



ACTION PLAN 2021-2023

INVALIS - Protecting European Biodiversity from Invasive Alien Species



Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency

Athens, Greece, August 2021

AUTHORS:

Orfeas Roussos, Project Manager

Christina Kapetanopoulou, Project Communication Manager

Dimitra Petza, Project Coordinator

CONTENT

| | |
|---|-----------|
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS | 4 |
| PART I – GENERAL INFORMATION | 5 |
| PART II – POLICY CONTEXT | 6 |
| <i>The Action Plan aims to impact:.....</i> | <i>6</i> |
| <i>Names of the policy instruments addressed</i> | <i>6</i> |
| <i>Further details on the policy context.....</i> | <i>6</i> |
| PART III – DETAILS OF THE ACTION ENVISAGED | 8 |
| 1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION: THE PROJECT | 8 |
| 2. CURRENT STATUS IN GREECE – STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY..... | 9 |
| <i>State of play at the beginning of the project (2018)</i> | <i>9</i> |
| <i>Developments since then</i> | <i>10</i> |
| <i>Conclusions.....</i> | <i>11</i> |
| 3. ACTION PLAN 2021-2023: DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIONS | 12 |
| <i>Action Plan Objective</i> | <i>12</i> |
| <i>Action 1 – Project: Education & Raising Awareness on IAS</i> | <i>13</i> |
| <i>Action 2 - Web Portal on IAS</i> | <i>17</i> |
| <i>Action 3 –IAS Management Working Group.....</i> | <i>20</i> |
| 4. MONITORING PLAN | 23 |

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-------|---|
| EU | European Union |
| IAS | Invasive Alien Species |
| JMD | Joint Ministerial Decision |
| MoEE | Ministry of Environment and Energy |
| NECCA | Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| PP | Project Partner |



Natural
Environment
and Climate
Change Agency
N.E.C.C.A.



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund



PART I – GENERAL INFORMATION

| | |
|--|--|
| Project: | INVALIDIS: Protecting European Biodiversity from Invasive Alien Species |
| Partner organisation: | Natural Environment and Climate Change Agency (NECCA) |
| Other partner organisations involved (if relevant): | - |
| Country | Greece |
| NUTS2 region: | Attiki |
| Contact person of partner organisation: | Dimitra Petza |
| Email address: | d.petza@prv.ypeka.gr |
| Phone number | +30 210 8089271 |



PART II – POLICY CONTEXT

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- ☒ Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- ☐ European Territorial Cooperation programme
- ☐ Other regional development policy instrument

Names of the policy instruments addressed

1. Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development Operational Programme 2014-2020
2. Environment, Energy and Climate Change Operational Programme 2021-2027
3. Regulation (EU) no. 1143/2014

Further details on the policy context

In Greece, with the exception of certain interest groups (such as environmental agencies, NGOs, universities and research institutes), there is a limited awareness and understanding of the threats posed by IAS and the actions required for their prevention and control. Additional measures need to be taken to support the implementation of the EU Regulation 1143/2014.

The **Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development Operational Programme 2014-2020** includes 16 priority axes. Priority axis 12 supports the implementation of EU environmental policy on maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem services.

The challenges associated with biological invasions are addressed under:

- Specific Objective 6: Preserving and protecting the environment & promoting resource efficiency
- Investment Priority 6d: Protection and restoration of biodiversity and soil, and promotion of ecosystem services, among others through NATURA 2000 network, and green infrastructures
- Action 6 – Management measures for mitigating the impacts of invasive alien species

As a part of implementing Action 6, a project on drafting a list of IAS and organizing a methodology for their risk assessment was already launched by the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MoEE) in February 2021. The outcomes of this project are expected to cover much of the necessary improvements of the territorial situation, as these were defined in the INVALIDIS Application Form.

However, in order for it to be effective in improving IAS management, it has to be accompanied with other actions. This is the objective of the INVALIDIS Action Plan.

Since the current programming period is approaching its end and the remaining available funds are restricted, the INVALIDIS Action Plan also aims at influencing the new programming period. The Environment, Energy and Climate Change Operational Programme 2021-2027 is currently being drafted. In the latest draft (April 2021), the challenges associated with biological invasions are addressed under:

- Priority axis 6: Protection of biodiversity
- Specific Objective vii: Enhancement of biodiversity, green infrastructures in urban environment and pollution reduction
- Action 8.9. Addressing the impacts of invasive alien species, focusing on the marine environment and on species/habitat types of Community interest

The 2nd round of public consultation of the programme was closed on 15.05.2021. The INVALIDIS project team has participated in the public consultation, trying to influence the programme in the direction described in the Action Plan.

PART III – DETAILS OF THE ACTION ENVISAGED

1. General Introduction: the project

INVALIDIS is submitted under priority axis 4 "Environment and resource efficiency", specific objective 4.1 "Improve the implementation of regional development policies [...] in the field of the protection and development of natural and cultural heritage". The **objective** of the project is to improve policies for protecting biodiversity from Invasive Alien Species (IAS), by bringing together 7 partners from 7 countries and supporting policy measures for prevention, early detection, and control of IAS in their respective territories. Biological invasions are considered to be one of the greatest threats to the biodiversity and natural ecosystems. IAS can act as vectors for new diseases, cause native species' extinction, change ecosystem processes, and reduce the value of land and water for human activities.

INVALIDIS is expected to enable the participating territorial authorities to address common challenges associated with biological invasions such as:

- a) knowledge gaps in ecosystems' vulnerability to biological invasions and species' distribution,
- b) lack of awareness about IAS environmental and socioeconomic risks,
- c) low level of cooperation between public authorities and key stakeholders for the implementation of IAS management measures, and
- d) conflicts of interests.

The **duration** of the project is 5 years and it is divided into two phases:

- **Phase 1** (June 2018 - May 2021) consisted of a process of learning through exchange of experiences between partners, leading to the drafting of regional Action Plans (APs) and accompanied by actions of dissemination and communication.
- **Phase 2** (June 2021 - May 2023) focused on monitoring the implementation of the Action Plans.

Information about the project can be found in the following web pages:

- Comprehensive website for the project: <https://www.interregeurope.eu/invalidis/>
- Website for the project in Greece: <https://ekpa.ypeka.gr/en/nature-biodiversity/interreg-europe-invalidis-protecting-european-biodiversity-from-invasive-alien-species-pgi05271-invalidis-2/>

The territories of the INVALIDIS partners are characterized by different paces and conditions concerning the protection of natural ecosystems from IAS. Interregional cooperation was expected to allow exchange of experiences on efficient eradication/control methods, management of emerging conflicts of interests and engaging local communities in the management process, based on regional specificities and challenges. The overall objective is to support INVALIDIS partners in transferring the lessons learnt into regional policies and Action Plans.

The learning process of the INVALIDIS project consists of the following activities of interregional exchange of experience:

- 4 common studying activities (baseline studies)



-
- a. Comparative analysis of territorial policies on IAS management (A1.1)
 - b. Identifying the dimensions determining natural ecosystems' vulnerability to IAS (A1.2)
 - c. Mapping territorial authorities' management capacities and needs related to the design and implementation of IAS policy measures (A1.3)
 - d. Identifying good practices and case studies regarding IAS management (A1.4)
 - 3 interregional workshops on IAS management topics:
 - a. Different eradication/control methods for IAS (A3.1)
 - b. Management of emerging conflicts of interest in IAS management practices (A3.2)
 - c. Evaluation of territories' vulnerability to IAS (A3.3)
 - 2 site visits, in Lombardy and Extremadura (A3.4)
 - 1 EU-wide policy learning event (A3.5)

A risk assessment framework for EU public administrations to assess regional ecosystems' vulnerability to IAS (A4.1) was also produced based on the interregional exchange of experience.

Additionally, to the interregional exchange of experience, regional activities in Greece provided an important contribution to the learning process of the INVALIS project. These activities were:

- 6 regional stakeholder meetings (A2.1). In each meeting, representatives from various stakeholders' groups were present, such as public authorities, universities/research institutes, managing bodies of protected areas, environmental NGOs, associations, private companies, press and media, and of course, the managing authority of the policy instrument.
- 1 public dialogue event (A2.2), attended by 47 participants, including representatives from stakeholders' groups, but also citizens interested in the issue of IAS. The event took place following a period of public consultation of the project, by questionnaires.

2. Current Status in Greece – Strategic Development Pathway

State of play at the beginning of the project (2018)

Greek public authorities in 2018 did not yet have a comprehensive picture of the status and distribution of IAS in the country. Nevertheless, there had been adequate research on the occurrence of selected invasive species in the Greek territory, providing useful insights into the current state and conditions of alien species' invasion.

In early 2014, MoEE published the [National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan](#), setting specific objectives for the prevention, early detection and control of the introduction and spread of invasive species in natural ecosystems. However, the Ministry acknowledged that there had not been enough progress in implementing the EU policy on IAS. The territorial situation left a lot to be improved, such as by:

- developing a robust **institutional framework** for detecting, preventing entry, controlling, or eradicating IAS,
- achieving a **better understanding** of the pathways and the causes of the introduction as well as the impact of such introductions on biodiversity and economy,

- developing a **comprehensive inventory of IAS** observed in natural ecosystems and classify them based on their frequency, spatial distribution and potential damage to biodiversity, economy and health, and,
- raising **public awareness** about the threats presented by IAS.

Developments since then

During Phase 1 of the INVALIS project (2018-2021), there were significant developments in the framework for IAS management in Greece. The main achievement is the **Draft Joint Ministerial Decision (JMD)** for implementing the Regulation (EU) 1143/2014. The public consultation of the JMD has been completed in 22.03.2021 and its final version is expected to be signed within the forthcoming period. The INVALIS project has contributed to the public consultation of the JMD through the distribution of the Draft among its stakeholders and other interested parties in Greece, and also through the organization of the 5th Regional Stakeholders' Meeting, which was focused on the JMD Draft.

In February 2021, MoEE has also launched a **project on drafting a national list of IAS and organizing a methodology for their risk assessment** (see also p. 4 of this document). The outcomes of this project are expected to cover much of the necessary improvements in the territorial situation. The project is integrated in the Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development Operational Programme 2014-2020, under Investment Priority 6d: *Protection and restoration of biodiversity, and promotion of ecosystem services through NATURA 2000 network and green infrastructures*, which is also the target of the INVALIS project.

In particular, the expected deliverables of the project (to be completed by August 2022) are:

1. Literature review with the aim of compiling an inventory of IAS in Greece, and creation of a database, in which also pathways of introduction for each species will be recorded.
2. Drafting a national list of IAS (of member state concern).
3. Risk assessment for each species, according to Article 5 of the Regulation (EU) No. 1143/2014. Ranking of invasive species and proposal of management measures for high-risk species.
4. Depiction of the geographical distribution of IAS in Greece.
5. Literature review with the aim of recording the species, which can potentially enter Greece, and identification of possible pathways of introduction.
6. Development of indicators (tendencies) per way and time of introduction of species in terrestrial and aquatic (freshwater and marine) environments.
7. Proposal for the establishment of necessary administrative structures for implementing the Regulation (EU) No. 1143/2014, and proposal for the adoption of required regulatory acts.
8. Presentation of project outcomes based on the technical format of reporting procedure according to Article 24 of the Regulation (EU) No. 1143/2014.
9. Proposal for an IAS surveillance system.

The representatives of the contracting authority of this project (MoEE) as well as of the tenderer (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens) belong to the INVALIS regional stakeholders' group and have attended the regional stakeholder meetings. Thus, they have been informed about the interregional exchange of experience and its outcomes have been taken into consideration.

Work on IAS management in Greece is ongoing through **several other projects and research programmes**. These are, among others: [LIFE ATIAS](#), [Alien Plants in Greece](#), [ALAS](#), [INVASION](#), [4ALIEN](#).

Also, it must be noted that significant progress has been achieved in **networking between stakeholders in IAS management through the INVALIS project**. A total of 103 participants (not including NECCA employees) have attended the regional stakeholders' meetings, including representatives from:

- Public authorities: Ministry of Environment and Energy, Ministry of Rural Development and Food, Managing Authority of Operational Programme "Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development", Management Bodies of Protected Areas
- Universities: National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Agricultural University of Athens, University of Patras, University of the Aegean, University of Crete
- Research Centres: Hellenic Centre for Marine Research, Hellenic Agricultural Organization-DEMETER, Benaki Phytopathological Institute, Goulandris Museum of Natural History
- NGOs: iSea, The Green Tank, Hellenic Ornithological Society, Archipelagos Institute of Marine Conservation, Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature, WWF Greece
- Associations: Hunting Federation of Macedonia & Thrace, Panhellenic Union of Recreational Fishers
- Environmental web sites: Green Agenda
- Private companies: HOMEOTECH Co.

There has also been a limited number of **actions for raising public awareness on IAS**. Projects such as "Is it alien to you? Share it" and "Eat it before it eats them" of the NGO iSea or the ELNAIS network, have helped to raise awareness especially on marine IAS. INVALIS has also contributed to this goal through the public consultation of the project and the public dialogue event, the organization of 4 information days in Greek universities (especially aiming at increasing awareness among future scientists and members of public authorities, who will have the competence to deal with this issue), media appearances (in radio, newspapers, web sites).

Conclusions

There has been significant progress in setting a framework for IAS management since 2018. The new developments are expected to have an important contribution in improving the territorial situation. The Draft JMD specifically addresses the issue of institutional framework for detecting, preventing entry, controlling or eradicating IAS. The project launched by MoEE will contribute to the better understanding of the pathways and the causes of the introduction, to forming a comprehensive inventory of IAS observed in natural ecosystems and to their classification based on their frequency, spatial distribution and potential damage to biodiversity, economy and health. It will additionally support the improvement of institutional framework, through the proposals for the establishment of

necessary administrative structures, required regulatory acts and a surveillance system, and also through the proposal of management measures for high-risk species. It is thus already a significant improvement of the policy instrument, covering much of the reasons of improvement, as these were defined in the Application Form of the INVALIS project (p. 12).

However, there are still areas, in which action is required. These developments do not adequately address one of the reasons for improvement of the policy instrument, as defined in the Application Form: in Greece, with the exception of certain interest groups (e.g., environmental agencies), there is a limited awareness and understanding of the threats posed by IAS and the actions required for their prevention and control. It is also a common conclusion from both the interregional and the regional exchange of experience, that other measures, be it legislative or actual management measures, cannot be actually effective, if there is not an increased awareness on the IAS issue. Therefore, action for raising public awareness is necessary in order to achieve a real improvement of the policy instrument. It must be noted, that the effectivity of the JMD will depend not only on the increased awareness among the general public, which was clearly identified as a necessity through the interregional exchange of experience (especially from partners, which have already developed a legislative framework on IAS), but also on a better understanding of the problem through the local, regional and national authorities, which will be responsible for implementing the JMD. Lack of awareness of the problems associated with IAS by these authorities was demonstrated through various examples during the regional stakeholder meetings in Greece.

It is also important to maintain and develop the networking among IAS stakeholders, which was recognized by the stakeholders themselves, as one of the significant achievements of the INVALIS project in Greece. The regional stakeholder meetings demonstrated that there is a big amount of data and knowledge, which policy makers can make use of. However, this knowledge is not always available for everybody involved in IAS management. Improving the situation in this field will allow a better evaluation and monitoring for ongoing projects and policy measures, as well as a better allocation of funding for new projects.

3. Action Plan 2021-2023: Description of the actions

Action Plan Objective

The objective of this Action Plan is to detail how the lessons learned from the partners' cooperation and the activities in Phase 1 can inform and develop future actions, so that the policy instrument(s) can be improved. The separate actions are:

1. Launch a **new project on education and raising public awareness** on the issue of IAS.
2. Create a **web portal on IAS**.
3. Establish a **regional IAS management network**.

Actions 1 and 2 will lead to the improvement of the policy instrument(s) through the implementation of new projects. although Action 2 is also expected to contribute to an improved governance of the policy instrument(s), by supporting communication and networking between decision-makers and stakeholders. Action 3 aims at improving the governance of the Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 in Greece.



Action 1 – Project: Education & Raising Awareness on IAS

Background

The importance of raising awareness on the problems related to IAS was among the key findings of the interregional workshops, in regards both to the monitoring/control/eradication of IAS (A3.1) as well as to minimizing the conflicts of interests arising between various stakeholders in IAS management (A3.2). One of the guidelines produced in the 1st Interregional Workshop was to communicate around the phenomenon of IAS through intervention with schools, exhibitions, scientific conferences, information brochures.

It was also one of the common conclusions arising from the public dialogue events (A2.2) organized in partners' countries. In the synthesis report (p. 16), it is stated that *"public awareness on IAS was prioritized by all partners as it promotes and encourages efficient IAS management"* and *"it can be a low-cost tool compared to other methods"*. It was also noted that the available scientific knowledge is not communicated to the public in an easy and accessible language, while environmental courses at schools often do not include the IAS issue.

In the Comparative Analysis of Territorial Policies on IAS Management (A1.1), the low public awareness and/or opposition to government intervention was found to be the most important barrier constraining the implementation of policies. Raising awareness on biological invasions at all levels, from policy officers and managers to local communities and the general public, was one of the guidelines for optimizing existing policy instruments. Another guideline was the staff capacity development for all aspects of IAS management, through an adequate training.

Lack of public awareness in Greece was also one of the issues that was often stressed during the regional stakeholder meetings. Raising awareness is necessary not only among the general public, but also among the responsible authorities, as demonstrated through various examples reported by stakeholders. Also, the possible problems which may arise by eradication measures were mentioned: the public opinion is very sensitive in this issue and reactions can be very severe, if there is not a better understanding of the threats posed by IAS and the necessary management measures.

As a conclusion, the legislative initiatives and any other measures in IAS management, must be accompanied by educational and awareness-raising actions. This conclusion is also shared by MoEE, which is responsible for these measures: their success depends on increased awareness of the threats posed by IAS and on an adequate training of staff in the responsible authorities. Among others, if IAS monitoring will be partly based on citizen science (depending on the proposal of the project launched by MoEE), it will not be



| | |
|---------------|--|
| | <p>able to function without an adequate level of knowledge on IAS among the general public.</p> <p>Various actions of raising public awareness on IAS were described during the interregional exchange of experience, providing valuable sources of inspiration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ministry for Ecological Transition and Sustainability - Junta de Extremadura (PP-3) presented in the 1st Interregional Workshop (A3.1) a wide range of actions, targeting not only the general public (communicating the problem of biological invasions in mass media, web portal, preparation of informative material, merchandising) and education sector (e.g. school workshops), but also specific sectors involved in IAS management (pet ownership, fisheries/aquacultures, forestry) and public authorities.• Corsican Agency of Environment (PP-4) presented in the 1st Interregional Workshop the ALIEM project, which helped to raise awareness of citizens, institutions and scientists through brochures, communication campaign or exhibitions, interventions on the radio, with schools or specific meetings with key players in the environment. Also, field trips were organized, as described in the synthesis report for public dialogue events (A2.2).• Lombardy Foundation for the Environment (PP-2) submitted as a Good Practice the creation of an integrated office in the airport of Orio al Serio, operating the control of IAS and actively informing passengers, customs inspectors and all the agents involved, on the problems caused by IAS.• In the EU-wide policy learning event (A3.5), organized by ICETA (PP-6), the LIFE INVASAQUA project was presented, which is implemented jointly by Spain and Portugal, and whose main objective is to raise awareness of the Iberian public and stakeholders involved with the problem of IAS on aquatic ecosystems. This will be achieved by developing courses, training days for key groups (surveillance agents, rivers and estuary users, educators etc.) and a mass media communication campaign for raising awareness on the general public about the threats caused by aquatic IAS. |
| Action | <p>Launching a project of education and raising awareness on IAS, consisting of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Training seminars/workshops on IAS for local and regional authorities, especially the ones responsible for implementing the Regulation (EU) 1143/2014. To a great extent, these authorities are unaware of the IAS problem or at least of the relevant sources of information, which are necessary for them to carry out their competences. Such seminars will lead to their increased capacity in IAS management, allowing a better |



| | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| | <p>local policy implementation and allocation of funding. These seminars/workshops can be held virtually, in order to reach an increased participation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b. Prepare TV and radio spots on IAS. These could be more effective, if they focus on a few easily recognizable IAS, which are significant in Greece. Species used as pets must be prioritized. The threats associated with the presence of IAS must be stressed, as well as the necessity of taking measures for their management. c. Organize exhibitions in country's entry points (ports, airports etc.). The research on the pathways of IAS introduction can be utilized, in order to find the most appropriate places for such exhibitions. d. Carry out education and awareness-raising in schools (e.g., through the development of an e-book for children, which is integrated in the school curriculum). Working with schools can have an effect in creating an environment, in which IAS management measures can be more effective through their understanding from greater sections of the society. e. Organize environmental education events e.g., through field trips in city parks, in which IAS are present. f. Prepare information material for visitors in protected areas, as well as for owners and customers of establishments related to pathways of introduction, e.g., pet shops or plant nurseries. Such information material can also be posted on selected web sites. Besides stressing the threats associated with the IAS and the need of management measures, the information must also include the legally binding management measures against IAS and relevant obligations e.g., by pet owners. <p>In conclusion, Action 1 will lead to the improvement of the policy instrument through the import of a new project to be financed within it, as inspired by interregional cooperation, and also based on the needs defined during the regional stakeholder meetings.</p> |
| <p>Players involved</p> | <p>Greek Biotope/Wetlands Centre (EKBY) had already applied a project on this issue in the past and can be involved in several parts.</p> <p>Universities/research institutes: especially in training courses, preparation of educational material.</p> <p>Managing authorities of protected areas: organization of field trips, distribution of information material.</p> <p>MoEE: will be involved in the training seminars (e.g., selection of authorities related to the implementation of the Regulation (EU) 1143/2014) as well as in the preparation of information material.</p> <p>Ministry of Education: education and awareness-raising in schools</p> |



| | |
|------------------------|---|
| | |
| Timeframe | Semester 7-8 (June- May 2022): Preparation of actions Semester 9-10 (June 2022- May 2023): Implementation of actions, monitor their success, carry out necessary adjustments |
| Costs | €100,000 (estimated) |
| Funding sources | Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development Operational Programme 2014-2020 Environment, Energy and Climate Change Operational Programme 2021-2027 |





| Action 2 - Web Portal on IAS | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Background | <p>The dispersion of the existing knowledge on IAS is an important problem that was identified during the regional stakeholders' meetings in Greece. There is little coordination between different projects and initiatives and even, in some cases, a limited knowledge of each other. It is difficult for a decision-maker to have an overview on ongoing and completed activities related to IAS (projects, scientific publications etc.). This is also an obstacle when it comes to decide which projects on IAS should be prioritized for funding. A web portal encompassing all information relevant on IAS in Greece, including links to specialized initiatives focusing e.g., in marine species or alien plants, is still missing in Greece. This could help not only in raising public awareness on IAS, but also in keeping stakeholders updated on new developments related to IAS management and allowing communication between them.</p> <p>During the activities of interregional exchange of experience, various examples of similar initiatives were described by the INVALIDIS partners, providing sources of inspiration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The INVASEP web portal in Extremadura (presented in the 1st Interregional Workshop (A3.1)): it contains adapted information regarding IAS, teaching and school material, audiovisual area, news, games, warning networks.• The "Invasoras" Platform in Portugal (described in the Good Practice Guide (A1.4)), primarily focused on the alien flora in terrestrial ecosystems. It contains comprehensive profiles of the species considered invasive in Portugal, provides useful tools and information for managers, scientific community members and anyone interested in the topic, and offers learning material for environmental education.• The Agency for the Protection of the Environment (ARPA) has developed a website, which describes the impact of the alien plants. It is described in the comparative analysis of territorial policies (A1.1). |
| Nature of the Action | <p>Create a web portal providing an overview of the status of IAS management and of the existing knowledge on IAS in Greece. The portal can have a section containing general information, with open access for the general public, and a more secure section containing detailed and sensitive information, in which the access is restricted to registered users (individuals and organisations related to IAS management). The portal can be linked to the general Biodiversity Portal planned by NECCA.</p> |



The portal can contain:

- General introduction to the subject of IAS.
- Links to IAS-related projects in Greece (completed/ongoing) and to websites focusing on specific IAS categories (e.g., ELNAIS, Alien Plants in Greece), as well as to international networks (e.g. EASIN, INVASIVESNET) and journals (e.g. BioInvasions Records).
- Educational material e.g., factsheets on IAS, presentations, quiz.
- News related to IAS management (e.g., scientific publications, new developments on the institutional framework, IAS sightings)
- Discussion room for IAS stakeholders, in which various issues on IAS management, as well as ideas for new projects and recommendations for already ongoing projects can be discussed.

The portal will give an overview of the territorial situation, which will be interesting not only for the general public, but also useful for decision-makers. It will allow different stakeholders to get involved in the evaluation, management and monitoring of policy measures and IAS-related projects and provide input, as well as exchanging best practices.

The web portal will also contribute to raising the public awareness on IAS, which is a necessary precondition for all other IAS management measures to be effective, as it was clearly demonstrated both through the interregional and regional exchange of experience (see Action 1). By providing links to existing international or national networks, such as EASIN or ELNAIS, and thus informing users about existing apps and reporting possibilities, it will also support early warning and surveillance. There is also the possibility that it has a more direct contribution in early warning, if users are able to report IAS sightings in the web portal itself.

Steps/sub-actions in implementing this action:

1. Assess the current status (pre-existing websites on IAS).
2. Determine the content of the web portal: available data, information, links to other websites.
3. Define the agents responsible for the management of the portal, as well as the agents providing information.
4. Design and develop the portal and data infrastructure.
5. Collect existing information and feed it to the web portal.
6. Examine the possibilities for communication and information exchange among registered users.
7. Define the mechanisms for the maintenance of the portal, as well as its updating through the flow of new information.



| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| | <p>In conclusion, Action 2 will lead to the improvement of the policy instrument through the import of a new project to be financed within it, as inspired by interregional cooperation. It is also expected to lead to an improvement of the governance of the policy instrument, since monitoring and evaluation of measures can be improved through the enhancement of communication and networking of decision-makers and other stakeholders.</p> |
| Players involved | <p>Universities/research centres, ministries: provide information about ongoing or completed projects, new scientific publications, contribution in educational material</p> <p>Managing Authorities of Protected Areas: provide information about IAS in their areas of responsibility, use educational material</p> <p>Associations of hunters and fishers, both for information input as also for using educational material</p> |
| Timeframe | <p>Semester 7 (June- November 2021): Steps 1-2.</p> <p>Semester 8-9 (December 2021- November 2022): Steps 3-7.</p> <p>Semester 10 (December 2022-May 2023): test the portal, monitor its success, carry out necessary improvements</p> |
| Costs | <p>€50,000 (estimated)</p> |
| Funding sources | <p>Transport Infrastructure, Environment and Sustainable Development Operational Programme 2014-2020</p> <p>Environment, Energy and Climate Change Operational Programme 2021-2027</p> |



Action 3 –IAS Management Working Group

Background

An important gain through the INVALIDIS project in Greece, as stressed by the participants in the regional meetings, was that a place for dialogue among various stakeholders involved in IAS management (researchers, NGOs, public authorities, private companies, hunters' and fishers' associations) was created. The presentation of various projects and practices on IAS led to fertile discussions on necessities in IAS management and acted, among others, as a basis of the development of this Action Plan. It was a recurring request that this process is institutionalized and continued after the end of the project.

The Draft JMD for implementing the Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 includes the provision for a Scientific Advisory Committee, having as its task to support the coordination work of the MoEE and to harmonize policies applied as part of the implementation of the JMD. The Committee will include representatives both from public authorities and the scientific community, whereas it also foreseen that other stakeholders, such as representatives of public or private bodies or NGO members, can also be invited to express their views. A broader network, including all possible IAS stakeholders and meeting regularly, can act supportive to this Committee. It can help in identifying the issues which need to be managed and possible stakeholders that should be invited in the Committee for each issue.

Encouraging cross-departmental collaborations and synergies with local communities was one of the recommendations of the Comparative Analysis of Territorial Policies on IAS Management (A1.1) for improving the policy instruments. Specifically, the guidelines included the implementation of policies to establish surveillance, monitoring and information exchange networks and ensuring the full participation by all stakeholders, including local communities, in the development and implementation of legislation, and also the intensification of the collaboration with equivalent national focal points for relevant instruments and organizations, in order to further develop, advance and implement national and regional IAS strategies and strengthen the responsiveness systems.

Other sources of inspiration from interregional exchange of experience:

- Corsica Alien Network was presented in the 1st Interregional Workshop (A3.1). It integrates various invasive species practitioners, regional and local authorities, research institutes, universities, environmental organisations, divers, professional and citizens' associations, to help meet the need of timely identifying new invasions and acting upon, so as to prevent their establishment, and if this is not possible, at least to mitigate adverse environmental impact.



| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iberian Working Group on Invasive Alien Species, which was developed as a result of the LIFE INVASEP project. |
| Nature of the Action | <p>Use the INVALIDIS stakeholders' group already established during the project and enlarge it by including e.g., professional chambers, local fishers' associations, regional authorities. Organize biannual on-line meetings among the members of this group, who are also going to be registered users in the IAS web portal (Action 2). The subjects of these meetings will be the progress of ongoing projects on IAS, presentation of planned projects, as well as news from the implementation of policy measures from the field. The outcomes of projects and policy measures will be discussed, while at the same time identifying needs for new projects and measures. The participants will be thus involved in the evaluation, management and monitoring of policy measures and IAS-related projects. The organization of such meetings can improve the policy instrument by encouraging cross-departmental collaborations and synergies with local communities, as it was concluded in A1.1 deliverable.</p> <p>The virtual organization of meetings is proposed, in order to have a representation of as many organizations as possible. Many of the bodies represented in the group, such as the management bodies of protected areas, are dispersed around Greece and their physical participation in meetings is not feasible.</p> <p>The establishment of such a group, with its members meeting regularly, will support the exchange of best practices, improve the efficiency of IAS management actions and also contribute in finding solutions to shared problems, acting in combination with Action 2 (web portal). Additionally, based on the conclusions from these meetings, annual workshops focused on specific issues of IAS management can be organized.</p> <p>In conclusion, this action will improve the governance of the Regulation (EU) 1143/2014 in Greece, mainly by acting as a support to the Scientific Advisory Committee, which is foreseen in the Draft Joint Ministerial Decision for implementing the Regulation.</p> |
| Players involved | All INVALIDIS stakeholders (universities/research centres, public authorities, managing bodies of protected areas, environmental NGOs, associations of hunters and fishers). |
| Timeframe | <p>Semester 7 (June 2021-November 2021): Enlargement of the stakeholders' group, first meeting</p> <p>Semester 8-10 (December 2021-May 2023): Necessary adaptations</p> |



Natural
Environment
and Climate
Change Agency
N.E.C.C.A.



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund



INVALIDIS
Interreg Europe

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| | Possible continuation after the end of the project, after evaluating its outcomes. |
| Costs | No costs expected (depending on whether meetings will be held virtually), except staff and organization costs |
| Funding sources | Not relevant |



4. Monitoring plan

In order to ensure the successful implementation of the Action Plan, it is also necessary to design a plan for its monitoring. The monitoring will include the control of the action's progress according to the timeframe described in the previous sections, the evaluation of the results of these actions and the adjustments to the timeframe as well as to the nature of the actions, if this is deemed necessary for achieving the objectives of the Action Plan.

In order to facilitate the monitoring of the Action Plan, the following steps are required:

- Involvement of the regional stakeholders and the managing authority of the policy instrument:
 - Organization of biannual meetings on the progress of the Action Plans
 - Regular communication with the managing authority and with other stakeholders involved in each action, when this is deemed necessary.
- Continuation of the interregional cooperation, by maintaining the communication between the project partners on the following issues:
 - The progress of the implementation of the Action Plan in other partners' regions and identification of the difficulties encountered.
 - Receiving expertise from other regions, especially on measures related to the transfer of particular experiences developed in these regions.
 - Ensure proper project management and an alignment between monitoring of the different Action Plans.
- The definition of measurable indicators demonstrating the progress in the implementation. These indicators can be the following:
 - Number of bodies (e.g., environmental agencies, professional associations) involved in the evaluation and monitoring of projects and policy measures.
 - Number of registered users and visitors in the web portal.
 - Number of participants in the training seminars and environmental education events.



Natural
Environment
and Climate
Change Agency
N.E.C.C.A.



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

INVALIDIS
Interreg Europe

Date: 23.08.2021

Signature: _____

Stamp of the organisation (if available): _____

