".</p> <p>With regards to the commentary on the Programme, it is proposed to integrate this element in the Programme.</p>