

IT-HR CROSS BORDER STRATEGY

Final Version of 25/August/2021

Deliverable Number D.3.2.3

Project Acronym	CREW
Project ID Number	10044942
Project Title	Coordinated Wetland management in Italy-Croatia cross border region
Priority Axis	3 Environment and cultural heritage
Specific objective	3.2 Contribute to protect and restore biodiversity
Work Package Number	3
Work Package Title	Creation of the CREW Observatory and definition of the IT-HR cross border Strategy
Activity Number	3.2.
Activity Title	Definition of the IT-HR cross border Strategy for the protection of wetlands
Partner in Charge	UNICAM
Partners involved	ALL PPs
Status	Final
Distribution	Public

Summary

Executive Summary	3
INTRODUCTION.....	4
1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CREW CROSS-BORDER STRATEGY	5
2. STRATEGIC PILLARS	8
2.1 Strategic Pillar 1: Applying the CREW methodology for Wetland Contracts	8
2.2 Strategic Pillar 2: Monitoring the results of the Wetland Contracts.....	10
2.3 Strategic Pillar 3: Mainstreaming the tool into national and regional regulations.....	11
2.4 Strategic Pillar 4: Strengthening synergies among Italian and Croatian coastal wetlands	13

Executive Summary

This document aims to define a common strategy to enhance the protection and restoration of wetland biodiversity through the active stakeholder involvement and the application of the CREW methodology (Wetland Contract).

This document has to be read in close connection with WP 4 (Implementation of Wetland Contracts in target areas). Indeed, starting from the cross-border priorities (D.3.2.1), shared among partners at the first stage of the project, that builds the base for the implementation of the local Wetland Contracts objectives and strategic scenarios (D.4.3.2), the cross-border strategy has been eventually perfected through the evaluation of the tested pilot Wetland Contracts (D.4.3.4) at the last stage of the project.

This document has been structured into two main parts: The first part “BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CREW CROSS-BORDER STRATEGY” describes the structure of the Strategy and sets the Common environmental and governance goals to be pursued; the second part “STRATEGIC PILLARS” defines four strategic pillars representing key challenges as well as key opportunities in wetland governance.

INTRODUCTION

Wetlands in the cross-border area of Italy and Croatia are vulnerable interconnected environments, hugely contributing to biodiversity. Their protection intertwines scientific-environmental aspects and governance concerns.

The CREW project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund through the Italy - Croatia CBC Programme, aims at ensuring higher coordination between different level of spatial planning and authorities in charge for wetlands management, whilst limiting conflicts between preservation issues and economic activities.

CREW aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. to set up a cross border Observatory to monitor best practices and data on Italian and Croatian coastal wetlands;
2. to protect the biodiversity in Italian and Croatian coastal wetlands by the implementation of a coordinated methodology for wetlands management (Wetland Contract) in coherence with the ICZM principles. Enhancing the implementation of an integrated tool, the project will assure higher coordination among stakeholders and decision makers, limiting and absorbing raising conflicts between preservation issues and economic activities (farming, aquaculture, tourism) and will enhance the achievement of sustainable long-term results.
3. to share a cross border strategy and strengthen synergies among Italian and Croatian coastal wetlands;
4. to improve the public awareness about the value of the wetlands ecosystems among policy makers, managers, professionals, and general public and strengthen their active engagement in territorial governance.

By implementing the foreseen actions, CREW promotes the implementation of EU policies among Italy and Croatia. Wetland Contracts particularly help to achieve the goals of Environmental Directives such as Habitats Directive, Birds Directive, Flood Directive and Water Framework Directive, Marine Strategy.

1. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CREW CROSS-BORDER STRATEGY

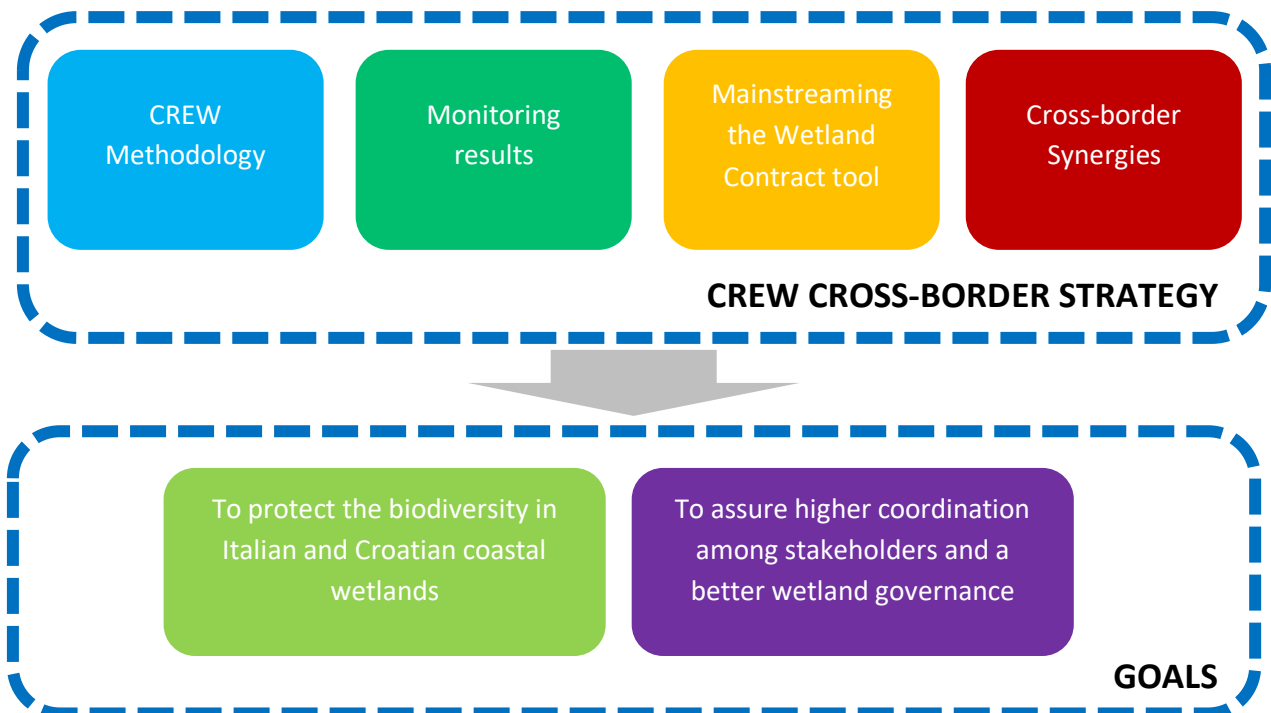
The CREW cross-border Strategy is built upon the results of the CREW project and the experiences of the project partners in the implementation of the Wetland Contract processes in Italian and Croatian protected wetlands.

This Strategy is funded on four strategic pillars representing key challenges as well as key opportunities in wetland governance. For each pillar, specific recommendations have been identified, taking into account the needs for its implementation and the added value of cross-border joint actions taken in order to tackle environmental criticalities or build upon the future opportunities.

The general objective of this Strategy is to enhance the protection and restoration of Italian and Croatian coastal wetlands' biodiversity through the active involvement of stakeholders.

Strategic Pillars:

1. Applying the CREW methodology for Wetland Contract implementation;
2. Monitoring the results of the Wetland Contracts;
3. Mainstreaming the tool into national and regional policies and regulations;
4. Strengthening synergies among Italian and Croatian coastal wetlands through the CREW Observatory.



BOX 1 - Common environmental and governance goals

Nature and biodiversity

- to increase the conservation status of key habitats, animal and plant endangered species
- to protect and maintain the aquatic environment and the ecosystems connected to it
- to reduce fragmentation and vulnerability of natural habitats taking into account the movement of fauna in the context of climate change
- to take into account the biology of wild species and facilitate the genetic exchanges necessary for the survival of species of wild fauna and flora
- to oppose salt water intrusion without obstructing fish migration
- to reduce and prevent hydraulic risk/coastal erosion
- to implement effective monitoring of habitats and species
- to prevent and monitor fire
- to raise awareness on illegal activities in order to change incorrect behaviors (fires, illegal hunting, illegal fishing) and monitor them
- to control boat emissions and promote sustainable and soft mobility
- to adapt and mitigate climate change
- to regulate anchoring and limit numbers of boats in protected areas
- to monitor birds, stopover and nesting
- to control of numbers of wild boar
- to revitalize and preserve suitable habitats for nesting and feeding of endangered bird species reducing anthropogenic disturbance
- to promote more efficient monitoring of poaching
- to eradicate invasive species
- to enhance the systemic potential of the riparian/ecotonal habitats
- to encourage the establishment of natural biocenoses introducing native species
- to promote river restoration interventions
- to improve hydraulic safety

Water

- to promote a sustainable use of water resource
- to reduce water pollution
- to increase/improve the water quality
- to implement effective monitoring at the scale of the entire wetlands' catchment area
- to recycle and reuse water resources

- to improve wetland water balance (surface and underground waters)

Local development

- to enhance the economic potential of the wetlands and integrate the maintenance and prosperity of economic activities in equilibrium with the wetlands fragile balance (balancing the need for further development of local communities and the need to protect natural resources)
- to enhance the wetland as a sustainable touristic destination promoting sustainable forms of tourism compatible with environmental dynamics
- to contribute to greater coordination and homogeneity in the promotion of the wetland territory, also in terms of landscape, use, economic development and slow tourism
- to support multifunctional activities, integrating environmental protection with economic activities
- to guarantee the existence and conservation of traditional activities enhancing identity elements and traditions
- to raise awareness on wider public (inhabitants of the area and tourists) the importance of the wetlands preserving natural values and the resources are used sustainably, possible threats and sharing of information and disseminate water culture
- to enhance historical and cultural heritage: Restoration, preservation and valorization of the historical and cultural landscape and promotion of economies with a low environmental impact
- to enhance and revitalize cultural heritage and values and local activities and praxis
- to reduction of touristic seasonality
- to encourage the development of selective forms of tourism (rural, gastro, green tourism, adventure tourism ...)
- to determine the carrying capacity of areas where recreational and tourist activities occur (especially in protected areas, on beaches, sea and open fresh water)
- to promote sustainable agriculture with low environmental impact
- to promote sustainable mobility / slow and conscious mobility
- Re-acquisition of the wetland and the territory by the local community as a usable element both from a recreational, naturalistic and cultural point of view
- to promote infrastructural improvement interventions (circular path, additional observation points, information points, interpretive tables and paths, photo point, souvenir shop etc.)

Governance

- to activate and guarantee a process of public participation and sharing on issues related to the lagoon and the landscape in order to share choices and strategies
- to actively involve stakeholders and local communities in the process of decision making and/or management of the area building a new community linkage amongst local stakeholders
- to foster closer co-operation of the public and private stakeholders
- to activate and guarantee a process of participation and public sharing on issues related to the lagoon and landscape in order to share choices and strategies
- to hire more personnel full time work positions (rangers, educators, scientific experts)
- to promote more efficient surveillance
- to establish a common vision on long-term strategy of the wetland (participatory management plan)
- to collaborate with county/regional and local public fire departments on fire prevention
- to cooperate with police, county/regional/local authorities, NGOs for tackling poaching
- to make decisions in other sectors influencing nature preservation together with the nature protection sector (Local counties/regional authorities and other decision makers are educated about preserving the biodiversity of the area and cooperate with the protected areas)
- to cooperate with forestry sector on preserving pastures and mosaic landscapes
- to activate a Wetland contract as a decision-hub (e.g. sharing visions, attracting funds)
- to promote unitary projects with multifunctional approach
- to integrate agriculture funds and Ecosystem Services in the management of the protected areas
- to improve the capacity of stakeholders to implement shared decisions and manage conflicts
- to share and communicate knowledge, data, projects and activities

2. STRATEGIC PILLARS

2.1 Strategic Pillar 1: Applying the CREW methodology for Wetland Contracts

Promote and apply the CREW methodology for the Wetland Contract implementation based on a multistage process (and related templates to guide the organization in its development), all characterized by a wide participation of institutions and municipalities local authorities.

The Methodology starts with a comprehensive and integrated context analysis and the first commitment of the stakeholders involved in the early phase to pursue common objectives; then, through an inclusive and multilevel participatory process, lead to the definition of a long-term strategy and an Action Plan to be implemented within 3-4 years and the signature of the final Agreement by the stakeholders responsible for the realization of the actions.

Recommendations:

- In choosing and analyzing the target area borders, consider it at both local and catchment/hydrographic district level by identifying the core area and the influence area;
- Use an integrated approach mixing economic and environmental objectives considering the interrelationships between ecological dynamics and economic flows;
- Make sure to engage all relevant stakeholders (private and public) and interest groups;
- Carefully identify the financial resources and commitments for the actions foreseen by the Action Plan.

BOX 2 – CREW Methodology (see CREW Toolkit – Deliverable 4.2.1)

1. CONTEXT ANALYSIS

1.1 Regulatory framework: The regulatory framework analysis focuses the regulation background related to water management within each target wetland explaining laws, rules, procedures, plans, policies, and levels of jurisdiction in the field of wetlands management. It is detailed in two levels: National and pilot area level;

1.2 Scientific description: The scientific description collects the available information and diagnosis about the target wetland related to environmental, socio-economic and territorial development aspects. It aims to better focus the objectives to be developed in the Wetland Contract implementation stage to the local challenges and priorities;

1.3 Stakeholder map: The Stakeholders map identifies all the key stakeholders to be involved in the Wetland Contract participatory process (those who will participate in the Territorial Labs and those who will eventually subscribe the Contract) by framing them in different categories related to: (i) the stakeholders’ territorial level of reference (National, Regional, Local, civil society, key groups); (ii) their engagement degree (effective or potential); (iii) their priority area of interest. The list needs to be constantly updated during the process in order to ensure a coherent involvement of key stakeholders;

1.4 Memorandum of Understanding: The MoU is the first commitment of the stakeholders involved in the process and sets the first common objectives. With the signature of the MoU the governance structure is established with the task of coordinating the Wetland Contract process.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROCESS

2.1 Alternative Scenarios and Common Strategy: The Alternative Scenarios are identified by involved stakeholders through a participatory process (Territorial Labs). The first Scenario to be developed is the “Trend Scenario” that seeks to reproduce the continuity of current trends in three strategic areas: governance, environment and economic and social development. In this scenario the involvement of citizens is limited, management and the conservation policies do not encourage the involvement of all territorial stakeholders. Therefore, it represents the continuation of the present development pattern, and it is not considered as the optimal framework for the achievement of the objectives, against the degradation of natural spaces. The second and last Scenario is the “Preferred Scenario” developed basing on the participation activities of the Territorial labs open to the public. It combines aspects of the trend scenario and expectations/visions/ideas considered as most important to the members of the community and engaged stakeholders. It will balance the potential reality of the future while on one side providing opportunities to adjust to changing development patterns, and the other side addressing the desired objectives of environmental protection and economic development. Therefore, the Preferred Scenario represents a shared mid-term Common Strategy that combines the general planning objectives with the local development policies and needs;

2.2. Action Plan: The Action Plan (short term, 3-5 years’) describes the foreseen actions by typology, actors involved in the implementation, financial resources and timing;

2.3. Wetland Contract (Agreement): The Wetland Contract Agreement is a formal commitment subscribed by the key stakeholder involved with which they commit to carry out the actions developed and shared in the participated process.

3. REALIZATION

4. MONITORING

2.2 Strategic Pillar 2: Monitoring the results of the Wetland Contracts

Monitor the effectiveness and results of the Wetland Contract both in terms of governance process and realization of the Action Plan and achievement of the common goals.

The main objective of the monitoring activity will therefore be to monitor the results obtained by the specific actions included in the Action Plan, evaluating the differences compared to the original programming both in terms of variation in the achievement of objectives (timing, changes, impediments, criticality), and financial deviation of each action in order to identify any indications for the reorientation in progress or reorientation of a future Action Plan.

Recommendations:

- Develop a Habitat Quality Map every 5 years;
- Keep monitoring the level efficiency, effectiveness and performance of the Wetland Contract in order to identify critical issues and unexpected factors, and indicate any need for reorientation in case of challenging circumstances;
- Share the monitoring results with local stakeholders;
- Share the monitoring results within the CREW Observatory to populate the online platform and analyze them at cross-border level.

BOX 3 – Habitat Quality Map (See CREW Tutorial for InVEST version 3.8.9 – Habitat Quality model)

The InVEST Habitat Quality model is able to estimate the quality of the ecosystems and their level of degradation. This tool enables the identification of ecosystems that have a greater capacity in hosting and allowing the survival of animal and plant species and, at the same time, assessing the impact that certain threats have on them. Firstly, the software requires the proper definition of the objective of the given assessment and based on this, it can identify the threats in the territory. These threats must then be assigned relative weights (between 0 and 1) according to their capacity to deplete ecosystems, by creating a matrix. This tool shall also report the intrinsic sensitivity of ecosystems and the sensitivity of ecosystems in relation to each threat. Because of these input data, the model is able to return the mapping of the study area, showing by means of a chromatic scale the quality or degradation of the territory with respect to the objective of the assessment.

2.3 Strategic Pillar 3: Mainstreaming the tool into national and regional regulations

Mainstream the Wetland Contract tool into national and regional regulatory framework and policies in order to make the instrument more effective.

The Wetland Contract can be defined as shared commitment acts by different public and private subjects, in various capacities interested in water bodies, for environmental restoration and socio-economic regeneration of water systems. The Wetland Contract is formalized within a decision-making process of participation and negotiation that integrates the various interests present around a water body, defining responsibilities and implementation tools for the governance and sustainable management of the wetland system. The signatories of the Wetland Contract undertake, respecting the competences of each one, to operate within a framework of strong enhancement of the principle of subsidiarity, activating all the partnership tools useful for the full achievement of the shared objectives.

Recommendations:

- Promote the establishment of a specific permanent table on Wetland Contracts in close collaboration with the Italian National Table of River Contract;
- Promote the establishment of a permanent table on Wetland Contracts in Croatia;

- Promote the embedding of the Wetland Contract tool into the national and regional regulations in Croatia;
- Promote the activation of new Wetland Contract processes in Italy and Croatia.

BOX 4 – Legal framework of the Wetland Contract tool at EU, Italian and Croatian level

At EU level, no legislative instruments reflect the figure of the Wetland Contract tool. However, the Wetland Contract pursues the main objectives of the following European environmental directives: Habitat Directive 1992/43/EC; Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC; Floods Directive 2007/60/EC; Birds Directive 2009/147/EC; Marine Strategy Framework Directive 2008/56/CE. Moreover, both the European Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) and daughter Directives (Habitat Directive, Floods Directive, etc.) require Member States to foster an integrated approach for the management of all water bodies, through a collaborative governance able to combine multi-objective, multi-level and multi-stakeholder decision-making processes and to simultaneously pursue environmental enhancement, risk management and local development.

In particular, River/Wetland Contracts can be assimilated to “negotiated environmental agreements” included in the Directive 2007/60/EC as “Complementary measures” that shall be adopted additionally to the basic measures in order to achieve the environmental objectives.

Italy

The Italian Charter of River Contracts defines River Contracts “as negotiated and participatory planning processes aimed at containing eco-landscape degradation and redevelopment of river basins/sub-basins”.

The fundamental step for the validation of the River Contract tool has been the insertion of article 68 bis in the *Testo Unico Ambientale* (Environmental Law) in 2015. The article conveys the Italian River Contracts’ mission: “The River Contracts contribute to the definition and implementation of the district planning instruments at the basin and sub-basin level, as voluntary tools of strategic and negotiated planning that pursue the protection and the correct management of water resources as well as the valorisation of the riverine regions, the safeguard from the hydraulic risk, contributing to the local development of these areas”.

In 2015, the National Table of River Contracts developed the document “Definitions and Basic Qualitative Requirements for River Contracts”, setting the main methodological reference for the Italian River Contracts.

In the Italian legal system, negotiated programming (*Accordo di programmazione negoziata*) is defined by law n.662 / 1996, article 2 paragraph 203 letter a), as “regulation agreed between public entities or between the competent public entity and the public or private party or parties for implementation of different interventions, referring to a single development purpose, which require an overall assessment of the activities of competence”, within the regions and other local bodies. Through negotiated planning,

therefore, local authorities and other stakeholders operating in the area pursue development objectives as coordinated and harmonious as possible. Law 662/1996 containing "Measures to rationalize public finance" which introduces (art. 2, c. 203) "Negotiated Programming", as such meaning the "regulation agreed between public entities or between the competent public entity and the o the public or private parties for the implementation of different interventions, referring to a single development purpose, which require an overall assessment of the activities under their responsibility".

Croatia:

In the Croatian context, the River/Wetland Contract tool has been tested for the first time in CREW implementation. Although, the Wetland Contract is in line with goals set up in national regulations dealing with environment and nature protection, water management and public participation. The most important of these is a Nature protection Act (NN 80/2013, 15/2018, 14/2019, 127/2019), which sets up an obligation for the Public Institution to pass the 10-year management plan for the area, with the emphasis on the participatory approach and stakeholder involvement.

2.4 Strategic Pillar 4: Strengthening synergies among Italian and Croatian coastal wetlands

The CREW Observatory is a transnational hub that aims at (i) Strengthening the network among Italian and Croatian coastal protected wetlands, (ii) collecting and monitoring all the data related to the project and the cross border protected wetlands, (iii) empowering networking for future projects and the transferability of the cross-border strategy and of the project results.

Recommendations:

- Networking with other Natura 2000 sites in the cross-border region;
- Networking with other Ramsar sites in the cross-border region;
- Networking with other Wetland Contracts activated in the cross-border region;
- Networking with MedWet Initiatives to disseminate the results at Mediterranean level;
- Networking with other EU funded project working on Environmental Contracts (e.g. Interreg Med Coasting Plus, Interreg Med Tune Up);
- Organize annual events to update and share the implementation results of the Wetland Contract activated by CREW project;
- Keep updating and promoting the Observatory web platform (<http://crew-observatory.unicam.it/wordpress/>).