

SPARE - Strategic Planning for Alpine River Ecosystems – Integrating protection and development

SPARE - Planification stratégique des écosystèmes des rivières alpines – Intégrer protection et développement

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RÉSUMÉ

Dans le cadre du projet Interreg Alpine Space «SPARE», les partenaires du projet de six pays alpins travaillent ensemble pour faire progresser l'harmonisation des besoins humains avec la protection des écosystèmes aquatiques. Cinq zones pilotes à travers l'espace alpin (Dora Baltea, IT, Drôme, FR, Inn, CH, Soča, SL, Steyr, AT) se sont engagées à gérer leurs rivières et bassins versants de manière intégrative, et à mettre en oeuvre des processus participatifs, à la fois pour améliorer les pratiques de gestion des rivières et pour accroître la sensibilisation et les connaissances sur les services écosystémiques des rivières en bonne santé. Le poster présentera les résultats préliminaires du projet triennal, tels que les expériences acquises dans les cinq zones pilotes, un aperçu pan-alpin des cours d'eau prioritaires ayant des besoins de protection élevés et une plateforme interactive en ligne pour l'échange de connaissances et l'appui aux politiques.

ABSTRACT

Within the framework of the Interreg Alpine Space project "SPARE", project partners from six Alpine countries are working together to advance the harmonization of human use requirements and the protection of Alpine rivers. Five different pilot areas across the Alpine space (Dora Baltea, IT; Drôme, FR; Inn, CH; Soča, SL; Steyr, AT) are committed to integrative river and catchment management, and engaged in participatory processes, to improve existing river management practices and to increase awareness and knowledge about the ecosystem services of healthy rivers. The poster will present preliminary outputs of the three-year project, such as the experiences learnt from the five pilot areas, a pan-Alpine overview of priority rivers with high protection needs and an interactive online platform for knowledge exchange & policy support.

KEYWORDS

Alpine rivers, ecosystem services, integrative river management, participation, policy support

1 THE SPARE PROJECT - STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR ALPINE RIVER ECOSYSTEMS INTEGRATING PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Interreg Alpine Space project « SPARE » lasts from December 2015 to December 2018. Following the approach of viewing Alpine rivers as society's lifelines and the fact that this vulnerable natural capital is under strong pressure, the project aims at contributing to an improved harmonization of human use requirements and protection needs. Nine project partners from six Alpine countries are collaborating to show how strategic approaches for the protection and management of rivers can be improved across administrative and disciplinary borders. In five different pilot areas across the Alpine space (Dora Baltea/Italy, Drôme/France, Inn/Switzerland, Soča/Slovenia, Steyr/Austria) integrative river and catchment management approaches, with a focus on participatory methods for stakeholder involvement, are applied. Thereby, existing river management practices shall be improved.

Alpine rivers provide a wide range of ecosystem services such as clean drinking water for human use and irrigation for agriculture, habitats for manifold organisms, recreation opportunities and energy provision. Based on the understanding that Alpine rivers can only provide these and other services when we keep them intact, the project aims at raising awareness and knowledge of ecosystem services of healthy rivers.

2 PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND MAIN OUTPUTS

The manifold "SPARE" project activities lead to the development of a range of different outputs. This includes a pan-Alpine overview of priority rivers with high protection needs, a collection of river management challenges and best solutions in the Alps, a set of governance tools that shall enable river managers to plan, apply and evaluate integrated and participatory river management approaches, a guidance on innovative river protection and management processes and an interactive platform of knowledge exchange. In the following, some of these activities and outputs are explained in more detail.

2.1 Activities in pilot areas

All pilot case study areas and their actors are committed to integrative river and catchment management and participate in the SPARE project activities. Despite a common project understanding, the five case study areas focus on slightly different aspects:

- In the Drôme catchment (France) the involvement of local inhabitants in the revision of the local water management plan is fostered and expanded in addition to the present waterboard.
- At the Inn in Engadine (Switzerland) participatory processes are applied to balance the use and protection of water resources.
- At Dora Baltea (Italy) a quantitative assessment approach to tackle problems of water abstraction from agriculture and hydropower is developed.
- At the Steyr (Austria) the focus lies on raising awareness of river functions and services and on the derivation of development objectives to ensure sustainable water management.
- At the Soča (Slovenia) the implementation of an integrated river management to establish inter-sectoral cooperation and decision-making is supported.

2.2 Pan-Alpine GIS-Database

GIS-data from the whole Alpine space (borders as defined by the Alpine Convention) was collected on the basis of internet research as well as by contacting national institutions, supported also by all project partners. Requested data included basic data (river network, lakes and land use), classification data (e.g. catchment area, discharge, fish region), protection priority criteria (e.g. ecological status, hydromorphological status, protected areas, floodplain forests) and pressure data (e.g. impoundments, hydropeaking, water abstraction). The goal was an update of a pan-Alpine overview (Muhar et al., 2013) on the most important pressures and the resulting ecological status in a consistent database. Based on the finding that spatial data on certain aspects is not available in some countries, an overview on spatial data deficits and needs in the Alpine space shall be provided. Ecologically sensitive river stretches shall be identified and guidance for river protection priorities shall be given. The pan-Alpine database shall provide a framework to put future projects and decisions in a broader, Alpine wide context and thereby support to avoid short term, single case decisions in river protection and management.

2.3 SPARE-LIVE: Let rIVERs flow – an Action and Policy Support Service (APSS)

The “SPARE” APSS is an interactive knowledge exchange online platform to support decision, action and policy making. It integrates (1) a River Protection and Management Reference Database (RPMR), (2) a Decision and Participation Workflow and (3) a MOOC like online learning service.

- (1) The “River Protection and Management Reference Database” is an online open access database of past and existing use cases, reference solutions and best practices.
- (2) The “Decision and Participation Workflow” is an interactive website tool that shall assist the management and participation in participatory workflows. This includes the selection of participatory tools, managing participants, adaptation and tracking of the participatory process. Participants are able to get informed on their role, their tasks and their progress. The tasks in the processes rely on existing analogue or external web-tools.
- (3) The “Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)” - like online learning service is an e-learning platform, where key project outcomes are prepared as online course. This includes lectures, interviews, charts, videos and other visual material. Target groups are workflow managers and participants of civic participatory processes.

3 CONCLUSIONS

The described project activities and outputs aim to contribute to SPARE’s overall objective: to capitalize and improve strategic river management approaches across different spatial and governance levels of the Alps and increase awareness of functions, services and vulnerability of Alpine river ecosystems for successful protection activities. This is ensured through a broad partner and observer network, comprising of representatives of all administrative levels and well-known NGOs as well as the involvement of experts outside the partnership.

The open and interactive knowledge exchange platform provides synthesized knowledge and experiences for policy and decision-making. The SPARE project activities include the promotion of management and governance strategies for transnational and pan-Alpine application and aim to contribute the transfer from good practices to good policies.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Muhar, S., Schinegger, R., Fleck, S., Schülting, L., Preis, S., Trautwein, C. and Schmutz, S. (2013). Scientific foundations for identifying ecologically sensitive river stretches in the Alpine Arc. Study funded by MAVA and WWF.

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