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ABOUT THE PROJECT

The newly launched Interreg Mediterranean project, cofounded by European Regional Development Fund and coordinated by Veneto Region, addresses the issue of wetlands in Europe, which are vulnerable interconnected environments, hugely contributing to biodiversity. Their protection intertwines scientific-environmental aspects and governance concerns.

WETNET tackles the issue of implementing a multilevel governance for MED wetlands in order to achieve overall and network effects on wetlands ecosystems as well as on connected local systems. By defining common priorities for MED wetlands conservation, WETNET builds a common territorial strategy for their integrated management. Building on

previous EU experiences (River Contracts), WETNET seeks to test and transfer 'Wetlands Contracts', acting through broad participatory processes where users, private and public entities are committed in mainstreaming wetlands preservation into their ordinary activities. To these aims, the project will also increase the knowledge on River Contracts effectiveness and strengthen existing transnational networks for sharing and disseminating information and good practices on wetlands' preservation. The project partnership involves all authorities and typology of stake-holders operating in target field. It will allow WETNET to meet the Wetlands needs at a broad scale, ensuring the transferability of its results to other EU countries.

PHOTO 1 ►
ODIEL MARSHES (SPAIN)



WHAT'S GOING ON?

One of the first results of the Wetnet project is the awareness that the issues highlighted during the partners meetings are largely the same.

In the different pilot areas selected similar actors and objectives have been identified as well as the same difficulty in reconciling the protection needs of protected areas with those of valorization, development and maintenance of economic activities.

These problems, as well as the urgent necessity to solve explicit or latent conflicts between the needs of humans and the protection of the environment, increasingly reinforce the conviction that the Wetland Contract can be the right tool to try to bring together and harmonize the various interests and needs of all local communities and socio - economic actors.

The most interesting disciplinary challenge is to clarify and explain what are the ecosystem services that wetlands provide to the environment and the community, and what is their real value in economic terms as well.

This is in fact one of the main arguments to convince all the different actors that their contribution is really important to achieving viable and sustainable goals through pragmatic actions.

All project partners are involved in trying to incorporate the contents that were currently underdeveloped in the River Contract experiences, using skills and expertise in the partnership so that they can provide a useful tool that can be used concretely throughout the wetlands of the Mediterranean countries.

I wish all the project partners a good job in the coming months that will be very challenging. (LP)

CLAUDIO PERIN

LEAD PARTNER

Veneto Region

CONTACT PERSON

Claudio Perin, Regione del Veneto.

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DURATION

10/2016/04-2019 (30 MONTHS)

TOTAL BUDGET

2,252 M €

EDRF CONTRIBUTION

1,914 M €

INTRODUCING THE PARTNERS

The partners who are participating in the Wetnet Project are:

PARTNERSHIP

Veneto Region	Veneto	Italy
Province of Vercelli	Piemonte	Italy
ZRZ SAZU - Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts	Zahodna Slovenija	Slovenia
FAMP - Andalusian Federation of Towns and Provinces	Andalucía	Spain
SEOBirdLife - Spanish Ornithological Society	Comunidad de Valencia	Spain
CIRF - Italian Center for River Restoration	Veneto	Italy
SARGA - GOVERNMENT OF ARAGON	Aragón	Spain
RCDI - Development and Innovation Network	Alentejo	Portugal
Gozo Development Agency - Gozo Regional Committee	Malta	Malta
Tour du Valat	Provence-Alpes- Côte d'Azur	France

PARTNERSHIP ASSOCIATED

Wetlands International-European Association	Gelderland	Netherlands
The Ljubljana barje Nature Park	Zahodna Slovenija	Slovenia





REGIONE DEL VENETO

LP1. VR-VENETO REGION

Veneto Region

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<https://www.regione.veneto.it/web/guest/home>

<https://www.regione.veneto.it/web/ambiente-e-territorio>

The Territorial Planning Department of the Veneto Region is responsible for landscape, urban, spatial and territorial planning policies and for their regulatory and disciplinary apparatus, as well as for the definition and the implementation of the Regional Landscape Plan and the Regional Territorial Coordination Plan. Since 2012 it coordinates the "Regional Landscape Observatory" whose objectives are the protection, valorization and management of cultural and natural heritage in order to recognize, protect and recover its cultural and natural values. The Observatory is responsible for integrating landscape protection into spatial planning and into sectorial policies that may have a direct or indirect effect on the landscape management.

In the past programming periods the Territorial Planning Department implemented fourteen EU-funded projects (CONSPACE, ALPTER, DIVAS, ALPHOUSE, SUSPLAN, PAYS.MED.URBAN, ALPBC, CABEE, RURBANCE, NATREG, APICE, UHI, 2B PARKS, GIS4EU) mainly on the theme of environmental sustainability and the protection of the landscape, out of which 3 as LP (the Alpine Space project AlpTER, the IPA Adriatic project DIVAAs and the MED project 2B PARKS) and many others as WP leader.

Some of the above mentioned projects were related to the topics of WETNET, in particular the MED Project 2B PARKS. In the current programming period the Department is also involved in the Alpine Space project "CESBA Alps".

PP1. Prov. VC- PROVINCE OF VERCELLI

Province of Vercelli

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The province of Vercelli has expertise in the area of provincial planning. The departments engaged in the project are the "Governance and Environmental Areas" (Area Territorio e Area Ambiente) which have responsibility in the fields of environment protection, sustainable development, territorial planning. The Governance Area department is competent for the Provincial Coordination Plan that defines the ecological network for the whole territory of the province. The Province, through the Provincial Coordination Plan (PTCP) intends to develop a tool for implementing a united vision for the Province sustainable development. The Plan pictures the current use of the territory and provides the criteria, the addresses and the prescriptions to which the stakeholders involved in the territory's transformation will have to conform. The PTCP is a fundamental tool for the protection of the environment, the enhancement of the cultural heritage, the valorization of the production and infrastructural systems. The tool intends to be a participated plan, developed through the involvement of Municipalities, Mountain Communities, Social, Cultural and Environmental Associations operating across the provincial territory. These departments are in charge for the Territorial Information System (SIRA). In this activity area the Cartographic Center of SIRA aims at developing, managing and exchanging environmental data. The administration is also competent in the area of Governance and has experience in EU projects on environmental management, such as the LIFE NATURA-ECORICE project.



PP3. FAMP-ANDALUSIAN FEDERATION OF TOWNS AND PROVINCES

Federación Andaluza de Municipios y Provincias
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The Andalusian Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FAMP) was established on March 16, 1985. FAMP is an association formed by the Local Authorities that voluntarily decide it. It was declared of Public Utility by Ministerial Order of 06/18/2007. At present, a total of 776 City Councils, 8 Provincial Councils, 50 Commonwealths and 11 Autonomous Local Entities are adhered to the Federation.

It has public legal personality and full capacity to act, with no more limitations than those established in the current legal regulations. Its commitment to interinstitutional cooperation leads it to participate in different public bodies created as forums for debate and collaboration at the national, regional and provincial level, and taking part in the elaboration of regional regulation, thus protecting local administration's interests. Another role of FAMP is to propose models for local ordinances, as well as to participate in agreements with public and private organizations for the defense of local governments' interests. Besides this, FAMP advises on the processing of the various administrative files of different agencies through the Andalusian Council of Local Governments.

The aims of the Federation are the promotion and defense of local autonomy, together with the representation and defense of Local Entities' general interests before other public administrations or private organizations, and the provision, directly or through companies or entities, to the Local Corporations of those services that are of interest to them. The Federation is also responsible for the dissemination of local institutions between their citizenship and other public or private institutions, the development and consolidation of European spirit among local citizenship, and the diffusion of "good Governance" and "Open and Innovative Government" approaches, in order to improve local services. ICTs play a key role in FAMP's external outreach, as they provide a common channel of interconnection among municipalities, by offering information as well as enabling spaces for dialogue, shared work, and the access to information of interest.

FAMP is structured around a number of technical departments working on legal issues, continuous training addressed to technical staff and political representatives in local administration, equal policies and networking, and European projects. Its technical board works in the generation of tools and processes contributing to develop new models of sustainable,

smart and integrating local development, favouring the exchange and visibility of good practices at the local level.

Sustainable Growth and Circular Economy are strategical working lines of the Federation. Thanks to the Greens project (<http://greensproject.eu/es/>), a network of stakeholders interested in Green Public Procurement has been created, with more than 30 public and private entities adhered so far. FAMP has a long and solid experience in the implementation of European projects, as it is backed by projects in the frame of EQUAL, INTERREG, Leonardo, HORIZON 2020, ERASMUS+, etc. Networking has a crucial role in the model of good governance that inspires the work of the federation. Several networks such as RECSA (Andalusian Network of Sustainable Cities) RADEL (Andalusian Network of Local Development), RACS (Andalusian Network of Healthy Cities) and RAMLV (Andalusian network of Municipalities free of Violence) have been created to meet their goals from the conviction that by joining efforts and wills, the outcomes will be fruitful.



PP2. ZRC SAZU-RESEARCH CENTRE OF THE SLOVENIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS

Research Centre of Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts
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The Research Centre of Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts (ZRC SAZU) is the leading research institution in the humanities and social sciences in Slovenia and a cutting-edge academic institution in Central, East and Southeast Europe. Its activities are incorporated into global research circles, thanks not only to knowledge, experience, and skills of the researchers and technicians, but also to high-quality and modern technical equipment. In its present form as a network of eighteen institutes with more than 300 researchers and technicians, ZRC SAZU has a multidisciplinary character; in addition to the humanities; its spheres of research also cover the natural and social sciences. Anton Melik Geographical Institute, which is partner in the WETNET project, was founded in 1946 and hosts seven departments and a museum. The institute's staff can provide a wide variety of expertise, ranging from natural, earth, and spatial sciences to social sciences and the humanities and interdisciplinary research across all of these fields. The Department of Environmental Protection, which staff will be mainly involved in the project, is an important player in the field of environmental and nature protection, managing of protected areas, awareness raising, participatory process, stakeholder networking and promoter of changing environmental behaviour. Aforementioned themes have developed in numerous international projects in the last five years, including FP7, LIFE+, Interreg Program and transnational cooperation projects. One of the specific topics developed, regarding the project WETNET is the catchment or watershed approach in managing of coastal wetlands.

PP4. SEO/BirdLife-SPANISH ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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SEO/BirdLife was founded in 1954 with the main aim of preserve wild birds and their habitats. Now, we are working in nature conservation in Spain and through the BirdLife International network, contributing to the preservation of world's biodiversity. As a scientific NGO, we carry out scientific studies to improve the knowledge about wild birds and their habitats, as an essential tool for its conservation. Our work is focused in four main axis: 1. To stop the world's loss of biodiversity, preserving birds in Spain and contributing to its preservation and improvement of conservation status around the world. | 2. To preserve sites and habitats to ensure the natural resources essential for life, keeping a net of important areas for biodiversity, its connectivity and improving its conservation status. | 3. To promote the environmental

sustainability, through raising awareness of nature in the society, promoting economy, production and consumption, and ensuring inversion to conserve ecosystems and their services. | 4 -To empower people to convert society in a power of change mobilizing and strengthening the people, sectorial and politics support, improving the environmental governance and influencing in the global environment improvement. The main objective SEO/BirdLife is preserve biodiversity and ensure a sustainable development. In this sense, coordinating and enhancing the effectiveness of management and planning of protected wetlands in Mediterranean areas are a key issue to tackle biodiversity loss and overall conservation status impoverishment around Mediterranean wetlands. To preserve biodiversity, in SEO/BirdLife we empower people for a sustainable development. Also, as a BirdLife International partner, we can empower existing transnational networks for sharing, gathering and disseminating information and good practices on wetlands governance and preservation, and increase knowledge on the effectiveness of instruments for water systems' integrated management.



PP5.CIRF- ITALIAN CENTER FOR RIVER RESTORATION

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www.cirf.org

Reference organization in Italy on river restoration and sustainable wetland management, linking research with practice, with more than 15 years of experience at national and international levels. Key issues tackled include assessing effects of management alternatives of river systems, conflict resolution, ecosystem services, identification of best practice in sustainable management and restoration. In Italy it orientates the implementation of pertinent policies supporting public authorities and practitioners and through targeted dissemination. As an active member of relevant EU networks (i.e. the European Centre for River Restoration and Wetlands International) it can ensure transnational perspective and background. CIRF aims at: 1.increasing public awareness on river restoration benefits, through educational activities, publications and dialogue with public authorities, professionals and researchers; 2. coordinating, promoting and supporting pilot studies and innovative projects; 3. developing and stimulating the involvement of all subjects interested in the management of water and land providing interaction and coordination with similar international centers.

P8. SARGA-GOVERNMENT OF ARAGON

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Aragones Society of Agri-Environmental Management (SARGA) is a public company of the Government of Aragon specialized in the execution and management of all types of public infrastructure and in agri-environmental service delivery aimed at sustainable development in the Autonomous Region. The company was founded in October 2012 following the merger of two public entities of the Government of Aragon: Sirasa (Aragones Society of Rural Infrastructures) and SODEMASA (Environmental Development Society), specialized in the field of agriculture and environment respectively. Thus, SARGA unifies the management of both services in favour of a greater efficiency and effectiveness. The company offers services in the following activity areas:

a) Cattle services: transport and collection of animal carcasses, animal welfare, agri-food audits. | b) Agricultural services: industrialization and marketing of agricultural products and by-products, administration and management of farms and agricultural centers, prevention and control of pests and plant and animal diseases. | c) Environmental services: protection and management of forests and natural protected areas, comprehensive waste management, management and operation of economic activities related to the environment. | d) Forestry services: forests fire prevention and fire fighting. | e) Infrastructure: execution of infrastructure works at local, provincial or regional level,

preparation of studies, plans, projects and reports and execution of any actions related to the water cycle. Although the main customers of the company are located in the Autonomous Region of Aragon, SARGA also works for other customers outside the Autonomous Region and collaborates on different projects with partners from across the European Union. Thus, the company has developed important R&D+I projects that have allowed them to become a reference at a national and European level on some subjects, such as the fight against the zebra mussel in irrigation installations and manure management. SARGA has an extensive experience in the EFQM model of business excellence, having achieved the stamp EFQM 500+ prior to the merger, turning into the first public company of Autonomous Region scope to achieve it, and the second Aragonese company including the private sector. SARGA is accredited by ENAC as Inspection Entity in different scopes within the agri-food sector and has a highly qualified team that can develop projects with efficiency effectiveness and economic viability criteria.

PP9. RCDI - DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION NETWORK



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Mission and Values: RCDI is a not for profit association, based on a competence network of experts, focusing on sustainable development and innovation. The mission of RCDI is to promote and support sustainable development, covering, in particular, the following main fields: a) Promotion of sustainability and innovation through the elaboration of technical and economic studies and through advice and technical support to public and private organizations; b) Support to the management of natural resources for preservation of biodiversity, through the promotion of awareness raising actions and cooperation projects and initiatives, targeting citizens and institutions; c) Promotion of equal opportunities and non-discrimination, through the development and management of initiatives for a more innovative, sustainable and inclusive society.

Competences: RCDI competences cover a large range of expertise: Environment, management of natural resources and biodiversity; Territorial cohesion; Regional and urban development; Business management for innovation and sustainable growth; Entrepreneurship and SME internationalization; Social cohesion and support to non-discrimination policies.

RCDI partners are highly skilled professionals with relevant work experience in their areas of expertise, including: Coordination of multi-disciplinary projects; Networking experience and talent to involve relevant stakeholders, ranging from policy makers and local/regional authorities to economic operators. Bridging relations between the public administration and the business sector.

PP10. GDA-GOZO DEVELOPMENT AGENCY - GOZO REGIONAL COMMITTEE

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The Gozo Regional Committee (GRC), set up through legislation enacted in 2011, represents the regional authority for Gozo, the second island of the Maltese archipelago. Its main offices are situated in Victoria (Rabat). Gozo suffers from double insularity problems because all commercial and business activities involving imports and exports have to first go through the main island of Malta. The legislation setting up the regional authorities assigned to the Committee the role to

“protect the natural and urban environment of the locality”.

GRC is focusing its efforts on achieving for Gozo the status of “eco-island” by 2020. It is deeply involved in the work of the Gozo Ministry’s EcoGozo directorate, which undertakes various initiatives to promote the ecological dimension of the island. These include the protection and proper management of Gozo’s valleys and water courses as one of its policy priorities. Indeed, GRC intends to play an important role in the management of the natural environment present in the region through its strong network of public and private stakeholders, comprising all 14 Local Councils, the Ministry for Gozo and other key actors in addressing the environmental challenges that the island faces. The Committee plays a pivotal supporting role in policy making, carrying out public consultations within its municipalities to assist the Ministry. It can also draw upon the competences and know-how of its Local Councils, which have been actively involved in the protection of the environment in their respective localities since they were set up more than 20 years ago.



PP11. TDV-TOUR DU VALATARTS

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Created more than 50 years ago by Luc Hoffmann, visionary naturalist and patron, the Tour du Valat has since then developed its research activities for the conservation of Mediterranean wetlands with the constant desire to achieve: “Better understanding for better management”. Convinced that it will only be possible to preserve wetlands if human activities and the protection of the natural heritage can be reconciled, the Tour du Valat has for many years developed research and integrated management programs that promote interchanges between wetland users and scientists and mobilize a community of actors to promote wetland benefits to decision makers.

The Tour du Valat, located in the heart of the Camargue, is a private research organization. It has the legal form of a public-benefit foundation since 1978.

The estate, which includes all the natural habitats representative of the fluviolacustrine zone of the Camargue, extends over an area of 2,700 hectares, of which 1,845 are classified as a Regional Natural Reserve. A certain amount of experimental work is carried out by the Tour du Valat’s researchers on this estate.

The Tour du Valat is also a unique bibliographical resource centre in the Mediterranean, specialized in wetlands ecology. Each year, hundreds of researchers, teachers and students from the Mediterranean basin come and consult the library’s reference materials. The Tour du Valat employs around seventy employees who are involved throughout the Mediterranean basin. The scientific team, comprising around thirty specialists, is dedicated to implementing research programs focusing on wetlands and tests a variety of management methods. The results are communicated via training and the implementation of innovative projects being carried out in collaboration with a wide range of partners.



FIRST PROJECT AND STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING IN SEVILLE (SPAIN)

The First Project and Steering Committee Meeting of the WETNET was held by the Andalusian Federation of Towns and Provinces last 6-8th March 2017 in Sevilla (Spain). This event enabled partners to meet each other personally and marked the first contact of the project's work.

On the one day and half, the partnership held an internal meeting where the aims and activities of the project as well as the time-schedule for the next months were discussed in detail. There were presentations on the an European overlook on Wetland Contract as voluntary tool for inclusive governance. Several

"pilots areas" from each region were presented. Management and financial issues, the dissemination and communication activities were put together.

The second day was the technical visit chosen by the FAMP for the pilot zone: The Odiel Marshes. Doñana Natural Park was visited too as model of Wetlands area really important in Spain. Visitors received information from the Conservation Officer of the Odiel Marsh in the reception center Anastasio Senra.

Next Steering Committee Meeting have been celebrate on Jun 11-14th in Ljubljana (Slovenia) by ZRZ SAZU parter of the project.



◀ PHOTO 2
WETNET PARTNERS GROUP,
SEVILLA (SPAIN)



PHOTO 3 ▶
TECHNICAL VISIT ODIEL
MARSHES, HUELVA (SPAIN)



◀ PHOTO 4
TECHNICAL VISIT TO ODIEL
MARSHES, HUELVA (SPAIN)



In the next WETNET NEWSLETTER

**PILOT AREAS
IN WETNET PROJECT**

**SECOND STEERING COMMITTEE
JUNE 11-14TH (LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA)**

**WHAT ´S
A WETLAND CONTRACT?**