



# INVALIDIS A4.2: SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

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## 1 Introduction

Sustainability is a critical component of any project's work to achieve wide impact and long-term goals and outcomes. Sustainability implies that the project continues to attract interest, influence developments and keep having positive impact on a particular area of interest, even after the completion of all project activities.

This document ("sustainability plan") lays out the INVALIDIS strategy to achieve the long-term sustainability & impact of project results, primarily aiming at the integration of the knowledge consolidated during the project into relevant policies, as well as at securing sufficient political support in partnership territories for the implementation of the envisaged improvements in targeted policy instruments.

The INTERREG Europe Programme requires that any public funded project ensures that the exchange of lessons learnt and research findings will be valorised after the end of the funding period. This has been a common challenge in the past INTERREG Europe calls, and thus needs to be clearly identified. Consequently, a monitoring phase (Phase II) was introduced to allow for the continuation of the exchange of experiences process and support the valorisation & transfer of the lessons learnt within and beyond partnership territories, achieving a multiplying effect. The INVALIDIS project results are primarily expected to be integrated into key policy instruments in partnership territories, and improve the (policy) framework and conditions for addressing a major issue (i.e. biological invasions) threatening biodiversity in Europe. Additionally, the Policy Learning Platforms, also recently introduced by the INTERREG Europe programme, are anticipated to further enhance the valorisation of results after the end of the funding period. INTERREG Europe also places particular emphasis on the sustainability of the project's results after the completion of the monitoring phase (Phase II). For this purpose the sustainability plan presented in the following sections is an essential guide, setting out the basis for the continuation of the project results in the long-run.

This sustainability plan outlines the main actions to be undertaken by the INVALIDIS project's consortium to ensure the sustainability of the project and its outputs during Phase II and after project completion in May 2023. The plan analyses the issues and challenges associated with sustainability strategies, defines the outputs to be sustained as well as the main channels to be used for achieving sustainability goals. The overarching aim is to ensure that project results and

the lessons learnt will be diffused and adopted by key stakeholders, target groups and local communities in partnership territories, even after the end of the funding period and the completion of the project.

In summary, the sustainability plan is structured as follows:

- **Section 1** provides a brief introduction to the sustainability plan.
- **Section 2** describes the purpose of the sustainability plan
- **Section 3** provides the key definitions, namely dissemination, exploitation and sustainability
- **Section 4** focuses on how the sustainability strategy will unfold
- **Section 5** provides guidelines and tools on how to identify relevant stakeholders and create repositories as well as the benefits of stakeholders' participation in the INVALIS project
- **Section 6** presents the project's sustainability action plan.
- **Section 7** proposes a time plan for sustainability activities.
- **Section 8** deals with the plan's expected revisions and updates.

## 2 Purpose of the sustainability plan

The sustainability plan aims to create the framework for sustaining the lessons learnt and the results produced within the INVALIDIS project, assuring that the main outcomes will be supported and embraced by relevant stakeholders and kept up long enough to make a decisive contribution to the fight against biological invasions, not only in partnership territories but across the EU. This is largely dependent on the identification and engagement of key stakeholders, and on building (social) consensus within local communities.

More specifically, INVALIDIS sustainability plan aims to:

- i. Lay out the project's sustainability strategy, addressing key sustainability objectives, dimensions of sustainability strategy, target groups/beneficiaries and engagement methods, sustainability tools and activities.
- ii. Identify stakeholders and secure their engagement in project activities, contributing to the long term sustainability of project results.
- iii. Develop repositories of regional stakeholders to disseminate and mainstream project results.
- iv. Define sustainability channels and tools.
- v. Present the project outputs to be sustained.
- vi. Decide on sustainability actions to be implemented by partners during semesters 7- 10 and the post-project period, highlighting:
  - a) Types of stakeholders to be actively involved in each activity.
  - b) Actions and means to foster the long-term impact of lessons learnt within the project, especially in Phase II.
  - c) Regional, national, European policies that can be positively affected by the lessons learnt during the project concerning the management of biological invasions.
- vii. Describe ways to transfer lessons beyond the partnership.
- viii. Set a time schedule for sustainability activities.
- ix. Keep the sustainability strategy up-to-date.

### 3 Key definitions

This section aims to make the distinction between 3 concepts that describe interactions with stakeholders: a) dissemination, b) sustainability and c) exploitation. Although frequently used interchangeably, these terms refer to different processes. In particular, dissemination refers to the process of making the results of programmes or initiatives available and accessible to end users, relevant target groups and key actors to raise public awareness on a particular topic and initiate changes on a legislative/ policy level. In turn, sustainability refers to the project's capability and capacity to extend its functioning beyond project's duration thus multiplying project's added value. Lastly, exploitation refers to the expansion of results well beyond project's duration. In the context of the INVALIS project, these terms are approached as follows.

#### 1. Dissemination

In the context of EU funded projects, dissemination is the process of making the results of programmes or initiatives available to the end-users, target groups, the key actors, to increase public awareness on important subjects and consequently to influence policy making procedures. Dissemination is key not only to the overall success of the project and the sustainability of its outputs even after the end of the funding period. The process of correctly disseminating results needs to be carefully designed from the beginning of the project's design and implementation period.

#### 2. Exploitation

"Exploitation" is any action that makes use of promising outputs and results already achieved by funded projects, thus increasing their impacts for the benefit of those same regions and/or other regions of the programme area. Exploitation goes beyond the mere duplication of existing outputs and results and ensures that the results of the project remain relevant and beneficial even after the end of the project's duration. To achieve that, project outputs and results shall be tailored to the needs of the regions and target groups that will make further use of it. In simple words, exploitation is the medium to safeguard project's long-term sustainability.

#### 3. Sustainability

Sustainability is the project's capacity to continue its existence and functioning beyond its completion. Sustainability implies the use and exploitation of results after the project end.

Within the scope of the INVALIS project, sustainability means that the project's results will endure in the medium and long term and within different contexts. The durability of the project's results is thus ensured by monitoring results, identifying potential use beyond the project's life, contacting selected stakeholders and gathering opinions on potential use for policy making. Although not all the parts of a project can be sustainable, it is important that the sustainability plan will be planned from the project's initial stage to ensure its maximum efficiency. For INVALIS, sustainability is considered as a principal measure of project's success and is based on the following principles which are of vital importance to the project's quality of specific outputs and more broadly to their sustainability potential. Thus, to ensure that the project will remain sustainable in the future, the following parameters have to be taken into account, discussed thoroughly in section 3 of the present report.

- I. Optimum allocation of financial and non-financial resources**
- II. Tangibility of outcomes**
- III. Development of valuable outcomes worth to be sustained.**



## 4 INVALIS Sustainability Strategy

### 4.1 Sustainability principles

The INVALIS sustainability plan is founded on the following principles.

#### **A. Optimum allocation of resources to achieve the widest possible impact**

According to the INTERREG EUROPE programme, it is essential to deploy resources to projects that are structured to benefit the stakeholders and recipients both in the short and long term thus ensuring their maximum gain from participation. European funding terms and conditions have recently become increasingly stringent and demanding, and this is clearly represented in the approach that the INTERREG Europe programme adopts. More specifically the introduction of the Phase II monitoring process for all projects is such an indication, allowing for better insight into the lessons learnt from the cooperation and the way they are integrated into the policy making process.

#### **B. Tangibility of outcomes**

The process of ensuring the sustainability of INVALIS results and of the lessons learnt, means that the results have explicit added value, are transferable for future actions in related projects and are therefore tangible. Tangibility is therefore ensured by the availability of the results to the target groups and the general public both through the availability of reports on the project website and the dissemination of results at third party events.

#### **C. Development of outcomes worthy of being sustained**

INVALIS aims to promote the implementation of policy instruments and measures to foster the adoption of measures of IAS management. This is achieved through exchange of experiences and interactive learning processes between INVALIS regional authorities and stakeholders that identify, discuss and evaluate measures of prevention, early detection, control and eradication of IAS in natural ecosystems and make policy recommendations. To achieve the desired sustainability outcome, these policy recommendations must be capable of enhancing relevant policy instruments addressed in the project even after the completion of the project.



## 4.2 Sustainability objectives

As mentioned, the project, in line with programme guidelines, aims to achieve the long-term sustainability and impact of project results, so as to make a decisive contribution to the fight against biological invasions. To do so, project's sustainability activities need to accomplish the following objectives.

- **Support** the integration of the knowledge acquired into the action plans to be developed for the improvement of the policy instruments addressed.
- **Secure** sufficient political support in partnership territories to implement the envisioned/suggested improvements in policy instruments.
- **Mainstream** project results into regional, national, EU policies targeting biological invasions, and protection of biodiversity.
- **Mobilise** resources for actions/measures on IAS management in partnership territories, and across the EU.
- **Build** consensus within local communities addressing/mitigating possible conflicts.
- **Raise** public awareness and involve stakeholders in IAS management activities.
- **Support** the wide uptake of project results (e.g. risk assessment framework) by relevant actors and competent authorities.

## 4.3 Potential sustainability barriers and ways to address them

This section present the main barriers that could impede the progress of the INVALIS project. To ensure the sustainability of results, the present section also discusses ways to address these barriers. The most important barriers are:

- **Funding opportunities**
- **Staff allocation and other resources**
- **Organization and Communication**
- **Time management**
- **Interest and motivation**
- **Other potential difficulties**

### **Funding opportunities**

Funding from the INTERREG Europe programme only covers the project's duration starting from June 2018 – May 2023. It is therefore necessary for the existing financial resources to be used efficiently both during the duration of the project but also in the post-project period. Additionally, new funding schemes can be identified during the duration of the INVALIS project as a way to further ensure project's sustainability. Possible post funding opportunities are detailed in 7.1.5.

### **Staff allocation and other resources**

The staff associated with INVALIS specific activities is usually allocated to a different project or activity after the end of INVALIS, meaning that the availability of staff is also limited. Available staff and resources should be strategically and efficiently used. For example, if the partner organisation has a monthly or bimonthly newsletter through which it can continue to disseminate the project's results it could do so without significant additional staff, execution or administrative costs. Likewise, if the partner employs a certain number of staff for the execution of EU funded projects related to efficient management of IAS, it may be possible to integrate or use the results of the INVALIS in the scope of this project. This will ensure not only that the results of the INVALIS project will be sustained both during and after the end of the project.

### **Organisation and Communication**

Communication between partners and key stakeholders can easily be lost and often becomes less frequent after the project's completion. This is often the case since after the end of the funding period, the involved individuals have less and limited time to spend on activities related to the project and its foreseen activities have been completed. It is important to create opportunities in order to continue the established relationships and to further expand them and share new ideas. Organisation and communication are therefore both important to the sustainability of the results.

### **Time management**

Limited time is a major issue since by the end of the project, the staff associated with INVALIS particular activities are no longer available to spend time on associated tasks and are allocated to a different project or have other responsibilities. In the case that the partner does have the capacity to occur a certain number of hours for the INVALIS project, the time available will be in any case limited and activities such as keeping the project's website updated may become a challenge. In the case that there is time for the activities it is best to spend it on the activities

which will provide the highest added value. From the stakeholders' perspective, time issues are also important in the sense that there may be limited possibilities to participate in the dissemination process outside the project's official scope and to contribute further to sustaining the results.

### **Interest and motivation**

It is sometimes the case that the partners and the regional stakeholders may lose interest after the project's completion, particularly in the case that the immediate effects of the project have been achieved on a policy level. This is less likely to be the case if the project has developed high quality outputs, and strong networks, thereby maintaining their interest and motivation to further disseminate project results.

### **Other potential difficulties**

Complex and time consuming administrative and bureaucratic procedures in certain partner countries can also be a significant barrier to the implementation of the sustainability plan. This phenomenon is often more strongly present on a regional and peripheral level in the EU countries.

Overcoming the above obstacles can be a challenging process particularly with the lack of financial resources, however it is essential that potential, negative effects are minimised in order to achieve the maximum results from the project in the long-run.

## 5 Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder groups are essential for the sustainability of INVALIS project's results. More specifically, involving stakeholders in project activities can help to bring different ideas to the table, identify common needs, mitigate conflicts and build a sustainable collaboration during project duration and beyond. Stakeholders are also crucial in the provision of suggestions for the action plans as potential beneficiaries, securing also their contribution in the implementation phase. Lastly, stakeholders can provide valuable input depending on their expertise, area of activities, and participation in different policy learning activities. To achieve project's sustainability, it is necessary to involve all relevant groups of stakeholders in implementing the action plans produced in phase 1, and sustain their willingness to implement the envisaged improvements for each policy instrument beyond the project's duration. The benefits of stakeholders' participation in project (sustainability) activities can be summarised as follows:

- Ensuring that the project plans are beneficial for stakeholders as well as the wider community.
- Developing an environment of trust by allowing the voices of the stakeholders be heard and their issues be known.
- Making the project accountable to the stakeholders thus ensuring its efficiency.
- Enabling the voices of the stakeholders to be heard and increases the level of trust between research and implementation.
- Promoting transparency in the actions of the project and ensures that the project is held accountable for its actions.
- Increasing ownership by stakeholders who feel the project is taking in account their views and motivates them to sponsor the project, which ultimately leads to sustainability.
- Achieving in facilitating support and commitment to the project, and ultimately increases the chances for sustainability after the project has been completed.

### 5.1 Identification of stakeholders

Stakeholder identification is the first and foremost task for the effective stakeholder engagement. This sub-section provides an overview of the types/categories of stakeholders identified in the Application Form as well as the ways it can be further expanded.

The **first level** includes the **local and regional stakeholders** influencing or improving the respective policy instruments addressed by INVALIS and who are expected to contribute towards

the development and implementation of the action plan. The project's sustainability can be ensured by regional stakeholders providing suggestions for the action plans of the partners. The stakeholder group meetings (A2.1) allow for the exchange of ideas, the discussion of existing challenges and the development of a plan which contributes to the development of methods for the sustainability of results. This will significantly contribute to the **Identification of innovative measures and awareness raising on environmental conditions/issues to engage the public to support actions towards improving biodiversity status** that constitutes one of the aims of the INVALIS project. Indicative examples of such stakeholders groups are:

- ✓ Partners' staff participating in the project
- ✓ Partners' staff and associates not directly participating in project activities.

The **second level** includes **national and EU-wide actors** not directly involved in the project but who have the ability to influence decisions on policies that allow the adoption and implementation of measures that can significantly reduce the threat of Invasive Alien Species. For this purpose, it is necessary to develop a separate database of second level stakeholder groups by each partner individually for common use in phase II of the project. For the development of this database, partners can identify new stakeholders using relevant websites, drawing on prior knowledge and / or by establishing communication with the partners' managing authorities. This will also significantly contribute to the **Identification of innovative measures and awareness raising on environmental conditions/issues to engage the public to support actions towards improving biodiversity status** that constitutes one of the aims of the INVALIS project. Indicative examples of such stakeholders groups are:

- ✓ Public authorities responsible for environmental & ecosystems protection
- ✓ Environmental NGOs & agencies

The **third level** involves the **stakeholders groups** and how they develop new skills and expertise in the duration of the project, its monitoring period and the post project period. In turn, this also contributes in developing the ways in which to influence the policy-making process. To this end, it is suggested that the stakeholders will gain from learning in the exchange of experiences and the respective discussions developed in the stakeholder group meetings. This will significantly contribute to the **development of transferable tools & resources to promote benchmarking and policy learning, and transfer knowledge and lessons learnt beyond the partnership** that constitutes the second aim of the INVALIS project. Indicative examples of such groups involve:

- ✓ Biodiversity experts and environmental consultants

The **fourth level** involves other target groups which are related to the wider community and include **businesses, regional and local public administrations, Chambers of Commerce and institutes** related to technological tools, practices and measures for effective prevention, detection, control and eradication of IAS. These groups can gain specialised knowledge from the availability of the sustained results of the project and its output such as the website and the developed guides and methodologies, and reports. This will contribute to increase **regional authorities' capacity to effectively implement policies on prevention, early detection, control and eradication of Invasive Alien Species (IAS) in natural ecosystems by strengthening interregional and cross-border cooperation to address biological invasions with a more coordinated approach** which constitutes the third aim of the INVALIS project. Indicative examples of such groups involve:

- ✓ Chambers of commerce
- ✓ Universities & research centres involved in environmental sustainability management
- ✓ Policy stakeholders outside the partners' regions

## 5.2 Potential benefits for the stakeholders

The external stakeholders, who could potentially benefit from the project outcomes, as well as the benefits that could arise for them, are briefly presented in this subsection. It must be noted that the members of the organisation making up the INVALIS partnership are also included among those who will benefit from INVALIS results; not only through their direct involvement in project activities when running but also through the adoption, valorisation and exploitation of results beyond the project duration at institutional or operational level.

Table 1. Benefits of participation beyond the scope of INVALIS project

Target Group	Benefits
Regional authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate policies and finance to invest in appropriate environmental institutions</li> <li>• Identify strategic requirements of EU objects to promote further integration and cooperation</li> <li>• Identify commonalities and differences between regional policy approaches and ways to address them</li> </ul>
Environmental Agencies and NGOs, Biodiversity experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accomplish their duties</li> <li>• Maximise the number and efficiency of IAS measures</li> <li>• Learn more about programs and initiatives as a means of supporting research activities</li> </ul>
Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create new knowledge</li> <li>• Create popular and useful courses</li> <li>• Maintain reputation</li> <li>• Learn about priorities and strategic directions on the thematic fields in the US/EU</li> </ul>
Industry Associations ( e.g. businesses with a strong dependence on the natural environment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generate business</li> <li>• Make profitable discoveries and maintain commercial advantage</li> <li>• Support civil society organisations and public authorities</li> <li>• Identify opportunities to increase competitiveness by international collaboration</li> </ul>



Target Group	Benefits
Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create new knowledge</li> <li>• Share information with other stakeholders</li> <li>• Influence EU policy</li> <li>• Learn about other projects, initiative, networks, relevant research and industry actors</li> </ul>
General public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A heightened understanding of IAS management and an interest in gaining useful, accurate information</li> <li>• Learn about projects, initiatives and relevant stakeholders</li> <li>• Benefit from implemented activities as it enhances research and industry</li> </ul>

### 5.3 Key stakeholders in the INVALIS project

The Application Form provides a list of (indicative) regional stakeholders for each partner (Table 1), which should ideally be expanded in order to form the above-mentioned repository of stakeholders involved during and after the completion of the project. In addition to these stakeholders, the target groups also include a wider audience such as businesses and the general public who may have a personal interest in related topics.

Table 2. List of project partners and key stakeholders as defined in the Application form

No	Partner	Key Stakeholders
1	 <p><b>ΕΚΠΑΑ</b> ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΚΕΝΤΡΟ ΠΕΡΙΒΑΛΛΟΝΤΟΣ &amp; ΑΕΙΦΟΡΟΥ ΑΝΑΠΤΥΞΗΣ</p> <p>National Centre for Environment and Sustainable Development (NCESD) (EL)</p>	<p><b>MANAGING AUTHORITY (MA) OF THE POLICY INSTRUMENT</b> "Transport infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development"</p> <p><b>PUBLIC AUTHORITIES AND ASSOCIATIONS</b> Ministry of Environment and Energy (YPEKA) Administrative Regions of Greece Local public administrations with environmental departments</p> <p><b>CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE</b> Union of Greek Ship-owners Pan-Hellenic Federation of Tourism Enterprises Chambers of Commerce and Industry</p> <p><b>ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS</b> WWF Greece Mediterranean SOS Network Hellenic Society for the Protection of Environment &amp; Cultural Heritage</p> <p><b>UNIVERSITIES</b> National &amp; Kapodistrian University of Athens – Faculty of Geology and Geo-environment  University of the Aegean – Department of Environment</p>
2	 <p><b>Fondazione Lombardia per l'Ambiente</b> Lombardy Foundation for the Environment (FLA) (IT)</p>	<p><b>MANAGING AUTHORITY (MA) OF THE POLICY INSTRUMENT</b> Lombardy region</p> <p><b>PUBLIC AUTHORITIES</b> Lombardy Region – Directorate General, University, Research and Open Innovation Municipality of Milan</p> <p><b>REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES</b> Institute for Environmental Protection and Research (ISPRA)  Regional Agency for the protection of the Environment (ARPA)</p> <p><b>PROTECTED AREAS</b> Stelvio National Park Ticino Lombardy Park</p> <p><b>UNIVERSITIES</b> Polytechnic University of Milan University of Pavia</p> <p><b>ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS / ASSOCIATIONS</b> WWF Italy Confagricoltura / CIA / Coldiretti</p>

No	Partner	Key Stakeholders
3	 <p>Consejería de Medio Ambiente y Rural, Políticas Agrarias y Territorio</p> <p>Regional Ministry for environment and rural, agricultural policies and territory – Regional Government of Extremadura (EXTREMADURA) (ESP)</p>	<p><b>MANAGING AUTHORITY (MA) OF THE POLICY INSTRUMENT</b> Regional Government of EXTREMADURA</p> <p><b>PUBLIC AUTHORITIES AND ASSOCIATIONS</b> Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment (MAPAMA)</p> <p>General Directorate for Agriculture and Livestock General Directorate for Rural Development</p> <p><b>UNIVERSITIES AND RESEARCH CENTERS</b> Chambers of Commerce of Badajoz Chambers of Commerce of Caceres</p> <p><b>CONFEDERATIONS</b> Guadiana and Tagus Hydrographic Confederations</p>
4	 <p>Corsican Agency of Environment (OEC) (FR)</p>	<p><b>MANAGING AUTHORITY (MA) OF THE POLICY INSTRUMENT</b> Regional Government of Corsica</p> <p><b>PUBLIC AUTHORITIES</b> Ministry for Ecology, Energy, Sustained Development, and Spatial Planning National Office for Hunting and Wildlife (ONCFS)</p> <p><b>REGIONAL AGENCIES</b> The Rhone-Mediterranean and Corsica Water Agency Alien Corsica Network</p> <p><b>UNIVERSITY</b> University of Corsica Pasquale Poli</p> <p><b>CLUSTER ORGANISATIONS / ASSOCIATIONS</b> Corse Association of South Corsica's Young Farmers</p> <p>Federation of Fisheries and Protection of the Aquatic Environment in Corsica</p>
5	 <p>Bucharest-Ilfov Regional Development Agency (ADR-BI) (RO)</p>	<p><b>MANAGING AUTHORITY OF THE POLICY INSTRUMENT</b> Ministry of Regional Development, Public Administration and European Funds</p> <p><b>PUBLIC AUTHORITIES</b> Ilfov County Council Bucharest City Hall</p> <p><b>UNIVERSITIES</b> University of Bucharest – Centre for Environmental Research and Impact Studies</p> <p><b>SECTOR STAKEHOLDERS</b></p>

No	Partner	Key Stakeholders
		Bucharest Energy and Environment Agency Bucharest Chamber of Commerce and Industry
7	 <p><b>ZEMGALE PLANNING REGION</b></p> <p>Zemgale Planning Region( ZPR) (LV)</p>	<p><b>MANAGING AUTHORITY OF THE POLICY INSTRUMENT</b> Ministry Environmental Protection and Regional Development</p> <p><b>PUBLIC AUTHORITIES</b> Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (EPRDM)</p> <p>State Environmental Service (SES) Municipalities in Zemgale region</p> <p><b>UNIVERSITIES / RESEARCH INSTITUTES</b> Latvian University of Agriculture (LUA) Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology (LIAE)</p> <p><b>ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCIES</b> Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Latvian Nature Fund (LNF)</p>

#### 5.4 Guidelines and tools on how to create and expand stakeholders' repositories

It is crucial to ensure that INVALIS project engages with the right stakeholders from the early stages of the project, and no effort is being wasted to communicate to the audiences that are less relevant for the project. In addition, it is important to ensure that the existing repository of stakeholders can be further enriched with new stakeholders identified over time, as the project progresses and more individuals and organisations are reached to introduce the project and disseminate project results.

For these reasons, the INVALIS projects follows a carefully developed methodology for the identification, analysis and mapping for existing and future stakeholders. The methodology allows the INVALIS consortium to ensure that all the contacts gathered have a high potential to get interested and be engaged to project. The steps are as follows:

1. Identification
2. Analysis
3. Mapping

##### 1. Identification

At the identification stage, the brainstorming of all potential stakeholders takes place by taking into account their relevance to the aims of the INVALIS project. Gathered stakeholders at this stage include everyone who might potentially have some interest in INVALIS activities and results (e.g., any technology providers, any stakeholders involved in measures of prevention and IAS management, research institutes etc.). At this stage, all project partners get involved by building an initial list of existing stakeholders and try to expand that list.

## **2. Analysis**

The second guideline involves analysis to better understand stakeholders' relevance and interest to the project and the perspective they offer. Analysis is initially performed by doing a desk research and evaluating stakeholders' recent activities, interest in IAS management and relevant technological tools and measures. The evaluation of stakeholders is conducted keeping in mind the following criteria:

1. Willingness to participate in IAS management activities and interest in IAS management results or actions. The aim is to answer at the following questions: How willing is the stakeholder to engage? How likely is it that the stakeholder will be interested to participate in IAS management activities or use INVALIS results?
2. Potential influence of the stakeholder towards INVALIS project and its results. Here, one needs to ask how much influence the stakeholder has on concrete project tasks, actions, results as well as how they can influence the level of policy making.

## **3. Mapping**

Mapping is the final step that follows stakeholder analysis. In the context of INVALIS project, mapping refers to the stakeholder being added to the list by assigning category of influence/interest (which is determined during the analysis stage), indicating their stakeholder group (explained in the chapter below) and a country where the stakeholder is established or operational. The final result of such mapping is the Stakeholder List, in the form of an excel workbook or a google sheet that partners can update during and after the project's completion to ensure the sustainability of the project's results. It is recommended that each partnership organisation create a regional database of stakeholders, following the above guidelines. This list must be updated every semester.

## 6 Sustainability Action Plan

### 6.1 Key pillars of the INVALIS sustainability strategy

The project's sustainability strategy will be built on 4 pillars to reach and engage stakeholders and achieve the widest possible impact: a) networking, b) maintenance of web resources, c) participation in policy learning platforms, and d) monitoring of action plan implementation.

Figure 1. Dimensions of sustainability



#### 6.1.1 Networking

In order to ensure the sustainability of the project after its completion and guarantee the project's long-term success and influence, it is necessary to create a well-established network of contacts and long-lasting relationships. It is suggested that all partners should continue to identify new, relevant stakeholders after the completion of the project, but also to keep contact with identified stakeholders aiming to widen cooperation and create new opportunities. This will be achieved

through the stakeholders who influence the policy making process and policy recommendations on the policy instruments addressed in INVALIDIS and beyond the project's scope.

**Implementation period:** Phase I, II and post-project period.

#### 6.1.2 Development and maintenance of project website and social media pages

The project's website is hosted on the INTERREG Europe website, as is the case with all other participating projects in the Programme. The INTERREG Europe programme ensures that information about the INVALIDIS project such as news and events update are disseminated widely, thus adding/contributing to the impact of the project's results. This guarantees that the website will be reliable, easily accessible and establishes an efficient interconnection between the project's activities and the programme. Apart from the project website, the INVALIDIS project has developed other digital tools such as social network accounts (Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) and e-newsletters, and integrates them with the predefined structure hosted by the programme. This facilitates and, at the same time, ensures the sustainability of INVALIDIS results, enabling the project's news and events to be available to the public.

**Implementation period:** Phase I, II and post-project period.

#### 6.1.3 Policy Learning Platforms (on the INTERREG Europe Official Website)

The policy learning platform is an important feature of the INTERREG Europe programme which aims to open-up the programme's knowledge in all the four priority axes of the INTERREG Europe programme. It is a space of continuous learning where any organisation dealing with regional development policies in Europe can find solutions and request the exchange of experiences which can promote benchmarking, policy learning and policy briefs for the transfer of knowledge. For INVALIDIS this platform can be particularly useful.

Activity A3 relates to the development of transferable tools and resources to ensure sustainability, which could be exploited in the context of the policy learning platform. More specifically, Activity 3.5 regards participation in policy learning platforms together with participation in EU policy learning events on IAS management to protect biodiversity in Europe organised by the INTERREG platform.

**Implementation period:** Phase I, II and post-project period.



#### 6.1.4 Monitoring of action plan implementation (Phase II)

As previously discussed, the approach of INTERREG Europe is that the exchange of experiences can benefit all partners and the lessons learnt will be further exploited during the years following the project implementation period. During Phase II, partners will monitor the implementation of action plans that will be developed in Phase I.

Phase II will allow for better insight and development into the way the lessons learnt from cooperation are implemented by partners, as the project's results are expected to be integrated into the relevant policy instruments of the participating regions. Phase II is dedicated to monitoring of the action plan for every policy tool that the project addresses; monitoring is carried out by:

- Maintaining contact with the stakeholders involved in implementing the activities in each region.
- Regularly updating the project's website and social media pages (Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter) and providing information on the progress made on the implementation of the different action plans.
- Organising a final high-level political dissemination event and gathering executives and policy makers from the regions and from other relevant institutions.

Consequently, this will set the base for the more efficient implementation of the sustainability plan and the continuation of the activities which will ensure it.

**Implementation period:** Phase II.

#### 6.1.5 3-5 year post-project period

The post-project funding period is important since it will continue to sustain the project results once the major activities have been completed in Phase I. It aims to encourage the continuation of communication between the involved regional stakeholders and the sharing of experiences within the scope of INVALIDIS activities and actions.

As a result, the post-project period aims to further encourage the improvement of policies targeting prevention, early detection, control and eradication of IAS in natural ecosystems. The list of policies/actions that could be improved in the context of the INVALIDIS project is presented in Table 3. This relates to INVALIDIS main activities and the enhancement of the capacity of

authorities to effectively implement policies that promote and support the development of effective measures of IAS management. Thus, the activities and exchange of ideas during this period can potentially lead to the adoption of innovative methods and tools in order to raise awareness on the increasing threat posed by IAS.

In terms of **funding**, an indicative list of potential sources of funding for the post period project are presented below. However, this is only an indicative list and partners in the INVALIS project are invited to explore possible funding opportunities at national level that could be used for sustaining project results.

1. Territorial authorities' own resources, including ERDF funds. These could include regional funds on sustainable environmental development.
2. Public-private partnerships for relevant investments. These could include sponsorships by large environmental, technological institutions or charitable organizations.
3. National/European funding for a successor project on IAS. These could include LIFE, H2020, ERASMUS+ programmes.
4. Private funding such as sponsorships by charitable institutions.
5. Call for tenders on environmental studies, risk mitigation measures, control/eradication activities.

**Implementation period:** post-project period.

## 6.2 Project outcomes and results to be sustained

This subsection presents the project results and outputs that needs to be sustained to maximise the diffusion of lessons learnt beyond the INVALIS consortium in all the involved regions in line with the overall goal of the project. The exploitable results of the INVALIS project are summarised in the following table. Any ongoing or planned initiative targeting to address biological invasions (across the different stages of IAS management) could exploit these assets, to increase its operational efficiency and effectiveness.

Table 4: INVALIS main results/outputs and target groups

<b>Exploitable results and outcomes</b>	<b>Target Groups that may benefit</b>
A1.1 Comparative analysis of existing IAS policies	<b>Public authorities, Environmental NGOs, Biodiversity experts</b>
A1.2 Report on natural ecosystems' vulnerability to IAS	<b>Public authorities, Environmental NGOs, Biodiversity experts</b>
A1.3 Report on territorial authorities' management capacities and needs related to the design and implementation of IAS policy measures	<b>Public authorities, Environmental NGOs, Biodiversity experts</b>
A1.4 Report on good practices and case studies regarding IAS management	<b>Public authorities, Environmental NGOs, Biodiversity experts</b>
A2.1 Lessons learnt from stakeholders meetings	<b>Partners' staff, Biodiversity experts, Environmental NGOs, Industry associations</b>
A3.1 Results from the workshop on the different eradication/control methods for invasive alien species	<b>Universities, Environmental NGOs, companies, Biodiversity experts</b>
A3.2 Results from the Interregional workshop on how to manage emerging conflicts of interest in IAS management practices	<b>Universities, Environmental NGOs, companies, Biodiversity experts</b>
A3.3 Results from the Interregional workshop on how to evaluate territories' vulnerability to invasive alien species	<b>Universities, Research institutes, Environmental NGOs, companies, Biodiversity experts</b>
A3.4 Lessons learnt from two exchange of experience visits to transfer successful policy measures/practices on IAS prevention and management	<b>Universities, Environmental NGOs, Industry associations, Biodiversity experts, partner's staff, regional governments</b>

A3.5 Conclusions from EU level policy learning event on IAS management to protect biodiversity in Europe	<b>Public authorities, Environmental NGOs, Biodiversity experts</b>
A4.1 Risk assessment framework for determining the vulnerability of natural ecosystems	<b>Universities, Environmental NGOs, Research institutes, Industry associations, Biodiversity experts</b>
A5.1 Action plans	<b>Universities, Environmental NGOs, companies, Biodiversity experts, partner's staff, Regional governments, Chambers of commerce</b>

### 6.3 Sustainability channels and activities

The sustainability plan follows certain stages in terms of activities and in regular time periods, in line with the competences and established roles of each INVALIS partner. The following table (Table 5) identifies and outlines the main activities that the partners should undertake to achieve sustainability of project results and outputs.

Table 5: Sustainability Activities

Action	Activity	Updating Frequency/Time plan	Execution method	Partners involved
<b>INVALIS project website</b>	The website will remain publicly available for as long as the JS is able to support its functioning after the completion of the project (phases I and II).	<b>Per semester</b>	The website should be updated by the lead partner also responsible to handle the website for the duration of the project. Partners should visit social networks even after the end of the project and should include the reports and summaries on an online database available for public use and knowledge.	<b>ADR-BI</b>
<b>Social media accounts (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter)</b>	The social media accounts will remain active after phases I and II.	<b>Per semester</b>	The social media accounts will be also kept up-to-date by the lead partner and/or the communication leader on a regular basis.	<b>ADR-BI</b>

<b>Monitoring of the implementation of action-plan</b>	Each partner will monitor the implementation of each action plan during phase II and the post-project period if it is applicable.	<b>Semi-annually</b>	An evaluation of the project results will be carried out by each partner.	<b>All partners</b>
<b>Networking/Lobbying</b>	By expanding the stakeholder base, INVALIDIS policy recommendations and conclusions can be disseminated in 3 <sup>rd</sup> party events even after the project's completion.	<b>Continuous</b>	Regular communications by all partners and participation in 3 <sup>rd</sup> party events.	<b>All partners</b>
<b>Promotion</b>	Dissemination of INVALIDIS results and policies to the general public and possible new target groups and regional stakeholders in the long-run.	<b>Continuous</b>	n/a	<b>All partners</b>
<b>Press Campaign</b>	Each partner will write a press release regarding the final dissemination event in their country and publish news after its implementation.	<b>n/a</b>	The press release will include the conclusions of the events and the result of the project.	<b>All partners</b>

<b>Learning the lessons of the project for future initiatives</b>	Identify & suggest ways of improvement in order to manage the financial and human resources more efficiently in similarly targeted, future projects.	<b>Continuous</b>	In the preparation of new projects.	<b>All partners</b>
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Further to the above, the INVALIS partnership will attempt to ensure the continuity of the transnational & multi-stakeholder dynamic initiated by the project through the following ways, aiming also to attract interest/support and transfer project results beyond the partnership.

- Continue further dissemination (as described above) with newsletters and updates on the social media pages on new and existing stakeholders.
- Develop ideas for future cooperation with existing organizations and private industry initiatives.
- Contact relevant media to request re-appearances to promote awareness on the threat of IAS.
- Contact policy-makers to track relevant changes on policy frameworks.
- Cooperate with public authorities, industry associations to further illustrate the value of the project's results.
- Establish and operate a help desk that provides information for the INVALIS project to all interested parties and dissemination of information through email campaigns.
- Participate in IAS related events. Examples of such events are presented in the table below (Table 4).
- Track academic research on the topic and contact researchers for consultation on future projects.



Table 3. Examples of IAS events

Title of event	Details	Type	More info
<b>Non-marine snails and slugs: from extinction to invasion</b>	Location: Riga, Latvia Date: Aug 25, 2020 to Aug 28, 2020	Conference	<a href="https://www.darzkopibasinstituts.lv/en/canceled-international-scientific-conference-non-marine-snails-and-slugs-from-extinction-to">https://www.darzkopibasinstituts.lv/en/canceled-international-scientific-conference-non-marine-snails-and-slugs-from-extinction-to</a>
<b>International Conference on Biological Invasions</b>	Location: Vodice, Croatia Date: Sep 15, 2020 to Sep 18, 2020	Conference	<a href="http://www.neobiota2020.biol.pmf.hr/">http://www.neobiota2020.biol.pmf.hr/</a>
<b>Western Regional Panel on Aquatic Nuisance Species</b>	Location: Anchorage, Alaska Date: Sep 16, 2020 to Sep 18, 2020	Annual Meeting	<a href="https://westernregionalpanel.org/2020-alaska-annual-meeting/">https://westernregionalpanel.org/2020-alaska-annual-meeting/</a>
<b>Biocontrol Industry Meeting</b>	Location: Basel, Switzerland Date: Oct 19, 2020 to Oct 21, 2020	Meeting	<a href="https://www.abim.ch/home.html">https://www.abim.ch/home.html</a>

## 6.4 Mainstreaming results into IAS related policies

One of the project's sustainability objectives is to integrate the lessons learnt during project implementation into IAS and biodiversity related policies at regional, national and EU level. This section presents the main policies targeting to address the problem of biological invasions in a number of EU Member States and which can be further improved with the results and knowledge acquired within the INVALIS project.

*Table 4. IAS related policies that can benefit from project results*

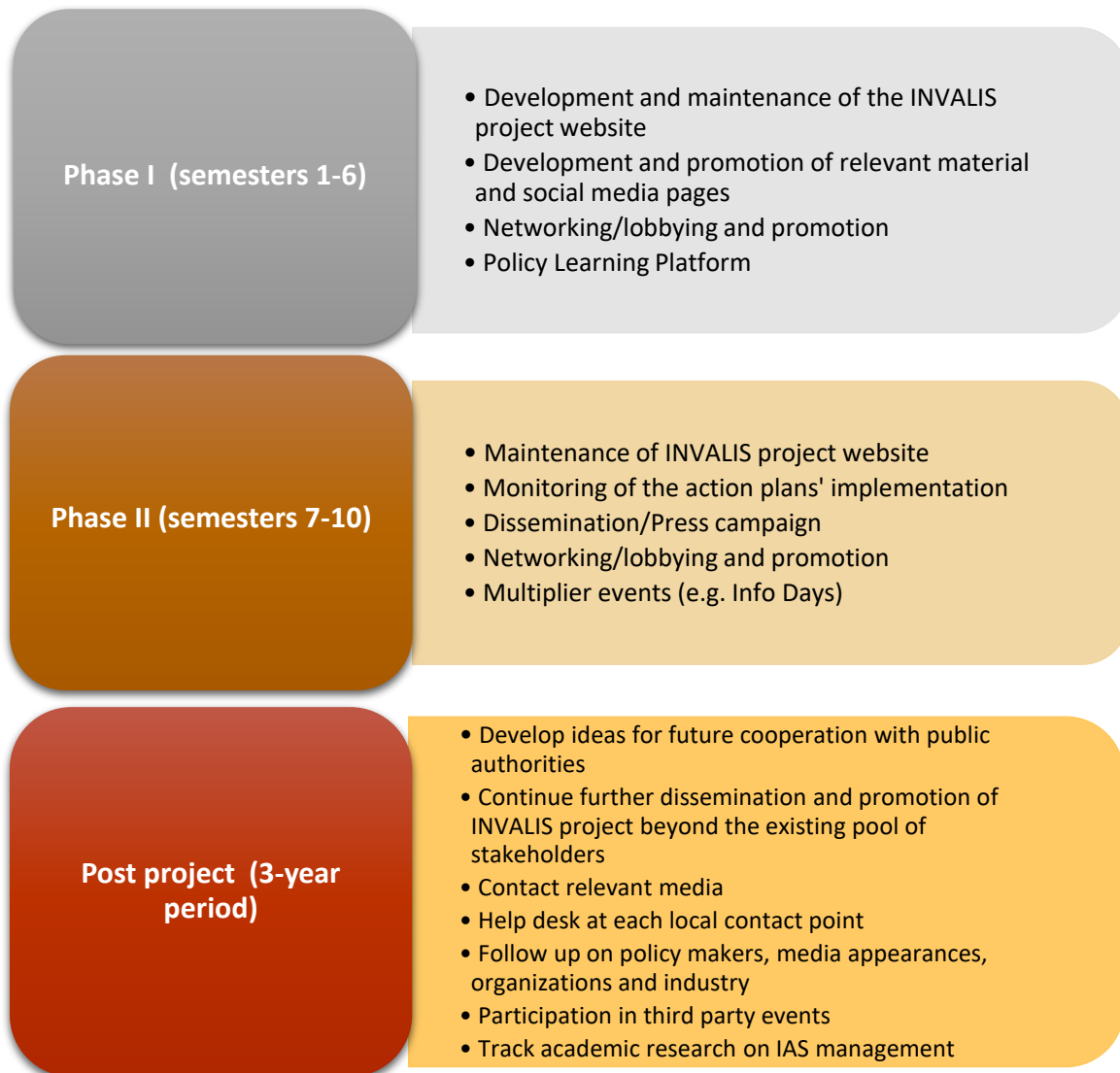
Country/Region	Policy / Regulation
<b>Greece</b>	Article 12 of the main Biodiversity Law in Greece (Law 3937/2011)
<b>Italy</b>	Legislative Decree 230/2017
<b>Spain</b>	Royal Decree 630/2013
<b>Corsica</b>	Two Orders adopted on the 14th of February 2018
<b>Bulgaria</b>	National Regional Development Strategy (2012–2020) National Rural Development Program (2014–2020) National Action Plan for the Conservation of Wetlands in Bulgaria (2013–2022) National Forestry Strategy (2013–2020), National Program for Fishery and Aquaculture (2007–2013) Action Plan, National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Tourism (2009–2013)
<b>Portugal</b>	Law No 11/87
<b>Zemgale Planning Region</b>	Cabinet Regulation No 467 Adopted 30 June 2008 Regulations Regarding Restriction of the Distribution of Invasive Alien Plant Species” Cabinet Regulation No 468 Adopted 30 June 2008 „List of Invasive Alien Plant Species”
<b>Belgium</b>	2020 Biodiversity Strategy
<b>United Kingdom</b>	The Great Britain Invasive Non-native Species Strategy
<b>Slovenia</b>	Strategy for the Management of Non-native Invasive Species
<b>Slovakia</b>	Subsidies in the field of activity of the Ministry of Defence - Act. No. 435/2010

Country/Region	Policy / Regulation
<b><i>Austria</i></b>	Invasive Alien Species Regulation
<b><i>Finland</i></b>	National strategy for invasive alien species (2012)
<b><i>Malta</i></b>	National Strategy for Preventing and Mitigating the Impact of Invasive Alien Species (IAS)
<b><i>Poland</i></b>	The Programme of conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity along with Action Plan for the period 2015-2020
<b><i>Denmark</i></b>	Action 11 'Registration of invasive species in new portal'
<b><i>Ireland</i></b>	National Biodiversity Action Plan, 2017-2021
<b><i>Russia</i></b>	N 456, 2010, Ministry of Agriculture of the Russian Federation
<b><i>Iceland</i></b>	Protection of Nature Act - Act no. 44 of March 22 1999

## 7 Time plan of sustainability activities

The sustainability plan will be implemented throughout the project's duration including phase I phase II and the 3-year post project period. An overview of the implementation strategy can be found in the figure below.

*Figure 2. Overview of the implementation strategy*



## 8 Revisions and updates of the sustainability Plan

Lastly, to ensure that the quality of dissemination tools and activities remains high, INVALIS Activity A4.2 “Implementing the sustainability strategy” consists of three basic steps, namely:

- Provision of data on prospective stakeholders’ repositories to be involved during & post project (Semester 1)
- Development of the INVALIS sustainability plan (Semester 5) and
- Implementation of the sustainability strategy (across Phases and post-project)

Once the sustainability strategy has been defined, the first update of the sustainability plan will be done in Semester 6 according to the application form. Additionally, it is suggested that the list of regional stakeholder groups for each partner could be updated during the first 6 semesters since by participating in INVALIS activities throughout Phase I, partners will have expanded their networks and connections. Therefore, new activities and lessons learnt can also be adopted in the INVALIS sustainability strategy. Finally, the INTERREG Europe programme allows for good ideas discovered during implementation phase I in a specific region to be tested in another region. These actions can also be included in an updated version of the sustainability plan.