

P E R I U R B A N

Component 4: Methodology Testing and Regional Action Plans

Action Plan

according to Component 4 general description

Project Partner	Lombardy Region
Intervention Area (e.g. local, regional, specific park area)	<p>The regional ecological network, regional green infrastructure, is one of the town-planning management tools approved with Regional Council resolution in 2008. Starting from a regional plan, the next step is that of adopting the REN in municipal planner tools, the PGTs, by 2012. The Territory Management Plan is the new municipal town-planning tool introduced by Regional Law 12/2005.</p> <p>Therefore, the Regional Ecological Network is a top-down tool that aims to build a network of ecological and multifunctional links throughout Lombardy. The main objectives are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. to build some of the main ecological corridors linking priority areas for biodiversity; 2. strengthen the quality of habitats and ecological value of priority areas promoting the effectiveness of those ecosystemic functions they perform; 3. consider the polyfunctional value of the Network, that can also guarantee landscaping and recreational functions.

PART 1: O V E R V I E W

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List of actions detailed below

Please provide the list of the actions described below in bullet points.

As emerged from recent conventions (for example Vitoria Gasteiz 21-23/06/2012) the definition of ecological network has surpassed the concept of Nature 2000 identifying “green islands” to preserve and protect to reach that long awaited widespread natural area necessary for the balanced and stable development of our communities.

The key to achieving this lies in introducing measures to incentivise this transformation and caring for these environments so that those landowners involved in this ecological network/green infrastructure view it as an opportunity not a tie.

In other words those within this ecological network must not block any transformation activities and dedicate their time solely to preserving the sites. However, they can “cultivate nature” and the relative ecosystemic services so they still have an economic activity sustained by public funds as part of a large scale green infrastructure policy.

Clearly this policy to implement an ecological network/green infrastructure will vary according to the relative territorial context: in fact in the more urbanised areas (e.g. North Milan) it will involve acquiring strategic areas (passages) that, now residual areas from an agricultural/production point of view, can be managed directly by the public administration through the park boards; whereas in situations with more productive agriculture (e.g. South Milan) the incentive system must be heavily promoted making it cost-effective for those farmers within the ecological network to “cultivate” nature and ecosystemic services rather than agricultural produce.

The Lombardy Region was one of the first to adopt and invest energy and funds into this innovative tool; to the point that the Lombardy Regional Council approved the final overall plan for the Regional Ecological Network in 1:300.000 scale on 26 November 2008 with resolution No 8/8515, integrated with No 8/10962 of 30 December 2009. The Lombardy Region subsequently approved the project “From parks to the regional ecological network” with RCD No 8/10415/2009 making 13 million Euros available to the Regional Parks and Provinces to set up the REN. 80 feasible projects in 27 beneficiary bodies (Regional Parks and Provinces) were defined at the same time, of which 71 have already started and 10 have already been completed.

The Regional Ecological Network is recognised as priority green infrastructure of the Regional Territorial Plan acting as model for regional and local town-planning. In fact the network identifies those areas to be integrated into the REN leaving communes the job of including the specific work in their LMPs (local master plans).

To inform local stakeholders, (administrative, territorial and environmental) the region has already organised the roundtable meeting of the region and programmed that in Pavia, taking place in July and the one in Mantova in September. These two initial roundtable meetings will sound out local



opinion in two of the least urbanised towns of the region as regards improving the communication and information tools that will be proposed during the next roundtable meetings in other provinces of the Lombardy Region. It is a plan to inform and involve those local stakeholders that will have to apply the REN on a municipal and provincial scale.

Our Action Plan aims to apply the REN in one of the most urbanised metropolitan areas in Europe. Thanks to the Lombardy Region's support and commitment we aim to incentivize the work in the province of Milan, bringing the issue of the peri-urban to the forefront. Both parks of the INTERREG IVC project are already involved in the work to implement this network thus enhancing the value of this multi-purpose project. The plan is that of rebalancing the entire eco-territorial system in the medium term (10-20 years), basis not only to preserve biodiversity but also to improve the quality of life and services for the populations involved (self-purification, improving water resources, opportunities for use, carbon sink, contribution to producing renewable energy etc.). Moreover, not necessarily quantifiable ethical and identity values may be achieved. These multifunctional networks become polyvalent ecological networks once they take on a certain meaning and value for local populations.

Potential links to current regional activities

Please provide several essential bullet points

The Lombardy Region's Action Plan is divided into various points that can be summarised in 2 strategies:

INVOLVEMENT AND INFORMATION:

1. **MILAN PROVINCIAL ROUNDTABLE MEETING:** organise Milan provincial roundtable meeting by October to inform communes and steer them in preparing their LMPs. In fact they must outline their so-called Municipal Ecological Network and Provincial Ecological Network by 2012. This roundtable meeting will be an opportunity to show the final map of the ecological network and present this innovative town-planning tool to those stakeholders involved. Communes will be encouraged to adopt the principles and tools implemented by the Lombardy Region in applying the REN in their LMPs. Moreover, those LMPs already approved and including the ecological network will be assessed to identify possible designs and application tools;
2. **MILAN CITY ROUNDTABLE MEETING:** a Milan city roundtable meeting will be held following that of the region to involve administrative (the commune of Milan), territorial (Università degli Studi di Milano) and environmental stakeholders (Parco Nord Milano/Parco Sud Milano) to define and start to work on the MEN (Municipal Ecological Network) of the Commune of Milan;
3. **LOCAL ADMINISTRATIVE STAKEHOLDER INFORMATION DESK:** opening a technical information desk for those stakeholders that have adopted the REN in their LMPs and wish to plan works in line with the regional ecological network;



4. **LOCAL TERRITORIAL STAKEHOLDER INFORMATION DESK:** technical assistance and information for farmers on how to apply those structural/environmental measures set out in the RDP (Rural Development Plan) and European regulations included in the PAC promoting sustainable use of rural areas. This Rural Development Plan sets out certain environmental measures, of which No 216 and 214 are those of greatest interest even for the REN. It includes preparing information sheets to be distributed to farmers and/or managers of agricultural firms to inform them of those measures guaranteeing eco systematic services and thus encouraging farmers to adopt interventions aimed at creating the REN.

FIND, REDIRECT AND INVEST FUNDS TO ACHIEVE THE REGIONAL ECOLOGICAL NETWORK:

5. **GREEN BELT FUND:** The Lombardy Region set up a financial fund called the “Green Belt Fund” with DGR 11297 of 10 February 2010. Its aim is that of supporting those interventions that aim to develop the territory and safeguard/enhance rural areas/the landscape/environment, in particular by making the most of agricultural, wooded, natural and landscaped areas and regenerating degraded areas. This Action Plan aims to redirect these funds to potential work to build the Regional Ecological Network;
6. **CARIPO FOUNDATION:** the Cariplo Foundation, a banking foundation that carries out philanthropic activities, made 4.5 million Euros available in 2012 to carry out feasibility studies and promote those interventions necessary to build existing ecological corridors or those identified by territorial planning tools (Regional Ecological Network) on a mass scale and/or carry out local interventions to strengthen the environmental matrix and structural characteristics with a view to improving ecological links. Therefore, this Action Plan aims to stimulate the Cariplo Foundation (over which the Lombardy Region has some control) to continue steering financial policies in favour of ecological links and achieving the REN;
7. **ECONOMIC FUNDS FROM EUROPEAN DIRECTIVES:**
 - **PAC:** the Rural Development Plan is the PACs second mainstay and with regulation 1698/2005 a single fund was set up to finance rural development (FEASR) for the period 2007/2013. Part of these FEASR funds are intended to finance sustainable agricultural and forest development measures in line with safeguarding biodiversity, enhancing the landscape and developing sources of renewable energy. Amongst these measures 216 (non-productive investments) includes actions to create linear plant structures (hedges and rows) and wooded buffers, as well as reclaim springs and wet lands, whilst measure 214 (agro-environmental measures) aims to maintain linear plant structures and wooded buffers and preserve biodiversity in paddy fields and pastures of a high naturalistic value. These two measures act in synergy and as a result contributions of € 450/ha are provided to maintain these plant structures.
 - **PAF:** PAFs (prioritized action frameworks) are submitted, as proposal to the European Parliamentary commission, to demonstrate that the Natura 2000 and



Regional Ecological Networks are implemented with naturalistic finance such as that intended to carry out the LIFE network, communication finance such as that intended for REN projects and urban finance from various community funds (like FEASR and FSE).

8. **ECOLOGICAL COMPENSATION FUNDS:** there is a specific ecological compensation scheme, amounting to around 9-15 million, to offset the construction of infrastructures that will host EXPO 2015 in Milan. The STRAIN method is used to quantify and locate those areas to be re-naturalized and calculate compensation operations. This includes creating new external environmental units in place of those existing ones of less ecological value. The environmental impact assessment observatory standardizing domestic law on Via, will assess compensation project proposals and follow their implementation.

Actions already undertaken in the thematic field

Please provide several essential bullet points

In South Milan Park: Ecological Plain Network within the agricultural territories of the abbeys between the Parco del Ticino and Parco Agricolo Sud Milano: strengthening and enhancing the water meadow network.

In North Milan Park: Strengthening the ecological importance of the eastern sector of the North Milan Park

Action Summary

Please provide a short overview of the actions, their objectives (including budget available) and methods deployed, potential links to current regional activities, actions already undertaken within thematic area as well as the flexibility to allow the integration of Good Practices

The Lombardy Region has invested around 13 million Euros in 80 feasible projects in 27 recipient bodies between Parks and Provinces as starting point in creating the REN. Both the Parco Agricolo Sud Milano and Parco Nord Milano (INTERREG IVC project partner) benefitted from this finance carrying out two different projects respectively:

Parco Agricolo Sud Milano: funds amounting to € 1,024,000.00. There is a draft project involving two of the regional parks, Parco del Ticino and Parco Agricolo Sud Milano. The nature of the agricultural areas of these two major parks, one extending along the banks of the river Ticino and the other whose agricultural area responds to the structure of the irrigation network, allow an articulated ecological network system aimed at maintaining and increasing the biodiversity within the agricultural fabric and between some of the most important historical and architectural elements of the history of the Lombard plain, that is the abbey system. Some of the typical elements of this agricultural area can be found within this scenario, forming



typical portions of the ecological network including: the river axes (primary corridors), ditches and cavities (secondary corridors), water meadows, springs, wetlands, wooded and buffer areas near to historical complexes or floodplains typical of these territories (stepping stones). Nodal points include water meadows, meadows flooded throughout the year that, thanks to an ingenious cultivation technique invented by the Cistercian monks around 1100, produce fresh hay all year round. This particular type of field, maintained by farmers, has a very high biodiversity value, comparable to that of wetlands, and therefore if appropriately linked to the major natural sites on the park's territory by hedgerows, creates a real network suitable to maintain biodiversity, as well as interfering with the fragmentation of agricultural areas



Parco Nord Milano: funds amounting to € 409,000.00. This intervention includes creating a surface water system (canals and lakes) and an ecological link, using the waters of the Villoresi canal, between the Parco Nord Milano and Parco Grugnotorto-Villoresi. The planned project work will strengthen and increase the water supply within the park. The canals and lakes built as a result of this project will open up a true ecological corridor supported by the Villoresi canal enabling amphibian fauna and fish to move from the “open system” of the Villoresi canal (connecting the Adda and Ticino rivers) to the “closed” one of the Park. In fact, the water element is of fundamental importance in increasing the biodiversity of the Parco Nord Milano, enclosed as it is by roads and buildings; in fact, amphibian species (such as the *Crested newt*), indicator of the good quality of the water and habitat, have already returned to other areas of the Park, thanks to water from the Villoresi canal.

Moreover, building lakes and canals that have a perfectly natural configuration will create an environment suitable for birds, in support of the Regional Ecological Network.

