



LIFE Project Number
< **LIFE14 NAT/IT/000209** >

Progress Report
Covering the project activities from 1/12/2018 to 29/05/2020

Reporting Date
< **29/05/2020** >

LIFE PROJECT NAME or Acronym
< **LIFE EREMITA** >

Data Project

Project location:	Emilia Romagna, Italy
Project start date:	< 01/01/2016 >
Project end date:	< 31/12//2020 > Extension date: <30/06/2022 >
Total budget:	€ 2,126,987
EU contribution:	€ 1,268,863
(%) of eligible costs:	

Data Beneficiary

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Section 1 - Overall assessment of the achievements and as to whether the project objectives and work plan are still viable

Actions A

All 7 actions A are completed except for A5. At the beginning of February 2020, the catalogue of opportunities for volunteering was published on the project website (<https://progeu.regione.emilia-romagna.it/it/life-eremita/notizie/notizie-2020/e-uscito-il-catalogo-2020-delle-opportunita-per-il-volontariato>) and to date 4 volunteers have joined (2 PNFC and 2 MAR). The training course, scheduled in spring 2020, due to the Covid-19 emergency, will be organised online in the period June-September; the practical part, if possible, will be organised with field lessons, or alternatively with video lessons, depending on the evolution of the infection and the ministerial and / or regional measures pertaining to the ongoing health emergency. Action A7 ended in April 2020 with the drafting and release of the deliverables to the Monitor for the monitoring visit on April 8, 2020. The executive projects of the two ABs (*Associated Beneficiaries*) MEOR and MAR and the drafting of the Restocking Plan of *G. bilineatus* were completed in December 2019 with the formal approval of the projects.

ACTIONS C - Action C1 is only ongoing for one of the six ABs involved: the MAR, which started the works on February 17, 2020 and stopped them on March 12, 2020 due to the COVID-19 health restrictions. Works are expected to resume after the nesting period of avifauna, at the end of July, with their conclusion by autumn 2020. MEOR has finished the works in May 2020. To date, with the interventions of 5 ABs out of 6, 667 habitat trees for *O. eremita* have been made through hollowing, thinning, brushing and cleaning around habitat trees that had been created or found in *ex-ante* monitoring (A3). The works for *R. alpina* are finished: 1001 interventions (felling, girdling, suckering, stacks) were carried out by PNFC, PNATE, MEC and MEOR in 8 Natura 2000 sites. - Action C2, solely in charge of MAR, ended on 10/02/2020 with the drafting of the works completion report. The recovery interventions of watercourses suitable for *C. mercuriale* involved two Natura 2000 sites (IT4090001 and IT4070011). The total length of the waterways affected by the interventions is 2,685 m, divided into 6 lots: Lot1-Rio Gambellaro 900m; Lot2 - Rio Basino 150m; Lot3 - Rio Cavinale 255m; Lot 4 - Rio delle Solfatare 180m; Lot5 - Rio Stella 550m; Lot 6 - Pietracuta 650 m. The interventions have created ecological corridors between the various sites in which the species is present, restoring the maximum ecological functionality, suitable to introducing the species as foreseen in the subsequent Action C5. Action C3 ended with the installation MEOR's 23 WMBs, thus reaching the total of 150 WMBs installed in favour of *O. eremita* on the territory of the 6 ABs, as per the Proposal. The WMBs are monitored to verify their functionality and the ABs, when necessary, carry out small maintenance operations. Stacks of wood and tripods were built in favour of *R. alpina*. In detail, PNATE has created 20 stacks and 3 tripods, MEC 24 stacks, MEOR 6 stacks, 2 tripods and 10 stackings of beech trunks whose branches were not removed, PNFC has carried out felling interventions of plants then left on the ground either whole or with crosscut stems (No.78) and felling of plants to create hut-shaped formations (No.17). Action C4, the breeding activity of *O. eremita* continues regularly and No. 25 L1, No. 41 L2 and No. 96 L3 are available at the breeding facility of PNFC; No. 338 L2 and No. 169 L3 at PNATE's ; No. 31 L2 and No. 327 L3 at MAR's. For *G. bilineatus*, on the basis of the Restocking Plan (A7), contacts with Sweden, Croatia and Latvia resumed on May 7. A webmeeting was held with Sweden on May 15, which allowed the identification of the possible sites and the methods of withdrawal through a Swedish company that will also be able to provide consultancy for the authorisation request, which has already been sent to them for the appropriate verification. Should this be successful, the shipment is scheduled by air and in refrigerated mode so as to minimise the specimens' stress. Negotiations are underway with Latvia in the same way as for Sweden. We're still waiting for the response of Croatia to continue cooperation. After a meeting with the Focus Group, an additional hypothesis also emerged, to avoid further delays, which will

be illustrated in section 2. - Action C5: in the period from 10/06 to 01/07 2019, 289 adults of *C. mercuriale* were translocated in 4 sessions. The individuals were taken from Rio 1 and 2 of Pietracuta (IT4090001) and released in 4 rivulets at the IT4070011 site: Rii Solfatare, Rio Cavinale, Rio Stella, Rio del Diavolo. The transfer of around 250 individuals from the 2 rivulets of Pietracuta was carried out on 21 and 27 May 2020, in 5 rivultes also located on the IT4070011 site, in the 4 rivulets of the 2019 translocation and in the Rio Basino. For *O. eremita*, during the summer/autumn 2019 season, No. 678 L3, 39 adults and 16 cocoons were introduced, divided as follows: PNFC No.39 adults, No. 16 cocoons and No. 350 L3 in sites IT4080003 and IT4080002; PNATE No.180 L3 in sites IT4030001, IT4030002, IT4030003; MEC No. 50 L3 in site IT 4040001; MEOC No. 98 L3 in sites IT4020026, IT4020001, IT4020003. - Action C6: the database is being updated by entering the data of the concrete and monitoring actions; maps with the data currently available are visible to the public on the project website. With Action C7 the last two workshops were carried out on 10/28/2019 at Abbazia di Marola in PNATE and on 5/11/2019 in S. Sofia in PNFC. Action C8 has started with the identification of the working group, composed of the PM, the technical representatives and the project's entomologists.

ACTIONS D

Action D1 is regularly in progress. The specimens of *O. eremita* bred at the breeding facilities are divided as follows: PNFC No. 25 L1, No.41 L2; No. 96 L3, No. 56 cocoons; PNATE No. 338 L2, No. 169 L3; MAR No.31 L2; No. 327 L3. Action D2 will take place during the next summer/autumn period, as foreseen by the Proposal, one year after the first introductions that were made in 2019. - Action D2: for *O. eremita* the action began in September 2019; in some territories (MAR, PNFC) monitoring activities allowed for the discovery of L1, L2 and L3 larvae, confirming the successful reproduction of the freed adults, and of the presence of cocoons that demonstrate the cycle completion of the larvae immitted in the WMBs. In the remaining territories, where the introduction took place only in late summer, monitoring activities enabled the control of the health status of WMBs wood and of the damage level. For *C. m. castellanii* monitoring activities were carried out from 11 June 2019 to 26 August 2019, and later from 7 May 2020 to 29 May 2020 in the 5 streams of release of the relocated specimens and no. 69 (number to be updated in accordance with the last D2 monitoring) out of 486 perfectly healthy, relocated individuals have been recaptured.

ACTIONS E

All dissemination actions are ongoing with the exception of E3 and E6 planned at the end of the project. The website has also been updated in the English version. Almost all environmental education programmes have been implemented, involving a total of 5300 students and 229 classes in the 6 ABs. MEOR has 17 booked classes that, due to the Covid-19 emergency, have been suspended and postponed to the next school year. At the breeding centre of MAR, operated by the organisation 'Aquae Mundi', 370 people of which 140 students received dissemination materials and information on the project in 2018; 1140 people of which 470 students received them in 2019. -Action E5: PNATE, MEOC and MAR organised 14 workshops planned by the Proposal. In addition to the editions of the "Palaeremita" care of PNATE, 7 editions were carried out by PNFC during 2019. The Palaeremita restyling is underway with the construction of new marquees. Due to the Covid-19 emergency the editions of "Palaeremita" have been suspended. No. 52 press releases were written and published as news on the project website and disseminated also thanks to the Facebook page of the project (<https://progeu.regione.emilia-romagna.it/it/life-eremita/notizie/notizie>); No. 13 specific articles were published on magazines and local newspapers (<https://progeu.regione.emilia-romagna.it/it/life-eremita/temi/prodotti/articoli>). The FB page is constantly updated and is followed by 967 people. The press office activity and therefore the coordination of communication activities were assigned to the recently appointed PM.

ACTIONS F

From January 2019 to the end of April 2020 the project was managed by the staff of the Emilia-Romagna Region. The tender for the appointment of the Project Management assignment terminated at the end of April 2020, assigning the task to the Delta-Ethic Institute Temporary Joint Venture. The PM is Cristina Barbieri who, with the support of her work group, will have to coordinate the technical, scientific and dissemination activities of the project, including the creation of technical documents and financial reporting. -Action F2: on 5/05/2020 the Technical Table was held, and on 11/05/2020 the Focus Group for *G. bilineatus* concentrated above all on identifying additional actions to be implemented in case of delays in the recovery of specimens from abroad for the restocking activity. Action F3: on 15/05/2020 a letter was sent to the Life RegKind representatives to re-activate the contacts and for an update on the restocking and captive breeding activities envisaged by their project in favour of *G. bilineatus*.

Section 2 - Identified deviations, problems and corrective actions taken in the period

Overall, the actions in favour of *O. eremita*, *R. alpina* and *C. mercuriale* are in line with the schedule. In the period that goes from January 2019 to the date of this report, the deviations concern the *G. bilineatus* restocking plan, the assignment of the Project Management activity, the technical-scientific management, the implementation of the training and information activities. Below are the problems encountered and the corrective actions implemented according to the groups of actions scheme.

ACTIONS A

Action A5: although the calendar was published in February 2020, to date we have a low number of volunteers joining, evidently due to the limitations imposed by the ministerial and regional decrees, which suspended all internship activities. For the same reason, the preparation of the second training course for volunteers is also late; originally scheduled for spring 2020, it had to be canceled. As a corrective action, during the last Technical Table of 05/05/2020 it was decided to carry out the second training course online, in the manner specified in Section 1. The *G. bilineatus* restocking plan (A7) scheduled for June 2019 ended in December 2019, with a delay of 6 months, and the consequent postponement of the C4 and C5 actions specified below.

ACTIONS C

Actions C4 and C5: coordination for collaboration with the representatives of Sweden, Latvia and Croatia, the request for authorisations to draw specimens and their subsequent introductions have been postponed. In addition, the emergency COVID-19 prevents planning international travel. In the last month, a series of initiatives have been put in place to recover the time gap: contacts with the technical representatives of the three countries have been resumed and, to overcome the impediment to travel, experts from donor countries – who can carry out the sampling and send the specimens - are being identified. To date, the most advanced situation is with Sweden: thanks to the technical contact Dr. Tommy Karlsson, a Swedish company has been identified, which has been asked for a quote for the collection of specimens in the source sites and for subsequent shipment to Italy. If the timing of the authorisation by the competent authority (County) permits it, it will be possible to carry out the sampling in September, evaluating the possibility of distinguishing between new and old generations. Similar discussions are under way in Latvia with Dr. Mārtiņš Kalniņš and in Croatia with Dr. Martina Temunović. Recently, from the end of May, contacts with Dr Mārtiņš Kalniņš progressed and the necessary authorisation request to the National Biodiversity Agency of Latvia is being drafted. As corrective actions, thanks to the intensification of the activities in the last month, during the Focus Group on 11/05/2020 and on 28/05/2020 two supplementary activities for *G. bilineatus* were discussed: 1) deepening the knowledge about the presence and consistency of other populations of *G. bilineatus* in Italy. Professor Audisio, scientific referent of the group, on the occasion of the update pursuant to art. 17 of the Habitat Directive reported that, in addition to the Lake Pratignano

site (confirmed thanks to the *ex-ante* monitoring of the project), there are two other sites of presence of the species in Piedmont and Lombardy: Fondotoce and Pian di Spagna, both within protected areas, that were not confirmed in the past 20 years. Unlike what emerged from the checks with the managing authorities of these sites, which was reported in the request for amendment presented in December 2018, the in-depth analysis carried out by prof. Audisio raises the doubt that the absence of the species in the two sites may be caused by inadequate sampling in terms of systematicity, effort and appropriate skills. Should a thorough sampling in the two sites, conducted by personnel specialised on the taxon, produce positive results, it would pave the way for drawing specimens from populations alternative to those of the three Member States listed above. To this end the forwarding of the authorisation requests to the Ministry of Environment and to the two Regions is currently underway and a survey visit for a possible collection has been scheduled for July with a group of four expert entomologists: P.Audisio, GL.Nardi, G.Carotti e R.Fabbri. 2) The second supplementary activity concerns further verification of the consistency of the population of the Lake Pratignano site, for the purpose of drawing specimens. Given the careful study and specialisation on capture techniques of the species acquired by the technical team and the project entomologists, given the morphological characteristics of the site, represented by a peat bog with several lateral pools, and given the elusiveness of the species, it is not to be excluded that the population present may have a greater consistency than that found in the *ex-ante* monitoring. Currently in the peat bog there is a lot of water and these conditions could be more favourable to find the species, compared to 2016 and 2017.

ACTIONS D There are no particular difficulties.

ACTIONS E - The health emergency COVID-19 has imposed a lockdown and social distancing, therefore the events and meetings aimed at the public and scheduled for "Palaeremita" (E7) in spring 2020 have been canceled. Given the nature of the event it was decided to postpone to next year the conclusion of the "Palaeremita" editions. Based on the evolution of the situation, we are assessing the organisation of the 2 symposia scheduled for action E2 as a webinar in autumn 2020.

ACTIONS F

Action F1: The previous contract for Project Management, provided as external assistance, ended on 11/30/2018. The new tender, to cover the service until the end of the project, was published in June 2019, but then canceled due to a lack of documents from the two participating companies. The new tender was published in September 2019 and closed in November 2019, but the final awarding with the signing of the contract took place on 24/04/2020, due to necessary administrative checks. Therefore from December 2018 to April 2020, even though the CB staff coordinated the activities, the delay in appointing the PM position slowed down some technical actions, in particular the definition of the *G.bilineatus* Restocking Plan and its implementation. The continuity of the assignment until the end of the project strengthens the technical staff entrusted with the project, and will allow the recovery of accumulated delays. Action F3: due to the limitations imposed by COVID-19, the organisation of the workshop with the participation of the technical representatives of the 3 countries in the project area was not possible for the current year and was postponed to 2021. There are no deliverables and milestones not completed and scheduled for this period. It is expected that the deliverable scheduled for 30/06/2020 "Minutes of the volunteer training courses, second phase" will be late due to the impossibility described above to carry out the course at this time. It should also be noted that the project activities allowed the preparation of No. 8 degree theses, visible on the project website (<https://progeu.regione.emilia-romagna.it/it/life-eremita/temi/prodotti/prodotti>). In addition, a scientific article on *G. bilineatus* (<https://doi.org/10.1080/24750263.2020.1732487>), created thanks to the project activities, was published in the sector scientific magazine "The European Zoological Journal".