



BIOGOV uses multi-stakeholder partnerships and participatory governance to improve regional policies for natural heritage and biodiversity conservation

www.interregeurope.eu/biogov

An interregional cooperation project for improving natural and cultural heritage policies.

Project Partners

Province of Fryslân (NL)

Flemish Land Agency (BE)

Bulgarian Management Association (BG)

Territorial Studies Institute (Environment and Territorial Planning Ministry) (ES)

Lodzkie Region (PL)

ADEPT Transylvania Foundation (RO)

Mures Environmental Protection Agency (RO)

County Administrative Board of Västra Götaland (SE)

Slovenian Forestry Institute (SI)



Environment &
resource
efficiency



1.30 M
ERDF



Jun 2018
May 2022



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

Action plan
BIOGOV 2020-2022

BIODIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

Forest management

Planning for biodiversity

Project: BIOGOV

Partner organisation: Slovenian Forestry

Institute

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant):

Country: Slovenia

NUTS2 region:

Contact person: Tjaša Baloh

Email address: tjasa.baloh@gozdis.si

Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- ☐ Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- ☐ European Territorial Cooperation programme
- ☒ Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed:

Operational Programme for the
Implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy
in the Period 2014-2020



This action plan has been developed with the support of
the European Union through Interreg Project BIOGOV 2018-2020.

Biodiversity governance

Improving regional policies for natural heritage and biodiversity conservation through Multistakeholder partnerships and participatory governance

In 2018, the BIOGOV partners in Slovenia opened a collaboration with the Slovenia Forest Service and the Institute of Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation to facilitate activities of two Regional Stakeholder Groups in two Forest Management Units (FMUs), selected to be prototype FMUs for the BIOGOV project. The aim of work was to address specific biodiversity challenges in the forests of FMUs using a multi-stakeholder partnership (MSP) process.

The FMUs have been selected based on criteria discussed by the BIOGOV project team and submitted to the Slovenia Forest Service who presented a list of eligible FMUs in the Upper Carniola and Central Slovenia NUTS 3 regions.

The criteria for selection of FMUs were the following:

1. The Forest Management Plan (FMP) is undergoing renovation in the years 2019, 2020 or 2021.
2. Expected level of stakeholder activity is high
3. Timeframe of the preparation of the FMP is compatible with the Phase I of the BIOGOV project (2 years)
4. Variety of forest functions (ecosystem services) is present in the FMU (provisioning, supporting, regulating, cultural)
5. Diverse forest ownership

During the bilateral meetings between the BIOGOV project team, Slovenia Forest Service and the Institute of RS for Nature Conservation, the MSP concept was presented to the two main actors in the forest management planning process. We carried out stakeholder mapping for each FMU, focusing on stakeholders' past involvement in the process of forest management planning, their level of interest and power of influence. The main challenges to be addressed by the Regional stakeholder group (RSG)

workshops within each FMU were identified. The main stakeholders identified during the bilateral stakeholder mapping meetings were contacted by the BIOGOV project team or the local forest rangers.

In April 2019, a RSG workshop for FMU Medvode was carried out. An independent professional facilitator moderated the workshop using participatory methods. The main stakeholder groups attended the workshop, the specifics of the FMU were presented by the local forester and on-site presentation of the biodiversity challenges the FMU is facing was carried out. Another session has been dedicated to group work addressing the biodiversity challenges in light of forest management planning.

The RSG workshop in FMU Radovljica took place November 2019. The workshop started with field presentation of management and environmental challenges by the local forest manager. The afternoon session was set up with participatory approach following H. Brouwer:

1. Shared language session:

I. What is biodiversity?

II. The impact of the current situation in forests and forest management planning on biodiversity - threats and opportunities

III. The role of FMPs to respond more intensively to threats and opportunities

2. Co-creation session:

Identification of activities directly or indirectly related to biodiversity enhancement that could be included in or derived from FMPs.

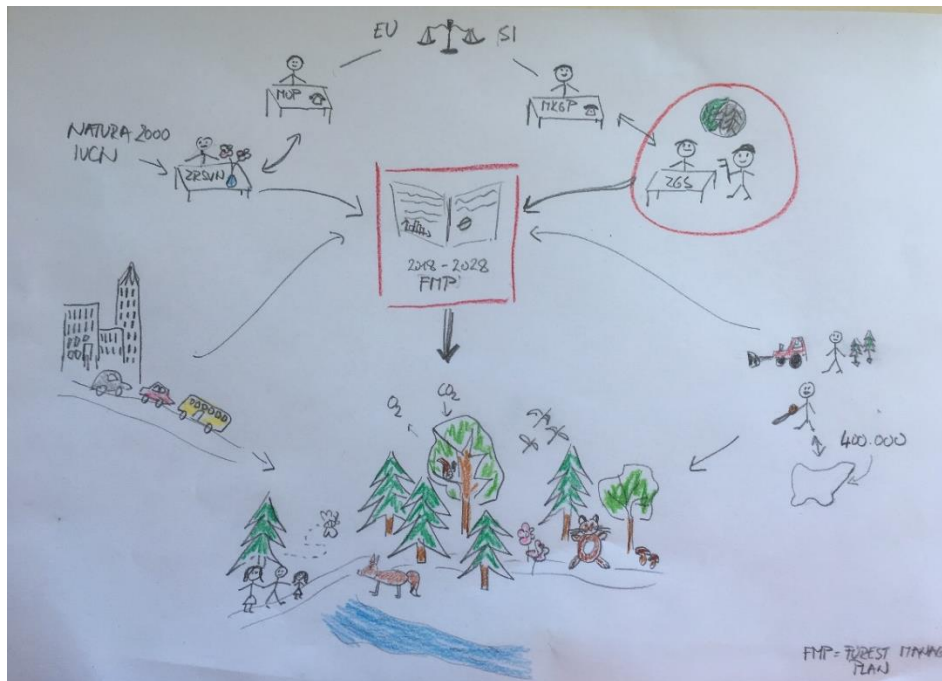
Regional Stakeholder Group Unit 1 (Medvode):

The RSG consisted of 4 local forest managers, 2 forest management planners, 6 researchers (silviculture, biodiversity), 4 private forest owners, 1 representative of Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, 1 representative of Ministry of Environment, 2 representatives of the Institute of the RS for Nature Conservation, 1 representative of mountain bike/cycling association, 1 representative of Biotechnical faculty..

Regional Stakeholder Group Unit 2 (Radovljica):

The RSG consisted of 4 local forest managers, 3 forest management planners, 2 researchers (silviculture), 2 private forest owners, 1 hunter, 2 representatives from the Slovenian State Forests, 1 representative of the Institute of the RS for Nature Conservation.

Background



For the purposes of forest management planning, Slovenia is divided into territorial units. These are further subdivided into forest management units for which forest management plans are prepared as part of the tasks of the public forestry service and financed from the state budget.

Slovenian Forest Service (SFS) is responsible for preparing plans for all territorial units and all forest area, public and private. The FMPs are binding in terms of restrictions.

Before preparing the draft, the employees of the SFS must obtain mandatory information prescribed by the law, which includes cultural protection guidelines, nature conservation guidelines and environmental guidelines (Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food, 2019).

Conservation guidelines are prepared by the Institute of RS for Nature Conservation (IRSNC) and include measures for maintaining the favourable status of species and habitat types, such as reducing artificial redevelopment areas, preparing habitat for restoration, recording dead tree mass, maintaining water areas, grasslands, maintaining forest reserves, ecocell formation and designing peaceful zones. The nature protection measures are the result of both nature protection orientations and the sustainable way of forest management and are co-designed by SFS and IRSNC. The guidelines are incorporated into the draft forest management plan.

1. Policy instrument works (state of play) and how it can be improved

In Slovenia, the notion of participatory planning has become embedded into policy processes, and in many forms those who are concerned by planning decisions can become involved in the process. These can be individuals, groups, organizations, etc. Nature conservation policies are well integrated into forest management plans, but measures for their implementation are planned and financed only in a small extent. To do this, it is necessary to incorporate new insights into stakeholder engagement in the process of drawing up forest management plans.

It is necessary to develop a more active participatory process of integrating nature conservation guidelines into the system of forest management planning, and with close cooperation of the SFS and IRSNC, formulate measures for maintaining the favourable status of qualifying species and habitat types.

- Challenge:

In forest planning, there are specific participation contexts and circumstances that affect the participatory process which need to be addressed. Forestry in Europe today faces a combination of trends such as restrictions on the economic production of timber while thorough bioeconomy the demand for timber is increasing ; the traditional use of forests for timber production is shifting to the non-market benefits of forests. Consequently, ecological and social functions are increasingly important in the use of forests, with environmental and social issues at the forefront. The growing diversity of interests in forests is causing conflicts concerning their use. This means that planners need to consider conflicting stakeholder interests when preparing FMPs. Such planning is demanding, time consuming and requires a lot of cooperation, both organizationally as well as with the interested public and forest owners.

An important feature of forestry participation in Slovenia is that forest management plans are prepared (and binding) for the use of public forests but also for private ones.

The forest management planning in Slovenia has a long tradition. Managing complex and conflicting interests requires public forestry agencies to improve their public participation skills and improve financial, organizational and technical capacity to promote and effectively use participatory approaches. Although forestry policies and laws foresee participatory approaches in forest management planning, there is no public funding available. Partly because of the lack of funds (and lack of time), the participatory process lacks in implementation due to low level of stakeholder engagement.

2. MSP process:

An important aspect is the collaboration between forestry and nature conservation professionals who together shape the sustainable development of forestry. In Slovenia, nature conservation content has long been embedded in the concept of sustainable, close to nature and multifunctional management of all forest areas, public and private. Forest use planning is intertwined with many legal acts and regulations. The key players in the field are SFS and IRSNC, which are preparing the forest management plan and setting nature conservation policies for forest management.

Both institutions play an important role in the planning of management of the Natura 2000 areas, which in Slovenia account for 45% of all forest area. This means that for almost half of Slovenian forests biodiversity conservation is important at least at a level 2 (out of 3)) and owners often face restrictions on the use of their forests, without being informed of presence of Natura 2000 area on their parcel and often without compensation following restrictions.

The forestry sector must increasingly integrate other fields (e.g. water protection, tourism, recreation) in its work to direct forest use to ensure its principles: sustainable, close to nature and multifunctional. Planning for sustainable use has a long tradition in Slovenia dating back to 19th century, but for its effective multi-purpose use it is necessary to expand the range of actors in forestry planning. Cross-sectoral cooperation between the forestry and nature protection services is crucial for the effective management and integration of nature conservation content, without neglecting the importance of the private sector (owners, forestry contractors) who are implementing the FMPs and also, civil society.

- Challenge to make MSP more effective ~~(500 Char)~~

Formally, the involvement of nature conservation and wider environmental content and actors in forest management planning has been identified and implemented at the institutional level, but studies suggest that implementation measures and active cooperation with the owners are still lacking. For the owners, performing forest management activities in accordance with nature protection guidelines is a difficult task. SFS is investing significant efforts into educating and raising capacities and skills of forest owners and SFS employees. Furthermore, it is necessary to set up measures, evaluate them financially and provide forest owners with adequate competences, the financing and compensation for the long-term provision of all forest functions, including biodiversity protection.

a. Conclusions from the baseline study:

In terms of MSP: participatory planning is foreseen with the Law (Forest Act,

Nature protection act, Aarhus convention as relevant for the process of forest management planning) ; however, the implementation depends on individual teams (the required level of participation is limited to gathering of the information and informing stakeholders on the almost finalised FMPs).

CHALLENGES:

- Lack of knowledgeable staff to carry out quality participation process
- Involvement is based mainly on informing, less on consultation processes
- Landowners are not aware of their right to participate
- The involvement of stakeholders is low, interest of small owners is low

The policy document

Biodiversity objective of Operational Programme for the Implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy in the Period 2014-2020 is described in the Priority 2.6.4 Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure.

The forest management in Slovenia follows three main principles: Multifunctional, Close-to-nature and Sustainable. The main instrument for implementation of these principles in forests is the forest management plan. Thus, the process of forest management planning is a crucial component of future biodiversity protection. Within this process participation of different actors should follow the goal - inclusion of sustainability. This should improve the process of policymaking, increase understanding and knowledge, and may help improve implementation of FMP.

BIOGOV in Slovenia

The overarching goal of BIOGOV in Slovenia is to facilitate a participatory process in forest management planning focusing on biodiversity aspects of forest management. The outcome of the BIOGOV activities will be two (2) Forest Management Plans, prepared and accepted because of increased collaboration between different actors.

BIOGOV does not aim at changing the wording of the policy document. It is focusing on improving the implementation of policy goals through a greater understanding and acceptance of conserving biodiversity for future resilience of forests within a broad number of stakeholders and communities. BIOGOV wants to improve governance and planning of the use of forest resources. Based on the experiences from the BIOGOV project, SFS can use the principles of participatory approach in the future work to conserve biodiversity within forest management. BIOGOV can thereby make the policy document more effective on a national level to conserve biodiversity.

Action plan

BIOGOV 2020 - 2022

The following actions are planned for 2020-2022 to improve implementation of policies for biodiversity conservation in Slovenia

Strategic level

Action 1:

1

Strengthen the institutional and personnel capacity of participatory planning for biodiversity in forest management in Slovenia

Improve skills and knowledge on participatory approaches of local forest management planners as well as institutional support for the participatory processes within planning.

Improved governance of the forest management planning process (timing of important information exchange regarding management strategies, solving the issues with local stakeholders, acceptance of participatory process results)

Inclusion of the BIOGOV team as an observer of participatory process into the preparation of the Forest management plans for the next period

Inspiration source: PP Netherlands – trained facilitator employed by the Agency, Best Practices from the interregional learning

Operational level

Action 2:

2

Strengthen the role of biodiversity in the forest management area of Bled and other regions in Slovenia

OP Priority 2.6.4 Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure:

Considering substantial bark beetle attacks in the FMU Radovljica and consequently damaged areas, the forests have changed significantly. We aim to protect and restore biodiversity with forest management strategies embedded into forest management planning focusing on increasing species diversity.

Reforestation of bark-beetle damaged areas using planting material of several tree species.

3

Action 3:

Setting up recreational paths separate from zones rich in biodiversity in the FMU Medvode

OP Priority 2.6.4 Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure.

Protecting identified biodiversity zones by softly limiting (channelling access to roads/tracks/paths) open and recreation access to areas of forests especially rich in biodiversity.

4

Action 4:

Promoting the participatory approach within implementation of future forest management practices for conservation of biodiversity

Foster participatory approach in drafting and accepting the Forest and conservation management handbook for riparian forests, work on informing and knowledge sharing of importance of implementation of these approaches in forestry and conservation practice

Synergies of BIOGOV and REFOCuS (DTP INTERREG DANUBE PROJECT)

Part III – Details of actions envisaged

Action 1	Strengthen the institutional and personnel capacity for of participatory planning for biodiversity in forestry management in Slovenia
1. Background	<p>We need better skills and knowledge of local forest management planners as well as institutional support for participatory processes in conservation and forest management planning.</p> <p>Improved governance of the forest management planning (FMP) process (in time exchange timing of important information exchange regarding management strategies, solving the issues with local stakeholders, more efficient acceptance of participatory process results)</p> <p>Inclusion of the BIOGOV team as an observer of participatory process into the preparation of the Forest management plans for subregional plans renovation process will include the BIOGOV team as observers of participatory process for the next period.</p> <p>During the BIOGOV project interregional visits it became clear that participatory approaches in planning require institutional capacities. The main inspiration for this activity has been the PP's Netherlands best practice on: A participatory process leading to cross-fertilization between policy and practice in Gulp valley (Voeren) as well as PP's Belgium and PP's Sweden's approach to biodiversity management.</p>
2. Activities	The process of drafting future forest management plans foresees increased participatory approach in planning. The BIOGOV team will be included as an outside observer to the participatory process which will take place from 2020 to 2021. The BIOGOV team will not have a decision-making power, however, it will be able to consult the SFS staff and give advice.
3. Players involved	Stakeholder groups involved in RSG: Slovenia Forest Service, Conservation Actors, Forest Owners, Public, Others.
4. Timeframe	2021
5. Cost	N/A
6. Funding sources	Planning process is funded from public funds within SFS institutional funding
7. Lessons learned from BIOGOV	Participatory approaches implemented during BIOGOV project and best practices from peer reviews and project interregional meetings show the importance and models of facilitating participatory governance.

Part III – Details of actions envisaged	
Action 2	Strengthen the role of biodiversity in the forest management area of Bled and other regions in Slovenian forests
1. Background	<p>The areas of FMU Radovljica and its surroundings have been largely under attack from bark beetle due to predominantly planted Norway spruce forest. This resulted in severely changed forest composition after dying Norway spruce was removed by sanitary cutting. In light of the changed conditions, the challenge is what kind of species composition to promote within Forest Management Plans to be more in line with the environmental conditions present in the area.</p> <p>Within the Regional Stakeholder group, the changes in species composition due to bark beetle attacks were addressed. Promotion of different, more suitable tree species were discussed to be included in the Forest management plans to support tree species biodiversity.</p> <p>The inspiration for this action have been: (1) the peer review visit in Sweden, showing the areas which have been set aside from monoculture, also due to bark beetle, and will be dedicated to promoting biodiversity; (2) the interregional meeting in Spain, where the main actors, local communities and land owners, are supported by public measures in establishing a protocol of collaboration between the administration and the associations of chestnut forest owners for the biological fight.</p>
2. Activities	We want to increase the importance of biodiversity in the Forest Management Plan. Within the forest management planning and activities for the reforestation of forests damaged by bark beetles we aim to promote the use of planting material of multiple tree species to enhance the biodiversity.
3. Players involved	SFI, SFS, forest owners
4. Timeframe	2020-2022
5. Cost	Planned within the SFS annual plan - TBD
6. Funding sources	PRP financing through Slovenia Forest Service
7. Lessons learned from BIOGOV	The MSP-processes brought together different actors in open discussion and increased understanding of the involved actors on important elements of biodiversity.

Part III – Details of actions envisaged	
Action 3	Setting up recreational paths separate from biodiversity zones reach in biodiversity in the FMU - Medvode
1. Background	<p>OP Priority 2.6.4 Protecting and restoring biodiversity and soil and promoting ecosystem services, including through Natura 2000, and green infrastructure.</p> <p>Recreation is one the most recognised and increasing forest ecosystem services.</p> <p>During the RSG Workshops for FMU Medvode, the forest manager presented the plan for conflict resolution between forest owners and recreation activities in private forests. The complaints of forest owners were mainly addressed to the damage to soil and endangering themselves (where the forest owner may be held responsible for injuries). The forest manager opened a discussion with individual forest owners and associations to plan for restricted forest recreation paths that would not cause damage to the private land. 43 forest owners agreed to participate.</p> <p>The BIOGOV inspiration stems from similarities in multipurpose space use and planning between Slovenia and Sweden. In both countries the approach is used in forestry. When different interests use the same resource, conflicts may occur if one use affects another negatively. In a multipurpose plan, the different uses are regulated to reach an optimal solution for all the uses. For the forest resource (timber production), this procedure generally results in adaptations of economic forestry to other uses, like biodiversity conservation or outdoor recreation. In Slovenia, we try to complement different forest functions at the same time. Both production and recreation function of forests are converged in this action, as inspired by the Sweden model.</p>
2. Activities	Protecting identified biodiversity zones by softly limiting (channelling access to roads/tracks/paths) open access to forests through FMP
3. Players involved	SFS, Municipality of Medvode, Forest owners, recreational association
4. Timeframe	2020 - 2022
5. Cost	/
6. Funding sources	Recreational association own resources, Municipality
7. Lessons learned from BIOGOV	<p>Conflict resolution strategies within MSP model have been adopted to facilitate a discussion among the opposing interested parties.</p> <p>The project interregional meeting in Romania and the peer review held in Sweden, ADEPT presented their activity of had setting up 80 km of mountain bike trails to help prevent the conflict.</p>

Part III – Details of actions envisaged	
Action 4	Promoting the participatory approach within implementation of new future forest management practices for conservation of biodiversity
1. Background	<p>Synergies of BIOGOV and REFOCuS DTP project</p> <p>Riparian forests of the Mura-Drava-Danube Biosphere Reserve are important ecological corridors but at the same time are in unfavourable condition due to, among other, lack of guidance on how to manage riparian forest, especially when natural regeneration fails. These forests are important for society in general due to provision of many services and benefits. REFOCuS fights to counteract this decline by boosting riparian forest resilience. In order to achieve this goal, the project is devising novel silvicultural methods for forest management and conservation and increase availability of appropriate planting material to be used when natural regeneration fails. It also aims to reconcile sometimes different views of forestry and conservation.</p> <p>One of the results of the REFOCuS project is the development of forest management and nature conservation guidelines/ practical approaches. The process of drafting the documents focuses on participatory approach based on knowledge from BIOGOV, with stakeholders providing inputs, and their training. With this the project will deal with the restoration and management of ecological corridors by addressing lack of knowledge on how to manage riparian forests and providing policy recommendations.</p>
2. Activities	Foster participatory approach in drafting and accepting the Forest and conservation management handbook for riparian forests, work on informing and knowledge sharing of importance of implementation of these approaches in forestry and conservation practice
3. Players involved	SFI and project partners
4. Timeframe	2020-2022
5. Cost	/
6. Funding sources	Project funding
7. Lessons learned from BIOGOV	Involvement of relevant stakeholders from the beginning, keeping open communication and consultation, building trust, and working on group dynamics.