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Dear colleagues and friends of Econnect,



Chris Walzer

I sincerely hope you all had some rest during the summer and are now fully energized for this final project year. In the past months the web-based JECAMI tool has again been upgraded and has now been successfully implemented in the first pilot regions and the initial road tests are looking very promising.

While on the subject of the webpage remember to have a look at it every now and then, as there is a wealth of information available. Under the guidance of University of Innsbruck, a first draft of the policy recommendations has been circulated. This document constitutes a major deliverable of the project and will require input from each and every partner over the next months - this is an extremely important tool to have our concerns heard. Econnect will implement concrete measures in the pilot regions - with a mere 12 months left, the respective planning processes should now be well on the way to completion if these goals are to be achieved. Discussions have started on the date and possible content of the final conference which will be held in Berchtesgaden in May 2011. During the conference, the results of the project will be presented to the wider public and media. I trust that the next months will be characterized by enhanced communication and exchange between all partners and I look forward to hearing your views on all aspects of the project. Chris Walzer, Research Institute of Wildlife Ecology, University of Veterinary Medicine, Vienna, Lead Partner

ECONNECT photo contest: clicks beyond borders

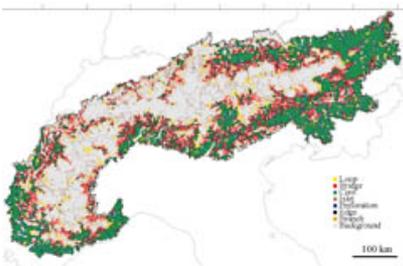


Photos help to make people aware that they create obstacles to the free migration of plants and animals.

The partners in the Econnect project invite amateurs and professional photographers to make a pictorial record of ecosystem fragmentation in the Alps. The photo contest "Clicks beyond the borders" aims to visualize the importance of ecological links in the Alps in powerful images. The pictures should show barriers to ecological connectivity as well as strategies of animals and plants, helped by human beings, to surmount these barriers. The closing date is 15 January 2011. There will be awards for the twelve best pictures. These will also be exhibited during the final conference of the ECONNECT project in Berchtesgaden/D and be reproduced in a calendar. With this contest, the partners in the EU-funded three-year project ECONNECT want to make the public more aware of the theme of ecological connectivity: although the theme is a very important one, it has received little attention in the popular media so far.

More information on the contest: <http://www.econnectproject.eu/cms/?q=news/en> (de/en/fr/it/sl)

Discovering connectivity gaps for the Brown Bear



This map gives information on topological connectivity. It shows the results of MSPA based on the potential distribution of *U. arctos* in the Alps (resolution: 1 km²). The influence of anthropogenic disturbances on distribution of brown bear will be evaluated additionally.

The Austrian Environment Agency has undertaken an assessment of the existing and potential habitat of the Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*) in the Alps. This was the first step to investigate potential connectivity between habitat patches. The Brown Bear is one of eight species for which similar work has been conducted and is still in progress. In addition the assessments of the existing and potential habitats of lynx, wolf, red deer, black grouse, griffon vulture, otter and the European bullhead will be made.

As it is difficult to identify corridors for the Brown Bear visually at an alpine scale, the potential habitat was classified into core areas and areas connecting, or so called bridges. Bridges are not threatened areas per se, but they are of particular importance to connect core areas. The analysis was conducted using an algorithm called the morphological spatial pattern analysis developed by the Joint Research Center of the European Commission and implemented in GUIDOS, an open source software package.

In an additional step the effects of anthropogenic barriers, in particular motorways, on long distance dispersal of the Brown Bear were investigated. Using a graph based approach, it was found that motorways impaired the migratory ability of the bear.

In conclusion, there is sufficient potential habitat in the Alps to sustain viable bear populations and there are some anthropogenic migratory obstacles. Further topics that should be addressed are the levels of tolerance within the population and the problem of illegal shootings.

Legal barriers and potentials for a pan-Alpine ecological network



The legal instruments that can support the creation of ecological networks are not enough known by decision makers.

How can legal instruments contribute to the objectives of ecological connectivity in the Alps? This question was in the focus of an international technical seminar organised by CIPRA France and CIPRA International on 6 May in Grenoble/F, in the frame of the "legal barrier" work package of Econnect. The seminar was a key step between the inventory of all legal instruments in favour of ecological connectivity and the concrete actions that should be carried out on the ground.

About 50 participants from several Alpine countries and from different sectors such as law, administration, protected areas and environmental associations exchanged their experiences and points of view along constructive discussions. They gathered the main obstacles and potentials of legal instruments. The results of the discussions will contribute to the further work within Econnect.

The presentations are available on http://www.econnectproject.eu/cms/?q=download_area_A

synthesis report in English and French will follow soon.

Final conference for the legal barriers work package

The city of Aosta/IT will host the final conference of the legal barriers work package of the Econnect project. The event is scheduled for the coming 9th of December. Besides presenting the most relevant achievements of the legal component of the project, the conference will focus strongly on the existing links between ecological connectivity and mountain farming. As for the strictly legal component, both the updated versions of the already circulated national assessments and new bilateral comparative outlooks will be presented at the event, including practical case studies and model legal instruments, such as the EGTC. The goal of these bilateral comparisons is to assess existing national and regional legal frameworks concerning protected areas in neighbouring Alpine countries, and single out the most appropriate legal instruments to enhance the ecological connectivity among protected areas and create ecological corridors, allowing the species to migrate between different living spaces.

Transferring knowledge of the Econnect project



The results and findings of the Econnect project will be made broadly available.

In the frame of the "knowledge transfer" work package a policy-recommendation document is being elaborated, aimed at reaching the policy makers and responsible actors at local/regional, national and European level. The document will present concrete suggestions for political contents aimed at ensuring effective cross-border cooperation and the further development of ecological networks in the alpine region. In this way the results of the Econnect project will be made broadly available and far reaching effects of the project will be ensured.

Apart from that a project synopsis is being produced containing the syntheses of objectives, activities, results and achievements of the Econnect work packages. The synopsis will ensure the sustainability of the project results, their broad distribution and their comprehension.

Furthermore a toolbox-document is being compiled containing all methodologies adopted by the

different work packages and project partners during the realisation of Econnect project goals and can be used as a methodological reference work.

All these products will be discussed at the project partner meeting of Econnect in Bolzano on 15-16 November.

News from the pilot regions

A common tool for pilot regions



The second meeting of the ECONNECT pilot areas brought an agreement on a common tool for analysing ecological connectivity.

The second international meeting of the pilot regions which proceeded in Dobbiaco/Toblach on April 22, 2010 bore its fruits. Indeed, the pilot regions adopted a common tool, entitled JECAMI (Joint Ecological Continuum Analysing and Mapping Initiative-Web services). This instrument has been developed by the Swiss National Park in collaboration with the Arinas company. The benefits of this initiative are manifold. The "JECAMI" tool provides a harmonized strategy to the pilot regions in order to analyze the situation of ecological connectivity.

The integrated valuation model shows the value of each part or patch of the analysed landscape concerning its promotion of the ecological continuum. The analysis area can be uploaded or be drawn online. The analysis results are thematically divided into 10 different indicators which reach from biology, landscape ecology and geography up to socio-economy. This allows to compare the results in different areas and therefore a broad interdisciplinary discussion for all

interested parties.

The pilot regions will be able to identify the ideal and priority areas to establish future measures of connectivity.

They also can make use of the Internet tool in order to support communication towards the various users and authorities. JECAMI is easily accessible and will increase the visibility of connectivity. It will be possible to visualize at the same time the habitats of the species and the results of connectivity. Econnect awaited an effective tool to incorporate and to combine the spatial results of the project and a facilitated access of all the stakeholders concerned. With JECAMI this is done. Towards the end of the project time, it will be also available for public use.

Berchtesgaden - Salzburg: analyzing possibilities for improving connectivity



Apollofalter as focal species for extensive grasslands in the Pilot Region Berchtesgaden - Salzburg

Important steps towards implementing connectivity measures in the course of Econnect have been made in the pilot region "Berchtesgaden - Salzburg". In order to analyse the connectivity of extensively cultivated grasslands in the region a set of butterfly and grasshopper species has been defined. Measures to improve the quality of certain grassland habitats will be planned and implemented subsequently. Additionally, several other possibilities are analysed to develop ecological connections in the pilot region, like e.g. the revitalisation of a small river. It will support the migration of rare fish species for reproduction as well as enable the development of natural structures of high ecological value. Another major aspect in "Berchtesgaden - Salzburg" is the role of landscape planning, especially in a transboundary context. A workshop jointly organised with the State Government of Salzburg will enhance the transboundary exchange of experts in the field of landscape planning and ecological networks.

Pilot region of Isère: bridges for more traffic safety



In the pilot region of Isère a green bridge is going to be built.

In the framework of the project "Paths of life" the pilot region Isère signed a contract with the motorway company to build a green bridge. Work will start before the end of the year. Apart from that, the pilot region Isère has published a guide presenting various experiences they led since ten years in different areas and the methods being used. The publication "Methodological guide of the hierarchical ecological networks - Ten years of experiments in Isère" is available in English and French and has been produced in the framework of the knowledge transfer work package. It will soon be available on the Econnect website. Isère welcomes feed backs on this publication.

Maritime Alps National Park and Valle d'Aosta: Workshop on concrete connectivity examples on the field

The workshop organized by the Maritime Alps National Park and Valle d'Aosta region has seen researchers, authorities, local stakeholders and students debating on ecological connectivity issues. During the first session, very interesting cases have been presented. A participatory approach - The collaboration of the Department of Isère (F) with railway and highway operators, fishermen, farmers, naturalists and urban-planners led to an integrated land management and to a dialogue with more than 80 local municipalities. Thanks to this open and participatory approach, ecological connectivity issues are taken into account during the urban-planning processes.

Making barriers visible - Suspended cables of cable-cars and ski-lifts represent a threat to birds, especially to black grouses and grouses. A survey carried out by the Observatoire des Galliformes de Montagne in the French Pyrenees and the French Alps has shown that almost 60% of this kind of plants causes death between birds (684, 476 of which are black grouses and 103 grouses). Some display-systems such as colored cable wires for ski-lifts and floating devices (photo) have proved effective in reducing ski-lifts and cable cars' impact on birdlife.

Birds and electricity - An interesting experience in the Po Delta Park has mitigated the impact of pylons and electrical wires on birds. In this zone has been calculated that around 171 birds per km are killed by power cables. Among the systems put into practice in cooperation with ENEL (the Italian energy operator), perches and platforms on poles and electrical pylons, buried cables, replacement of "classic" cables with elicord ones.

The second session foresaw three separate workshops on aerial, terrestrial and water connectivity. In general, emerged a pessimistic picture due to a lack of planning in the medium - long term. Nevertheless, the dialogue has been fruitful, with several proposals:

- First, it's necessary to improve and increase communication efforts directed to citizens and local authorities and to ensure that the economic value of nature is well understood by these key actors.
- Making the "river contracts" experience be part of regional planning, as well as SIC management plans.
- Regarding air connectivity, a way to improve the situation is to initiate constructive dialogues with the companies that operate the power grid and ski resorts. There is a good opening to the dialogue by this subjects that should be exploited.

Concerning eolic plants issue, it is urgent that impact assessments are taken into proper consideration by the bodies in charge of approving the authorizations. Actually, other requests such as economic incentives, are taken in much more consideration during the environmental impact assessment.

More information and PDF presentations: http://www.econnectproject.eu/cms/?q=download_area

New cross-border project supports Ecological Network at local level



The endangered Rock Butterfly.

Continuum Initiative for pan-Alpine ecological networks at local level.

The Rock Butterfly (*Chazara briseis* L.) is threatened by extinction. It can only be found in the Swiss Münstertal because of the large expanse of species-rich dry grasslands in the neighbouring Italian municipalities of Taufers and Mals. To further the Rock Butterfly, grazing land will be cleared in Münstertal and grazing plans optimised within the framework of DIVERSICOLTURA. Besides the Rock Butterfly, a large number of other animals and plants will profit from this. The forestry group and the affected farmers will also benefit in terms of work and ecological direct payments. DIVERSICOLTURA is ensuring that the Rock Butterfly's habitat in the Italian Vinschgau remains in good condition so that these measures make sense in the long term.

News from the connectivity scene

International workshop: Follow-up and new projects beyond Econnect



The second think tank workshop aims at identifying the needs and possibilities for the follow-up project beyond ECONNECT.

The Ecological Continuum Initiative organises a workshop to develop visions and to set the course for an assured continuation of projects beyond Econnect. The workshop will take place on November 17th 2010 in Bolzano/I. The workshop aims at defining new project ideas and elaborating projects on ecological connectivity in the Alps. The maintaining of approved partnerships, as well as the build-up of new project partnerships is an additional goal of the workshop.

Apart from the think tank pool of experts, the collaborators from Econnect, especially collaborators and stakeholders from all pilot regions, and other running connectivity projects are kindly invited to participate.

The first workshop in the frame of the think tank was about stakeholder integration and was carried out on April 23th 2010 in Toblach (I).

More information on the think tank and the workshops:

<http://www.alpine-ecological-network.org/index.php>

Less barriers, more nature!



Every day we build new obstacles on the migrating routes for animals and we prevent plants to spread freely. In most of the cases we are not even aware of this problem. How would it feel and look like, if our living spaces would suddenly get fragmented by obstacles we cannot easily overcome? Join us on the 20th of October in one of six major cities! We will set up obstacles in busy pedestrian areas of Zurich/CH, Milan/I, Munich/D, Ljubljana/SI, Lyon/F and Vienna/A. The Ecological Continuum Initiative prepares this big international event to raise the awareness on the interruption of ecological corridors towards a wide public. Apart from setting up the obstacles, a number of accompanying activities will take place. Information: fabio-guarneri@bluewin.ch

55 questions on alpine ecological connectivity



Research questions will help defining priority issues in the field of ecological connectivity.

A joint research project of Econnect, the Platform Ecological Network under the Alpine Convention and the Ecological Continuum Initiative aims to identify "The 55 most urgent questions concerning ecological networks in the Alps" by bringing together all "alpine actors" such as national administrations, protected areas, researchers, stakeholders and various NGOs. The study employs a methodology which has been successfully applied in this context in other regions. To date, the 22 participating institutions have submitted some 450 questions. These questions will undergo a second round of review and consolidation before a final prioritization and selection process is carried out at a workshop beginning of December in Switzerland. The output of the process will be a list of 55 questions which reveal the lack of robust scientific evidence or novel approaches with regard to ecological connectivity in the Alpine region.

Subsequently the list of questions will be published in a peer-reviewed journal and disseminated to a wider public within the Alpine region and beyond, in order to help researchers and donors focus on urgent projects.

An example of ecological corridor at Parco delle Groane / I

Inside the Parco delle Groane, a protected area that extends at the foot of the Alps nearby the city of Milan, it was implemented an underpass for amphibians and small fauna that allows this small wildlife to cross safely the road that split the park in two. The broader aim of such an intervention, which foresees a second round of works starting very soon, is to preserve and increase the biodiversity of the Park and, eventually, appreciate the ecological corridor between the two Sites of Community Importance Pineta di Cesate e Boschi delle Groane.

Even though a quantitative survey hasn't been done yet, some observation confirmed that the underpass is currently used by amphibians. Such a good practice is of the kind that Econnect project wants to implement within its Pilot Regions in order to preserve amphibians and small wildlife.

More information: <http://www.wwf.it/client/render.aspx?content=0&roo> (it)

Events you should not miss

Conference / Congress: **ForumAlpinum 2010: Metropolises and "their" Alps.** 6.10.2010 – 9.10.2010. Munich/DE.

language: de, fr, it, sl. Organisation: ISCAR Geschäftsstelle, Bern/CH.

Info: www.forumalpinum.org/2010/e/.

Conference / Congress: **General assembly of protected areas managers.** 21.10.2010 – 23.10.2010. Zernez/CH. language: de, en, fr, it, sl. Organisation: ALPARC Netzwerk Alpiner Schutzgebiete, Secrétariat permanent de la Convention alpine: Task Force Espaces Protégés, Chambéry/FR.

Info: www.alparc.org/the-alparc-network/how-alparc-works/general-assembly.

Internal Meeting / Convention : **Econnect project partner meeting .** 15.11.2010 – 16.11.2010. Bolzano/I. language: en.

Workshop / Seminar: **International workshop in the frame of the think tank of the Ecological Continuum Initiative.** 17.11.2010 – 17.11.2010. Bolzano/IT. language: en.

Info: www.alpine-ecological-network.org/index.php/the-ecological-continuum-initiative/thinktank.

Workshop 55 questions. 6.12.2010 – 7.12.2010. Liestal/CH. Organisation: ISCAR Geschäftsstelle, Bern/CH.

Conference / Congress: **Final conference of ECONNECT Work package "legal barriers".** 9.12.2010 – 9.12.2010. Aosta/IT. Organisation: Regione Autonoma Valle d'Aosta, Servizio Aree Protette, IT. Contact: c.sedda@regione.vda.it

Conference / Congress: **European Conference on Biodiversity and Climate Change.** 12.4.2011 – 13.4.2011. Bonn/DE.

language: en. Organisation: Bundesamt für Naturschutz (BfN), Bonn/DE. Contact: katrin.kraus@uni-greifswald.de

4th World Conference on Ecological Restoration. 21.8.2011 – 25.8.2011. Mérida/Mexico. language: en. Organisation: Society for Ecological Restoration International, Washington D.C./US.
Info: www.ser2011.org/en/.

Publications you should consult

New publication on approaches, tools and activities for implementing a pan-Alpine ecological network.

During the last few years various documents, publications and reports which reflect approaches, tools and activities that support the implementation of an ecological network across the Alps have been published. Some of this information had not been made available for a wide public until now.

You can download the report here: <http://www.alpine-ecological-network.org/index.php>

First atlas of biodiversity risk in Europe. The new "Atlas of Biodiversity Risk" is the first of its kind to describe and summarise in a comprehensive, easy-to-read and richly illustrated form the major pressures, impacts and risks of biodiversity loss on a European and global level.

More information: <http://pensoft.net/newreleases/14595.htm>

Experiences from the Carpathians: a manual on creation of ecological corridors. Based on a pilot project of realizing trans-boundary ecological connectivity in the Ukrainian Carpathians a manual on stakeholder involvement and landscape-ecological modeling to connect protected areas has recently been published.

The pdf in English can be downloaded at: <http://www.carpathianconvention.org/NR/rdonlyres/9>

France: new guidelines for the implementation of ecological networks . 1. Guideline for strategic decisions, 2. Methodological guideline for the elaboration of ecological network plans, 3. Guideline for transport infrastructure management. Download (only in French): www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr.

2010: **LIFE building up Europe's green infrastructure.** Addressing connectivity and enhancing ecosystem functions. 60 pages

ec.europa.eu/environment/life/publications/lifepublications/lifefocus/documents/green_infra.pdf

2010: **Connectivity conservation and the Great Eastern Ranges corridor.** 68 pages

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/nature/ccandger.pdf

2010: **Assessing and Creating Linkages within and beyond protected areas.** A quick guide for protected area practitioners. 28 pages

www.wildlandsnetwork.org/sites/default/files/CreatingLinkagesQG-Web-1.pdf

Wildlands Network

www.wildlandsnetwork.org

ECONNECT Project: Restoring the web of life

Connecting habitats and protected areas all over the Alps is the new conservation frontier: an ambitious international project funded by the EU in the framework of the Alpine Space Programme aims at establishing an Alps-wide ecological network.

The ECONNECT project will bring a major and innovative contribution to the conservation of the Alps' outstanding biodiversity. Sixteen partners from six Alpine countries have come together to promote a dynamic approach to conserving the natural heritage of the Alps. The project became operational in September 2008 and will run until the end of August 2011.

The activities of ECONNECT contribute to the implementation of the Alpine Convention (Art. 12 Nature Conservation Protocol) which is binding for the signatory states according to international law.

Project Partners

Lead partner: University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna; Research Institute of Wildlife Ecology (FIWI) (A)

Other partners: University of Innsbruck, Institute of Ecology (A) | Umweltbundesamt GmbH (A) | National Park Gesäuse GmbH (A) | National Park Hohe Tauern (A) | Italian Ministry of Environment (I) | European Academy of Bolzano (I) | WWF Italy (I) | Nature Park Alpi Marittime (I) | Autonomous Region Valle d'Aosta (I) | General Council of the Department of Iserre (F) | Task Force Protected Areas of the Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention (F) | Scientific research centre CEMAGREF (F) | National Park Berchtesgaden (DE) | CIPRA International (LI) | Swiss National Park (CH)

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