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Action Plan Slovenia

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RENATUR

**Improving regional policies to better protect the natural
heritage of peri-urban open spaces**

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Part I – General information

<i>Project:</i>	RENATUR - Improving regional policies to better protect natural heritage of peri-urban open spaces
<i>Partner organisation:</i>	BSC Kranj, Regional development agency of Gorenjska r
<i>Country:</i>	Slovenia
<i>NUTS2 region:</i>	West Cohesion region
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Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:	<input type="checkbox"/>	Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
	<input type="checkbox"/>	European Territorial Cooperation programme
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other regional development policy instrument

policy instrument addressed:

Regional development program 2021-2027

Initially it was foreseen that BSC Kranj would have influenced the National operational program for cohesion policy 2014- 2020. However, due to the fact that funds for the overall program has been contracted or in pipe line, there was no more possibility to influence the mentioned program.

Therefore, we put our effort in finding the possibility to change the regional development program for Gorenjska region. The Regional development program for Gorenjska region 2014-2020 includes the priority Preservation of natural and cultural heritage where main priority of actions lie in preservation of biodiversity in Natura 2000 and other protected areas with fragile biodiversity. Biodiversity is part of the priorities, actions connected to tourism, since preservation of biodiversity is mentioned from the point of view of development of restrictive measures (restrictions in the time of overflow of visitors and limitation of visitors to marked paths and preservation and forming the areas with no visitors).

The topics of “regreening” of peri-urban areas and ecoservices and green infrastructures are not addressed by the program.

While the program period 2014- 2020 ended, in preparation of regional development program 2021-2027 we tried to change – upgrade the strategic approach and include eco services and green infrastructures which so far were not part of the goals and actions of the regional development program.

We need to upgrade approaches and find the operational ways how to address the challenge of eco services and green infrastructures, including upgrade the knowledge, capacity of policy level as well also to develop and upgrade the policies at local municipality level).

While working with stakeholders on preparation of regional development program 2021-2027 we checked the goals, actions planned and implemented in the period 2014-2020 where certain elements of the eco services and green infrastructures were introduced, although at that time

the national guidelines were not in power yet. We presented the stakeholders the EU framework and started to work on topics of eco services and green infrastructures as important part of the regional development program 2021-2027.

Further improvement of the topic of eco services and green infrastructures is needed, especially to address the topic of peri-urban areas, eco services and green infrastructures, in particular from the point of view of revitalisation of peri-urban areas, restoration and preservation of biodiversity with involvement of the local community policy. This is very relevant for the Slovenian context where the administrative regions do not exist.

BSC Kranj will improve the Regional development program 2021-2027, which represent the basis for the development of the region in programming period 2021-2027 and represents the corner stone for actions of the region. Regional development program 2021-2027 is the document that reflects needs and priorities of the region. This is the main baseline for the actions supported by National Operational program for cohesion policy, National program for recovery and also represents the key document on which further work in region is done (via local community policies) and also other EU funds, where region Gorenjska can look for financial support for realisation of its development priorities.

So far eco services and green infrastructures in suburban areas is addressed in draft of Regional development program 2021-2027 in priority: Environment, goal: preservation of biodiversity.

The regional development program on eco services and green infrastructures in suburban areas will be further elaborated and upgraded in the final version of Regional development program 2021-2027 (now in preparation). The need for addressing eco services and green infrastructures in suburban areas grew rapidly in recent years due to growing understanding of importance of eco services and green infrastructures for revitalisation of formal industrial sites, growing need for revitalisation of suburban areas (from the point of quality living space). Suburban areas are facing big pressure (via filling green areas with buildings and/or becoming the overcrowded areas - especially in weekends (additionally the pressure was put on suburban green areas during COVID 19) and in many cases the biodiversity started to change with negative connotation. Also, till recent years eco services and green infrastructures in suburban areas were not addressed, since the topic was not seen as priority, also green areas in suburban areas were not seen as richness of biodiversity and important corner stone of quality of life of citizens and visitors alike. With strategic approach towards eco services and green infrastructures in suburban areas it is more and more understood, that better long-term protection of biodiversity in suburban areas can be assured and further protection of biodiversity in Natura 2000 and in other nature areas can be strengthened. Additionally, with strategic management of biodiversity in suburban areas, suburban areas will have the capacity to better adapt the living conditions of inhabitants to climate change.

Through regional development program 2021-2027 we will also influence local policy in local communities. We will address the change in at least one local community in the region.

Implementation of the RENATUR project in phase 1 brought the following lessons important for the protection of natural heritage of peri-urban open spaces in Gorenjska region:

- new knowledge and understanding on the concept of eco service and green infrastructures and their importance for biodiversity
- understanding of important synergies between planning processes and approaches and eco services and green infrastructures in peri-urban areas

- understanding of biodiversity in suburban areas and richness of biodiversity in suburban areas
- understanding of the challenges of degraded areas (especially formal industrial sites), where biodiversity can play important role for its revitalisation
- understanding of biodiversity as important corner stone of the “revival” of quality life in suburban areas
- building partnerships to start to work on eco services and green infrastructures in suburban areas
- understanding how eco services and green infrastructures are interlinked with other aspects related to the quality of life in suburban areas
- understanding how eco services and biodiversity can/is the corner stone of finding the way how to fight against climate change
- understanding that eco services and biodiversity in suburban areas need to be brought up on bottom up principle
- understanding that with diversity of experts that work on eco services and strategic work with inhabitants and stakeholders policy change can be enforced

Based on the findings of the project RENATUR, the following action are foreseen: upgrading the draft of Regional development plan 2021- 2027 with the topic of biodiversity in suburban areas (not tackled so far)

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

General background

Region Gorenjska has over 50 % of Natura 2000 areas. Gorenjska region is mainly build up of smaller settlements and 5 bigger cities (the biggest has less than 50.000 inhabitants). So far biodiversity protection was mainly connected to the protected areas, while in suburban and other areas was not so much taken into account and it was not approached in the strategic way.

So far, the biodiversity in peri-urban areas were not tackled. Via growing visits of the inhabitants and tourists to green areas in suburbs and near the cities there is an urgent need to address the challenge of:

- strategic planning for preservation of biodiversity in the extend of peri-urban landscapes
- build up areas (parks, etc..)
- bicycle trails
- areas at water bodies
- green areas in close vicinity of the cities (meadows,etc.)
- urban gardens

In preparation to the new programming period several meetings took place with local communities and other stakeholders to define strategic topics of eco services and green infrastructures – to be embedded in regional development program and local policy level (local communities).

Overall introduction of actions

Since there is no strategic approach yet we started to work on regional development program upgrading (strategic document of the region) and on empowerment of local communities' stakeholders (ending up with at least 1 policy change on local policy level).

The development of the action plan is based on peer reviews and good practices that were presented in RENATUR project. Moreover, the actions have been developed based on discussion and co-operation with the members of the regional stakeholder group.

ACTION 1 – Upgrading draft of Regional development program for Gorenjska region 2021-2027

Action 1 is connected to the upgrading of the draft of Regional development program 2021-2027. So far eco services and green infrastructures in suburban areas is addressed in draft of Regional development program 2021-2027 in priority: Environment, goal: preservation of biodiversity. But there is a need to better prepare and include aspects of eco services and green infrastructures into regional development program.

Therefore we plan to organise meetings and individual discussions with the stakeholders from diverse fields of expertise that share the interest for green infrastructure and see it as opportunity for further development. Based on the discussions/ideas from stakeholders the draft of measure will be prepared and further on elaborated and later on as proposal included in the draft of regional development program.

Based on the measure written in the regional development program, the regional development program will be presented to the regional board of mayors and regional development council and later on sent to approval to the National ministry responsible for approval of the regional development program.

Relevance to the project

The action is based on the experiences and good practices from RENATUR project (especially from those coming from

- Belgium (Flanders): strategic work with green areas and improving its biodiversity, especially with measures at areas that are partly build up areas (e.g. areas with diversity of functions- partly also build up areas – at main roads)
- Germany (Saxony-Anhalt): strategic work with formal industrial sites with multiple functions (public, private) and its importance/connection to the suburban/urban areas

In those cases, strategic approach is embedded in strategic long term mapping, strategic overview and careful planning of change of policies and actions on the field.

Good practices mentioned will serve as starting point for preparing draft/final measure in regional development program that focus on green infrastructure.

Moreover, the ideas for upgrading the regional development program were inspired by peer reviews implemented during RENATUR phase one.

Stakeholders involved

- local communities
 - Municipalities in Gorenjska region
 - Regional board of mayors
- chambers craft, economy...
 - Chamber of Agriculture in Gorenjska region
 - Chamber of Commerce in Gorenjska region
 - Chamber of craft (5 chambers)
- institutions responsible for biodiversity,....
 - regional office for protection of nature
- NGOs working on the topic of biodiversity
 - NGO-s working on topic of biodiversity

Timeframe

- April 2022 – December 2022 preparation of draft of the measure/final text integrated in regional development program
- January – March 2023 presentation of the regional development program to the regional board of mayors and regional development council of Gorenjska region
- April – June 2023 process of communication with National ministry responsible for confirmation of regional development program and confirmation of the regional development program on national level

Costs

- work of employees of BSC Kranj 2 people part time (at least 30 % of their work time for the period of 12 months (estimated costs of 2 workers /part time 50.000 EUR)
- Organisation cost of workshops: 1.000 EUR
- External expertise to support work of stakeholders (if needed) 1.000 EUR

Funding sources

- costs of the public funds (own resources BSC Kranj)
- costs of the public funds received from the state – national government and local communities for regional tasks

Monitoring and expected impacts of the action:

The BSC team will monitor the implementation of the action and will present the upgraded version of the Regional development program 2021-2027 to regional board of the mayors and to national ministry.

The foreseen indicators:

Indicator	Expected value
Number of workshops	2
Number of participants at workshops (overall)	10

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Stamp of the organisation (if available): _____

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