



IMPACT Action Plan – Molise Region

Produced by each region, the **action plan** is a document providing details on **how** the lessons learnt from the cooperation will be exploited in order to improve the policy instrument tackled within that region. It specifies the nature of the actions to be implemented, their timeframe, the players involved, the costs (if any) and funding sources (if any). If the same policy instrument is addressed by several partners, only one action plan is required.

Part I – General information

Project: IMPACT (Innovative Models for Protected Areas: Exchange and Transfer)

Partner organisation: Molise Region

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant): _____

Country: ITALY

NUTS2 region:ITF2 – MOLISE

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Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:	Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
	European Territorial Cooperation programme
X	Other regional development policy instrument

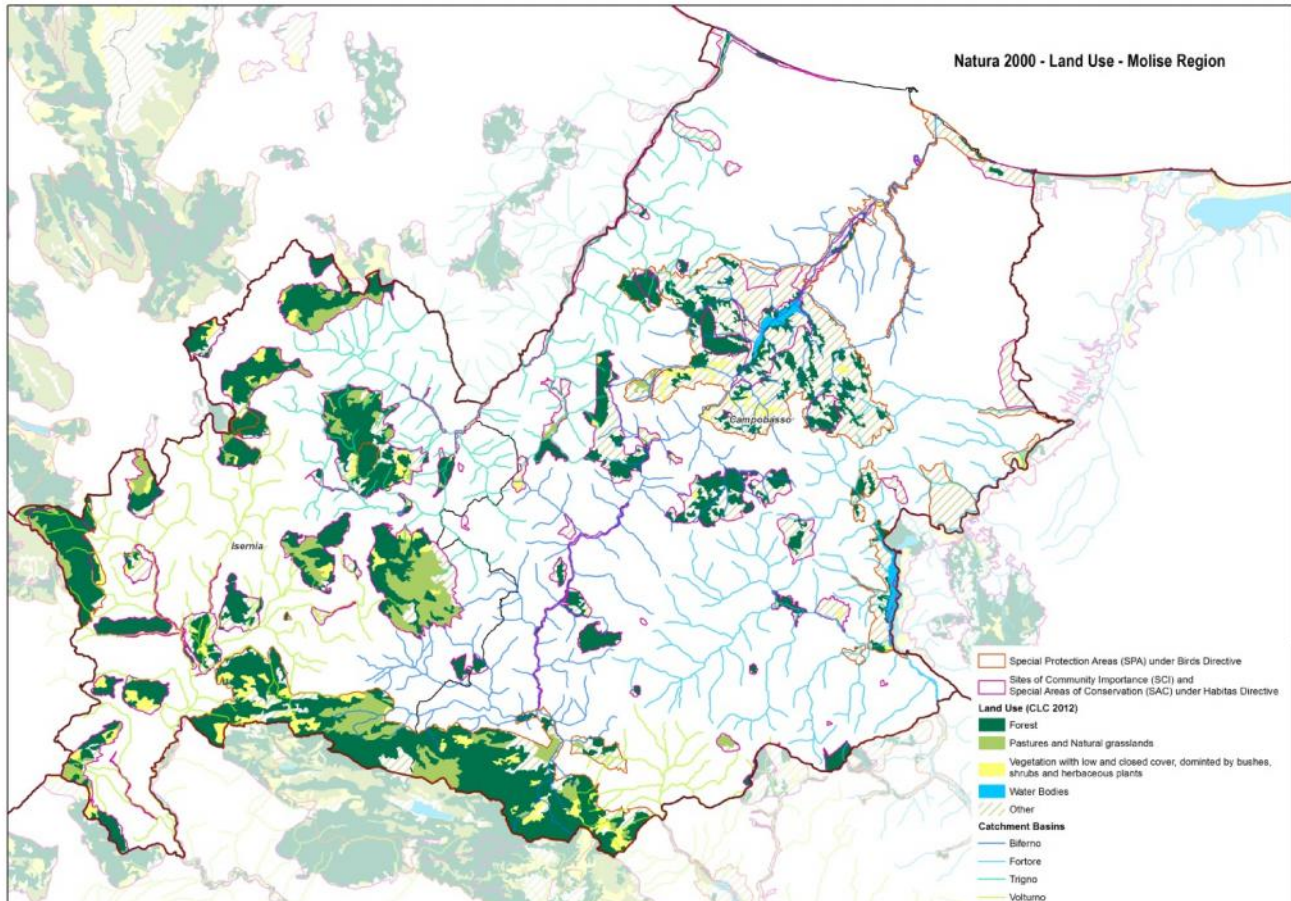
Name of the policy instrument addressed: **ROP ERDF/FSE 2014-2020**

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

ACTION 1 Mountain habitat conservation: forests and open spaces

1. The background

IMPACT “sub-objectives”: biodiversity, awareness raising



The Natura 2000 areas of Molise are mostly located in the mountains and characterized by the presence of woods and pastures: specifically the coexistence of extensive forests and wide open spaces creates the ideal conditions for the conservation of many species of Community interest. Currently the existence of forests, meadows and pastures is threatened. The forests, due to improper forest exploitation practices: the category facing the most widespread threat in Molise (which - according to the Management Plans - occurs in 58% of the sites) is the management and use of forests. Furthermore, the lack of active, sustainable and responsible management of forests reduces the value of forests and forest' products (as underlined by the Regional Forest Management Plan). The abandonment of mountain animal husbandry, on the other hand, is causing a considerable reduction of pasture meadows: according to the Regional Forestry Plan of Molise, between 1990 and 2012 the area with "grasslands, pasture and uncultivated grasslands" decreased by almost 10,000 hectares, while the wooded area is growing strongly.

In the Molise Region there are already tools aimed at protecting forests and pastures from the threats highlighted above: the present action takes that into account and integrates it with existing tools, but focusing its attention on the Natura 2000 areas.

For the forests, the Rural Development program (RDP) measures envisage the prevention (sub-measure 8.3) and the restoration (sub-measure 8.4) of the damages caused by fires, natural disasters and catastrophic events, while the sub-measure 8.5 (Investments intended to increase the resilience and the environmental value of forest ecosystems) finances actions for the improvement of forest formations. This measure is targeted in the direction of the present action, that has a specific focus regarding eco-sustainable forest management

practices within the Natura 2000 sites. Furthermore, the Regional Forest Management Plan, through its action 3 *Management and improvement of the public (3A) and private (3B) forests*, envisages the solutions of the present action (forest management plans and eco-certification). However, since this Plan is currently in the SEA (Strategic environmental assessment) phase and will therefore pass a substantial period of time before it is approved and applied, it is considered that this action –due to the fact that it is fully consistent with its objectives and actions - can be perfectly integrated into the regional forest planning as an implementation tool.

Regarding meadows and pastures, there is a specific measure of the RDP (13 - compensation in favour of areas subjected to natural constraints or to other specific constraints, sub-measure 13.1 compensatory payment for mountain areas), aimed at favouring the stability of agricultural and husbandry activities in the mountains, linking the financial contribution to the maintenance of stable meadows and pastures; with the expected premiums being 200 €/ hectare for livestock farms and 160 €/ hectare for non-zootechnical farms. In addition, the Region has activated a program to promote the recovery of abandoned public agricultural land, entrusting them to young farmers (the land bank). The present action will therefore be appropriately integrated with the existing instruments, avoiding overlapping, and aimed at encouraging the recovery of the grasslands on state and / or municipal land (eg tratturi) through the exemption of the payment of the pasture grazing fee to the administrations, using the Regional operative program (ROP) to adequately compensate the recipients of this contribution.

Two IMPACT “good practices” have been a source of inspiration to develop the action:

- GP10 *Landscape monitoring in a transboundary park in Romania and Serbia* has developed a methodology to monitor changes in the landscape. The experience can be adapted to the local context and applied to monitor both the impacts due to incorrect forest logging and the loss of prairie habitat due to growth of forest
- GP11 *Promoting open spaces in a forest park as a means of increasing biodiversity*. Collserola Natural Park provides some interesting examples of actions to tackle the loss of prairie habitat, by recovery of farming activities and the maintenance of open spaces with the use of grazing animals (sheep and goats) after a first mechanical clearance.

2. Action

Sub-action 1.1 Improvement of forest management practices by encouraging eco-certification of wood products from forests within Natura 2000 areas.

Activity 1.1.1 Property registration (public and private) of forest areas within the Natura 2000 areas

Crossing the regional data-base (land register of properties and land use) it is possible to identify the size of the land plots and the share of public and private forest areas ownership. This information is necessary to estimate the amount of funding to be allocated to incentivize sustainable forest management and eco-certification in public and private areas.

Activity 1.1.2 Preparation of a "standard specifications" for the allowance of forest exploitation of public property plots

In areas of public property, the implementation of sustainable management practices can take place by forming and selecting companies that guarantee these practices. Due to this, the development of a model of ad hoc contract specifications is made, that owners of public forest properties (Municipalities and state property) will be able to use. The possibility of using Measure 2 of the RDP (Advisory service, substitution and assistance to the management of farms) to finance the additional costs of the certification procedures will be added.

Activity 1.1.3 Meetings with Municipalities of public forest properties and State Property

To facilitate the adoption of the "standard specifications" by the public parties involved, it is required that - simultaneously with the performance of Activity 1.1.2 - meetings are held to verify and acknowledge their needs and evaluate the opportunity to incentive mechanisms.

Activity 1.1.4 Identification of incentive mechanisms to guide owners of private forest areas towards eco-certification.

The reasons according to the owners of forest areas orient their choices on how to manage and use the forest will have to be analysed - through surveys on the wood market and interviews with the owners of forest areas. From the results of the survey it is possible to identify incentive mechanisms to be implemented through a specific RDP measure (not evident today) or other financial instruments that allow to repay the owners of

ecosystem services in relation to the ecological and recreational functions of the woods.

Activity 1.1.5 Promotion of an eco-certified wood supply chain

Elaboration of a measure of the RDP (or other financial instruments) to support forestry enterprises and encourage the creation of a certified wood supply chain (see eg the measure 8.6 of the Lazio RDP "Support for investments in forestry technologies and transformation, mobilization and marketing of forest products").

Sub-action 1.2 Promoting sustainable farming activities for the conservation of meadows / pastures

Activity 1.2.1 Analysis of the effectiveness of existing incentive mechanisms

The starting point will be an analysis of the capacity of the measures of the RDP (Sub-measure 13.1) and of the strategy of the land bank to promote agro-zootechnical activities that avoid the abandonment of meadows / pastures. In particular, it will have to be analysed if the strategies already in place are effective to encourage the practice of grazing in the grasslands (in particular in public areas) or if they should be improved to be more effective (for example through exemption from payment of the "pasture fee").

Activities 1.2.2 Definition of an effective incentive strategy

From the results of the 1.2.1 activity it will be possible to assess whether the existing mechanisms are sufficient to allow the conservation of pasture meadows, if the existing measures need to be reformulated (eg higher premiums are necessary) or if a specific strategy for the Natura 2000 sites is to be implemented through a sub-measure of measure 5.1.1 of the ROP.

Activity 1.2.3 Definition of a regional funding plan to support specific measures of the Natura 2000 site management plans

The Good Practices of the IMPACT project demonstrated that sometimes it is not possible to create the conditions to involve private individuals in the maintenance of meadows pastures and that this task must be carried out directly by the public hand (possibly involving voluntary associations or local companies involved in public utility). Many Management Plans for Natura 2000 sites include measures to manage open spaces for public use. The possibility of identifying a financing plan (within the ROP or other financial instruments) to be dedicated to this purpose is to be assessed.

3. Players involved

Regione Molise,
Municipalities located in Natura 2000 sites
Corpo Forestale dello Stato (Forest guards)
Molise University

4. Timeframe

__16 Months__

5. Costs

_____105.000 €_____

6. Funding sources

__POR-FESR, National funds (National Strategy for Internal Areas, Pact for the development of Molise)_____

AZIONE 2 Improve the “Italian Transiberiana”

1. The background

IMPACT “sub-objectives”: Promotion, sustainable tourism, Capacity Building

The Sulmona-Carpinone-Isernia railway is a secondary railway line of Abruzzo and Molise, since 2010 it has been free of traffic. It connects the city of Sulmona to Isernia. It is 128.7 km long, starting from Sulmona (in Abruzzo) at 328 meters above sea level (asl) reaching the highest altitude of 1,268.82 meters asl of the Rivisondoli-Pescocostanzo station to descend, to Castel di Sangro at 793 meters asl. From Castel di Sangro the railway enters Molise ascending to San Pietro Avellana and then descending again at 423 meters asl at Isernia station.



The railway is already used for tourism purposes thanks to the commitment of the "Amici della Ferrovia – Le rotaie" association, the Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane (FS) Foundation and other public and private partners. Tourism demand is growing strongly, but there is no tourism offer that involves the territories crossed by the railway line, which could increase the potential in terms of hospitality, catering and typical products.

The action aims to enhance the opportunity offered by the railway line, increasing the frequency of trains and expanding the tourism, which today allows for the use only with organized round-trip journeys in the same day. The idea of development involves more frequent tourist trains, and with a greater number of stops, with modes of use that allow passengers to hop in and off at different stops, connected to each other through cycle paths and shuttle buses that reach the surrounding villages and locations of tourist interest, in particular the Natura 2000 sites, accessible from the stations.

Two IMPACT “good practices” have been a source of inspiration to develop the action:

GP 01 *Flow of tourists from the Western area to the Eastern area of Sierras de Tejada* is a good example of solutions to spread the tourist fluxes in a protected area: in order to avoid the accumulation of tourists in only one zone of the park, transport communication between different areas has been facilitated.

GP 03 Paths and ICT apps for self guiding tours is also a source of inspiration: the development of an internet based guide for mountain bikers, maps and a downloadable app for self-guiding tours could ease the creation of a network of pedestrian and biking trails, integrated with the railway stops.

2. Action

Sub-action 2.1 Development of paths and activities that allow to extend the benefits of "railway tourism" to the surrounding territory

Activity 2.1.1 Itineraries for the use of the surrounding historical-cultural and natural heritage, through cycle paths or public transport

Survey on points of tourist interest in Natura 2000 sites, on the offer of hospitality, restaurants, catering and typical products existing in the areas surrounding the railway. Identification of bicycle and / or trekking paths and collective passenger transport services that - starting from the Molise railway stations (S. Pietro Avellana-Capracotta, Villa S. Michele, Vastogirardi, Carovilli-Roccasicura, Pescocostanzo-Chiauci, Sessano del Molise, Carpinone) - link points of tourist interest, population centers and services (hospitality, restaurants, catering, companies producing local products, etc.).

Activity 2.1.2 Feasibility study for the creation of information points, service and marketing spaces for local products at the main stations

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the possibility of creating information points and services (assistance, catering) for tourists at the railway stations in Molise, or a number of them. On the basis of the results of the activity 2.1.1 and of the assessment of the state of conservation of the station buildings, it will be assessed on which stations require intervention, what kind of interventions should be conducted, how the spaces and the related costs will be managed (realization and management).

Activity 2.1.3 Development and elaboration of a communication strategy and promotion of tourism offer

The activity consists of:

- creation of maps (both paper and online - the latter includes interactive and multimedia, which can be accessed using smartphones) of the routes, sites of interest and services;
- communication and marketing plan
- training plan for expert tourist guides of the territory
- preparation of "tourist packages" with tour operators

Sub-action 2.2 Adapt the frequency of trains and the number of stops to the new ways of using "railway tourism"

Activity 2.2.1 Activate synergies with the Abruzzo Region and other possible partners to optimize the new railway tourism formulas

The "Trans-Siberian of Italy" starts from Sulmona and passes through areas of great interest also in the Abruzzo Region (mostly inside the Majella National Park.) Abruzzo could benefit from a different mode of organization of railway tourism, which allows a use that is not limited to the outbound and return journey in the day. Thus making it advisable to create synergies with the Abruzzo Region and the National Park, in order to give more value to the action and to facilitate the involvement of the FS Foundation in the operation. This is so that the Molise Region promotes an agreement with the Abruzzo Region and the Majella National Park leading to a wider tourist use of the Sulmona-Carpinone-Isernia railway.

Activities 2.2.2 Agreeing on the new mode of train management among all the stakeholders involved

An agreement must be signed between the interested parties that foresees the frequency of the trains (possibly one a day with several stops), the scheduled stops and the timetables. The agreement must define the commitments envisaged by each partner and include the methods for covering the costs.

3. Players involved

Regione Molise

Regione Abruzzo

Majella National Park

Municipalities along the railway

NGO "Amici della Ferrovia – Le rotaie" and other local NGOs

Italian Railway Foundation (Fondazione FS)

4. Timeframe

_____22 months_____

5. Costs

_____280.000 €_____

6. Funding sources

_____POR-FESR, National funds (National Strategy for Internal Areas, Pact for the development of Molise)_____

ACTION 3 Molise “Natura 2000” Label

1. The background

IMPACT “sub.objectives”: Promotion,

Molise is one of the Italian regions with the best environmental conditions. The wide extension of woods, good quality waters, low population density and limited industrial development have made it possible to preserve a largely uncontaminated territory. This condition reaches its peak within the Natura 2000 sites.

Today the market reflects a growing demand for products (agri-food and handcraft) and services (tourism) with characteristics of wholesomeness and low environmental contamination. The basic idea of this action is to facilitate the marketing and commercialization of products and services of Natura 2000 areas, making them recognizable through a brand/label.

It should be noted that the Molise Region has already launched a strategy to promote Molise products and services through the “Piacere Molise” brand, filed in 2006 and then “relaunched” in 2015 at the Milan Expo. This brand, managed by Union Chambers Molise, does not specifically concern the Natura 2000 areas, but allows the coalition of companies operating throughout the regional territory, provided they comply with the trademark regulation and the production / provision specifications of the services provided for by the Trademark.

The action aims to create a brand that makes recognizable products (agri-food, crafts) and services (hospitality, restaurants and catering) of the Natura 2000 areas of Molise. The brand could possibly use existing regulations as quality certification procedures, but it is possible to evaluate the possibility that all the goods and services produced within the Natura 2000 sites are included in the brand. In fact, the internal areas of Molise itself have quality products with typical characteristics, in particular in the agri-food sector (low-level areas of anthropization and air pollution, of soil waters), that do not require compliance with certification regulations.

BP 05 Health trips reports the experience of Espaces naturels régionaux (ENRx) and WWF (publicly rated products) in Regional nature parks of Avesnois, Caps et Marais d’Opale and Scarpe-Escaut, creating labels to promote local products and services. Owners located in the Regional nature parks propose a trip offer recognized by the WWF label called “Gîtes Panda” or the “Valeurs Parc naturel regional” mark (values of Park) and also “Fitness, nature and well-being” and “Bike reception”. The approach of BP05 could be replicated in Molise by creating a label that acknowledges products and services of the Molise Natura 2000 sites.

2. Action

Activity 3.1.1 Analysis of the effectiveness of the “Piacere Molise” mark as a tool to promote products and services

It is planned to interview the companies that have joined the existing brand (from the form available on the Ministry of Economic Development website, in 2012 fifteen agri-food companies, 3 diffuse hotels and 9 restaurants), to verify the perception of the effective utility of the brand and identify strengths and weaknesses of the existing experience.

Activity 3.1.2 Preliminary study of the existing economic activities within the Natura 2000 areas

A census of the existing economic activities will be carried out within the Natura 2000 sites, through the analysis of the Sites of Community Importance (Siti di Importanza Comunitaria SIC) Management Plans (socio-economic characterization) and the consultation of existing databases in the Region, the Municipalities concerned and the Chamber of Commerce.

Activities 3.1.3 Sample survey of economic activities to verify the interest in using the Trademark

An investigation will be carried out, through interviews with a significant sample of companies active within the Natura 2000 sites, aimed at evaluating the interest of companies in joining the brand. The interviews will have to make it possible to identify the conditions that companies would adhere to the brand as well as the constraints that would make it of lesser interest to companies.

Activity 3.1.4 Market survey to verify consumers’ tendency towards the brand

A nationwide market survey will be carried out to verify consumers’ inclination (turnout) towards products and

services recognizable through the brand.

Activity 3.1.5 Creating the Brand

On the basis of the results of the analyses carried out in the previous activities, the stakeholders involved in the action will evaluate the ways of creating the brand and will implement all the steps necessary for its creation, and in particular:

- It will be evaluated whether to enhance the existing "Piacere Molise" brand by creating a particular declination concerning the Natura 2000 areas
- The procedure for complying to the trademark (with any conditions of adhesion) will be defined.
- The operator of the brand and the activities to be guaranteed will be identified
- The brand logo will be created and the promotional campaign for membership by the companies will start

3. Players involved

Regione Molise

Molise University

Chamber of Commerce

Associations of entrepreneurs

GAL

4. Timeframe

_____ 22 months _____

5. Costs

_____ 210.000 € _____

6. Funding sources

_____ POR-FESR, National funds (National Strategy for Internal Areas, Pact for the development of Molise _____

strategic planning and negotiated instrument that pursues the protection, correct management of water resources and enhancement of the fluvial territories together with the safeguard from the hydraulic risk, contributing to the development of local economy".

The current action has the following objectives:

- activation of river contracts on the most important water bodies of Molise, in particular to guarantee the conservation of species, populations and habitats of Community interest;
- definition of a specific funding line on the ROP funds to finance river protection and / or rehabilitation and re-habitat interventions identified as priorities in the context of river contracts

The good practice 12 SITXELL developed a Territorial Information System incorporating information on the values of natural spaces based on scientific data to help identifying, analyzing, evaluating and planning open spaces. A similar approach could be used in Molise and applied to the surface water network to identify river stretches requiring protection or restoration for endangered species conservation purposes.

If GP 12 SITXELL could be replicated in Molise for the initial, analysis phase of the action, GP 13 "Vitoria Gasteiz Green Belt" will inspire the following steps, when habitat restoration measures will be applied. In Vitoria Gasteiz a huge habitat restoration project has been realized, restoring several kind of ecosystem, such as woodland, grassland and wetlands. In Molise we expect to restore mainly river and floodplain habitat (including riparian forests and wetlands), but the experience of Vitoria Gasteiz could be used as a reference.

2. Action

Sub-action 4.1 Creation of a shared knowledge framework

Activity 4.1.1 Verification of the most important threats for species of Community interest related to running waters present in the Natura 2000 sites of Molise and identification of the basins for the launching of river contracts

Through the analysis of the SIC and Special Protection Areas (SPA) forms the sites that include the categories of threat of "changes of the hydraulic conditions induced by the man" or those that signal other forms of alteration of the aquatic habitat (for example alterations of the riparian vegetation or water pollution) will be identified. Based on this survey and taking into account the ecological needs of the species concerned, the river basins on which to activate the river contracts will be identified. We suggest that the contracts must be activated at least on the Biferno and on the Alto Volturno basins.

Activity 4.1.2 Elaboration of a map of the areas for possible interventions

Data on the status of the water bodies of interest in the basins selected through the activity 4.1.1 will be analyzed. In particular, the "ecological status" of water bodies (sensu Water Framework Directive, 2000/60) will be investigated on the basis of the monitoring carried out by ARPA. The existing data on the status of the riparian zone will also be examined (see, for example, the application of the fluvial function index performed by ARPA Molise on Biferno in 2004, D. Urciuoli, R. Martone, A. Iamele, A. Manuppella The ecology of the Biferno river: its fluvial functionality). Then, based on the analysis results of the activity 4.1.1, the tracts of water bodies inside the Natura 2000 sites that require redevelopment or re-habitat interventions and, based on the observation of territorial images, will be reported on digital cartography. Furthermore, will be identified the sections of waterways external to Natura 200 sites requiring:

- protection against possible alteration interventions because they are well preserved
- the need for redevelopment and re-habitat interventions, to allow the territorial expansion of isolated populations.

Sub-action 4.2 Launch of the river contract (activities will be replicated for all river basins identified through activity 4.1.1)

Activity 4.2.1 Preliminary analysis of the program framework of reference

Recognition of the main current plans that constitute the reference framework for the integrated management of the river basin system in question, including the Basin Management Plan, the Flood Risk Management Plan, etc. and a selection of any other territorial and / or sector plans also with landscape value, including the analysis of municipal scale planning for the areas of intervention identified and mapped through the activities 4.1.1 and 4.1.2.

Activity 4.2.2 Identification and mapping of stakeholders

Recognition of public and private entities interested in the management of the river and of the surrounding territory, and their mapping in terms of relevance in the decisions that can compete with the River Contract in question.

Activity 4.2.3 Sharing of the rules and the "Manifesto" of "vision" and signing of the River Contract (CdF)

The stakeholders involved in the contract will agree on the rules and tools for managing the process. In particular, the procedures for establishing the funding priority and the planning and implementation of the interventions will be agreed upon. The protection measures (constraints and rules to be included in the Territorial Plans and the Basin Management Plan) will also be shared for areas outside Natura 2000 sites that have a good state of conservation.

Sub-action 4.3 Definition of the mechanisms for the financing of the redevelopment and re-habitat interventions

A specific funding line will be defined within the ROP or other financial instruments, to be allocated to the implementation of river and re-habitat rehabilitation measures. Note that well designed interventions must not include significant management and maintenance costs. It will also be possible to study a Payment for Environmental Services (PES) mechanism, which foresees a contribution from water users (Water Service Management Authorities and irrigation users in Campania and Puglia) to co-finance the implementation of the redevelopment and re-habitat interventions.

3. Players involved

Regione Molise

Molise University

River Authority (Autorità di Distretto Appennino Meridionale)

Drainage Authorities (Consorzi di Bonifica e irrigazione)

Water Authorities and Utilities (Autorità d'Ambito e Enti di Gestione del Servizio Idrico Integrato)

4. Timeframe

____ 22 Months ____

5. Costs

____ 170.000 € ____

6. Funding sources

____ POR-FESR, National funds (National Strategy for Internal Areas, Pact for the development of Molise ____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Stamp of the organisation (if available): _____