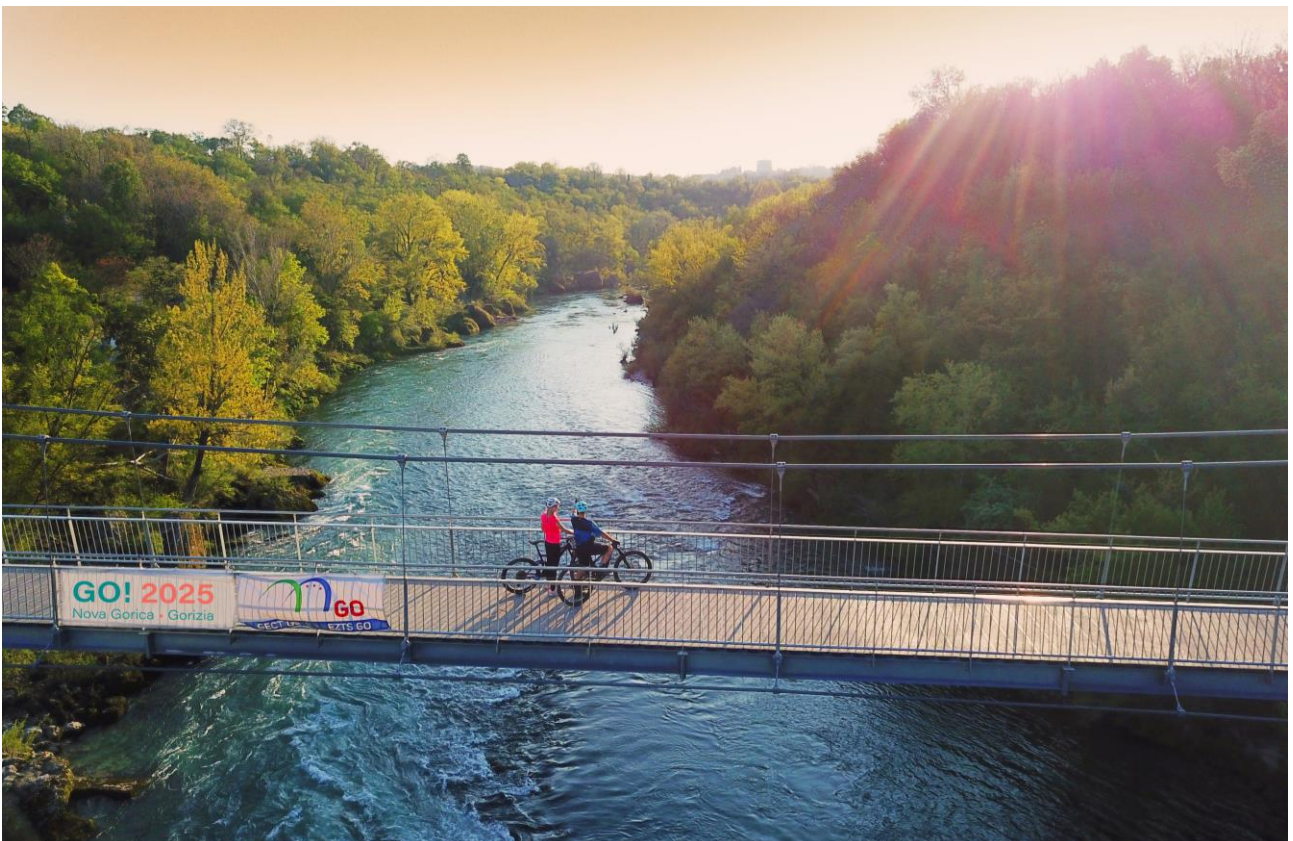


Sharing solutions for better regional policies

EGTC GO

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN Final Report



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General Information	
Project	Cyclewalk
Partner organisation(s) concerned	EGTC GO (European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation of Gorizia, Nova Gorica, Sempeter Vrtojba) is legally based in Italy. The actions take place in the transnational territory of EGTC GO
Nuts 2	Italy - ITH4 Friuli-Venezia Giulia Slovenia - SI02 Western Slovenia (Zahodna Slovenija)
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 EGTCGO area

Nova Gorica and Gorizia are twin-cities on the Italy-Slovenia border and together with the Municipality of Šempeter-Vrtojba form a single cross-border urban area. Traffic accessibility by road is adequate, with the Slovenian expressway H4 (Nova Gorica-Razdrto) and Italian highway A34 (Gorizia-Villesse) serving as a main routes, while the rail connections between the cross-border regions is currently being upgraded. The proximity of Trieste Airport in Ronchi dei Legionari, Italy, also increases connectivity, as it is only 25 km away from Nova Gorica.



Source: Own elaboration

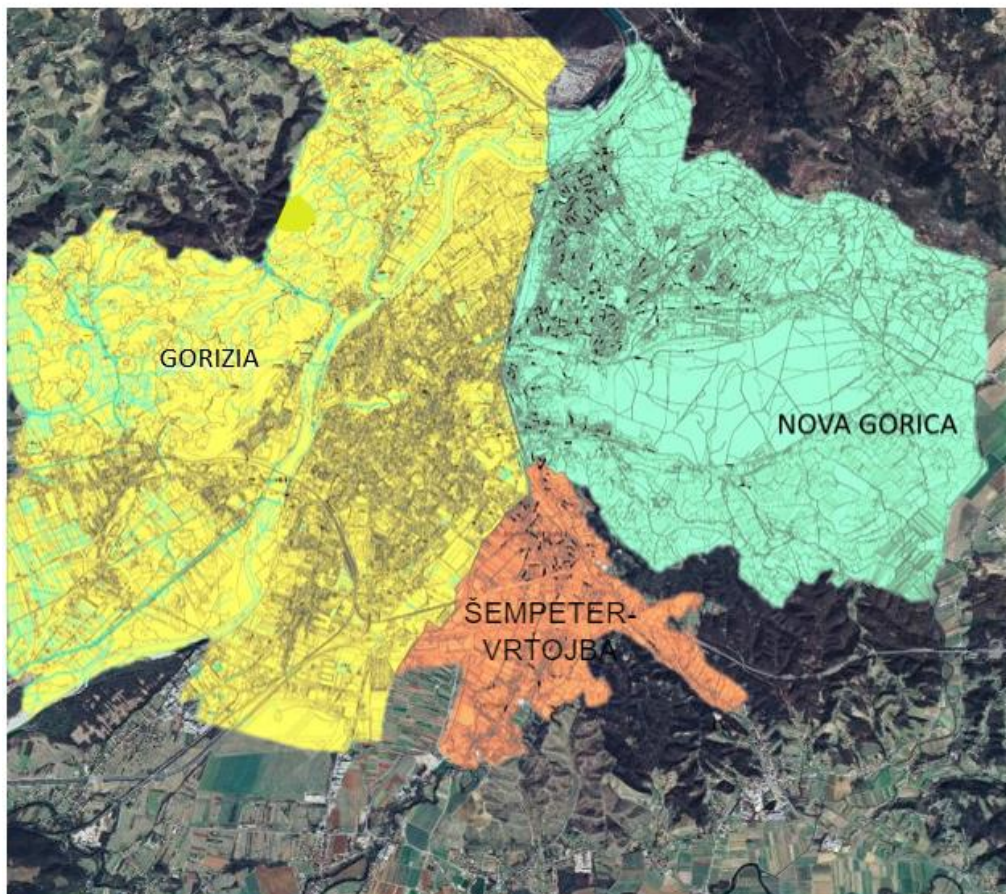
ITALIAN NUTS III	POPULATION (inhabitants)	SURFACE (km ²)	DENSITY (inhabitants/km ²)
Trieste	234.493	212,5	1.103,50
Udine	528.791	4.969,0	106,42
Gorizia	139.403	467,1	298,44
Pordenone	312.533	2.275,0	137,38
Venezia	853.338	2.467,0	345,90
TOTAL	2.068.558	10.390,6	199,1

SLOVENIAN NUT III	POPULATION (inhabitants)	SURFACE (km ²)	DENSITY (inhabitants/km ²)
Primorsko-Notranjska	52.334	1.456,0	35,94
Osrednjeslovenska	542.306	2.334,0	232,35
Gorenjska	203.636	2.137,0	95,29
Obalno-kraška	113.961	1.044,0	109,16
Goriška	117.260	2.325,0	50,43
TOTAL	1.029.497	9.296,0	110,7

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The analysis of the cross-border context conducted by the Italy and Slovenia Interreg programme⁵ highlights the main characteristics of the territory of the EGTC area.

- The border between Italy and Slovenia is a relatively short border of 232 km but extremely diversified in terms of morphology as it crosses mountains, plains and coastal areas.
- Regarding the economic situation, the area is not far from EU standards, the Italian side is slightly above the EU average of GDP per capita and the Slovenian side is slightly below.
- Similarly, the labour market situation, as regards rates of employment, unemployment and long-term unemployment, is also close to the EU 28 average.
- Although physical accessibility to the border is not perceived as a major obstacle to cooperation (especially for Slovenians), only 12% of the population reported crossing the border for work or business, showing a medium / low level of economic integration with respect to other border regions.
- Based on the Eurobarometer survey, legal and administrative differences are perceived as the main obstacles to cooperation by over 50% of the population, while 68% (among the highest rates in Europe) consider language a major obstacle to cooperation. However, the historical existence of Italian and Slovenian-speaking minorities is recognized and promoted in both countries.



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1.2 POLICY CONTEXT

In this context, the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC GO) plays a crucial role in leading the development at the cross-border level. The European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation is a European legal instrument designed to facilitate the implementation and the management of projects in the field of cross-border cooperation, overcoming the difficulties coming from different regulations and procedures.

EGTC GO was established in 2011 by the municipalities of Gorizia (ITA), Nova Gorica (SLO) and Sempeter-Vrtojba (SLO) -forming a single functional urban area -to identify and cope with common challenges, in order to strengthen the cross-border territory.

The EGTC GO represents an innovative, unique, tool to pursue the path towards an advanced crossborder cooperation that will allow to realize the strategic objectives of the three cities. The EGTC GO was established to identify and cope with common challenges in order to strengthen the cross-border territory. The strategic plan of the EGTC GO was adopted through a joint effort that involved also citizens and experts in many fields such as transportation, energy, healthcare, culture and education, city planning and sport. The strategic plan is based on three pillars: 1. Promotion of the cultural tourism and cross-border natural resources; 2. Sharing of health services; 3. Gorizia-Nova Gorica-Šempeter Vrtojba railway line.

The EGTC GO is currently the only legal instrument offering the following possibilities:

- shaping a shared strategy of urban development;
- bringing forward the needs of the three communities (Nova Gorica, Gorizia and Šempeter – Vrtojba) through an assembly of representatives and thus avoiding any of the three cities to have a predominant role;
- capitalising the outcomes of past cooperation and ensuring continuity;
- operating across the entire cross-border area regardless of municipal borders.

In December 2015, the EC specifically identified the Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) for the development of the cross-border territory of the three municipalities, with a total grant of €10 million (85% covered by ERDF and 15% by national co-financing), €5 million of which are allocated for cultural tourism and cross-border natural resources. EGTC GO was assigned the role of intermediate body with the responsibility to implement the ITI in the territory of the three municipalities.

In the 2014-2020 the EGTC has been recognised as the sole beneficiary that will implement the common strategy. The unique beneficiary model represents the most advanced kind of cross-border cooperation, consolidating the new concept of territorial integration. The EGTC GO is indeed the only entity with territorial authority in the cross-border area that can:

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- coordinate the institutions that are implementing the programme,
- integrate the managing mechanisms through the multiple levels of governance,
- facilitate partnerships with Italian and Slovenian stakeholders involved in the promotion of the territory, and
- inform citizens about the project development.

It represents the first and unique case in Europe of implementation of an ITI at cross-border level. In February 2017 the Interreg CBC Italy-Slovenia Programme approved the “Isonzo-Soča cross-border natural park” Project with a grant of €5 million. The project is implemented by EGTC GO as sole beneficiary. The Project “Isonzo-Soča cross-border natural park” (01.04.2017-30.06.2022) consists firstly of infrastructural works (new cycle and pedestrian paths, including a new bridge over the river), to be built both in Italy and in Slovenia.

1.3 EGTC GO initiatives to promote sustainable urban mobility

The EGTC GO has approved the strategic pilot action “Isonzo – Soča” that exploits synergies between territorial development and urban mobility investing on a number of cycling and walking paths serving the three Municipalities and improving the accessibility to a restored area near the river that will become a cross-border park. Projects under the ITI has been strongly focused on infrastructure restoring and investments therefore there was a strong interest from EGTC GO to get the best knowledge in terms of European standards and best practices and translate them into the I.T.I. documents.

The goals of **ITI Isonzo-Soča**^[2] project are the conservation, protection, recovery and development of the natural and cultural heritage of the cross-border area along the Isonzo-Soča river, as a single tourism destination. The Isonzo-Soča project aims at “giving back” the river to the cities, encouraging citizens to enjoy the territory crossed by the river. Ideally, this goal will be reached through a series of works that will increase the value of the area by improving its accessibility. These works will also increase the number of tourists by making the area more suitable for tourism, through the construction of a cross-border network of walking and cycling routes that will constitute a cross-border urban park, which will also improve sustainable mobility for local inhabitants. An area more attractive will become more attractive for citizens and tourists and will positively impact the local economy. Furthermore, a communication campaign will promote the territory as a new tourist destination.

Specifically, the project aims to construct a cross-border network of cycle and pedestrian paths along the Isonzo river and along the state border that connects Salcano to Šempeter-Vrtojba in the territories of Gorizia, Nova Gorica and Šempeter-Vrtojba.

Moreover other initiatives and investments to strengthen cross-border cooperation and improve mobility have been implemented:

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The **Integrated Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan**^[3] of the cross-border region of Nova Gorica - Gorizia was developed within the PUMAS project (Planning sustainable regional-Urban Mobility in the Alpin Space). A Vision of an Optimally Connected Region^[4] guided the development of the Integrated Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) drawn up by Nova Gorica, Gorizia and five other municipalities. The SUMP consists of five strategic pillars:

- Establishment of integrated transport planning, including the needs of vulnerable groups
- Promotion of walking as a daily travel mode, introduction of new reduced speed traffic zones.
- Creation of conditions for optimal exploitation of cycling potential, especially in Gorizia.
- Development of attractive public transport.
- Shift car users habits by introducing electrically powered vehicles.

The **Cyclewalk Project**^[5] is a completed Interreg project that aims at supporting the shift from car usage to cycling and walking mobility patterns over shorter distances, improving accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists. EGTC GO is one of the partners in the project, contributing to the transition to a more sustainable alternative for urban mobility and tourism by introducing quality criteria for proper planning of walking and cycling infrastructures.

The B-solutions project **CB Pump - Cross-border Public Urban Mobility Plan**^[6] aims at identifying sustainable solutions to the removal of obstacles hindering the integration of urban transport networks. Moreover, it will mobilise relevant actors at the local, regional and national level to conclude a cooperation agreement to set up new cross-border bus lines within the target area. It will also make it possible to treat the border area shared by the three cities as a single urban system and, accordingly, to make a distinction between international commercial bus lines and cross-border bus lines, which are more similar to local public bus services.

The B-Solutions Project: Cross-border Bike-Sharing - In 2021 EGTC GO has submitted a proposal concerning the integration of the existing bike sharing systems between the two cross border cities Gorizia and Nova Gorica. The ambition is to have before the European Capital of Culture (2025), an up and running integrated bike sharing systems managed by the EGTC GO.

GO! 2025 project - European Capital of Culture - The candidacy for European Capital of Cultural has been carried out by both municipalities - Nova Gorica and Gorizia – is an evident achievement of the European programme to promote cross-border governance and a more cohesive socio-economic fabric. The project, whose slogan is GO! Borderless, aims to tear down social, linguistic, cultural, economic, administrative, and ethnic borders and create an urban space that brings citizens together in a unified city. The project includes an integrated line of actions linked to long-term strategies to improve also the mobility of the entire area. The cultural sector wants to become a leading economic activity able to attract private investments and

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youth workers. Nova Gorica and Gorizia are conceptualising an innovative strategy to build a creative industry hub and a cultural start-up incubator.

1.4 Lessons from the COVID 19 sanitary crisis and new perspectives

The Covid-19 sanitary crisis has significantly slowed the implementation of the action plan, in particular regarding data gathering and field surveys, hindering the possibility to interview people on site. One of the recommendations of this report is to continue the data gathering and increasing the synergies with the available set of data.

According to a recent ESPON report¹ on the EGTC GO area, the temporary reintroduction of the frontier - as decided by national authorities - has interrupted the smoothness of the communication and cooperation between administrations, interfering with the process of jointly planning of the metropolitan area. The two mayors sat down in Transalpine square with a desk divided by the border continuing the dialogue for managing the twin city.

The two mayors during the lockdown have highlighted the importance to have a common cross-border framework to tackle future health crisis. It was not a merely political issue but a concrete problem since the only crossing place open was the highway link where pedestrians and cyclists were not allowed to pass.

As part of the candidacy for European Capital of Cultural 2025, EGTC GO has organised Italian and Slovene language online courses to facilitate the interaction of cross-border citizens.

¹ [https://www.espon.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/ESPON_QoL - FR Annex 10 - CS 07 Nova Gorica Gorizia-01292021.pdf](https://www.espon.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/ESPON_QoL_-_FR_Annex_10_-_CS_07_Nova_Gorica_Gorizia-01292021.pdf)

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1. ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 CYCLEWALK project and ITI

The strategy of the I.T.I. intervention is the territorial development of the concerned area by improving its accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists, investing in some key infrastructural interventions (cycle and pedestrian bridges) and the restoration of existing paths. The planned interventions can be more efficient if there is an awareness in the contracting authority of the best practices in terms of standards and European models.

The Cyclewalk project has provided quality criteria based on the good practices collected by the project partners, to ensure that the foreseen planned infrastructure are tailored to effective needs and characteristics of the users.

The new cycle and pedestrian paths have been integrated with the existing ones to create a cross-border cycle network aimed at both daily mobility of citizens and cycle tourism. The core network is a “Ring for bicycles” with two axis, North-South along the border corridor, East-West with a straight link between the centre of Gorizia and that of Nova Gorica. The network is connected with other cycle routes in Slovenia and Italy –existing and under construction –to enable the building of a transnational cycle route along the Isonzo-Soča river from the source to the mouth. The project includes the development of a strategic plan for the promotion of the new cross-border natural park.

The ITI Project governance and management documents are:

- 1.the calls for tender for cycle and pedestrian infrastructures in the lots;
- 2.the executive projects of the cycle and pedestrian infrastructures in the lots;
- 3.the Strategic plan for the promotion of the Isonzo-Soča cross-border natural park.

The EGTC GO, a public Italian body, succeeded in publishing a tender on the Slovenian public procurement portal, applying the Slovenian legislation by applying the DIRECTIVE 2014/24 / EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 26 February 2014 on public procurement.

2.Some cycle and pedestrian infrastructures in the Project are under construction.

3.The Strategic plan for the promotion of the park is the first document to take into consideration the promotion the cross-border territory as a whole.

The strategic plan proposes to increase the number of visitors to the area and to diversify the tourist offer by focusing on cycling. The strategy developed takes into consideration economic, but also environmental, infrastructural, transport, cultural, historical and sociological aspects and was preceded by a consultation of

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numerous actors of the territory (from the University to the hoteliers, from environmental associations to cultural ones, to give some examples).

An upgraded version of the plan was released in December 2021 to take into account the new opportunities offered by the award received by Nova Gorica and Gorizia, nominated European Capital of Culture 2025. The final version of the strategic plan has benefited from the best practices developed during the Cyclewalk project. The Action Plan and the implementation report has been integrated into the Isonzo strategic plan.

The final version of the plan has been drafted also to fit the new opportunities offered by the candidacy of Nova Gorica and Gorizia as European capital of culture 2025. The candidacy has activated the territory and its stakeholders and is outlining new synergies, new visions and new development strategies for the cross-border area. The strategic plan for the promotion of the Isonzo-Soca cross-border natural park is an important tool, on which the future of the area will be based. The plan will also be taken into account by the Assembly of the EGTC GO, which will draw up its own second strategic plan, defining the priority development themes for the next 7-10 years.

The municipalities of the EGTC GO urban area have been strongly involved in the whole process of interregional learning and as pilot areas for the activities foreseen. It was very useful to analyse the different approaches within the single urban area for what concerns walking and cycling infrastructure and other measures. The relevant scientific and technical exchange that the project has been reflected particularly in the taking up of knowhow by the technical offices of the administrative bodies, important moments of involvement for them, beyond the study visits, the interregional trainings.

The CYCLEWALK EGTC GO action plan aimed at influence the ITI. Given the current stage of the ITI project development, the actions contributed to the drafting of the second part of the strategic plan for the promotion of the Isonzo-Soča cross-border natural park and has been integrated in it. The update of the EGTC GO Strategic Plan is scheduled for 2022.

The action plan has the goal to enable evidence-based decision-making in future development measures and promotion of cycling and walking in the transnational cross-border area by firstly collecting data (where missing) and analyse it.

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2.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION 1 - Sustainable inter-modality audit

- a) **A technical committee, coordinated by EGTC GO was set up and** obtained information and available data from:
1. The national rail operator Trenitalia
 2. Nomago Bikes , the operator of the Nova Gorica bike sharing.
 3. As the Municipality of Gorizia started drafting a Cycling Master Plan, the EGTC took contact with the relative offices to share data about the ITI project Isonzo-Soča cross-border park. It was not possible to receive from the Municipality of Gorizia any data from the Biciplan.
- **CROSSMOBY** - Cross-border integrated transport planning and intermodal passenger transport services financed under the CBC Interreg Italy – Slovenia. The main results expected from the CROSSMOBY project are: 1- the contribution to a higher quality, safer, more sustainable and less polluting cross-border mobility of people between Italy and Slovenia. This result will be achieved by increasing the supply of connections between the two countries, made possible by the new cross-border rail services planned along the Venice - Trieste - Ljubljana axis; 2 - the developed cooperation between the most relevant actors of the two countries, at regional and local level, towards a cross-border planning of sustainable mobility, made possible by the expected innovative approach in the adoption, development and coordination of PUMS (Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans).
 - **BIKE NAT** - project under the CBC Interreg Programme Italy – Austria - Cycling routes to improve the natural and cultural heritage that. The proposal aims at enhancing the cross-border territory of Friuli Venezia Giulia, Carinthia and Salzburg, increasing its external visibility and physical usability, preserving the environment and satisfying tourist mobility needs, considering primarily the current situation regarding accessibility to major attractions, and facilitating incoming users (by cycling and hiking) through the promotion and enhancement of existing public transport systems and the improvement of the overall Alpe Adria Radweg Cycle-Way. A proposal will be made regarding the experiment of new intermodal passenger services (such as bus plus bike from MICOTRA train stations), the launch of new bike friendly services and the implementation of joint actions to promote tourism, such as the affixing of common signage near the most important points of the CAAR.

A field survey was conducted to collect missing data.

A report of 60 pages was drafted. **SEE ATTACHED REPORT 1 – AUDIT ON INTERMODALITY.**

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2.3 IMPLEMENTATION OF ACTION 2 - Usage monitoring pilot (active mobility)

- b) **A technical committee, coordinated by EGTC GO was set up and** obtained information and available data from:
 - The Municipality of Nova Gorica that provided the data of traffic counting
 - The Department of Infrastructure of the Slovenia Republic, which provided the data of the counter in Solkan
- c) **An own counter was activated in Gorizia to collect data**
- d) **A report of 13 pages** was drafted:
SEE ATTACHED REPORT 2 – PILOT ON USAGE MONITORING

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2.3 Implementation of ACTION 3 - Setup of a network of service providers for active mobility and cycle tourism

To promote cycling infrastructures, existing and in construction, it is important to accompany them with the parallel promotion of a variety of services. To enable evidence-based decision-making about the promotion strategy, as far as services are concerned the following networks have been involved:

- Discussion at technical level with the EGTC GO Transport, Urban, Sport Committees
- A new EGTC GO Environment Committee will be set up and it will contribute, *inter alia*, to promote local services for cycling
- A high-level network of service providers has been involved in the context of the preparation of the European Capital of Culture. This table is coordinated by the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region
- the EGTC GO will coordinate a local network hospitality services in general, followed by a promotion strategy proposal based on the

An initial survey to build a knowledge base of the existing and potential offer (desktop search) of a variety of services from bike sharing to bike rentals, from mechanical assistance and repair service to bike shops, from bike kitchens to bike-friendly accommodation, from charging stations for e-bikes to luggage transfer for cycle tourists, from routes information websites to mobile apps.

- The EGTC GO is currently exploring a innovative app that will provide information about the services offer by the different economic operators, including bike services related.

Involving the Chambers of Commerce of Gorizia and Nova Gorica, launching an open call to invite the existing providers interested in developing their activities in this field to gather together to inform about their current capacities and to identify new potential services that can be offered.

- A technical table has been set up in order to launch the cross-border bike sharing that should be up and running in 2022

Setting up a network of those operators interested in further development in the context of the European Capital of Culture, who will be consulted on a regular basis (like other expert groups already established by EGTC GO). The purpose of the new network, set up and coordinated by EGTC GO will contribute to the implementation of the following activities foreseen in the European Capital of Culture Bid Book:

Cycle paths/green mobility	Nova Gorica - Gorizia	750,000	2021-2023	Together with the common bike-sharing system (connected to Borderless Wireless) the backbone of GO! 2025 mobility
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Objective 2:	A GREEN, VIBRANT CITY WITH A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE		
	Specific Objectives	Dimensions	Indicators (examples)

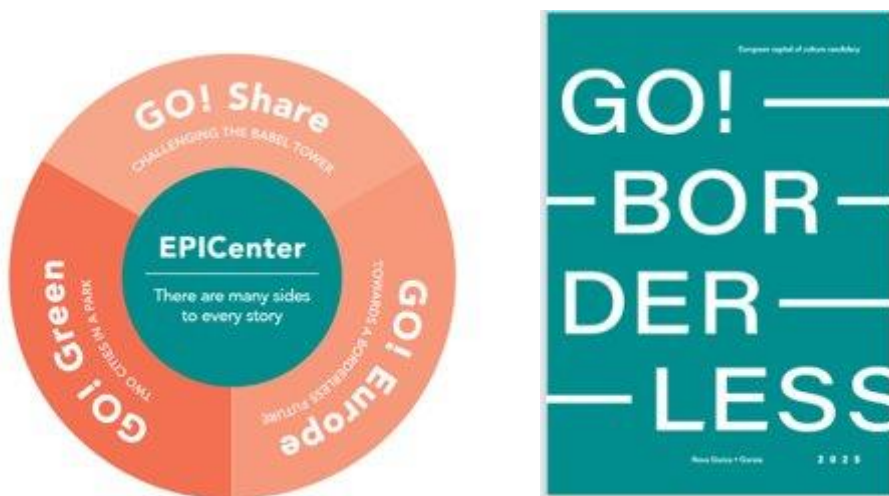
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<p>Urban development</p>	<p>To foster cross-border urban integration</p>	<p>City centres</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in motorised traffic in city centres; • Increase of bike sharing opportunities;
		<p>Suburban and rural areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in suburban and rural cycling paths; • Increase in public transport connecting suburban and rural areas with city centres;

Source: Bid Book European Capital of Culture 2025

The FVG and all Italian actors have set up a coordination table for the activities in preparation of the European Capital of Culture 2025. In this table the EGTC GO president is promoting sustainable mobility

Municipality level – the EGTC GO Assembly and the 3 EGTC GO Committees have discussed the implementation of the action plan and has decided to endorse the EGTC GO with the setting up of an integrated bike sharing systems between Gorizia and Nova Gorica.



Action 3 - Usage monitoring pilot (active mobility – results)

- The EGTC GO is currently exploring a innovative app that will provide information about the services offer by the different economic operators, including bike services related.
- A technical table has been set up in order to launch the cross-border bike sharing that should be up and running in 2022

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2. Recommendations

I. Continue the promotion of cycling in the EGTC GO area

Continue in the EGTC GO area the promotion of the benefits of cycling in

- Preventing diseases – link with the Health Project currently managed by the EGTC GO
- Contributing to the EU Climate Change Agenda – studies have demonstrated that using the bike can have a significant impact on CO2 savings
- Organize cycle training for school for children, migrants, elderly
- Making full potential of the EGTC GO Sport Committee

II. Bring the importance of cycling on top of local politicians agenda

- Explore with the municipalities incentives for using the bike (e.g. reverse toll money)
- Increase the bike viability in the Gorizia and Nova Gorica city center
- Embed the promotion of biking Urban mobility and infrastructure
- Organize cycle training for school for children, migrants, elderly

III. Data gathering – the project has highlighted the importance of cross-border data analysis for evidence based policy

- Integrate the data collected from public bike sharing schemes into the real-time information from public transport to allow for better and seamless inter-modal trips.
- Encourage data collection from cyclists, to use this data to improve urban cycling and to allow access to data for individual cyclists
- Explore the possibility to use data from cyclists' apps/devices to improve cycling environment in urban areas.

IV - Integrated ticketing and Integrated planning – trilingual with timetable

V - Continue attracting EU funding on cycling The following EU-level funding streams could be used to promote cycling:

- European Regional Development Fund and European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development are the main source for cycling projects.
- The Horizon Europe program can support innovation and research projects containing cycling components.
- The SME program can support the competitiveness of cycling-related enterprises (e.g. cycling-related manufacturing SMEs) and European-scale cycling tourism projects.
- The LIFE program can support environment and climate-related actions.
- The Erasmus+ and Europe for Citizens programs can support European campaigns, events and other soft measures to involve European citizens and change their perceptions and/or behaviour (for example to promote physical activity).

VI - Foreseen specific actions in the upcoming Small Project Fund on cycling and culture

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^[1] European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Green City Action Plan methodology, London, UK, 2016, page 4.

^[2] For further information, please consult the following document: <https://www.greencitynetwork.it/wp-content/uploads/Strategia-regionale-per-le-green-city.pdf>