

# **ACTION PLAN**

**to influence strategic investment in green  
infrastructure in**

# **LJUBLJANA URBAN REGION**

## Part I – General information

**Project: Planning for Environment and Resource eEfficiency in European Cities and Towns (PERFECT)**

**Partner organisation: Regional Development Agency of the Ljubljana Urban Region (RRA LUR)**

**Other partner organisations involved (if relevant): -**

**Country: Slovenia**

**NUTS2 region: SI04 - Western Slovenia**

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## 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 2014 – 2020 (OP),**

**Priority Axe (PA) 6. Improvements of the environment and biodiversity status,**

**Thematic Objective (TO) 6: Preserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency,**

**Investment Priority (IP) 6.3: Taking action to improve the urban environment, to revitalise cities, regenerate and decontaminate brownfield sites, reduce air pollution and promote noisereduction measures.**

Managing Authority (responsible for producing the policy): **Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy**

Intermediate body (implementation of policy instruments): **Ministry for Environment and Spatial planning (MESP)**

### IP Background

Urban areas in Slovenia are faced with suburbanisation, relocation of functions from urban centres to periphery and, consequently, loss of quality land in the vicinity of cities. At the same time, the areas in cities remain poorly exploited and devalued. All this weakens the developmental role of cities and the quality of living.

The specific objective of OP supports measures that will contribute to the efficient use of space in urban areas through the reactivation of abandoned and under-utilized areas in cities, improving public spaces in cities and hence improving the conditions for the development of economic and social activities and increasing the attractiveness of the urban environment for work and living.

The measures will be implemented through the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) mechanism. Only 11 urban municipalities are eligible for the use of funds: Ljubljana, Maribor, Koper, Kranj, Celje, Novo mesto, Velenje, Nova Gorica, Ptuj, Murska Sobota and Slovenj Gradec. Urban renewal projects for co-financing are proposed by urban municipalities based on their Sustainable Urban Strategies.

The proposed measures / projects must pursue two main objectives:

- The efficient use of space within cities and urban areas by reactivating abandoned and underused areas and buildings;
- Improving the quality of public spaces.

The criticism of the policy instrument refers to 2 main issues:

- The funding process is focused on a selection of cities / urban municipalities that can implement projects under the ITI mechanism, but there are other urban areas (conurbations) which are not eligible for funding but could greatly benefit from it.
- The funding is not intended solely for the green infrastructure (GI) measures; therefore, GI projects must compete for funds with other investment projects. The ratio between confirmed GI projects and other confirmed projects (investment construction projects) is about 1:5.

The OP 2014-2020 does not address green infrastructure specifically and doesn't foresee financial

instruments directed solely to urban GI. The possibilities of financing GI projects can be traced within several priority axes:

- PA 4. Sustainable consumption and production of energy and smart grids (financing of green roofs and green facades as complementary measures in the framework of energy renovation of buildings);
- PA 5. Climate change adaptation (financing of hydro-technical and ecosystem measures to reduce flood risk in the areas with potential significant flood risks)
- PA 6. Improvements of the environment and biodiversity status (financing projects for protecting and restoring biodiversity in Natura 2000 areas and projects in urban areas for improvement of the urban environment, revitalisation of cities, regeneration and decontamination of brownfield sites)
- PA 9 Social inclusion and poverty reduction (financing of local GI projects under CLLD strategies in areas of LAGs).

The fragmentation of various funding opportunities through OP means that not many of organisations are familiar with all the various funding instruments and therefore can't successfully compete for GI funds. Another obstacle for the investment in GI is that GI projects must compete for funds with other classic / grey infrastructure projects (e.g. hydro-technical construction projects compete for same funds as GI measures for flood protection).

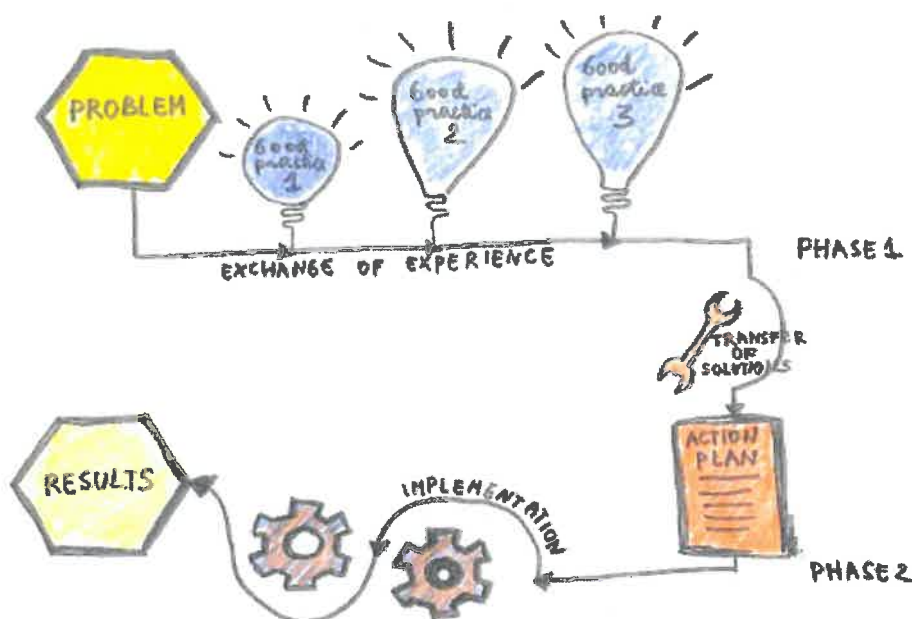
#### Performance Indicator

**10% representation of green infrastructure projects among all projects funded by the policy instrument, as a result of additional opportunities identified by the project.**

The main obstacles in achieving the indicator are:

- The difficulty to access OP funds (for smaller municipalities and local organizations which are not familiar with various funding opportunities) and
- The lack of interest for GI projects from local decision makers (which is linked to few opportunities for GI funding, ignorance of GI benefits, other priority issues).

#### The road to implementation



Source: [interreurope.eu/news-and-events/news/4236/on-the-road-to-implementation-tips-for-the-action-plans](https://interreurope.eu/news-and-events/news/4236/on-the-road-to-implementation-tips-for-the-action-plans)

Identified problems:

1. **No specific priority axes for (urban) green infrastructure** (possibilities of financing GI projects within several priority axes, a good knowledge of the OP is needed to trace various funding opportunities).
2. **When financing green infrastructure, projects are subject to the same criteria as other classic / grey infrastructure projects for funds (they aren't specifically encouraged).**
3. **The lack of interest for green infrastructure projects from local decision makers.**

Exchange of experience – good practices that influenced the Action Plan:

1. **Green Net Graz (Provincial Government of Styria);**
2. **Green Net GU-SÜD (Provincial Government of Styria);**
3. **Regional spatial planning (Provincial Government of Styria);**
4. **Plan Amsterdam (City of Amsterdam);**
5. **Handbook on participatory planning (Municipality of Ferrara);**
6. **Training Workshop for Councillors (Cornwall Council);**
7. **Factsheets and Expert papers (Town & Country Planning Association);**
8. **Periodical Newsletters (whole partnership)**
9. **Green City Instrument (SASD).**

Possible solutions – Action Plan Actions:

1. **Creating the Strategy for protection and development of green infrastructure in Ljubljana Urban Region.**
2. **Putting green infrastructure on the political agenda.**

## Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

### ACTION 1:

#### Creating the Strategy for protection and development of green infrastructure in Ljubljana Urban Region

1. **The background** (the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan)

Through the project we have identified a lack of inter-departmental and cross-sectoral cooperation when it comes to planning and implementation of GI. The lack of cooperation is perceived horizontally and vertically between various national and local institutions. That results in municipalities rarely agreeing on common priorities for the investment in GI and losing a chance to reach the desired multiple benefits and synergies of a well-planned GI.

Good practices from Ljubljana Urban Region and other PERFECT partners indicate that strategic, integrated and well-argued planning of GI is a first step towards creating a resilient environment. Therefore, inter-departmental and cross-sectoral working should start at the strategic level and persist to the implementation level as a common agenda of different stakeholders.

Experience gained from PERFECT partners:

- **Green Net Graz** (Provincial Government of Styria): example of a joint policy of the Urban Planning Department and the Department for Construction in the City of Graz, which brings forward the implementation of green spaces. The network is a strategic model for the longer term, serving as a framework for the work of the city's Urban Planning Department.
- **Green Net GU-SÜD** (Provincial Government of Styria, P2P meeting): example of a cooperation of 5 municipalities and the City of Graz, an extension of Green Net Graz into the neighbouring region.
- **Regional Spatial Planning – Regional Development Programme and Regional Development Concept** (Provincial Government of Styria, P2P meeting): example of how a combined spatial and development planning system works on a regional (inter-municipal) level.
- **Plan Amsterdam and green policies** (City of Amsterdam): example of integrated inter-departmental and cross-sectoral strategies, approaches and working practices of City of Amsterdam.
- **Handbook on participatory planning: Rethinking Green Infrastructure** (Municipality of Ferrara): a handbook for decision makers and public administration describing various methods, tools and processes of stakeholder's involvement, some of which will be used in preparing the strategy.
- **Periodical newsletters** (whole partnership): informing stakeholders about the role and benefits of GI, disseminating project results and good practices.

### 2. Action

Preparing the Strategy for protection and development of green infrastructure in Ljubljana Urban Region (GI Strategy). The document will be a result of an inter-departmental and cross-sectoral working of national, regional and local stakeholders, which covers a strategic long-term document and a mid-term implementation plan (action plan of the strategy). The strategy will:

- Define priority areas of protection and development of GI in the region.
- Set the priority list of measures and projects to be implemented.
- Be a basis for the Regional Development Programme, that must be prepared till 2021 and Regional Spatial Plan, that must be prepared till 2023 by the Ljubljana Urban Region.

**Actions to be implemented:**

**2.1 Workshops with stakeholders**

Planned number of workshops: 1-2

Timeframe: 7<sup>th</sup> Semester (January – June 2020)

**Aim:** Presentation of key components of the GI Strategy: priority areas, priority measures and the action plan and getting the feedback from the stakeholders. Including appropriate proposals in the final version of the strategy.

**Players involved:** representatives of 26 municipalities (municipal departments and services for spatial planning, protection of the environment and nature, communal activities, investments and development projects), representatives of ministries (Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food), representatives of national institutions (sectors covering topics of: nature, culture, water, forest etc.)

**2.2 Communication with 26 municipalities**

Planned number of newsletters: 2

Timeframe: 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Semester (January – December 2020)

**Aim:** Presentation of key components of the GI Strategy and its importance (in addition to raising awareness about the role and benefits of GI and disseminating good regional practices).

**Players involved:** representatives of 26 municipalities (municipal departments and services).

**2.3 Preparation of the document and its presentation in front of the Regional Development Board**

Timeframe: 8<sup>th</sup> Semester (July – December 2020)

**Aim:** Presenting and adopting the GI Strategy by the Regional Development Board (preparation of the documentation for the meeting, presentation in front of various committees prior to the Regional Development Board Meeting).

**Players involved:** Regional Council and its committees.

**2.4 Publishing of e- publication**

Timeframe: 8<sup>th</sup> Semester (July – December 2020)

**Aim:** To bring the GI Strategy document closer to the actual implementors we will produce a clear and easy to read publication containing key components of GI Strategy and distribute it via e-mail and publish it to rralur.si website.

**3. Players involved** (the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and their role):

- 26 Municipalities of Ljubljana Urban Region (different departments, services and officials) – cooperation in preparation of the GI Strategy, mostly verification of planned measures and the action plan.
- Ministries and national institutions: Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Slovenian Forest Service, Slovenian Forestry Institute, Institute for Water of Republic of Slovenia, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Nature Conservation, Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia – cooperation in preparation of the GI Strategy, mostly verification of planned measures and the action plan.
- Expert planning institutions – expert support in preparing the GI Strategy.
- Regional Development Board – a regional body that adopts all legally binding regional documents.
- Regional Development Committees – committees supporting the work of the board.

**4. Timeframe**

7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Semester (January – December 2020)

The preparation of the strategy is already in course, partially within the PERFECT project. A first draft of the strategy was prepared by the end of 2019. The final strategy will be prepared and presented to the Regional Development Board of the Ljubljana Urban region by the end of 2020.

**5. Costs**

Most of the preparatory work will be carried out by employees of the RRA LUR, staff costs will be covered by own resources.

The costs of workshops will be covered by own resources.

Planned costs:

- Staff costs – 4.500 EUR.

**6. Funding sources**

For the Action 1 RRA LUR's own resources will be used.

**ACTION 2:**

**Putting green infrastructure on the political agenda**

**1. The background** (the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan)

Low level of political engagement around GI is a threat, as political engagement is vital to put GI development with its full benefits in practice. To put GI on the political agenda we need to raise the awareness of the importance and functioning of GI amongst the national and local policy and decision makers. There is a need for a strong political "GI Ambassador" to advocate the importance and benefits of GI.

Good practices of educating and awareness raising methods for the decision makers have been tested



and presented during the PERFECT project and will be used as a basis:

- **Training Workshop for Councillors** (Cornwall Council): an awareness rising event tailored specifically for the decision makers with the aim to understand the need to actively plan for GI and to recognise the benefits that larger interconnected spaces can make to improve the social, economic and environmental functioning of new and existing developments.
- **Factsheets and Expert papers** (Town & Country Planning Association): tools to illuminate various aspects and benefits of GI in a simple and understandable way to provide evidence for planners and advocates of GI when communicating with policy and decision makers.
- **Periodical newsletters** (whole partnership): informing stakeholders about the role and benefits of GI, disseminating project results and good practices.
- **Green City Instrument** (SASD, P2P meeting) – an OP instrument through which cohesion policy funds in Hungary encourage cities to improve and expand green infrastructure in urban areas.

## 2. Action

To put GI on the political agenda the actions are planned on 3 different levels:

- Policy makers on the national level (Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning – different directorates and services, Ministry of Economic Development and Technology (Directorate for Regional Development), Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy, Association of Urban Municipalities of Slovenia and others)
- Local policy and decision makers (mayors and municipal councillors of 26 municipalities of the region)
- Municipal administration and services (of 26 municipalities of the region).

These 3 groups of stakeholders will be addressed through: training workshops, study visits, newsletters, factsheets, written recommendations and good practice examples dissemination.

### 8.1 Raising awareness of the policy makers on the national level

Timeframe: 7<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> Semester (January 2020 – June 2021)

- Presenting the GI Strategy (7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Semester): workshop, distribution of publication.
- Recommendations for the integration of GI provided in the process of preparation of the EU Cohesion Policy Operational Programme 2021-2027 (7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Semester): Whilst it was not possible to influence the current Operational Programme (OP) and the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) mechanism as there was no reopening of the programme in that part, we strive to influence the next programme. Through PERFECT project, the municipalities of Ljubljana Urban Region have recognized the importance of GI and the opportunities provided by GI projects in their area. By drafting a regional GI strategy, municipalities have prepared some of the projects to the point that they are ready to co-finance. This can be a good basis for Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy (MA), Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning (IB), and Association of Urban Municipalities of Slovenia (IB) to recognize the importance of urban GI and to set up the next OP (or to formulate calls and criteria for co-financing) so that the urban GI is more emphasized.
- Recommendations for the integration of GI provided in the process of preparation of the Strategy of Spatial Development of Slovenia 2050 (SSDS 2050) (7<sup>th</sup> Semester): Project PERFECT team is in constant contact with the Strategy of Spatial Development of Slovenia working group for last 3 years and will remain to do so in Phase 2. While project PERFECT is dealing with the regional level, the SSDS 2050 will address GI at the national level and give general directions for GI on the regional level. The interactions already resulted in putting GI into the strategy as one of the main components of the spatial development concept, together with polycentric urban system, transport corridors and rural areas. With the recommendations on GI on a regional level we believe to provide a missing link between the GI concept on a national level and the green systems planned on the local level of settlements. The SSDS 2050 is planned to be adopted in 2/2 of 2020.

- Recommendations for the integration of GI provided in the process of the preparation of the Regional Development Programme (7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Semester): The project PERFECT team will be directly involved in the preparation of next Regional Development Programme (RDP) and will give recommendations on the type, method and criteria for implementation of GI and make sure to include GI into RDP as one of regional development priorities.
- Recommendations for the integration of GI in preparation of Regional Spatial Plan. The project PERFECT team will be directly involved in the preparation of Regional Spatial Plan (RSP), the expertise that was produced through the project will act as an expert basis for the preparation of RSP, where one of the components will be landscape development concept.

Aim: trying to influence new policies, programmes and documents so that the GI will be better represented/included and the resources for the implementation of GI projects will be more easily accessible for the municipalities and other investors.

Players involved: Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy (MA), Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning (different directorates and services), Ministry of Economic Development and Technology (Directorate for Regional Development), Association of Urban Municipalities of Slovenia, Slovenian National Rural Network.

### 8.2 Changing mindsets of the local decision makers

Timeframe: 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> Semester (January 2020 – December 2021)

- Adaptation of 10 PERFECT Factsheets on various benefits of GI.
- 4x Training workshops and good practice presentations (study visits) in the region emphasizing one of the benefits of the GI (health, biodiversity, climate change, local economy). The workshops and presentations will be hosted and organized by RRA LUR and the selected municipality of the Ljubljana Urban Region.

Aim: trying to influence local decision makers to implement more GI projects.

### 8.3 Education of the municipal administration

Timeframe: 7<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> Semester (January 2020 – December 2021)

- Adaptation of 10 PERFECT Factsheets on various benefits of GI.
- Extracts and recommendations form the GI Strategy customized for each of 26 municipalities of the region to help in the preparation of Municipal Spatial Plans.
- 4x newsletters – raising awareness about the role and benefits of GI and disseminating good regional practices (in addition to presentation of key components of the GI Strategy and its importance).
- GI Portal - maintenance and administration of the Interactive GIS Web Platform for Green Infrastructure Planning that was developed in the process of preparation of the strategy with the aim of providing municipalities the information on locally and regionally planned interventions (municipalities have an insight into the work of other municipalities).

Aim: informing and educating municipal administration on GI benefits to ensure integrated and joint planning of GI on the local and intercommunal level.

### 3. **Players involved** (the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and their role)

- Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy (MA).

- Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning – different directorates.
- Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, Directorate for Regional Development.
- Local decision makers (mayors and municipal councillors of 26 municipalities).
- Municipal administration (different departments, services and officials).
- Regional Development Board.

#### 4. Timeframe

7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Semester (January 2020 – December 2021)

Most of the awareness rising activities will be carried out during project lifetime – until 2021, some of the activities will continue after the project ending.

#### 5. Costs

Most of the work will be carried out by employees of the RRA LUR, staff costs will be covered by our own resources. The costs of workshops and study visits will be covered by own resources. Co-financing through new European territorial cooperation programmes will be sought.

Planned costs:

- External services – 2.000 EUR.
- Staff costs – 8.000 EUR.

#### 6. Funding sources

- RRA LUR's own resources,
- Municipal resources,
- European territorial cooperation programmes.

Date: 6.4.2020

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Stamp of the organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

