

# **Restoring the web of life – Ecological networks for more biodiversity in the Alps**

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In response to decreasing biodiversity and phenomena such as climate change, a transnational approach aimed at creating an Alps-wide ecological network has been developed during the last few years in the Alps. It is promoted in particular by three initiatives: Ecological Continuum Initiative, ECONNECT project and Platform Ecological Network of the Alpine Convention. This Alps-wide approach underlines the importance of both an international framework and the need to extend connectivity activities to other sectors than nature protection. In 2007, four Alps wide institutions, ALPARC (Alpine Network of Protected Areas), CIPRA (International Commission for the Protection of the Alps), ISCAR (International Scientific Committee on Research in the Alps) and WWF (with its alpine programme), launched the “Ecological Continuum Initiative”, its aim being to improve ecological connectivity in the Alps. Unlike the national approaches, the cross-border approach developed by these organisations is based on a new vision of protecting the natural environment of the Alpine massif as a whole, from France to Slovenia. The Initiative is financed by a Swiss Foundation. Launched in September 2008 and financed through the European Union’s Alpine Space Programme, the three-year ECONNECT project – with its motto “Restoring the web of life” – is designed to promote model network implementation in seven pilot regions. The pilot regions are working to show how networking can be improved in the specific case at the local level. To promote cross-border working in the development of ecological networks, the Ecological Network platform was established in the framework of the Alpine Convention in 2007. This platform brings together the relevant authorities in the countries of the Alps, the Alpine Convention observers and other actors from administrative bodies, the research community and the regions of the Alps. It encourages a political dialogue with the objective of generating political support for networking initiatives in the Alps.