SUPER – Sustainable Urbanisation and Land-use Practices in European Regions

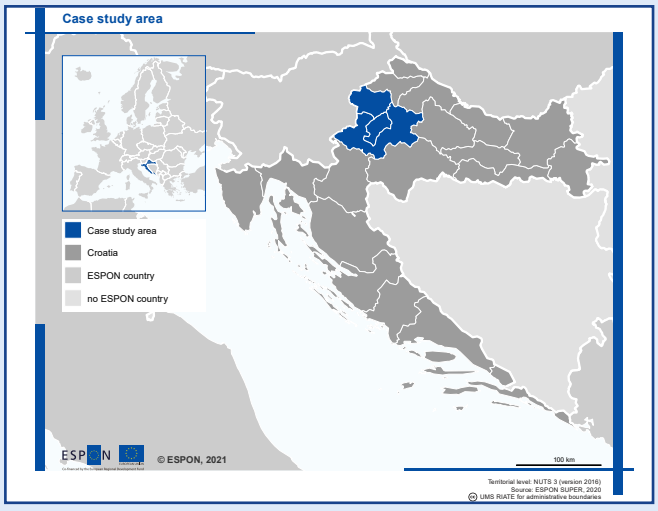
Factsheet Croatia | Spin-off

Aim of the case study

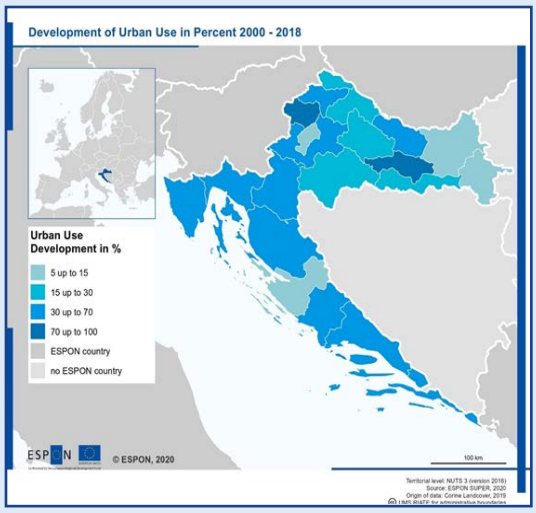
The SUPER Guide to sustainable urbanisation and land-use developed a set of recommendations for policy-makers and practitioners in spatial and urban planning, which were evaluated through the SUPER Spin-Off. The Croatian case study was focused on events in the development of legal and financial framework for reconstruction planning after the 2020 earthquakes in Croatia, tending to apply the results and recommendations from SUPER to specific post-earthquake reconstruction process issue. The main analysed intervention was the Act on the Reconstruction of Earthquake-damaged Buildings in the Territory of the City of Zagreb, Krapina-Zagorje County, Zagreb County, Sisak-Moslavina County and Karlovac County.

State-of-art in terms of post-earthquake reconstruction process

In March 2020 Croatia was hit by a devastating earthquake near Zagreb. Earthquakes made huge damage to important public services (health, education, etc.) and public institutions necessary for the functioning of the state. The rebuilding process will be guided by the new Act on the Reconstruction of Earthquake-damaged Buildings in the Territory of the City of Zagreb, Krapina-Zagorje County, Zagreb County (OG 102/20) as well as Sisak-Moslavina County and Karlovac County, which were added later after the second strong earthquake in December 2020 (OG 102/20, 10/21). This Act will affect the urbanization of central Croatia during a long post-earthquake reconstruction process. In practice, this Act was not developed to directly manage land management, but to provide financial and management framework for the post-earthquake reconstruction process. The Act is not directly related to spatial planning but to construction rehabilitation, thus opening the door to the process of planning a long-term post-earthquake reconstruction strategy and integrated urban revitalisation as a processes of urban area regeneration. The renovation of damaged buildings itself will satisfy the tenants and their economic, social and environmental needs exclusively from the aspect of housing in a particular housing unit, but the wider environmental, social and economic issues of urban area are not resolved, which is the task for spatial and strategic planning.



The scope of study area



Urban use development in Croatia 2000-2018

ESPON

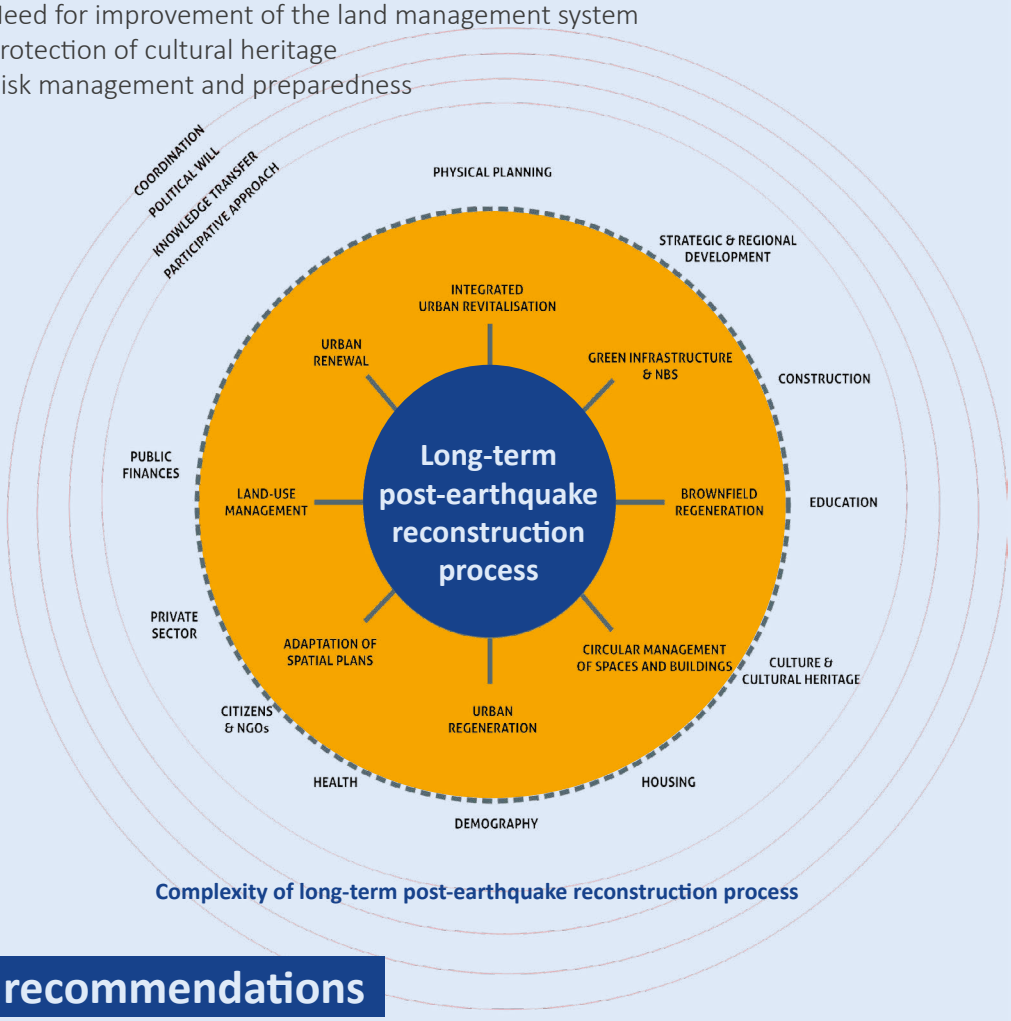
EUROPEAN UNION

Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

Main land use challenges to be addressed

After the earthquake events in 2020, Croatia is facing a series of challenges that will influence the next decades of territorial development. The most important challenges within the next period in relation to land-use in Croatia and its sustainability are:

- Lack of a long-term vision for post-earthquake reconstruction
- Need for integrated urban revitalisation
- Need for a more participatory approach
- Adjustment of spatial planning documents to support post-earthquake reconstruction process
- Lack of horizontal and vertical cooperation
- Support better coordination between strategic and spatial planning
- Need for improvement of the land management system
- Protection of cultural heritage
- Risk management and preparedness



Complexity of long-term post-earthquake reconstruction process

Main recommendations

Case study yielded numerous conclusions and recommendations for integrating sustainable urbanisation and land-use instruments for future possible seismic events. To ensure risk resilience and preparedness, the case study provides recommendations for activities needed before and after the earthquake event. The recommendations concern not only the Croatian case, but all earthquake-affected areas in Europe. In general, policy makers and decision-makers should strive for better multisectoral coordination (during the reconstruction process), adaptation of spatial (land management), legal and financial framework, bolster political will, promote knowledge transfer, increase participative approach, promote long-term post-earthquake reconstruction planning through integrated urban revitalisation, improve hazard resistance and resilience, apply good practices regarding green infrastructure and circular management of buildings and spaces, etc. Numerous urban areas of the European Union, especially those in the Mediterranean area, could learn a lot from this case study. Earthquakes are not frequent, they are unpredictable, so they are often not seriously considered during urban development planning. But when they do happen, they cause great damage and often limit the functions and service of urban area. It is therefore important to emphasize at the EU level the need to strengthen resilience to earthquakes and other natural hazards in order to preserve sustainable urbanisation and sustainable land-use.