

**Interreg**

Alpine Space

**ALPBIONET<sup>2030</sup>**

EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND



# ALPBIONET2030

Integrative Alpine wildlife and habitat management for the next generation

Mid-term Conference

Parallel sessions summary

In order to gather feedback on the SACA approach and experience from the expert audience, the ALPBIONET2030 partners carried out parallel sessions during the Mid-term conference.

The participants split up into 3 groups, each dealing with one specific topic that ALPBIONET2030 aims to influence (political level, planning, implementation). With the help of the parallel sessions, the following questions were answered:

## 1 Questions

### Policy

1. Which could be the national / regional policies to link the SACA approach?
2. How to integrate the SACA approach into the different sectoral policies?
3. How to integrate the SACA approach to the national nature conservation policies?
4. What would be your political recommendation to foster ecological connectivity?

### Planning

1. Which national or regional initiatives / connectivity planning concepts can be linked to it? How can the interfaces be determined?
2. Which options do exist in your country/region to extend ecological connectivity activities beyond existing protected areas?
3. How can the SACA concept be communicated to other sectors?
4. Please be as specific as possible for (a) agriculture, (b) spatial planning, (c) forest, (d) settlement, (...)

### Implementation

1. What problems may occur in the practical implementation of SACA?
2. How to use SACA in order to manage wildlife at cross-border level?
3. ...

By answering these questions, existing activities and best practice examples were gathered from the participants. The outcome should yield some replicable measures and activities how to improve ecological connectivity outside the protected areas. The key goal is to show the people and institutions critical areas where more connectivity is needed.

## 2 Feedback of participants

### Policy

At the beginning of the discussion all participants were reminded that the ALPBIONET2030 approach to ecological connectivity in the alpine and EUSALP area proposes to structure the alpine territory in three types of areas:

**Ecological Conservation Areas – SACA 1**

**Ecological Intervention Areas – SACA 2**

**Connectivity Restoration Areas – SACA 3**

The 3 categories do not rank the areas against each other (SACA 1= good; SACA 3 = bad), but do provide indications on how best to act in the different context to improve ecological connectivity,

- by reinforcing existing protection mechanisms (SACA 1) in order to maintain the functioning of ecological connectivity,
- by developing coherent integrated connectivity concepts (SACA 2) or
- by restoring specific corridors or implementing selected ad-hoc measures (SACA3).

The SACA approach has not the aim to install a hierarchy between areas of different SACA categories.

The proposed approach is seen as interesting tool to bring the results of the project to the ground at the local and regional level. It offers the possibility to make the theoretic connectivity approaches of the Alps and the EUSALP operational by providing possibilities to target funding and implementation actions to specific geographic areas.

By providing indications on how best to act in each type of SACA this approach offers the possibility to distinguish the different possibilities of interventions (creation of wildlife passages, integrated spatial planning, reinforcement of conservation efforts, ...) and provide indications about the key sectors to be involved.

The aim of the SACA approach is to provide an operational tool; SACA are not designed in an objective of creating a new protection status to be added to the numerous already existing protection types but as an element of an ecological connectivity strategy giving indications on how best to act within an area.

Concerning their acceptance and integration to regional and local policies the communication issue has been identified as central aspect: the concept needs to be presented and communicated in an understandable way in order to involve the concerned institution at different levels and make them understand their role when setting up connectivity measures.

Protected areas managers have been identified as important players. Their role should not be limited to the boundaries of their protected areas but the mission to work on ecological connectivity aspects in

a larger geographic context involving also areas outside the boundaries should be included in the conservation policies.

There is a multitude of different legal instruments existing in all countries, these instruments need to be implemented as foreseen.

### **Good practice**

In all countries good practice examples exist on how to make the SACA operational. Some examples:

- Dolomiti Bellunesi NP: project on prevention of car/ animal accidents
- PACOBACE (action plan for bears in Italian Alps)
- Nature protection law in Slovenia: conservation of a good state of populations (not fragment them)
- National infrastructure spatial plan foresees the construction of green bridges when new highways are built (SLO)
- Implement already identified wildlife corridors in valleys and lowlands (CH)
- Different planning instruments would allow an interface to SACA approach (Flächennutzungsplan, Landesentwicklungsplan, Alpenplan) (D)
- No flight areas in sensitive territories (ex. Mont Blanc) (I)
- Financial incentives for the implementation (Landschaftspflege RL) (D)
- Project Netzwerk Naturwald = buying stepping stone areas (AT)
- Restoration of river systems (CH)
- Use of cohesion funds to restore connectivity within Natura 2000 sites for priority species (SLO)
- Transboundary project for European Charter of sustainable tourism (Alpi Marittime – Mercantour)
- Implementation of the “Trame verte et bleue” (green and blue infrastructure) (F)

### **Obstacles**

- National/ regional borders are barriers; just as well as differences between legal regulations between countries or regions
- The perception of the problem at local (political) level is very low.
- “hard” borders around protected areas
- Sectoral thinking in administrations
- Fragmentation by existing infrastructure

### **Next steps**

- Involve young generation in conservation activities
- Improve communication among municipalities and include ecological connectivity in municipality spatial planning
- Introduce SACA approach to EUSALP strategy (AG7)
- Organise national “round tables” to present SACA approach
- Lobby for changes in legislation concerning possibilities of actions for protected areas (possibilities to participate to activities outside boundaries)
- Develop a list of species which are currently most affected by fragmentation
- Spread a common platform to share experience on ecological connectivity (Jecami)
- Communication to Alpine convention

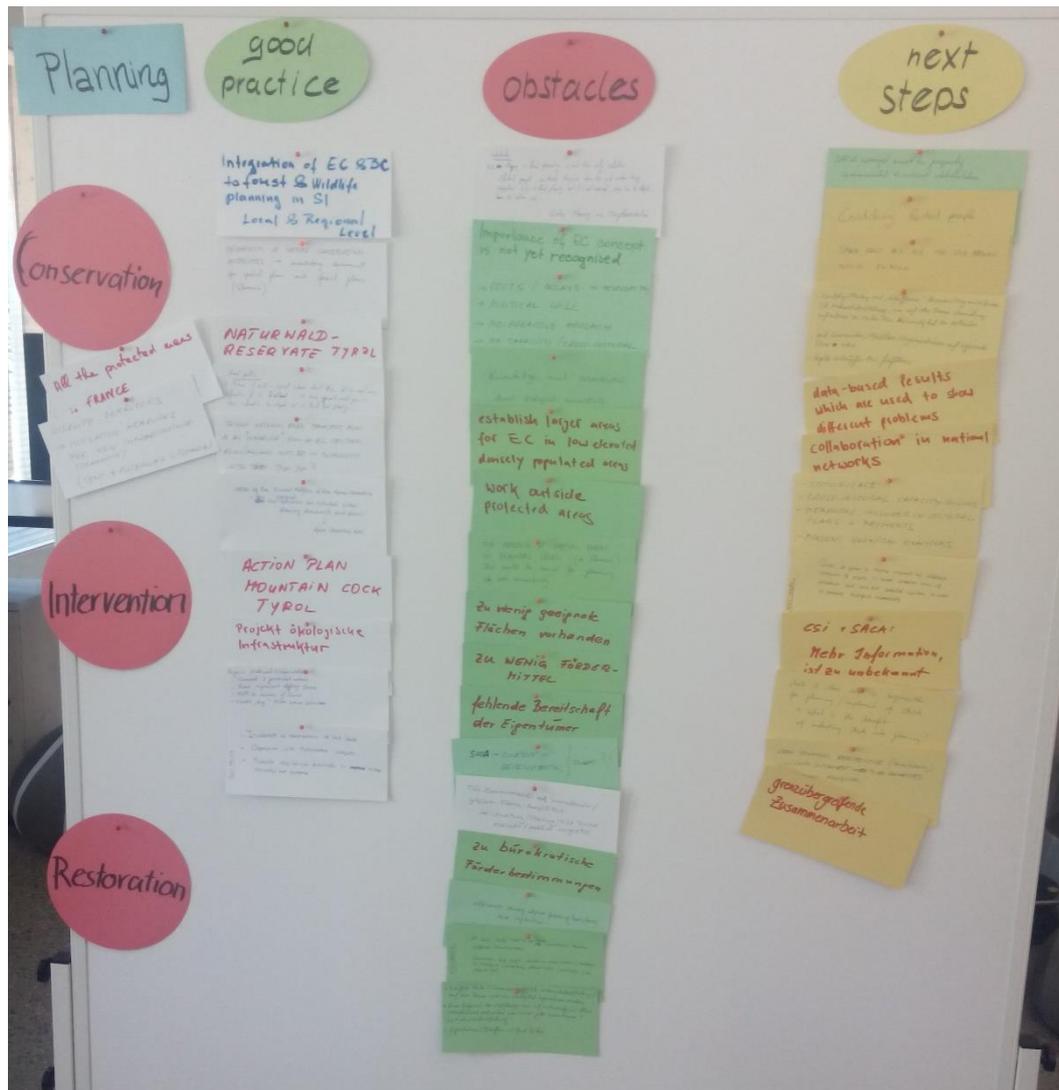
## Planning

The SACA concept provides new information to the planning levels and departments of the single alpine countries or offers the possibility to link regional/ national planning concepts, for example in terms of

- What nationally or regionally important areas for EC are covered by which type of SACA? Does the SACA classification increase the importance of national /regional protected territories by their function for the alpine wide connectivity?
- What possibilities do exist to interconnect the national/regional concepts with SACA? Are there any options for common initiatives?
- Where may transnational ecological connectivity be impacted by regional / national projects or initiatives?

In the discussion the following feedback was given by the participants (see as well photo below):

- It is not clear, if the SACA concept follows a conservation approach or a development approach.
- SACA could give the impression to be another concept like Natura2000 to make spatial planning more difficult and give more restrictions to people (SACA 1 areas are mainly Natura2000 sites); therefore it should be strongly separated from Natura2000, especially in Slovenia (and as well in other countries, as the reputation of Natura2000 is not always positive and is linked with restrictions in people's mind).
- SACA is not addressed to the general public, but to experts dealing with spatial planning – though it has to be understood by elected people and must be communicated to the public.
- SACA should be an opportunity to receive money for the restoration of areas and for financial measures in general; therefore one of the results will be a map to check regional investment possibilities.
- SACA is complex and again a concept.
- The new approach should cover the EUSALP-wide area.
- SACA should be seen as a starting point to strengthen the concept of ecological connectivity, the next step will be the verification of the model on the ground.
- It is very important to bring the concept to the wider public, to the spatial planning experts and to cross-border projects and we need good ideas how to implement this.
- We should give priority for needs of action and be more precise on target groups.
- SACA 2 areas should be proved as possible regions for EU-funding measures.



Picture 1: Result of planning session

## Implementation

The discussion showed how important it is to integrate the idea of SACA into existing approaches and institutions and to make it known in society. That is why it was not possible to leave the point of view of policy or planning outside. In the end, these have main effects on how implementation in the field works.

	<b>Good practise</b>	<b>Obstacles</b>	<b>Next steps</b>
<b>Conservation SACA1</b>	Compensation (e.g. ASFINAG)	Contradictory bureaucracy/regulation Availability of estates Possible spread of diseases; Lack of resources; SACA Map too rough for measure planning	Connect SACA to EU CAP (Common Agricultural Policy); synergy of existing plans/approaches (e.g. Natura2000)
<b>Intervention SACA2</b>	N2k Network landcare association obligation to mitigation	See above	Buy strategic areas of land; Use SACA label as motivation; Involve society and Integrate connectivity into value system
<b>Restoration SACA3</b>	-	See above	See above

### Good practice and obstacles

#### Compensation:

As a good practise, green bridges over the highways around Vienna were mentioned. These were initiated through the political pressure on ASFINAG and compensation regulations. But they bring also problems on ecological connectivity: Endemic diseases could spread and endanger the red deer population also in surrounding areas. This example shows, how measures on ecological connectivity might have also negative consequences on nature.

#### Obligation to mitigation:

Further, the Carpathian mountains was mentioned as an example of good practise: Building of motorways forced the obligation of corridors and there is a well-connected Natura2000 network in the mountain range.

#### Landcare association:

The integrating approach of the landcare association (DVL) is a good example of bringing together stakeholders of policy, nature conservation and agriculture in landscape planning and management of measures.

#### SACA map too rough:

The SACA approach was criticized in terms of scale: It is too rough for the practical work, measure- and landscape planning in detail.

#### Contradictory bureaucracy and regulations:

Responsibilities and general availability of resources for measures in administration are basic problems to deal with. There is a problem noticed in understanding for ecological measures of administrations. This is not only to lead back to contradictory opinions but also to contradictory law.

## Next steps

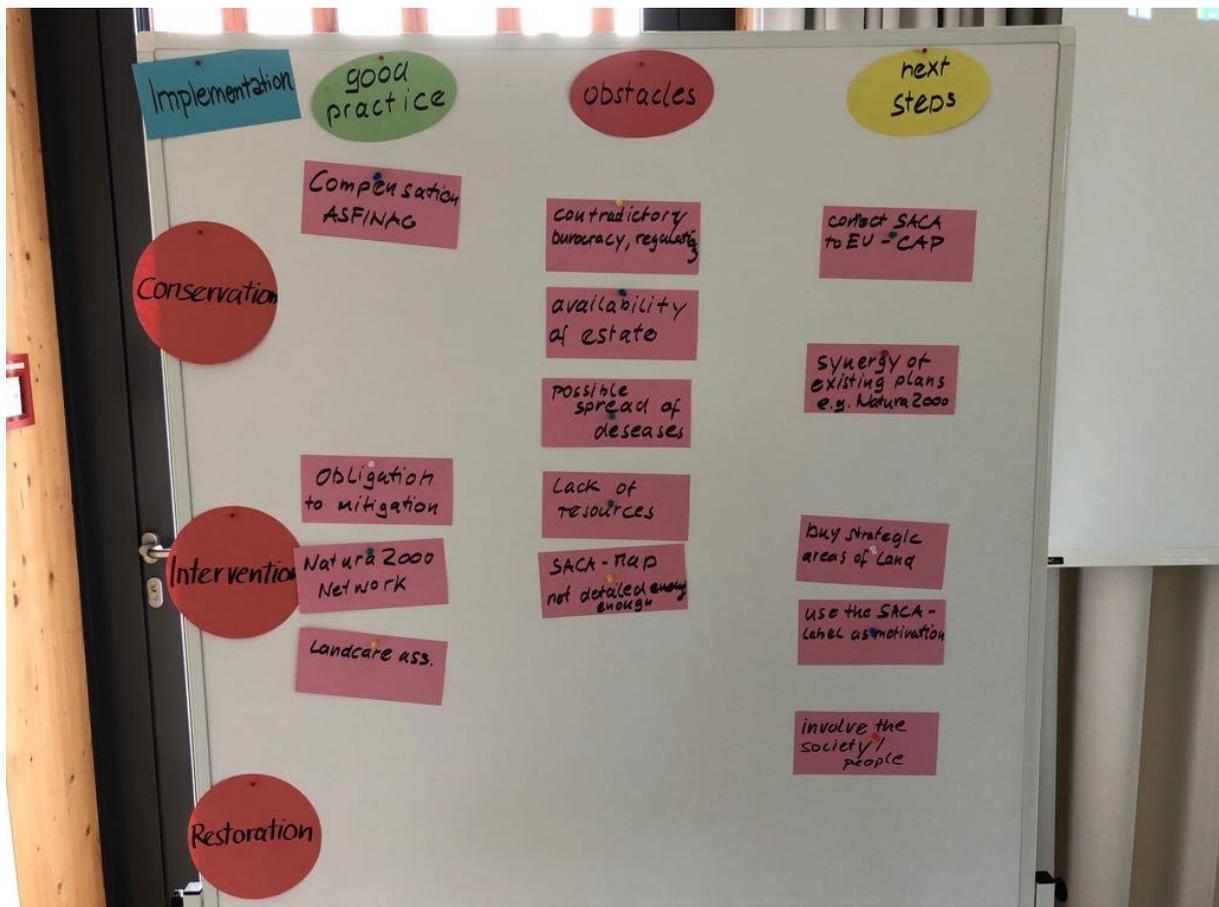
### Synergies of existing plans:

Next steps could be to establish synergies of the existing plans and approaches such as the SACA approach with the Natura2000 network. This could be helpful for the SACA approach to publish it and also for others concepts to be extended (spatially and also content-related).

Further, famous and well-integrated institutions like EU CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) should be informed and integrated to the SACA approach.

### SACA as a label:

The SACA approach should be integrated in the value system of society. This could be possible with the use of SACA as a label. This could be a certification for administrations and a bonus system would be helpful to motivate administrations and land users to participate. To involve the society should be a basic strategy to make the problem common.



Picture 2: Result of implementation session

### 3 Next steps of the SACA concept

#### **WPT2**

- Revisiting WPT5 workshops and discuss the current state of cross-border wildlife management strategies in the context of SACAs with the respective stakeholders.
- Organize a workshop in transborder project region of Mount Blanc with stakeholders from France, Italy and Switzerland, discussing more detailed project region SACA analyses.
- Further discussions on the SACA concept with respective wildlife management experts and stakeholders (e.g. as part of WPT4/5 field visits).
- Analyse and map wildlife management systems and different aspects of hunting in respect to the SACA concept.

#### **WPT4**

- Analysis especially in the area between the Alpine Convention perimeter and the EUSALP (Intersection area). Here we need continuity of the process.
- Mapping of the barriers showing different categories and possible connections or corridors (including evaluation of the impacts of such barriers for migratory species by the experiences of experts and protected areas, participation of FEDERPARCHI for the Italian partners and PA's) – include conflict locations, type and main stakeholder affected on the map
- Field visits on the base of the mapping results of JECAMI, SACA 2 areas at some of these intersection areas
- Expert Workshop and interviews how to overcome such barriers:
- Propose solutions for the different barriers in the field of infrastructure, spatial planning, legal and political aspects), consider inputs from WPT3

#### **WPT5**

- Organize stakeholder meetings at SACA level to analyse the current and most urgent human-nature conflicts considering inputs from WPT5
- Spread the WPT5 deliverable (1, 2, 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3.) during SACA's round tables and stakeholder workshop
- Organize new school meetings in SACA areas to discuss the results of the students' survey
- Use the opportunity provided by the EURAC Workshop of November 2018 to spread the SACA concept