

Econnect



Improving Ecological Connectivity in the Alps

- AS priority area: Environment and Risk Prevention
- Duration: 01/09/2008 - 30/11/2011
- [Project webpage](#)
- [Project on the website of the Alpine Space Programme](#)

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Project summary

"ECONNECT aims at the enhancement of ecological connectivity in the Alpine Space. Protection of

biodiversity and natural heritage – a central necessity to cope with the challenges of climate change – requires an integrated approach which beyond protected areas considers high biodiversity areas and corridors as linking elements of an Alpine ecological network. International umbrella organisations linked to the Alpine Convention, scientific institutions and local implementation partners have joined forces to demonstrate needs and options for action and develop innovative instruments for ecological connectivity. Pilot applications involving different stakeholders result in long-term implementation. To overcome legal and administrative constraints policy recommendations are presented ensuring effective cross-border cooperation and procedural harmonisation. Knowledge transfer and dissemination are guaranteed by the widely ramified structure of partners and the strategic use of networks.”

Source: [Econnect project summary](#)

Hypotheses

- [Coordination of sector policies to prevent exploitation of natural resources and single-sector economies](#)
- [Sensitive Alpine territory requires appropriate and diversified measures \(consensus-oriented multi-stakeholder approach\)](#)

Keywords

- [natural heritage](#)
- [biodiversity](#)
- [legislation](#)
- [knowledge transfer](#)

Topics

- [Reducing environmental damage](#)
- [Enhancing and protecting natural resources and heritage](#)
- [Developing access to information and knowledge](#)

Results

[Results](#) of a project can be differentiated in [outputs](#), [outcomes](#) and [impacts](#) of an intervention.

Source: [OECD Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management](#).

Outputs

Output	Category	Language(s)	Target group	Remark
Webs of life. Alpine biodiversity needs ecological connectivity. Results from the ECONNECT project	Report	EN	Policy maker; civil servants / administration; Planner; Scientists; Specific institutions; Civil society / citizen	Final project document containing: The project in a nutshell, major achievements, connectivity and selected key species, pilot regions and implemented activities, policy recommendations, after Econnect: how to continue the process. In depth information on Results from the ECONNECT project
Policy recommendations	(Policy) recommendations	EN	Policy makers	"[...] this document has the objective to inform policy makers and decision makers at all levels, from local to regional to trans-national, about key conclusions of the project. It is intended, among others, for government agencies and agencies at EU ministries. The purpose of the policy recommendations is to stimulate further development of and support for the ecological connectivity concept, as its implementation will result in enhanced effectiveness of programmes to conserve biodiversity both in cultural landscapes and in wilderness areas of the Alps, and the ecosystem services associated with it." Policy recommendations , p.1 In depth information on Policy Recommendations

Output	Category	Language(s)	Target group	Remark
Implementation recommendations	Guidelines	EN	civil servants / administration; Planner; Specific institutions	“During implementation of the ECONNECT project, seven pilot regions under the leadership of protected area administrations applied a common methodology to elaborate and realize various concrete measures and to establish spatial linkages in order to improve ecological connectivity in their region. The experiences and lessons learnt from this process are summarized in the ‘Implementation Recommendations’. The Implementation Recommendations are aimed at supporting protected area administrations and experts working towards nature conservation at a regional level.” Implementation recommendations, p.1 In depth information on Implementation Recommendations
The ECONNECT Project and the Work Package 6	policy oriented summary	EN	Policy maker; civil servants / administration; Planner; Scientists; Specific institutions; Civil society / citizen	Study on legal barriers. In depth information on Study on legal barriers
Joint Ecological Continuum Analysing and Mapping Initiative (JECAMI) – Webservices	tool	EN	Policy maker; civil servants / administration; Planner; Scientists; Specific institutions; Civil society / citizen	“The JECAMI-Webservice (Joint Ecological Continuum Analysing and Mapping Initiative – Webservices) is composed of the CSI-Service (Continuum-Suitability-Index), the SMA-Service (Species Mapping Application) and the PAM-Service (Priority Areas Mapping).” Joint Ecological Continuum Analysing and Mapping Initiative (JECAMI) – Webservices In depth information on JECAMI
Ecogame	Public relation	DE	Civil Society / citizen	A game on ecological topics developed within the sphere of the ECONNECT project. In depth information on ECOGAME

Output	Category	Language(s)	Target group	Remark
ECONNECT Pilot Areas	Map	EN	Policy maker; civil servants / administration; Planner; Scientists; Specific institutions; Civil society / citizen	Map showing the location of the seven project pilot Areas. In depth information on Pilot Areas
Bibliographie indicative «Réseaux écologiques en France»	Literature review	FR	Policy maker; civil servants / administration; Planner; Scientists; Specific institutions;	Literature overview on ecological networks in France. In depth information on Bibliography review

Résumé of project outputs

Results which are directly or indirectly suitable or applicable for practitioners / politicians and civil servants / administration:

- The main results of the projects are suitable and applicable for practitioners / politicians and civil servants / administration. They serve to inform and increase the knowledge (state of the art) of ecological connectivity.

Which of the project results are usable for which aspect of SSD and which are the most relevant for practitioners / politicians and civil servants / administration?

- Policy recommendations, Implementation recommendations, Legal_barriers_Executive_summary, JECAMI, French bibliography about ecological networks

Are there results which need further steps to be useful for practitioners / politicians and civil servants / administration?

- It appears essential to better integrate the established pilot regions in all future Alpine-wide initiatives and actions. [...]in upcoming initiatives the integration of other essential sectors that markedly influence the decisions in respect to ecological networks in the Alps can be improved on. This urgently calls for trans-sectoral funding schemes, the development of a common language and a thorough evaluation process. [...]information has not reached the actors in the field. [...]in order to address the complex issue of the ecological continuum it appears necessary to apply a forward reasoning approach which identifies possible future scenarios and integrates uncertainties (p.65. final booklet).

Which kinds of stakeholders have been involved, how have their competences been used in the project and are there options for a better implementation?

- Non-professional photographers were invited to take pictures showing barriers and corridors in the Alps and to share their images through an on line service (Flickr). A class of photograph students was invited to use their creativity to explore ecological connectivity: images taken at the Alpi Marittime Natural Park (one of the ECONNECT pilot regions) were used to set up an

- exhibition that was displayed at the Econnect Final Conference. Moreover, local key stakeholders and communities were targeted by specific information/communication events in many pilot regions:
- stakeholder involvement for road management in Département Isère (F);
 - stakeholder involvement for grassland management in Berchtesgaden (D);
 - stakeholder involvement for the Rombach river in the Raethian Triangle (CH). Finally, specific knowledge-transfer activities reached key actors at all levels of governance (stakeholders, managers, NGOs, GOs, scientists) and territorial coverage (local, alpine, European). (p. 27, final booklet)
- It seems necessary to foresee a shift of competences towards a central unit, that should be responsible for transnational, transboundary or trans-provincial projects (at the administrative level). This unit should be provided with sufficient financial and personal resources and able to work in a trans-sectoral dimension. Finally, the administrations of protected areas within the Pilot Regions need to be equipped with adequate financial and personal resources to pursue their complex tasks and functions. (p.57, final booklet)

Are the results (tool, method, indicator, recommendation) directly or indirectly addressing the strategic objectives for the Alpine Space?

- The results address two of the strategic objectives: Sustainable managed biodiversity and landscapes & Sustainable resource management and production

What could be long-term outcomes of this project? If none, why low impact? Why high impact? What is needed to achieve outcomes in the long-run?

- Econnect contributed significantly to increasing the knowledge about existing ecological barriers and corridors in the Alps and their inherent complexity. By looking at the landscape from a functional, rather than a structural perspective, and evaluating how suitable or unsuitable an area is for the ecological continuum, ECONNECT delivered technical support to those who are improving landscape permeability on the ground. Moreover, this was the very first project to investigate how national and regional legislations affect the Alpine web of life. Finally, ECONNECT explored and put into effect new ways of communicating such complex topics. (Final Report p.19)

Outcomes and Impacts

Unlike project outputs, outcomes and results cannot be described in a standardised way. Therefore, they are listed as free text:

Further synergies

The documents on different animal species could be done for other species.

Achievements that could be further implemented

The evaluation of priority areas can be based on the indicators of the JECAMI tool (Continuum-Suitability-Index - CSI) (Affolter et al. 2011). These indicators provide valuable statements on the interface between regional and the Alps wide level of conservation and connectivity objectives. (p.12 implementation recommendations) The results derived from this analysis process will serve as a basis for future spatial planning processes so that the spaces not yet fragmented and essential for species movements can be preserved (p.26, final booklet) Establishment of a common management system for geographic data (p.63, final booklet)

Remaining gaps

“there is a limited knowledge on the complex theme of ecological connectivity among the

administrations, stakeholders and the population;" (p.57, final booklet) "the administrations of protected areas within the Pilot Regions need to be equipped with adequate financial and personal resources to pursue their complex tasks and functions"(p.57 final booklet)

Emerging contradictions

"landowners and stakeholders are strongly concerned about the establishment of additional protected areas resulting in limitations in land use or even heteronomy;" (p.57, final booklet) this statement continues to be valid although the project has raised the landowners awareness.

Accessibility of project results

- [Econnect outputs on the official website of the project](#)
- [Econnect outputs on the website of the Alpine Space Programme](#)

Synergies

- [Environmental assessment](#)
- [Climate change](#)
- [GIS based tools](#)
- [Educational tool kit](#)
- [Reducing environmental damage and natural hazard risk prevention](#)

[legislation](#), [natural heritage](#), [environmental policy](#), [knowledge transfer](#), [biodiversity](#), [EU project](#)

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