

June 2007: start of the Ecological **Continuum project** (financed by the Swiss MAVA Foundation) by:

- Alpine Network of Protected Areas **ALPARC**
- International Commission for the Protection of the Alps **CIPRA**
- International Scientific Committee Alpine Research **ISCAR**
- **WWF** European Alpine Programme



Aim of **Continuum project**  to lay the basis for the long-term implementation of an ecological network in the Alps

The Continuum project has developed a **set of methodologies** for connecting important areas and a catalogue of possible measures to enhance connectivity, implemented in four **Pilot Regions**.

The four project partners provide the foundation for the work of the **Platform “Ecological Network”** of the Alpine Convention and have successfully initiated the **ECONNECT Project**

ECONNECT is financed mainly by the EU **Alpine Space Programme** and co-financed by ERDF.

The total project financing amounts to 3.198.240,00 €

The partnership is composed by sixteen partners from six Alpine countries

Austria

- University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna,
Research Institute of Wildlife Ecology → **Lead Partner**
- National Park Hohe Tauern
- Federal Environment Agency
- National Park Gesäuse
- University of Innsbruck, Institute for Ecology

Germany

- National Park Berchtesgaden

France

- CEMAGREF
- Council of Department of Isère
- Task Force Protected Areas – Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention

Italy

- Alpe Marittime Nature Park
- Autonomous Region of Valle d'Aosta
- European Academy of Bozen
- Ministry for the Environment
- WWF Italy

Liechtenstein

- International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA)

Switzerland

- Swiss National Park

ECONNECT started in September 2008 and will run until the end of August 2011

The main objective is the **protection of biodiversity in the Alps** through an integrated and multidisciplinary approach aimed at encouraging the promotion of an ecological continuum across the Alpine region.



Particular attention will be given to **establish and increase the links** between regions high in biodiversity value

The project's emphasis is on the **implementation of measures in pilot regions** in order to then magnify the results by way of guidelines and best-practice dissemination.



To achieve these objectives the project will carry out a number of specific actions falling under three major categories:

Information gathering:

- harmonise geographical data
- analyse existing physical and legal barriers
- define migration corridors

Action on the ground:

- create, approve and test a methodological approach for the establishment of ecological corridors
- strengthen the cooperation between relevant institutions
- apply concepts and action in Pilot Regions

Communication:

- Raise awareness about the importance of ecological connectivity
- Spread results of the process being carried out

ECONNECT is based on a holistic approach for the development of ecological networks, integrating administrative, multinational and scientific institutions.

It is foreseen to provide an Alpine-wide overview on the areas important to ecological connectivity by referring to quantitative and qualitative information on selected sites (core areas) and the level of interconnectivity between them (corridors).

Natural, social and economic barriers to the establishment of connectivity will also be identified and proposals will be made on how to overcome them.

- **WP1** Project Preparation
- **WP2** Project Management
- **WP3** Information & Publicity
- **WP4** Data Management
- **WP5** Barriers and Corridors
- **WP6** Legal Barriers
- **WP7** Implementation in Pilot Regions
- **WP8** Knowledge Transfer

WP 4 – Data Management

Work Package 4 aims to set up and manage a systematic GIS platform to carry out alpine-wide analysis of ecological networks.

MAIN TASKS:

- collect existing spatial data sets
- adapt, integrate and harmonise the existing data
- evaluate and documentate data harmonisation methods developed in other EU projects and national projects
- provide support to the pilot regions in using the geographic information for analysis and mapping tasks in GIS desktop applications
- set up a web-based geodata and metadata catalogue

WP responsible: EURAC - European Academy of Bozen, Italy

WP 5 – Barriers and Corridors

Work-Package 5 aims to identify ecological anthropogenic barriers preventing natural ranges of different species, and to the development of concrete measures to improve the migration of species and the exchange of gene fluxes.

MAIN TASKS:

- Select a representative sample of species classified by migration needs, ecosystem requirements and zoological classes
- Analyse species habitat needs in terms of habitat connectivity
- Provide a spatial analysis of current and potential habitats, their lack of connectivity and its reasons
- Characterize the barriers by their origin, size, shape and degree of permeability and (economic) assessment of possibilities to diminish them
- Develop measures and management practises to surmount barriers and measurement classification by practicability and feasibility.

WP responsible: UBA-AT – Austrian Federal Environment Agency

WP 6 – Legal Barriers

Work Package 6 aims to identify legal barriers concerning protected areas and their surroundings which may be hindering the creation of ecological networks.

MAIN TASKS:

- Analyse the legal framework of protected areas in each Alpine state, especially with regard to connectivity and transboundary issues
- Study the main legal instruments for transboundary cooperation
- Compare the legal frameworks of transboundary protected areas, also proposing models concerning ecological corridors
- Use the Pilot Regions of the project as case studies for the bilateral comparison of legal frameworks, also proposing models

WP responsible: MATTM – Italian Ministry for the Environment

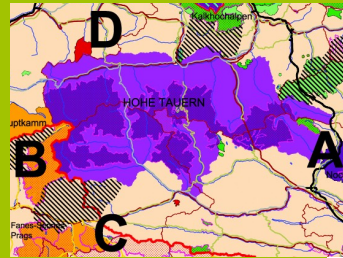
WP 7 – Implementation in Pilot Regions

Work package 7 provides a very detailed planning process in seven Pilot Regions. It aims at the realisation of a continuum of habitats and to reduce fragmentation of areas especially where a high degree of conflicts as regards territory use can be presumed.

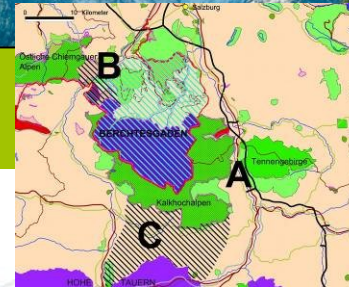
MAIN TASKS:

- Analyse the situation of ecological connectivity in the Pilot Regions
- Implement concrete planning on local scale, such as spatial links and measures in favour of the establishment of the ecological network
- Involve stakeholders in charge of different topics linked to the questions of connectivity in Pilot regions
- Organization of training sessions, meetings and workshops

WP responsible: TFPA - Task Force Protected Areas (Permanent Secretariat of the Alpine Convention), France

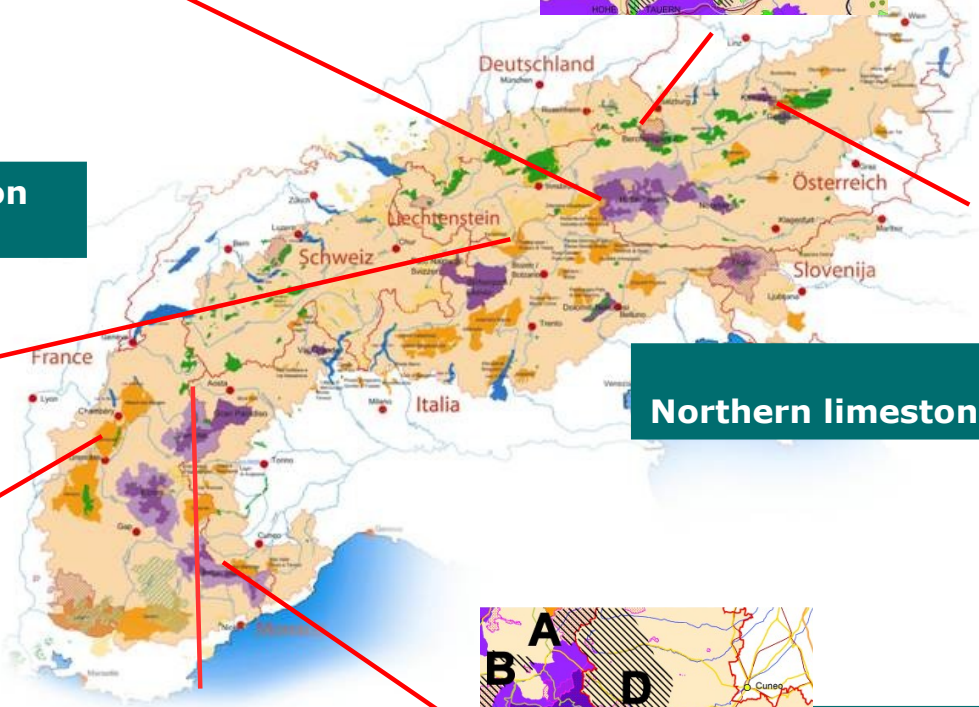
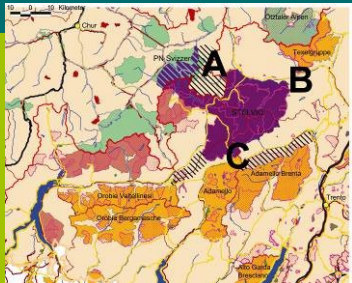


Hohen Tauern region

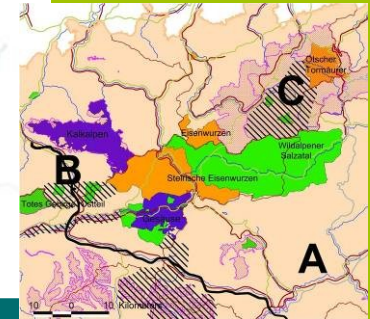


Berchtesgaden – Salzburg region

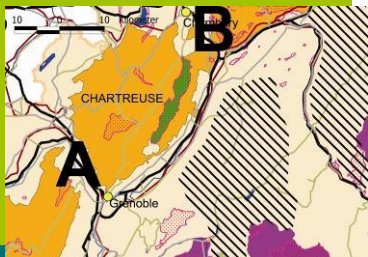
Rhaethian Triangel region



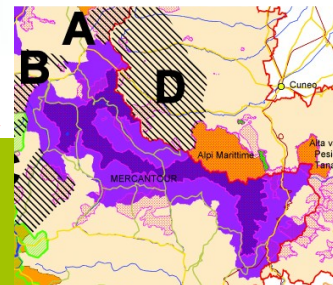
Northern limestone Alps region



Monte Rosa region



Department Isère region



Mercantour - Alpi Marittime region

WP 8 – Knowledge Transfer

Work package 8 main objective is to prepare results for a common understanding of the project and to transfer knowledge to other mountain regions.

MAIN TASKS:

- Elaborate synopsis of project objectives, methodologies, activities, achievements based on the work of the other work packages, as an instrument of knowledge transfer
- Elaborate and distribute implementation guidelines and project syntheses to key actors at the local, Alp-wide and European level
- Organise a workshop with key actors from other mountain areas (esp. Carpathians and Pyrenees) for the elaboration of implementation guidelines and policy recommendations
- Interact with other project initiatives related to ecological networks in the Alps

WP responsible: UIBK - University of Innsbruck (Institute for Ecology), Austria



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