

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF INTERREG CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027 PROGRAMME

SCOPING REPORT

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On behalf of

Interreg
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Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

CE	Central Europe
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
IP	Interreg Central Europe Programme 2021-2027
MA/JS	Managing Authority and the Joint Secretariat
SEA	Strategic environmental assessment
SEA Directive	Directive 2001/42/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment
SEA Protocol	Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
WG CE21+	Working Group for preparing the successor Interreg CE Programme for the 2021-2027 programming period

1 INTRODUCTION TO INTERREG CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027 PROGRAMME

1.1 INTERREG CENTRAL EUROPE PROGRAMME

The Interreg Central Europe (CE) Programme is one of the transnational cooperation programmes established under the European Territorial Cooperation goal in the framework of the EU Cohesion Policy. Transnational cooperation takes place for more than 20 years in the central Europe area and currently the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-2020 Programme is being implemented.

The programme supports regional cooperation among nine central European countries: Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, as well as parts of Germany and Italy. The overall objective of the current Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2014-2020 Programme is “to cooperate beyond borders to make central European cities and regions better places to live and work” by implementing smart solutions answering to regional challenges in the fields of innovation, low- carbon economy, environment, culture and transport. The programme budget totals to around 246 million Euros from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). Further information and relevant documents concerning the Interreg CE Programme 2014-2020 can be found on the programme website: www.interreg-central.eu.

The programme is managed by the City of Vienna, acting as programme Managing Authority (MA), with the support of the Joint Secretariat (JS) established in compliance with Article 23(2) of Regulation (EU) No 1299/2013.

In June 2018 the Interreg CE Monitoring Committee (MC), i.e. the body representing the 9 Member States participating in the programme, established a Working Group for preparing the successor Interreg CE Programme for the 2021-2027 programming period (WG CE21+). The WG CE21+ is composed by representatives of the nine Member States with the participation of the European Commission (EC) as observer and the support of the MA/JS. The scoping report presented hereby supports the forthcoming Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the future Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme for the 2021-2027 period which is summarized in chapter 1.3 and further presented in chapter 4.1.

1.2 PROGRAMME AREA

The Interreg Central Europe Programme covers, either fully or partly, the territories of nine EU Member States: Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. Six of these member states have acceded the EU in 2004 or later.

The programme spreads across a core area of the European Union, spanning from the middle of Germany to EU external borders with Russia, Belarus and Ukraine in west-east direction and from the Baltic to the Adriatic Sea in north-south direction. See Figure 1 for details.

The programme area covers over 1 million square km and is home to about 146 million people (according to 2013 data). The territory features rich natural and cultural heritage and different landscapes ranging high and low mountain ranges, but also wide plains and large river basins and lake districts. The programme area also covers diverse climatic zones.

Central Europe is characterised by structural differences between rapidly developing urban and industrialised growth poles (such as capital city agglomerations like Warsaw, Prague, Berlin, Vienna, and Budapest) and rural and peripheral areas facing often a lower competitiveness and shrinking population.

Figure 1 Interreg Central Europe Programme Area



Source: Interreg Central Europe

1.3 INTERVENTIONS CONSIDERED WITHIN THE INTERREG CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027 PROGRAMME

The Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027 Programme is a transnational cooperation programme within the goal of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) supported by the European Regional Development Fund. It aims at promoting cooperation among the regions of the CENTRAL EUROPE programme area through the exchange of knowledge, best practices, expertise, building of capacities and a better coordination of stakeholders. It therefore primarily focuses on soft measures which according to the current draft Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027 Programme (Version 0.2) are foreseen to be implemented in the following four priorities and 9 specific objectives (SOs) as also presented in detail in Chapter 4 of this report:

Priority 1: A smarter central Europe through cooperation

SO 1.1: Strengthening innovation capacities in central Europe

SO 1.2: Developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship in central Europe

Priority 2: A greener central Europe through cooperation

SO 2.1: Supporting the transition to a climate-neutral central Europe

SO 2.2: Increasing the resilience to climate change in central Europe

SO 2.3: Taking circular economy forward in central Europe

SO 2.4: Safeguarding the environment in central Europe

SO 2.5: Greening urban mobility in central Europe

Priority 3: A more connected central Europe through cooperation (NB: this priority is suggested provisionally and awaits further decisions on whether it will be eventually included in the next programme or not)

SO 3.1: Connecting central European regions to EU transport corridors

Priority 4: A better governance for cooperation in central Europe

SO 4.1: Strengthening governance for an integrated territorial development in central Europe

1.4 STEPS OF THE PROGRAMMING PROCESS AND ITS RELATIONSHIPS WITH STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The Interreg CE 2021-2027 Programme (IP) will be elaborated through an iterative process involving evolving versions of the IP.

The initial planning of the IP is presented in its Version 0 (currently numbered as Version 0.2) which portrays the possible approach of the programme. The proposed interventions will be fully described in the IP Version 1 that will be assessed through the SEA process and presented for consultations with the relevant environmental authorities and the public. Conclusions from these consultations will be integrated into the IP Version 2 which will serve as the basis for the European Commission's decision-making on the Interreg CE Programme 2021-2027.

This scoping report presents the relevant environmental issues and policy objectives with regards to the sketch of the programme strategy of the Interreg CENTRAL EUROPE Programme, as presented in the IP Version 0.2 and aims to identify the key environmental issues of concern that should be considered in the IP and its accompanying strategic environmental assessment.

2 STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS FOR INTERREG CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027 PROGRAMME

2.1 AIMS OF THE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (hereinafter SEA) for the future Interreg CE 2021-2027 Programme is conducted in accordance with the EU Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment (hereinafter SEA Directive) and the UNECE Protocol on Strategic Environmental Assessment to the Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a Transboundary Context (hereinafter SEA Protocol).

The strategic environmental assessment generally describes the evaluation of the likely environmental, including health, effects, which comprises the determination of the scope of an environmental report and its preparation, the carrying-out of public participation and consultations, and the taking into account of the environmental report and the results of the public participation and consultations in a plan or programme.

This goal of this particular SEA is to further strengthen environmental considerations into the preparation and adoption of the Interreg CE 2021-2027 Programme. Specifically, the SEA process aims to:

- Support **sustainable development considerations** and aspirations formulated e.g. in the **European Green Deal** during the elaboration of the programme proposal.
- Systematically consider impacts and contributions of the proposed programme on the **relevant environmental policy objectives adopted at the European Union level**.
- Assess the likely significant impacts (**positive and adverse**) of interventions proposed in the programme and their cumulative effects on key environmental issues in the programme area.
- Suggest **mitigation measures** that help to avoid, minimize or offset potentially adverse impacts and **enhancement measures** that enhance environmental benefits and positive side-effects of the programme
- **Engage environmental authorities** early in the process and provide opportunities for consultations with the **public concerned**.

The SEA process is guided by the following applicable guidance documents:

- Guidance on the implementation of Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment¹.
- Annex 1 of the European Commission Guidance on ex-ante evaluation for the 2014-2020 programming².
- European Commission Guidance on Integrating Climate Change and Biodiversity into Strategic Environmental Assessment³.

Due to the rapidly evolving policy and development context associated with outbreak caused by the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 at the time of writing, the assessment also considers the relevant health concerns in accordance with the recommendations contained in the Resource Manual to Support Application of the Protocol on SEA (UN, 2012).

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/environment/archives/eia/pdf/030923_sea_guidance.pdf

² https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/2014/working/ex_ante_en.pdf

³ <https://ec.europa.eu/environment/eia/pdf/SEA%20Guidance.pdf>

2.2 SEA PROCESS STEPS AND TIMELINE

The Interreg CE Managing Authority has commissioned the SEA to independent external experts - consortium of Integra Consulting Ltd. (CZ) and Zavita Ltd. (SI) - selected through a tendering process.

This SEA began with a kick-off meeting on 31 January 2020 and proceeds through steps outlined in Figure 2. The SEA currently undergoes a scoping phase, which aims to define the scope and level of detail of the information which must be included in the Environmental Report in accordance with the Article 5, paragraph 4 of the SEA Directive and Article 6 of the SEA Protocol. The scoping process involves the elaboration of a scoping document (this report) and consultations with the relevant environmental authorities in the nine EU Member states that are involved in the Interreg CE programme.

Figure 2 Steps of the SEA process and timeline

Step	Date	Status
Kick off meeting	31 January 2020	Completed
Integrating the SEA process to the programming process timeline	February-April	Completed
Scoping document and consultations with environmental authorities	June-July 2020	Current
Draft Environmental Report	Sept-Oct 2020	-
Presentation of draft Environmental Report to WG CE21+	Sept 2020	-
Consultations of env. authorities and the public on Environmental Report	Nov-Dec 2020	-
Documentation of consultations and final Environmental Report	Dec 2020	-
Environmental statement	After IP adoption	-
Expected end of the process	spring 2021	-

2.3 STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

The SEA scoping report presents the relevant environmental policy framework for Interreg CE 2021-2027 (Chapter 3) and the preliminary review of interactions between the proposed priorities and the objectives of Version 0.2 of this programme and the relevant environmental issues and objectives (Chapter 4).

Readers of this report are invited to share their views on two primary questions:

- **Does this scoping report omit any significant environmental issues or objective that should be considered within the Interreg Central Europe 2021-2027 programming process? What should be added or changed?**
- **Are there any other important linkages between the relevant environmental issues and the priorities and the objectives of the Interreg Central Europe 2021-2027 programme?**

3 ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY OBJECTIVES AND ISSUES FOR INTERREG CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027 PROGRAMME

The relevant environmental protection objectives for Interreg Central Europe Programme 2021-2027 include two types of objectives established at the European Union level:

- Legally binding commitments formulated through adopted policies and directives; and
- Aspirational objectives that are currently being developed and/or negotiated and put forward the Union's long-term ambitions that may be of direct relevance to Interreg Central Europe programme.

Due to the rapidly evolving policy and development context associated with SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the environmental policy objectives include also the relevant health concerns in accordance with the provisions of the UNECE SEA Protocol. The following text presents the key objectives and relevant issues and concerns identified.

Environmental policy topics	Key issues and concerns
Air	Impacts on human health and well-being
	Impacts on ecosystems
Climate	Mitigation (GHG emission reductions, renewable energy, energy efficiency)
	Adaptation (adaptive capacity and adaptation measures)
Water	Protection of water ecosystems and wetlands
	Hydro-morphological pressures
	Pollution pressures on water and links to human health
	Water abstraction and its pressures on surface- and groundwater
Soil	Ensuring sustainable use of land and soil
	Preventing loss of soil and soil pollution
Biodiversity and Natura 2000	Protection and preservation of biodiversity and natural ecosystems
	Promotion of green infrastructure and ecosystem-based management
	Protection and preservation of Natura 2000 species and habitats
Population and human health	Public health and environmental health
	Noise
Material assets	Resource use and efficiency
	Waste generation and management
Cultural heritage	Protection and preservation of cultural heritage
	Promotion of participatory management of cultural heritage
Landscape	Protection and preservation of landscapes
Resilience	Resilience to economic, social and environmental shocks
	Resilient agricultural and food production systems
	Resilient health systems
	Resilient infrastructure
	Resilience of urban systems

The following text presents these environmental policy topics, issues and concerns in detail.

3.1 AIR

3.1.1 Context

Air pollution is a traditional environmental policy concern in EU since the late 1970s. The main instruments in EU-wide efforts to improve air quality were the Air Quality Framework Directive (EC, 1996) and its daughter Directives that established standards for a range of pollutants including ozone, particulate matter (PM₁₀) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), in the period up to 2004. The Air Quality Framework Directive and the first three daughter directives were later consolidated into a single Ambient Air Quality Directive (EU, 2008) that aims to control the emissions from mobile sources, improving fuel quality and promoting and integrating environmental protection requirements into the transport and energy sector are part of these aims. The directive requires the Member States to divide their territory into zones and agglomerations where they need to undertake assessments of air pollution levels. Where air pollution levels are elevated above limit or target values, the Member States have to prepare air quality plans or programmes in order to address the sources responsible and attain the limit values before they formally enter into force. Information on air quality should be disseminated to the public.

The Clean Air Programme for Europe (EC, 2013a) reiterated the long-term EU objective for air pollution as: no exceedance of the World Health Organisation guideline levels for human health⁴ (which may also develop over time); and no exceedance of the critical loads and levels which mark the limits of ecosystem tolerance⁵. It stipulated new EU air policy objectives for 2030 as follows:

- Reduce health impacts (premature mortality due to particulate matter and ozone) by 52%, and
- Limit ecosystem area exceeding eutrophication to 35%

3.1.2 Relevant policy objectives

Issue	Policy objectives and targets	Target year	Sources	Category
Impacts on human health and well-being	Attain limit values for sulphur dioxide (SO ₂), nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂), benzen (C ₆ H ₆), carbon monoxide (CO), lead (Pb), and particulate matter (PM ₁₀ and PM _{2.5}). Achieve target values for PM _{2.5} , outdoor ozone (O ₃), arsenic (As), cadmium (Cd), Ni and benzo(a)pyrene (BaP); and the long-term objective for O ₃ .	2020 and 2030	Ambient Air Quality Directive (EU, 2008) Clean Air Programme for Europe (EC, 2013a) SDG 11 Sustainable cities (UN, 2015a)	Legally binding commitment
	By 2030, cut the health impacts of air pollution (in terms of premature mortality due to PM and O ₃) by 52 % compared with 2005.	2030	Clean Air Programme for Europe (EC, 2013a) SDG 11 Sustainable cities (UN, 2015a)	Aspirational objective
Impacts on ecosystems	Achieve the national exposure reduction target for SO ₂ and NO _x .		Ambient Air Quality Directive (EU, 2008) Clean Air Programme for Europe (EC, 2013a)	Legally binding commitment

⁴ Strictly speaking, there is no known safe level of exposure for some pollutants such as particulate matter, but WHO guidelines are set at low risk levels and regularly revised.

⁵ Critical loads and levels, i.e. the maximum levels the ecosystem can tolerate without degrading

	By 2030, reduce the ecosystem area exceeding eutrophication limits to 35 %.	2030	Clean Air Programme for Europe (EC, 2013a), National Emissions Ceilings Directive (EU, 2016)	Aspirational objective
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3.2 CLIMATE

3.2.1 Context

Climate change is a key environmental, economic and social challenge globally and in Europe. Mitigation and adaptation are both necessary to limit the risks related to climate change.

On the mitigation side, the EU has in 2008 adopted a set of regulatory measures known as the Climate and Energy Package (EU, 2008) which contained a revised EU Emissions Trading Directive, a Decision on effort sharing in non-ETS sectors, a directive on the promotion of renewable energy, and a directive on carbon capture and storage. The Climate and Energy Package was revised in 2014 (EU, 2014a) and specified the following EU-wide targets and policy objectives for the period from 2021 to 2030:

- At least 40% cuts in greenhouse gas emissions (from 1990 levels);
- At least 32% share for renewable energy;
- At least 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency.

In December 2019, the European Commission announced its so-called European Green Deal (EC, 2019) that aims to make Europe “the first climate neutral continent” by 2050. In March 2020, the Commission has tabled a proposal for the European Climate Law (EC, 2020) that puts forward a legally binding target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The proposed European Climate Law requests:

- the relevant European Union institutions and the Member States to take the necessary measures at EU and national levels to enable the collective achievement of the climate-neutrality;
- the European Commission to review by September 2020 the EU’s 2030 target for climate in light of its proposed the climate-neutrality objective and explore options for a new 2030 target of 50 to 55% emission reductions compared to 1990; and
- the European Commission to assess by 30 June 2021 how the existing EU legislation implementing the Union’s 2030 target would need to be amended in order to enable the achievement of 50 to 55 % emission reductions compared to 1990 and to achieve the climate-neutrality-objective and empowers it to adopt delegated acts to supplement this Regulation by setting out a trajectory at Union level to achieve the climate-neutrality objective.

With regard to climate change adaptation, the policy targets at the global and European levels are less quantifiable, and most monitoring activities so far focus on the adaptation process rather than on quantitative outcomes. Of particular relevance are policies for disaster risk reduction (e.g. EU Civil Protection Mechanism, EU action plan on the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction), the common agricultural policy, the common fisheries policy, the Floods Directive, the Water Framework Directive, the forest policy, the nature directives, and policies related to public health (EEA, 2019).

3.2.2 Relevant policy objectives

Issue	Policy objectives and targets	Target year	Sources	Category
Climate change mitigation	At least 40% domestic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to 1990.	2030	Climate and Energy Package (EU, 2014a)	Legally binding commitment
	EU-wide emissions and removals of greenhouse gases regulated in Union law shall be balanced at the latest by 2050, thus reducing emissions to net zero by that date.	2050	European Climate Law proposal (EC, 2020)	Aspirational objective
	At least 27% is set for the share of renewable energy consumed in the EU in 2030.	2030	Climate and Energy Package (EU, 2014a)	Legally binding commitment
Climate change adaptation	Strengthen resilience and the capacity to adapt to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries.	2030	SDG target 13.1 (UN, 2015a); Paris Agreement (UNFCCC, 2015b)	Aspirational objective
	Climate-proofing EU action: mainstream adaptation measures into EU policies and programmes.	2030	EU strategy on adaptation to climate change (EC, 2013b; Council of the European Union, 2013)	Legally binding commitment

3.3 WATER

3.3.1 Context

Water represents a key resource for nature, agriculture, energy production, transport and human health. Availability and sustainable use of water is a key challenge globally and within Europe. Protection of water resources and of fresh and saltwater ecosystems is therefore one of the cornerstones of environmental protection in Europe.

EU started taking first steps towards water protection in 1991 with the adoption of the Urban WasteWater Treatment and Nitrates Directives (EU, 1991a, 1991b). With the directives reducing pollution pressures on water was addressed. With the adoption of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), a cornerstone of EU-wide water integrated protection efforts was laid. EU policies addressed in the Floods Directive (2007/60/EC), the Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC), the Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC), the Drinking Water Directive (98/83/EC) also contribute to water protection in the member states. Water and biodiversity are interconnected and addressed through the EU Biodiversity Strategy (EC, 2011a) and the priority objectives of the Seventh Environment Action Programme (EU, 2013a).

Key water protection needs in Europe include (EEA, 2019):

- Improved implementation and increased coherence between EU water-related policy objectives and measures is needed to improve water quality and quantity.
- In the future it will also become increasingly critical to address and monitor the climate-water-ecosystem-agriculture nexus and connection with energy needs.

- It is on the river basin scale that effective solutions for water management can be found and essential knowledge is being developed through the implementation of river basin management plans under the Water Framework Directive.

3.3.2 Relevant policy objectives

Issue	Policy objectives and targets	Target year	Sources	Category
Protection of water ecosystems and wetlands	Achieve good ecological status of all water bodies in Europe	2015	Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)	Legally binding commitment
	Protect, conserve and enhance freshwater as well as the biodiversity that supports this natural capital	2050	7th EAP, PO 1 (EC, 2013)	Aspirational objective
	Protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes	2020	SDG 6.6 (UN, 2016)	Aspirational objective
Hydro-morphological pressures	Assess and manage flood risks, aiming to reduce the adverse consequences for human health, environment and cultural heritage	2015	Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)	Legally binding commitment
	Good hydro-morphological status (quality element supporting good ecological status)	2015	Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)	Legally binding commitment
Pollution pressures on water and links to human health	Achieve good chemical status of all surface and groundwater bodies	2015	Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)	Legally binding commitment
	Reducing and further preventing water pollution by nitrates from agricultural sources	N/A	Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC)	Legally binding commitment
	To protect the environment in the EU from the adverse effects of urban waste-water through collection and treatment of waste-water. Implementation period depends on year of accession	EU-15: 1998-2005 EU-13: 2006-2023	Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (91/271/EEC)	Aspirational objective
	To preserve, protect and improve the quality of the environment and to protect human health	2008	Bathing Water Directive (2006/7/EC)	Legally binding commitment
	To protect human health from adverse effects of contamination of water for human consumption	2003	Drinking Water Directive (98/83/EC)	Legally binding commitment

	Eliminate challenges to human health and well-being, such as water pollution and toxic materials	2050	7th EAP, PO 3 (EC, 2013)	Aspirational objective
	Improve water quality by reducing pollution	2030	SDG 6.3 (UN, 2016)	Aspirational objective
Water abstraction and its pressures on surface- and groundwater	Achieve good groundwater quantitative status of all groundwater bodies	2015	Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)	Legally binding commitment
	Water stress in the EU is prevented or significantly reduced	2020	7th EAP; PO 2 (EC, 2013)	Aspirational objective
	Water abstraction should stay below 20 % of available renewable water resources	2020	Roadmap to a resource efficient Europe (EC, 2011b)	Aspirational objective
	Substantially increase water use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater	2030	SDG 6.4 (UN, 2016)	Aspirational objective
	Implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate	2030	SDG 6.5 (UN, 2016)	Aspirational objective

3.4 SOIL

3.4.1 Context

Land and soils represent a universal natural capital - not only due to its food production capacities, but also due to many other ecosystem services they provide to nature and mankind. As the demand for food and the pressures on land and soil are increasing on a global scale, ensuring sustainable land-use management is becoming a major priority. This is reflected in UN set Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015a), where soil is recognized as a key natural resource.

Existing unsustainable use of soils is compromising the European Union's domestic and international biodiversity and climate change objectives. For all these reasons, the Commission adopted a Soil Thematic Strategy (COM(2006) 231) with the objective to protect soils across the EU. Although the Soil Framework Directive was never adopted, the 7th Environment Action Programme (EU, 2014), recognises that soil degradation is a serious challenge. It provides that by 2020 land is managed sustainably in the Union, soil is adequately protected and the remediation of contaminated sites is well underway.

The key issues of concern include (EEA, 2019):

- Prevention and restoration of land and soil degradation are addressed broadly in the European policy framework – binding targets are lacking at European level, soil is not subject to a comprehensive and coherent set of rules in the Union and not all soil threats and soil functions are covered.
- At the moment, only a few EU Member States have specific legislation on soil protection. According to a study by Frelih-Larsen et al. (2017), 671 policy instruments related to soil protection exist in the 28 EU Member States (EU-28), and 45 % of them are linked to EU policies.

- Existing EU policies in areas such as agriculture, water, waste, chemicals, and prevention of industrial pollution do indirectly contribute to the protection of soils. But as these policies have other aims and scope of action, they are not sufficient to ensure an adequate level of protection for all soils in Europe.
- The lack of a comprehensive and coherent policy framework for protecting Europe's land and soil resources is a key gap that reduces the effectiveness of the existing incentives and measures and may limit Europe's ability to achieve future objectives related to development of green infrastructure and the bioeconomy.

The European Green Deal offers a new opportunity not only to ensure proper land and soil protection policy mainstreaming into development planning processes in Europe.

3.4.2 Relevant policy objectives

Issues	Policy objectives and targets	Target year	Sources	Category
Ensuring sustainable use of land and soil	Promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally	2030	SDG Target 15.2 (UN, 2015a]	Aspirational objective
	Combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world	2030	SDG Target 15.3 (UN, 2015a]	Aspirational objective
	Restore at least 15 % of degraded ecosystems; better integrate biodiversity into agriculture and forestry	2020	EU biodiversity strategy to 2020	Aspirational objective
	Ensuring long-term sustainability and potential of EU agriculture by safeguarding the natural resources on which agricultural production depends	N/A	Common agricultural policy (CAP)	Aspirational objective
	No net land take by 2050	2050	7 th EAP	Aspirational objective
Preventing loss of soil and soil pollution	Mitigate the effects of drought in countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification	2030	SDG Target 3.9 (UN, 2015a)	Aspirational objective
	Reduce soil erosion, increase soil organic matter, and promote remedial work on contaminated sites	2020/2050	Roadmap to a resource efficient Europe (EU)	Aspirational objective
	Prevent further degradation of soil, preserve its functions and restore degraded soil	N/A	Thematic strategy on the protection of soil	Aspirational objective
	Ensure the monitoring of negative impacts of air pollution upon ecosystems (Article 9) (includes soils)	2030	National Emission Ceilings Directive (Article 9)	Legally binding commitment
	Identify and assess sites contaminated by mercury, and address risks (includes soil contamination)	N/A	Minamata Convention on Mercury (Article 15)	Aspirational objective
	Ensure that emissions do not exceed removals in the LULUCF sector (no-debit rule)	2025, 2030	LULUCF regulation (2018/841)	Legally binding commitment
Land and soil protection policy mainstreaming	Integrate soil protection into relevant EU policies	N/A	Thematic strategy on the protection of soil	Aspirational objective

3.5 BIODIVERSITY, FAUNA, FLORA AND NATURA 2000 NETWORK

3.5.1 Context

Nature protection and maintaining biodiversity have long been policy goals of the EU. The Birds Directive adopted in 1979 and amended in 2009 (EU, 2009) laid down the basic requirements for the protection of all naturally occurring wild bird species in EU. The Habitats Directive (CEC, 1992) established the comprehensive arrangements for protection of over 1000 animals and plant species and over 200 types of habitat, as well as the EU-wide Natura 2000 network.

The EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 (EC, 2011) aimed to “halt the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services by 2020, to restore ecosystems in so far as is feasible, and to step up the EU contribution in averting global biodiversity loss”. The Seventh Environment Action Programme fully embraces the objectives of the EU biodiversity strategy and states that, by 2020, the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services should be halted and that by 2050 biodiversity is protected, valued and restored in ways that enhance our society’s resilience.

However, EEA (2019) emphasize that, although there has been some progress in some areas, such as designation of protected areas, many agreed targets are not achieved by 2020 and there is high chance they are not going to be met by 2030 either. The crucial change should be made in the implementation and funding of existing measures in all European environmental policies as well as greater policy coherence with respect to biodiversity in agricultural and other sectoral policies. Also, the wider application of ecosystem-based and adaptive management in combination with increased public awareness of society’s dependency on biodiversity and nature would be important steps forward.

In May 2020, the EC adopted new EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 – the core part of the European Green Deal, and an associated Action Plan. It sets ambitious EU targets and commitments for 2030 to achieve healthy and resilient ecosystems. But also reflects the fact that protecting and restoring nature will need more than regulation alone. It will require action by citizens, businesses, social partners and the research and knowledge community, as well as strong partnerships between local, regional, national and European level. (EC, 2020c).

3.5.2 Relevant policy objectives

Issue	Policy objectives and targets	Target year	Sources	Category
Biodiversity and natural ecosystems				
Protection and restoration of biodiversity and well-functioning ecosystems	Establish a larger EU-wide network of protected areas on land and at sea, building upon existing Natura 2000 areas, with strict protection for areas of very high biodiversity and climate value	2030	EU biodiversity strategy to 2030	Legally binding commitment
	Effectively manage all protected areas, defining clear conservation objectives and measures, and monitoring them appropriately	2030	EU biodiversity strategy to 2030	Legally binding commitment
	Combat invasive alien species	2020	Regulation on invasive alien species; EU biodiversity strategy to 2030, Targets 4, 5 and 6; 7th EAP	Legally binding commitment
	Maintain and restore ecosystems and their services ⁶	2030	EU biodiversity strategy for 2030	Legally binding commitment

⁶ By, among others, bringing nature back to agricultural land, increasing the quantity of forests and improving their health and resilience, restoring marine and freshwater ecosystems, greening urban and peri-urban areas, addressing invasive alien species

Promotion of green infrastructure and ecosystem-based management	Integrate green infrastructure (GI) into key policy areas, improving the knowledge base and encouraging innovation in relation to GI, improving access to finance including supporting EU-level GI projects.	2020	Green infrastructure – Enhancing Europe’s natural capital (GI strategy)	Aspirational objective
Enabling the necessary transformative change	Strengthen governance framework to ensure better implementation and track progress, improving knowledge, financing and investments and better respecting nature in public and business decision-making	2030	EU biodiversity strategy for 2030	Legally binding commitment
Natura 2000				
Protection and preservation of Natura 2000 species and habitats	Protect species and habitats under the nature directives	2020	Birds Directive, Habitats Directive (EU, national); EU biodiversity strategy to 2020, Target 1; Action plan for nature, people and the economy	Legally binding and aspirational objective

Besides above mentioned policies directly connected to the topic of biodiversity and nature, there are also other sectoral and territorial policies that have an important role for biodiversity and nature protection, e.g. Water Framework Directive, Floods Directive, Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), National Emission Ceilings Directive, climate change-related policies, Europe’s Bioeconomy Strategy and Cohesion Policy.

3.6 POPULATION & HUMAN HEALTH

3.6.1 Context

A clean environment is essential for human health and well-being. At the same time, the local environment can also be a source of stressors - for example air pollution, noise, hazardous chemicals - that negatively affect health. The health of the EU population is also adversely affected by climate change, through heatwaves, floods and changes in the distribution of vector-borne diseases. At a broader level, climate change, loss of biodiversity, and land degradation can also impact on human well-being by threatening the delivery of ecosystem services, such as access to freshwater and food production.

EU countries hold primary responsibility for organising and delivering health services and medical care. To support EU countries at their efforts to ensure health protection, EU adopted EU Health Programme 2014-2020 (EU, 2014b) that aims to ensure health protection in all EU policies.

The 7th Environment Action Programme forms the basis for dealing with the problems of environmental health in EU. Other policies for managing environmental health issues in EU are indirectly all the environmental directives that target the protection and management of Europe’s environment. EU Environmental Noise Directive (EC, 2002) should be specifically mentioned here, while other important directives are presented in other subchapters.

The key health-related policy concerns in Europe include (EEA, 2019):

- Air pollution represents the single largest environmental health risk in Europe, exposure to air pollution is estimated to result in over 400 000 premature deaths in the EU each year. EU’s actions to protect citizens from air pollution had not yet delivered the expected impact.

- Climate change has serious health consequences. Further development of policies is needed through e.g.: including climate change, to a greater degree, in public health programmes and planning, improving the social and environmental determinants, building climate resistant infrastructure, improving interagency coordination mechanisms.
- The effectiveness of health-related policies in Europe varies geographically, environmental risks are also not evenly distributed across society.
- Intersectoral and inclusive approach towards improving environmental health is necessary.
- Times of economic crisis and shrinking budgets put environment and health in jeopardy of being perceived as luxury, secondary to other priorities. It is therefore important to achieve enhanced understanding and use of economic arguments to support action on environment and health issues.

3.6.2 Relevant policy objectives

Issue	Policy objectives and targets	Target year	Sources	Category
Public health (general)	Reduce premature mortality, increase life expectancy, reduce inequities in health, enhance well-being of the European population, universal coverage and "right to health"	2100	Health 2020: a European policy framework and strategy for the 21 st century	Aspirational objective
	Contributing to innovative and sustainable health systems, increasing access to better and safer healthcare for citizens, promoting good health and preventing diseases, protecting citizens from cross border health threats	2020	EU Health for Growth Programme (2014-2020) (COM (2011) 709)	Aspirational objective
Environmental health	Safeguard the Union's citizens from environment-related pressures and risks to health and well-being	2050	7 th EAP (EU)	Aspirational objective
Noise	Define a common approach intended to avoid, prevent or reduce on a prioritized basis the harmful effects, including annoyance, due to exposure to environmental noise	N/A	EU Environmental Noise Directive (END) (2002/49/EC)	Legally binding commitment

3.7 MATERIAL ASSETS

3.7.1 Context

The SEA Directive includes 'material assets' as one of the assessment topics without defining what this term might encompass. In various EU member states, different interpretations for this term can be found, covering a wide variety of asset- and resource-management issues related to (SEPA, 2019):

- infrastructure (energy, heat generation and distribution, flood protection, water supply and waste-water management, transport, telecommunications, waste management and pipelines);
- buildings and facilities (such as housing, healthcare facilities, schools, greenspace, core paths, cycle paths; manufactured goods); and
- natural assets such as minerals (such as sand, gravel, rock, and slate), agricultural land, etc.

Material assets addressed within this SEA focus on resource management uses – particularly on the natural resource use and efficiency; and waste generation and management. Considerations related to the management of infrastructure, building and facilities are addressed under cross-cutting assessment theme 'resilience'.

Resource efficiency – both within as well as outside the context of waste management - has been extensively promoted within the 7th EU's Environmental Action Plan (EU, 2013) and partly legislated through the revised Waste Framework Directive (EU, 2018). The entire concept is further elaborated in the Commission's proposals for the European Green Deal (EC, 2019) and a new Circular Economy Action Plan (EC, 2020).

3.7.2 Relevant policy objectives

Issue	Policy objectives and targets	Target year	Sources	Category
Resource use and efficiency	Create more with less, delivering greater value with less input, using resources in a sustainable way and minimising their impacts on the environment.	2050	7th EAP (EU, 2013); European Green Deal (EC, 2019) and new Circular Economy Action Plan (EC, 2020)	Aspirational objective
	Achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources	2030	SDG 12.2 (UN, 2015a); 7th EAP (EU, 2013)	Aspirational objective
Waste generation and management	55 %/60 %/65 % of municipal waste is prepared for reuse or recycled	2025, 2030, 2035	Waste Framework Directive (EU, 2018)	Legally binding commitment
	Strengthen and extend obligations for separate collection of hazardous household waste (by end 2022), bio-waste (by end 2023), textiles (by end 2025)	2022, 2023, 2025	Waste Framework Directive (EU, 2018b)	Aspirational objective / Legally binding commitment
	Meeting the targets for the collection, recycling and/or recovery of packaging waste, construction and demolition waste, WEEE, end-of-life vehicles, batteries, single-use plastics	2035	Waste Framework Directive (EU, 2008, 2018b), Packaging Waste Directive (EU, 2018c), WEEE Directive, ELV Directive (EU, 2000), Batteries Directive (EU, 2006); Single-use Plastics Directive (EU, 2019b))	Legally binding commitment
	All plastics packaging should be recyclable	2030	EU plastics strategy (EC, 2018a)	Aspirational objective
	Halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses	2030	SDG 12.3 (UN, 2015a)	Aspirational objective

3.8 CULTURAL HERITAGE

3.8.1 Context

Cultural heritage is not limited to material objects, but also includes intangible aspects, such as traditions, music, dance, rituals, knowledge and skills. All of these aspects of cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, represent the systems of values, beliefs, traditions and lifestyles that characterise past and present societies (Eurostat, 2019).

The Convention Concerning the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage adopted in 1972 (UNESCO, 1972) established the basic framework for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage at the international level. It was later followed by other policies, dealing with specific segment of cultural heritage: The European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Council of Europe, 1992), Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2001) and Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003) that address the need for protection and conservation of cultural heritage. Recently the issue of the participatory management of cultural heritage is being as well supported by European policies.

Key cultural heritage related challenges in EU are:

- Effectiveness of the policies and their integration in practice depends on the level of intersectoral cooperation, thus it is necessary to promote it.
- Good governance, especially on the local level, depends on the locals and their willingness for the protection and management of cultural heritage, which is strongly connected to awareness and cultural identity. Awareness rising on the importance of cultural heritage is crucial.
- For effective protection of cultural heritage it is crucial to provide financial resources for management and to set the protection measures in a way they do not incur unreasonable costs.

3.8.2 Relevant policy objectives

Issue	Policy objectives and targets	Target year	Sources	Category
Protection and preservation of cultural heritage	Protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage at the international level.	N/A	Convention Concerning the protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, 1972 (UNESCO, 1972)	Legally binding commitment
	Protection and preservation of underwater Cultural Heritage.	N/A	Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, 2001 (UNESCO, 2001)	Legally binding commitment
	Protection and preservation of intangible Cultural Heritage.	N/A	Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003 (UNESCO, 2003)	Legally binding commitment

	Conservation and enhancement of the archaeological heritage.	N/A	The European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (COE 1992)	Legally binding commitment
Promotion of participatory management of cultural heritage	Heritage as a resource for human development, the enhancement of cultural diversity and as part of an economic development model based on the principles of sustainable resource use.	N/A	The Framework Convention on the value of Cultural Heritage for Society (COE, 2005)	Legally binding commitment
	Promotion of good governance based on participatory management.	21 st century	European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21 st Century (COE, 2017)	Non-binding aspirational objective
	Participation and access for all, smart solutions for a cohesive and sustainable future, safeguarding endangered heritage.	2020	European Framework for Action on Cultural Heritage (European Commission, 2018)	Non-binding aspirational objective

3.9 LANDSCAPE

3.9.1 Context

The richness and diversity of landscapes is a distinctive feature of the European continent. There is probably nowhere else where the signs of human interaction with nature in landscape are so varied, contrasting and localised. Despite the immense scale of socio-economic changes that have accompanied this century's wave of industrialisation and urbanisation in many parts of Europe, much of this diversity remains, giving distinctive character to countries, regions and local areas (EEA, 2016).

The most important EU policy addressing the protection and preservation of landscapes is the European Landscape Convention (COE, 2000) that was adopted in 2000 with aim to achieve a balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the environment. The convention emphasises the need for general framework for landscape preservation that authorities of the member states have to establish and implement.

Key landscape-related challenges in EU are:

- Generally, differences of the spatial planning system and landscape planning do not originate from different membership (EU) or ratification of any convention (European Landscape convention) but rather from the different traditions of administration, government and importance of nature and landscape protection (Kovács et al, 2013).
- The main problem because of which the measures and activities cannot be efficient is that the landscape issues are mostly divided among different bodies but also between different spatial levels.

3.9.2 Relevant policy objectives

Issue	Policy objectives and targets	Target year	Sources	Category
Protection and preservation of landscapes	Protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage at the international level.	N/A	Convention Concerning the protection of the World Cultural and	Legally binding commitment

			Natural Heritage, 1972 (UNESCO, 1972)	
	Protection and preservation, sustainable management and planning of European landscapes, assuring higher cooperation between the EU Member States.	N/A	The European Landscape Convention (COE, 2000)	Legally binding commitment
	Framework for the conservation of biological and landscape diversity.	N/A	Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy (COE, 1996)	Non-binding aspirational objective

3.10 CROSS-CUTTING THEME: RESILIENCE

3.10.1 Context

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic unfolding at the time of writing (March 2020) brings about unprecedented impacts on public health and well-being as well as a multitude of longer-term economic and development implications that will be fully apprehended only in the months to come. The breadth of diverse stress factors nevertheless raises an importance of resilience which may - either explicitly or under different terms – arise as a new crosscutting development concern in future development interventions within EU programmes in 2021-2027.

The European Commission (EC, 2012) defines resilience as the ability of an individual, a household, a community, a country or a region to withstand, to adapt, and to quickly recover from stresses and shocks. It calls for a long-term approach to enhancing resilience and its integration into different sector policies, in particular Food Security, Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction.

Similarly, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN, 2015a) recognizes the need to prepare for emerging shocks and stresses, and postulates several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that aim to advance resilience. Key SDGs explicitly addressing this need include SDG 11 ‘Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’; and SDG 9 ‘Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation’. Resilience is also addressed in targets detailing other SDGs, such as the SDG Target 1.5 ‘Build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters’; and SDG Target 13.1 ‘Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries’.

The European Union has committed to implement the UN Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals both in its internal and external policies. As the resilience regards, the European Commission (EC, 2017) promotes its own strategic approach to promoting resilience in external actions through:

- strengthening the adaptability of states, societies, communities and individuals to political, economic, environmental, demographic or societal pressures, in order to sustain progress towards national development goals;
- strengthening the capacity of a state - in the face of significant pressures to build, maintain or restore its core functions, and basic social and political cohesion, in a manner that ensures respect for democracy, rule of law, human and fundamental rights and fosters inclusive long-term security and progress; and
- strengthening the capacity of societies, communities and individuals to manage opportunities and risks in a peaceful and stable manner, and to build, maintain or restore livelihoods in the face of major pressures.

Although EC (2012) and EC (2017) focus on development activities outside the EU territory, their recommendation for deploying a multifaceted strategy and a broad systems perspective for both ‘reducing the multiple risks of a crisis and at the same time improving rapid coping and adaptation mechanisms at local, national and regional levels’ may be also relevant for the future activities aimed at transforming the social and economic systems within EU towards more resilient ones for external and internal shocks and stresses. One could almost argue that the EU’s goals for advancing sustainable development would benefit from positioning the EU institutions and programmes on the cutting edge of the resilience-based development agenda. Such activities could well synergize with many other calls to better manage strategic risks in diverse policy-making domains, ranging from narrow ‘prevention, detection, and rapid response to public health threats’ (WHO, 2018) to broad ‘risk-based strategic planning’ (NATO, 2018, SACT, 2017).

3.10.2 Relevant policy objectives

Issue	Policy objectives and targets	Target year	Sources	Category
Resilience to economic, social and environmental shocks	Build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations, and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.	2030	SDG 1.5 (UN, 2015a)	Aspirational objective
Resilient agricultural and food production systems	Ensure sustainable food production systems and implement resilient agricultural practices that increase productivity and production, that help maintain ecosystems, that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters and that progressively improve land and soil quality.	2030	SDG 2.4 (UN, 2015a)	Aspirational objective
Resilient health systems	Strengthen the capacity of all countries for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks ⁷ .	2030	SDG 3.d (UN, 2015a)	Aspirational objective
Resilient infrastructure	Develop quality, reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure, including regional and transborder infrastructure, to support economic development and human well-being, with a focus on affordable and equitable access for all	2030	SDG 9.1 (UN, 2015a)	Aspirational objective
Resilience of urban systems	Substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels.	2020/2030	SDG 11.b (UN, 2015a)	Aspirational objective

Questions for the reader:

- Are there any other environmental issues or objectives that should be added to this list?
- Should some of the identified environmental issues be skipped ?
- Are there any particularly useful documents or sources of information or know-how that the SEA process should consider?

⁷ Or ‘develop country capacity to prevent, detect, and rapidly respond to public health threats independently of whether they are naturally occurring, deliberate, or accidental’ (WHO, 2018).

4 LINKAGES BETWEEN THE RELEVANT EU ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES AND THE INTERREG CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027 PROGRAMME

This chapter examines main linkages between the relevant environmental issues and policy objectives identified in the preceding Chapter 3 and the Interreg CE Programme 2021-2027 proposal, using the IP version 0.2.

4.1 PRIORITIES AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CURRENT INTERREG CENTRAL EUROPE 2021-2027 PROPOSAL

Version 0.2 is a very preliminary version of the IP aimed at portraying the possible strategy of the Interreg CE programme that reflects conclusions and decisions of the 7th WG CE21+ meeting (online meeting, 19-20.05.2020, 28.05.2020). **All sections** will therefore be further revised and elaborated in future versions of the IP, in line with future WG CE21+ decisions, the outcomes of the partner involvement process as well as with developments of the legal framework for Interreg Programmes developed by the European Commission. Figure 3 presents the priorities, specific objectives and the possible results of the the Interreg CE Programme 2021-2027 based on IP version 0.2.

Figure 3 Priorities, specific objectives and the possible results of the the Interreg CE Programme 2021-2027 IP version 0.2

Specific objective	Possible results
Priority 1: A smarter central Europe through cooperation	
SO 1.1: Strengthening innovation capacities in central Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening CE regions in the shift to a green and digital economy as well as Industry 4.0 revolution Balancing out of regional disparities between urban and rural areas in benefitting from R&D Enabling and empowering of SME – especially along the value chains of key industrial sectors of central Europe – to access to transnational networks and clusters especially in fields of common interest such as RIS3 and to realise R&D in their specific field Fostering cooperation between the business sector and technical and research/education institutions Cross-sector cooperation between different industries, e.g. health, tourism, cultural and creative industries Enabling relevant players in rural regions to cope with economic transition and create socioeconomic impact. Developing and implementing innovative approaches/solutions/technologies for services of general interest interest in different types of territories, especially in sparsely populated areas.
SO 1.2: Developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship in central Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balancing out regional disparities (urban-rural) in terms of human capital Empowering people and decision makers to successfully cope with modern challenges such as digitalisation or other forms of economic transitions Contributing to ensuring the global competitiveness of central Europe's industries Contributing to capacity and skill development as a major cornerstone of economic development, promotion of higher education and training centres

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening capacities for social innovation and novel solutions for silver economy and healthcare for different types of territories, especially in sparsely populated, rural and declining areas Generation of entrepreneurial attitudes in the local social environment with the ability to keep talent and attract entrepreneurs through appropriate opportunities and incentives Fostering services for entrepreneurs aiming at better access to research
Priority 2: A greener central Europe through cooperation	
SO 2.1: Supporting the transition to a climate-neutral central Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved energy efficiency of public buildings and infrastructures in central Europe Progress towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions of industrial production processes Increased renewable energy production and usage across central Europe Smart integration of climate neutral solutions and technologies across sectors Strengthened capacities for climate neutral energy planning at local/regional level Improved energy and demand side management
SO 2.2: Increasing the resilience to climate change in central Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved risk preparedness and risk management, including a better coordination at the transnational level (including flood protection and wildfires etc.)) A higher awareness for climate change and an increased resilience to climate change effects such as weather extremes (including heat, floods, droughts etc.) Cross-sectoral approaches for an integrated response and adaptation to various climate-induced challenges for different types of territories New and improved solutions deployed for addressing climate change related risks and disasters (including floods and droughts)
SO 2.3: Taking circular economy forward in central Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contributing to the improvement and practical implementation of circular economy solutions and roll-out in central European regions Strengthening circular economy value chains at territorial level Identifying and removing barriers or structural problems for closing material and energy cycles Contributing to the goal of “zero waste”
SO 2.4: Safeguarding the environment in central Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved protection and valorisation of the natural assets in central Europe (also linked to sustainable tourism) Local and regional integrated approaches and pilot initiatives to help implement the paradigms of ecosystem services and green infrastructure Fighting of concrete environmental challenges for central Europe such as air pollution Reduced conflicts between environmental and economic development Reinforcing the the variety of landscapes in central Europe (e.g. CE Green Belt, the Carpathian Convention) Counteracting the loss in biodiversity Sustainable management and tackling of conflicting interests of protected areas Reducing urban sprawl and soil sealing through improved land management and spatial planning
SO 2.5: Greening urban mobility in central Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved, integrated and sustainable solutions for mobility in central Europe’s functional urban areas Further deployment of smart and innovative sustainable urban mobility solutions based on digitalisation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved governance for greener mobility in functional urban areas, including enhanced mobility planning • CO2 reduction for urban mobility as a whole • Changes in the modal split towards sustainable modes of mobility, including improved public transport services • Reducing traffic congestion and air pollution in functional urban areas considering urban – rural relationships (e.g. commuters) • Improved public transport • More sustainable last mile services
Priority 3: A more connected central Europe through cooperation	
SO 3.1: Connecting central European regions to EU transport corridors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthened multimodal links of peripheral areas to nodes of transport corridors • Increased accessibility of remote and rural regions in central Europe, including also digital accessibility • Fostering multi-modal, demand responsive sustainable transport alternatives • Strategic responses and integrated solutions for sustainable transport across borders, including the preparation of larger investments in transport infrastructure • Improved coordination of transport and urban/spatial planning at different governance levels along the TEN-T CNC to fully exploit its potential for regional development
Priority 4: A better governance for cooperation in central Europe	
SO 4.1: Strengthening governance for an integrated territorial development in central Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced cooperation among central European territories to reduce administrative and legal barriers beyond administrative boundaries • Strengthened institutional capacity for integrated territorial governance across thematic sectors • Closer cooperation of areas with functional ties across central Europe to foster polycentric development • A strengthened central European identity that builds on common historic ties and cultural assets • Improved capacities of public authorities and governance processes to manage societal challenges including demographic change • New or improved services of general interest aimed at ensuring equal opportunities and social inclusion in peripheral areas

4.2 RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE EU ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES AND THE IP VERSION 0.2

Figure 4 presents key relationships (where positive or adverse impacts may occur) between the Interreg Central Europe IP v 0.2 proposals on the relevant EU environmental policy objectives.

Figure 4 Linkages between the Interreg CE 2021-2027 Programme and EU environmental policy objectives

SEA topics	Environmental (including health) policy objectives & concerns	Interreg Central Europe Programme 2021-2027 - version 0.2									
		Priority	1		2					3	4
		SO	1.1	1.2	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	3.1	4.1
Air	Air quality impacts on human health and well-being										
	Air quality impacts on ecosystems										
Climate	Mitigation (GHG emission reductions, renewable energy, energy efficiency)										
	Adaptation (adaptive capacity and adaptation measures)										
Water	Water ecosystems and wetlands										
	Hydro-morphological pressures										
	Pollution pressures on water and links to human health										
	Water abstraction and its pressures on surface- and groundwater										
Soil	Ensuring sustainable use of land and soil										
	Preventing loss of soil and soil pollution										
Biodiversity and Natura 2000	Protection and preservation of biodiversity and natural ecosystems										
	Promotion of green infrastructure and ecosystem-based management										
	Enabling the necessary transformative change	8									
	Protection and preservation of Natura 2000 species and habitats										
Population and human health	Public health and environmental health										
	Noise										
Material assets	Resource use and efficiency										
	Waste generation and management										
Cultural heritage	Protection and preservation of cultural heritage										
	Promotion of participatory management of cultural heritage										
Landscape	Protection and preservation of landscapes										
Resilience	Resilience to economic, social and environmental shocks										
	Resilient agricultural and food production systems										
	Resilient health systems										

⁸ EUBD 2030 - the Commission will help to build a European Business for Biodiversity movement, taking inspiration from recent initiatives

	Resilient infrastructure									
	Resilience of urban systems									

Key

The strength of potential relationships (positive or adverse) determined on the basis of their strengths and territorial significance:

	Strong relationship
	Significant relationship
	Weak relationship

The above determination is only tentative and can be modified based on the comments obtained.

Questions for the reader:

- Are there any other important linkages between the relevant environmental issues and the priorities and the specific objectives of the Interreg Central Europe 2021-2027 programme?
- Are there any particularly useful documents or sources of information or know-how that the SEA process should consider?

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