



ASSOCIATION HYLA STRATIGIC PLAN

2024 - 2028

Zagreb, March 2024.

FULL NAME OF THE
ASSOCIATION:

Association Hyla

CROATIAN NAME OF THE
ASSOCIATION:

Udruga Hyla

ABBREVIATED NAME USED
IN THE DOCUMENT

Hyla or the Association

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CONTENT

HYLA MISSION AND VISION	1
BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSOCIATION	2
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	6
EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS	8
ANALYSIS OF HYL A ACHIEVEMENTS 2019 - 2024	12
PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS	16
STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS ANALYSIS	18
SMART GOALS AND MITIGATION MEASURES	22
Elaboration of SMART goals to mitigate the uncertainty of funding	23
Elaboration of SMART Goals to Mitigate Personnel and organizational challenges	25
Elaboration of SMART goals for human resources and professional challenges	28
Elaboration of SMART goals to mitigate poor outreach to the general public	30
PROGRAMS, DIRECTIONS AND OBJECTIVES OF ACTION	33
I. PROGRAM: Professional - scientific research	34
II. PROGRAM: Protection and conservation of species and habitats	34
III. PROGRAM: Promotion and involvement of the public	35
ELABORATION OF THE 1ST STRATEGIC PROGRAM:	36
ELABORATION OF THE 2ND STRATEGIC PROGRAM:	38
ELABORATION OF THE 3RD STRATEGIC PROGRAM:	40

1 HYLA MISSION AND VISION

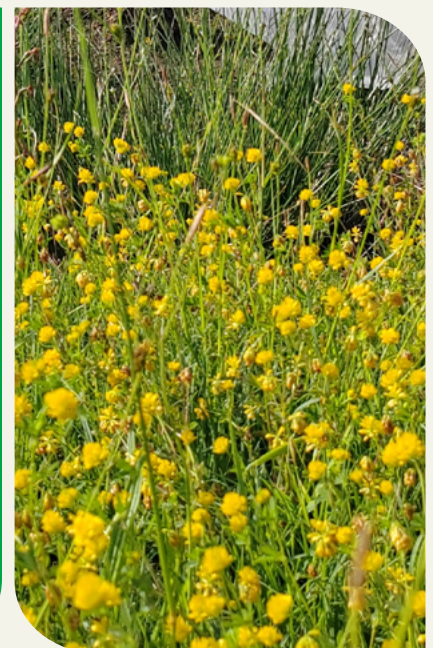
MISSION

To educate and raise public awareness about the importance of nature conservation and encourage their active participation. To conduct, promote, and develop scientific and professional research focused on herpetofauna, entomofauna, and their habitats to improve their protection. To provide professional support to nature protection stakeholders, collaborate with them to monitor the conservation status of species and their habitats, and propose and help implement conservation measures.



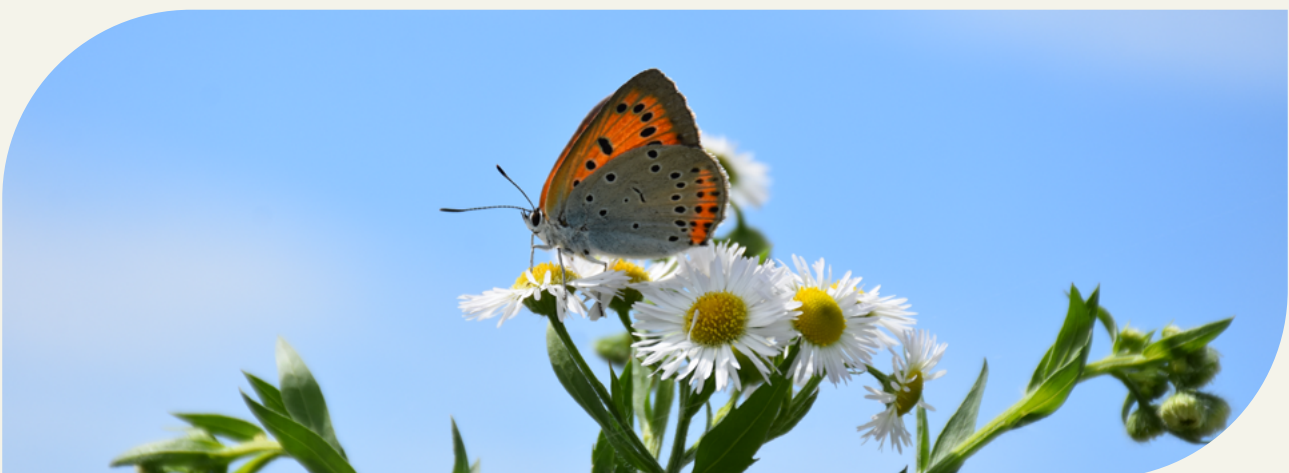
VISION

As a relevant organization in herpetology and entomology, with its expertise and quality work, it will contribute to the improved protection of biodiversity by fostering collaboration between the general public and all stakeholders in nature conservation, through continuous professional and scientific research.



2 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSOCIATION

Association Hyla was established in 1997 under the name “Society for the Protection and Study of Amphibians and Reptiles of Croatia – Hyla.” It was **founded by biologists and enthusiasts** passionate about amphibians and reptiles, motivated by the need to protect these species. In 2004, the Society was renamed the Croatian Herpetological Society - Hyla and developed a communication infrastructure, including a website (www.hhdhyla.hr) and a mailing list for members and associates. These tools help maintain connections among members and a network of regional and local associations and partner organizations. Since 2013, the Association has expanded its activities by employing new experts to include habitats and invertebrates, particularly dragonflies, butterflies, and select groups of beetles. With this broader focus, the Association changed its name in 2016 to **Association Hyla**, which remains in use today. In nearly **30 years** of operation, Hyla’s experts have implemented **more than 200 projects** in Croatia. Since its inception, approximately 300 members from diverse professions and interests have contributed to Hyla. The Association has consistently improved the accessibility of information and the visibility of its work to the public through the Hyla website, social media platforms ([Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#)), and newsletters distributed via [Mailchimp](#).



While Hyla is registered as a professional association, it is open to anyone interested in the protection and study of nature. Consequently, its members are predominantly biologists and biology students, with a smaller proportion of citizens interested in the Association's focus areas. Since October 4, 2008, Hyla has been a **full member of IUCN** (International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources), the oldest and largest global network for nature conservation. Additionally, Hyla has been a **member of Zeleni Forum** since 2017, a network of non-governmental environmental organizations aimed at influencing the creation and implementation of environmental and nature conservation policies in Croatia.



In the past five years, Hyla has successfully implemented numerous projects.

In the past five years, Hyla has successfully implemented numerous projects. Among the most notable is the “*Development of the System for Monitoring the Status of Species and Habitat Types 2022–2024*” project, supported by the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, abbreviated as “Megamonitoring.” Through this initiative, Hyla staff, in collaboration with external experts and consortium partners, developed and tested monitoring programs for amphibians, reptiles, beetles, dragonflies, and butterfly species listed in Annexes II, IV, and V of the Habitats Directive. For these species, all EU member states are required to periodically report on their conservation status.



Additional details about ongoing projects, outcomes, and contributions to environmental and species conservation can be provided upon request.

Members must regularly report on their conservation efforts. One of the key initiatives, the Ministry of Agriculture's project, "*Assessment services of operation type 10.1.3 – Conservation of grasslands of high natural value*," aimed at protecting grassland habitats. Another project, "*Pilot measures for the protection of butterflies*" (operation type 10.1.5), focused on the conservation of diurnal butterfly species in Croatia, which we carried out from 2019 to 2022 in collaboration with consortium partners.

In addition, we participated in the **SMART** project led by the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, where between 2021 and 2022, we defined conservation goals and basic measures for insufficiently known butterfly species, working alongside consortium partners.

We also contributed to the fight against invasive species through the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development's project "*Mapping of alien and invasive species of amphibians and reptiles, and the development and testing of monitoring programs*," carried out from 2018 to 2020. Additionally, **we served as lead experts in developing management plans for the red-eared slider turtle**, conducting workshops with stakeholders, and drafting a management plan in 2021. In 2019, we conducted workshops and developed an expert basis for drafting a management plan for a strictly protected species, including an action plan for the Balkan Terrapin (*Mauremys rivulata*).



One of Hyla's key projects is "Nature Connections 2018-2021," **the first project financed by European funds**. This project was implemented through the **Interreg VA Slovenia-Croatia** cooperation program, co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, with Hyla participating as a partner. Another important EU project is "**LIFE for Mauremys 2022-2026**," which focuses on protecting the Balkan Terrapin *Mauremys rivulata*, an umbrella species of Mediterranean wetlands in Dubrovnik-Neretva County. Hyla is a partner in this project, which is carried out through the **LIFE Program** of the European Union.

Alongside these key projects, we have successfully implemented a series of smaller but significant initiatives, contributing to the conservation of target groups.



The number of successfully implemented projects is reflected in the stable growth of our income and the consistent number of employees. Over the past five years, we have maintained an average of about ten full-time employees, with occasional additional hires on a temporary basis to support specific project activities.

3 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The organizational structure of the Association is **based on its members**. Membership in the Association is voluntary for all persons who accept the principles of work and goals of the Association and meet the conditions prescribed by the Statute. Membership in the Association can be active, regular, and honorary. Any person with legal capacity who has paid the last two consecutive annual membership fees and who decides at the Assembly sessions can become an active member of the Association. Any person (under the Statute) who, by filling out the [application form](#), expresses an interest in following or participating in the work of the Association and attends the Assembly sessions can become a regular member of the Association. Honorary members are exempt from paying membership fees but have all the same rights as active members.

The association is structured through various association bodies.

ASSOCIATION BODIES

ASSEMBLY

The Assembly of the Hyla Association is the **highest governing body** of the Association. The Assembly is composed of active, regular and honorary members of the Association. Assembly sessions are held at least once a year. At regular Assembly sessions, annual work reports and financial reports are submitted and work programs for the following year are adopted. At elective Assemblies, members of the Association's bodies are elected.

MANAGEMENT BOARD

The Management Board is the **executive body** of the association and consists of five members, who must be active or honorary members of the Association, with a mandate of three years. One member of the Management Board is an employee representative and is elected by the Association Office, the remaining members are elected by the Assembly by direct vote.

EXECUTIVE TEAM

The executive team is represented by employees of the Association's Office through the following functions:

- **DIRECTOR** – an employee of the Association to whom the Management Board transfers the operational management of the activities and representation of the Association
- **DEPUTY DIRECTOR** – an employee of the Association who replaces the Director in the event of his absence and represents the Association
- **FINANCE MANAGER** – an employee of the Association who performs certain professional, administrative, and financial tasks in the Association and represents the Association
- **OFFICE MANAGER** – an employee of the Association who deals with work organization, human resources, and other needs of the Association's Office
- **EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVE ON THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS** – An employee of the Association who represents the employees and work of the Office to the Management Board. He/she conveys issues from the Office to the Management Board and the conclusions of the Management Board to the Office.

4 EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

NATURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION SECTOR

The Environmental Protection Agency, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, Ministry of Agriculture, county public institutions managing protected areas, and public institutions of national parks and nature parks.

Forms of Cooperation:

- collaboration in conducting monitoring and research activities related to biodiversity conservation and natural values,
- data collection and guidelines that are needed for developing national action plans for endangered species/habitats,
- analysis of available data on herpetofauna and entomofauna to enhance protection and improve impact assessments on the environment,
- improvement of biodiversity monitoring systems,
- strengthening and promoting the implementation of international agreements—Convention on Biological Diversity, Bern Convention, Habitats and Birds Directives, CITES, Aarhus Convention, and other EU regulations,
- development of educational materials for visitors to protected areas,
- development of sustainable solutions to environmental challenges—e.g., implementing “mitigation measures” in critical hotspots for amphibians,



CIVIL SOCIETY

Hyla works with a wide range of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civic initiatives, both local and international, dedicated to nature protection, sustainable development, education, good governance, the protection of public and natural goods (student associations of biologists and related professions, networks of associations, local initiatives, etc.).

Forms of Cooperation:

- strengthening transparent relations between local authorities and communities through educational and practical activities related to nature protection,
- networking and collaborating with other NGOs across Croatia and the region,
- strengthening the influence on public policies,
- facilitating participation in nature protection activities.

EDUCATION SECTOR AND ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

Hyla engages with the education sector and academic community, including primary and secondary school students, university students, teachers, lecturers, and professors; The Ministry of Science, Education, and Sports, the Faculty of Science at the University of Zagreb, the University of Osijek, the University of Zadar, the Croatian Natural History Museum, and other natural history museums and/or departments (Rijeka, Zadar, Split), as well as the Zoological Garden of Zagreb.

Forms of Cooperation:

- educating the younger generation and the educational profession,
- providing education for students of biological and related fields,
- creating educational materials and programs,
- organizing activities and publications,
- application and dissemination of knowledge through extracurricular activities.



LOCAL COMMUNITIES, GENERAL PUBLIC, AND CITIZENS

Hyla connects with local communities, the general public, and individual citizens, promoting environmental awareness and engagement in biodiversity protection.

Forms of Cooperation:

- educating and informing about biodiversity and nature protection, especially related to herpetofauna and entomofauna,
- responding to inquiries about snake species, pond and lawn maintenance, and other nature protection issues,
- increasing public understanding of individual impact on the environment,
- encouraging personal involvement in nature protection through various projects and activities.



LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS (COUNTIES, MUNICIPALITIES, CITIES)

Hyla also collaborates with local and regional governments, helping to bridge the gap between regulations and practical action in nature protection.

Forms of Cooperation:

- supporting the implementation of environmental regulations,
- offering solutions through partnerships with NGOs to address nature protection challenges,
- encouraging open dialogue with local populations and communities,
- advocating for better implementation of international agreements related to environmental protection.

5 ANALYSIS OF HYLA ACHIEVEMENTS

2019 - 2024

Professional Development of Hyla into an Expert Organization for Herpetofauna and Entomofauna

Hyla has strategically positioned itself as an **expert organization in the research of herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles) and entomofauna (insects)**. Through focused efforts, Hyla has gathered and supported the professional development of several experts, many of whom are now recognized as leaders in these fields. This is evidenced by the management of two groups independently within the Megamonitoring project: herpetofauna and dragonflies, as well as active participation in consortia for beetles and butterflies.

Hyla has placed a strong emphasis on maintaining **high research quality**, ensuring competitiveness compared to other institutions working in these areas. Over the past five years, numerous expert-scientific studies have been conducted, making significant contributions to the understanding of the Natura 2000 ecological network, the status of herpetofauna and entomofauna populations, and the availability of scientifically validated knowledge.



Continuous Engagement and Maturation of Hyla Members and Associates

From 2019 to 2024, Hyla has focused on the continuous development and growth of its members and associates. All employees, except for the administrator, joined Hyla during their student years, where they participated in fieldwork, contributed to projects, and gained practical experience which not only enhanced their skills but also increased their competitiveness in the job market after graduation. Some individuals have pursued further education, including doctoral studies.

Hyla's network of associates is extensive, and we continuously strive to engage with both amateurs and experts interested in our focus areas—herpetofauna and entomofauna—across Croatia and beyond. This ongoing collaboration helps strengthen the association and expand its reach in the field.

Hyla's Recognition by Institutions, Donors, and CSOs

Throughout its existence, Hyla has established **strong collaborations** with numerous institutions both in Croatia and across the region, as well as internationally. The main Croatian institutions with which we frequently work include the Institute for Environment and Nature, the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, county public institutions managing protected natural areas, and national parks and nature parks. Depending on the projects we pursue, our cooperation with these institutions varies from year to year, though we have established continuous multi-year partnerships with some. Notable collaborators include the Public Institution of Dubrovnik-Neretva County, with which we work on the LIFE project for river turtle protection (*Mauremys rivulata*), as well as the Public Institutions of Lika-Senj County, Krapina-Zagorje County, Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, Biokovo Nature Park, Mljet National Park, Brijuni National Park, Plitvice Lakes National Park, and the Public Institution for the Management of Protected Natural Values in Rakovica, among others.

Additionally, Hyla actively engages in projects with other institutions, companies, and associations. Over the past five years, we have collaborated with the Faculty of Science and Mathematics at the University of Zagreb, the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Zagreb, the Croatian Museum of Natural History, the City Museum of Varaždin, and organizations such as OIKON d.o.o., Geonatura d.o.o., BIODIEA d.o.o., Vita Projekt d.o.o., as well as associations like The Association Biom and the Center Dr. Stjepan Bolkey Association.

Increased Support from Competent Institutions for Research within the NATURA 2000 Ecological Network

Since Croatia joined the European Union in 2013, opportunities for research conducted by Hyla and similar institutions have steadily increased.



As an EU member, Croatia is required to periodically report on the conservation status of target species and habitats on its territory. As a result, systematic and regular field research, including monitoring, has become essential to collect the necessary data.

Hyla conducts annual research in collaboration with county public institutions, protected area management bodies, and the Institute for Nature Conservation. Public institutions set specific conservation goals within their management plans for ecological network areas, which align with Hyla's focus groups. The Institute (within the Ministry) is responsible for national data collection.

Through the Megamonitoring project, Hyla secured significant funding to undertake **the largest inventory of herpetofauna and entomofauna in Croatia to date**. This project engaged the largest number of researchers so far, and it also led to the development of monitoring programs that must be followed in the future.

New Sources of Financing

Over the past five years, Hyla has successfully secured funding from various key sources:

- **Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development:** Through the Operational Program Competitiveness and Cohesion 2014 - 2020, we have received EU funds, particularly for projects like the Megamonitoring and SMART projects.
- **Interreg VA Slovenia-Croatia:** Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, this funding supported the implementation of the "Nature Connections" project.
- **LIFE Program:** Co-financed by the European Union and the Fund for Environmental Protection and Energy Efficiency, which provided support for the "LIFE for Mauremys" project.

Additionally, we have secured smaller amounts of funding from various public institutions responsible for managing protected areas.

6 PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to **define the direction** for the development and program activities of the association **over the next five years**, aligned with its defined vision and mission. It considers the organization's identified strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats concerning external factors such as the state of nature conservation, the implementation of relevant public policies, broader economic and political trends, the activities of the academic community, the education system, civil society, and the media, as well as potential funding opportunities for Hyla's initiatives. The Strategic Plan will serve as a systematic foundation for developing program units, project preparation, and activities aimed at Hyla's organizational growth. The plan is **available to all Hyla members** and accessible to other stakeholders and the general public.



Preparations for the Strategic Plan were carried out during the previous mandate. The plan itself was **developed in January and February 2024** through a multi-day strategic planning workshop involving Hyla staff. Written input from the Management Board in March 2024 was used to refine and supplement the draft Strategic Plan.

Participants in the strategic planning process **redefined Hyla's mission and vision** and formulated new strategic goals for the next five-year period. These goals were further developed into specific objectives with corresponding implementation methods, which are detailed in the Strategic Plan document. The plan focuses on **strengthening organizational and professional capacities** in areas where Hyla has already established itself as a leading organization and **expanding its capabilities in conservation activities**. Additionally, it maintains an **emphasis on education and public awareness** while increasing investments in the promotion and visibility of Hyla. The participants in this strategic planning process have committed to systematic organizational development to ensure financial and personnel stability and to enhance the organization's recognition as a civil society association, ensuring efficient implementation, expertise, and high-quality work.

7 STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS ANALYSIS

S T R E N G T H S

- ▲ Recognizability of the association in the nature protection sector.
- ▲ Ability to achieve positive changes in nature protection and raise general awareness about nature.
- ▲ Strong professional background and scientific activity rooted in science-based conservation (SBC).
- ▲ Expertise and experience among Hyle employees in monitoring, mapping, inventorying, and analysis.
- ▲ Motivation, goodwill, and commitment of Hyle employees.
- ▲ Professionalism in performing project tasks and striving for quality.
- ▲ Extensive networking with other institutions, built through professional collaborations and scientific research.
- ▲ A broad network of collaborators, providing opportunities to hire external experts for projects.
- ▲ Largest database for herpetofauna and entomofauna in Croatia.
- ▲ Ownership of the Biologer.hr platform, facilitating biodiversity data collection and enhancing citizen science participation.
- ▲ Financial stability and availability of professional staff to support promotion and visibility.
- ▲ Recognition as an institution for volunteering and professional practice.

W E A K N E S S E S

- ▼ Dependence on unreliable sources of financing and over-reliance on small projects.
- ▼ Time burden due to handling too many projects at once, leading to a lack of time for other important tasks like visibility, promotion, and education.
- ▼ A small number of employees limits the capacity for managing larger projects.
- ▼ A limited workforce restricts the number of projects that can be undertaken—each staff member can manage only a certain number of projects before becoming overloaded.
- ▼ Insufficient time to write scientific papers not covered by project budgets.
- ▼ Lack of expertise in habitat restoration, population, genetic, and ecological research—requires external collaborations.
- ▼ Shortage of visual materials (photos, videos) for promotion.
- ▼ Lack of storage space for promotional and educational materials.
- ▼ Insufficient finances dedicated to educational activities and building capacity for volunteer engagement.

O P P O R T U N I T I E S

- ▲ Long-term needs for mapping and monitoring (RO bond for protection, monitoring, and reporting within the ecological network NATURA 2000).
- ▲ Identified need among clients for genetic/ecological/population research and habitat restoration.
- ▲ Deficit of herpetofauna and entomofauna experts in other institutions.
- ▲ Specialized EU funds for Biodiversity, education, volunteering, and conservation activities.
- ▲ Legally adopted and binding management plans for ecological network areas, secured funding.
- ▲ Cooperation with other organizations and institutions (engagement of external collaborators, formation of consortia for larger projects).
- ▲ Biologer platform – potential for inclusion in a national platform for collecting biodiversity data.
- ▲ Media and public interest in topics about nature.
- ▲ Interest of BIUS and other student associations in volunteering, foreign students interested in conducting professional internships at Hyla.

T H R E A T S

- ▼ Croatia is not utilizing EU funds enough.
- ▼ Bureaucratic inertia in the nature protection sector.
- ▼ Weak communication and unclear division of responsibilities for the implementation of individual obligations among contracting organizations in the nature protection sector.
- ▼ A lot of work for the nature protection system with little money; projects may be abandoned due to Insufficient finances at the commissioning organizations.
- ▼ Lack of interest from commissioning institutions for necessary research.
- ▼ Lack of interest from partner institutions in applying for European projects, as well as in coordinating them.
- ▼ A large expenditure of energy and working time on the preparation and administration of large projects.
- ▼ Further overload with a series of small projects.
- ▼ Strengthening competition.

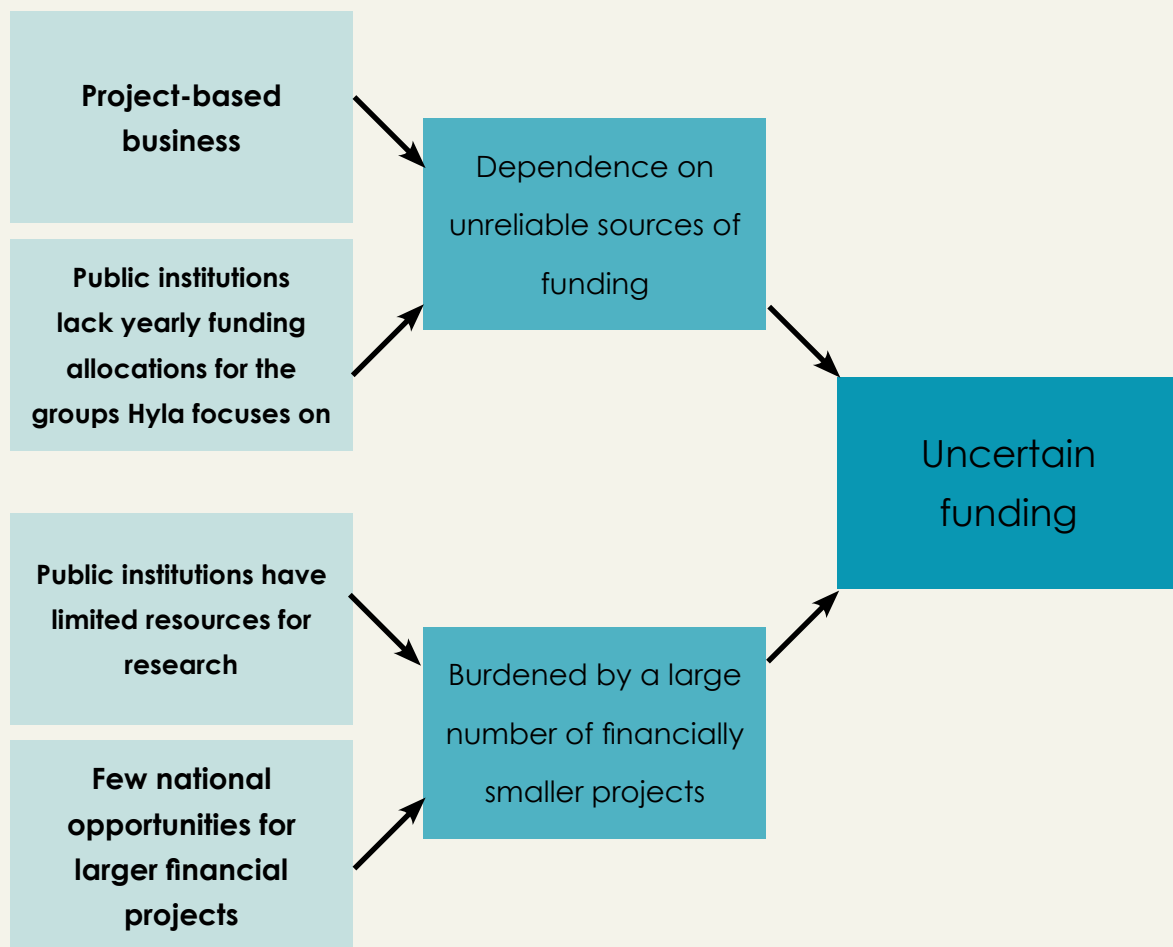
8 SMART GOALS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

After analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, it is important to focus on **addressing the weaknesses** of the Association and implementing mitigation measures to alleviate these challenges. To visually assist in this process, problem trees have been created from the identified weaknesses. These trees have been further refined into **mitigation measures using SMART goals**. SMART goals are an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. This concept helps to clearly define what we aim to achieve and how.

The weaknesses mentioned are categorized into **four problem trees** based on their similarities:

- 1. Uncertain funding of the Association**
- 2. Personnel and organizational challenges**
- 3. Human resources and expertise challenges**
- 4. Poor outreach to the general public**

Elaboration of SMART goals to mitigate the uncertainty of the Association's funding



WEAKNESS: PROJECT-BASED BUSINESS

Although project-based work is a weakness, it is currently the **core activity** of the Association and is unlikely to change shortly due to available financing options. A precautionary measure is to continuously and promptly complete existing projects, apply for larger European projects, form partnerships with other European projects, and prepare future approved projects to ensure financial stability.

SMART goal: Monitor and coordinate the implementation of existing and new projects annually to ensure financial stability.

WEAKNESS: PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS LACK YEARLY FUNDING ALLOCATIONS FOR THE GROUPS HYLÁ FOCUSES ON

Public institutions follow ten-year management plans for activities in protected areas. These management plans lead to annual work programs, where budgets are prepared around September. Projects should be proposed to public institutions during this time to align with their management plan activities.

SMART goal: Propose projects to public institutions on time to secure additional funding for research and Association activities every year.

WEAKNESS: PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS HAVE LIMITED RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH

While public institutions' lower budgets do not significantly impact the Association's finances, they still play an essential role in achieving the Association's goals. It's important to utilize these limited funds effectively each year.

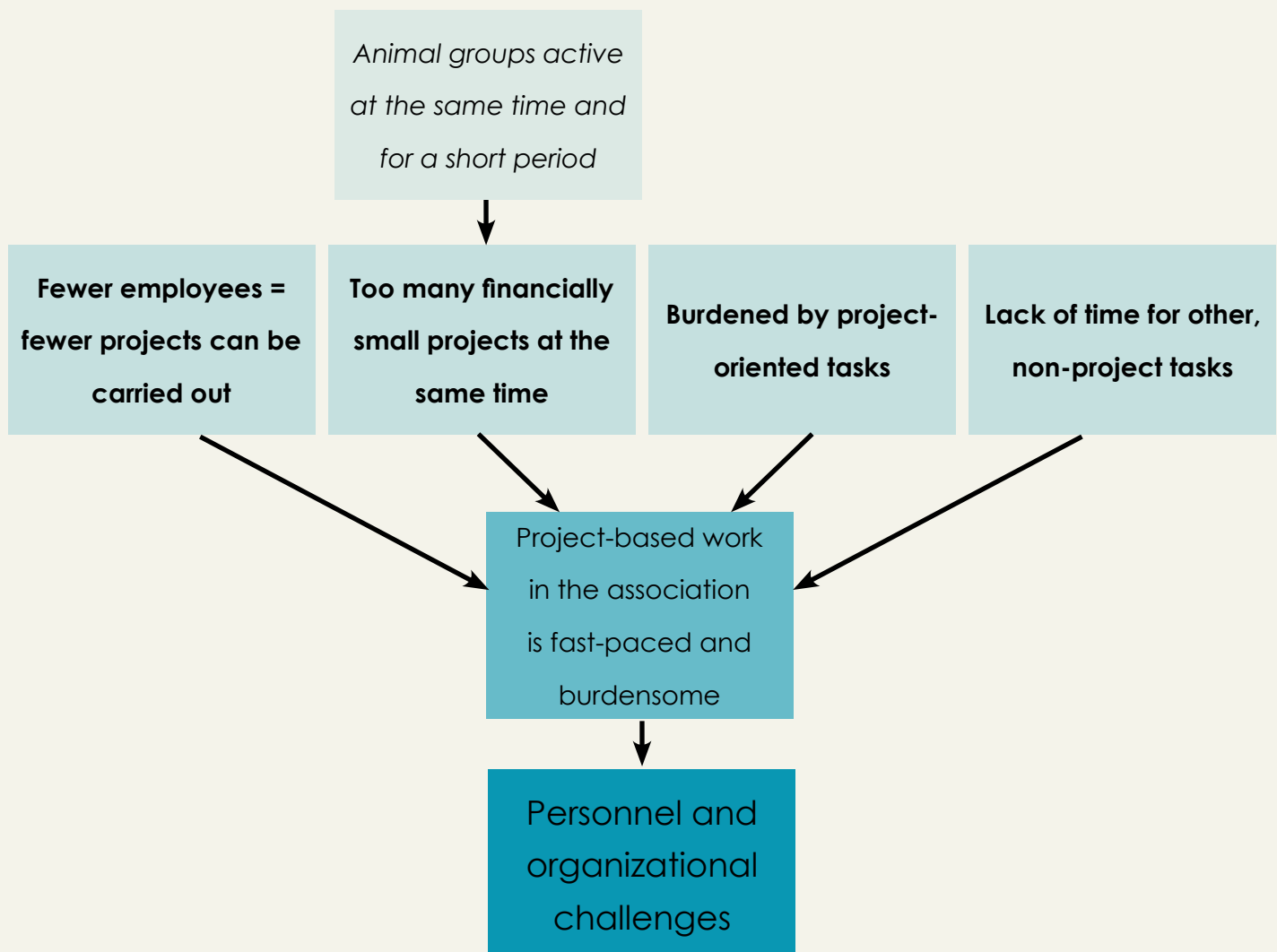
SMART goal: Apply for more European projects and reduce smaller projects to a maximum of ten, totaling 15,000 euros per project annually, to supplement finances and meet the Association's goals.

WEAKNESS: FEW NATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR LARGER FINANCIAL PROJECTS

This weakness relates to sources of funding, where clients in Croatia generally do not have large funds to finance the research that Hyla is involved in. Occasionally, tenders are issued by competent institutions related to nature protection (such as the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development, the Ministry of Agriculture, etc.), where they are beneficiaries of EU funds, and through tenders they seek contractors for the planned activities. However, Hyla also has the opportunity to apply for EU projects (such as LIFE, INTERREG programs, etc.), which it should take advantage of because the funds obtained in this way contribute to a greater extent to the financial stability of the Association.

SMART goal: Apply for EU projects continuously and at the required pace, and apply for larger national projects so that European funds become the main source of financing for the Association (reach 80%) in the coming period. Increase the number of partnerships at the international level, especially with neighboring countries such as Italy and Slovenia, through consultations on applying for similar projects, including Hyla as a partner in future continuations of European projects.

Elaboration of SMART Goals to Mitigate Personnel and organizational challenges



WEAKNESS: FEWER EMPLOYEES = FEWER PROJECTS CAN BE CARRIED OUT

If opportunities for further growth in the number of employees do not arise, it is necessary to consider how to secure financial resources to maintain financial stability for the existing number of employees. Since a smaller number of employees also means a smaller number of projects that can be implemented during the year, the Association should **properly allocate energy and working time** to larger projects that contribute more significantly to financial stability, along with smaller projects that contribute to the goals of the Association. The Association plans to have between nine and twelve employees in the next five years. If it is unacceptable to miss some of the opportunities offered, and the number of projects exceeds the capacities of the existing employees, based on the project/field risk assessment, the Association may use other ways to mitigate such situations. This includes hiring new employees on a temporary basis, contracting external experts for temporary work, and the like.

SMART goal: Develop a more detailed annual operational and financial plan and update it at least once a year. Maintain business dynamics, and in case of exceeding own capacities, use other forms of short-term employment.

WEAKNESS: TOO MANY FINANCIALLY SMALL PROJECTS AT THE SAME TIME

Given the groups the Association deals with and the legislation and strategies for the protection of biodiversity and nature, the Association will ensure that the selected projects contribute to the strategies for the protection of biodiversity. To be able to focus on more important projects due to limited capacities, we plan to focus on financially larger projects that have a more significant impact on the strategies, while we will omit financially smaller projects.

SMART goal: Strategically select projects according to priorities.

WEAKNESS: BURDENED BY PROJECT-ORIENTED TASKS

This weakness refers to the filling of the Association's employee capacity with activities related to contracted projects, which **leaves no room for tasks that are not a regular part of the projects** but are important for the smooth functioning of the organization. These include tasks such as maintaining databases and sample collections, maintaining equipment, and even tasks such as needs analysis and preparing future projects. Since the Association's operations are project-based, the price of the services offered by the organization should be somewhat higher to cover the cost of activities related to individual projects, as well as part of the Association's operations after the completion of individual projects.

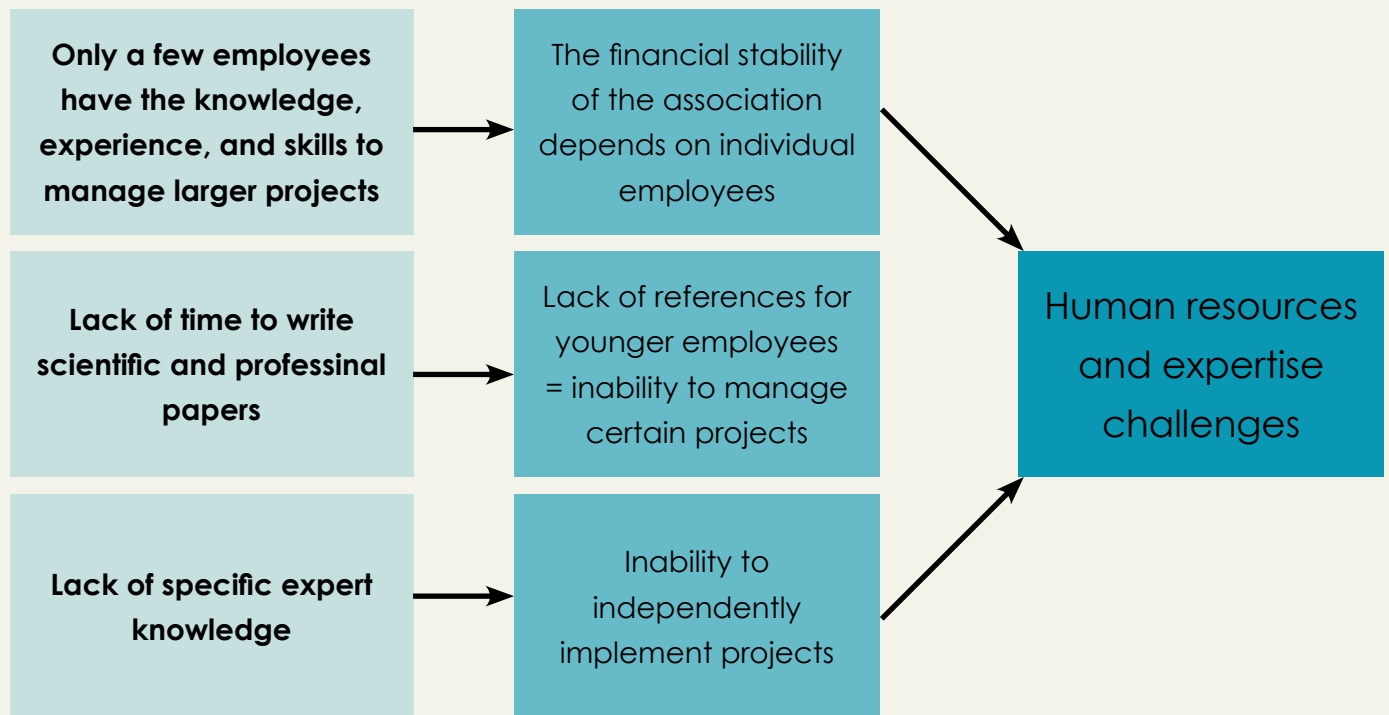
SMART goal: When preparing bids, adjust the price of the Association's services to cover the cost of the Association's operations according to market conditions and tender rules. The price of the employee's working day also includes the costs of the Association's cold storage facility (rent, utilities, and equipment) as well as administrative costs, if the above cannot be separated in the project application or included in indirect costs.

WEAKNESS: LACK OF TIME FOR OTHER, NON-PROJECT TASKS

Related to the previous weakness of being overloaded with project-related tasks, there is also the weakness of **not having enough time for non-project tasks**. After securing the finances for the working hours of its employees, the Association should organize their work in such a way that the majority of the time employees can devote to project tasks (since this ensures the inflow of finances), and the remaining part of the time to allocate employees to **non-project tasks that are also crucial for the smooth operation of the Association**. It would be desirable for the Association to hire a person as an **office manager** who would, among other things, also deal with the organization of employees' time so that they can cover all necessary tasks within their capacities.

SMART goal: In the event of an increase in staff, hire a person to the position of office manager who will help organize the time of the Association's employees.

Elaboration of SMART goals for human resources and expertise challenges



WEAKNESS: ONLY A FEW EMPLOYEES HAVE SUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE, AND SKILLS TO MANAGE LARGER PROJECTS

If most of the responsibility for ensuring the continuous operation of the Association lies with only a few employees, in the event of their departure or even a longer absence (due to maternity leave, sick leave, etc.), the Association is **at risk of reduced business volume and financial decline**. Therefore, individual development of expertise and skills of a larger number of employees should be ensured so that the division of responsibility is among a larger number of people, which would reduce the risk of financial decline. Also, a minimum of two employees should be involved in the implementation of projects in order to gain experience and transfer knowledge (an experienced person with a less experienced person). This should be taken care of by a person in the position of office manager, and in her absence, the director.

SMART goal: To develop and implement an annual plan for the individual development of the Association's employees and provide the necessary training to employees so that they have sufficient knowledge, experience, and skills to lead and implement projects.

WEAKNESS: LACK OF TIME TO WRITE SCIENTIFIC AND PROFESSIONAL PAPERS

With project tasks that do not include writing scientific and professional papers because the clients do not need them, and non-project tasks that are essential for the smooth operation of the Association, employees do not have much time left for writing scientific and professional papers. However, this segment is important for the individual development of each employee, and also for the Association itself, which gains visibility and increases the number of business opportunities if its employees are more visible as experts in certain areas. The person in the position of manager and/or office director should also include this segment when evaluating the needs of the Association and employees and when organizing the employees' working hours.

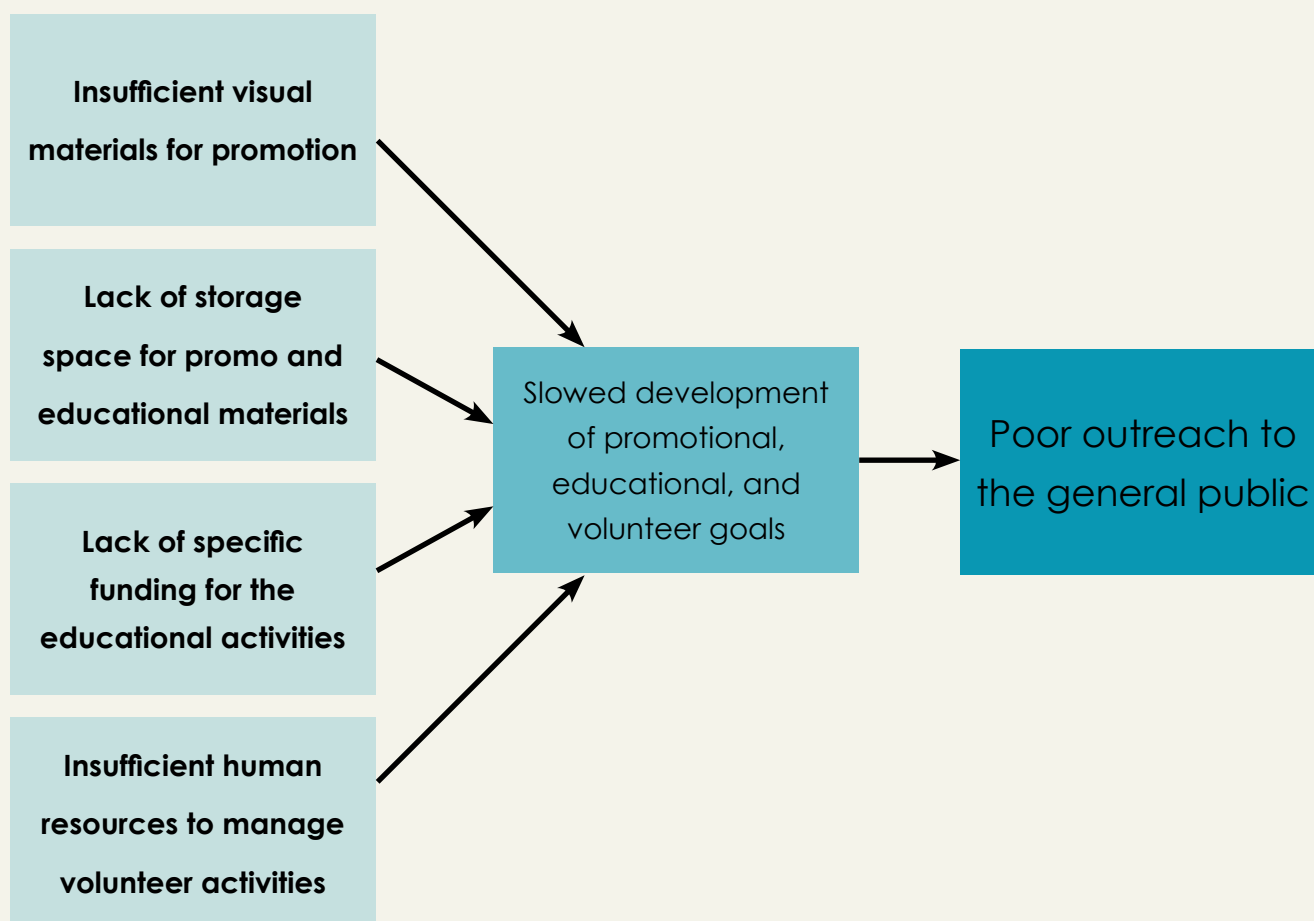
SMART goal: Every year in the winter period, ensure two months with a reduced workload for writing scientific or professional papers so that every employee working in professional nature protection work participates as an author or co-author on at least one paper.

WEAKNESS: LACK OF SPECIFIC EXPERT KNOWLEDGE

For each employee to progress in personal development and for the Association to develop into a stronger organization and thus maintain or strengthen its position in the market, it is necessary to **pay attention to the professional knowledge contained in the Association**. Therefore, if employees have the ability and want to expand their professional knowledge, the Association should enable them to do so through targeted training. Also, if some professional knowledge is beyond the capacity of current employees, one of the conditions for hiring new people may be the possession of the knowledge that the Association needs. Currently, these are advanced knowledge in statistics, modeling, or, for example, specific knowledge related to ecological, population, or genetic research.

SMART goal: Through the development and implementation of the annual individual development plan for the Association's employees, include targeted training for the required specific knowledge, or through the employment plan, anticipate people with the necessary professional knowledge. In a five-year period, each employee should attend at least two training courses. U petogodišnjem razdoblju svaki zaposlenik trebao bi pohađati minimalno dvije edukacije.

Elaboration of SMART goals to mitigate poor outreach to the general public



WEAKNESS: INSUFFICIENT VISUAL MATERIALS FOR PROMOTION

Although the Association has enough photographs and even some video material that can be used in promotion, such **materials need to be regularly updated to remain current**. Some of this can be obtained by the Association's employees themselves at no additional cost, for example, by setting aside some time during research to take photographs and produce better quality images. The other part, such as various video clips, needs to be foreseen in future projects in which there is room for the acquisition of such materials, by contracting a professional cameraman who will produce high-quality video content.

SMART goal: Ensure that, through our capacities, a sufficient number of quality photographs of target species, habitats, and activities are produced during each project, each year. If necessary, in future projects, secure funds for contracting the production of quality video materials on the necessary topics for promoting the protection of the species and habitats we deal with, as well as the Association.

WEAKNESS : LACK OF STORAGE SPACE FOR PROMOTIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Although the Association has produced and supplied the necessary amount of promotional materials through various projects and continues to do so, the current **storage capacities of the Office are limited** and cannot accommodate more materials. First, a **plan for the distribution** of promotional and educational materials must be developed and implemented, ensuring that their stocks do not occupy the Office's storage space for years, preventing the procurement of new materials. If more storage space is required for an individual project, the Association can **rearrange part of the space** in the basement to ensure proper physical and chemical parameters for storage, or it could rent external storage units on a short-term basis.

SMART gola: Develop and implement a plan for the dissemination of promotional and educational materials and, if necessary, secure additional storage space through our own capacity or via the rental of an external storage unit.

WEAKNESS: LACK OF SPECIFIC FUNDING FOR EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Although the Association's educational activities are carried out through most scientific research projects or projects for the protection and restoration of species and habitats, only **small financial resources are currently allocated** for this activity. When planning future projects, especially European ones, it is essential to develop work packages with educational activities that will attract greater funding for this area. Additionally, the Association should aim to register projects of an **exclusively educational** nature.

SMART goal: In future project planning, particularly European ones, **allocate a larger budget for the implementation of educational activities and start applying for projects focused exclusively on education.**

WEAKNESS: INSUFFICIENT HUMAN RESOURCES TO MANAGE VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Currently, there is **more interest in volunteer activities** through the Association than it has the capacity to accept. It is essential to explore funding sources that will increase the human capacity to lead volunteer activities within Hyla.

SMART goal: Investigate funding sources for volunteer activities, develop a plan to attract volunteers, and aim to increase the number of volunteers in Hyla by 10% annually to reach an average of 20 volunteers per year.

9 PROGRAMS, DIRECTIONS AND OBJECTIVES OF ACTION



The Hyla Association monitors **legislation, conventions, and strategies** related to the protection of nature and biodiversity, and we implement all projects following them. The most significant ones are listed below:

- 1. Strategy and Action Plan for Nature Protection of the Republic of Croatia for the period 2017-2025**
- 2. European Union Biodiversity Strategy to 2030**
- 3. Nature Restoration Act - REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON NATURE RESTORATION AND AMENDING REGULATION (EU) 2022/869**
- 4. Habitats Directive**
- 5. Convention on Biological Diversity and the targets and protocols arising therefrom (AICHI, Nagoya, Cartagena).**

I. PROGRAM: PROFESSIONAL - SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

DIRECTION 1: Conduct monitoring to report on the conservation status of species and habitats

STRATEGIC GOAL: To influence the quality, systematic, and regular implementation of monitoring for the target species of our interest groups (herpetofauna and entomofauna).

DIRECTION 2: Map and inventory herpetofauna and entomofauna

STRATEGIC GOAL: To expand the knowledge base on species distribution and complete Hyla's databases on the biodiversity of the groups that the Association deals with for the purpose of more effective protection of species and habitats through the nature conservation sector and the general public.

II. PROGRAM: PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SPECIES AND HABITATS

DIRECTION 1: Conduct scientifically based ecological, population, and genetic research

STRATEGIC GOAL: Collect data through ecological, population, and genetic research that will enable the application and implementation of future conservation projects and activities, revision of monitoring programs, and better management of the species of our interest groups.

DIRECTION 2: Implement habitat conservation and restoration

STRATEGIC GOAL: To lobby and actively participate in the conservation and restoration of habitats to improve the conservation of species and their habitats.



III. PROGRAM: PROMOTION AND INVOLVEMENT OF THE PUBLIC

DIRECTION 1: Improve visibility and networking

STRATEGIC GOAL: Through various activities, improve the presence of Hyla in the public and professional space and promote herpetofauna and entomofauna in order to increase their visibility.

DIRECTION 2: Promote “community science” or “citizen science” in Croatia

STRATEGIC GOAL: To develop and promote the Biologer.hr platform as a tool for “citizen science” in Croatia and to encourage public involvement in collecting biodiversity data.

DIRECTION 3: Develop education

STRATEGIC GOAL: To work through educational activities to increase public knowledge and awareness of nature protection.

DIRECTION 4: Develop membership, volunteerism, and professional practices

STRATEGIC GOAL: Through membership, volunteerism, and professional practice, to spread knowledge about herpetofauna and entomofauna and the need for their protection, and to increase the number of members and volunteers who actively participate in the activities of the association.

ELABORATION OF THE 1ST STRATEGIC PROGRAM: PROFESSIONAL- SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

Modes of action:

- critical literature review and analysis of existing data
- empirical research and publication of data (symposia, congresses, journals, reports)
- maintenance and development of relations with partner institutions

Collaborators:

- Environmental Protection Agency
- Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development or the competent ministry
- Public institutions for the management of protected areas
- Other stakeholders in the nature protection sector



DIRECTION 1: Conduct monitoring to report on the conservation status of species and habitats

Specific objectives:

1. Conduct a minimum of 2 monitoring/projects for each Natura 2000 amphibian species (except the ocre Proteus anguinus), reptiles, dragonflies, beetles, and butterflies, through cooperation with public institutions or the competent ministry.
2. Participate in the implementation of national monitoring of our groups at least once during the duration of the strategic plan, if the competent ministry announces a tender.
3. Develop and adapt a minimum of 20 monitoring programs for target species in protected areas.
4. Strengthen the capacities of employees of at least 10 public institutions by implementing educational activities for monitoring.
5. Develop cooperation and exchange knowledge on monitoring implementation with other institutions in Croatia, the region, and Europe.

DIRECTION 2: Map and inventory herpetofauna and entomofauna

Specific objectives:

1. Carry out a minimum of five inventory projects.
2. Carry out a minimum of 10 mapping of the species of our interest groups.
3. Use literature and recent field data to revise at least one Red Book/Red List, if the competent ministry issues a tender.
4. Supplement Hylina's database (on the Biologer.hr platform) with a minimum of 100,000 entries.
5. Accept at least one field data collection project annually to prepare environmental impact studies.
6. Write at least five papers that will include the distribution of species of our interest groups or species.

ELABORATION OF THE 2ND STRATEGIC PROGRAM: PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF SPECIES AND HABITATS

DIRECTION 1: Implement scientifically based ecological, population, and genetic research

Specific objectives:

1. Determine the genetic distribution of individual species (e.g. newts *Triturus* spp., *Bombina* spp.) in collaboration with partners.
2. Conduct ecological research on at least one target species of herpetofauna (e.g. *Testudo*, *Triturus*, *Bombina*, *Dolichophis*, *Emys* on islands, etc.), saproxylic beetles, dragonflies, and butterflies.
3. Conduct population research on at least one target type of interest group.
4. Use the collected data for threat assessments (e.g. revision of red books or lists, if the Ministry will announce a tender).
5. Write or participate in at least one paper related to ecological, population, or genetic research on one of the species of our interest groups.



DIRECTION 2: Implement habitat conservation and restoration

Specific objectives:

1. **Monitor** national, European, and international legislation on the protection of species and habitats of our groups, as well as biodiversity and nature.
2. Participate as an **advisor for the restoration** of water bodies and grasslands by joining at least one advisory body.
3. Promote Hyla as a pond and lawn restoration consultant by participating in at least two congresses, then through advertising on Hyla's website with a minimum of one article and five posts on social media per year.
4. **Lobby the competent institutions** for habitat restoration to protect the species of our interest groups within **at least 10 project reports** (through making recommendations).
5. Implement or participate in at least two **projects involving habitat restoration**.
6. Participate as a consultant or as an implementer in **at least two projects involving the removal of invasive species** (e.g. red-eared slider turtles *Trachemys* spp.).



ELABORATION OF THE 3RD STRATEGIC PROGRAM: PROMOTION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

SMJER 1: Improve visibility and networking

Specific objectives:

1. Redesign the **visual identity** of Hyla
2. Include at least two Hyla employees in the **IUCN Species Specialist Group**.
3. Participate in **meetings and annual gatherings** of organizations and networks of which we are a member (IUCN, Green Forum).
4. If necessary, include Hyla in **additional organizations** (e.g. SEH, Butterfly Conservation, etc.).
5. Prepare and implement the **Hyla promotion plan** - social networks, media appearances, popular scientific articles, stands, and events.
6. **Translate** the official Hyla website into English (at least basic information); regularly **update information** about the Association's work on the website.
7. Present the results of the Association's research through at least **five presentations or posters** at a minimum of three different congresses at the national level, two at the European or world level.
8. Organize and hold Hyla's 30th **birthday celebration**.
9. **Publish** "Herpetological Guide"
10. **Redesign and reprint** the booklets "Snakes of Croatia" and "River Turtle - a Hidden Inhabitant of Southern Croatia".

DIRECTION 2: Promote “community science” or “citizen science” in Croatia

Specific objectives:

1. Create a plan for the promotion and development of the **Biologer.hr** platform.
2. Participate in the **annual meetings** of the Biologer platform.
3. **Exchange data** among open databases in agreement with other local communities.
4. Submit one project that includes the **development and promotion** of the Biologer platform.
5. Organize one **Biologer camp** in Croatia; regularly participate in Biologer camps.
6. Continuously work on **increasing the number of users** and the amount of data.

DIRECTION 3: Develop education

Specific objectives:

1. Design an **educational event** that makes Hyla recognizable to the public - the event was held at least twice during the duration of this strategic plan.
2. Submit at least one **educational project**, either independently or as part of a larger EU project (through a specific work package).
3. **Propose educational activities** within at least three projects for public institutions.
4. Design and implement at least one **educational exhibition** that is promoted throughout Croatia (special locations, libraries, schools, etc.).
5. Create at least one educational **printed and one digital material**.

DIRECTION 4: Develop membership, volunteerism, and professional practices

Specific objectives:

1. **Revise** the Plan and Program for members and volunteers and professional internships.
2. Annually hold **at least four lectures** for members, **one excursion** for members, and regularly send out the **Hyla newsletter** with news, and if possible invite them to participate in the implementation of projects.
3. Accept a minimum of **three people per year as part of professional practice**.
4. Accept a **minimum of two people per year as part of volunteering** (individual volunteers, EVS, or Erasmus volunteers).
5. Regularly **maintain a volunteer database** and actively record volunteer activities.
6. Regularly **maintain the member base** and work on **increasing membership**.





[Back to top](#)