

DANUBE BIODIVERSITY CORRIDOR IN BAVARIA

with Deutsche Verband für Landschaftspflege (DVL)

CRITICAL ISSUES

The importance of the Danube and its conservation is crucial in Europe (for biodiversity, habitats, identity and survival), we also highlighted it in our documentary *Habitat*.

Starting from West Germany (where it was born) up to the Black Sea, it embraces 9 States; it is the second largest river (2,860 km) in Europe and is of great biological importance, representing a significant wetland and a rich nature reserve.

The 875 km² catchment area of the Große Laber is located in the hilly area of Lower Bavaria, between the Isar and the Danube, and includes parts of the Hallertau in the west and the Gäuboden in the northeast.

In this selected catchment area of the Bavarian Danube, intensive agricultural management, especially in recent decades, has led to a sharp decline (over 50%) both in water availability and in the diversity of native species (many of which are now at risk of extinction), especially in the wider environs of the three FFH areas located in this zone.

From the first analyses (GIS and other) carried out together with Eurac Research as part of the wider European project, EU Biodiversity Corridors, it appears to be a corridor in need of restoration.

INTERVENTION AREA

This specific project in Germany plans to act in the case study region of Große Laber, characterized by intensive agriculture, high numbers of livestock and increasing tourism. It envisages interventions along 50km of its catchment area, in a zone covering approximately 65 km² (6,500 hectares), includes the Niedermoor südlich Nieder-leierndorf Nature Reserve and would connect two other protected areas.

The other two main protected areas along the course of the river are:

- The nesting area for meadow birds "Labertal bei Langquaid" (Störche Im Labertal), is a nature reserve considered among the priority areas for the support of meadow birds such as the lapwing and the Bavarian curlew.
- The lower course of the Laber, in the districts of Kelheim and Regensburg, is protected as area FFH (Fauna, Flora, Habitat) 7138-372 "Tal der großen Laber zwischen Sandsbach und Unterdeggenbach" (valley of the large Laber between Sandsbach and Unterdeggenbach). This area is home to both important wetlands and peat bogs as well as species that are highly threatened in Bavaria, such as curlew, lapwing, pipit, common snipe, white stork, creeping celery and brook mussel. A further unquantified threat to the fauna of the area is represented by the non-acceptance of the presence of the otter (*Lutra lutra* L.) by local breeders.

INTERVENTION

With Deutsche Verband für Landschaftspflege (DVL) - the German National Landcare Association - we are planning the restoration study of an ecological corridor along a tributary of the Danube in Bavaria, southeast of Regensburg, Germany. The goal is to create an ecological connection system between three natural areas along the 50km of the Große Laber, restrictively regulate intensive agricultural and tourist activities in the implementation of measures aimed at the conservation of biodiversity, promote the integrative implementation of the protection of endangered species, create wetlands and support the conservation of water bodies / heaths with concrete activities.

The project, therefore, also contributes to the implementation of the European Water Framework Directive (good ecological status of water bodies), which is a priority for European intervention.

It also aims to regulate, reorganize and control intensive agricultural and tourist activities, in the implementation of nature conservation-oriented measures that can create greater value both for biodiversity, climate protection and for human society.

Specific Objectives and Approach:

- Concrete actions taken will reverse the decline of biodiversity in the area and will be beneficial to the reported species, all at risk of local decline or extinction;
- Optimization of connectivity, land management and biotope maintenance measures in line with species, peat, water and climate protection objectives;
- Creation and conservation of species-rich grasslands and wetland habitats typical of flood plains (including small water bodies for amphibians, dragonflies, etc.);
- Measures for humus formation with associated CO₂ sequestration, such as increasing the presence of nitrogen in the soil to encourage microbial activity;
- Raise awareness of native species and biotopes, and their need for protection through targeted public relations work, to increase acceptance of the measures;
- Educational activities aimed at increasing social knowledge and acceptance of wild species (e.g. otter), potentially subject to illegal killing;
- Demonstrate how the integration of human needs (production of regional goods, local tourism, environmental education and awareness-raising) with conservation-driven tasks can produce greater value for both biodiversity and human society;
- Inform and involve the local population about the background and results of the projects;
- Transfer of knowledge outside the regions and in the EU: the developed methods will be transmitted to other LPV personnel in other regions in the context of qualification events;
- Address the negative side effects that may arise from land use restrictions;
- An ex-ante and ex-post monitoring in the areas subject to interventions, to assess the real effectiveness of the actions undertaken in the long term, cannot be missing for the following years.

DURATION & BUDGET

- Duration: 1 year (renewable for 3 years) starting from 01st April 2023
- Project budget: €88,000.00

PARTNER

- DVL is a German Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity and Habitats, was founded in 1993. It is the non-profit umbrella organization of 200 landscape conservation organizations in Germany.
- DVL will contribute its experience to the development of the project. In particular with his two local organizations, the LPV VÖF Kelheim and the LPV Regensburg, he will ensure that the targeted measures put into focus are effectively implemented and make a lasting contribution to the improvement of the biotope network. With many years of experience implementing relevant projects in the region, they will pursue a supra-regional approach beyond district boundaries. Furthermore, the DVL will help to disseminate the implemented solutions and the achieved results beyond the project region, in Germany and in the European context.