

Analysis of financing planned and used for Natura 2000 Management Programme in Slovenia for the multiannual period 2015-2020

Project:

LIFE integrated project for enhanced management of Natura 2000 in Slovenia (LIFE17 IPE/SI/000011, LIFE-IP NATURA.SI)

Action A.3



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT
AND SPATIAL PLANNING

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Abbreviations

AECM	Agri-environment-climate measures
AKTRP	Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development
Birds Directive	Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CF	Cohesion Fund
CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
CMEPIUS	Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes
CP	Cooperation programme
CSF	Common Strategic Framework
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EASME	Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
EEA	European Economic Area
eMA	Electronic monitoring system
EMFF	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
GODC	Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy
Habitats Directive	Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora
HT	Habitat type
INOP	Implementation plan of the Operational programme
LAWP	LIFE Multiannual Work Program
LIFE	L'Instrument Financier pour l'Environnement
LIFE-IP NATURA.SI	LIFE Integrated Project for Enhanced Management of Natura 2000 in Slovenia (LIFE 17 IPE/SI/000011)
MAFF	Ministry for agriculture, forestry and food
MFF	Multiannual Financial Framework
NCFF	Natural Capital Financing Facility
OP	Operational programme
PA	Partnership Agreement
PAF	Prioritised action framework for Natura 2000
PF4EE	Private Finance for Energy Efficiency
PPP	Plant protection product
PUN	Natura 2000 Management Programme 2015-20
RDP	Rural Development Programme
SAC	Special Areas of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Areas

SUMMARY

An analysis of use of funds for implementing of the Natura 2000 Management programme for Slovenia for the period 2015-2020 is a part of the action A.3 of the LIFE Integrated Project for Enhanced Management of Natura 2000 in Slovenia (LIFE 17 IPE/SI/000011 LIFE-IP NATURA.SI). It is conducted by the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning for better measurement of implemented activities and to find the gaps where additional financing is needed. Analysis is based on the information gathered from different organizations. Data on allocations and the use of funds were gathered from competent authorities and conclusions are based on interviews with applicants and beneficiaries of different EU projects

POVZETEK

Pričujoči dokument Analiza porabe sredstev za izvajanje Programa upravljanja Natura 2000 za Slovenijo za obdobje 2015-2020 je del akcije A.3 LIFE za okrepljeno upravljanje Nature 2000 v Sloveniji (LIFE 17 IPE/SI/000011 LIFE-IP NATURA.SI). Analizo je izvedlo Ministrstvo za okolje in prostor za namene priprave izboljšanih ukrepov in iskanje vrzeli, kjer je potrebno dodatno financiranje. Analiza temelji na informacijah, zbranih od različnih organizacij. Podatki o dodelitvah in porabi sredstev so bili zbrani od pristojnih organov, zaključki pa temeljijo na razgovorih s prijavitelji in upravičenci različnih EU projektov.

1. General introduction and current state of the Natura 2000 network

Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora had a solid background in Slovenia even before 2004 when Slovenia designed the Natura 2000 sites. This, together with geographic position of the country, is also a reason why Slovenia is among those EU countries with the highest biodiversity, which is also evident in a high share of its territory included in the Natura 2000 network (37, 9 %). Since the designation of the Natura 2000 network management and planning of these sites and species and habitat types protected by The Birds and The Habitats Directive has become on one hand more systematic, dynamic, and more intense therefore on the other hand management has also become more demanding, requiring much more human resources.

A third of Slovenia's Natura 2000 sites overlap within the large-scale protected areas like national, regional or landscape parks or small-scale protected areas like natural monuments, strict nature reserves or nature reserves. Together, Natura 2000 sites, protected areas, areas of special protection create an important network of biodiversity rich areas with nature conservation status, which covers more than 56 % of Slovenia's territory.

Slovenian Natura 2000 network comprises of 355 sites, from which 324 are Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) established under the Habitats Directive and 31 are Special Protection Areas (SPA) established under the Birds Directive. Together, they aim for conservation of 233 species (119 bird species and 114 species on the Annex II of the Habitats Directive) and 60 habitat types.

For conservation, protection, preservation, or achievement of a favourable status of these species, their habitats and habitat types in Natura 2000 sites the Government also adopted the Natura 2000 Management Programme 2015-2020. This Programme sets detailed conservation objectives and measures to achieve them, as well as possible sources of financing.

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2. Planned financing of the Natura 2000 Management Programme

2.1. General EU framework

In parallel with the preparation of the Natura 2000 Management Programme the financing of its implementation was planned as well. At the strategic EU level for funding there was a Common Strategic Framework adopted, defining 11 strategic EU priority investments for the financial perspective 2014-20. Strategic priority 6 was *Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency*. This priority was further divided into 6 investment priorities, one being (6d) *Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure* and another (6c) *Preservation, protection, promotion, and development of the natural and cultural heritage*. All EU funding instruments had to refer to these strategic priorities and sub-priorities, so that also tracking of allocation of funding was made possible. There was also a result indicator for these strategic priorities defined at the EU level – (common indicator CO23) Surface area of habitats supported to attain a better conservation status. Together with categories of intervention 86 (Protection, restoration, and sustainable use of Natura 2000) and 85 (Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, nature protection and green infrastructure) this tracking was made possible also for the spending.

These regulations include common provisions for 5 principal funds: European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), European Social Fund (ESF), Cohesion Fund, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EARD) and European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). The general objective of the regulation is to create the conditions for an integrated use of the 5 above mentioned funds such that the common objectives derived from the Europe 2020 Strategy are reached with one programming tool for all structural funds. Therefore, a single source of guidance for all five funds was done, The Common Strategic Framework (CSF), namely, of increasing cohesion policy by strengthening its thematic focus on the one hand, and the synergies and coordination of funds on the other hand. CSF defines how a project or initiative supports the key objectives with four basic components: projects objective (what will the project or initiative achieve), projects approach (how will that achievement be realized), measurement (how will achievement be measured and reported) and target (what is the forecasted improvement that will define success). However, the document is not part of legislation although it proposes several key actions of obligatory nature, complementing certain elements already found in the regulations.

The base for drawing up EU funds is the Partnership Agreement (PA) which is governed by the Common Strategic Framework and tries to align its content with the content and orientations of the operational programmes (OP) for the period 2014 – 2020. Slovenia has three operational programmes:

- OP for the implementation of the EU cohesion policy,
- Rural Development Programme,
- OP for the Implementation of the EMFF.

European Commission prepared a Commission Position Paper for Slovenia where it outlined our challenges and main funding priorities. Therefore, PA and OP follow these priorities as well as the relevant Slovenian-specific recommendations of the Council.

The amount of funds available is defined through a lengthy process of negotiations, harmonisation, and adjustments. Initially the Multiannual Financial Framework of the European Union needs to be defined. The Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) of the EU, also called the financial perspective, is a seven-year framework regulating its annual budget. The financial framework sets the maximum amount of spending in the EU budget each year for broad policy areas and fixes an overall annual ceiling on payments and commitments. Moreover, during MFF negotiations national allocations for certain programmes are defined, i.e., the maximum amounts of funds available to each of the Member States per policy areas in the financial perspective. Currently, (May 2022) national allocation per Member States have been agreed.

Once the national allocation and its division per broad policy areas are defined each country needs to prepare the operational programmes for individual policy areas. This is done through negotiations on the national level, which includes national authorities for relevant policies (ministries), representatives of local self-government and regional development bodies and certain NGOs. The negotiations run under auspices of the European Commission institutions. Usually, the operational programmes and other programming documents undergo several rounds of the revisions based on the conditions and recommendations, given by the European Commission. Preparation of the national operational and similar programmes for the period 2014 - 2020 was guided by their contribution to the European strategy for smart, sustainable, and inclusive growth (so called Europe 2020 strategy) and by the analysis of the development challenges and opportunities in respective member state.

In funding, implemented through national allocations and adoption of operational or similar programmes Slovenia assured funding for IP 6d in:

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); its funds are available through:
 - Operational Programme for the Implementation of the European Cohesion Policy
 - Interreg programmes (European Territorial Cooperation)
 - Cross-border programmes (Slovenia –Italy, Slovenia – Croatia)
 - Transnational programmes (Alpine Space, Mediterranean, Danube, Adriatic-Ionian)
- European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EARDF)
- European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

Slovenia is eligible also for funding from directly (centrally) managed EU funds. Directly managed funds are managed by European Commission institutions (e.g., European Commission departments or its executive agencies), as opposed to indirectly managed funds and programmes, which are managed by national institutions (national authorities or national development institutions) or funds and programmes with shared management, where both European Commission and national organisations are responsible for management. About 80 % of the EU funds are subject to shared management.

Directly managed programmes, relevant for financing of Natura 2000 are:

- LIFE, managed by till end of 2020 by Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME),
- Horizon 2020, whose various sub-programmes were till end of 2020 managed by several European Commission institutions, e.g., Directorate Generals, such as the Directorate General for Research and Innovation or the Directorate General for

Communications Networks, Content and Technology, or by executive agencies such as the Research Executive Agency, the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, or the European Research Council Executive Agency.

Additional source of financing are national funds and donor funds.

Each of the above-mentioned funding instruments had different rules for distributing funds, for assuring preparation of targeted projects and targeted spending, for eligibility of costs and for administrative procedures. In the following chapters these funding instruments are described, including all four above mentioned elements.

2.2. Structure of the current financing of support by the European Union by thematic objective for Slovenia for period 2014-2020

Financing of 11 strategic EU priority investments (or thematic priorities) for the financial perspective 2014-20 for Slovenia is shown in the Table 1, per fund and statistical NUTS 2 region.

Table 1: Financing of 11 strategic EU priority investments (or thematic priorities) for the financial perspective 2014-20 for Slovenia (November 2021).

Thematic objective	ERDF	Eastern Slovenia	Western Slovenia	ESF	Eastern Slovenia	Western Slovenia	CF	EAFRD	EMFF
1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	498.286.850	283.678.684	214.608.166					24,126,000.00	
2. Enhancing access to, and use and quality of information and communicating technologies	42.988.982	25.371.237	17.617.745					7,500,000.00	
3. Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs in the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD), the fishery and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF	427.385.857	263.228.743	164.157.114					238,948,972.00	9,854,259.16
4. Supporting the shift to a low-carbon economy in all sectors	44.032.200	26.099.288	17.932.912				238.015.650		
5. Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management	36.385.069	36.385.069					56.420.616	206,323,170.00	
6. Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	149.032.752	100.032.755	48.999.997				284.389.163	206,323,170.00	8,166,308.00
7. Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures	108.435.292	108.435.292					245.684.430		
8. Promoting sustainable and quality employment and supporting labour mobility				272.547.197	131.581.121	140.966.076		77,790,000.00	5,300,000.00
9. Promoting social inclusion, combating poverty and any discrimination	72.952.560	40.035.380	32.917.180	157.623.131	92.638.770	64.984.361		41,892,491.00	
10. Investing in education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning	20.023.291	10.014.152	10.009.139	212.857.243	120.676.227	92.181.016		10,000,000.00	
11. Enhancing the institutional capacity of public authorities and stakeholders and an efficient public administration				62.073.980	25.082.882	36.991.098			
Technical assistance	17.162.510	14.112.244	3.050.266	12.868.043	9.072.157	3.795.886.50	89.537.036	24,946,000.00	1,488,546.84
Revoked measures								3,971,250.00	
TOTAL	1.416.685.363	907.392.844	509.292.519	718.769.595	379.473.557	339.296.038	914.046.895	837,849,803.00	24,809,114.00

Table 2: Structure of the current financing Natura 2000 network.

Name of the fund:	European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) / Cohesion Fund (CF)	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EARDF)	European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)	INTERREG, transnational programmes and other EU funds	LIFE Programme
Basis for allocation of measures/ projects relevant for Natura 2000 network	Allocated funds are specified in OP ECP 2014-2020 and divided according to 85, 86	Allocated funds are divided according to measures for separate sectors	Allocated funds are divided according to relevant measures	Distribution of funds is determined through the application process and by priority 6d	Projects are approved following a bottom-up approach.
Additional segregation of funds	Divided according to current spending separately for EU and national co-funding	Divided according to current spending separately for EU and national co-funding	Divided according to current spending separately for EU and national co-funding	Divided according to the priority area Nature and Biodiversity	Divided according to the priority area Nature and Biodiversity
Proportion of allocated national funding	20 % of total funds	¼ of total funds	¼ of total funds	15 % of total funds	¼ of total funds
The sum of allocated funds	46.5 MEUR	1070 MEUR	300 TEUR	14,2 MEUR	53,3 MEUR
The sum of spent funds on Natura 2000	16,7 MEUR	99,2 MEUR	215 TEUR		
Number of projects	11+4	12+4	3	10 + 21	15 traditional + 1PRE+ 1 IP
Proportion of consumed funds	36 %	9.3 %	71.0 %		/

3. Operational Programme for the Implementation of the European Cohesion Policy

3.1. Introduction

Slovenia is participating in drawing funds for management of Natura 2000 network from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) via Operational Programme for the Implementation of the European Cohesion Policy – so-called mainstream cohesion policy as opposed to Interreg / European Territorial Cooperation. Allocation of funds relevant to measures for management of Natura 2000 are divided under categories of intervention 85 *Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, nature protection and green infrastructure* and 86 *Protection, restoration, and sustainable use of Natura 2000*. Projects are further approved following a direct confirmation procedure, which allows targeted financing, and therefore a discrete overview of projects relevant to Natura 2000 areas. Allocated funds for Slovenia are specified in official document of Operational Programme for the Implementation of the European Cohesion Policy in the 2014-2020 period with updates approved on 11th December 2018. Funds were then unified for western and eastern region. Total European allocated funds relevant to measures for Natura 2000 in Slovenia (till November 2021) is 37.2 M EUR, additional national funding allocated for the co-funding of these measures is approximately 1/5 of the total sum and equals to 9.2 M EUR therefore the whole allocated sum of relevant funds is 46.5 M EUR (Table 4).

3.2. Targeted use of funds on the programme level

Important step to ensure targeted use of funds on the programme level was the need to use a meaningful programme result indicator and project output indicator. The programme result indicator was sum of conservation statuses of Natura 2000 species and habitat types. At the project level a common output indicator has been prescribed already by the EU. For Natura 2000 sites this was *CO23 Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status*, and it was further defined as “*surface area of the habitats supported (e.g. purchased habitats used in appropriate manner, or leased habitats the appropriate use of which is contracted, or land dedicated to public use handed over for management which guarantees appropriate use) to achieve better conservation status*”. At the programme level Slovenia had to define the value of this indicator. The target value of CO23 was defined at 450 hectares. Additional output indicator was 6.7 “*surface of nature protection areas arranged for public access*” (e.g. surface area arranged for public access, which is arranged in a nature protection manner, allowing the demonstration of appropriate use to achieve better conservation status of species and habitat types for achieving multiplier effects. The scope was determined based on available funds). The target value of 6.7 was 250 ha. To achieve targeted use of these funds for priorities, the Government in the Natura 2000 Management Programme 2015-20 has defined a list of Natura 2000 sites and on them species and habitat types in need of rapid action (Appendix 6.4, part A and B). To focus projects on these sites, species, and HT, and to achieve the common result indicator, Slovenia chose a direct confirmation procedure for the approval of projects. This procedure allows for a discrete overview of projects relevant to Natura 2000 areas, and several adjustments of draft

applications so that they fulfil all the criteria. Ministry has set following criteria for project approval to achieve targeted use of these funds:

- Project had to be listed in Natura 2000 Management Programme – table 6.4.A
- It had to address at least half of Natura 2000 species and habitat types, listed in the Natura 2000 Management Programme – table 6.4.A (these are Natura species and habitat types in an unfavourable conservation status at a Natura 2000 site with several such species/HTs)
- Each project had to implement concrete improvements and/or reestablishment of habitats with minimum area of 50 (or 100 hectares where a complementary project is implemented)
- Project partnership had to include at least one institution responsible for managing Natura 2000 areas

3.3. Administrative procedures and eligibility

Projects are defined with the Natura 2000 Management Programme 2015-20. According to the submissions of draft project proposals some of the projects were later included in the Implementation plan of the Operational programme (INOP). Many of the project partners were involved in the preparation of the project ideas already at those early phases. Actual partnerships were formed at a later phase – preparation of each project required a series of meetings, where detailed project planning took place.

Next phase, after initial development of the project ideas, harmonisation/adjustment process with Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning began to come to eligible project proposals. This was a lengthy process in duration of two years or more for each project. As a result, project proposal was developed, and formal application form could be prepared. Application form was reviewed by the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning and the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy and only then confirmed, so implementation could begin.

Most important financial-administrative features are:

- Co-financing is 100 % of eligible costs. Share of finance sources: 80 % ERDF, 20 % national co-financing.
- Activities for improvement and/or reestablishment of habitats of species or habitat types in the field should represent at least 50 % of all project's eligible costs.
- Costs for interpretation should represent at most 30 % of all project's eligible costs.
- Staff costs should represent at most 30 % of all project's eligible costs.
- Project partners pay full costs and later claim financing. Exceptions are investment costs, which are financed immediately.

The first level control checks all eligible costs; the financial claims process is therefore time-consuming. Financial claims periods are not fixed (Interreg, for example, has fixed six-month reporting periods) and shorter claiming periods are possible. There is no pre-financing; to cover running costs of the project implementation there has to be swift claiming process without mistakes. Large-sized projects may necessitate borrowing funds.

3.4. Targeted use of funds in implementation

To use funds from this programme, project proponents had to prepare eligible project proposals. This proved more challenging than initially planned. Eligibility (as explained in the previous chapter) has been reached after submitting several updates of the draft project applications (in average 6). One of bigger challenges in reaching eligibility was addressing an appropriate number of targeted species. An overview of number of target species and target habitat types (HT), listed in the Natura 2000 Management Programme – table 6.4.A, for selected projects with comparison between first version of the application form and final, approved version of the application shows this development:

Table 3: An overview of number of target species and target habitat types (HT), listed in the Natura 2000 Management Programme – table 6.4.A, for selected projects with comparison between first version of the application form and final, approved version of the application.

Project name	First version of the application form		Approved version of the application form	
	number of target species and HT, listed in updated table 6.4.A	number of other species and HTs	number of target species and HT, listed in updated table 6.4.A	number of other species and HTs
Ensuring the appropriate use of karst grasslands and walls – ZA KRAS	22	10	23	18
Improving the condition of the most important grasslands and bog areas on Lake Cerknica and Planinsko polje – KRAS.RE.VITA	11	1	11	1
Improvement of the status of alkaline fens and transition mires in Central Slovenia and in the Gorenjska region – Mala barja – Marja	5	7	5	7
Measures for maintaining and improving the conservation status of endangered animal species and habitat types in Vipava valley – VIPava	9	4	10	0
Maintenance of agricultural landscape for birds and butterflies in Goričko – Gorička krajina	13	0	13	0
Restoration and maintenance of wetland habitats in the Ljubljana Marshes – PoLJUBA	16	0	11	0
Improving the status of species and habitat types in Triglav National Park – Vrh Julijcev	11	2	10	2

Improving the conservation status of species and habitat types of the river and riparian zones of the Drava River – zaDravo	15	0	15	0
Improvement of the status of grassland, water and minor forest habitats and determination of quiet zone in the Pohorje hills - Vizija Pohorje 2030 – Pohorka	14	0	13	0
Restoration of wetland habitats along the Mura River – Natura Mura	16	0	15	0
Improving the conservation status of species and habitat types of the Landscape Park of the Pivka intermittent lakes – PIVKA.KRAS. PRESIHA	8	1	11	2
Arrangement, restoration or setting up of areas with standing water and streams in Goričko – Mokrišča na Goričkem*	6	0	6	0
The land of forests and bears – DeGoMe*	15	2	20	2

*Projects were not approved

Another challenge was more targeted use of funds for more targeted activities required to address improvement of conservation status of species and habitat types. In most cases, project funding required in the approved version of a project decreased compared to the funding required in the first draft. Usual decrease was about 15 %, but in some cases up to 60 %.

For the period 2014-2020, till the end of the year 2021 39.9 M EUR total (38.9 M € eligible cost) were approved for 11 projects relevant to Natura 2000 network, from which national co-funding equals to 7,8 M EUR (20% of eligible costs). These eleven projects with direct impact on Natura 2000 management are named: VrH Julijcev, PoLjuba, Gorička Krajina, VIPava, Mala barja – Marja, KRAS.RE.VITA, Pohorka, Za Dravo, Natura Mura, Za Kras and Pivka.Kras.Presiha (Table 5).

There are additional 4 complementary projects approved on joint interpretation of Natura 2000 and cultural heritage, namely Na-kolih - UNESCO Heritage Interpretation Centre for prehistoric pile dwelling in Ig, Interpretation Centre Natura 2000 - Auersperg Ironworks in Dvor, Natura 2000 Information centre Kras in Štanjel Castel and Interpretation Information Centre in Borl Castle. Together 7,6 M EUR total (6.8 M € eligible cost) were approved for these 4 projects, from which national co-funding equals to 1.5 M EUR (also 20% of eligible costs).

98 % of the funds allocated to measures for Natura 2000 in Slovenia in the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) were mobilised with these 15 projects, current spending of these 15 projects amounts to 36 % of total sum of allocated funds (Table 4).

Table 4: Total allocation and current spending on measures relevant for Natura 2000.

Category of intervention	Allocation to measures relevant for Natura 2000		Current spending on measures relevant for Natura 2000*	
	EU	National	EU	National
85 Protection and enhancement of biodiversity, nature protection and green infrastructure and	37.205.179	9.271.968	13.267.503	3.379.769
86 Protection, restoration, and sustainable use of Natura 2000				

* Cut of date: 30.11.2021

- Financial size of projects: between 1.7 M EUR and 7 M EUR; average size: 3.8 M EUR.
- In average each project targets 3 habitat types and 11 species listed in the Natura 2000 Management Programme – table 6.4.A
- Average size of targeted habitats is 170 ha per project.
- Average duration of projects: 4 years

Implementation dynamics of projects varies between the projects, but due to the nature of them more activities tend to be implemented at the end of the project. This is reflected also in the dynamics of spending. Below is an overview the financial size of the projects and dynamics of spending in EUR:

Table 5: Overview the financial size of the approved projects and spending.

Name of the project	Duration	Total value of the project (mio €)	Total value of the eligible (mio €)	Payed eligible amount from project start - 30.11.2021 (mio €)
Ensuring the appropriate use of karst grasslands and walls – ZA KRAS	1.8.2017 – 31.1.2023	3.18	2.97	1.68
Improving the condition of the most important grasslands and bog areas on Lake Cerknica and Planinsko polje – KRAS.RE.VITA	1. 11.2017– 31.12.2022	5.79	5.14	2.50
Improvement of the status of alkaline fens and transition mires in Central Slovenia and in the Gorenjska region – Mala barja – Marja	1.11.2017 – 30.10.2023	1.97	1.96	1.16
Measures for maintaining and improving the conservation status of endangered animal species and habitat types in Vipava valley – VIPava	1.11.2017– 30.12.2023	3.34	3.34	2.18
Maintenance of agricultural landscape for birds and butterflies in Goričko – Gorička krajina	1.12.2017 – 30.3.2022	1.79	1.78	1.42

Restoration and maintenance of wetland habitats in the Ljubljana Marshes – Poljuba	1.1.2018 – 30.9.2023	4.13	4.12	2.67
Improving the status of species and habitat types in Triglav National Park – Vrh Julijcev	1.2.2018– 30.11.2022	3.69	3.69	0.65
Improving the conservation status of species and habitat types of the river and riparian zones of the Drava River – zaDravo	1.6.2019 – 31.03.2023	6.22	6.19	0.30
Improvement of the status of grassland, water and minor forest habitats and determination of quiet zone in the Pohorje hills – Vizija Pohorje 2030 – Pohorka	1 9.2019 – 30.6.2023	2.18	2.18	0.28
Restoration of wetland habitats along the Mura River – Natura Mura	1.3.2020 – 30.11.2023	4.57	4.54	0.28
Improving the conservation status of species and habitat types of the Pivka Intermittent Lakes Landscape Park - Pivka.Kras.Presiha	1.9.2020 – 31.12.2023	3.07	2.97	0.15

3.5. Administrative procedures and eligibility

Project partners and applicants expressed substantial degree of dissatisfaction with administrative procedures. Main challenges, projects deal with, are:

- Duration and complexity of project proposal development and application procedure. This process has taken in average 2 years, and in some cases, four to five years before proposals could be confirmed; some of the proposals are still in preparation phase in time of writing.
- State aid. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food considered all the projects as receiving state aid, regardless of the opinion of the Ministry of Finance, responsible for state aid for this fund. Administrative work, caused by this decision, was a major burden for project partners and Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning. Numerous farmers are presumably not eligible for support from the projects under the de-minimis scheme, since they already reached the ceiling for maximum support. Projects face major delays (over one year due) to the unexpected complications with state aid and will have to be prolonged.
- Project management is time consuming and causes disproportionately high costs.
- Control of costs is burdensome as well, especially staff costs controls.
- Staff costs flat rate (20 %) is low and therefore not an option for project partners.
- Notary costs are not eligible.

Project partners have expressed mixed experiences with the cooperation with the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning. Proposal preparation phase was especially difficult in this respect, some of the applicants reported about mistrust received from the Ministry staff. Initially there were issues with reliability and speed of the electronic monitoring system (eMA), however, its functioning has been improved and does not present a problem anymore.

Ministry staff on the other hand was surprised by initial project ideas that were a collection of activities project partners wished to do, regardless of if the activities represent a true and necessary contribution to improvement/maintenance of habitats of species or habitat types in the field. List of activities therefore had to largely change in most of the projects to arrive to a project application eligible for financing. Changes mostly included more targeted use of funds for more targeted activities needed to address improvement of conservation status of species and habitat types, listed in the PUN table 6.4A. In most cases, project funding required in the approved version of a project decreased compared to initial required funding. Usual decrease was about 15 %, but in some cases up to 60 %. Two project applications didn't prepare the final version because of too large differences between expectations of project applicants and the frame for targeted use of funds, set in the PUN table 6.4A. Two project applications weren't supported because of Covid-19 initiated changes of policy priorities.

State aid rules and procedures regarding agricultural and forest land were another source of confusion and unproductive work burden. Here, rules were implemented harmoniously of between the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning and Ministry of Finance. Later, however the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food intervened and caused confusion. Every applicant should clearly inform itself about state aid conditions at the beginning of the preparation of project proposal; but the conditions should remain stable and unchanged during the proposal preparation and project implementation. There is a joint understanding between the project partners and the Ministry of Environment to open a separate state aid scheme for nature conservation in the next financial perspective.

Some of the project partners expressed frustration with the contents of the projects. They report weak link with other financing mechanisms and other initiatives that take place in the project areas, e.g., regional, and municipal development plans or local NGO activities. The Operational Programme channels the funding exclusively into Natura 2000 related activities – stronger connection with natural heritage should be made possible in cohesion projects, according to the opinion of some project partners. The projects are too short; the project duration should be increased to achieve optimal ratio between results in target areas and funds spent.

Project partners reported that the process of project proposal preparation and harmonisation with the Ministry of Environment is very long and should be reorganised. Applicants lacked directions from the Ministry regarding the contents of the project proposals. It happened that the ideas of the applicants were rejected by the Ministry as inappropriate, however, no information, what would be appropriate, was received. In a very few cases, the instructions from the Ministry of Environment conflicted with updated instruction from the Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy, but solutions were found in all these cases. Methodology, principles and rules of preparation of cohesion projects should be harmonised between all relevant European and national institutions also in cases, when they are updated, and only then communicated to applicant institutions. There should be clear and tailored instructions and rules for development of nature conservation projects. Financial rules

should be adapted to the specifics of the 'soft measures' projects (projects without large investments).

Project partners pointed out some of the costs are not eligible for financing, for example: equipment costs below 500 EUR per item are covered by overheads; all travels, done by company car are not eligible, while rates for travels done with private cars are too low to cover actual costs. These costs must be therefore covered by administrative costs & overheads, which means an additional financial burden on project applicants.

3.6. Lessons learned

Key message of relevant applicant institutions based on experiences with preparation and implementation of mainstream ERDF projects is the system of project application and implementation makes efficient financing of Natura 2000 and achievement of goals of the nature conservation policy in Slovenia challenging. The system should be overhauled; most importantly, principles, frameworks and rules of preparation and implementation of the projects should be clear in advance and remain stable until the end of the implementation period. Key message of the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning is that targeted use of funding requires a different approach to prepare a project application and build project partnership. Activities that represent a true and necessary contribution to improvement/maintenance of habitats of species or habitat types in the field must be a core of a project and locations and project partners have to be formed around this.

The process of public procurement could be streamlined: current rules stipulate that each procurement procedure, even small evidence procurements, obtain confirmation from the Ministry of Environment at three different stages. This requirement could be abandoned, at least for small procurement procedures.

The project partners suggested more emphasis should be given to communication activities. Currently the costs for communication are limited and communication should be focused on ensuring the acceptability of the Natura 2000 network and the actions implemented in the projects.

Interviewees have mixed opinions regarding benefits of the cohesion policy financed; the projects contributed positively to the goals of nature conservation policy and Natura 2000 Management Programme in Slovenia to a certain extent, however, potentials for improvement remain substantial.

4. European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)

4.1. Introduction

In the eighties of the 21st century the share of agricultural policy took up more than 70 % of the EU budget, this share has since then been reduced to around 40 %. During the same period, the structural funds have grown, from a little over 10 % in 1980 to around 34 % 2017.

The EU's Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) was set up to provide farmers with fixed income by guaranteeing minimum prices for their produce. Since the early 1990's, the EU has engaged in a series of reforms of the CAP meant to reduce the level of subsidies for farmers. This explains the decrease in the share of CAP spending. Even then, the CAP remains the single most important item on the EU budget where the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), as so called second pillar of the CAP, also remains the largest of three structural funds of EU. Through this reform of CAP, the policy of farming and the policy of subsidised measures have also changed. Therefore, in the period 2014-2020 Slovenia for Natura 2000 network managed to secure funds from European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) in the sum of 72.769.811 EUR. This sum also includes funds that are not specifically targeted to Natura 2000 areas but contribute indirectly to the preservation of the agricultural land on those areas (eg. OMD - payments for areas with natural or other specific constraints – 68.711.697 EUR or organic farming – 20.834.001 €).

There are more ways of drawing funds from EAFRD. One of the most direct ways for nature conservation efforts is through Agri-environment-climate payments or so called AECM measures.

Another way of drawing funds from EAFRD is investments in physical assets with public tenders who address predetermined topics, including topics related to Natura 2000. Public tenders who influence Natura 2000 network cover different types of fields, from agri-food and forestry sectors, environmental sustainability, and wellbeing of rural areas in general. Funds in sectors are further divided by the type of investment, like investment in technology, education projects and so on. These funds are accessible to individuals as well as non-governmental organisations which comply with criteria in the tender.

Table 6: Total allocation from the EAFRD to the Member State/region in EUR (data relevant for different years, see comments)

Measure	Total current allocation to the EAFRD measure*		Current spending on actions or sub-measures relevant for Natura 2000**		Comments (relevance, experience to-date, challenges for the next period)
	EU	National	EU	National	
M4 Investments in physical assets	236.009.792 €	78.669.931 €	77.926 €	25.975 €	payments on June 30, 2021 In Natura 2000 areas, restoration and establishment of traditional high-trunk meadow orchards has been funded by this measure according to conservation objectives as well as fencing of pastures to protect livestock against the large carnivores.
M8.4 Investments in forest area	10.540.800 €	3.513.600 €	4.136.562 €	1.378.854 €	payments on June 30, 2021 for investments in reforestation after natural disasters. Payments are also for areas outside Natura 2000.
M10 Agri-environment climate measures	202.865.540 €	67.621.847 €	8,125,216	2,708,405	payments on December 31, 2020 5,187,485 EUR were paid for 4 operations, which are dedicated for maintenance of habitats and species of EU importance (HAB: Special grassland habitats. MET: Grassland habitats of butterflies VTR: Habitats of birds of humid extensive meadows. STE: Litter meadows).

					Another 5,646,137 (Natura 2000 areas + outside) have been paid for operations (Conservation of steep meadow habitats, Hummocky meadows, Livestock rearing in area of the occurrence of large carnivores, Mountain pasture, High-trunk meadow orchards, Preservation of hedgerows) which contribute to the preservation and improvement of biodiversity in agricultural landscape.
M11 Organic farming	66.098.250 €	22.032.750 €	15.625.501 €	5.208.500 €	payments on December 31, 2020 that were payed to agricultural for parcels, which are fully or partially located in Natura 2000 sites.
M13 Payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraint	253.211.196 €	84.403.732 €	51.533.773 €	17.177.924 €	payments on December 31, 2020 In measure M13 there are no additional environmental requirements for the farmers, nevertheless this measure contributed indirectly to the maintenance of the habitat types and species and prevents grasslands from overgrowing and land abandonment. Payments that were payed to agricultural holdings for parcels, which are fully or partially located in Natura 2000 sites.
M.15	Not programmed				
M.16.5	4.273.989 €	1.537.894 €	2.638.558 €	418.274 €	Only projects contributing to the management of Natura 2000
M19.2	31.686.488 €	7.921.622 €	862.526 €	215.632 €	payments on September 15, 2021 for project that are supporting nature conservation actions in or outside Natura 2000 network
Subtotal	804.686.055 €	265.701.376 €	74.874.846 €	24.399.184 €	
TOTAL	1.070.387.431 €		99.274.030 €		

* Based on 10. Change of RDP 2014 - 2022 on 19. 8. 2021.

**In our calculations we took into account the payments from the subsidy campaign 2015 onwards - that is, according to the rules of RDP 2014-20. First payments for the 2015 subsidy campaign were made in 2016.

Funds for wellbeing of rural areas can be drawn by CLLD - Community-Led Local Development. The CLLD approach includes three funds, namely the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). CLLD in the programme period 2014-2020 is divided into 37 local action groups which cover 100 % of Slovenian territory. All Local development strategies (LAG) include the EAFRD and the ERDF funds, their main goals being promoting social inclusion, reducing poverty in the economic development of rural areas, with a focus on promoting local rural development

The aim of the measure Cooperation (M16) is to accelerate the transfer of knowledge and innovation from the research sphere to agricultural practices. The measure Cooperation is implemented through four sub-measures. The following are particularly important for the objectives of the PUN 2000:

- support for pilot projects and the development of new products, practices, processes, and technologies (sub-measure 16.2),
- support for joint action to mitigate or adapt to climate change and support for joint approaches to environmental projects and sustainable environmental practices (sub-measure 16.5).

There are two types of projects in the Cooperation measure:

- EIP projects (measure M16 - Cooperation from the Rural Development Program 2014-2020),
- pilot projects (measure M16 - Cooperation from the Rural Development Program 2014-2020).

Within the EIP projects (Table 7), solutions are sought for the real problem of farms and farming enterprises in the field of agriculture, forestry, or food sector or to find solutions for agricultural holdings in adapting to climate change, to protect biodiversity or for environmentally efficient agricultural production in water protection areas and other protected areas. These are more extensive projects. For project implementation, a partnership consisting of at least three members is established based on a cooperation agreement. Pilot projects are small-scale projects aimed at addressing the specific challenges of agricultural production, environmental protection, and climate change that agricultural holding face, with the participation of at least two partners.

Table 7a. List of EIP projects which address contents of conservation of Natura 2000 and biodiversity.

Measure / call	Project title	Topic	Lead partner	Project duration	Amount of approved funds
16.5 /1. JR (2.2.2018)	Pollinators for fruit growers and fruit growers for pollinators	Agriculture in support of nature conservation or the conservation of biodiversity through the appropriate farming practice	Nacional institute of biology	14. 12. 2018 – 13. 12. 2021	216.768,77 €
16.5 /2. JR (28.12. 2018)	Extensive orchard of indigenous and traditional Slovenian fruit varieties and their role in biodiversity - the preservation of the traditional cultural heritage	Agriculture in support of nature conservation or the conservation of biodiversity through the appropriate farming practice	University of Ljubljana Biotechnical Faculty	15.11.2019 - 15.11.2022	249.735,97 €
16.5 /3. JR (8.11.2019)	Forest edge as a support to the preservation of species diversity in forests, providing ecosystem services	Biodiversity conservation in forest habitats	Secondary school for forestry and woodworking Postojna	6/2020 – 6/2023	249.954,42 €
16.5 /4. JR (13.12.2019)	Innovative environmental-climate-based management systems of cattle farms to ensure feed production and optimal conditions for rearing of cattle	Agriculture in support of nature conservation or the conservation of biodiversity through the appropriate farming practice	University of Ljubljana Biotechnical Faculty	1. 12. 2020– 30. 11. 2023	249.989,28 €

16.5 /4. JR (13.12.2019)	Conservation and improvement of biodiversity in agricultural intensive areas based on ecosystem characteristics	Agriculture in support of nature conservation or the conservation of biodiversity through the appropriate farming practice	Geodetski zavod Celje d.o.o.	2020 – 2023	203.980,74 €
16.5 /4. JR (13.12.2019)	Farming with(for) biodiversity on lowland farms in Slovenia - EIP VIVEK	Agriculture in support of nature conservation or the conservation of biodiversity through the appropriate farming practice	E-institute - Institute for Comprehensive Development Solutions	13. 01. 2021 – 13 01. 2024	247.784,46 €
16.5 /4. JR (13.12.2019)	Integration of ecosystem services into the sustainable agriculture through the species diversity of flowering meadows	Mitigation and adaptation to climate change in agriculture	Makrobios Panonija so.p.	29.06.2021 - 29.06.2024	247.600,77 €
16.5 /4. JR (13.12.2019)	Hedges as a support of biodiversity, preserving the traditional and disappearing cultural pattern of Slovenian countryside and providing ecosystem services	Mitigation and adaptation to climate change in agriculture	Slovenian Forestry Institute	25. 5. 2021 - 24. 5. 2024	248.605,02 €
M16.5_05b_EURI	Improving nature positive measures in agricultural production systems in Slovenia (acronym: EIP KROTA)	Agriculture in support of nature conservation or the conservation of biodiversity through the appropriate farming practice	E-institute - Institute for Comprehensive Development Solutions		249.919,20 €
M16.5_05b_EURI	Farming for the conservation of species rich grasslands through the transfer of knowledge to the farmer	Management of grassland of high nature value	Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation		217.511,42 €
M16.5_05b_EURI	Supporting pollinators in intensive agricultural landscapes to promote biodiversity. (POMOP)	Agriculture in support of nature conservation or the conservation of biodiversity through the appropriate farming practice	Nacional institute of biology		249.080,44 €
M16.5_05b_EURI	Supporting organisms to ensure species diversity, protect natural resources and to improve the potential of agricultural land in times of climate change	Mitigation and adaptation to climate change in agriculture	2DOM D.o.o.		248.951,34 €

Table 7b. List of pilot projects which address contents of conservation of Natura 2000 and biodiversity.

Measure / call	Project title	Lead partner	Project duration	Amount of approved funds
16.5 /2. JR	Testing of the new two-stage semi result measure VTR	Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation	october 2019 – october 2020	44.790,30 €
16.5 /2. JR	Introduction of conservation seed mixtures for restoration of degraded grasslands on	Agricultural Institute of Slovenia	october 2019– october 2021	44.791,30 €

	the area of Sports Center Pokljuka			
16.5 /4. JR	High trunk pasture orchards as new agricultural practice	Education, TAMARA URBANČIČ S.P.	1.12. 2020 – 1.12. 2022	44.996,45 €
16.5 /4. JR	Conservation of farmland biodiversity with development and inclusion of learning models in agricultural activity	University of Primorska	01. 01. 2021 - 31. 12. 2022	42.372,40 €
				176.950,45 €

Considering the identified needs and considering the national strategic documents Slovenia identified and focused on the following intervention areas under the EAFRD for the 2014-2020 period:

- Facilitation of processes of structural adjustment in agriculture and, consequently, the creation of conditions for increasing the productivity of Slovenian agriculture and the level of self-sufficiency,
- Efficient organisation of the agricultural market, strengthening of agro-food chains and higher recognisability and quality of local products,
- Sustainable exploitation of forests and increasing added value of wood, with better market integration in the field of forestry and along the forest wood chain, and improvement of competitiveness in forestry and non-industrial wood processing,
- Promotion of agricultural practices that have favourable effects on the preservation of natural resources and adaptation to climate changes,
- Green jobs and coherent and sustainable development of rural areas based on the development of endogenous potential of the local environment,
- Knowledge and innovation transfer, the environment and climate change are horizontal objectives addressed by all five priority areas.

4.2. Targeted use of funds on the programme level

The sum of allocated funds is divided according to the field of measures that they address e.g. investments in physical assets, basic services and village renewal in rural areas, investments in forest areas, agro-environment-climate measures, organic farming, payments to areas facing natural or other specific constraints, and other measures. The listed measures are relevant to managing or at least influencing the Natura 2000 network especially because of the principle by which they are determined, approved, implemented and controlled. There is also no further detailed segregation of these measures specific for Natura 2000 payments, neither is there a classification done for forest-environmental and climate services and forest conservation.

AECM measures in the period 2014-2020 in Slovenia comprise 19 different measures, which can be distributed in three main groups considering their contribution to nature conservation or their impact on different types of habitats:

- AECM measures, which target the protection of the environment (arable farming and vegetable cultivation; hop growing; fruit growing; wine growing; permanent grassland I; Permanent grassland II, water sources)
- AECM measures with general (non-targeted) but still positive impact on habitats, mainly grasslands, such as Conservation of steep meadow habitats (KRA_S50), Hummocky meadows (KRA_GRB), Mountain pastures (KRA_PAST, KRA_CRED), High-trunk meadow orchards (KRA_VTSA); Livestock rearing in areas of occurrence of large carnivores (KRA_OGRM, KRA_VARPA, KRA_VARPP) Preservation of hedgerows (KRA_MEJ). These measures support maintenance of grasslands, and where there is no or little possibility for intensification of production due to relief or climate, these measures help achieving Natura objectives while they prevent overgrowing of agricultural land with forest.

The third group are target nature conservation AECM measures:

- HAB - Special grassland habitats;
- MET - Grassland habitats of butterflies;
- VTR - Habitats of birds of humid extensive meadows;
- STE - Litter meadows (*see further on*).

Table 8: Funds, spent for (non-targeted) AECM measures.

	KRA_VTSA	KRA_MEJ	KRA_PAST	KRA_CRED	KRA_GRB	KRA_S50
Area 2021 (ha)	697	165,9 km	4925	985	3	324
Spent funds in year 2015 (EUR/ year)	121.406	not yet implemented	483.502	54.641	1.278	75.140
Spent funds in year 2016 (EUR/ year)	139.529	not yet implemented	499.939	59.024	1.205	79.058
Spent funds in year 2017 (EUR/ year)	145.166	188.421	557.988	58.622	1.157	81.732
Spent funds in year 2018 (EUR/ year)	147.040	204.333	537.676	58.297	1.273	79.839
Spent funds in year 2019 (EUR/ year)	151.603	228.847	529.098	60.927	1.026	78.750
Spent funds in year 2020 (EUR/ year)	138.965	233.162	531.280	63.190	337	69.565

	KRA_OGRM	KRA_VARPA	KRA_VARPP	VOD_ZEL	VOD_FFSV
Area 2021 (ha)	1.405	262	857	31.524	38.670
Spent funds in year 2015 (EUR/ year)	55.055	0	53.460	5.010.133	1.505.692
Spent funds in year 2016 (EUR/ year)	123.493	17.595	77.663	5.230.449	1.564.584

Spent funds in year 2017 (EUR/ year)	123.924	19.591	79.658	5.440.385	1.611.647
Spent funds in year 2018 (EUR/ year)	124.941	19.241	87.674	5.536.358	1.592.002
Spent funds in year 2019 (EUR/ year)	130.703	18.008	88.543	5.545.044	1.607.279
Spent funds in year 2020 (EUR/ year)	151.302	23.068	90.442	5.592.176	1.620.725

The most important measures for nature conservation are four targeted AECM measures for maintenance of habitat of more demanding grassland habitat types and/or species: HAB, MET, VTR and STE. Implementation of these measures is restricted to grassland management areas within Natura 2000 areas, where measures are eligible. These areas are based on zones of more demanding grassland habitat types and/or species, and finally delimited, taking into account grassland management requirements.

Natura 2000 Management Programme determines targeted area for targeted AECM measures by each Natura 2000 site (species or HT zone) to be reached by the end of 2022 in the appendix 6.3 of the Programme. Next table presents available and spent funds for implementation of the four specific grassland AECM measures, defined as appropriate for individual Natura 2000 area.

Table 9: Available and funds spent for implementation of the four specific grassland AECM measures.

	HAB	MET	VTR	STE
Target area (ha)	2.0039	1.448	31.51	77
Area 2021 (ha)	5.921	661	1.359	9
Available funds (EUR/year) *	5.690.663	5.46.577	1.062.579	16.384
Spent funds in year 2015 (EUR/year)	467.893	98.604	169.983	3.285
Spent funds in year 2016 (EUR/year)	509.414	180.807	296.537	4.751
Spent funds in year 2017 (EUR/year)	520.758	186.951	305.214	4.097
Spent funds in year 2018 (EUR/year)	666.971	190.348	307.192	3.433
Spent funds in year 2019 (EUR/year)	752.572	200.017	314.061	4.527
Spent funds in year 2020 (EUR/year)	821.534	185.442	307.372	3.395

*Considering potential inclusion of all target areas in obligatory and optional demands of KOPOP measures: HAB, MET, VTR and STE.

In the period 2015 – 2020 the four nature-conservation target KOPOP measures represented between 3.04 and 3.76 % of annually spent funds for all KOPOP measures. See table below:

Table 10: Annually spent funds for KOPOP measures.

year	KOPOP EUR	Nature conservation target KOPOP measures only	Share in %
2015	24.340.888	739.765	3,04
2016	28.857.266	991.545	3,44
2017	30.005.937	1.017.020	3,34

2018	30.558.842	11.67.944	3,82
2019	30.929.020	1.271.177	4,12
2020	30.663.459	1.317.744	4,30

4.3. Administrative procedures and eligibility

The approving, accounting, and caring out of payments are done only through accredited payment distribution agencies, in Slovenia that is the Agency for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development (AKTRP). The Agency's fundamental tasks regarding disbursement of EU funds (paying agency) are conducting tenders, processing, and approving applications, approval of claims for payment, execution of payments and accounting of payments. Obligations from EAFRD are managed by Agency's Direct Payments Division. Sector's main purpose is to implement agricultural policy measures in the field of direct payments (first pillar) and payments under the rural development program (RDP, 2nd pillar). RDP payments include:

- Transfer of knowledge and information activities (measure M1)
- Advisory services, farm management services and farm relief services (measure M2)
- Quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs (measure M3)
- Investments in physical assets (measure M4)
- Development of farms and enterprises (measure M6)
- Basic services and village renewal in rural areas (measure M7)
- Investments in the development of forest areas and the improvement of forest viability (measure M8)
- Setting up of producer groups and organisations (measure M9)
- Agri-environment-climate payments (measure M10)
- Organic farming (measure M11)
- Payments for areas with natural or other specific constraints (measure M13)
- Animal welfare (measure M14)
- Cooperation (measure M16)
- Support to local development within the leader initiative (community-led local development) (measure M19)

In the period 2014-2020, within the RDP 2014-2020 AECM measures are implemented as a "management scheme". This means that the farmer's way of carrying out agricultural practice is very clearly defined. Most AECM measures are designed to implement mandatory and optional requirements. Mandatory requirements combine all the key requirements for maintaining a favourable state of nature conservation (e.g. mowing time, ban of fertilization ...). The selection requirements give additional positive synergies to the mandatory requirements, but if implemented independently (without mandatory requirements) they would not have a significant impact on the status of the species / HT. The farmer may therefore decide to implement the selection requirements on a voluntary basis. If he implements them, he receives additional financial resources for it.

Beneficiaries must meet the following general conditions when entering in an AECM measure:

- they own at least 1 ha of agricultural land,
- they are registered in the Register of agricultural holdings,

- they have completed a 6-hour regular training program,
- they have adopted a farm activity plan.

Beneficiaries must meet the following general conditions each year when carrying out the AECM measures:

- they have completed a 4-hour regular training program,
- they use the counselling service by the end of the year at the latest, if they joined the AECM measure in 2018,
- prescribed records must be kept for the AECM measure for the entire duration of the obligation,
- the use of sewage sludge is not permitted.

Beneficiaries claiming payments for the AECM measure must comply with the minimum requirements for the use of fertilizers, plant protection products (PPPs) and cross-compliance requirements in addition to the requirements defined for individual operations. The minimum requirements for the use of fertilizers refer to keeping records of the use of organic and mineral fertilizers, which must be kept by the farmer for all agricultural land on the farm and from which at least the quantity and type of organic and mineral fertilizers, fertilization time and area data must be shown where these fertilizers are used. The minimum requirements for the use of PPPs refer to the correct use of PPPs from the regulation governing cross compliance. These are, above all, correct use, storage, keeping records of use, which must also be kept for all land on the farm, etc. The records must show at least information on the quantity, concentration and type of PPP, time of application and information on the area where a particular PPP was used.

In the case of the use of fertilizers and PPPs, the farmer must keep data on the purchase, consumption, delivery, receipt and stock of individual types of fertilizers and PPPs for all the farming areas (mass balance calculation). In 2020, an exception was introduced that operations HAB, MET, VTR, STE, breeding in the area of large carnivores and mountain grazing do not need to keep data on purchase, consumption, delivery, receipt and stock of individual types of fertilizers and PPPs.

In the implementation of RDP 2014-2020, the funds of measures M01 and M02 are awarded through a procurement procedure. Means of measures M03, M04, M06, M07, M08, M09 and M16 are awarded through the Call for proposals with public tenders. Public procurement is carried out by the Ministry. The Ministry also prepares calls for tender and tender documentation which is then executed by the Agency. Investors submit applications to the agency.

In the 2014-2020 programming period, the number of regulations governing the implementation of rural development program measures has also increased significantly which further hinders the quality implementation of measures.

4.4. Targeted use of funds in implementation

Targeted use of funds for AECM measures is controlled by AKTRP by administrative control and by a certain % of in-situ control. This applies for measures M10, M11, M13 and M14 on the basis of the applications submitted. To reach targeted use of funds, public services (agricultural advisory service and nature conservation services) are required to stimulate farmers in most suitable areas to apply for relevant targeted AECM measures.

From 2015, first relevant year in this period, it can be summarized that every year we are closer to the targeted area extent. We can see the growth in the table:

Table 11: Included and target areas in AECM measures each year from 2015 to 2019.

Year KOPOP	Target area (ha)	2015 area (ha)	2015 / target area (%)	2016 area (ha)	2016 / target area (%)	2017 area (ha)	2017 / target area (%)	2018 area (ha)	2018 / target area (%)	2019 area (ha)	2019 / target area (%)	2020 area (ha)	2020 / target area (%)
HAB	20039	2880	14	3773	19	3873	19	4664	23	5244	26	5.556	28
MET	1448	440	30	591	41	614	42	621	43	637	44	612	43
STE	77	14	18	15	19	15	19	15	19	15	19	11	14
VTR	3151	1055	33	1262	40	1297	41	1329	42	1388	44	1325	42
SUM	24715	4152	17	5641	23	5799	23	6629	27	7278	29	7504	30
Year KOPOP	Target area (ha)	2021 area (ha)	2021 / target area (%)										
HAB	20039	5921	29										
MET	1448	661	45										
STE	77	9	11										
VTR	3151	1359	43										
SUM	24715	7950	32										

Growth of area where measures are implemented is steady although the biggest growth was in 2016 when most of eligible applicants were informed and educated of their potential rights. From then the growth of area where measures are implemented is relatively small, a couple of percentage yearly as a result of different projects that made a local specific contribution. It is also apparent that the measures are far from reaching whole potential targeted area, they are implemented on less than 1/3 of potential area. This is mostly because implementation of measures is challenging for farmers, is voluntary and linked to quite some administration.

4.5. Lessons learned

The European regulations set out in programming period 2014-2020 a common monitoring and evaluation framework was set to be considered by Member States when assessing the effectiveness of rural development programs. The common framework under which the ministry must monitor the implementation of rural development programs includes, inter alia, predefined indicators for each level of rural development program. The indicators set out in the European Regulations have some shortcomings, which are also transposed into national rural development programs due to their mandatory use. For example, the status indicators do not have a specific target value, but the impact indicator is a set indicator of total public expenditure, which, according to the Court of Auditors, does not indicate whether and to what extent the content objectives were achieved, but only what amount was paid to the beneficiaries.

The Court of Auditors also found that the Ministry and the Agency are monitoring and collecting data from beneficiaries to calculate the indicators which they are required to report to the European Commission. The beneficiaries were required, when applying for the tender, to provide information on the physical and economic objectives or indicators to be achieved at the completion of the investment. The Court of Auditors found that some of the indicators foreseen were such that their intended values could not be reached by the beneficiary at the end of the investment. In addition, some of the projected values of economic indicators announced by the beneficiary in the invitation to tender were a criterion for the selection of projects, which, in the Court's view, is not an appropriate criterion.

The Court of Auditors also noted in the audit report as a deficiency that decisions taken by the Agency were subject to a considerable margin of tolerance, even though they relate to mostly comparable content.

In the ex-post controls, the Agency focused primarily on verifying that the investment was located on-site and whether the activity for which the funds had been obtained was being carried out, and in particular on the existence of equipment on the site itself. However, in regard to verifying that the beneficiaries achieved the investment objectives, it was found that the Agency's verification defer.

The Agency and the Ministry, with the exception of ex-post controls, also did not determine the success of individual projects within 5 years after the completion of the projects and after that period, they only verified that the beneficiary submitted the required annual reports after the last disbursement. The Agency and the Ministry did not verify the information on the achievement of the indicators indicated by the beneficiaries in their reports during the period. The Ministry also included provisions on reporting in the legal bases and decisions, and, in the Court's assessment, the provisions were not, as a rule, specified in the regulations and decisions so as to make it clear to the beneficiaries what their obligations are, when they occur and how long they last, how much time they have to report to the agency, as well as the consequences of any default.

In the case of nature protection requirements in particular, there are additional risks associated with the timing of certain tasks, such as reduction, ban on fertilizers or plant protection products, ban on certain activities, carrying out certain activities only on part of the holding or carrying out a specific task in specific time period. Here, in particular, control is a key element, but is difficult to achieve in all respects.

In the case of construction investment, there is a lack of project documentation, lack of cultural and nature consensus. In certain cases, three tenders must be submitted, which must be obtained before the application is submitted. The application must reconcile the eligible costs from the application form with the tenders attached. The shortcomings that appear suggest a very comprehensive set of instructions with a lot of administration already identified.

5. European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)

5.1. Introduction

The EMFF is the fund for the EU's maritime and fisheries policies for 2014-2020. The fund helps fishermen in the transition to sustainable fishing, supports coastal communities in diversifying their economies, finances projects that create new jobs and improve quality of life along European coasts, supports sustainable aquaculture developments, and makes it easier for applicants to access financing. The Fund is used to co-finance projects, along with national funding. Each country is allocated a share of the total Fund budget, based on the size of its fishing industry. Each country then draws up an operational programme, saying how it intends to spend the money. Once the Commission approves this programme, it is up to the national authorities to decide which projects will be funded. The national authorities and the Commission are jointly responsible for the implementation of the programme.

5.2. Targeted use of funds on the programme level

Slovenia in operational program for EMFF has set to achieve the objective of the renewed Common Fisheries Policy and to integrate maritime policy based on these objectives: promoting sustainable and competitive fisheries and aquaculture, promoting the development and implementation of integrated maritime Union policies, promotion balanced and inclusive territorial development of fisheries areas (including aquaculture) and contributing to the implementation of the reformed Common Fisheries Policy which goes towards the conservation and sustainable management of stocks, while at the same time supported the fisheries sector in the Republic of Slovenia in the direction of competitive and sustainable development.

In the entire programming period 2014-2020, Slovenia secured financial resources from the EMFF in the amount of 24,809,114.00 EUR from the EMFF. With the funds allocated to support of OP EMFF 2014–2020 measures from the budget of the Republic of Slovenia, available funds totalled EUR 32,647,360.88 EUR. After the last change was confirmed on 19th of July 2019, the sum of funds has decreased to 21,431,579.00 EUR.

These resources are further divided into financial resources for the implementation of measures and technical assistance. To implement the measures, Slovenia secured 8,891,223.00 EUR and 2,646,306.00 EUR for technical assistance. The co-financed measures are further subdivided into:

- A measure supporting the design and implementation of conservation measures and regional cooperation, for which a total of 333,334.00 EUR is earmarked for the entire management period.
- A measure for the protection and restoration of marine biodiversity and ecosystems in the framework of sustainable fisheries, for which a total of 733,333.00 EUR is earmarked for the entire management period.
- Measure to increase the potential of aquaculture sites for which 200,000.00 EUR has been allocated throughout the management period.
- A control and enforcement measure for which a total of 2,295,213.00 EUR is earmarked for the entire management period.
- A data collection measure for which 2,929,343.00 EUR is earmarked for the entire management period.
- Marketing measures for which a total of 1,066,667.00 EUR has been allocated for the entire management period.
- The Integrated Maritime Surveillance measure, for which 333,333.00 EUR is earmarked for the entire management period.
- A measure promoting the protection of the marine environment and the sustainable use of marine and coastal resources, for which a total of 300,000 EUR is earmarked for the entire management period.
- A measure to improve knowledge of the state of the marine environment, for which 700,000.00 EUR is earmarked for the entire management period.

Technical assistance is intended to ensure the effective implementation of the OP ESPR 2014-2020, with technical assistance aiming at ensuring the quality of implementation, establishment, monitoring and control of the program and increasing the visibility of the program and its components. Technical assistance is focused on maintaining a stable and experienced staff composition, while improving job composition in terms of responsibilities at the individual workplace, while also supporting support activities and reducing the administrative burden on beneficiaries.

The measures for Natura 2000 are classified under special measures and are specifically envisaged in the measure protection and restoration of marine biodiversity - contribution to better management or conservation, construction, installation or modernization of dormant or mobile devices, preparation of protection and management plans in connection with NATURA 2000 sites and special areas of conservation, management, restoration and monitoring of marine protected areas where NATURA 2000 sites are included. Measures for environmental awareness, participation in other actions aimed at conserving and enhancing biodiversity and ecosystem services are also predicted under this measure.

In the Republic of Slovenia, we have defined nine marine and coastal areas of Natura 2000, with a total area of 18,098 km². For the needs of Natura 2000 sites, the operational program provides for the implementation of studies and other activities for knowledge of the marine environment, including the collection of information on the status of habitat types and species. The implementation of nature conservation measures is planned in accordance with the Natura 2000 Management Programme and other relevant action programs. The monitoring of the status of marine species and habitats of Natura 2000 and other conservation activities in line with the Prioritised action framework (PAF), such as directing activities in areas of conservation importance, education, and the involvement of fishermen in conservation. Various awareness-raising activities are also planned.

5.3. Administrative procedures and eligibility

The managing authority of the OP EMFF 2014–2020 is the Ministry for agriculture, forestry and food (MAFF).

The intermediate body of the managing authority is the Agency of the Republic of Slovenia for Agricultural Markets and Rural Development which carries out the payment tasks and is also responsible for conforming performed tasks. The audit authority referred to regulation is the Office for Budgetary Control of the Republic of Slovenia, which is a body within the ministry responsible for finance.

The monitoring is done by the Monitoring Committee of the Operational Program for the Implementation of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund in the Republic of Slovenia for the period 2014-2020. In accordance with the Regulation on the European Funds, the managing authority is responsible for managing the operational program in accordance with the principle of sound financial management; therefore, MAFF is the beneficiary of all measures and technical assistance.

The selection and implementation of operations under measures and technical assistance takes place in two phases: first being choice of operation and the second one selection of a contractor to perform the operation. The measures and technical assistance are implemented on an annual basis in accordance with the adopted budget for each financial year.

Furthermore, individual measures are determined by the eligibility of operations and the compliance criteria. Direct measures related to Natura 2000 sites are defined under the measure protection and restoration of marine biodiversity and ecosystems in the framework of sustainable fishing activities. Here the conditions for eligibility of operations are determined and the type and the period of operation, which can be carried out in the period from 22.7.2015 to 30.11.2023. Eligible operations must be in compliance with the rules governing the environment. And operation must not be carried out under other European Investment and Structural Funds or Union or national financing instruments.

5.4. Targeted use of funds in implementation

There were three projects (called operations in EMFF vocabulary), relevant for implementation of Natura 2000, in the implementation period 2014 – 2020. All three projects were financed by the Union Priority 6 – Promotion of implementation of integrated maritime policy. The projects are briefly presented in the table below:

Table 12: Basic information for the three EMFF projects, relevant for implementation of Natura 2000.

Project name	Beneficiary	Total eligible expenditure (EUR)	Amount of Union contribution (EUR)	Duration
27 - Field mapping of Natura 2000 marine habitat types in the Slovenian sea	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food	84,820.50	63,615.38	12/2017 – 11/2018

30 - Monitoring of dolphins in Slovenian sea for the reporting period 2013-2018	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food	55,915.54	41,936.65	5/2018 – 7/2019
105 - Monitoring of <i>Phalacrocorax aristotelis</i> in Slovenian sea 2020 - 2021	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food	74,440.69	55,830.52	4/2020 – 11/2021

5.5. Administrative procedures and eligibility

The sole beneficiary of the EMFF funded projects in Slovenia is Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, as defined by the art. 17 of the Regulation on the implementation of measures and technical assistance from the Operational Programme for the implementation of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund in the Republic of Slovenia for the period 2014-2020. The MAFF then publishes public tenders and selects external experts, which actually carry out great majority of work during the implementation of the projects. The contents of the above-mentioned Natura 2000 relevant projects are in line with the Natura 2000 management programme (PUN) and Prioritised action framework for Natura 2000 (PAF). The public tenders for are based on the framework documentation, prepared by the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, which takes into account directions of PUN and PAF.

5.6. Lessons learned

The experience of the beneficiary and project implementers is generally positive; the financing was beneficial, since it enabled gathering of data on selected Natura 2000 species and their condition. The projects contributed to fulfilment of obligations according to Habitat Directive, MSF Directive and ACCOBAMS. The financing should be continued.

6. INTERREG Cross-border programmes

Within two cross-border programmes; Slovenia – Croatia and Slovenia – Italy there were specific allocations done for 6d and 6c. Important focus of cross-border programmes is territorial, cross-border cooperation, and therefore the content criteria are less important than in funds using national allocations. Cross-border programmes offer possibilities of strengthening connections with local level institutions and general public; they allow for financing of rather concrete conservation measures. Transnational projects are a venue for networking on a higher policy level; both cross-border and transnational projects enable and promote cooperation between different disciplines, sectors and types of institutions (public, NGOs, for-profit, local, regional, national...).

While good command of English language is an absolute must in transnational projects, communication in cross-border projects on Croatian and Italian border often runs in Italian, Croatian and Slovenian language. In the period 2014 – 2020 Interreg programmes were popular with the applicants due to the rather high co-financing rate (85 % of eligible costs). The co-financing rate may decrease in the 2021 – 2027 perspective; this has been a topic of

discussions in Interreg community since 2019, however major reduction of the co-financing is not expected.

7. INTERREG V-A SLOVENIA CROATIA

7.1. Introduction

Interreg V-A Slovenia – Croatia was a territorial cooperation programme in a border area along Slovenian – Croatian border. Programme area consisted of 9 regions in Slovenia and 8 regions in Croatia. The overall programme budget comprised 55.7 M EUR. The Priority Axes 2 (Preservation and sustainable use of natural and cultural resources) and 3 (Healthy, safe and accessible border areas) were implemented through open calls. Under Priority Axis 1 (flood risk management) strategic project was directly approved by the Monitoring Committee.

7.2. Targeted use of funds on the programme level

In CP (cooperation programme) Slovenia – Croatia, targeted use of funds for priorities at the level of the programme, required a meaningful indicator, applicable and acceptable by both Slovenia and Croatia. This programme result indicator was then bound to the Natura 2000 standard data forms, the improvement of the value “conservation”. Project result indicator was the common result indicator set for Natura 2000 sites – CO23 Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status. The target value of this indicator was set at 31,000 ha for both countries, based on a proposal of external consultant preparing outlines for this CP. Here, distribution of funds was done through a call for application of projects per priority axis. In this CP 6d and 6c had a joint allocation of funds and therefore a joint call for applications. However, one project could target either 6d or 6c, not both together, which helped in targeted use of these funds. Additionally, the project application had to explain how they will contribute to the result indicator.

7.3. Administrative procedures and eligibility

- eligible partners: national, regional, and local authorities; public or private non-profit organisations with relevant scope of activities; for objective 6c only: SMEs
- cross-border partnership required, typical size of the partnership: 6 – 9 project partners
- typical project duration: 24 or 30 months
- typical project size (inv. priorities 6c and 6d, eligible costs): 800,000 to 1.5 M EUR, largest project: 2.5 M EUR
- co-financing rate: up to a maximum rate of 85 % of eligible costs
- eligible costs: staff costs, travel and subsistence costs, external assistance costs, equipment costs, costs of infrastructure and construction works, overheads.

Open call for proposals had pre-defined three cut-off dates, after which proposals were evaluated by the joint secretariat members. Evaluation took place in two phases: administrative and eligibility check (no possibility of subsequent corrections of the proposals)

and quality evaluation (strategic and operational). The proposals were finally selected by the monitoring committee consisted by representatives of national authorities for territorial cooperation programmes, relevant ministries, regional bodies and selected NGOs.

Notable is low number of selected projects in investment priority 6d (only 4 out of 38 co-financed projects), number of applications was low as well. As programme evaluation pointed out, Indicators under the investment priority 6d were quite complex and applicants found it difficult to align them with own project ideas. Contents that were to be addressed by the investment priority 6d are very specific and the number of competent organizations is smaller than for the investment priorities 6c or 11. The published summary of the methodology for calculation of indicators did not seem to be sufficient for the applicants to understand the context.

Numerous applications failed to pass administrative and eligibility check, their share was 72 % on 1st cut-off and 42 % on 2nd cut-off. Since many good project ideas failed before they were even evaluated the programme management bodies then decided to allow re-submission with certain improvements of the administrative and eligibility part, which lowered the fallout rate to 28 %.

Once the accepted projects started implementation, they entered reporting procedure. Reporting took place in six months reporting periods. It consisted of content related and financial-administrative parts. Each direct cost item was to be reported individually and backed with supporting documentation.

Monitoring of programme implementation was carried out by the programme management bodies with support from external experts. Central tool for monitoring of the programme were result and output indicators. Output indicators express direct products of the financed projects. Output indicators for investment priority 6c measure were numbers of visitors, tourist products, investments, enterprises receiving support and participants of capacity building activities. Output indicators for investment priority 6d measure the sum of surface area of habitats supported by the projects, number of practical demonstrations of measures in nature in support of biodiversity, number of studies and tools for assessing and promoting ecosystem services the projects developed and number of participants of capacity building activities.

Long term effects of the programme activities were monitored with result indicators at the end of the programme period. Result indicator for investment priority 6c was Visitors to cultural and natural heritage sites in the programme area. Result indicators for investment priority 6d was Average degree of conservation status of habitat types and species of Natura 2000 sites in programme area.

The design of the monitoring process has certain drawbacks as it is obvious from the case of indicators for projects of the investment priority 6d. Since it is difficult to differentiate between effects of the projects and effects of other factors influencing conservation statuses with one indicator only, wider evaluation would be necessary to obtain knowledge of the project effects. The scope of evaluation was defined by the programme management bodies while the evaluation itself was carried out by the external evaluator. At the time of writing results of the evaluation only evaluation of programme structures, procedures and communication was finished. The guiding question for programme impact evaluation the programme has prepared for external expert, however, do not, for example, ask to evaluate impact on selected habitat types and species.

7.4. Targeted use of funds in implementation

In three cut-off dates the 24 project proposals, targeting the investment priority 6d and thus relevant for Natura 2000 network, were prepared and received by the programme secretariat. Four applications were selected; success rate for 6d projects was 17 %, above the programme average, which was 12 %.

Four relevant projects, having significant effect on Natura 2000 network, were determined through the application process, where projects are divided and labelled according to the sector that they influence. Projects which directly contribute to maintenance and restoration of Natura 2000 habitats and species or to the integrity of Natura 2000 sites or to the coherence of the network have priority 6d, therefore only these four were selected as targeted projects.

Data for four projects, relevant for nature conservation:

- targeted area: 32,432.97 ha of habitats with a goal of attaining better conservation status (between 61 and 29,000 ha per project)
- 29 planned practical demonstrations of measures in nature in support of biodiversity
- duration of projects: three years

Table 13: Eligible expenditure allocated to the four projects relevant for nature conservation.

Project acronym	Investment priority	Total eligible expenditure allocated to the project for SLOVENIA (in EUR)	Allocated ERDF funds for SLOVENIA (in EUR)
LIKE	6d	729,044	619,687
ČIGRA	6d	269,490	229,067
Carnivora Dinarica	6d	1,333,666	1,133,616
VEZI NARAVE	6d	1,731,450	1,471,733
SUM		4,063,650	3,454,103

Short descriptions of the projects:

- LIKE - Living on the Karst Edge. The project focused on the karst edge area as a series of steep cliffs and limestone slopes where long-term interaction between man and nature has produced peculiar biological, cultural, and aesthetic values. The overall objective is to establish an effective management and monitoring mechanism of the N2000 area to reduce the pressures on biodiversity. The system of joint N2000 area management and monitoring was upgraded by citizens' science, which along with the use of drones and creating a volunteer network is one of the planned innovations. Project duration: 1.09.2017 - 29.02.2020. Project web site: [Like – Zavod RS za varstvo narave \(zrsvn-varstvonarave.si\)](http://Like – Zavod RS za varstvo narave (zrsvn-varstvonarave.si))
- ČIGRA. The goal of the project is to maintain a stable population of terns on gravel habitats along the Sava and Drava rivers and improve its conservation status in Natura 2000 sites. Project duration: 01.09.2017 – 29.02.2020. Project web site: [Očuvanje populacija čigri u porječju Save i Drave \(ČIGRA\) – HAZU](http://Očuvanje populacija čigri u porječju Save i Drave (ČIGRA) – HAZU)
- Carnivora Dinarica - Cross-border cooperation and ecosystem services in the long-term preservation of large carnivores populations in the Northern Dinarides. Carnivora

Dinarica aims to improve conservation status of large carnivores (lynx, wolf, and bear) in the Natura 2000 areas Javorniki-Snežnik, Notranjski trikotnik in Slovenia and Gorski kotar and S. Lika in Croatia. Project duration: 01.09.2018 – 28.02.2021. Project web site: [Project CARNIVORA DINARICA - Dina Pivka](#)

- VEZI NARAVE (TIES OF NATURE). The project addresses the challenge of conserving and restoring biotic diversity for future generations and raising awareness of the impact nature has on the well-being of man. The project's main objective is to ensure the durability of the conservation and restoration of target species in Natura 2000 areas of the rivers Sotla and Kolpa, Risnjak National Park, the Radensko polje area, and the Kamačnik canyon. Project duration: 1.9.2018 do 28.2.2021. Project web site: [Vezi narave](#)

7.5. Administrative procedures and eligibility

Described in chapter 7.6.

7.6. Lessons learned

Recommendations, expressed by the project partners, relate to duration of the projects; three years is not sufficient to achieve satisfactory results in target areas. Secondly, there was a problem with the definition of indicators and size of target areas – see section 13.4 *Other issues and challenges* for wider description.

Room for improvement could be identified in reporting and evaluation procedures too. Reporting and verifications of reports were mostly oriented on administrative-financial dimension, leaving content and result related aspects of project implementation in shadow. This is in part caused by lack of the expert knowledge in the programme bodies and first level control team.

Administrative-financial reporting procedure was a challenge for less experienced project partners. The need to report each cost item individually caused considerable workload. Project partners, in addition, experienced problems with cash flow. The programme has no pre-financing, and all the costs initially have to be fully covered by the project partners. Due to the nature of the reporting cycle (six months reporting period, three months recommended deadline for project reports incl. certificates of eligibility of costs, additional time for review of the reports on the side of programme bodies and actual payment of the co-financing sum) there was a wide time gap between cost occurrence and reception of the co-financing.

This time gap was often even widened with delays, occurring in the first level control in Slovenia. During the programme period 2014 – 2020 the Slovenian first level control hosted by the Government office for Development and European Cohesion Policy, experienced occasional problems with lack of personnel. Implementation of the projects may have caused considerable pressure on financial stability of certain project partners. Project partners had limited possibility to update and correct financial report upon reception of the results of the first level control – this is another point where improvements are possible.

8. INTERREG V-A SLOVENIA ITALY

8.1. Targeted use of funds on the programme level

On the programme level the topics, relevant for nature conservation, are gathered in Priority Axis 3 - *Protecting and promoting natural and cultural resources* combining investment priorities 6c, 6d and 6f. Similarly, to the Slovenia – Croatia programme allocation of funds is made on the level of the entire programme priority and not on the level of investment priorities / specific objectives. 27.3 M EUR were allocated to the programme priority 3 out of 91,6 M EUR (ERDF + co-financing).

Applicants were directly guided towards nature conservation objectives with result indicators for Programme specific objective 3.2 (PI 6d): Level of preservation of status of habitats and Level of preservation of status of species. It was necessary to place the project proposal either on specific objective 3.1 (PI 6c) or 3.2 (PI 6d). As in the CP Slovenia – Croatia, the common project result indicator CO23 was used (Surface area of habitats supported in order to attain a better conservation status), and the value was set at 6,000 ha for both countries.

8.2. Administrative procedures and eligibility

Financial rules of the Interreg SLO – ITA programme differed only in details from the rules of the Interreg SLO – CRO programme. Categories of eligible costs were the same; there were some specific differences in staff costs – e.g. level of flat rates.

Calls for proposals for Interreg SLO – ITA took place following different principles: there was not one open call with cut-off dates but number of different calls: in 2016 there was a call for standard projects without priority/specific objective restriction, targeted call for standard projects in 2019, and two strategic calls in 2018. There were two projects (with topics not directly relevant for nature conservation), planned already in the programming phase and not subject to selection through calls for proposals.

Targeted standard call in 2019 was confined only to selected specific objectives – according to achievement of indicators from performance framework and available funds per programme priority. Other calls were open for applications for all programme specific objectives (investment priorities). Principles of application selection for standard calls were, roughly speaking, the same as for Interreg SLO – CRO.

There were important differences between standard and strategic calls (and corresponding projects): strategic projects were larger in size, had larger share of public institutions in the partnerships, project topics were deemed strategic by the national authorities of both cooperating countries. More important were differences in development and selection of applications: the applicants developed topics together with the programme authorities in advance, which mean that the selected projects and their project partners were in major part already known at the time of publication of strategic calls.

Average size of standard projects: 6 project partners, 1.5 M EUR

Average size of strategic projects: 11 project partners, 3 M EUR.

8.3. Targeted use of funds in implementation

20 applications targeting IP 6d were received on all calls of proposals; three were selected (15 % success rate). Cumulative number of project proposals for all IPs is 238, out of which 55 were selected for funding (23 % success rate). Success rate was lower on standard calls (as opposed to strategic calls).

Out of five co-financed projects on investment priority 6d, four are standard projects and one is strategic project.

Table 14: Eligible expenditure allocated to the projects relevant for nature conservation.

Project acronym	Investment priority	Project type	Total eligible expenditure allocated to the project for SLOVENIA (in EUR)	Allocated ERDF funds for SLOVENIA (in EUR)
CONA	6d	standard	481,464	409,244
GREVISLIN	6d	strategic	1,500,225	1,275,191
NAT2CARE	6d	standard	512,893	435,959
ECO-SMART	6d	standard	287,950	244,757
ENGREEN	6d	standard	872,128,	741,308
TRETAMARA	6d	standard	200000	170,000
SUM			3,854,660	3,276,459

Short descriptions of the projects:

- CONA -The improvement of the ecological status of the Koren river and the Soča river mouth in the Adriatic - The project's main objective was to carry out interventions aimed at guaranteeing sustainable ecosystem services with the help of green technologies. Project duration: 01.09.17 - 31.12.20. A reduction in the wastewater emptied into in the Koren river and the Adriatic will also have a positive impact on the conservation status of habitats and species. Project web site: [CONA | Italia Slovenia \(ita-slo.eu\)](http://CONA | Italia Slovenia (ita-slo.eu))
- GREVISLIN - Green infrastructures for the conservation and improvement of the condition of habitats and protected species along the rivers. Project duration: 15.11.18 - 14.02.22. The main result of the GREVISLIN project was the long-term pilot implementation of strategic planning and development as well as protection of green infrastructure and ecosystem services and the introduction of cross-border monitoring of water status, which affected the improvement of species and habitats in Natura 2000 areas. Project web site: [GREVISLIN | Italia Slovenia \(ita-slo.eu\)](http://GREVISLIN | Italia Slovenia (ita-slo.eu))
- NAT2CARE - Engagement of citizens and concrete conservation actions in Julian Prealps Nature Park, Triglavski Narodni Park, Natural Park of the Friulian Dolomites. Project duration: 01.10.17 - 30.06.20. The project's overall objective was to improve the status and the presence of the biodiversity within the project partners' Natura 2000 areas (the Julian Prealps Nature Park, the Triglavski Narodni Park, and the Natural Park of the Friulian Dolomites) by implementing Natura 2000 habitat and species measures, by improving their integrated and cross-border management, by raising

awareness and providing training on the environment, and by increasing the promotion of ecosystem services. Project web site: [NAT2CARE | Italia Slovenia \(ita-slo.eu\)](https://natura2000.itaslo.eu)

- ECO-SMART Market of Ecosystem services for an Advanced NATURA2K Area Protection Policy. Project duration: 01.04.20 - 30.06.22. The objective is to contribute to the conservation of the biodiversity in NATURA 2000 ITA-SLO sites thanks to the development and pilot application of eco systemic services (ESS) / payment systems for eco systemic services (PES) methods for drafting adaptation plans to climate change. Project web site: [ECO-SMART | Italia Slovenia \(ita-slo.eu\)](https://eco-smart.itaslo.eu)
- ENGREEN - Strengthening green infrastructure in the cross-border cultural landscape. Project duration: 01.04.20 - 31.08.22. The main project expected result is to strengthen ecosystem management and biodiversity restoration through restoration of green infrastructure and of ecosystem services in the cross-border IT-SI area. Project web site: [ENGREEN | Italia Slovenia \(ita-slo.eu\)](https://engreen.itaslo.eu)
- TRETAMARA - Trezze, Tegnue and marine environments of the upper Adriatic: management proposals. Project duration: 03.02.20 - 28.02.22. The main project objective is to promote cross-border cooperation in order to guarantee a good state of conservation of protected species linked to green infrastructure in the cross-border IT-SI area. The project intends to bring to the joint development of green infrastructures in favor of biodiversity and citizens by integrating the concept of services for the ecosystem and the participation of interested parties in integrated management. Project web site: [TRETAMARA | Italia Slovenia \(ita-slo.eu\)](https://tretamara.itaslo.eu)

8.4. Lessons learned

Since the nature of the programme is essentially the same as that of Interreg Slovenia Croatia lessons, described at the Interreg Slovenia Croatia, apply for the programme Interreg Italy Slovenia as well. First level control is carried out by the same institution and department under very similar rules.

9. INTERREG Transnational programmes

9.1. Introduction

Slovenia also participated in five transnational programmes and in interregional programme Interreg Europe. Transnational programmes are:

- Interreg Alpine Space,
- Interreg Central Europe,
- Interreg Mediterranean,
- Interreg Danube,
- Interreg Adrion.

Programme Interreg Central Europe and Interreg Europe had no dedicated funds for investment priority 6d.

There are many similarities between cross-border and transnational programmes but also numerous important differences:

- Similarly, to the cross-border programmes the main aim of the transnational cooperation is fostering of territorial cooperation. There is no single thematic focus; investment priorities covered are largely the same as well.
- Transnational cooperation has a much larger territorial scope compared to the cross-border cooperation. Programme's areas are defined on NUTS 2 level (e.g. Lombardy or Catalonia), which means entire Slovenian territory was eligible for all five transnational programmes. Interreg Mediterranean programme, for example, included all regions on the Mediterranean coast including islands, south Portugal (which is on the Atlantic coast) and certain landlocked regions.
- Transnational projects are in average much larger compared to cross-border projects in terms of partnership and financial size.
- While thematic scope is similar to that of the cross-border programmes, the nature of the projects is nevertheless different. Cross-border projects are more concrete, put more emphasis on small scale investments and local to regional cooperation across borders. Transnational projects put more emphasis to soft actions as opposed to investments and to achieving change on strategic level. Typical goals of transnational projects are development and alignment of policies, development of common strategies and implementation measures etc. There are some differences, however, between transnational programmes as well. For example, Interreg Alpine space gave even more importance to policy development and working on strategic level and rarely finances investments (and in no case construction works). Interreg Central Europe, on the other hand, financed numerous projects with demonstrational investments, including construction works (e.g. energy retrofitting of public buildings).
- Partners are different to a certain extent: partners in transnational projects are, broadly speaking, larger institution with wider territorial and policy outreach. Municipalities and local NGOs are common in cross-border projects, but rare in transnational projects.
- Interregional programme Interreg Europe is even more pronouncedly about working on strategic level. The programme area covers the entire EU territory. It does not include investment priority 6d.
- Advantage of transnational projects for project partners is international networking and exchange of knowledge and experiences.

For general information see also opening part of the cross-border programmes section.

9.2. Targeted use of funds on the programme level

Similarly, to the cross-border programmes, transnational programmes are thematically organised in specific objectives, which correspond to the investment priorities. Investment priority 6d was financed by all five transnational programmes with exception of Interreg Central Europe. Finance allocation was defined on the level of programme priority (which means there was no predefined allocation for investment priority 6d only). Programme indicators were defined for each specific objective separately.

The selection processes for determination of which project are relevant to Natura 2000 is similar to LIFE and cross-border programmes. It is also done through the application process, where again only projects with explicit investment priority 6d for the implementation of EU nature policy and associated green infrastructure or their category of intervention is classified as 85 or 86, with a similar meaning were selected.

9.3. Administrative procedures and eligibility

Some of the programmes used single step application procedure, while others two-step procedure, where only proposals, selected in the first step, develop full proposal. Two step procedure was strongly appreciated by the applicants, and it contributed to the quality of proposals as well. On the other side, it increases work burden for programme management bodies.

Selection of project proposals took place via calls for proposals; typically, there were three or four calls per programme during the financing perspective. Average success rate of proposals was around 10 %, but it varied greatly between the calls for proposals. Financial rules were very similar among the transnational programmes and did not differ much compared to the cross-border programmes as well, since all Interreg programmes were subject to the same set of European regulations. The same goes for eligibility of applicants. There were minor differences in certain rules, for example duration of period of eligibility of costs, details on eligible cost types, maximum and minimum number of partners in the partnership.

It must be noted, however, that in practice there were stricter, unwritten, limitations. For example, Interreg Alpine Space programme stipulated minimum size of the partnership four partners from four different countries. No Alpine Space project with four partners only has been selected during the entire programming period, as such partnership would be deemed too limited by the evaluators. Actual typical size of co-financed projects was between eight and twelve project partners, or up to 15 project partners for certain transnational programmes.

9.4. Targeted use of funds in implementation

The selection process for determination of projects, relevant to Natura 2000 is similar to LIFE and cross-border programmes. It is also done through the application process, where again only projects with explicit investment priority 6d for the implementation of EU nature policy and associated green infrastructure or their category of intervention is classified as 85 or 86, with a similar meaning were selected. Nevertheless, we have identified few projects from Interreg Central Europe and Interreg Europe as being relevant for Natura 2000 and are therefore listed in Table 15. Twenty-one (21) projects fitting these criteria were selected with a total EU co-funding allocated from transnational Interreg EU programmes for their implementation in the sum of 6,2 M EUR. National co-funding of these measures is 0,9 M EUR.

Table 15: Eligible expenditure allocated to the projects relevant for nature conservation.

Programme	Project acronym	Investment priority	Total eligible expenditure allocated to the project for SLOVENIA (in EUR)	Allocated ERDF funds for SLOVENIA (in EUR)
Danube	ECO KARST		634,695	539,491
Danube	coop MDD	6d	367,800	312,630
Danube	Sava TIES	6d	150,090	127,577
Danube	MEASURES	6d	198,828	169,004
Danube	REFOCuS	6d	492,996	419,046
Alpine Space	SPARE	6d	360,971	306,825
Alpine Space	ALPBIONET2030	6d	322,520	274,142
Alpine Space	HyMoCARES	6d	221,400	188,190
Alpine Space	RockTheAlps	6d	466,970	396,925
Alpine Space	Eco-AlpsWater	6d	273,246	232,259
Alpine Space	GreenRisk4ALPs	6d	398,425	338,661
Alpine Space	ALPTREES	6d	447,702	380,547
Alpine Space	OpenSpaceAlps	6d	139,165	118,290
Alpine Space	LUIGI	6d	326,076	277,164
Adrion	IMPRECO	6d	174,794	148,575
Mediterranean	WETNET	6d	233,755	198,692
Mediterranean	PHAROS4MPAs	6d	75,400	64,090
Central Europe	3Lynx		214,060	181,951
Central Europe	BEECH POWER		386,840	328,814
Europe	BIOGOV		197,741	168,080
Europe	BID-REX		165,553	140,720
SUM			6,249,027	5,311,673

Short descriptions of the projects:

- ECO KARST- Ecosystem services of karst protected areas – driving force of local sustainable development. The ECO KARST project aims to contribute to the protection and sustainable development of karst bioregions in the Danube region based on their valued Ecosystem services. Project in numbers: 7 countries, 16 partners, 7 pilot areas, 7 protected areas, 7 local action plans, 1 common strategy for karst nature protected areas, Guide for Pro Biodiversity Business, Practical guide of mapping ecosystem services at the regional level, Network for the Conservation of Karst eco-regions. Project duration: 01.01.2017 – 30.06.2019. Project website: [ECO KARST - Interreg Danube \(interreg-danube.eu\)](http://ECO KARST - Interreg Danube (interreg-danube.eu))
- COOP MDD - Transboundary Management Programme for the planned 5-country Biosphere Reserve “Mura-Drava-Danube”. Through the coop MDD project, we are working towards harmonization of Protected Areas management and develop a joint Management Programme for the future 5-country UNESCO Biosphere Reserve "Mura-Drava-Danube". Project in numbers: 5 countries, 11 partners, 12 associated partners, 10 protected areas, 225,000 ha of Natura 2000 sites, 10 local awareness raising events, 8 local plans, 8 river schools, 1 Transboundary programme. Project duration: 01.01.2017 – 30.06.2019. Project website: [coop MDD - Interreg Danube \(interreg-danube.eu\)](http://coop MDD - Interreg Danube (interreg-danube.eu)).
- Sava TIES - Preserving Sava River Basin Habitats through Transnational Management of Invasive Alien Species. Sava TIES is regionally significant project that was implemented in all four countries of the Sava River basin: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia. The main goals are to: find an effective solution for permanent eradication of IAS, reduce habitat fragmentation, and improve the connectivity of the transnational ecological corridor. Project in numbers: 4 countries, 9 partners, 12 associated partners, Sava River with a catchment area of 97,800 km² and a length of 926 km, 7 pilot areas, 3 IAS tackled: Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), False Indigo (*Amorpha fruticosa*) and Tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*). Project

duration: 01.06.2018 – 31.05.2021. Project website: [Sava TIES - Interreg Danube \(interreg-danube.eu\)](http://Sava TIES - Interreg Danube (interreg-danube.eu)).

- MEASURES – Managing and restoring aquatic Ecological corridors for migratory fish species in the Danube River. MEASURES aims to create ecological corridors by identifying key habitats and initiating protection measures along the Danube and its main tributaries. Sturgeons and other migratory fish species act as flagship species in support of project goals. Project in numbers: 8 countries, 12 partners, 12 associated partners, 1 Strategy for ecological corridor conservation and restoration in the Danube catchment, Ex situ stocks of Danube sturgeons established, 20 experts trained in fish habitat mapping, The MEASURES Information System (MIS). Project duration: 01.06.2018 – 31.05.2021. Project website: [MEASURES - Interreg Danube \(interreg-danube.eu\)](http://MEASURES - Interreg Danube (interreg-danube.eu))
- REFOCuS - Resilient riparian forests as ecological corridors in the Mura-Drava-Danube Biosphere Reserve. Project goal is to counteract the decline of riparian forests of the Mura-Drava-Danube Biosphere Reserve by boosting their resilience. To achieve this goal, REFOCuS came up with novel silvicultural methods for forest management and conservation & increased availability of appropriate planting material to be used when natural regeneration fails. Results: Database on planting material for riparian forests, Forest health risk maps, Book - Perspectives for forest and conservation management in riparian forests, Common regional forest reproductive material transfer procedure. Project in numbers: 5 countries, 5 partners, 6 associated partners. Project duration: 01.06.2018 – 31.10.2021. Project website: [REFOCuS - Interreg Danube \(interreg-danube.eu\)](http://REFOCuS - Interreg Danube (interreg-danube.eu))
- SPARE - Strategic Planning for Alpine River Ecosystems. Project aims at contributing to a further harmonization of human use requirements and protection needs. The main aims were to increase the awareness and knowledge level of the functions and services healthy rivers provide, improve existing river management practices by integrating ecosystems services and participatory approaches and enable decision makers and river managers to select and apply strategic planning approaches according to their needs. Project in numbers: 9 partners, 6 Alpine countries, 6 pilot studies. Project duration: 16.12.2015 – 15.12.2018. Project website: Spare project
- ALPBIONET2030 - Integrative Alpine wildlife and habitat management for the next generation. Objectives: Provide standardised cross-cutting institutional procedure for Alps-wide ecological connectivity coordination and planning across all Alpine states (EUSALP perimeter), Create a new and enhanced understanding of spatial cooperation for biodiversity and ecological connectivity among the Alpine countries with SACA and transnational wildlife strategy elaboration & Define priorities and contribute to implementing existing planning criteria for ecological connectivity between the Alps and the EUSALP space. Results: JECAMI 2.0 - Alpine wide standardised software for connectivity analysis, Alpine wildlife management strategy, Alpine mediation strategy for human-nature coexistence, Strategic Alpine Connectivity Areas, Atlas-Spatial analysis and perspectives of [ecological] connectivity in the wider Alpine areas. Project in numbers: 14 partners, 6 Alpine countries, more than 25 observer institutions. Project duration: 1.11.2016 – 31.12.2019. Project website: ALPBIONET2030
- HyMoCARES - HydroMorphological assessment and management at basin scale for the Conservation of Alpine Rivers and related Ecosystem Services. By the implementation of HyMoCARES it is expected that effective operational approaches to improve ES related to river hydromorphology are integrated in the implementation process of EU legislation and in daily river management by relevant target groups. The main expected outputs are a methodological framework, toolbox on hydromorphological monitoring and assessment procedures, set of tools to support planning and design of hydromorphological management and restoration measures including, sectoral guidelines and checklists for final users. Project in numbers: 6 Alpine countries, 13 partners, 38 observers. Project duration: 01.11.2016 – 30.10.2019. Project website: Hymocares
- RockTheAlps. The overall objective of the project RockTheAlps has been to reinforce and strengthen the implementation of rockfall risk prevention policy and mitigation strategy support in

line with a sustainable forest management approach. For achieving that objective, the first harmonized rockfall natural risk and protection forest mapping for the entire Alpine Space have been provided. Project in numbers: 6 Alpine countries, 15 partners, 24 observers. Project duration: 01.11.2016 – 31.12.2019. Project website: [Rockthealps](#)

- Eco-AlpsWater - Innovative Ecological Assessment and Water Management Strategy for the Protection of Ecosystem Services in Alpine Lakes and Rivers. Project in numbers: 5 Alpine countries, 12 partners, 37 observers, 11 pilot sites (6 lakes, 5 rivers), Toolbox for the implementation of innovative monitoring approaches – protocols for eDNA monitoring in alpine waters. Project duration: 17.4.2018 – 16.10.2021. Project website: [eco-alpswater](#)
- GreenRisk4ALPs – Main objectives to overcome conflicts and resistances with new risk mitigation alternatives and science-based communication support and to implement innovative ecosystem-based risk management for natural hazards by generating recommendations adapted to local practical, socioeconomic, scientific, and political needs. Project in numbers: 6 Alpine countries, 12 partners, 15 observers, 6 pilot sites, Protective Forest definition matrix, new tools on protective forest and Natural hazard Assessment, Decision Oriented Risk Assessment. Project duration: 17.4.2018 – 16.10.2021. Project website: [greenrisk4alps](#)
- ALPTREES - Sustainable use and management of non-native trees in the alpine region. The objective is to provide a transnational strategy for a Decision Support System on responsible use and management of non-native tree species in the Alpine Space. The project fits within the context of national and regional site-derived policy aiming to protect and enhance biodiversity to ensure ecological connectivity and cultural resources while maintaining a high level of resilience and ecosystem services across the Alpine space. Project in numbers: 5 Alpine countries, 12 partners. Project duration: 1.10.2019 – 30.6.2022. Project website: [ALPTREES](#)
- OpenSpaceAlps - Sustainable development of alpine open spaces by enhancing spatial planning governance. Project aim is to foster sustainable development of Alpine Space by maintaining open spaces as part of alpine Green Infrastructure through an interlinked, multi-level transnational spatial governance considering integration of ecosystems functions and needs into policies. Project in numbers: 6 Alpine countries, 6 partners, 17 observers, Project duration: 1.10.2019 – 30.06.2022. Project website: [OpenSpaceAlps](#)
- LUIGI - Linking Urban and Inner-Alpine Green Infrastructure - Multifunctional Ecosystem Services for more liveable territories. The project aims to recognise and valorise the joint benefits deriving from green infrastructure network (orchards, forests, rivers, green paths) between mountain/rural and urban areas as well as their potential for sustainable economic development, based on natural capital and ecosystem services that participate in assuring higher quality of life & better urban environments to people living in urban centres. Project in numbers: 6 Alpine countries, 14 partners, 26 observers, 10 pilot sites, Project duration: 1.10.2019 – 30.06.2022. Project website: [LUIGI](#)
- IMPRECO - Common strategies and best practices to IMProve the transnational PRotection of ECOsystem integrity and services. Objective: Enhance the capacity in transnationally tackling environmental vulnerability, fragmentation, and the safeguarding of ecosystem services in the Adriatic-Ionian area. IMPRECO is a transnational network of protected areas and local communities pursuing one common goal: safeguarding the capacity of natural ecosystems to provide the services that are fundamental for the well-being, security, and prosperity of the Adriatic Ionian Region. Project in numbers: 5 countries, 7 partners. Project duration: 1.1.2018 – 31.12.2020. Project website: [IMPRECO \(adriointerreg.eu\)](#)
- WETNET- – Coordinated management and networking of Mediterranean wetlands. The project aims at ensuring higher coordination between different levels of spatial planning and authorities in charge for wetland management, whilst limiting conflicts between conservation issues and economic activities. By defining common priorities for MED wetland conservation, WETNET builds a common territorial strategy for their integrated management. Project in numbers: 6

countries, 10 partners, 9 pilot areas, 9 protected areas. Project duration: 1.11.2016 – 30.4.2019.
Project website: [WETNET \(interreg-med.eu\)](http://WETNET.interreg-med.eu)

- PHAROS4MPAs - Blue economy and marine Conservation: safeguarding Mediterranean MPAs to achieve Good Environmental Status. Capitalizing on existing EU projects and other results, PHAROS4MPAs conceives and delivers an integrated framework for recommendations on the necessary practical collaboration between MPAs and the maritime sectors targeted by the project. Results: online decision support tool. Project in numbers: 10 countries, 15 partners, 9 associated partners, 8 economic sectors. Project duration: 1.2.2017 – 1.8.2018. Project website: [PHAROS4MPAs \(interreg-med.eu\)](http://PHAROS4MPAs.interreg-med.eu)
- 3Lynx - Population based (transnational) monitoring, management and stakeholder involvement for the Eurasian Lynx affecting 3 Lynx Populations. The project helped to improve lynx conservation capacities of responsible stakeholders through experience, data and tool sharing and by implementing a harmonised lynx monitoring at population level. The project also strived to actively involve key stakeholders, namely hunters and foresters, into lynx conservation issues. Project in numbers: 5 countries, 11 partners, 10 outputs. Project duration: 1.7.2017 – 30.9.2020. Project website: [3Lynx - A transboundary project - Interreg \(interreg-central.eu\)](http://3Lynx - A transboundary project - Interreg.interreg-central.eu)
- BEECH POWER - World Heritage BEECH Forests: emPOWERing and catalyzing an ecosystem-based Sustainable Development. The BEECH POWER project aims to improve the management quality and effectiveness of this site to safeguard the ecosystem integrity of the single parts by improving capacities and active participation of relevant stakeholders. Project in numbers: 5 countries, 7 partners, 15 outputs. Project duration: 1.4.2019 – 31.3.2022. Project website: [BEECH POWER - Interreg \(interreg-central.eu\)](http://BEECH POWER - Interreg.interreg-central.eu)
- BIOGOV - Celebrating Biodiversity Governance (BioGov) is about the improvement of natural and cultural heritage policies. We want to reach our goal through participatory governance, by way of stakeholder cooperation. Project in numbers: 8 countries, 9 partners. Project duration: 1.6.2018 – 31.5.2022. Project website: BIOGOV | Interreg Europe
- BID-REX - From Biodiversity Data to Decisions: enhancing natural value through improved regional development policies. BID-REX aims to enhance natural value preservation through improved regional development policies by creating/reinforcing the link between relevant biodiversity data and conservation decision-making processes. More specifically, it aims to facilitate the use of biodiversity information and increase the impact of ERDF allocation in the preservation of the European natural heritage by providing decision-making processes with appropriate biodiversity information. Project in numbers: 6 countries, 9 partners. Project duration: 1.4.2016 – 31.4.2021. Project website: BID-REX | Interreg Europe

9.5. Administrative procedures and eligibility

Reporting procedures were basically the same as those described at Interreg Slovenia Croatia section, since transnational and interregional programmes were subject to the same set of European regulations and national rules on reporting. First level control was performed by the same institution and department as well, which means project partners encountered exactly the same situation: full payment of costs in advance; reporting process, which requires substantial workload; delays, occurring at the first level control. In addition to that, common problem was also quality of financial reports, provided by the project partners – this occurred often in the first years of the programme’s implementation. Programmes offered possibility of reporting staff costs as flat rate – this greatly reduces workload for reporting staff costs. However, flat rates were so low, (max 20 %, depending on the programme) that virtually all project partners opted for reporting staff costs as real costs. Common problem, encountered by the institutions which had employees, working on several projects simultaneously, was

combining staff costs financing from different projects, whenever they used different methods of staff costs reporting for these projects.

9.6. Lessons learned

We can identify room for improvements in these areas:

- Two step application selection procedures could be used for all Interreg programmes.
- Project proposal selection process: greater use of external experts as evaluators would increase the quality of evaluations and selected projects. Some programmes use exclusively members of the joint technical secretariats as evaluators.
- Financial reporting should be simplified. Higher flat rates for staff costs and lump sums per output type could be considered
- On the other hand, more weight should be given to quality checks of the project outputs. Again, use of external experts would be beneficial. Currently, first level control mostly does formal and legal control. Project officers, working in joint secretariats are rarely experts on the topics they cover as well.
- Finally, programme evaluations should take longer time span in account. Since transnational programmes are about policy and strategic development, the full effects of the projects and programmes are visible only after the projects finish, sometimes years later. Programme evaluations were all carried out during the programming period and could not take long term effects into account.

10. LIFE Programme

10.1. Introduction

The LIFE (“L’Instrument Financier pour l’Environnement”) is a programme launched by the European Commission in 1992 dedicated exclusively to measures in the fields of environmental protection, nature conservation and climate change mitigation and adaptation. The European Commission manages the LIFE programme through its services Directorate-General for Environment and Directorate-General for Climate Action, and its Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME).

LIFE programme is defined by two key documents:

- the **LIFE Regulation**¹ which sets the main framework and objectives of the programme. In this period, it established the Environment and Climate Action sub-programme. The Sub-programme for Environment covers priority areas Environment and Resource Efficiency, Nature and Biodiversity, and Environmental Governance and Information.

¹ http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.L_.2013.347.01.0185.01.ENG

- the **LIFE Multiannual Work Program** (MAWP) which sets details and the current funding priorities. It clarifies budgets by specifying what kind of projects can receive support within the sub-programmes for environment and climate action. Within funding period 2014–2020 two LIFE multiannual work programmes were adopted (2014-2017², 2018-2020³).

LIFE is a comparatively small EU financing programme. In the funding period 2014-2020 LIFE has a budget of 3.4 billion EUR, which accounts for less than 1 % of the EU budget.

There were 4 different type of action grants for projects possible in period 2014-2020:

- Traditional projects: best practice, innovation, and demonstration projects, as well as dissemination/information projects and governance projects.
- Integrated projects: projects aiming at the implementation on a large territorial scale plans and strategies required by EU legislation in the areas of nature, water, waste, air.
- Technical assistance: projects providing financial support to help applicants prepare integrated projects.
- Preparatory projects: projects identified by the Commission to support specific needs for the implementation and development of EU environmental or climate policy and legislation.
- Capacity building projects: financial support to the activities required to build the capacity of Member States with a view to enabling their more effective participation in LIFE.

The LIFE programme is one of the main sources of EU funding for implementing the Birds and Habitats Directives and halting biodiversity loss. LIFE co-funds projects that work to conserve the species and habitats listed in the annexes of both nature Directives, across the entire Natura 2000 network, including marine protected areas. It also supports activities targeting threatened species or habitats that are not included in the annexes of the Habitats Directive but have a status of 'endangered' or worse in the IUCN's European Red Lists of species and habitats. Since it was launched in 1992, LIFE has co-financed over 1,700 nature and biodiversity projects.

10.2. Targeted use of funds on the programme level

Targeted use of funds for Natura 2000 in LIFE programme is guided by the Commission (EASME) through allocations set by Regulation limitations, through a sophisticated Selection procedure, encouraged through a higher co-financing rate for Nature projects and by encouraging Member States to apply for integrated life projects.

LIFE Regulation includes limitations that allocate (i) 75 % of the LIFE budget to Environment sub-programme, (ii) at least 81 % of resources to projects (via action grants or financial instruments); (iii) at least 55 % of LIFE Environment sub-programme budget in period 2014-

² https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:JOL_2014_116_R_0001

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?qid=1518531793134&uri=CELEX:32018D0210>

2018 and 65 % in period 2018-2020 to projects supporting the conservation of nature and biodiversity; this include also projects under information and governance targeting nature or biodiversity; (iv) 30 % ceiling of the LIFE budget dedicated to projects (i.e. 30 % of the 81 %) for Integrated Projects.

The LIFE Regulation sets eligibility and the awards selection criteria as well as a basis for selecting projects. It establishes specific objectives and thematic priorities for the priority area Nature and Biodiversity and area Environmental Governance and Information. Additionally, MAWP lists project topics for implementing the thematic priorities, focussing efforts on concrete environmental policy priorities and areas for action under the each of the areas in sub-programme Environment. Methodology for Selection pushes projects financed by LIFE to comply with LIFE Regulation and satisfy the criteria outlined in the "Guide for the evaluation of LIFE project proposals" published each year with the call.

- Projects must be of EU interest, making a significant contribution to the achievement of the general objective of LIFE,
- They must be technically and financially coherent and feasible and provide value for money,
- Where possible, projects financed by LIFE should promote synergies between different priorities under the sixth Environmental Action Programme and integration.

Actions must take place within the territory of the member states of the European Union. Actions outside the EU are possible if necessary, to achieve EU environmental/climate objectives; and to ensure the effectiveness of interventions carried out in the member states.

The Commission aims to ensure a sound geographic distribution of projects. For the duration of the first multiannual work programme (2014-2017) indicative national allocations in line with the principles of solidarity and responsibility sharing based on population and area of Natura 2000 sites were applicable to traditional LIFE projects under the ENV sub-programme. From 2018 - within the second multiannual work programme (2018-2020) national allocations were phased out and selection is only merit based. Where indicative national allocations are not applicable, projects shall be selected exclusively based on merit.

Most LIFE projects are entitled to at least 55 % v co-financing from EU, but traditional, integrated, preparatory projects and technical assistance projects in LIFE Nature and Biodiversity priority area are entitled to 60 % co-financing or up to 75 % for projects targeting priority habitats & species.

In each EU country there is a national contact point for the LIFE programme. They help with application and organise information/networking events and proposal writing workshops. They can also support in communicating and disseminating project results. The national contact point for Slovenia is the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning. In LIFE 2014 call Ministry successfully gained a LIFE Capacity Building project that has made efforts to increase the knowledge on the preparation and management of projects and, accordingly number of successful LIFE projects in Slovenia increased. In the past, on average, 2 projects were approved per year, while during the LIFE project Capacity Building, 4 projects were approved per year. In general, the interest in the LIFE programme has increased since the project itself and its overall image have become recognizable to the wider range of people.

10.3. Administrative procedures and eligibility

The Commission has delegated the implementation of many components of the LIFE programme to the Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME). External selection, monitoring and communication teams provide assistance to the Commission and EASME. The European Investment Bank manages two financial instruments which were introduced under the LIFE 2014-20 regulations: The Natural Capital Financing Facility (NCFF) and Private Finance for Energy Efficiency (PF4EE) instrument.

LIFE is open to public or private bodies or institutions registered in the European Union. Project proposals can either be submitted by a single beneficiary or by a partnership which includes a coordinating beneficiary and one or several associated beneficiaries. They can be either national or transnational.

Following the annual call for proposals, applicants to the programme submit their proposals directly to EASME depending on type of action grand either in paper or through e-proposal - Commissions on-line creation and submission web application. Guidelines for applicants are published annually with the call for proposals.

For traditional projects in the environment sub-programme a two-stage application procedure was introduced with 2019 call. First a concept note of 10 pages is submitted. If a concept proposal meets the eligibility criteria beneficiaries are invited to submit the full project proposal based on the feedback from the LIFE programme.

EASME is responsible for the evaluation procedure. It will verify the admissibility, exclusion and eligibility, the selection and the award criteria and propose a list of project proposals for co-financing according to the criteria outlined in the "Guide for the evaluation of LIFE project proposals" which is published each year with the call. Projects are approved following a "bottom-up" approach, which gives applicants the decision which eligible actions shall be implemented and financed.

10.4. Targeted use of funds in implementation

Slovenia has been involved in the LIFE Programme since 2000 and joined the programme before gaining full EU membership. Since then LIFE projects have been the most important mechanism of building up management capacity of key stakeholders of Natura 2000, for direct conservation measures and raising awareness and level of information about Natura 2000.

Slovenian beneficiaries have in LIFE calls 2014-2019 successfully applied eleven (11) traditional LIFE Nature and Biodiversity projects (NAT), five (5) traditional LIFE information and governance projects (GIE), one (1) preparatory LIFE project (PRE) and one (1) Integrated LIFE project with measures for improving conservation state of Natura 2000 species and habitat types. Out of sixteen (16) traditional LIFE projects (GIE & NAT) ten (10) are with Slovenian Coordinating beneficiary (from these 4 with transnational partners) and six (6) projects are with Slovenian associated beneficiaries in transnational projects (Table 16).

Table 16: List of traditional LIFE projects from LIFE calls 2014-2020 in progress in Slovenia

* Slovenian LIFE projects with international partners

** International LIFE projects with Slovenian partners

Project no.	Project title	Project duration	Total value of the project / Value of SI partners for international projects	Total EC contribution /EC contribution to SI partners for international projects	No. of Natura 2000 HT Species targeted in Slovenia	No. of Natura 2000 HT targeted in Slovenia	No. of Natura 2000 sites targeted in Slovenia
LIFE14 NAT/SI/000 005	LIFE TO GRASSLANDS - LIFE conservation and management of dry grasslands in Eastern Slovenia	2015 - 2020	3,898,582 €	2,923,936 €		2 (HT 6230 & HT 6210)	6
LIFE15 GIE/SI/000 770	LIFE ARTEMIS - Awareness Raising, Training and Measures on Invasive alien Species in forests	2016 - 2020	1,091,953 €	647,701€			
LIFE15 NAT/HR/00 0997	**LIFE EUROTURTLES - Collective actions for improving the conservation status of the EU Sea Turtle Populations**	2016 - 2021	5,116,167 €/ 780,943 €	3,793,167 € / 583,010 €	2 (<i>Caretta caretta</i> , <i>Chelonia mydas</i>)		
LIFE16 GIE/SI/000 711	LIFE NATURAVIVA - Biodiversity- Art of LIFE	2017 - 2022	2.482.242 €	1.473.385 €			
LIFE16 NAT/IT/000 816	**ROC-POP-LIFE - Promoting biodiversity enhancement by Restoration Of Cystoseira POPulations	2017 - 2020	912,697 €/ 37,206 €	543,597 € / 22,322 € /		1 (Reefs)	1
LIFE16 NAT/SI/000 634	*LIFE Lynx	2017 - 2024	6,829,377 €/ 4,467,225 €	4,081,404 € / 2,600,716 €	1 (<i>Lyfe linx</i>)		7
LIFE16 NA T/SI/00064 4	*LIFE for LASCA - LIFE SAVING LASCA Urgent measure to conserve nearly extinct species <i>Protochondrostoma genei</i>	2017 - 2021	2,223,788 € / 1,933,228 €	1,331,160 € / 1,161,160 €	1 (<i>Protochon drostoma genei</i>)		1
LIFE16 NA T/SI/00070 8	LIFE STRŽEN - Improvement of Natura 2000 statuses with renaturation of Stržen's riverbed on intermittent Cerknica Lake	2017 - 2022	3,863,248 €	2,863,212 €	1 (<i>Botaurus stellaris</i>)	1 (HT 3180 Turlough)	2
LIFE18 GIE/IT/000 755	LIFE 4 POLLINATORS - Involving people to protect wild bees and other pollinators in the Mediterranean**	2019 - 2023	2,485,965 € / data not available	1,365,747 € / 108,865 €	Invertebrates		
LIFE18 NAT/IT/000 972	LIFE WOLFALPS EU - Coordinated actions to improve wolf-human coexistence at the alpine population level**	2019 - 2024	11,939,693 € / data not available	7,029,000 € / 973,397 €	1 (<i>Canis lupus</i>)		
LIFE18 NAT/SI/000 711	LIFE AMPHICON - AMPHIBIAN CONSERVATION and habitat restoration*	2019 - 2026	8,079,824 € / 6,980,895 €	4,840,514 € / 4,154,157 €	3 (<i>Bombina bombina</i> , <i>Bombina variegata</i> <i>Triturus carnifex</i>) + other amphibians		4

LIFE19 GIE/SI/000 161	LIFE NARCIS - NATuRe Conservation Information System	2021 - 2024	3,695,411 €	1,971,050 €			
LIFE19 GIE/SI/001 111	LIFE BEAVER - LIFE with the beaver, wetlands, and climate change*	2020 - 2024	913,861 € / 637,262 €	491,647€ / 343,460 €	1 (Castor fiber)		6
LIFE20 NAT/IT/001 122	LIFE PINNA - Conservation and re-stocking of the Pinna nobilis in the western Mediterranean and Adriatic sea**	2021 - 2025	2,965,885 €/ data not available	1,753,700 €/ data not available	1 (Pinna nobilis)		
LIFE20 NAT/IT/001 468	LIFE SEEDFORCE - Using SEED banks to restore and reinFORCE the endangered native plants of Italy**	2021 - 2026	7,790,685 €/ data not available	4,671,420 €/ data not available			
LIFE20 NAT/SI/000 253	LIFE for Seeds - Conserving grassland habitats through a new seed bank	2021 - 2026	5,351,723€	4,013,790 €		3	21
LIFE20 PRE/BE/00 011	LIFE PROGNOSSES - PRotection of Old Growth Forests in Europe: Natural heritage, Outline, Synthesis and Ecosystem Services**	2021 - 2024	1,382,855 €/ data not available	794,471 € / data not available			
Together Total value /SI beneficiaries value *at least – some data were not available			70,110,095 € / *36,302,180 €	39,256,740 € / *23,840,162 €	11 species directly targeted	4 HT directly targeted	40 Natura areas

One (1) integrated project on enhanced implementation of Natura 2000 management programme LIFE17 IPE/SI/000011 - LIFE-IP NATURA.SI was approved and started with implementation in September 2018.

Table 17: Current allocation to measures relevant for Natura 2000 in LIFE programme.

Type of project or financing instrument	Current allocation to measures relevant for Natura 2000 in Slovenia	
	EU*	National**
Traditional projects	23,8	12,5
Integrated projects	10,2	6,8
Subtotal	34	19,3 M €
TOTAL		53,3 M €

* In transnational projects only allocation to Slovenian beneficiaries was considered.

**Beneficiaries own contribution and national co-financing was considered.

In the total costs of implementation of LIFE project in Slovenia amount to 52,3 M EUR, from which 34 M EUR its co-financing is contributed by EU and the rest (ap. 36 %) is national co-funding provided by beneficiaries with their own contribution and by the Ministry of Environment and Spatial planning through national co-financing scheme. Average financial size of traditional projects is 4,5 M EUR, out of which 2,9 M EUR is EU co-financing. Implementation of majority of the projects will take place five years; shortest project duration is three years; longest duration is seven years. LIFE projects are usually partnership projects.

10.5. Administrative procedures and eligibility

Reporting schedule for traditional LIFE projects is as follows: progress report at least every 18 months. Financial reporting: for a five-year long project there is mid-term report and final report. There is 7 % overheads rate, real costs need to be reported by accounting each cost item individually. There are three payments of co-financing during the project implementation (again for a five-year long project): prepayment and payments after confirmation of mid-term and final report. LIFE programme does not have externalised or centralised first level control; first check of eligibility of costs is done by the project lead partner. Project partners usually report costs to the lead partner every three months. Part or all the project's costs are audited by an auditor, hired by the lead partner. EASME controls the costs only after project end. Projects supported are during implementation by the monitoring team, hired and appointed by the EASME.

10.6. Lessons learned

The project partners generally praised the programme and its procedures. Application rules and process are clear. Project duration is a strong positive point of LIFE projects. While, for example, duration of the Interreg projects is fixed at three years, LIFE project may vary in their duration and are long enough to achieve actual results in nature.

Beneficiaries identified few possible improvements:

- project beneficiaries receive final information on eligibility of their costs and quality of their financial reports only after the end of the project. Financial check by the lead partner and audit do not give the definitive information and results of the final financial control, made by EASME can differ from that of lead partner's financial control and audit.
- there are no fixed eligibility and administrative rules even for project partners from the same country. The programme rules for project implementation are sometimes not clear; the problem is often interpretation of programme rules in the context of the national legislation. Monitoring teams of the projects may give contradictory answers to the same questions, so it happens that two projects, carried out by the same institutions simultaneously, are reported in different ways. This situation causes a lot of uncertainty and loss of time.

11. HORIZON 2020

11.1. Introduction

The Horizon 2020 Programme is the main EU funding instrument for research and innovation across all economic sectors. With an allocation of almost 77 billion EUR in the MFF 2014-2020 it has been designed to support initiatives aimed at securing Europe's global competitiveness in line with Europe 2020 Strategy – namely Innovation Union. It is a complex

programme, covering wide range of topics and consisting of different types of actions, which finance wide range of possible activities, from pure research to researcher mobility. While the predecessor programme of Horizon 2020, Framework Programme 7, had strong orientation to funding research, the focus of Horizon 2020 is both on research and innovation support. Horizon 2020 does not belong to the most important and relevant sources of funding for Natura 2000 related activities or nature conservation in general.

11.2. Targeted use of funds on the programme level

In terms of strategic priorities, the Programme is structured in three pillars and specific objectives. Some relevance to nature conservation is in two out of the seven societal challenges that are establishing Pillar 3, namely:

- Societal challenge 2 – Food security, sustainable agriculture and forestry, marine/maritime/ Inland water research and the bioeconomy,
- Societal challenge 5 – Climate action, environment, resource efficiency & raw materials.

For each of the societal challenges, dedicated Work Programmes are published defining the thematic priorities and topics opened to calls for proposals.

11.3. Administrative procedures and eligibility

Financial support is provided according to the following three types of actions and corresponding grants which apply for each of the societal challenges:

Table 18: Types of actions and corresponding grants for each of the societal challenges.

Type of actions	Main focus	Typical partnership	Co-funding rate
Research and Innovation actions (RIA)	Generating new knowledge or new technology	Typically led by academia	100 % of eligible direct costs
Innovation actions (IA)	Closer – to – market activities, generating new or improved products, processes, services and/ or business models	Possibly led by academia or private companies, with stronger involvement of private companies, but also not-for-profit bodies	70 % to 100 % of eligible direct costs

Coordination and support actions (CSA)	Coordination and networking of research and innovation projects, programmes and policies (research or innovation only not possible).	Often involve private sector, but also not-for-profit bodies	100 % of eligible direct costs
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Indirect eligible costs (e.g., administration, communication and infrastructure costs and office supplies) are reimbursed with a 25 % flat rate of the direct eligible costs.

Partnership structure plays an important role for competitiveness of the project proposals. Geographical distribution of the partners is of relevance; many experienced project partners think that a successful partnership has to include institutions from the EU-15 (so called old member states).

Here we provide, as an example and illustration, basic data on one of the Horizon 2020 calls:

- Call name: SC5-07-2015 More effective ecosystem restoration
- Type of action: Research and innovation actions
- Specific Challenge: Ecosystem restoration is frequently an expensive and lengthy process, but it is capable of delivering extensive benefits in a cost-effective manner, while also conserving and enhancing Europe’s natural capital. The restoration sector has accumulated expertise, but knowledge, technologies and capacity will need to grow rapidly and be shared, if the full potential offered by restoration is to be achieved.
- Scope: Proposals were developed for conceptually coherent ecosystem types, tools, approaches, methodologies, and methods to assess and predict the effectiveness relative to their stated objectives of environmental restoration measures (including both cost-effectiveness and benefits in relation to biodiversity and ecosystem services). They engaged the whole restoration community (business, academia, including social sciences and humanities, public administrations, and civil society) in a major initiative to exchange experiences, identify strengths, weaknesses and best practices, encourage new techniques and technologies, and share information, knowledge and know-how in order to promote effective and sustainable restoration activities across the EU.
- Amount of funding: 5-7 M EUR
- Expected impact: Improved design of restoration/rehabilitation measures and incentives; more effective integration of the ‘restoration agenda’ into the delivery of major policy objectives related to growth, job creation, urban and rural development, resilience to climate change, conservation and enhancement of natural capital. Achieving innovative policy mechanisms that can facilitate restoration. Contribute to advances in green infrastructure, in line with EU 2020 Biodiversity Strategy.

11.4. Implementation and lessons learned

According to the data, received from the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, there were five projects with Slovenian project partners in the programme period 2014 – 2020, that touched the topic of biodiversity. None of these projects, however, directly dealt with Natura 2000. Only one of these projects was Research and innovation action (RIA); others were either ERA-NET or CSA (Coordination and support action) projects – which means they primarily dealt with networking and common planning of research activities.

12. EEA AND NORWAY GRANTS

12.1. Introduction

EEA and Norway Grants are financial instruments based on the cooperation between Slovenia and three donor countries: Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The projects, financed by this EEA and Norway grants are shorter, less complex and financially smaller; however, basic principles of project preparation and implementation, including reporting, are similar to those of much larger programmes. EEA and Norway grants are therefore appropriate for institutions with fewer experiences in EU and related funding.

2.8 billion EUR has been made available in the 2014–2021 funding period. The EEA Grants (1.5 M EUR) are jointly financed by all three donors and available in all 15 countries. The Norway Grants (1.3 M EUR) are financed solely by Norway and available in the 13 countries that joined the EU after 2003. During this period, Slovenia is entitled to EUR 37.7 M EUR, of which 19.9 M EUR comes from the EEA Grants and 17.8 M EUR from the Norway Grants.

EEA and Norway Grants programme are divided in two ways:

- thematically into priority sectors and programmes,
- organisationally into five programmes and funds.

Programmes and funds are run by different organisations, also called programme operators. The five programmes/funds and their operators are:

- Technical Assistance; Operator: Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy (GODC);
- Education, Scholarships, Apprenticeship and Youth Entrepreneurship; Programme Operator: Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy, with the small grant scheme Scheme for Mobility and Small Partnerships, operated by: Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes (CMEPIUS);
- Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation; Programme Operator: Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy;
- Fund for Bilateral Relations; Operator: Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy;

- Active Citizens Fund; Fund Operator: CNVOS – Centre for Information Service, Cooperation and Development of NGOs, in consortium with Institute PIP – Legal and Information Centre Maribor, and Society for the Advancement of Voluntary Work Novo mesto – DRPD Novo mesto acting as Fund Operator.

Social Dialogue – Global Fund for Decent Work and Tripartite Dialogue (Programme Social Dialogue – Decent Work) is implemented by Innovation Norway on behalf of the Donor States. Relevant for the nature conservation topics is the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation programme.

The five thematic priority sectors sub-divided into 23 programme areas funded in the period 2014–2021 reflect the priorities set out in the Europe 2020 strategy and the EU 11 cohesion policy objectives. They aim at contributing to growth and jobs, tackling climate change and energy dependence, and reducing poverty and social exclusion. They also promote bilateral and international cooperation.

Priority sectors in the period 2014–2021 are:

- Innovation, Research, Education and Competitiveness
- Social Inclusion, Youth Employment and Poverty Reduction
- Environment, Energy, Climate Change and Low Carbon Economy
- Culture, Civil Society, Good Governance, and Fundamental Rights and Freedoms
- Justice and Home Affairs

The donor countries conclude a Memorandum of Understanding with each beneficiary country. The Memorandums specify the programme areas to be funded in each beneficiary country. The aim is to tailor the support from the EEA and Norway Grants to each country on the basis of its needs.

12.2. Targeted use of funds on the programme level

Priority sector Environment, Energy, Climate Change and Low Carbon Economy is further divided into three programme areas, one of them being dedicated to environment and ecosystems (programme area 11). Among supported measures of programme area 11, suggested by the programme document *Priority sectors and programme areas* (the so-called Blue Book) are:

- Implementation of marine, inland water and terrestrial management plans and targets
- Development and implementation of action plans on threatened species and habitats and/or invasive alien species
- Mapping and monitoring of the ecological status

The topics, covered by the programme area 11, are part of the abovementioned Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation. The programme has its own programme documents, like the Concept Note and Programme Agreement.

The programme documents, defining available funds to different topics, together with indicators, are programme agreements. The Programme Agreements for the programme

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation earmarks 3 M EUR (eligible costs) or 2,250,000 EUR (grant) for Outcome 4 - Improved management of ecosystems under climate change pressure, which covers the topic of the programme area 11. Projects need to focus on one outcome only, which means, these three million Euros are available exclusively for nature conservation relevant projects. Co-financing rate will be up to 90 % of eligible costs.

12.3. Implementation and lessons learned

Peculiarity of the EEA and Norway Grants is very late publication of calls for proposals. The most important (and the only relevant for nature conservation) call of the programme period 2009 – 2014 was the common call for both programmes. *Call for proposals to co-finance projects under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism Programme 2009-2014 and the EEA Financial Mechanism Programme 2009-2014* was published in December 2013. The situation in the current programming period (2014 – 2021) was similar. This programming period will actually run until mid-2024. This timing of call publication is very important for applicants: the calls happen in the period between two EU financial perspectives, which is characterised with low number of calls for proposals (dry EU money season).

Call for proposals for co-financing of projects under the programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation for the programme period 2014–2021 was published in May 2021 with a deadline for submitting applications till 30 September 2021. Results of the Call were published in May 2022. Within the four outcomes 25 projects applied, 13 projects were selected for co-financing, 6 projects were put on reserve lists and 6 projects were rejected.

The programme favours bilateral partnerships, which include partners from Slovenia and one donor country. Partnerships should preferably be heterogeneous, made of public and private institutions, NGOs and research institutions.

In the programme period 2009 – 2014 there were four nature conservation projects, running from 2015 to 2016 or 2017 (Table 19).

Table 19: List of four nature conservation projects from call 2009-2014 (Programme Area: Biodiversity and ecosystem services & General objective: Increased capacity to manage and monitor Natura 2000 sites effectively) implemented Slovenia

Project title	Number of Natura 2000 species & habitat types targeted	Number of area restored (ha)	Project value (in EUR)	Amount of co-financing (in EUR)
SUPPORT	4 ht / 5 species		606,707	576,372
LJUBA	4 ht / 6 species	220	554,274	526,006
Goričko meadows	3 ht / 7 species	60	280,466	266,443
GoForMura	3 ht/		678,104	644,199
Together			2,119,551	2,013,020

Basic administrative data:

- number of project partners: 4 or 5 per project
- average project budget: 530,000 EUR
- average co-financing: 503,000 EUR
- co-financing rate: 95 % (of which 85 % programme grant rate, 10 % national co-financing rate)
- joint budget of the four nature conservation projects: 2, 2 M EUR

Short descriptions of the projects:

- SUPORT – Sustainable Pohorje management. Project goal to find sustainable development strategies for Pohorje that will ensure the protection of valuable natural areas and outdoor leisure activities. Project in numbers: 5 partners, 12 municipality areas, 2 Natura sites (SAC & SPA Pohorje), implementing protective measures in the field for 4 Natura 2000 habitat types and habitats for 5 animal species, obtained data on 5 species whose conservation status is unknown, increase the number of stakeholders accepting the implementation of the Natura 2000 Management Programme. Project duration: 3.2.2015 – 30.04.2016. Project website: [Project Support | Projekt Pohorka \(projektipohorja.si\)](#)
- LJUBA – People for Marsh - Biodiversity Conservation at the Ljubljana Marsh. The purpose of the project was to improve living conditions of three Natura 2000 qualifying habitat types of Ljubljana Marsh: purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), extensive meadows and lowland bog, and four Natura 2000 qualifying species: Fen orchid (*Liparis loeselii*) and butterflies The False Ringlet (*Coenonympha oedippus*), The Scarce Large Blue (*Maculinea teleius*) and The Marsh Fritillary (*Euphydryas aurinia*). Project in numbers: 4 partners, 1 protected area, 2 Natura sites (SAC & SPA Ljubljansko barje), management improved on 220 hectares of wet grassland and marshes and of habitat for 6 target species, obtained data on 3 species, whose conservation status is unknown and increased number of stakeholders, who are willing to consent to the implementation of Natura 2000 programme, to 150, Integrated management plan for 3 farms of the Ljubljana Marsh. Project duration: 3.2.2015 – 30.04.2016. Project website: [The project LJUBA - People for Moor](#)
- Goričko meadows – Efficient management of extensive meadows at Natura 2000 site Goričko. The aim of the project is to improve management of three Natura 2000 grassland habitat types, the European scops owl and three grassland butterfly species. Project in numbers: 5 partners, 1 protected area, 2 Natura sites (SAC & SPA Goričko), 60 hectares (320 plots) of abandoned overgrown meadows were cut down and non-native invasive species and wood vegetation removed. Conservation status of 4 target species of birds (hoopoe, rush, warblers, quail and brown shrike), 3 target species of butterfly (dusky large blue and scarce large blue, marsh fritillary) and 3 of grassland habitat types improved; 10 new agricultural holdings and 20 ha of new meadows included in the nature conservation-oriented measures of KOPOP 2015-2020. Project duration: 1.3.2015 – 30.04.2016. Project website: [Gorički travniki - Krajski park Goričko \(park-goricko.org\)](#)
- GoForMura - Governance of forest habitat types and species in the selected Natura 2000 sites alongside Mura. The aim of the project is to analyse factors affecting conditions of forest habitat types, selected amphibians (*Bombina bombina*, *Triturus carnifex*, *Triturus dobrogicus*), beetles (*Carabus variolosus*, *Graphoderus bilineatu*, *Cucujus cinnaberinus*, *Lucanus cervus*, *Cerambyx cerdo*), beaver, and otter on several locations along Mura River, to prepare management plans for test areas Murska Šuma and Gornja Bistrica on the basis of findings and to carry out protective measures for them. Monitoring of 5 bird species (*Dryocopus martius*, *Picus canus*, *Ciconia nigra*, *Pernis apivorus* & *Remiz pendulinus*) in unknown condition was performed and

monitoring of measures was established. Project in numbers: 4 partners, 2 Natura sites (SAC & SPA Mura), 2 pilot areas, 3 forest habitat types (91F0, 91E0 & 91L0), 10 species, measure to improve the existing habitat of amphibians by deepening natural depressions of an oxbow, common oak stand established on 4.3 ha, seeds for growing seedlings harvested from at least 50 trees, 19,000 seedlings planted, IAS *Acer negundo* cut on 159 m³. Project duration: 03.02.2015 - 31.01.2017. Project website: [GoForMura | Project \(gozdis.si\)](#)

In the programme period 2014–2021 from Outcome B.4: Improved management of ecosystems under climate change pressure & output B.4.1: Improved capacity for ecosystems management two (2) nature conservation projects were selected for co-financing & two (2) were put on the reserve list (Table 19).

Table 20: List of nature conservation projects from call 2014-2021 in progress & pending in Slovenia

Project title	Applicant	Project value (in EUR)	Amount of co-financing (in EUR)
To improve ecosystems and conserve vulnerable species of Natura 2000 at Jelovica; preparation of management model based on ecosystem services in decision making processes	CIPRA Slovenia, Association for the Protection of the Alps	1,143,298.04	1,143,298.04
Restoration of the network of wetlands and grasslands important for Natura 2000 and other protected species and habitat types in the Karst Biosphere Reserve and the Reka River Basin and the Seasonal Lakes of Pivka Nature Park	Škocjan Caves Public Service Agency	1,196,385.00	1,196,385.00
<i>Integrative approach in management and nature-based adaptation of coastal Natura 2000 riverine and wetland area</i>	<i>Science and Research Centre Koper</i>	<i>1,199,994.13</i>	<i>project on reserve list</i>
<i>Knowledge for Sustainable Nature Management</i>	<i>Municipality of Grosuplje</i>	<i>1,199,389.00</i>	<i>project on reserve list</i>

The administrative procedures (for Programme Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation) during the implementation were similar to those of the Interreg projects. First level control followed the same set of rules and was performed by Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy. Different were reporting tools; EPG and Norway grants projects were reported using Excel spreadsheets. Project partners found them outdated and not particularly user friendly; on the other hand, by using Excel they avoided all the bugs and slow operation, experienced by the users of the eMS, at least in the initial reporting periods. Reporting in the 2014 – 2021 period will take place via eMS, which has been used by majority of Interreg programmes since 2014. Operation of eMS systems has improved substantially over the course of the financing period. Most bugs were removed, speed and reliability of operation is now on satisfactory level. The necessary adjustments of the eMS to the particular programme (Norway and EEA grants in this case) often cause initial instability of the system and thus additional burden to the project partners.

Since there were no pre-financing funds were distributed according to the same principles as in Interreg programmes. Specific was in-kind co-financing for NGOs – they were able to provide part of their part of financing with voluntary work. Partial pre-financing is planned for project, financed in the 2014 – 2021 programmes.

General assessment of project partners of Norway and EEA grants is positive, the administrative procedures are not overly complicated, topics, covered by the programme coincided with actual problems and needs, and short duration of the project meant there was little pressure on project partners' finances due to necessary pre-financing. Short duration of the projects, on the other hand, meant it is impossible to monitor impact of project activities during project implementation. This financial mechanism with projects implemented in programme period 2009 - 2014, together with the experience that the applicants received through the LIFE programme, was basically a key steppingstone for the successful implementation of projects ERDF projects.

13. NATIONAL FINANCING OF THE NATURA 2000 NETWORK

The main cost of national financing allocated to the implementation of EU nature policy and associated green infrastructure, for measures or projects are salaries of employees, working on implementation of these measures. In addition to salaries, which are financed from the national budget, there are also two national funds that allocate finances for Natura 2000 in Slovenia: the Forest fund and the National Climate Fund.

13.1. Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning's financing for its nature conservation services

Slovenian Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning commits a bit over 8 M EUR yearly for nature conservation. This includes costs for the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, public managing bodies of protected areas, co-founding of activities connected to Natura management of other public bodies (The Fisheries Research Institute of Slovenia, Slovenia Forest Service et al.). To put it in numbers, seventy percent of financing of Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, whose main role is also managing Natura 2000 network, is financed by the state budget in amount of 1.1 M EUR annually. Furthermore, sixty percent of financing of public managing bodies of protected areas, whose most of the area consist of Natura 2000, comes from the state budget, which amounts 3 M EUR annually. Additionally, costs for salaries of employees at the Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning and bodies within the Ministry (e.g. Slovenian Environment Agency and inspectorate for the Environment and Spatial Planning), who are working on Natura 2000 and the implementation of EU nature policy amounts to approximately 1 M EUR annually.

For a better overview with a clearer understanding of the current situation of national financing for Natura 2000 management we also prepared a comparison table, where we further correlated stated financing.

Table 19: Further correlation of stated financing.

Name of the conservation foundation:	Proportion of national financing in correlation to Natura 2000	App. yearly allocation per institution in EUR	Cost in multiannual period 2014 – 2020 in EUR
Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation	70 % of its financing is in correlation to Natura 2000	1,120,000	7,840,000
Public managing bodies of protected areas	60 % of its financing is in correlation to Natura 2000	3,055,000	21,385,000
Ministry of the Environment and bodies within the Ministry	Slovenian Environment Agency + 21 FTE at Ministry	1,000,000	7,000,000
Ministry of the Environment and bodies within the Ministry	Monitoring of species & habitat types	470,000	3,286,000
Nacional Climate Fund*	According to spending in previous years	3,350,000	3,100,000
Forest Fund	According to spending in previous years	750,000	1,675,000
Estimation of total allocated funds		9,275,000	48,525,000

* Decree on the Program for the use of funds of the National Climate Fund for with biodiversity topics approved only for year 2019 (and then later for 2021 onward)

Public managing bodies of protected areas use the most of resources for managing Natura 2000 areas, this is normal considering the extensive management of all the protective areas with all the different aspects they must consider while maintaining protected areas in good condition.

13.2. National Climate Fund

Another fund for Natura 2000 network presents the National Climate Fund, which was established in 2009 and is part of state budget under jurisdiction of Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning. It is financed with revenues, gained by selling emission coupons, which are part of greenhouse gas emissions trading scheme. These funds are then used to finance measures that contribute to mitigation and adaptation of climate changes (for example, promoting use of new technologies that help reduce CO₂ emissions in households). Starting from 2019 onwards, National Climate Fund is used also for climate mitigation/adaptation

measures, related to Natura 2000 habitats and species protection. So far 3.35 M EUR has been allocated for Natura 2000 and species protection. Funds in the following years will be allocated according to their spending in previous years, available funds, and content of proposed measures.

13.3. Forest Fund

Yet another national fund that allocates finances for Natura 2000 in Slovenia is the Forest Fund, which was established in 2016, based on the Management of State Forests Act. The Forest Fund is financed by two assigned revenues, namely revenues from the disposal of state forests and an annual compensation for the management of state forests. For the management of state forests, the company pays to the Republic of Slovenia an annual fee of 20 % of the revenues from the sale of timber from state forests. According to the law, the funds of the Forest Fund are also intended for financing measures in the Natura 2000 sites in private forests in accordance with the Natura 2000 Management Programme (2015–2020) and the Forest Investment Program prepared by the Slovenian Forest Service in accordance with the National Forest Program. In 2017, 440,000 EUR was planned for measures in Natura 2000 for forest habitat types, based on the Forest Fund program. In this first year only 7,784 EUR was spent. In the year 2018, 200,000 EUR was planned for these measures, of which 164,937 EUR was spent. The unused funds of the Forest Fund are carried over from year to year and therefore, in 2019, 1,783,188 EUR was available for measures carried out in Natura 2000 sites for forest habitats. From 2019 on measures in Natura 2000 sites in private forests are planned in the amount of EUR 750,000 per year. In year 2019 707,418 EUR and in year 2020 802,343 EUR was spent for this purpose. Altogether more than 1,6 MEUR was spent for Natura measures in private forests from its establishment.

13.4. Targeted research projects (CRP)

Target research programmes (referred to the Slovenian abbreviation of CRP) represent a system created in 2001 for inter-sectoral cooperation in planning and implementing networked R&D projects for specific areas of public interest. CRP represent a special form of scientific and research programme of the ministry holding portfolio of science in cooperation with the Agency contributes to setting and implementing strategic development objectives for Slovenia in cooperation with other ministries.

The aim of a CRP is to ensure target-oriented research support for the following:

1. preparation of long-term development planning documents and system-level solutions for implementation at the national level, and for priority areas at the individual, inter-sectoral, and inter-departmental or inter-ministerial levels.
2. monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the basic policies from these documents and systemic solutions.
3. adapting or amending policy objectives and implementing measures with respect to changing circumstances in the domestic and/or international environment.

CRPs are stressing the interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and inter-institutional dimensions. To date the following CRPs have been designed: (1) CRP – Slovenian Competitiveness 2006-

2013, (2) CRP – Science for Peace and Security 2004-2010, (2) CRP based on Resolution on the strategic orientations of development of Slovenian agriculture and food industry in 2020 and (4) CRP projects based on declared institutional interest (2015 onwards).

CRPs are designed and implemented by ministries in cooperation with other interested users. Projects are carried out by public and/or private research entities that meet the conditions prescribed in the Research Act and other Agency regulations.

From 2014 till 2021 2.9 M EUR has been allocated for projects relevant for nature conservation for various topics – species and habitat type research, development of methodology for evaluation and mapping ecosystem services, designing monitoring of Natura 2000 species and habitat types, adapted sustainable agriculture, development of new result-based agri-environmental measure, sustainable forestry measures, pollinators, landscape types etc. There were 25 projects relevant for nature conservation confirmed from 2014-2021, 12 have already concluded. List of CRP projects relevant for nature conservation 2014 - 2021 are listed in Annex 1 of this document (in Slovene).

14. Horizontal challenges

Certain challenges, met by the institutions, active on implementation of Natura 2000, were not connected to one programme or financial mechanism only. They may be of thematic or financial and administrative nature.

Thematic challenges

In the system of financing of Natura 2000 in Slovenia it is difficult to obtain funding of indirect measures for conservation of species and habitat types, for example financing wastewater plants or removal of illegal landfills in areas with qualification species, sensitive on water quality. Wastewater and waste management financing in the country focuses on priority areas, usually those with major previous degradation, which are not within Natura 2000 sites. Using these criteria, areas within Natura 2000 sites are not a high priority. Currently, because of insufficient funds for nature conservation, majority of financial sources is oriented towards direct conservation measures, and not for above described and needed indirect measures, such as strengthening the capacity of institutions involved in the management of Natura 2000, through employee training and communication with stakeholders.

Moreover, important part of financial sources (Interreg or mainstream cohesion funds, for example) in the period 2014 – 2020 is oriented into support of species and habitat types defined in Natura 2000 management programme (PUN). The species and habitat types not included in the PUN are somewhat neglected – this may cause new problems in the longer term. Focused financing has both advantages and disadvantages.

The project partners reported issues with the programme indicators that were necessary to achieve; such case is Interreg programmes. Since the size of the target areas was defined individually for each target species and habitat type, the sum size of the target areas was very large and impossible to reach – as the individual target areas overlap territorially. The programme documents did not contain appropriate clarification and the actual sum size of the target areas.

Majority of the financial mechanisms perform administrative checks of project success and fulfilment of planned indicators. Reports are the main information input for evaluation of success of project activities. LIFE is the only programme where field visits are performed by nature conservation experts that actually check success and project activities efficiency in nature. More emphasis on field visits as part of the programme monitoring and evaluation would lead to higher quality of projects. There is an overall a lack of orientation towards result-based financial monitoring of the projects in all funds – the value of deliverables and results should be negotiated in the process of the project approval and then only the implementation of the deliverables / result should be monitored.

Slovenian nature conservation institutions reported about a number of issues, related to durability of activities' outputs and capitalisation of results. There is lack of transfer of successful practices, developed during various projects into other projects or into regular long-term financing. Outputs and results of various projects, initiatives, networks etc. are scattered in several webpages which are increasingly difficult to find as the time passes by. New web sites emerge, and older ones are no longer updated. Project websites often disappear as soon as the five-year period (duration varies) after the project end is over and there is no legal requirement to keep the project results accessible. Significant amount of publicly funded knowledge and experience is thus lost.

The interviewees think the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, as the policy making and policy monitoring institution, should assume more active role in transfer and capitalisation of knowledge. The Natura 2000 website could, for example, host a library of results of all Natura 2000 related projects, activities, and initiatives. So-called project chains could be planned: Interreg projects execute test activities, development of new approaches and methods, expert background documents. Once successfully tested, the results of Interreg projects could be used in concrete actions, financed by LIFE projects.

Administrative and financial challenges

Majority of relevant institution try to finance their Natura 2000 activities with multitude of sources; they may receive EU, national, donor and other funds simultaneously. Specific issues arise when combining different financing mechanisms; one is multitude of administrative and financial and reporting rules; different information systems, used for reporting etc. – decreasing clarity of the system.

To illustrate an example: in case employees' salaries are covered by multiple sources simultaneously it may be almost impossible to strictly follow the staff costs reporting rules of every financial source. Some programmes require reporting with timesheets, others only enable reporting of fixed share of full time equivalent through the entire reporting period. Some programmes allow for reporting overtime, others not. Some pay holidays and sick leave, others not.

It is worth noting there is little exchange of information between first level control bodies of different financial programmes. Interreg FLC, as an illustration, only checks and compares timesheets of Interreg projects in case an employee works on two or more Interreg projects simultaneously. Single timesheet for all EU programmes would contribute to transparency of financing. In general; more harmonisation and coordination among different financial mechanisms would be beneficial.

Planning of projects and preparation of application forms for partnership projects is a lengthy time-consuming process, especially for a lead partner of a proposed project. Moreover, success rate of project proposals is on average low. Preparation of all, successful and unsuccessful application forms, represents substantial cost as well. Interviewees pointed out preparation costs could be covered by either financial programmes themselves as part of eligible costs (some programmes already pay small lump sum for to cover preparation costs) or by the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning.

During the time of preparation of this analysis an unexpected event - Covid-19 pandemic - interfered with the available budget funds and the Ministries had to cut some of the national co-financing of programmes and some projects were not approved. EU-funded projects should be seen as a kind of export activity, as a development service, which brings the funds into the country and supports the national balance of payments. The government could support the EU projects by co-financing the costs and financing the payment gap (time between payment of eligible costs and reception of co-financing) with subsidised loans – special care should be given to NGOs, as they are financially more vulnerable compared to public institutions.

15. Conclusions

Only activities in the field improve conservation status of Natura 2000 species and habitat types. Therefore, a general conclusion is that funds must be used more for activities in the field required to address improvement of conservation status of Natura 2000 species and habitat types. These activities and conservation measures are best implemented, where solid knowledge of initial state of target species and habitats exists. Supporting activities are important and need financing, too, but focused to the level where they mainly support activities in the field. It is challenging to reach this, as different funds have very diverse rules for their use. Those funds, where eligibility and targeted use are defined nationally, have bigger potential to focus on resolving major problems and involving activities in the field required to address improvement of conservation status of Natura 2000 species and habitat types. Those funds, where their eligibility and targeted use are defined at the EU or multinational level, and are additionally approving projects, coming on a bottom-up approach, have a less effective approach. Each of the funds makes certain activities, that are needed for improvement of conservation status of Natura 2000 species and habitat types in the field and supporting activities, ineligible. It is important to continue with a possibility to finance large projects with multitude of sources, allowing use of several funds complementary for a large project.

Use of funds from the ERDF, that were part of the national allocation, was much targeted already at the eligibility level, and ensured 100% funding. However, project preparation was complex and difficult, and at the cost of project proponents. The quickest preparation procedure has happened where activities that represent a true and necessary contribution to improvement/maintenance of habitats of species or habitat types in the field were a core of a project and locations and project partners were selected, based on this. Projects, where partnerships were formed first and activities selected according to the needs or partners, took longer to pass. For the future it is important to progress in:

- Shorter time to develop project proposals,
- More clarity on potential state aid,

- “Lighter” project management, better preparation of requests for funds and staff costs flat rate that would need to be increased to at least 35 %.

Use of funds from the ERDF, that were part of INTERREGs, was targeted in some cross-border programmes, where both countries after a long programme preparation came to same interests. The success depends on high enough number of knowledgeable organisations (in the field of Natura 2000 conservation), that also have within the organisation established structure for project management and high enough budget to credit the costs, as refund is delayed. INTERREGs primary focus is on cooperation, and thus the selection criteria are largely derived from this focus. This is even more evident in transnational INTERREG programmes. They basically have a potential to complement activities, financed from other sources.

Use of funds from EMFF was in line with the Natura 2000 management programme and Prioritised action programme for Natura 2000 and was used for monitoring of marine Natura 2000 sites and species. The sole beneficiary of the EMFF funded projects in Slovenia is Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food. Ministry publishes public tenders and selects external experts, which carry out the work. Three monitoring projects were financed under the Union Priority 6 – Promotion of implementation of integrated maritime policy. Financing of projects for monitoring of marine Natura 2000 from EMFF continues till the end of the current EMFF financial perspective and will hopefully continue also under the new financial perspective as it has proved to be successful.

Use of funds from Horizon proved not to be contributing much to achieve objectives of the Natura 2000 network, and it is unlikely that this will change.

Use of funds from LIFE can be much targeted but can also be used for species and sites that are already in a favourable conservation status. As this is a centrally (not nationally) managed fund, changes, if there is a willingness for them, can only come from the Commission level. National co-funding can help in targeting these funds, but in a very limited scope.

Conclusions for agriculture are part of a separate report on implementation of the Natura 2000 Management Programme in agriculture⁴.

⁴ [Analysis of the Natura 2000 Management Program 2015-2020 \(PUN 2000\) for the agricultural sector](#)

Annex 1 - List of CRP projects relevant for nature conservation from 2014 - 2021 (in Slovene).

RAZPIS CRP	leto razpisa	Naslov projekta	Vodilni partner	Partnerji	Trajanje projekta	faza	Višina odobrenih sredstev	financerji
Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2014	Študija možnosti izvajanja zemljiških operacij na zavarovanih in varovanih območjih	Univerza v Ljubljani, Fakulteta za gradbeništvo in geodezijo	Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta, GEODETSKI ZAVOD CELJE, izvajanje strokovno-operativnih del in storitev v zadevah geodetske službe, ter drugih strokovno tehničnih del, d.o.o.	1.7.2014 - 30.06.2015	zaključen	60.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKO: 36.000 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 24.000 €
Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2014	Razvoj metodologije za ovrednotenje in kartiranje ekosistemskih storitev gozdov v Sloveniji	Gozdarski inštitut Slovenije	Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta	1.7.2014 - 30.06.2017	zaključen	130.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKO: 78.000 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 52.000 €
Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2014	Zasnova monitoringa stanja ohranjenosti manjšinskih Natura 2000 gozdnih habitatnih tipov v Sloveniji	ZRC SAZU	Gozdarski inštitut Slovenije, Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta	1.7.2014 - 31.03.2017	zaključen	90.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKO: 54.000 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 36.000 €
Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2014	Škode na travinju zaradi paše velike rastlinojede divjadi	Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta	Eurofins ERICo Slovenija Inštitut za ekološke raziskave d.o.o., Kmetijski inštitut Slovenije	1.7.2014 - 31.10.2016	zaključen	100.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKO: 60.000 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 40.000 €

Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2014	Načrtovanje in gozdnogojitveno ukrepanje v razmerah navzočnosti tujerodnih invazivnih drevesnih vrst	ZRC SAZU	Gozdarski inštitut Slovenije, Znanstvenoraziskovalni center Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti	1.7.2014 - 30.09.2016	zaključen	110.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKO: 66.000 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 44.000 €
Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2014	Opredelitev krajinske pestrosti in krajinskih značilnosti, pomembnih za ohranjanje biotske raznovrstnosti	Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta	AQUARIUS ekološki inženiring d.o.o. Ljubljana, Kmetijski inštitut Slovenije	1.7.2014 - 30.06.2015	zaključen	50.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKO: 30.000 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 20.000 €
Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2014	Varstvena genetika avtohtone potočne postrvi v Sloveniji	Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta		1.7.2014 - 30.06.2017	zaključen	150.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKO: 90.000 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 60.000 €
Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2016	Kmetovanje na vrstno bogatih travnikih	Kmetijski inštitut Slovenije	ZRC SAZU	1.10.2016 do 30.9.2019	zaključen	100.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKGP: 65.570 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 34.430 €
Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2016	Program rehabilitacije jadranskega lipana (<i>Thymallus aeliani</i>) v Sloveniji na osnovi novih genetskih označevalcev.	Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta		1.10.2016 - 30.09.2019	zaključen	75.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKGP: 49.180 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 25.820 €

Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2016	Pomen divjih opravevalcev pri opravevanju kmetijskih rastlin in trajnostno upravljanje v kmetijstvu za zagotovitev zanesljivega opravevanja	Nacionalni inštitut za biologijo	Univerza v Ljubljani, Veterinarska fakulteta, Kmetijski inštitut Slovenije, Grm Novo mesto - center biotehnike in turizma, Biotehniški center Naklo	1.10.2016 - 30.09.2018	zaključen	80.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKGP: 52.460 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 27.540 €
Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2016	Prostorska razporeditev, številčnost, ocena populacijskih trendov in potencialno širjenje areala vrste zlati šakal (<i>Canis aureus</i> L.) v Sloveniji	Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta	Gozdarski inštitut Slovenije, Visoka šola za varstvo okolja	1.10.2016 - 30.09.2018	zaključen	79.303 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKGP: 56.482,79 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 22.820,00 €
Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2018	Analitične podpore za večjo učinkovitost in ciljnost kmetijske politike do okolja in narave v Sloveniji (V4-1814)	Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta	KIS, ZRC SAZU in Inštitut za ekonomska raziskovanja	1.11.2018 - 31.10.2020	zaključen	250.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKGP: 170.000,00 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 80.000,00 €
CRP 2019	2019	Zasnova monitoringa divjih opravevalcev v Sloveniji	Nacionalni inštitut za biologijo	Prirodoslovni muzej Slovenije, Znanstvenoraziskovalni center Slovenske akademije znanosti in umetnosti	01. 11. 2019 - 30. 10. 2022	v teku	149.979 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKGP: 37.494,85 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 74.989,70 €, Vrednost sofinancerja MOP: 37.494,85 €

Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2020	Zasnova, testiranje in priprava rezultatsko usmerjenega kmetijsko-okoljskega ukrepa "Pisan travnik" na naravovarstveno pomembnih (NVP) travščih v Sloveniji	Univerza v Mariboru, Fakulteta za naravoslovje in matematiko	Kmetijski inštitut Slovenije in Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta	1.11.2020 - 30.04.2023	v teku	120.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKGP: 67.788,00 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 82.212,00
Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2020	Krajinske značilnosti in ukrepi bodoče kmetijske politike v Sloveniji	Univerza v Mariboru, Fakulteta za naravoslovje in matematiko	Univerza v Mariboru Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza v Mariboru, Fakulteta za elektrotehniko, računalništvo in informatiko, GEODETSKI ZAVOD CELJE, d.o.o.	1. 11. 2020 - 31. 10. 2022	v teku	120.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKGP: 54.231,00 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 65.769,00
Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2020	Trajnostni modeli kmetovanja na območjih Natura 2000	ZRC SAZU	Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta, Oddelek za zootehniko	01.11.2020 - 31.10.2022	v teku	120.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKGP: 54.231,00 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 65.769,00
Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2020	Pristopi in vrednotenje uspešnosti prenosa znanja na področju varstva okolja in narave v kmetijstvu	Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta, Oddelek za zootehniko	Univerza v Mariboru, Fakulteta za naravoslovje in matematiko in Kmetijsko gozdarska zbornica Slovenije, Kmetijsko gozdarski zavod Ptuj	01.11.2020 - 31.10.2023	v teku	120.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKGP: 54.230,00 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 65.770,00
Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2020	Ovrednotenje ekosistemskih storitev tal v kmetijski rabi	Gozdarski inštitut Slovenije	Biotehniška fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani, Kmetijski inštitut Slovenije	01.11.2020 - 31.10.2022	v teku	100.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKGP: 45.192,00 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 54.808,00 €

Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2020	Naravna obnova in nega gozdov, ogolelih po velikopovršinskih ujmah: usklajevanje ekoloških, ekonomskih in gozdarsko-političnih vidikov	Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta Oddelek za gozdarstvo in obnovljive gozdne vire	Gozdarski inštitut Slovenije	01.11.2020 - 31.10.2023	v teku	120.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKGP: 75.000,00 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 45.000,00 €
Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2020	Izdelava strategije upravljanja s potočno postrvjo v Sloveniji	Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta, Oddelek za zootehniko	ZZRS	01.11.2020 - 31.10.2022	v teku	120.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKGP: 54.231,00 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 65.769,00 €
Zagotovimo.si hrano za jutri	2020	Vpliv zveri na parkljarje: določitev vrstno specifične stopnje plenjenja in pomena za upravljanje prostoživečih velikih sesalcev v Sloveniji	Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta Oddelek za gozdarstvo in obnovljive gozdne vire	GIS, UP FAMNIT in Visoka šola za varstvo okolja Velenje	01.11.2020 - 31.10.2022	v teku	140.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKGP: 87.500,00 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 52.500,00 €
CRP 2021	2021	Prenova Regionalne razdelitve krajinskih tipov in izjemnih krajin v Sloveniji ter njihova digitalizacija	Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta			v teku	200.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKGP: 10.000,00 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 100.000,00 € Vrednost sofinancerja MOP: 80.000,00 €, MK: 10.000,00 €
CRP 2021	2021	Raziskave za opredelitev in preprečevanje obremenjevanja	ZRC SAZU	Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta in Geološki zavod Slovenije		v teku	108.000 €	MKGP: 18.000,00 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 54.000,00 €

		vodozbirnega zaledja Jelševniščice in Otovca, s posebnim ozirom na habitat črne človeške ribice (HaČloRi) (V1-2139)					Vrednost sofinancerja MOP: 36.000,00 €
CRP 2021	2021	Prenova Regionalne razdelitve krajinskih tipov in izjemnih krajin v Sloveniji ter njihova digitalizacija	Univerza v Ljubljani, Biotehniška fakulteta		v teku	200.000 €	Vrednost sofinancerja MKGP: 10.000,00 €, Vrednost sofinancerja ARRS: 100.000,00 € Vrednost sofinancerja MOP: 80.000,00 €, MK: 10.000,00 €
Together						2.892.282 €	