



Event Report

**EPPA Regional workshop on promoting good practices on EU-level
green and blue infrastructure projects**

**Creating a platform for national stakeholders to disseminate the multiple benefits of
Green and Blue Infrastructure solutions**

27-28 October 2021

Live video conference



This Project is funded by the European Union

NIRAS **umweltbundesamt^U**

The project implemented by the Consortium of NIRAS (lead)
and Umweltbundesamt GmbH

1 The event

The EPPA regional workshop on “Promoting good practices on EU-level green and blue infrastructure projects - Creating a platform for national stakeholders to disseminate the multiple benefits of Green and Blue Infrastructure solutions” took place on October 27-28, 2021, via live video conference. The workshop was organized in cooperation with TAIEX, and under the EPPA project work programme, namely activity 3.6 “Promote good practices on EU-level green and blue infrastructure projects – linking Green infrastructure with blue infrastructure (MPAs and water retention measures)”. It targeted the following EPPA beneficiaries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey.

The participants came from the relevant authorities of the EPPA beneficiaries involved in spatial planning and nature protection policy. They represented the Ministries with the environment portfolio, in addition to spatial planning institutes, national environmental management agencies, and water management agencies. Details are available in the list of participants. Civil society was represented by NGOs from the beneficiaries, namely: KADOS Kadikoy - Friends of Science, Culture and Art Association (Turkey), Co-PLAN Institute for Habitat Development (Albania), and Institute for Development Policy – INDEP (Kosovo*). The EU Delegations in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey were also present.

The speakers represented both the experience of EU Member States and of the European Commission (EC). There were experts from the relevant national authorities of Croatia, Romania, and Slovenia. Additionally, the workshop mobilized contributions from UNEP/MAP, the Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC), Plan Bleu, and EPPA beneficiaries. Details are available in the agenda; the presentations can be downloaded in both the TAIEX website and in the EPPA project website.

The Workshop aimed at raising awareness on the Blue Green Infrastructure (BGI) methods, benefits, and barriers, through the creation of a platform of dialogue and cooperation in a region that is complex and very diverse. There is a gap in understanding the requirements, interests, and motivational behaviours of BGI users, as well as their potential for developing stakeholders dialogue, that is addressed through the best practices and lessons learned analysis of case studies presented at this workshop. The event also aimed to raise awareness and knowledge of the concept of ecosystem services and of the value of blue and green infrastructure in protecting, preserving, and enhancing natural ecosystem, while achieving other environmental, public health, social, and economic benefits.

2 Proceedings and conclusions

EU Member States experts shared their experience regarding the development of green and blue infrastructure. Romania presented its experience in the context of the Danube River Basin. These have been focused on measures integrated with the river basin management plan and the flood risk management plan. Regarding flood management, Romania will create a roadmap of floodplain restoration and preservation partially based on green infrastructure, that will contribute to recreate lost aquatic, riparian and terrestrial habitats and prevent biodiversity loss. Concrete work, has already been planned for some pilot areas like in Bistret, including dikes, wetland restoration, afforestation, wetlands, and fishing lakes (estimated cost of 52 million euros). For Romania the Danube River Basin approach is very important as related to green infrastructure for water management. All the future projects on water management will include green infrastructure.

Croatia’s approach is structured along the implementation of Natura 2000 protection measures, through prioritized action frameworks (PAFs). These are strategic multiannual planning tools, aimed at providing a comprehensive overview of the measures that are needed to implement the EU-wide Natura 2000 network and its associated green infrastructure, specifying the financing needs for these measures, and linking them to the corresponding EU funding programmes. Some examples of action taken already in improving green infrastructure are the Polje Nature Park (floodwater retention in wetlands), integrated management of Croatian rivers to create new floodplains and biodiversity hotspots, developing green bridges over transport infrastructure, developing new forestry tools and funding through ecosystem



services payments, as well as mainstreaming green infrastructure ideas into other policy areas, like spatial planning, city management, transport and energy, and tourism.

Slovenia brought forward its lessons learned regarding data harvesting and exchange to achieve a better spatial analysis of anthropogenic activities and the benefits of green and blue infrastructure. This approach relies on taking already existing data layers (for instance, land use, Natura 2000 areas, heritage, water management, etc.) and integrating them into a single data matrix, allowing to recognize and identify specific and important green infrastructure and the ecosystem services it provides. However, unifying data is challenging and requires an efficient and feasible approach for better decision making. There could be different forms of georeferencing data, different data records or formats, large amounts of data available, data and results presented under incompatible theoretical models of calculation and interpretation, etc. To solve these problems, Slovenia is developing a web tool that integrates data from multiple sources and therefore makes it easier to use data for policy and decision making (several examples were provided on how it can be used).

Bulgaria presented the challenges at the nexus of hydropower and blue infrastructure. Historically, Bulgaria invested heavily on HPPs, currently it has 247 plants contributing with 13% of total power production. However, these 13% come at a high cost, including fragmentation and loss of aquatic habitats and biodiversity which are at the core of the country's Natura 2000 sites and corridors. As such, Bulgaria started implementing the ICPDR approach to hydropower that consists of defining "no go areas" for hydropower based on a mix of criteria (environmental, socio-economic, and energy effectiveness). In addition, it is also implementing mitigation measures to existing facilities that target ecological and biological flows interrupted by the dams. However, social tension between energy and environmental interests remains to be solved.

The EPPA project set the tone for the sharing of experience of its beneficiaries with green infrastructure and blue infrastructure by presenting the outcomes of the EPPA study on green infrastructure and ecosystems services in the Western Balkans. The study identified 13 priority areas for ecosystem restoration and GI deployment as well as 8 green corridors with EU Member States. The study also provides links to the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the WBIF/IPA III funding for EPPA countries, as well as conclusions and recommendations focused on mechanisms for regional and transboundary cooperation.

The Regional Administration of Protected Areas Vlore (Albania) offered its experience with the management of the single marine national park in Albania: "Karaburun-Sazan". Although it is the only marine park, it represents 15% of the Albanian coastline, having been established in 2010. The park is divided in 4 areas. The central zone (6% of the park) is strictly protected with only scientific and monitoring activities allowed; the effective management zone (69%) where some leisure activities are allowed, such as diving and water sports; the recreation zone (15%) where more human activity is allowed, including fishing; and the sustainable development zone (9%) dedicated to full touristic services and fishing. The park has specific species and habitat conservation goals (*Posidonia oceanica*, *Lithophylum byssoides*, *Cystoseira amentacea*), supported by monitoring protocols. The park's future goals are to create a financial mechanism for sustainability, develop a marine spatial plan for Vlora Bay, and improve regulation and control of touristic activities and flows.

Montenegro highlighted the importance of waste management infrastructure to maintain green and blue assets. In order to do so, Montenegro invested heavily in waste infrastructure, including recycling centres, a composting plant, waste treatment plants for hazardous wastes (medical, electric, electronic), and improvement of existing landfills. Further investments are ongoing to continue improve the waste management infrastructure.

Workshop outputs

The workshop's main outputs were:

- Raised awareness on Blue and Green Infrastructure (BGI) methods, benefits, and barriers.
- Raised awareness and knowledge of the concept of ecosystem services and of the value of blue and green infrastructure in protecting, preserving, and enhancing natural ecosystem, while achieving other environmental, public health, social, and economic benefits.



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- Exchange of experiences regarding the development of green and blue infrastructure in both EU Member States and EPPA beneficiaries.
- Discussion on the links of green and blue infrastructure with multiple policy subsectors of the EU, including water and flood management, protected areas management, transport and energy, etc.

3 Evaluation

The participants were asked to evaluate the workshop by TAIEX using an online survey after the event. The evaluation results are presented below in a summary table.

				Nr Responses	Expert Score	Yes / Excellent	No / Good	Partially / Satisfactory	Do not know / Poor		
81206	Workshop - participant - A. Questions	1	Was the workshop carried out according to the agenda?	20		16 (80%)	1 (5%)	3 (15%)			
		2	Was the programme well structured?	20		18 (90%)		2 (10%)			
		3	Were the key issues related to the topics addressed?	20		19 (95%)		1 (5%)			
		4	Did the workshop enable you to improve your knowledge?	20		17 (85%)	1 (5%)	2 (10%)			
		5	Was enough time allowed for questions and discussions?	20		19 (95%)		1 (5%)			
		7	Do you expect any follow-up based on the results of the workshop (new legislation, new administrative approach, etc.)?	20		18 (90%)	2 (10%)				
		8	Do you think that further TAIEX - Ipr_c_ abbreviation's assistance is needed (workshop, expert mission, study visit, assessment mission) on the topic of this workshop?	20		18 (90%)	2 (10%)				
		Workshop - participant - B. Expert ratings		Mr. Constantin, Gheorghe - Speaker MS	20	93.75%	15 (75%)	5 (25%)			
	Mr. Dimovski, Mihail - Other speakers		20	92.5%	14 (70%)	6 (30%)					
	Ms. Popovici, Mihaela - Other speakers		20	92.5%	14 (70%)	6 (30%)					
	Ms. Pokrnjac, Petekar, Anita - Speaker MS		20	91.25%	13 (65%)	7 (35%)					
			20	90%	12 (60%)	8 (40%)					
81206	Workshop - participant - B. Expert ratings	Mr. Sarit, Sano - Speaker MS	20	93.75%	15 (75%)	5 (25%)					
		Mr. Vassilev, Ventsislav - Other speakers	20	90%	12 (60%)	8 (40%)					
		Ms. Herra, Tatjana - Other speakers	20	87.5%	12 (60%)	6 (30%)	2 (10%)				
		Mr. Goozales, Gasino - Other speakers	20	91.25%	13 (65%)	7 (35%)					
		Mr. Uyar, Tanay Sidki - Speaker CC	20	92.5%	14 (70%)	6 (30%)					
		Mr. Ajredini, Smuel - Other speakers	20	92.5%	15 (75%)	4 (20%)	1 (5%)				
		Mr. Guarnis, Francois - Other speakers	20	92.5%	14 (70%)	6 (30%)					
		Ms. Brnovic, Ruzica - Speaker CC	20	86.25%	9 (45%)	11 (55%)					
		Ms. Filipovska, Erika - Other speakers	20	88.75%	12 (60%)	7 (35%)	1 (5%)				
		Ms. Ladij, Lorna - Speaker CC	20	91.25%	13 (65%)	7 (35%)					
		Workshop - participant - C. Logistic Ratings		1	Conference venue	13		6 (46%)	3 (23%)	4 (31%)	
	2		Interpretation	13		8 (62%)	2 (15%)	3 (23%)			
	3		Hotel	8		5 (63%)	3 (38%)				
	4		Flight	7		1 (14%)	5 (71%)	1 (14%)			
	5		Catering	7		1 (14%)	5 (71%)	1 (14%)			
81206	Workshop - participant - C. Logistic Ratings	6	Was the communication leading up to the event satisfactory?	12		10 (83%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)			
		7	Was the pre-event test useful?	13		11 (85%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)			
		8	Did you find the virtual event platform easily accessible?	14		14 (100%)					
		9	Was the platform user-friendly?	17		17 (100%)					
		10	Did the host provide adequate instructions during the event, on the use of the platform and in problem solving?	15		14 (93%)	1 (7%)				
		11	Was the IT support provided adequate?	17		16 (94%)		1 (6%)			
		81206	Workshop - speaker - A. Questions	1	Did you receive all the information necessary for the preparation of your contribution?	7		7 (100%)			
				2	Has the overall aim of the workshop been achieved?	7		7 (100%)			
				3	Was the agenda well structured?	7		7 (100%)			
				4	Were the participants present throughout the scheduled workshop?	7		6 (86%)		1 (14%)	
				5	Was the beneficiary represented by the appropriate participants?	7		7 (100%)			
6	Did the participants actively take part in the discussions?			7		4 (57%)		3 (43%)			
7	Do you expect that the beneficiary will undertake follow-up based on the results of the workshop (new legislation, new administrative approach etc.)?			7		5 (71%)			2 (29%)		
8	Do you think that the beneficiary needs further TAIEX - Ipr_c_ abbreviation's assistance (workshop, expert mission, study visit, assessment mission) on the topic of			7		7 (100%)					
81206	Workshop - speaker - C. Logistic Ratings	9	Would you be ready to participate in future TAIEX - Ipr_c_ abbreviation's workshops?	7		6 (86%)	1 (14%)				
		6	Was the communication leading up to the event satisfactory?	2		2 (100%)					
		7	Was the pre-event test useful?	3		3 (100%)					
		8	Did you find the virtual event platform easily accessible?	3		3 (100%)					
		9	Was the platform user-friendly?	3		3 (100%)					
		10	Did the host provide adequate instructions during the event, on the use of the platform and in problem solving?	4		4 (100%)					
		11	Was the IT support provided adequate?	4		4 (100%)					
		Workshop - speaker - D. Comments		Successful event benefiting of the usual professional TAIEX support coordinated by Nicolas! Thank YOU!							
		Workshop - participant - D. Comments		First of all, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to participate in the workshop. Excellent organization of the event, selected presentations appropriate to the title of the training. The acquired information, directions and knowledge from the presentations, I will be able to use in the future in the daily work and decision making in the procedures for solving the problems related to water protection, ie the environment. I ask you that the next meeting be held physically because online meetings are not seeming effective to me. Informative, very much contextualized time-wise but not that much with the actual situation of VB. In overall very positive feedback from my perspective.							



Endnotes

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Annexes

Annex 1: Agenda (provided as a separate document)

Annex 2: List of Participants (provided as a separate document)

Annex 3: Presentations (provided as a separate document)



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