

Project title:

Skills development for Natura 2000 site managers

Project objectives and key messages

The general project objective of the project is to improve the competencies of the managers and decision-makers of Natura 2000 Network with reference both to technical-scientific topics and to subjects related to management as well as organisation. Particularly, the project focuses on the needs of Mediterranean EU countries featuring similar soil/climate conditions and socio-economic contexts, which therefore require training programmes tailored for their specific environmental characteristics.

The specific project objectives are, in descending order of importance, as follows:

- To create a pool of experts in management of Natura 2000 Network sites featuring advanced competencies in the most up-to-date scientific topics (e.g. biodiversity, climate change, sustainable mobility, waste management, fight against eco-mafias, ecosystem services, risk prevention, etc.);
- To create a permanent database of educational and information materials addressing the managers of Natura 2000 Network sites and also including multimedia technologies and innovative tools to transfer know-how;
- To favour regular refresh training of the managers of Natura 2000 Network sites as well as the replication of good practices and successful cases;
- To strengthen competencies related to European environmental regulations (DH, DB, WFD, MSFD);
- To spread out the practice of interpreting environment to enhance Natura 2000 Network sites (evaluation of the efficacy and effectiveness of preservation interventions). This will also facilitate the implementation of interpretation techniques that have proved to be most effective on EU scale;
- To stimulate the cooperation among managers of Natura 2000 Network on EU scale, particularly in the countries in the Mediterranean area, to favour the replication of good practices and successful cases.

The project key message is that the management of Natura 2000 Network sites must provide effective response to the challenge not only of climate change, but also of social and economic changes which threaten their preservation. Therefore, as management institutions must have advanced competencies related to a wide range of topics, the project wants to offer them a variety of tools facilitating and improving the effectiveness of management.

The proposed actions address managers of Natura 2000 sites referring to several common concepts:

- Focus on 7 main matters:
 - preservation of nature/biodiversity;
 - communication, education, interpretation;
 - management;
 - legislative/administrative topics;
 - EU financial tools;
 - economic/tourist activities;
 - information for local communities

- Rigorous dissertation on the subjects both from the technical/scientific viewpoint as well as from the legislative/administrative viewpoint.
- Completeness of the subjects considered with respect to the target groups' knowledge needs.
- Use of innovative communication/multimedia tools.
- High usability of the contents for limited costs.

Actions and means involved:

The foreseen activities include:

- a) Preliminary seminars to assess training needs and preparation of a detailed training programme.
- b) Preparation of a library with educational materials for Natura 2000 sites managers (available mainly in digital).
- c) Settlement of a "Park School" and management for the whole project duration. Activities will include 7 classroom training sessions, 7 on-field training sessions and 7 webinars. On-field practical activities will take place.
- d) Organisation of 3 educational tours in Communitarian Natura 2000 sites
- e) Communication initiatives including: project website, newsletter and forum, logo of the project and graphic portfolio, other communication initiatives targeted to authorities, journalists and general public.
- f) Monitoring project impact on target audience (site managers) and on the environment

Expected results:

- Direct involvement of at least 250 active (or potentially active) people dealing with the management of Natura 2000 Network sites, also both through a web portal and through a forum focusing on project topics.
- Preparation of at least 11 thematic publications on interesting subjects for managers of Natura 2000 sites. These publications will be downloadable on the project website for free.
- Organisation of training activities, including: (1) at least 7 classroom courses attended by approx. 40 trainees each, (2) 7 on-field training courses attended by at least 15 trainees on average, with the aim of analysing successful cases both in Italy and abroad, (3) 7 webinars attended by at least 20 participants on average.
- Networking with at least 50 managing institutions of Natura 2000 Network sites which are located in the Mediterranean area.
- Significant improvement of the results of the self-assessment tests of the target groups after participating in the project. This assessment will be part of the monitoring activities.
- Involvement of at least 100 stakeholders (e.g. officers from the Ministry of the Environment as well as from the regional services for nature preservation) and 40 specialised journalists with reference to the project topics.