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Ecological Continuum Initiative

The Ecological Continuum Initiative in the International Year of Biodiversity



The International Year of Biodiversity, declared by the United Nations, represents even more encouragement for the Ecological Continuum Initiative to further develop its activities in preventing biodiversity loss in the Alps.

The Ecological Continuum Project has recently changed its name to The Ecological Continuum Initiative, which better reflects the intentions of the Continuum partners CIPRA, ISCAR, ALPARC and WWF to carry on the own activities in the long term, to support other projects and initiate new ones. The activities of the Continuum partners are not limited in time as it is typical for most projects.

The Continuum partners see the Year of Biodiversity as a great opportunity to position the ecological connectivity topic by the public. That is why important Initiative's activities will focus on media events. The events will take place in all Alpine countries and will make evident the importance of ecological connectivity in the Alps to a wide public.

The other 2010 key elements will be the "Think tank" activities. The think tank is a pool of experts from all Alpine countries who cooperate in result oriented way to develop new connectivity projects in a long- term perspective. The Continuum Initiative will organise three expert workshops. They will be based on the results of the first Think Tank workshop that took place in Chamonix/F in December 2009.

The Continuum partners will strengthen their efforts in providing information services which will be professionalized and carried on in the frame of a "service centre on Alpine ecological networks." This will support the transfer of knowledge and know-how between projects and territorial units.

As the Ecological Continuum Initiative place emphasis on identifying connectivity problems and solutions on the ground, the Continuum partners will prepare in 2010 a series of field trips for pilot regions stakeholders which should be implemented in 2011.

Think tank: Bundling the Alps-wide expertise on ecological networks



As the Continuum Initiative decided to focus on further connectivity activities with long-term issues, the Continuum partners are now aiming at the preparation of follow-up projects beyond ECONNECT to ensure that the fundamentals built up during this project can be used for further concerted implementation projects.

Such new projects have to be developed referring to the existing expertise on ecological networks and followed up by integrating available scientific and practical experts into such a process. In this context, the Continuum Partners have established a think tank on ecological networks which gathers most of the available expertise in Alpine countries. The think tank is explicitly no new structure or network. It is a pool of experts who cooperate in a problem and result oriented way.

The think tank will start its activities in 2010 with three workshops on specific topics, which have been elaborated at the first expert workshop on the second of December in Chamonix/France. 26 experts from all Alpine countries followed the invitation by the Continuum Initiative to express their needs

and expectations in relation to a "think tank" on Alpine ecological networks.

The think tank concept is available on www.alpine-ecological-network.org. If you are interested in contributing to the think tank, please contact Thomas Scheurer: scheurer@scnat.ch

Updated brochure and new eye-catcher posters on ecological networks in the Alps



Just in time for the International Year of Biodiversity, the Ecological Continuum Initiative has printed an updated version of the brochure on Ecological Networks in the Alps. With a new design, the brochure "Restoring the web of life - Ecological networks for more biodiversity in the Alps" illustrates the ecological connectivity topic and makes it understandable to a wide public.

As a lot has been done since the brochure was first published in 2008, the texts about the Continuum Initiative and the Platform have been updated and a paragraph about ECONNECT has been added. Furthermore, the brochure contains a lot of new pictures of plant and animal flag connectivity species and of structures that enhance connectivity and installations that hinder it.

The brochure is accompanied by an eye-catcher poster in the same design, which should, especially at the events in the International Year of Biodiversity, draw attention to the three Alps wide connectivity initiatives. The poster is also available in a rollup format (2.10x0.79 m).

The brochure and the posters have been financially supported by the German Environment Ministry, the French Ministry of Ecology and the Swiss

MAVA Foundation for Nature.

You can download the brochure and the eye-catcher poster in English, German, Italian, French and Slovenian at: www.alpine-ecological-network.org/. For printed versions please contact: info@alparc.org

Continuum fact sheets help implementing connectivity measures in the Alps

With a new series of fact sheets on ecological networks in the Alps, the Ecological Continuum Initiative continues to support the implementation of ecological connectivity measures on the ground. The fact sheets are not only informative printed documents. Their main objective is to move to action. They target stakeholders who are implementing ecological networks (e.g. from the ECONNECT pilot regions). The series of ten fact sheets covers the most important fields of work where connectivity measures should be implemented: agriculture, forestry, water management, hunting and fishing, spatial planning, traffic, nature protection, and tourism. Special fact sheets will also be published for municipalities and other important players in the establishment ecological networks. Each fact sheet will explain the importance of its respective sector for ecological connectivity and list concrete connectivity measures that stakeholders will be encouraged to implement. Furthermore, good-practice examples from the Alps will be presented in each fact sheet and will show that connectivity measures really work. These good examples will motivate the stakeholders to imitate them. The printable pdf version of the fact sheet on nature protection (in German) is already available for download at: www.alpine-ecological-network.org/. Italian and French version will follow soon as well as the other fact sheets (d/f/i). The printed fact sheets will be made available to the ECONNECT pilot regions in spring.

ECONNECT Project

ECONNECT Project – Working full speed for implementing ecological networks

The ECONNECT project has completed half time of its project life. In the pilot regions the teams are highly committed with preparing the implementation of ecological networks on the ground. The working area has been delimited for each of the seven regions, the important stakeholders have been informed, the species and habitats that should be specially fostered in each region have been selected and all pilot regions have agreed on a common methodology for reaching the joint aim of an Alps wide ecological network. In the coming months, each pilot region will work out its specific objectives and a plan on how to implement concrete connectivity measures.

On the Alps wide level, corridors and barriers are being modelled and visualised. The modelling methods have been selected and will serve to show habitats and corridors for the eight selected target species on Alps-wide level.

With regard to legal instruments, the situation has been analysed in detail for each Alpine country. A comparison of these instruments between the different countries is now under way and the preliminary results will be discussed in the frame of an expert workshop in Grenoble on 30 March. The final results of the legal analyses will be presented in a conference in Autumn.

The successful approach ECONNECT is using has been confirmed by a new project idea that has just been developed in the Swiss/Italian border area. The partners aim at further contributing to the implementation of the Alps wide strategy on local level with additional connectivity measures. Other ideas on how to carry on the implementation of the Alps wide ecological continuum will be discussed in the coming months in the frame of the think tank initiated by the Continuum Initiative.

International workshop on connectivity methods

More than 80 experts from all over Europe followed the invitation by the ECONNECT project to share and compare their individual experiences of fieldwork and innovative research methods regarding ecological connectivity in Grenoble, France, from the 4th to 6th of October 2009.

More than 80 experts from all over Europe followed the invitation by the ECONNECT project to share and compare their individual experiences of fieldwork and innovative research methods regarding ecological connectivity in Grenoble, France, from the 4th to 6th of October 2009.

The meeting was aimed at identifying the most successful instruments to restore connections between habitats of animals and plants. The discussions also contributed to define a common methodology and line of action for the "ECONNECT - Restoring the web of life" project. The conference, organised by Innsbruck University, Cemagref Grenoble and the Isère General Council, brought together numerous international organisations connected to the Alpine Convention, scientific institutions and local partners.

New solutions have been presented and visited in the frame of a field trip in the Isère department, one of the seven ECONNECT pilot regions. Solutions such as underground paths for amphibians, green bridges and sensors that use the heat or movement of animals to set off flashing lights, have been made in cooperation with the AREA Motorway Company. This partnership is an important sign that it is not just scientists that are interested in ecological corridors but also local stakeholders and politicians. Investing in ecological connectivity isn't just paying attention to the environment but also of making life safer for the animals and avoiding road accidents.

The next international workshop in the frame of ECONNECT will deal with legal instruments to increase ecological networks in the Alpine nations. It will be held in Grenoble on 30th March 2010.

Conference searching solutions to adapt to climate change

The Berchtesgaden National Park and the Alpine Network of Protected Areas (ALPARC) organised an international conference on ecological networks and climate change. The conference "Alpine Ecological Network: a response to climate change that will preserve biodiversity?" took place in Berchtesgaden, Germany, on 15th and 16th October 2009.

It brought together 110 administrators of Alpine protected areas, international researchers, research institutes, academics etc.

On the first day, 25 specialists gave a progress report on the Alpine projects linked to the setting up of ecological networks. First of all emphasis was placed on the biodiversity - climate relationship in scenarios of the earth's evolution in order to be able to comprehend this completely new change and its impacts. Next was shown how climate change can impact the functioning of ecosystems and how that affects the interaction and new distribution of species.

In the second part concrete examples of the setting up of ecological networks in the Alps were shown through current projects like ECONNECT, the Ecological Continuum Initiative and the Ecological Network Platform of the Alpine Convention.

Finally the possibilities of cooperation between the Alps and the Carpathians were presented in order to create an international corridor for the migration of species.

On 16th October an excursion was organised in the Berchtesgaden National Park together with a workshop on the subject of the region's vulnerability as regards hydrology, water resources and ecosystems in view of climate change in the context of the management of the protected areas.

Further information on the conference as well as the presentations and the talk summaries of the first day can be downloaded here: www.alparc.org/news/

Fourth meeting of the Platform

The Ecological Network Platform of the Alpine Convention held its fourth meeting on 1st December 2009 in Chamonix, France. The French Presidency presented the Platform work programme for the next two years.

In this time the focus will be on the official selection of "pilot regions" by the Alpine Convention. Furthermore, the Platform intends to develop a list of indicators suitable for assessing the current state of play of the Alpine ecological network.

In 2010, members of the Platform will be attending a range of national and international conferences and seminars where they will give presentations on ecological networking activities in the Alps and raise awareness about this subject.

In order to strengthen cooperation with other European mountain areas, a representative from the Massif Central in France had been invited to the meeting. She presented the project of creating an ecological network in the Massif Central as an important region linking the Alps with the Pyrenees.

Events

Conference / Congress: **International GMBA-DIVERSITAS conference**. 27.7.2010 – 30.7.2010. Chandolin/CH. language: en. Organisation: GMBA Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment, Institute of Botany, University of Basel, Schönbeinstr. 6, CH-4056 Basel.

Info: gmba.unibas.ch/2010conference/2010conference.htm.

Conference / Congress: **2010 IENE International Conference on Ecology and Transportation**. 27.9.2010 – 1.10.2010. Velenç/HU. Organisation: IENE Infra Eco Network Europe, Institute of Nature Conservation, Kliniekstraat 25, BE-1070 Brussels.

Info: www.cbm.slu.se/iene/conf2010/conf2010.php.

Conference / Congress: **ForumAlpinum 2010: Alps & Metropolises**. 6.10.2010 – 9.10.2010. Munich/DE. language: de, fr, it, sl. Organisation: ISCAR, Schwarztörstrasse 9, CH-3007 Bern.

Info: www.forumalpinum.org/2010/.

Publications

Connectivity Conservation Management

A Global Guide. Publisher: IUCN - WCPA, Mountains Biome Theme, 2010. [More »](#)

Further events, publications, news and links related to ecological networks are published on www.cipra.org/en/alpmedia/dossiers/13 (different entries in each language version of the website).

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The Ecological Continuum Initiative was started in June 2007 by ALPARC (Alpine Network of Protected Areas), CIPRA (International Commission for the Protection of the Alps), ISCAR (International Scientific Committee Alpine Research) and the European Alpine Programme of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) with the aim of maintaining or restoring ecological connectivity between important areas for nature conservation in the Alps. The initiative is financed by the Swiss MAVA Foundation for Nature.

