

LIFE Platform meeting on Invasive Alien Species.
29-30 November 2017
Palazzo Lombardia, Milano, Italy

**Participants' conclusions and recommendations to the
European Commission and EU Member States**

The participants of the 2017 LIFE Platform meeting on Invasive Alien Species express their gratitude to the Region Lombardia and the LIFE project Gestire 2020 for having organised the meeting.

The results of the two days of work reconfirmed that invasive alien species (IAS) are a major driver of biodiversity loss, and that their management is a key measure to ensure concrete, effective and long lasting results in terms of nature conservation.

The participants also convened that LIFE has provided impressive results in terms of successful case studies with a high replicability potential, including in areas addressed by several projects across the years with complimentary actions toward a range of target species. LIFE projects are usually characterised by a strong element of outreach, which may positively foster an improved knowledge and understanding of the EU regulation on IAS and other relevant international treaties. Additionally, LIFE projects have clearly contributed to provide social benefits derived from the implementation of management measures focusing on IAS, including the creation of direct and indirect jobs. Participants do also acknowledge the importance of the LIFE instrument in relation to the development and further implementation of the policy and legislation on IAS at the EU and global level.

In particular, in order to contribute to the implementation of EU Regulation 1143/2014 on IAS, as well as to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) Aichi Target 9, the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020, the Honolulu Challenge, etc. **the participants to the platform meeting agreed** on the following points to be addressed by the European Commission and the EU Member States, as well as all European countries:

- 1) Strengthen LIFE as a specific programme: LIFE has been the main financial tool to deal with the threat posed by IAS in Europe, supporting native species recovery actions along with wider ecosystem restoration programmes which helped to achieve the favourable conservation status of species, habitats and ecosystems. Additionally LIFE has been pivotal to raise awareness on IAS so to change people attitude towards the problem. It is vital to ensure the continuation of the LIFE programme in the future financial programming period, and strengthen the opportunities for funding projects targeting IAS and their pathways in the EU and beyond.

- 2) Given the extent of knowledge gaps on biological invasions and relevant management tools, there is evidence that advances on research and technology would facilitate the LIFE project design and implementation. As LIFE is not a research programme, to fill in current knowledge gaps the forthcoming Framework Programme 9 (FP9) should refocus its support for biodiversity, including IAS, on filling in the knowledge gaps. Synergies among EU financial instruments, which may facilitate the development of tools to efficiently manage IAS, should increase, for example in relation to research and innovation projects funded under Horizon 2020 and under the forthcoming FP9.
- 3) Increase opportunities for sustainability of results achieved by measures on IAS. This could be achieved by promoting opportunities for integration of financial programmes and resources, i.e. by setting rules in the EU structural and investment funds giving priority to actions that will ensure sustainability of LIFE projects. Furthermore, the creation under the LIFE programme of micro-grants, which may allow for the continuation of the activities propaedeutic to the long term sustainability of the after LIFE phase, should be considered.
- 4) Conflicts with other policy and legislation enforced at the local, national and EU level often affect the sound implementation of measures dealing with IAS, including those supported by LIFE and in line with the EU Regulation on IAS. The Commission and Member States should undertake all possible steps to prevent and avoid supporting (even financially) actions contributing to the introduction/spread of species alien in the EU and beyond. Additionally the competent national and European institutions should work to ensure the consistency and harmonisation between different policies and legislations relevant for IAS management.
- 5) Ensure that LIFE projects dealing with IAS include a special focus on prevention and early warning and rapid response actions as key tools for the sound implementation of the EU Regulation on IAS.
- 6) Based on the experience of the network developed as a bottom up initiative in Italy, a dedicated network of LIFE projects focusing on IAS should be promoted at the EU level. This should ensure appropriate information flow and replicability of project results and experiences on IAS management, including ways to involve stakeholders at all scales.