



SWOT workshop:

Ecological connectivity of dry karst grasslands in the border area of Slovenia and Croatia

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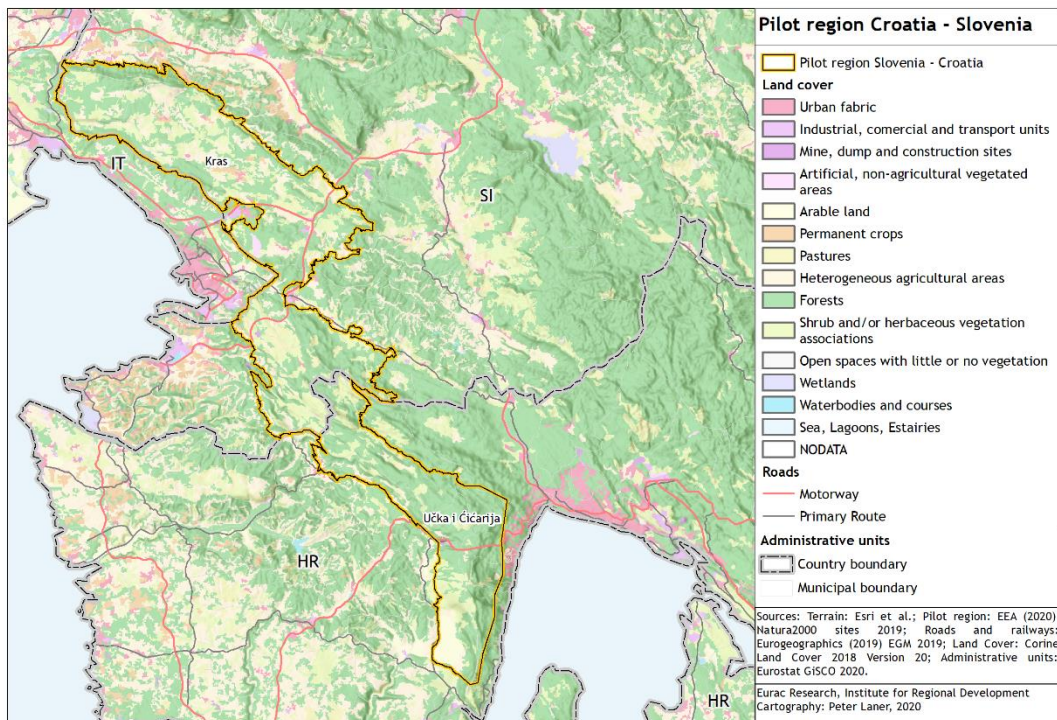
online workshops



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Map of the pilot area



Introduction

The main topic of the SWOT analysis within the DINALPCONNECT project was the ecological connectivity of the transboundary pilot region of the Karst and the long-term conservation of dry grasslands. We focused on habitat loss and consequently on the challenge of ecological connectivity of the remaining patches.

Among the objectives of the online workshops for the pilot area was to find local and national barriers, opportunities, conflicts and socio-economic issues related to dry grasslands. Among other things, we tried to answer the following questions:

- what are our goals for maintaining dry grasslands and transboundary ecological connectivity,
- what prevents the conservation of dry grasslands,
- which laws govern the work of different stakeholders and how they relate to the conservation of dry grasslands,

- what approach to take in the field of dry grassland conservation,
- where to obtain funds,
- how to coordinate conservation efforts with neighboring Croatia's efforts to harmonize the approach throughout the region.

Through the online workshops we focused on four thematic areas (although seven were initially planned, but their number was slightly reduced due to the nature of the online event):

1. biodiversity conservation,
2. spatial planning,
3. agriculture and
4. forestry.

Workshop agenda (Croatia)

8:55-9:00	Arrival of participants	
09: 00	Start of the workshop	Welcome speech
09: 05	Presentation of DINALPCONNECT project	Marina Grgić, BIOM Association
09: 15	Introduction to practical work	Moderator: Bruno Kostelić
Working part SWOT analysis		
09: 30-10:30	Joint discussion on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to ecological connectivity in the area of the ecological network Natura 2000 HR1000018 Učka and Čićarija. Identifying current agricultural and forestry practices that affect ecological connectivity, as well as activities, and pro-biodiversity business that affect biodiversity	
10:30-10:45	Coffee break	
10:45-11:45	Joint discussion on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to ecological connectivity in the area	

	of the ecological network Natura 2000 HR1000018 Učka and Ćićarija. Identifying current agricultural and forestry practices that affect ecological connectivity, as well as activities, and pro-biodiversity business that affect biodiversity
11:45-12:00	Conclusions and end of the workshop

The workshop was attended by representatives of four relevant sectors: spatial planning, biodiversity, agriculture and forestry. A total of 30 people participated.

Elements and conclusions of SWOT analysis for Croatia

SWOT analysis is one of tools that can be used for developing a strategy. It is a strategic planning technique used to help a person or organization identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to business competition or project planning

During SWOT analysis at the workshop, we used the following rules of SWOT analysis:

- **Development Strategy** - Strengths overcome weaknesses, opportunities overcome threats
- **Maintenance Strategy** - Strengths overcome weaknesses, threats overcome opportunities
- **Harvest Strategy / Necessary Change** - Weaknesses overcome strengths, opportunities overcome threats
- **Limitation Strategy** - Weaknesses overcome strengths, threats overcome opportunities

SWOT analysis conclusions by sectors

Conclusions - Spatial planning

SPATIAL PLANNING

	<p>Strenghts</p>
<p>Internal factors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spatial planning is still a basic tool for spatial management • Amendments to the Spatial Plan of the Municipality of Lanišće were adopted in the year 2020, and grasslands have been identified as planned botanical reserves which prevent the negative impact from the other sectors. • Amendments to the Spatial Plan of the Municipality of Lanišće also plan Ćićarija Regional Park, which would especially protect grasslands. • Legislation provides the possibility of protection of naturally valuable areas in the procedures of drafting new and / or amendments to spatial planning documents. • In the pilot area, there are studies that valorize grasslands and offer goals and protection measures, which can be used in spatial planning procedures. • The entire pilot area on the Croatian side is part of the Natura 2000 site, is protected in the category of Nature Park or is in the proposal for one of the categories of nature protection. Protected areas offer the advantage of networking of naturally valuable areas, which also has a direct positive impact on ecological connectivity. Also, the level of availability of data on the state of natural values in protected areas is significantly higher. <p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For existing protected areas, it is necessary to carry out the procedure of registering a special legal regime in the land register and cadaster, in order to to prevent their devastation in the event of an attempt to carry out some economic activities or interventions that are not acceptable given the phenomenon of protection. • Protection mechanisms are very complex, which makes difficult to use or implement them. Very good knowledge of legal regulations and expertise of competent institutions is required. • There is a lot of pressure from various development projects on naturally valuable, protected areas. There is a need to revise the areas of planned protection which have been planned for a long time and not realized within spatial plans. The current state of the natural

	<p>potential for these locations should be determined. There is also a problem that some nature valuable sites are planned for protection within the current construction areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protection should be planned according to what is needed and what we want to protect, and we should prevent the situations in which there are intentions for searching for the natural potential in areas where the development of some project/projects is trying to be prevented.
	<p>Opportunities</p>
<p>External factors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently, for the Natura 2000 site of Učka and Čićarija, which is mostly covered by our pilot area, a Management Plan is in the process of preparation. This area has recently been assigned to Public institution of Učka Nature Park. • Administratively, the Croatian part of pilot area is within Region of Istria which are also active on this area as well as Public Institution for Nature Protection - Natura Histrica. Bouth of those institution implement several projects that deal with the problem of dry grasslands. • There are several EU programs from which funds are secured on national level for Management plans • The current possibility for protection of the pilot area in Croatia as regional park, represents an opportunity for ecological connection of nature valuated sites. • There is an interest of scientific and other relevant institutions for creation of associated council with the aim for better coordination, creation of action plans and their implementation. • In the case of protection of the pilot area as regional park, the management structure would have the obligation of involvement into all processes of sustainable development and nature protection, as well as involvement in different collaboration and communication with different stakeholders. • The interest for outdoor tourism is increasing as well as the interest for nature in general. This trend makes this economically underdeveloped region interesting because of its nature beauty. • Starting from this year, the Croatian part of pilot area gain his tourist board which promotes this area based on its nature potential.

- The Municipality of Lanišće has recognized the natural potential of the area as a basis for its sustainable development, and is actively and willingly involved in all development initiatives.
- For the time being, the Municipality of Lanišće does not provide subsidies for the restoration of old houses, but sells real estate owned by them in order to change the negative demographic trends. They try to develop the tourist community, and eventually try plan to provide subsidies for agriculture in the future.

Threats

- Lanišće is the largest municipality in the County of Istria, but has the smallest population. **Demographic trends are not favorable** and there is a threat that existing or planned measures will not be sufficient for the planned development of economy, including agriculture, livestock breeding and forestry.
- **The treats are real if the planned protection mechanism would not be implemented in the near future**, because of the increasing pressure from development projects which are not acceptable on behalf of nature point of view.
- **Economic growth and urban development are continued to be seen primarily through the development and expansion of construction areas.**
- **There are interests of some stakeholders that are opposite to the concept of protecting the natural values.**

Conclusions - Biodiversity

BIODIVERSITY

Strengths

Internal factors

- The entire pilot area on the Croatian side is part of the Natura 2000 site, is protected in the category of nature park or is in the proposal for one of the categories of nature protection.
- The locations of valuable grasslands in the project area are known, and partly the condition and quality of those sites. In Region of Istria the grasslands habitat quality was estimated. This estimation was not made for the habitats within the Učka Nature

	<p>Park, but 10 years ago they made habitat maps which can be used for quality estimation. The monitoring methods were also proposed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existence of managers in the pilot area - Public institution of Učka Nature Park and Public institution of Region of Istria Natura Histrica is considered as strength, because of their role to protect naturally valuable habitats and species of the area. • Involvement of professional institutions and continuity of work on grassland protection activities. There is cooperation between institutions on both sides of the borders that jointly implement protection projects, plan and implement protection measures, and develop and conduct monitoring of indicator species. • Horizontal and vertical connection of relevant institutions, exchanges and availability of data <p>Dry grasslands are recognized in several operation EU programs as habitats that are worth for protection and for that there are funds available</p>
	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Succession is present on all grasslands of the pilot area. • Many protected areas were declared protected long time ago, based on old data without established monitoring and active protection mechanisms. Most areas do not have Management Plans, as well as most Natura2000 sites. Such protected areas should be revised, their natural potential should be assessed and, if necessary, their boundaries should be also revised. • Public institution for the protection of Učka Nature Park does not have new data about dry grasslands on pilot area but they continue their field work. • As part of the amendments of the regional spatial plan in the year 2001. The dry grasslands (6 habitats) were singled out as botanical protected sites. There is a need for revision of their boundaries and quality status because their protection and location is based on the old and insufficient data.
	<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational programs of several EU Funds available in Republic of Croatia recognize dry grasslands as habitats that are worth for protection and within them the financial funds are available. • Positive perception of the general public for the implementation of effective nature protection.

- Plans to establish formal protection potentially represent an **opportunity to ensure continuous targeted funding.**
- **Incentive programs,** forest management plans and similar documents are the basis for financing and implementing the necessary activities.
- **Establishing of formal protection is an opportunity for continuous funding,** while project work (although within the project work there is no continuous funding) promotes the establishment of cooperation and development of common approaches, as well as exchange of experiences.
- **The same problem on both sides of the border - the possibility of joint action.** Problems in ensuring the ecological connectivity of naturally valuable areas are the same on both sides of the borders of the pilot area since it is a geographically small area, with the same landscape and geomorphological quality, identical in its natural values. Due to the above mentioned, there is a need to harmonize action plans, protection measures and draft joint management documents.
- **Growing interest for the protection of natural values in the public accompanied by the growing desire for outdoor activities.**
- **The pilot area has low population density (anthropogenic impact is not significant) and there are no major or significant economic interventions/plans that are not acceptable for the existing natural values.**
- Učka Nature Park is **developing a new Management Plan as well as a Management Plan for the entire area of N2000 within the pilot area.**
- The results of this SWOT analysis and involvement in the **DinalpConnect project will contribute to the development of Management Plans.**
- It is unrealistic to expect that the large areas of grasslands will be fully saved / maintained and it is necessary to focus on maintaining recognized essential areas. **There is interest and already existing partnership cooperation to design a new project that would focus on those specific grasslands.**
- **The quality and characteristics of dry grassland habitats needs to be determined very well in order to be well managed.** The grazing or mowing measures should be specified by habitat type, which are the conclusions of the LIKE project, which was recently conducted in a pilot area.

Threats

- **High financial resources needed to achieve the goals of dry grasslands protection and ensuring ecological connectivity.**
- **Insufficient and uncoordinated cooperation** within the sectors of nature protection, spatial planning, forestry and agriculture on the subject matter.
- **The skepticism of some part of the public about planned formal nature protection plans.**
- **Unplanned and uncoordinated development of tourist and sports facilities / activities in pilot region.**
- **Inadequate exploitation and maintenance of dry grasslands by its owners.**
- **Insufficient economy interests** for getting involved in the implementation of the necessary measures.
- **The problem of land ownership - a large number of small plots owned by several persons**
- **It is unlikely that it will be possible to preserve large areas of dry grasslands that once existed.** It is necessary to focus on smaller areas and establish mechanisms for their management.
- Another problem is the **lack of financial resources for research and protection activities.**
- The Slovenian SWOT analysis shows that they have **protection goals which have not been achieved**, and it is considered that the situation is similar in Croatia.

Conclusions - Agriculture

AGRICULTURE

	Strengths
Internal factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A positive trend in the interest for leasing grasslands for grazing in the period from 2011 to the present. • Two-way communication between farmers and local governments. • Grasslands/pastures contribute to preservation of biodiversity in the area, and also contribute to the development of agriculture - for example, livestock and beekeeping.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are incentives for rural development programs. According to the Slovenian SWOT analysis, there is a certain increase in interest in livestock breeding.
	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Livestock farming is crucial for maintaining the grasslands, but in the Pilot region it is in poor condition. • In Croatia, highly valuable grasslands are used as pastures, not as meadows. • Some measures for rural development are too generalized for the entire territory of Croatia and they are not tempting to the farmers. • In incentives fees there is a lack of separation of dry and wet grasslands. Also, incentives are too low. • Lack of interest of farmers due to the lack of direct financial benefit. • Few interested farmers for grazing animals. • Significant decline in livestock numbers in the period from 2001 to 2011. • Insufficient education and information of potential beneficiaries of measures from the Rural Development Program. • Unresolved issue of private property prevents the lease and consolidation of a large number of plots. • Individuals do not support the planned protection of the area. • By comparing the current and previous land covering there are about 4,000-6,000 ha that were lost due to overgrowth with bush vegetation and become forest or transitional forest habitat. These areas are now managed by Croatian Forests. However, that is not an obstacle for their use for grazing animals.
	<p>Opportunities</p>
<p>External factors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just a few high-quality grasslands on Čićarija are in the incentive system. The advantage of this system is that farmers conclude the contract for 5 years, so they don't have to ask for incentives every year.

- Hunters could also be involved in grassland protections, e.g., the introduction of native species, such as the european rabbit that eats conifer shoots. When considering the introduction, it is necessary to respect the Act on the Prevention of the Introduction and Spread of Alien and Invasive Alien Species and their management (OG 15/18, 14/19). The introduction of non-native species is almost impossible. Depending on the type of grassland, it should be determined what could be introduced, and only if livestock cannot be introduced. This would require a more detailed habitat analysis.
- There are already suggestion measurements for grasslands protections, mostly related to livestock breeding. There is a lack of water in Pilot area si it is necessary to provide a water suply for grazing animals. One of posible solutions is creating puddles, which are also important for biodiversity aspect.
- **A larger part of the grasslands on Učka Nature Park are in lease, in relation to Ćićarija, where situation is oposite. There are several tenants on the south side of Učka.**
- The Public Institution of Učka Nature Park is planing to use previous lease model on area of northern side of Učka. For this it is necessary interest of the local farmers and resolved property relations. In area of Učka, one family are intensely engaged in farming, but there are also few farmers who are coming periodically.
- **Before the start of grazing on some grasslands it is necessary to make an analysis of their nutritional value.**
- **There is a difference in the nutritional value of different type of karst grasslands and it is necessary to assess the nutritional value of grasslands to determine whether such an area are suitable for livestock grazing.**
- The municipality is intensively involved in the procedures for resolving property-legal relations, which are recognized as a basic problem for lack of interest for farming in area.
- **There are initiatives for developing the credit lines and economic mechanisms for framers.**
- It is possible to cooperate and exchange knowlage with other managers of protected areas such as Velebit National Park or Dinara Nature Park, and with govremment authority. In the area of Dinara Nature Park number of interested farmers for grazing on grasslands is higher than expected. It is a crucial to present concrete information and offer support tofarmers.
- There is a lot of experience managers of protected areas in restorations methods of grasslands (e.g. removal of woody

vegetation, controlled fires and others). These experiences can also be used in this pilot area.

Threats

- There are not many grasslands on Ćićarija in system of incentives for rural development.
- The main problem with grasslands succession is lack of grazing.
- It is necessary to provide adequate infrastructure for livestock production, and water is crucial on Ćićarija. Visine potpora povećane su u odnosu na prošlo programsko razdoblje, ali ne dostatno.
- Insufficient increase of the incentive's fees for rural development.
- Protection of the area will not provide desired results, in case of inefficiency or lack of management measures there will be no assistance to farmers.
- A large number of private lands owned by a large number of owners, as well as a small number of state-owned land that is quite scattered in the pilot area, make it impossible to consolidate a larger area for lease.
- Negative demographic trends.

Conclusions - Forestry

FORESTRY

Strengths

Internal factors

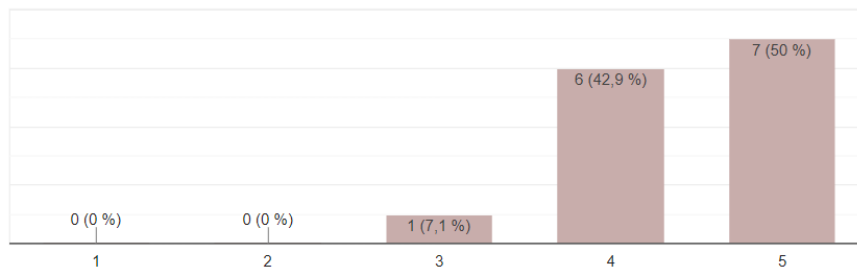
- There are already plans for restoration of native vegetation. The goal is to remove black pine from area, and implementation is already begun
- The succession of grasslands in some areas is stagnating in recent years.
- The part of the Forest Management Plans also will be measures related to uncultivated land, which is an improvement, but everyone is not equally enthusiastic.

	Weaknesses
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the Pilot area, only 15% of the forest are state-owned. The biggest problem is uncontrolled logging in private forests, therefore it is difficult to determine a direction for development. • Most private forests do not have developed Forest Management Plans. The development for Forest Management Plans is financed by the Ministry, at the request of the owner. • Komunele - a form of social ownership of grasslands. The government has registered and disputes with the local community. The discussion is whether it would be better for the government to lease grasslands at a symbolic price to the local farmers to use this land for farming. There is positive example in Lonjsko polje Nature Park. The area of komunelas represents about 26% of the area of Čićarija.
	Opportunities
External factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is crucial to provide financials for interested farmers, for which incentive programs exist and are being developed. • Hunters are willing to cooperate and engage in removal of bush vegetation from grasslands. The maintenance of the revitalized areas should ultimately be by grazing animals. • Possible mechanisms for restorations of grasslands that should be taken into consideration are controlled ignition and various methods of mechanical removal of bush vegetation. Removal of vegetation is necessary because the livestock will not graze on overgrown grasslands. If grazing is not enabled after removing bush vegetation it is better not to remove it.
	Threats
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest grasslands are leased for grazing but without a previous assessment of their suitability for grazing. It is necessary to analyze lowland grasslands, which are on thick soil and karst grasslands to establish the cost-effectiveness of such grazing. • Due to the majority of private forests in the Pilot area, they are in bad condition. Most private plots are cuted uncontrolled (without any documentation, permission). • The biggest problem is unresolved property and legal relations, grasslands cannot be lease until these relations do not resolve.

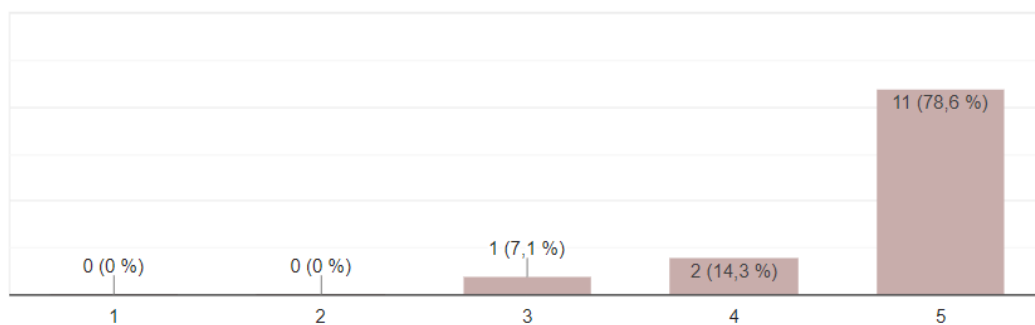
SWOT CONCLUSIONS FOR FORESTRY:

Evaluation of workshop Croatia

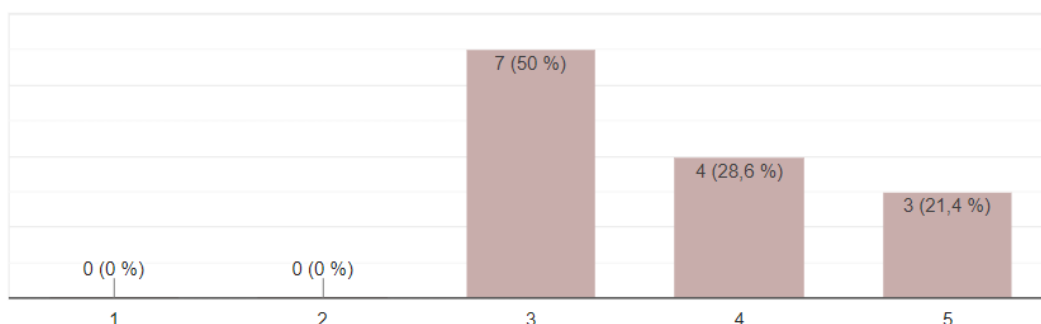
1. 1. How satisfied are you with the content created by today's workshop?
(1-not satisfied, 5-extremely satisfied)



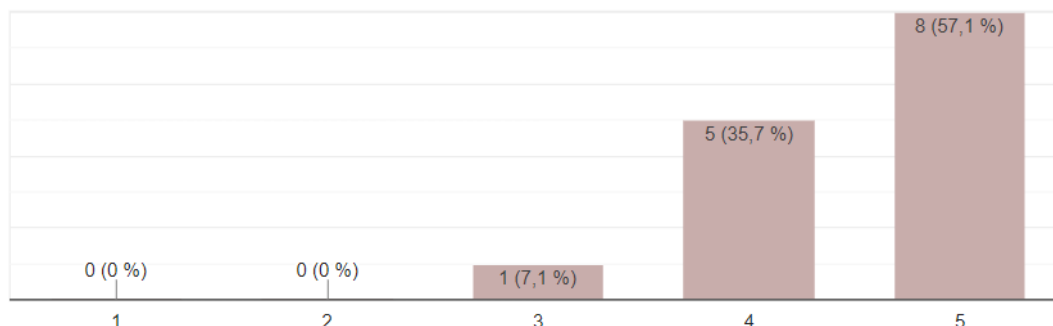
2. How satisfied are you with method of the work at today's workshop?
(1-not satisfied, 5-extremely satisfied)



3. 3. How satisfied are you with your participation in the workshop?
(1-not satisfied, 5-extremely satisfied)



4. How well did the workshop meet your expectations?
 (1-did not meet my expectations, 5-fully met my expectations)



4. Why?

- It would only be better if it was in person, otherwise a really productive workshop
- I learned more recent information
- The workshop was interesting and very concreteList of workshop participants

List of participants (Croatia)

No.	Name and surname of participant	Institution
1.	Peter Glasnović	University of Primorska, Koper
2.	Marijana Kapa	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
3.	Zrinka Mesić	Polytechnic in Karlovac
4.	Andrea Solić	WWF Adria
5.	Svjatlana Lupret-Obradović	Public institution "Natura Histrica"
6.	Andrej Mandić	Istria County, Administrative Department for Sustainable Development
7.	Ana Ljubić	Public institution "Natura Histrica"
8.	Neven Degmečić	Croatian forests

9.	Kristina Fedel	Administrative Department for Sustainable Development of Istria County
10.	Ivana Selanec	Association BIOM
11.	Slavko Brana	Public institution "Natura Histrica"
12.	Lorena Žakić	Municipality of Lanišće i Municipality of Lupoglav
13.	Vesna Ahel	Public institution Učka Nature Park
14.	Nereo Crnić	Hunter society Kobac Lovran
15.	Latinka Janjanin	Institute for Spatial Planning of the Istria County
16.	Mirjana Fonjak	State inspectorate of Republic of Croatia
17.	Egon Vasilić	Public institution Učka Nature Park
18.	Luka Meštrović	Public institution "Natura Histrica"
19.	Boria Vitas	State Institute for Nature Protection, Croatia
20.	Barbara Sladonja	Institute of Agriculture and Tourism, Poreč
21.	Mirela Uzelac	Institute of Agriculture and Tourism, PorečPoreč
22.	Vida Posavec Vukelić	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, State Institute for Nature Protection
23.	Boris Černeha	Croatian forests
24.	Filippo Favilli	EURAC
25.	Matevz Premelč	Zavita
26.	Ana Čebin	Agricultural Institute of Slovenia (AIS)
27.	Emina Zečić	Center for Energy, Environment and Resources, Cener21
28.	Emina Kadrić	Center for Energy, Environment and Resources, Cener21
29.	Mia Jakopović	Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb, student
30.	Martina Kaniža	Faculty of Science, University of Zagreb, student

SWOT ANALYSIS Slovenia

AREA	
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Interreg V-B Adriatic-Ionian Cooperation Programme



S T R E N G H T S	BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION	<p>Biodiversity in the area is still present, despite the decline in the volume of dry grasslands.</p> <p>The small size of the area and the knowledge of stakeholders increase the possibilities for planned and coordinated conservation of biodiversity.</p> <p>Concrete proposals have been prepared on how to promote a solution to overgrowing areas.</p> <p>There are separate databases for all four areas of the SWOT analysis.</p> <p>Nature protection goals have been set, and the areas are included in Natura 2000.</p> <p>Possibility of including dry grasslands in the target nature protection operations Agri-environment-climate payments (KOPOP) under the Common Agricultural Policy.</p> <p>Triglav National Park offers some examples of good practice (management plan for Natura 2000, BioAlp project), as well as examples of good practice in Škocjan Caves Park, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation and the University of Primorska.</p> <p>Participation in the international project DINALPCONNECT provides insights into foreign good practices in the field of dry grassland conservation, the development of a common, international approach and guidelines for the conservation of dry grasslands, and the creation of an ecological connectivity map.</p>
	SPATIAL PLANNING	<p>The possibility of using the existing set of spatial instruments that provide the basis for further planning and possible changes in accordance with the actual situation on the ground.</p> <p>Dry grasslands are present, which gives the landscape a pleasant mosaic image.</p>
	AGRICULTURE	<p>Interest in agriculture is growing again. Farmers are aware that they are preserving the landscape.</p> <p>Various measures of the Common Agricultural Policy can be applied in the Karst area: direct payments, payment for areas with limited possibilities for agricultural activity (OMD), KOPOP, animal welfare measure (DŽ) ... In the Karst area, a national measure is also implemented on the basis of the Regulation on the implementation of the measure to eliminate overgrowing on agricultural land.</p>

		<p>Sustainable farming projects are already under way in the area, which have provided a number of guidelines for the further management of agricultural land and results from which improvements to existing agricultural policy can be made.</p> <p>Now is the right time for changes, as the Ministry of Agriculture is preparing a Strategic Plan for the Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027.</p>
	FORESTRY	<p>Forest overgrowth is slowing down, and the forest areas has been stable for the last 10 years.</p> <p>Agriculture and forestry measures are already being coordinated to some extent.</p> <p>The vision of the mosaic image of the landscape is common to forestry, agriculture and biodiversity conservation stakeholders.</p>

W E A K N E S S E S	BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION	<p>Most of the areas crucial for the conservation of dry grasslands within the Natura 2000 Karst do not have a manager.</p> <p>Dramatic decline in the area of dry grasslands.</p> <p>Failure to achieve the objectives set out in the Natura 2000 Management Program (PUN).</p> <p>Invasive alien species that are rapidly expanding and changing the landscape have a major impact on the existing state of biodiversity.</p> <p>There is no communication and transfer of information between administrative areas (stakeholders) and also along the vertical of decision-making on national level.</p> <p>Nature conservation goals are often unattainable, even though they are justified.</p> <p>Databases (for all 4 areas of the SWOT analysis) are partial and unconnected.</p> <p>Each area has its own vision of development.</p>
	SPATIAL PLANNING	<p>Fragmentation of land and ownership.</p> <p>The instrument of spatial planning exists, but it is not used to a sufficient extent, as local communities do not have real interlocutors in the field of agriculture in the preparation of municipal spatial plans (OPN), which would comprehensively present the needs of farmers. Chamber of Agriculture and</p>

		<p>Forestry of Slovenia does not have the role that the Self-governing interest communities for agriculture once had.</p> <p>Insufficient cooperation with municipalities and insufficient interdepartmental cooperation in the field of spatial planning and determination of land use.</p>
	<p>AGRICULTURE</p>	<p>Interest in agriculture is not growing (fast) enough.</p> <p>A sharp increase in the population of large carnivores causing damage in agriculture.</p> <p>Numerous restrictions on measures to prevent the area from overgrowing have discouraged farmers from joining them.</p> <p>Agricultural measures are voluntary, you cannot impose a measure on farmers.</p> <p>Areas dedicated to organic farming are not defined.</p> <p>There is no systemic approach to guide the farmer as to what agricultural policy measures to implement in a given area.</p> <p>Bureaucratic obstacles - the difficulty of obtaining funds is a great burden for farmers, there is not enough explanation of the procedure, too much bureaucracy for both the farmer and the public services (systemic problem).</p> <p>Due to WTO rules, most agricultural measures are linked to land and livestock, which is a disadvantage in the area of fragmented land and unsuitable conditions for livestock.</p> <p>Incomplete agricultural policy - there are incentives that are voluntary.</p> <p>Abandonment of land and consequent overgrowing of agricultural land or inconsistent implementation of the Agricultural Land Act is unsanctioned.</p> <p>The vision of agriculture is difficult to harmonize with the vision of forestry, spatial planning, nature protection.</p> <p>The Ministry of Agriculture is facing a lack of databases in preparing the renewed common policy.</p> <p>Ambiguous and contradictory interpretations of current legislation on the inter-ministerial level (example of the Škocjan Caves Park, project ZA KRAS), which result in inconsistent and / or even conflicting instructions.</p>

		<p>Delays in the implementation of projects and / or even non-implementation and failure to draw funds for their implementation due to inter-ministerial inconsistency of interpretations of legislation and legal-formal frameworks for the implementation of activities in the set and approved form.</p> <p>Agricultural policy (including the strategy being planned) does not resolve legislative dilemmas and inter-ministerial inconsistencies.</p> <p>Agrarian communities and / or the owners do not have a clear and harmonized vision for the use of dry grasslands, despite the fact that for centuries grazing animals (sheep, goats, cattle) have preserved biodiversity; the modern interests of the owners are very diverse, uncoordinated, and are mostly directed by capital (vineyards, solar power plants, and everything the owners imagine).</p>
	FORESTRY	<p>Agriculture and forestry measures are not satisfactorily coordinated.</p> <p>Deforestation, where newly acquired meadows do not have the right intended use, leads to re-overgrowing and, in the long run, to a situation worse than the initial one.</p> <p>Deforestation is unjustified if the land that the farmer would like to clear is in the municipal spatial plan (OPN) for the intended use of the forest. Permit procedures are greatly extended in order to establish the justification for the deforestation.</p> <p>Insufficient active cooperation with municipalities in the field of forest conservation planning.</p> <p>Forestry cannot adapt to agriculture if there is no strategic planning for the use and preservation of agricultural land in the agricultural field.</p>

O P P O R T	BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION	<p>All overgrown areas have great potential to re-establish DRY grasslands.</p> <p>Agricultural policy measures should be inter-ministerially coordinated so farmers can benefit from those that lead to the conservation and not the destruction of biodiversity.</p> <p>Better management of important nature conservation areas owned by the Republic of Slovenia.</p> <p>Environmental legislation may prescribe a regime that would make the implementation of agricultural policy measures on dry</p>
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U N I T T I E S		<p>grasslands mandatory and thus prevent inappropriate uses arising from the interests of capital (conversion of dry grasslands into vineyards, solar power plants, etc.).</p> <p>The preparation of the Strategic Plan of the Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027 offers an opportunity for active involvement of stakeholders in the preparation of the Strategic Plan, within which a special intervention for the conservation of dry grasslands can be introduced.</p> <p>Concrete proposals have been prepared on how to prevent overgrowing, and on their basis, there is an opportunity to find a political consensus to change the legislation.</p> <p>Existing data, proposals, guidelines, databases need to be collected, inter-connected and discussed in order to achieve useful and feasible solutions. Guidelines and recommendations are not enough, they need to be implemented.</p> <p>Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation's databases can be the starting point for the creation of a common database, in which others available databases can be included.</p> <p>Visions of the development of individual areas are not so different in their essence that it would not be possible to find a common, broader consensus on a common development vision.</p> <p>Educating various stakeholders on the areas covered in SWOT analysis, the importance of taking into account several aspects, the interaction and coherence can contribute to a greater focus on inter-ministerial planning coordination and a step towards its implementation.</p> <p>Preserving biodiversity offers opportunities for sustainable tourism, promoting a better attitude towards the environment, quality time for people in nature.</p> <p>The absence of dry grassland management is an opportunity to find a common manager who would allow a uniform, but at the same time slightly tailored approach to each dry grassland.</p> <p>Land owned by agrarian communities and municipalities could be leased on a long-term basis to farmers who would work on larger areas and take care of dry grasslands. Defining the conditions of long-term lease on the land of agrarian communities would provide farmers with greater security and stimulate interest in farming.</p> <p>Establishment of a management organization of dry grasslands for the purpose of planned and systemic integration / cooperation at</p>
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		<p>the international level. Management organization would ensure that participation in international projects is consistent with long-term goals.</p> <p>Conservation of species and habitats as an opportunity to raise the quality of living.</p> <p>Inclusion of the emerging map of biological connectivity of areas in spatial maps.</p> <p>Meeting for the implementation of the SWOT analysis as an opportunity to prepare a list of existing databases and check how those could be upgraded by the NARCIS project (Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation), within which the optimization of existing nature protection databases is planned.</p>
	<p>SPATIAL PLANNING</p>	<p>Better coordination regarding the intended use of space in agriculture, as many things can be regulated in a spatial act, but not everything.</p> <p>There are still owners of larger compact areas (municipalities, agrarian communities, Agricultural Land Fund).</p> <p>More active and systematic involvement of stakeholders in the field of agriculture and forestry in the preparation of municipal spatial plans (OPN).</p>
	<p>AGRICULTURE</p>	<p>Increasing interest in agriculture to the extent that the trend of overgrowing the dry grasslands the Karst is reversed.</p> <p>Preserving agriculture is essential to maintaining the landscape.</p> <p>Opportunities to improve the existing system of agricultural policy measures; changes in the conditions (restrictions) for beneficiaries of the common agricultural policy measures, including the measure to prevent overgrowing of the area, so that farmers will be more motivated to intervene; measures that are ineffective need to be changed. Also, the recently amended regulation on the implementation of the measure to eliminate overgrowing on agricultural land already introduces fewer restrictions.</p> <p>As part of the strategic planning of agricultural land management, the conservation of grasslands may also be planned within the framework of the Strategic Plan of the Common Agricultural Policy 2023-2027.</p> <p>Sanctions of land tenants of the Agricultural Land Fund when farming deviates from the intended use of land (bad practices when agricultural tenants inconsistently use agricultural land).</p>



		<p>Inter-ministerial harmonization of interpretations of current legislation and priorities at the level of ministries, so that there will be no more inconsistent and / or even conflicting instructions from various executive bodies during the implementation of nature protection projects (example of the Škocjan Caves Park, project ZA KRAS, difficulties, caused by differences in the interpretation of illegal state aid in agriculture between two ministries).</p> <p>Actual proposals can be the basis for the design of new and / or renewed measures, whereby part of the measures can be targeted at a specific area (Karst).</p> <p>It is essential to include the Agricultural Land Fund in further discussions.</p> <p>The presence of Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia, which can contribute to greater coordination of farmers.</p> <p>Financial resources provided for the introduction of changes.</p>
	FORESTRY	<p>Coordination of agricultural and forestry measures for more efficient management of areas, as landowners are often involved in both agriculture and forestry.</p> <p>Additional activation of municipalities in the field of planning the preservation of forest areas in municipal ownership.</p> <p>The reform of the common agricultural policy is being prepared - we need a strategic plan, which is an opportunity to regulate the situation.</p> <p>Involvement of companies due to numerous business opportunities in the field of wood use and wood biomass.</p>

	AREA	
T H R E A T S	BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION	<p>Climate change.</p> <p>The high complexity of the ecosystem, which includes very diverse dry grasslands, so management should not be simplified. If we want to maintain the mosaic image, we need an individual approach for each plot.</p> <p>Maintaining the status quo and existing measures that are incomplete and partial; there is a lack of political will for comprehensive harmonization of the areas of nature protection, spatial planning, agricultural policy... this is a threat that applies to all areas, not just the area of biodiversity.</p>

		<p>Lack of a manager of the entire Natura 2000 Karst area, management plans and guidelines for biodiversity. Consequently, there is lack control and protection of dry grasslands.</p> <p>Failure to carry out management activities in the area (in the Karst this happens mainly in state-owned areas).</p> <p>An unspecified timeline for achieving the set goals.</p> <p>Failure to provide systemic (long-term) financing (it is currently mostly project-based, short- and medium-term).</p> <p>Invasive alien species - there is no common instruction on how to manage invasive species.</p> <p>Another species can become invasive, as some adapt extremely quickly.</p> <p>Lack of systemic management and control for non-forest areas.</p> <p>Mulching dry grasslands - the landscape is losing its shape and the species are losing its habitat.</p> <p>Too much focus on Natura 2000, too little on endangered species and habitats at the national level.</p> <p>Dealing with lists of protected and rare species that are a dead letter on paper.</p> <p>Forgetting the great importance of marginal agricultural areas (e.g. hedges), which contribute to the mosaic image of the landscape.</p>
	SPATIAL PLANNING	<p>Further inconsistencies between the actual situation and municipal plans will certainly have a negative impact on strategic planning as an aspect of spatial management.</p> <p>Further inactivity of municipalities in the management of agricultural land and forest owned by municipalities.</p>
	AGRICULTURE	<p>Short-term planning in agriculture, without long-term goals.</p> <p>Bureaucratic obstacles as a systemic problem in financing various agricultural projects (too much bureaucracy for both the farmer and the public services) lead to spontaneous and unplanned land management in the long run.</p> <p>Loss of interest in agriculture or also for grazing livestock (without grazing livestock there is no grassland).</p> <p>Excessively intensive livestock farming.</p>



		The large carnivores that occur in the area cause damage to farmers and cause demotivation for agriculture.
	FORESTRY	There are no common instructions on how to manage invasive tree species or. how to include their presence in forest management.

List of Participants (Slovenia)

Name	Institution
Stojan Ščuka	Škocjan Caves Park
Miloš Bartol	Škocjan Caves Park
Tina Trampuš	Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation
Jana Laganis	Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation
Ida Štoka	Chamber of Agriculture and Forestry of Slovenia, Sežana regional unit
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Boštjan Košiček	The Slovenia Forest Service, Sežana regional unit
Matej Reščič	The Slovenia Forest Service, Sežana regional unit
Andreja Neve Repe	The Slovenia Forest Service
Jure Čuš	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food
Peter Glasnović	University of Primorska
Blanka Bartol	Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning
Matevž Premelč	Zavita
Marko Pretner	Triglav National Park
Bruno Kostelić	Istria Croatia
Luka Škunca	BIOM
Marina Grgić	BIOM
Irena Bertonceļj	Agricultural Institute of Slovenia
Ana Čebin	Agricultural Institute of Slovenia
Janja Novoselc	moderator, KASPR

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Two different meetings were held in the two sides of the Pilot Area Croatia/Slovenia, discussing the same issue, the preservation of dry grassland and its potentials for ecological connectivity. In Croatia, spatial planning and biodiversity supports the development of an ecological network, but agriculture and forestry needs to identify and implement some additional changes.

Spatial Planning

Strengths overcome weaknesses

Spatial planning is an important spatial management tool that has resulted in the recent development of a municipal spatial plan in the pilot area. This spatial plan protects grasslands from potential threats of their fragmentation due to pressures from various development projects. Also, the natural potential of the entire cross-border area has been recognized, which can be seen in various categories of nature protection on both sides of the borders.

Opportunities overcome threats

Planning management documents are currently being drafted, which will further strengthen the position of grassland protection. The managers of natural values in the pilot area are also clearly defined, which guarantees that there are clearly defined entities with the task of establishing communication between all stakeholders and solving the identified problems in the pilot area.

Biodiversity

Strengths overcome weaknesses

The location and quality of dry grassland habitats in the pilot area are known and predominantly protected by some of the nature protection categories or are located within the N2000 site. We have lost large areas of those habitats, but the existing way of space management suggests that the remaining dry grassland will be possible to protect and preserve. Also, there is a horizontal and vertical connection of relevant institutions that own and exchange data, and their activities contribute to the protection of valuable habitats.

Opportunities overcome threats

The challenges are identical on both sides of the borders and there is an international connection of institutions that seek to protect dry grasslands in the pilot area. The public perception is positive and there are more and more programs and funding sources, which is why there is an opinion that it is possible to overcome obstacles and identified threats from the SWOT analysis.

Agriculture

Weaknesses overcome strengths

Grasslands contribute to preservation of the native biodiversity, but also, from economic aspect they contribute to the development of agriculture. However, conclusion is that agriculture in the pilot area (primarily livestock breeding that is important for grazing) is in a rather poor condition. Negative demographic trends and inadequate incentives fees for farmers are one of reasons for current situation.

Unresolved property relations are a major problem that further complicates livestock breeding and need to be addressed and resolved.

Opportunities overcome threats

The responsible institutions are involved and there are willing to give support and assist. The direction for solving problems has already been indicated. It is necessary to focus on specific locations with high - quality grasslands for grazing, as well as on locations where property relations are resolved. Also, water availability should be taken in concern. There is an opportunity for incentives for some forms of favorable lending. Advantage is the fact that farmers do not need to apply every year, they are valid for a period of 5 years. There are suggestions on how to resolve grazing issue, and there are examples of good practice.

Forestry

Weaknesses overcome strengths

The weakness that was recognized is the fact that a large part of the Pilot area of forests is privately owned, and for most of these Forests' Management Plans do not exist. Outcome is uncontrolled logging in this area, and it is difficult to define the direction of development. Also, the problem is kumunele - a specific form of joint ownership that has not been resolved. It is related to the large area of forest and agricultural land.

Opportunities overcome threats

There are models of succession prevention in the form of mechanical removal of bush vegetation, controlled ignition, programs for removing black pine forest areas. Some of these methods have been successfully carried out in the Pilot area. In further efforts to prevent succession and grassland protection, the most appropriate model for the pilot area should be considered. Also, strategic and planning documents provide the basis for implementation of the necessary actions, and the necessary financial resources can be provided for them. There is an interest of relevant institutions and their mutual cooperation for solving mentions problems.

For the Slovenian side, the response to the workshop was exceptional, as the Agricultural Institute of Slovenia managed to ensure the participation of the vast majority of stakeholder that play an important role in policy-making and management of natural areas, including dry grasslands, by carefully identifying the target group of participants.

The participants assessed the interdisciplinarity of the meeting as extremely positive, actively participated in the reflections on all four areas of SWOT

analysis and also actively participated in the drafting of the final document after the meeting.

At the meeting, the participants expressed their desire to concretize the highlighted strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and dangers on concrete examples from practice. Several proposals were made to include concrete proposals for improvements, which the Agricultural Institute of Slovenia intends to prepare within the DINALPCONNECT project in the form of an Action Plan in cooperation with the Škocjan Caves Park in 2022. Participants will be informed about the project results and opportunities for cooperation in the future.