

«Actions for the conservation of coastal habitats and significant avifauna species in NATURA 2000 network sites of Epanomi and Aggelochori Lagoons, Greece»



“ACCOLAGOONS”
(LIFE09 NAT/GR/000343)



Network Final Report

ACTION E.5 “Networking with other projects”



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Table of Contents

Introduction	3
The importance of networking as key part of European projects	4
Results and outcomes of the ACTION E.5	5
Conclusion	8
Annexes	9

Introduction

This document constitutes the Network Final Report of the ACTION E.5 of ACCOOLAGOONS project named as “Networking with other projects”, responsible beneficiary of which has been the Balkan Environment Center.

The aim of the ACTION E.5 has been the development of a network for the exchange of information and knowledge among LIFE+ projects implemented in Greece and in Euro Mediterranean countries. In this frame, the aim of this report is to quantify the results and outcomes of the networking action, shedding at the same time light on the value and importance of cooperation networks.

The importance of networking as key part of European projects

Networking is claimed to be one of the most important key activities in project management, hence, more and more emphasis is placed on planning and implementing networking actions in European projects.

Through networking, professionals, experts and various stakeholders have the opportunity to share knowledge on commonly interesting topics and exchange ideas. Experiences, expertise, best practices within Europe are shared, thus helping members of network grow and develop new skills and professional features. At the same time, members of certain networks can support each other in problem solving and difficulties addressing based on personal experience previously gained. Certainly, networking in European projects facilitates in a very effective way the promotion of a specific project and the dissemination of its mission and its technical core (aims, objectives, results etc), as a way to mobilize and inspire more groups of people to work for the same vision. All in all, the existence of a secure and reliable network in the context of European projects can act as a mobilizer and inspiring factor, while it helps project members feel that their efforts towards the realization of a specific aim and vision is part of a broader endeavor that is being supported also by other teams. For sure, it must be noted that through the existence of networks, new colleagues are found and already ongoing projects might be expanded by the development of new ones.

The above having been said, the existence of a concrete plan for networking in the context of ACCOLAGOONS project was considered of high value and as indispensable part of the project. Additionally, the core of the LIFE+ ACCOLAGOONS project, namely the environment, nature and biodiversity –currently burning topics that require successfully targeted actions–, strengthened the necessity of the realization of strong network among similar projects dealing with environmental issues. The area chosen for the expansion of this network has been Euro-Mediterranean area, as on the one hand environmental problems and concerns in the area are similar and on the other hand, the high diversity that it is characterized by (mentalities, cultures, languages, habit) can be a valuable input in the network.

All the above things considered, the ACCOLAGOONS project team planned a specific networking action (ACTION E.5) named as “Networking with other projects”, which consisted of specific elements and, despite the anticipated challenges and the various obstacles that appeared in its realization, it managed to be implemented to a certain point, bringing about all the positive dimensions that networking can provide.

Results and outcomes of the ACTION E.5

In an attempt to evaluate the networking action of ACCOLAGOONS project, its results and outcomes will be presented in this section. Thus, in first place, the following can be listed as outcomes of ACTION E.5:

- **Establishment of Networking Committee**

A Networking Committee was established in June 2013, being comprised of 14 LIFE projects in Greece and Euro-Mediterranean countries (Per Country: 2 ES, 1 CY, 2GR, 9 IT). A certain process preceded the establishment of the Networking Committee, including the Protocol for the establishment of the Networking Committee, the preparation of a list of relevant LIFE+ projects and the preparation of the invitation for participation in the Networking Committee, which were all approved by the Scientific Committee of the project. (Annex “Establishment of Networking Committee”)

- **Meetings of Networking Committee**

For the needs of strengthening the core of the Networking Committee, e-meetings were scheduled. The introductory e-meeting took place on the 30th of August 2013, where representatives from 6 LIFE+ projects participated. Participants presented their projects and then an open discussion about the problems and the opportunities was held. There was a plan for an final meeting for the 29th of September 2015, however, no reply was received after the invitation send, which led to its cancellation. (Annex “Meetings”)

- **Contact list of stakeholders and experts**

A contact list of stakeholders was prepared by BEC, and it was updated until the end of the project. Aslo a list of stekeholders was aksed by the Committes members, and two of them send some contact details, so the final list was developed. The contact list of stakeholders and experts is available for use for future collaboration in new environmental projects or as a pool of participants and speakers in future environmental events. (Annex “List of Stakeholders and Experts”)

- **Collection of Project Information Material**

BEC made an information database for ongoing similar LIFE+ projects in Greece and in Euro-Mediterranean area. In particular, BEC collected information material for 10 LIFE+ projects, which has been uploaded to the e-platform so that the members of the networking committee to have access. The information needed does not have the form of information sheet,

however, the aim of making available important information about other ongoing LIFE+ projects, has been successfully served through the collection and upload of information material. (Annex “Information Database”)

- **Development of Newsletters**

Two newsletters for the project generally were produced, the first in the beginning of the project (January 2011) and the second in March 2012. These newsletters have to do with ACCOLAGOONS project in general. Also BEC produced a newsletter concerning the first meeting of the networking committee. The first newsletter of the project was sent with the mail asking for similar projects to participate in the network committee. Also representative of ORTHE circulate some copies of the 1st ACCOLAGOONS's newsletter to interested parties in the International Symposium on Water and Wetlands in the Mediterranean, Agadir, Marocco (6-9 of February 2012). Both first and second newsletter of the project was distributed on the 13/12/2012, in the Conference that was organized by ORTHE, in Thessaloniki. Finally, the newsletter concerning the first meeting of the networking committee was sent to the participants of the network committee, in order to forward it to their stakeholders or interested parties. It is also uploaded to the projects web-site and e-participation tool, as and the two project's newsletters are. (Annex “Newsletters”)

Apart from the above mentioned outcomes of the ACTION E.5 “Networking with other projects”, the establishment of the cooperation network among ACCOLAGOONS project and other similar LIFE+ projects in Greece and Euro Mediterranean Area, has been proved to be of utmost importance, not only because it led to the dissemination of the ACCOLAGOON project itself but also because it strengthened the flow of knowledge, information, know-how and experience between professionals of the same field, promoting better preparation of future projects and enhanced performance in the implementation phase.

In particular, with concern to the promotion of the ACCOLAGOONS project itself, except for the dissemination of its aims, objectives, actions and results through the e-meeting, the Newsletter and the sharing of project's information material, additional opportunities for its promotion emerged, as representatives of BEC were invited in May 2013 by the Mayor of Stintino, Italy, Mr Antonio Diana, who is a member of the Networking Committee, to participate in the conference "ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT OF A TOURIST DESTINATION: NATURAL AND CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT, WATER, ENERGY AND WASTE" and present ACCOLAGOON project. The conference, held on 5-6-7-8 June 2013, was an International Convention of Studies on the interaction between the Environment and Tourism in the Mediterranean area, with the purpose of confronting the environmental

protection of the local area with a touristic use of the territory, in accordance with the international legislation. Two members of BEC's project team participated and presented ACCOLAGOONS project.

Moreover, through the activities of the Networking Committee, certain experience obtained by different projects was exchanged in order to act as problem prevention and resolve mechanism for other projects.

Furthermore, the networking actions encouraged the dissemination of know-how as a way to promote alternative technical solutions where appropriate. Indicative to this is, for instance, the collaboration that was developed between two project members of the Networking Committee, in addressing difficulties that they were confronted with in the projects' implementation phase. Particularly, representatives of the "ANDROSSPA - Management of the SPA site of Andros Island to achieve a favorable conservation status for its priority species" project turned to the ACCOLAGOONS project team in order to ask their support concerning the friendly moorings.

As a matter of fact, the networking actions promoted also the exchange of ideas among people working in similar projects, which can optimise in future the implementation of actions and maximize the efficiency of the project.

Conclusion

To conclude, as illustrated in this report, certain positive outcomes and results derived from the ACTION E.5 of ACCOLAGOONS project named as “Networking with other projects”, even though the action was realised only to a certain point. The positive impact that networking actions can cause in the context of European projects, is confirmed by the case of ACCOLAGOONS project and reassures the emphasis that should be placed in networking activities also in future projects.

Annexes

A. Establishment of Networking Committee

B. Meetings

C. ***List of Stakeholders and Experts***

D. Information Database

E. Newsletters