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Down to Earth

Good practices

Regional Association Neckar-Alb

1 GP template

As explained above, each PP must complete the template below with potential GPs (3 or 4, at least, one template per GP) identified in its region.

[Regional Association Neckar-Alb – Germany]

1. General information

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Project acronym	DOWN TO EARTH
Policy Instrument	Regional Plan Neckar-Alb
PI public authority	Regional Association Neckar-Alb
Version	2.0
Date	09/10/2024
GP Code ¹	PP05 RVNA

2. GP basic information

Number and Title of the GP	Biosphärengebiet Schwäbische Alb (UNESCO Biosphere Reserve Swabian Alb)
Body responsible for the implementation	Geschäftsstelle Biosphärengebiet Schwäbische Alb Biosphärenallee 2-4 D-72525 Münsingen-Auingen https://www.biosphaerengebiet-alb.de (last download: 20/11/2023)
Thematic objective of the GP (multiple choice if needed)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Year 1. Environmental risks related with depopulation and aging population in rural areas. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Year 2. All-type of access barriers to young farmers in depopulated rural areas. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Year 3. Policy instruments to foster the role of farmers and land managers in fighting climate change and environmental risks.

¹ Please, fill in the GP code following the next instructions: GP-PARTNER CODE-ACRONYM- GP number (i.e.: GP-LP01-AGADER-01).

PPs CODE and ACRONYMS: LP01-PP02 AGADER-FJDV / PP03 MoC / PP04 NMA / PP05 RVNA / PP06 UPatras / PP08 BSC.

Geographical scope of the GP	<input type="checkbox"/> National <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regional <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local
Location of the GP	Germany, State Baden-Württemberg, 29 towns and municipalities from three districts (Reutlingen, Esslingen and Alb-Donau district. The total area covers 85,270 ha.

3. GP detailed description

Summary of the GP	The Biosphere Reserve Swabian Alb is a model region for sustainable development that combines ecological, economic and social interests in its approach.
Detailed information on the GP	<p>The Swabian Alb and its foothills are a unique landscape facing many challenges. The rural villages on the Swabian Alb plateau in particular are facing the challenges of demographic change, climate change, the abandonment of agricultural businesses, uncertain farm succession, the disappearance of local amenities and a poor public transport infrastructure, among others.</p> <p>In 2008, a Biosphere Reserve was established due to the abandonment of the military training area "Gutsbezirk Münsingen" and its conversion in 2005. It is a jointly financed project of the Ministry of Rural Areas and Consumer Protection, the districts of Esslingen, Reutlingen and Alb-Donau, and the towns and municipalities of the Biosphere area. In 2009, it was recognized as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.</p> <p>The Biosphere Reserve serves as a model region for nature conservation and sustainable development. It is a tool for improving the territory through an integrated approach. The aim is to show how economic activities, residential needs and tourism activities can be realized while serving the interests of nature and the environment at the same time. This is implemented in the area by promoting sustainability projects, training and environmental education (e.g. education projects for children on biodiversity, resilience to climate change and sustainable use of resources) in close cooperation with local partners.</p> <p>The Biosphere Reserve currently covers an area of 85,270 ha and is divided into 3 protection zones.</p>
Resources needed	<p>The costs of managing the biosphere area amount to 730,000 Euro per year. The local authorities are contributing one third of the funding from 2011. The state will cover the remaining 70 %.</p> <p>The human resources that are required to set up and run the initiative include staff and rangers.</p>
Actors involved	The Biosphere Area is organised by the Federal State of Baden-Württemberg, represented by the Baden-Württemberg Ministry for the Environment, Climate Protection and the Energy Sector. Moreover, the regional councils of Stuttgart and Tübingen, the three districts of Alb-Donau, Esslingen and Reutlingen and the 29 towns and municipalities within the area are involved in the initiative. The Federal Institute for Real Estate Management manages the former military training area near Münsingen on behalf of the federal government, which at 6,700 hectares in the heart of the Biosphere Reserve accounts for almost a tenth of the total area. On top, numerous clubs, associations, interest groups and companies contribute to the success of the biosphere area. Furthermore, the project programmes PLENUM, REGIONEN AKTIV and LEADER have supported the project and have set the ground for its bottom-up approach.

Timescale

2005: Initial considerations took place for establishing a Biosphere Reserve at the area of the former military training area "Gutsbezirk Münsingen" in Baden-Württemberg.

01/2006: The Landesnaturschutzgesetz Baden-Württemberg (State Nature Conservation Act Baden-Württemberg) took effect and provided the legal basis for the establishment of Biosphere Reserves at the state level.

03/2008: The Biosphere Reserve Swabian Alb was officially designated by the State of Baden-Württemberg.

05/2009: The Biosphere Reserve Swabian Alb was officially recognized by UNESCO.

03/2012: An outline concept was handed in for the initiative. It provided the basis for the developments that were initiated.

2009-2019: The Biosphere Reserve Swabian Alb developed in a very dynamic way. A great number of activities, projects and cooperations were established in that period.

2015: Construction and restoration of the locations and the old warehouse begins. Opening of the "albgut" in 2017.

4. Evidence of success and transferability

Evidence of success

The Biosphere Reserve Swabian Alb has been a very successful initiative since its inception. This success is reflected in the more than 300 projects that have been implemented in the area since 2008, in areas such as nature conservation, regional development, education and sustainable tourism, among others.

The success of the initiative is further reflected in the large number of events that are regularly offered by the Biosphere Centre. The annual programme of the Biosphere Centre covers about 80 events per year. Moreover, a considerable Junior Ranger Programme has been established for the youth. On top, the success becomes obvious in the large number of visitors of the biosphere area. According to the Biosphere Reserve Swabian Alb, about 20,000 persons and about 75 school classes visit the Biosphere Centre in Münsingen-Auingen every year (cf. website of the Biosphere Reserve Swabian Alb 2023).

In addition, the success of the Biosphere Reserve Swabian Alb is reflected by a series of prizes and awards that the Biosphere Area and the stakeholders involved have received. These include:

- An award for the social cooperation project „Der Weg ist das Ziel“ / Sonderwettbewerb „Soziale Natur, Natur für alle“ in the framework of the UN decade on biodiversity
- An award for the project „Inwertsetzung von Klima- und Naturschutzmaßnahmen in den NNL“ in the framework of the UN decade on biodiversity
- An award for the project "albgemacht" in the framework of the UN decade on biodiversity
- An award „Naturwunder 2019, Deutschlands schönster Fluss (Große Lauter)“

Regional impact

The Biosphere Reserve Centre is placed in Münsingen-Auingen in the hearth of the Neckar-Alb region. Due to its geographical position, the Neckar-Alb region profits directly from the large number of trainings and educational programmes that are offered by the Biosphere Reserve Centre in Münsingen-Auingen.

As of now, about two thirds (66 %) of the area of the Biosphere Reserve Swabian Alb is located within the area of the Neckar-Alb region. Accordingly, large proportions of core zones, maintenance zones and development zones designated for environmental protection and development are an incremental part of the Neckar-Alb region.

The same holds true for projects and partners. A considerable number of projects that have been implemented in the fields of nature conservation, education for sustainable development, regional development, tourism development, cultural heritage preservation and public relation activities in the last years had a positive impact

on the Neckar-Alb region. To this adds that a partner network has been created by the Biosphere Reserve Swabian Alb that provides numerous benefits for the stakeholders and residents of the Neckar-Alb region.

Finally, considerable infrastructure was built in the framework of the Biosphere Reserve Swabian Alb initiative from which the Neckar-Alb region profited as well. In the process of building up an information and education network, a total of 12 information and experience centres were set up within the boundaries of the Neckar-Alb region. In addition, considerably parts of the Neckar-Alb area were valorised by the establishment of hiking trails, touristic offers, cycle paths and educational trails among others.

Potential for transferability (Overview)

The Biosphere Reserve is a category of protected areas under the German Federal Nature Conservation Act. It is organised by the State of Baden-Württemberg, represented by the Baden-Württemberg Ministry for the Environment, Climate and Energy Sector, and is supported by numerous public and private institutions. In the case of the the Biosphere Reserve Swabian Alb, the coordination, application, organisation and implementation must be seen as a large-scale project that has taken many years to complete. The extent to which the overall concept, or parts of the concept, are transferable to other sites will depend on national and regional legislation, political priorities, institutional and financial resources, regional circumstances, available stakeholders and public acceptance. However, the large number of individual projects that originated from the approach offer a wide range of starting points for developing and implementing new project ideas in other regions.

Rate of potential transferability

1 2 3 4 5

5. GP methodological viability

Study visit: theoretical session

In your opinion, how likely will it be to have a theoretical session about the GP? (1 – very unlikely | 5 – very likely)

1 2 3 4 5

The Biosphere Reserve Swabian Alb is an approach that is highly significant for the Neckar-Alb region and should thus be included in the German study visit.

Since the Biosphere Reserve Centre in Münsingen-Auingen regularly offers information events, lectures and guided tours for interested groups, it should be possible to have a theoretical session organized with the staff of the centre.

Study visit: practical session

In your opinion, how likely will it be to visit the experience? (1 – extremely unlikely | 5 – extremely likely)

1 2 3 4 5

The Biosphere Reserve Centre in Münsingen-Auingen is easy to reach. It has a freely accessible visitor centre that can serve as a programme point for the German study visit. This makes a visit during the study visit in Germany very likely.

6. GP pictures

GP pictures

If possible, provide pictures of the initiative



Picture: The Biosphere Reserve Center in Münsingen-Auingen

Photo: Neuberger