

Spatial Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia

Reasons for drafting a new Strategy

Almost for two decades the Physical Planning Strategy of the Republic of Croatia of 1997 had been directing spatial development and the development of the physical planning system in Croatia. Individual strategic principles of the Strategy of 1997 remained unrealised due to excessive ambition or lack of implementation instruments. This, however, does not diminish the major merits of this document that consisted in:

- directing the development of the young country, severely affected by war destruction;
- clear commitment towards sustainable development, rational use of space and preservation of natural, cultural and landscape values and environmental protection;
- physical planning system with clearly determined actors and stakeholders and physical planning directions, owing to which Croatian territory is in its entirety covered by spatial plans at the regional and local level;
- noting the need for development of a physical planning information system and monitoring and reporting on spatial status.

Among the key reasons for developing a new Strategy the following are of highest importance:

- phenomena and processes observed by monitoring the spatial status;
- a series of sectoral strategies and other development documents that have an indirect or direct impact on space and were adopted in the period upon adoption of the Physical Planning Strategy of the Republic of Croatia of 1997;
- change of context – the Republic of Croatia covered the way from a young country building up its own physical planning system to an EU Member State, with all rights and obligations arising therefrom.

Strategy development process

On 25 November 2013 the Minister of Construction and Physical Planning passed the Decision on the drafting of the Spatial Development Strategy of the Republic of Croatia. The Strategy sets out long-term tasks of spatial development until 2030, strategic directions with regard to development of activities in space and starting points for the coordination of development measures in space. The task of drafting the Strategy, in cooperation with spatial development stakeholders, has been taken over by the Croatian Institute for Spatial Development (CISD).

Following the methodological pattern for drafting strategic documents, particularly the principle of integration and coordination of sectoral requirements and the partnership principle, upon adoption of the Decision on Strategy drafting public bodies and entities with a public service mission were invited to provide data.

In parallel, the process of analysis and assessment of the territorial status and trends began, as well as the procedure of strategic environmental impact assessment. Special attention was dedicated to the analysis of sectoral development documents (strategies, programmes, plans). Within the scope of the carried out analysis more than thirty strategic documents at the national level were identified as relevant for spatial development.

For purposes of drafting the new Strategy, in cooperation with the scientific and professional community, six separate expert bases were carried out:

- Analysis of Spatial Plans of Counties,
- Landscape as a Factor of the Spatial Development Strategy,
- Regional Development, Settlement System, Urban and Rural Development and Transformation of Space,
- Integrated Coastal Zone Management,
- Demographic Scenarios and Migrations,
- Development of Economic Activities in Space.

Debates on the themes of these expert bases were carried out with representatives of physical planning institutes of counties and the City of Zagreb, and thereupon with representatives of public bodies and the scientific community (June 2014).

Based on established core values of Croatian space, the system of spatial development management and the established territorial status and trends, the expert team of CISD initiated the development of the Strategy concept by overlaying

the spatial data, carrying out a SWOT-analysis workshop, establishing the general spatial development objective (vision) until 2030 and development starting points as well as a draft of priorities.

The selected findings of the analysis of territorial status and trends and the concept of the Strategy were publicly presented in November 2014 and a further round of consultations thereon was carried out with representatives of the sectors.

Elaboration of the Strategy concept was continued in cooperation with the consultative body composed of acknowledged experts from various fields (Expert consultant body).

The process was continued by public consultation on the Draft proposal of the Strategy.

Special notice with an invitation to participate in the consultation was sent to public bodies, organisations, institutions and other entities with a public service mission. The notice was sent to a total of 753 addresses, with the indication that the study of the Draft proposal of the Strategy was available on official websites. Public consultation on the Draft proposal of the Strategy was carried out in the period from 15 June to 14 July 2015.

During consultation four public debates, organised by the CISD, were held in the four largest Croatian cities – macro-regional centres: Split, Rijeka, Zagreb, Osijek.

All the received positions and proposals with regard to the Draft proposal of the Strategy were carefully elaborated. In the period from 16 July 2015 to 17 August 2015 a total of 533 opinions, comments and proposals were elaborated.

Concurrently with the consultation on the Draft proposal of the Strategy, public debate was carried out on the Strategic environmental impact study (from 15 June to 14 July 2015).

The developed Final draft of the Strategy with the Report on the carried out consulting was submitted for adoption to the Government of the Republic of Croatia, upon having been previously submitted for final opinion to all ministries, the Croatian County Association, the Association of Cities in the Republic of Croatia and the Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Croatia.

On 10 September 2015 the Government of the Republic of Croatia supported the Strategy proposal and submitted it to the Parliament to enter adoption procedure. The Strategy is expected to be adopted by the Parliament in 2016.

Document Structure and Key Points

The Strategy consists of five main chapters:

1. Core values
2. Territorial status and trends (with SWOT analysis)
3. Basic principles and concept of spatial development
4. Spatial development priorities and strategic directions
5. Implementation framework

The Strategy identifies its **CORE VALUES** in:

- the mosaic feature of the spatial basis,
- natural resources
- Croatian spatial identity,
- models of planning and spatial development heritage,
- EU territorial policies.

Croatian spatial identity arises from natural, cultural, landscape and social values, as well as from its building culture and the culture of spatial planning and design.

The physical planning system of the Republic of Croatia is based on the Constitution, the territorial organisation of the state and the powers conferred to public law bodies, and it is determined in more detail by the basic law in the field of physical planning. The Croatian Parliament, the Government of the Republic of Croatia and representative bodies of regional and local self-government units ensure efficiency of physical planning by adopting spatial plans and other documents regulating the organisation, use and intended purpose of space and the conditions/requirements for its planning and protection in line with the objectives and principles of physical planning and sustainable development.

The **TERRITORIAL STATUS AND TRENDS** were established by analysis and assessment of the population basis situation, spatial structure, housing as the most important function of settlements, social infrastructure, economic activities and activities with the highest impact on space, transport and energy infrastructure and negative territorial impacts. An established process that could have dramatic consequences on Croatian space is a change in the demographic picture: a fall in the total population number, continuous natural depopulation, pronounced aging and disbalance in the population's age structure, negative net migrations with foreign countries (as of 2009).

The spatial distribution of central settlements reflects non-uniformity, which often is closely linked with population trends: a network of central settlements is visibly most sparse in mountainous and southern parts of central Croatia, in areas with numerous development limitations, and it is most developed in the northern and north-western parts of central Croatia and in the most eastern part of Croatia. In Croatia's urban system small towns are outstanding, whereas medium-sized towns are lacking. Croatia's rural space is characterised by negative demographic, economic and general development trends. In Croatia, like in Europe, one of the most important common challenges of rural areas is their insufficient capacity for creating high-quality and long-term sustainable jobs, and in this regard they lag behind urban areas.

A special challenge to planning in the future will consist also in the consequences of climate change. Flood risks have often occurred in the state territory over the past years. During the past decades recording of increasingly frequent extreme hydrological conditions and extremely high precipitation quantities has occurred that result in large water waves that significantly increase the flood risk in individual basins.

Within the framework of establishing the territorial status and trends, also the spatial development management system underwent special analysis, with the focus on topics where the most significant steps forward can and have to be made:

- the remediation of devastated areas and landscapes,
- connecting spatial planning systems with development policies,
- the further development of the physical planning information system, and
- development of the participatory model.

Aiming at a balanced and sustainable development, at raising the quality of life and mitigating negative demographic processes, the **BASIC PRINCIPLES** of the spatial development **CONCEPT** are:

- promoting polycentric spatial development
- mitigating negative demographic trends in the most threatened regions
- preservation of Croatian spatial identity
- using the benefits of the geographical location
- sustainable development of economy and infrastructure systems
- connecting with European territory
- integrated approach to physical planning
- active adaptation to ongoing changes.

Following the findings of the analysis of the territorial status and trends and the basic principles of the concept, **SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS** were determined.

Through the **sustainability of spatial structures** priority, directions are given for the development of a balanced settlement system, establishment of urban-rural partnership, planning of liveable and well-organized cities, promoting vitality and attractiveness of rural space, sustainable development and use of the coastal zone and sea and moderate use of space in which development is, as a priority, oriented towards areas that are already in use and towards processes of urban transformation.

Through the **spatial identities preservation** priority, affirmation of landscape features and values, preservation and sustainable development of cultural heritage and protected nature areas and promotion of building and design excellence is directed.

Within the **transport connectivity** priority, guidelines are given for the development of transport infrastructure (encouraging intermodal connections).

Within the **energy system development** priority, guidelines are given for connecting with European energy systems, for increasing the share of renewable energy sources and developing distribution and supply systems, as well as for increasing energy efficiency in all spatial systems.

The **resilience** priority gives guidelines for adaptation to ongoing changes – climate change and trends in economy, as well as for overcoming long lasting unresolved issues, e.g. passive management of abandoned, underused and degraded areas, or remediation of areas of illegal construction.

Spatial development and direction priorities

<p>4.1. SUSTAINABILITY OF SPATIAL STRUCTURE</p>	<p>4.1.1. Optimising the settlements system</p> <p>4.1.2. Harmonious development of cities and their functional regions</p> <p>4.1.3. Developing liveable and well-organized cities</p> <p>4.1.4. Promoting the vitality and attractiveness of rural areas</p> <p>4.1.5. Sustainable development and use of the coastal zone</p> <p>4.1.6. Reducing regional disparities and sustainable planning of areas with specific assets</p> <p>4.1.7. Promoting universal access to services of general interest and infrastructure</p>
<p>4.2. SPATIAL IDENTITY PRESERVATION</p>	<p>4.2.1. Sustainable development of protected areas and ecological network</p> <p>4.2.2. Preservation and sustainable use of cultural heritage</p> <p>4.2.3. Promoting building and design excellence</p> <p>4.2.4. Affirmation of landscape features and values</p>
<p>4.3. TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY</p>	<p>4.3.1. Development of the transport system</p> <p>4.3.2. Inclusion in the Trans-European transport network</p> <p>4.3.3. Inclusion in IT systems</p>
<p>4.4. DEVELOPMENT OF ENERGY SYSTEM</p>	<p>4.4.1. Promoting energy supply stability</p> <p>4.4.2. Development of production, distribution and supply</p> <p>4.4.3. Increase in the share of renewable energy sources</p> <p>4.4.4. Inclusion in the European energy system</p>
<p>4.5. RESILIENCE</p>	<p>4.5.1. Climate change adaptation and mitigation</p> <p>4.5.2. Enhancing natural capital by green infrastructure planning</p> <p>4.5.3. Increasing energy efficiency</p> <p>4.5.4. Sustainable waste management</p> <p>4.5.5. Sustainable management of mineral resources</p> <p>4.5.6. Adapting to changeable business conditions</p> <p>4.5.7. Developing sustainable tourism</p>

The last chapter, **STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK**, includes obligations and recommendations for coordination of spatial development measurements:

- development of the physical planning information system,
- providing interoperable spatial data services,
- development of „new generation“ spatial plans
- efficient cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation
- development of the participatory model,
- developing the culture of sustainable use of space, and
- recommendations for future research and development.