

**CROSSROADS
BIODIVERSITY**
From a LIFE Integrated
Project to a pan-Alpine
biodiversity agenda

10-11 October 2023

Palazzo Pirelli - Via F.Filzi, 22
MILAN - Italy

**CROSSROADS BIODIVERSITY
MESSAGE**



*Sincere gratitude to all the workshop participants and the representatives of
Ente regionale servizi agricoltura foreste Lombardia (ERSAF),
the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention,
the Alpine Biodiversity Board of the Alpine Convention, and
the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) Action Groups 6 and 7
who contributed to this Message.*



natura che vale
BIODIVERSITÀ, RICCHEZZA DELLA LOMBARDIA

PAF

attuazione azioni prioritarie per la biodiversità

64

AZIONI

FLORA
FAUNA
HABITAT

GOVERNANCE
CONSERVAZIONE
CONSAPIBILITÀ
MONITORAGGIO

CONNESSIONI TRA AREE PROTETTE

INFRASTRUTTURE VERDI



esperienze

Problemi

DIALOGO APERTO

Nuove SINERGIE

NUOVI APPROCCI

NETWORKING



FORESTE MULTIFUNZIONALI

QUALITÀ di VITA

COOPERATION
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
MOUNTAIN FORESTS

ALPINE CONVENTION

NATURE PROTECTION

IMPLEMENTAZIONE

MAPPATURA

OPPORTUNITÀ PER L'EUROPA

COORDINAZIONE POLITICA

VISIONE e STRATEGIA CONDIVISE

INNOVAZIONE NELL'AGRICOLTURA



TASK FORCE

WORKSHOP



ATTIVITÀ

INTERREG ALPINE PROGRAM
EU STRATEGY (EUSALP)

LIFE GESTIRE 2020

ecosistema

CROSSROADS BIODIVERSITY MESSAGE

from the workshop on Alpine biodiversity
held in Milan 10-11th October 2023

INTRODUCTION

The idea of a workshop on biodiversity arose from the convergence of three territorial processes that, at different scales and with different mandates, deal with a critical and timely issue: **biodiversity and nature conservation**.

The three processes are the **Alpine Convention** represented by its Alpine Biodiversity Board (ABB), the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (**EUSALP**) represented by its Action Groups 6 and 7, and the **LIFE Integrated Project (IP) GESTIRE2020**. The latter, in particular, field-tested concrete actions and developed tools to improve biodiversity governance, nature conservation and restoration, and evaluated monitoring effectiveness and usefulness in Lombardy.

GESTIRE2020, like all LIFE projects, aims to stimulate an “**afterlife action**”. In this regard the project took on **the promoter role, enabling a dialogue with territorial processes** that in parallel and at different scales and levels also work to curb the loss of biodiversity. The discussions between GESTIRE2020, the ABB and EUSALP (AG6 and AG7) resulted in the idea of co-organizing the **Crossroads Biodiversity Workshop (CBW)**.

The CBW aimed to establish an open dialogue between the processes to exchange ideas, experiences and solutions.

The recommendations that emerged during the workshop discussions are collected in the "Crossroads Biodiversity Message" (Message). The Message echoes key issues that the CBW participants consider fundamental in addressing biodiversity loss, specifically in the Alpine region. It is organized into three key thematic sections: Governance, Conservation and Restoration, and Monitoring.

The Message addresses policy makers, their technical support staff, regional stakeholders and citizens.

The Message has no claim to exhaustiveness and completeness; however, it underlines the urgent action areas from the technical and scientific point of view.

The objective of the Message is to offer a technical point of view to decision makers to support the development of effective and focused political action to halt biodiversity loss in the Alpine region.

PREAMBLE

This Message was developed by the participants of the international workshop **CROSSROADS BIODIVERSITY: from a LIFE Integrated Project to a pan-Alpine biodiversity agenda**, held in Milan, Italy on 10-11th October 2023.

The workshop is a LIFE IP Gestire2020 event, taking an Alpine-wide perspective by considering the biodiversity priorities of the Alpine region.

This Message is a contribution to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the European Biodiversity Strategy 2030 "Let's bring nature back into our lives" and the related upcoming EU Nature Restoration Law, the EU Habitat and Birds Directives and the national efforts to implement national biodiversity strategies, pledges and the future national restoration plans.

This Message underscores the importance of acknowledging biodiversity as a cornerstone to everyday life, which faces fundamental challenges, especially related to climate change.

GOVERNANCE

Governance constitutes a framework of principles and rules as well as respective actions to steer entities or processes. Good governance is based on the notion that nobody can do everything, but everybody can do something. Cooperation and communication are thereby prerequisites for an effective governance system that implements coherent and feasible actions for biodiversity conservation.

- The EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the upcoming EU Nature Restoration Law provide a framework for additional policies and actions at international, national and sub-national levels to improve the state of ecosystems and biodiversity.

In light of this, a high level of attention should be given to the Alpine biogeographic region, as one of the most fragile regions in Europe. Actions for biodiversity conservation and restoration need to be planned, implemented and monitored in a coordinated manner across administrative and national borders. For example, when EU Member States develop national restoration plans, recommendations for cooperation across national boundaries will be important.

- Meaningful and continued participatory governance, based on policies that are coherent across levels and sectors, is a prerequisite for biodiversity conservation.
- Cooperation is to take place between:
 - different political and administrative levels (European, macroregional, national, regional, municipal)
 - neighbouring administrative units
 - various sectors or departments of administrations.
- **Cooperation is at the core of the Alpine Convention and EUSALP.** The Alpine Convention with its Protocols and the EUSALP offer a solid basis to enhance cooperation between the Alpine states and legal entities at subnational levels, *inter alia* to address biodiversity governance. The Protocols of the Alpine Convention are binding and require full implementation.
- In practice, enhanced cooperation with other sectors (beyond nature conservation) can be achieved through:
 - initiating open communication, describing the needs of biodiversity and learning how other sectors are incorporating biodiversity aspects in their scope of influence;
 - leaving no sector or stakeholder alone with the consequences of declining biodiversity and equally sharing the positive effects of nature conservation measures;

- Collaborating to find acceptable or synergistic common solutions in parallel with implementation and, if there are no such solutions, considering biodiversity and ecosystem restoration as a priority.
- Especially with the agricultural sector, cooperative efforts, building on the common understanding of the crucial role of biodiversity and aiming for nature-positive action can support enhanced cooperation.
- Involvement of intermediaries / technical facilitators can help to bring various sectors and policy levels together for open exchange, deliberation and joint action.

CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION

Conservation and restoration aim to support nature protection, the recovery of degraded ecosystems and the harmonious cohabitation of nature and people (among many other aspects). The EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, aim to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, thereby achieving nature-positive sustainable development.

- Conservation and restoration are necessary at a large scale and beyond protected areas. Protected area managers do not carry the sole responsibility for conservation and restoration. All economic sectors and administration levels have to contribute to relevant actions in and beyond protected areas, based on their competencies.
- The management of protected areas, Natura 2000 sites and ecological networks needs to be strengthened and implemented with an adaptive approach to climate change. This can have many benefits, for example species climate refugia are indispensable to guarantee ecological function even after extreme climate scenarios.
- Nature-based solutions like coastal and river restoration, reforestation, creation of ecological corridors, agricultural methods based on plant protection products respecting soil equilibrium as well as pollinating insects, etc. should be prioritized to jointly combat the climate and biodiversity crises.

- Agriculture, farming and food systems play a critical role in biodiversity conservation. Sustainable agriculture, traditional farming practices and agriculture 4.0 as well as agroecology are ways to reduce the negative impact on natural resources, safeguard biodiversity and maintain its necessary production levels. This is especially important in mountainous areas, in accordance with the principles of the Farm to Fork Strategy of the European Green Deal.
- Sustainable use of plant and animal genetic resources in the Alps is needed at the transboundary level. Community seed banks can be a valuable tool for fostering diversity (minor species and landraces) in this regard.
- The burden of biodiversity conservation is to be shared amongst all sectors and stakeholders and should not rest solely on landowners (mostly farmers or forest owners). Upcoming innovations for biodiversity conservation should be considered in all sectors.
- The EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species needs to be implemented at the appropriate geographic scale across administrative boundaries, with necessary support.
- A sufficient and constant supply of funds is crucial to benefit biodiversity and its monitoring. Private funding and payments for ecosystem services can be considered further.
- Biodiversity action for the conservation of habitats and species of community interest is especially important on priority or significant areas even when privately owned. On private land, a wide range of compensation schemes and conservation agreements are available to encourage nature conservation efforts. Funding programmes are to allow land purchase for conservation and restoration measures, but also innovative concepts of land use with little or even positive impact on nature and appropriate added value for the farmers are to be strengthened and supported.
- Healthy soils are crucial for biodiversity, maintenance of ecosystem services and climate mitigation, therefore, compensation of soil loss is not a sufficient measure.

- Ecosystem functioning and services are key to protecting biodiversity and creating interconnectedness between rural/natural and urban areas.
- The “living in harmony with nature” approach is to be adopted in the Alps, implying not only conservation but also improving the relationship between nature and human beings.
- The maps of spatial priorities identifying important areas in the Alpine region for conservation, restoration, protection and connectivity are to be better utilised.
- Business plays an essential role in managing biodiversity. Additional efforts from businesses to embrace practices that benefit the green infrastructure of the Alps, focusing on the Nature 2000 network, are required. Every economic sector can check and improve its impact, becoming nature-positive if possible, e.g., by applying innovative green business models.

MONITORING

Monitoring is crucial for assessing the state of biodiversity in the context of climate change and other factors contributing to biodiversity loss. It serves as a fundamental element in governance, conservation and restoration. Cooperation around monitoring is crucial.

- All actions (including short projects) are to be planned based on sound *ante* and *post operam* monitoring. Monitoring reflecting the natural timeline offers meaningful information and needs to be planned, activated and secured through funding for adequate monitoring cycles.

- Long monitoring timelines are preferable, as they provide a significant contribution to the better understanding of biodiversity trends.
- A combination of inputs from experts (also in remote sensing), trained volunteers and citizen science projects is useful for data collection, as they complement each other.
- Data is to be made available for systems' interoperability at all levels (local, regional, national and international). Developing a common approach to data sharing is extremely helpful in this regard. The Darwin Core standard for databases needs to be implemented and usage restrictions communicated by the data author/owner are to be included in metadata. Another important suggestion is inclusion of the category “species not found” in databases.
- Monitoring efforts are to be directed towards both single species and communities. Species not covered by the EU Habitat and Birds Directives need to be included when appropriate, especially those most vulnerable to anthropogenic pressures and climate change. Existing data provide the baseline to guide the selection of species and communities to monitor, with a primary focus on fulfilling legal obligations.
- To improve the performance of monitoring systems, increased technical capabilities, sufficient funding, innovation and data sharing are required. The geographic scope of existing monitoring schemes and indexes (e.g., FBI, BMS, pollinators) needs to be broadened.
- Biodiversity surveillance and enforcement are complementary to monitoring and of paramount importance to ensure continuous improvement of the state of biodiversity.

CONCLUSION

Biodiversity needs to be considered in all sectors and policies. In particular, there are geographic areas with exceptionally valuable and/or vulnerable species and ecosystems, such as protected areas and Natura 2000 sites, that need to be taken into account.

The Alpine region is one of the richest biodiversity hotspots in Europe, bridging the Mediterranean, Continental, and Atlantic regions. To protect and restore Alpine biodiversity, it is essential to **establish a functional pan-Alpine ecological network, with the Natura 2000 network as its backbone**, and enhance connections with national, sub-regional and local ecological networks for the practical implementation of ecological connectivity and green infrastructure on the ground. To achieve this, effective communication, information exchange and networking are imperative. Cross-border, cross-level and cross-sector cooperation must be reinforced to facilitate the sharing of innovations, data, knowledge and experience.

Biodiversity is the foundation of life. Alongside increasing public awareness about biodiversity and engagement in conservation actions, it is also strategic to enhance the expertise of professionals in biodiversity-related matters and increase their capacity to collaborate with other sectors and stakeholder groups, including working with universities and high schools. It is important to remember that individuals can make a difference - personal skills and the ability to interact are crucial. Introducing approaches based on the concepts of ecosystem services and nature's contributions to people into decision-making processes and actions can provide significant support towards achieving a harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

Yet, **transformative change** and a shift in mindsets are still required at all levels of governance, across sectors and among stakeholders. Cooperation is of paramount importance in this regard, aiming for meaningful engagement of all parties, utilizing and building on prior experience.



Contesto Europeo

TEMI TRASVERSALI

RUOLO CHIAVE DELLA 'BIODIVERSITÀ'



TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

LIVING IN HARMONY WITH NATURE APPROACH

SERVIZI ECOSISTEMICI

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURES

LIFE GESTIRE 2020

GOVERNANCE

DIPENDE dalle POLITICHE

TECHNICAL FACILITATOR

PARTECIPATA e COLLABORATIVA (area alpina)

TRANSNAZIONALE

NON LASCIAMO SOLI GLI STAKEHOLDER

VALUE DRIVEN

Cooperazione CROSS-BORDER

DA APPLICARE su larga scala

CONSERVATION & RESTORATION

CONSUMO DI SUOLO

A CHI VA QUESTO MESSAGGIO?

CAMBIARE MINDSET

RAPPORTO con l'AGRICOLTURA e altri settori

RESTORATION Law



ARRIVARE alle 'COMUNITA' METADATI CONDIVISIONE RACCOLTA RIPETUTA di DATI

IL MESSAGGIO

a TECNICI e POLITICI

ATTENZIONE all'ARCO ALPINO

MONITORING

USIAMO I DATI ESISTENTI? QUALI Specie?

DIRETTIVE IN ATTO

ARMONIZZARE

ATTENZIONE ai METODI/APPLICATI

OPEN DATA

ANCHE SPECIE + RARE

SALVAGUARDIA della BIODIVERSITA'

SPECIES CLIMATE REFUGES

ANCHE DA REMOTO

AGRICOLTURA 4.0

AREE SIGNIFICATIVE

e SISTEMA ALIMENTARE

AGROECOLOGIA

TECNOLOGIE HABITAT

International workshop

Side Event of the European
Business & Nature Summit 2023

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