

## ECO-CONNECTIVITY: THE ROLE OF GREEN AND BLUE CORRIDORS IN SPATIAL PLANNING

As a way to support the implementation of the 'EU Green Deal' (EUGD) in practice, the practical concept of Green Infrastructure (GI) is becoming an international standard in nowadays spatial planning. The GI concept also offers a support to the EU Biodiversity Strategy (EBS), not only as a benefit for wildlife, but for human well-being as well. Together with other protocols, such as River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs), Integrated Coastal Zone Management Protocol (ICZM), Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)..., EBS offers a way of how to start achieving the natural recovery by 2030.

By implementing the GI concept, we are gradually improving the availability of ecosystem services (ES), while by ES the varied benefits to humans endowed by the healthy ecosystems are meant. It is crucial to understand that the conservation of biodiversity is also a guarantee for various benefits for humans, such as quality water supply, food and natural material supply, fresh air, recreational possibilities... which is also an ultimate guarantee for a long-term sustainable development. Additionally, the improved use of local sources and services also has a positive side effect: it decreases the hazard of spreading harmful diseases. In the post-COVID context, EBS aims to build our society resilient for future threats, such as climate change impacts, food and water supply insecurity, epidemics, economic disturbances, forest fires, natural disasters...

However, to gain the benefits which are foreseen by the Green Deal, thus zero pollution, affordable secure energy, smarter transport..., requires big changes in human economic and social behaviour. In order to practically apply the changes in the environment, methodological support is being developed. It consists of technical/spatial analysis methods and legal basis development, as well as the education and awareness raising plans. Technical methodology leads us to first, recognize the GI that already is present in the environment, and second, develop new land uses that can improve multiple ES supply or biodiversity in the area.

New GI areas are supposed to restore and improve the connectivity between the fragmented areas and network and/or other areas of high value for biodiversity. Connecting such areas takes place by implementing the so-called green and blue corridors: green corridors connect the otherwise isolated green areas, while blue corridors provide the connectivity of water systems. In this way we can establish a larger EU wide network of protected areas on land and sea, preventing genetic isolation and enabling adaptation of species and habitats to various changes in the environment.

On the Slovenian coastline, with the support (also financial) from different initiatives, programmes and from national and local institutions, many actions have already been performed, nationally and internationally. A few examples: with the Markovec tunnel we managed to redirect traffic away from the coast line, by restoring the Škocjan inlet we significantly improved biodiversity and the range of ES in the region, through lectures and workshops we are educating the young generation, by establishing the Board of coastal local communities (and similarly, the Board of Vipava region) we raised awareness about green topics among local inhabitants and actively involved the community in the local spatial planning, encouraging in this way the bottom-up approach (video: Towards the Green Coast: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ka1CfYhWXdg>, recent international conferences: Living with water 2019, Climate Change 2020...). With bottom-up approach, we complement the top-down approach and contribute to the establishment of strong local communities – cornerstones

of the resilient system – that are able to recognize and balance, not only the impact on the local environment on a local scale, but also the impacts and pressures coming from the outside.

This will provide viability of our own and other countries' goals when addressing sustainable development within healthy environment on land and sea. Our mission is to strengthen the cooperation between the countries and communities in the Adriatic-Ionian region, which will lead to improvement of marine environment on local and regional scale. During the day 2 of the TSG3 workshop we will address concrete measures to enhance transboundary cooperation, oriented toward post COVID recovery within the future green deal prospective.