Interreg ADRION ADRIATIC-IONIAN
European Regional Development Fund - Instrument for Pre-Accession II Fund

ECOVINEGOALS

Newsletter

MARCH 2022

Ecological Vineyards Governance Activities for Landscape's Strategies

Inside this issue

This Newsletter presents activities implemented throughout 2021 by the ECOVINEGOALS partners in the context of the three main pillars of the project: **Agroecological Practices; Landscape and Habitat in Viticultural Areas; and Participatory Governance for the Agroecological Transition of Vineyards.**

Following the definition of a common vision on agroecological principles and an indicative but not exhaustive list of good agroecological practices applied in viticulture, the structural analysis, the landscape analysis of the case study areas and the multicriterial analysis of pilot viticultural farms were conducted along with the initiation of the participatory governance activities.

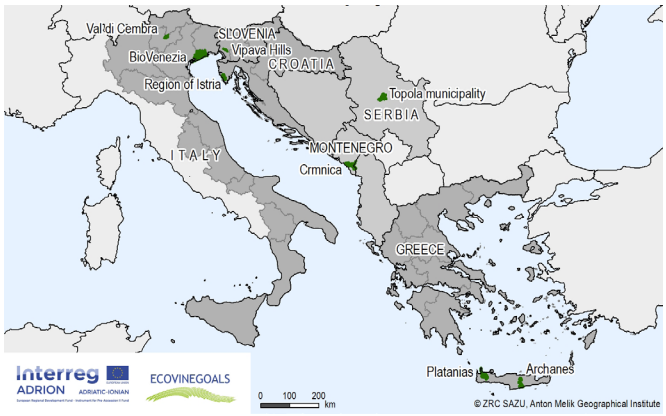
The transition path to agroecology for the viticulture sector has been determined by the ECOVINEGOALS/Interreg ADRION partnership as follows: to make grape production compatible, at the farm and landscape level, with the conservation of natural habitats and the biodiversity of species and ecosystems, to be able to provide diverse ecosystem services, to include all the products obtainable from a vineyard, to enhance local culture and traditional landscapes relating to vineyards, and to support other social and economic activities in rural communities, such as tourism, outdoor recreation, traditional culture, the creative economy and commerce in local products.

Agroecological Practices and Viticulture in the ECOVINEGOALS areas

Activities were led by the Autonomous Province of Trento, PAT-Italy, in collaboration with all other project partners.

Structural analysis was performed to define the main characteristics of each case study area from a geographical, environmental, political, economic and social point of view, and to highlight existing environmental, economic and social problems, as well as the presence of conflicts that might affect the wine sector, the population, or the territory. The analysis was based on secondary data and also discussions with local stakeholders including researchers, policy makers, viticulturalists, etc.

Within each area, a minimum of 30 farmers were surveyed, using a questionnaire to elucidate the key characteristics of grape production, winemaking and the grape market, from the farmers' and winemakers' point of view. The questionnaire addressed general farm information (size, agricultural management, etc), crop data (varieties), type of landscape/hydrological arrangements/presence of terracing and the state of the rural roads (accessibility); grape production, wine making and the market; best practices; and knowledge of agroecology and organic farming. Special emphasis



Map of the ECOVINEGOALS case study areas

was also placed on the specific problems faced by the farmers and on the level of knowledge and concern for agroecological practices.

Despite the differences and the specificities of each area, some common concerns emerged from the structural analysis of the case study areas and the surveys: ageing of the agricultural population; poor relations between farmers and civil society representatives; lack of interest from young people in the wine sector; difficul-

ties in finding agricultural labor; lack of knowledge and qualifications, particularly for autochthonous varieties, soil science and fertility management; difficulties in building networks with other farmers; scarce initiatives for including local historical and cultural aspects in wine production; lack of territorial initiatives for market innovation and strong interest in strengthening interrelationships with the tourism sector.

The agroecological, productive and economic performances of pilot viticultural farms in the case study areas were estimated using the **Main Agroecological Structure** (MAS) index, together with the analysis of the perception of the degree of favourability of the **Territorial and Environmental Context** (TEC) to agroecological transition.

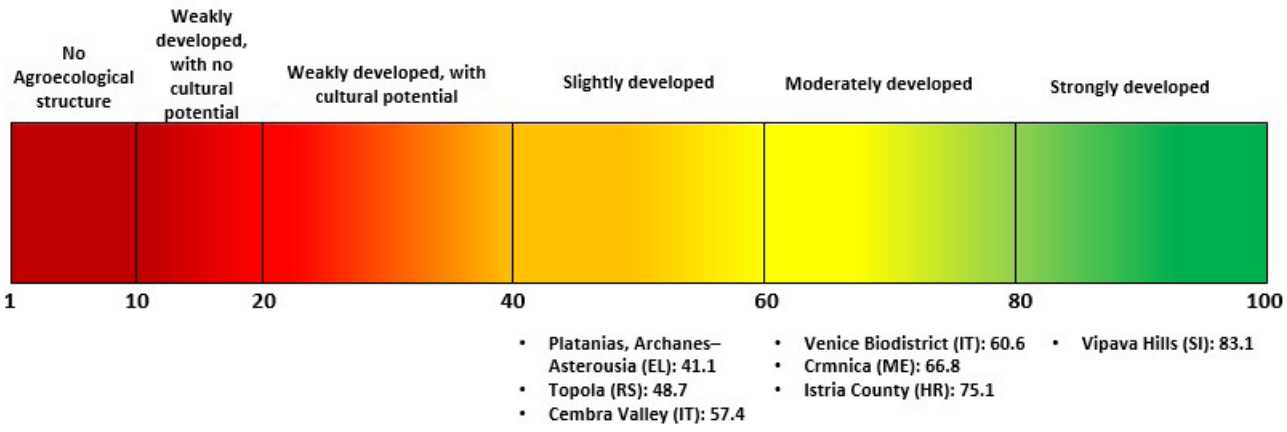
Ten indicators were used to rank the wine-producing farms according to their connection with the main ecological landscape structure, the extension and diversification of their external and internal connectors, soil conservation, weed management and other management practices. The degree of agrobiodiversity awareness and the capacities and possibilities of farmers to establish, maintain and improve the MAS of their farms was also estimated.

Along with the MAS, the socio-economic indicators of the perceptions of the farmers concerning the performance of viticulture in relation to the specific territory, i.e. quality, quantity and income generated, networking and social dimensions, were considered.

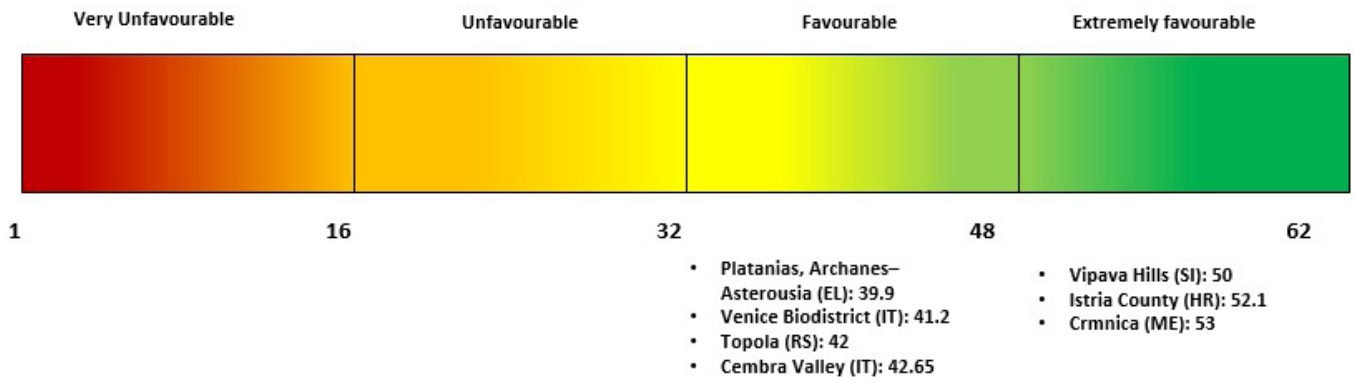
The **Main Agroecological Structure** (MAS) index was developed by Leòn-Sicard, to express the extent of the agrobiodiversity of a farm or an agroecosystem. The analysis includes five indicators of biophysical or ecosystem types and five indicators of cultural order.

MAS reflects the internal configuration or spatial arrangement of the farm and the connectivity between the different sectors, patches and corridors of vegetation or cultivations, and the exchanges between the external environments. Taking into consideration the internal configuration of the farm in particular, the observation focuses on the degree of openness and on the exchange relationships (between the different living species and between the different cultivations) that the farm maintains with its local environment. The more the farm presents an articulated arrangement of its spaces, able to alternate different crops, preserve the presence of trees and hedges, functional small ditches and water bodies, the more it will be able to participate in vital connections with the surrounding environment.

León-Sicard TE, J Toro Calderón, LF Martínez-Bernal and JA Cleves-Leguízamo (2018), The Main Agroecological Structure (MAS) of the Agroecosystems: Concept, Methodology and Applications, *Sustainability*,10, 3131



Main Agroecological Structure (MAS)



Territorial and Environmental Context (TEC)

The new indicators that complete the evaluation matrix for the ECOVINEGOALS project were designed to assess whether the wider territorial context favours agroecological transition. The viticulture farms involved in the survey were chosen from among the sample that participated in the structural analysis.

Interestingly while most areas were found to be slightly or moderately developed in terms of their MAS, the general territorial context was perceived by the farmers interviewed to be favourable or extremely favourable for agroecological transition.

The Landscape Dimension
How viticulture forms the landscape

Activities were led by the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Slovenia), in collaboration with all other project partners.

Each wine has its own natural and cultural landscape (Lugeri *et al.* 2011).

Viticultural landscapes, and more specifically the analysis of the linkages between vineyard cultivation practices, landscape and cultural heritage, constitute one of the main pillars of the ECOVINEGOALS project.

Cultural landscapes arise from the interaction between human activities and the natural environment, and evolve over time and space. The most important characteristics of any landscape are its dynamics and duality. Landscapes are constantly changing, despite their apparent permanence and solidity. These changes also affect the ability of a landscape to provide ecosystem services. Moreover, they consist not only of tangible (material) elements, but also of intangible (non-material) parts. As such, they are recognized as both ecological and socioeconomic systems. On the one hand, they are most profoundly influenced by their structures and functions, as well as by changes, while on the other, they reflect the social structure, cultural tradition, economic activities and political models that play key roles in shaping the landscape. Landscape diversity consists of heterogeneous structures, and in agricultural areas, it is largely dependent on human activities. The loss of traditional practices can lead to landscape and biodiversity impoverishment.

The cultural landscape teaches us about the relationship between humans and nature and reflects their interdependence. In the past, humans adapted to the natural features of an area, and landscape management was more sustainable than it is today, albeit due to technical constraints and technological limitations. This adapted land use created different landscape structures and increased landscape diversity, which

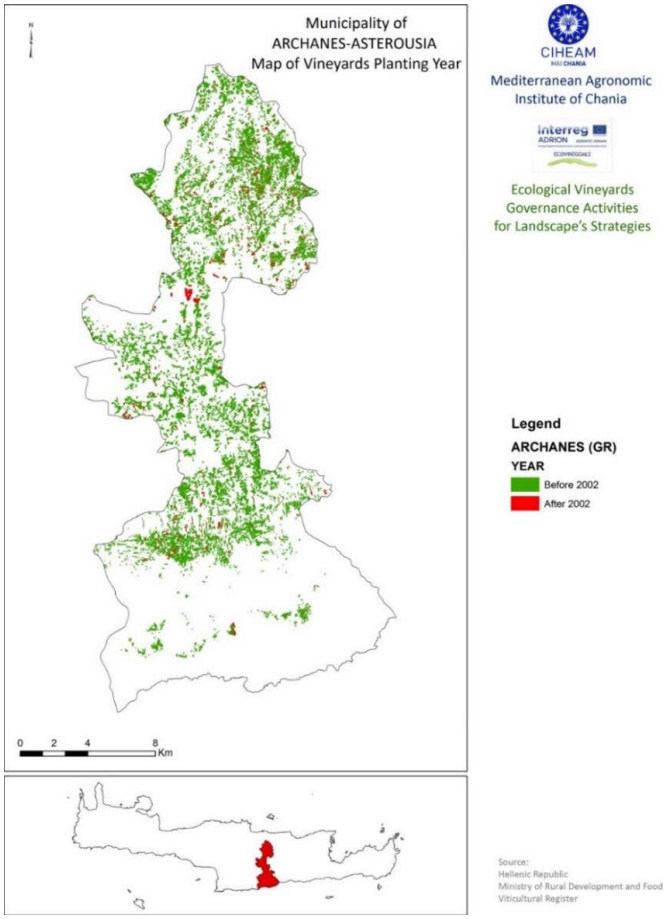
was reflected in a mosaic landscape. The diversity of human activities had a direct impact on both landscape diversity and biodiversity.

All of the above were considered in the landscape analyses of the territorial demonstrative areas that were carried out by the ECOVINEGOALS partners. These analyses form the basis for the development of the strategy and guidelines for reconciling viticulture with other competing land uses in the ADRION region, as well as for the preparation of local action plans in the case study areas. Unfortunately, the lack of essential GIS data, accurate data on land use on a fine scale, as well as documentation of organic vineyards, especially for specific case study areas, greatly limited the research work with adverse implications in the design of local action plans for landscape management in regard to the agroecological transition.

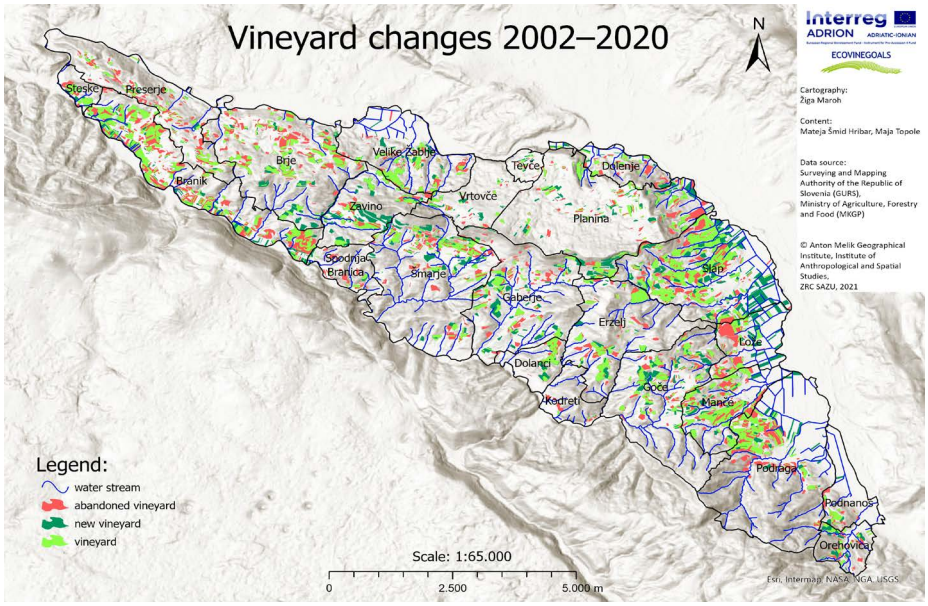
One of the findings, therefore, is that accurate datasets need to be produced at a local level in the ADRION region and they should be open access to support research.

The second finding is that traditional cultural landscapes in the ADRION region face two diametrically opposite dangers: **some are threatened by agricultural intensification, and others by land abandonment and overgrowth**.

Viticultural landscapes that are an important type of traditional European cultural landscape not only seem to be changing in modes of use but are also reducing in number. **Agricultural and rural development policies should therefore provide measures to counteract the double threat to these characteristic landscapes**.



Map of vineyards planting year, Archanes, Crete, Greece



Changes in vineyard land use, 2002-2020, Vipava Hills (SI)

Initiating Participatory Backcasting Governance Practices in the ECOVINEGOALS Areas

Activities were led by the Agency for Rural Development of Istria Ltd. Pazin (Croatia), in collaboration with all other project partners.

The thematic of participatory governance for agro-ecological transition of vineyards within the ECOVINEGOALS project involves participatory backcasting exercises in the wine-growing case study areas in each of the countries involved, to increase the capacity for shared agroecological governance of each territory by public and private decision-makers and also to design tailor-made action plans for the agroecological transition of viticulture.

The participatory backcasting pathways were designed to take into account the main land use and other conflicts in the pilot areas and allow for the resolution of conflicts in land use by identifying shared solutions for interested parties and to demonstrate the important role to be played by agroecological practices in the conservation and enhancement of the landscapes and habitats.

A short intensive training course was held to train the facilitators of the participatory backcasting process in each case study area, to provide common methodologies and practical tools relating to the activities, and to empower the facilitators in the use of these methodologies to achieve the purposes of the ECOVINEGOALS project.

This training took place online during the whole month of September 2021. The methodological approach adopted was inspired by the European Awareness Scenario Workshop (EASW) and included the following sessions:

Sessions	Participatory Activities	To...
1	Community Mapping (optional)	Know the territory and share information
2	Future Search	Imagine the transition you want
3	Ideas Factory	Create possible solutions and alternatives
4	World Cafe (puzzle game)	Define the Local Action Plan
5	Invest in your agroecological transition (optional)	Define the Priorities/Timeline of implementation

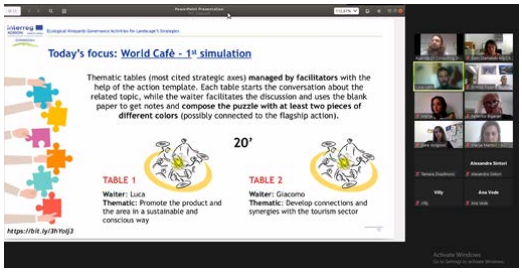
A participatory process proposal

These sessions enabled the facilitators to implement effective multi-stakeholder workshops in each case study area to formulate a common future vision for the agroecological transition of the viticultural landscapes along with action plans to contribute to the realization of this vision.

In all cases during the workshops, the peculiarities of each area with regard to viticulture were recognized, with diverse stakeholders' being asked to participate, contribute their ideas and perspectives, and to take an active part in the decision-making process. One of the roles of the facilitators was to connect diverse perspectives, to listen and pay attention to themes, patterns and insights arising during the meetings, as well as to capture the 'harvest' of the meetings and share it with all participants.

Although online participatory governance events is an option, in-person workshops are certainly more efficient; some of the project partners have opted to delay holding the workshops in their pilot areas until the start of 2022, when it was hoped that quarantine regulations will permit more freedom for interpersonal contact; other project partners and facilitators, however, proceeded and have held the workshops online and/or in-person.

Feedback from this experience so far has been extremely positive and all workshops conducted to date have resulted in the formulation of ambitious but realistic and achievable suggestions and activities to be included in the action plans. More participatory governance events will be organized during the first months of 2022.



The 3rd Steering Committee Meeting, CIHEAM-MAICh, Crete Greece

Between 11-14th October 2021, the third ECOVINEGOALS Steering Committee meeting was held (in hybrid form) at the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania, Crete Greece (CIHEAM-MAICh). This meeting provided the first opportunity for (almost all) partners to finally meet in person and discuss project matters face-to-face, which was greatly enjoyed by all after months of working online.

The consortium took full advantage of every opportunity presented to review the project's results and progress, to examine financial and management issues, to troubleshoot problems encountered during the project (in many cases arising from the effects of the Sars-2-Cov pandemic), and to thoroughly plan upcoming work.

It was an enormous pleasure to finally meet colleagues after months of collaboration online. The field visits to viticulture farms in the two Cretan ECOVINEGOALS case study areas in the Chania and Heraklion Prefectures provided a very welcome opportunity to combine project work with social aspects and an insight into the local landscapes and viticulture practices.

The next Steering Committee Meeting will be organized by the Municipality of Bar (ME) in May 2022.

Adrion Thematic Cluster

ECOVINEGOALS on agroecological transition, together with the DINALPCONNECT project on transboundary ecological connectivity, are members of the thematic sub-cluster 'Biodiversity Preservation and Protection, initiated by INTERREG ADRION, as part of the program capitalization strategy, to amplify and boost the projects' results and exchange good practices.

To date, three online meetings have been held between ECOVINEGOALS and DINALPCONNECT since September 2021, to plan joint activities including meetings, common publications, and policy papers. The first activity, a webinar: SHAPING THE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE OF THE ADRIATIC-IONIAN AREA, to present actions, results and possible impacts of DINALPCONNECT and ECOVINEGOALS, will be organized on May 19th, 2022

Looking to the Future

Future activities focus on:
Defining the guidelines, strategies and action plans to promote and support the agroecological practices in the fragile wine-growing areas of the ADRION region; reconcile viticulture with other competing land uses and with the conservation of landscapes and habitats and apply participatory territorial governance processes to improve stakeholders' capacity.

PARTNERS

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Autonomous Province of Trento, PAT, ITALY

Institute of Agriculture and Forestry Nova Gorica, KGZS-Zavod GO, SLOVENIA

Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts - ZRC SAZU, SLOVENIA

Agency for Rural Development of Istria Ltd. Pazin, AZRRI, CROATIA

Association for the Promotion of Employment, Vocational Training and Education – INFORMO, CROATIA

Business Development Centre Kragujevac, BDCKG, SERBIA

Foundation Business Start-up Center, BSC Bar, MONTENEGRO

Municipality of Bar, BAR, MONTENEGRO

Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Chania, CIHEAM - MAICh, GREECE

ASSOCIATED PARTNERS

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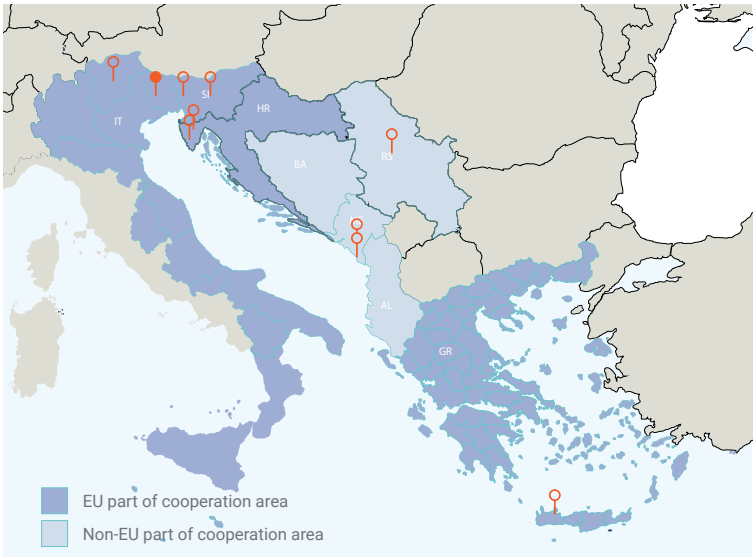

PROJECT DATA

Total budget: 1,939,505.59
ERDF: 1,399,759.25
IPAII: 248,820.5

Duration: 30 months
Start Date: 01.03.2020
End Date: 31.08.2022