

Deliverable D.3.5.1

Local Stewardship Community action plan and Constitutive Pact

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Central-BIC Project – Core Principles

1. Biodiversity as a Common Value

Central-BIC is founded on the recognition that biodiversity is an essential socio-economic and cultural asset. It aligns with the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the European Green Deal, promoting biodiversity conservation not as a constraint but as a driver of local development and innovation.

2. Reconciling Rural Communities and Nature Conservation

The project acknowledges that rural communities—covering 80% of Europe’s territory and hosting 30% of its population—play a crucial role in biodiversity protection.

It aims to reduce conflicts between conservation policies and local economic interests by promoting cooperative, participatory approaches and win-win solutions where environmental sustainability supports economic viability.

3. From Subsidies to Market-Based Ecosystem Services (PES)

Central-BIC aims at shifting from traditional public subsidy mechanisms to market-based Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES). It promotes:

- The recognition of the value of ecosystem services (ESs) provided by sustainable human activities (e.g., extensive livestock farming, forestry, tourism).
- The rewarding of responsible producers through consumer awareness and sustainable value chains.
- The development of PES systems that combine economic incentives and market recognition for biodiversity-friendly products and practices.

4. Sustainable Production and Consumption

The project aims at integrating the principle of Sustainable Production and Consumption (SPC) by linking biodiversity protection to market demand. This means encouraging consumer social responsibility and enabling producers to be rewarded for environmentally friendly practices, creating a circular relationship between production, consumption, and biodiversity value.

5. Biodiversity Communities Stewardship (BCS) Model

Central-BIC aims at introducing and creating the Biodiversity Communities Stewardship (BCS) concept:

- A participatory governance model engaging local authorities, farmers, associations, businesses, and citizens.
- Each BCS acts as a guardian community, fostering sustainable territorial management and protection of natural and cultural heritage.
- The BCSs operate through bottom-up initiatives, sharing good practices and joining a transnational network for knowledge exchange and cooperation.

Central BIC STEWARDSHIP COMMUNITY PACT

The Central BIC Stewardship Community is established in coherence with the strategic mandate of the Central BIC project and with the relevant EU policy framework on biodiversity, including the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 and the EU Green Deal, which call for the restoration of degraded ecosystems, the safeguarding of ecosystem services, the mobilisation of local actors and the reduction of conflicts between human activities and nature conservation.

In this context, The Central BIC Stewardship Community aims to contribute to the Central European response to the loss of biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (ESs), to the lack of awareness and recognition of their value among rural communities and consumers, and to address and mitigate the conflict between rural communities and nature conservation. The Community operates under the principle that local stewardship, shared responsibility and transnational consistency are necessary to secure long-term ecological, social and economic resilience.

The undersigned project partners, acting within their respective institutional mandates,

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their accession to the Central BIC Stewardship Community and commit themselves to:

1. Cooperate in good faith and ensure active participation in coordination and monitoring activities;
2. Promote and enable local activities that directly or indirectly support biodiversity conservation, ecosystem restoration and sustainable land-use practices;
3. Actively encourage awareness-building among local stakeholders and communities regarding the value of biodiversity and ecosystem services;
4. Accept that the organisation, responsibilities, procedures, coordination, communication rules and monitoring obligations of the Stewardship Community are governed by the Action Plan attached to this Act, which forms an integral part of this instrument.
5. The present Pact may be reviewed and, where necessary, amended every five years. In the absence of amendments or renewal deliberated by the Parties, the Act shall remain valid and continue to apply until replaced or revoked by written notice.

The Central BIC Partnership

CENTRAL BIC LOCAL STEWARDSHIP COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

1. Purpose and Scope

1.1 — This Action Plan establishes the strategic, organisational and procedural framework guiding the activities of the Central BIC Stewardship Community for a period of five (5) years.

1.2 — It defines common rules for the functioning of the Community, including coordination, internal regulation, decision-making processes, implementation of actions, monitoring obligations and communication rules, ensuring coherence across the territories engaged under Central BIC.

1.3 — The Action Plan serves as the reference instrument for translating the shared vision of the Stewardship Community into a structured and verifiable set of commitments applicable at local while maintaining alignment with Central BIC transnational outputs and principles.

1.4 — The provisions contained herein apply to all stakeholders that have acceded to the Central BIC Stewardship Community. Acceptance of this Plan is a condition for participation in the Community and for eligibility to take part in coordinated stewardship activities.

1.5 — The implementation of this Action Plan establishes a shared governance layer for voluntary convergence on biodiversity stewardship, ecosystem services enhancement and conflict mitigation between nature conservation and local socio-economic activities.

2. Principles of the Stewardship Community

2.1 — The Stewardship Community operates according to the principle that long-term biodiversity protection and the maintenance of ecosystem services require the active participation of local actors and not only regulatory mandates.

2.2 — The Action Plan is guided by the following principles:

a) Biodiversity protection and ES enhancement Activities undertaken by the Community shall contribute to the preservation, restoration or enhancement of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the relevant territorial context.

b) Alignment with Central BIC scientific and strategic outputs All measures, positions and decisions shall remain consistent with the objectives, methodologies, and deliverables of Central BIC and avoid divergence from the project's validated transnational framework.

3. Governance and Organization

Article 3.1 – Purpose and Scope

3.1.1. The present Governance Framework regulates the organisational structure, membership categories, and decision-making arrangements of the Central BIC Stewardship Community (“the Community”).

3.1.2. It applies to all Members duly registered in the Community Members Registry.

3.1.3. The Framework governs the internal functioning of the Community and does not establish legal or financial obligations unless expressly stipulated.

Article 3.2 – Founding Principles The Community operates in accordance with the following principles:

- (a) protection and enhancement of biodiversity and ecosystem services;
- (b) transparency and accountability;
- (c) inclusiveness and multi-stakeholder participation;
- (d) voluntary cooperation;
- (e) scientific integrity and evidence-based approaches.

Article 3.3 – Membership Categories

3.3.1. Membership of the Community is open to individuals, organisations, and institutions adhering to the principles set out herein.

3.3.2. The Community comprises the following categories:

- (a) Founding Members: entities forming the original partnership of the Central BIC Project. They have strategic and governance responsibilities.
- (b) Ambassador Members: members who actively promote the Community, support dissemination, represent the network externally, and facilitate engagement of additional stakeholders. They also participate in activities, provide inputs or data, and support thematic actions without undertaking representational roles
- (c) Contributing Members: members who support the Community and adhere to its principles

3.3.3. All Members, irrespective of category, shall be recorded in the Community Members Registry.

Article 3.4 – Accession Procedure

3.4.1. Membership is formalised through submission of the Accession Declaration via the official online form and/or signature of the Declaration of Adherence .

3.4.2. Upon validation, the applicant is entered into the Community Members Registry and acquires membership status.

Article 3.5 – Governance Bodies

The governance structure consists of:

- (a) the General Assembly;

- (b) the Steering Committee;
- (c) the Territorial Coordination Units.

Article 3.6 – General Assembly

3.6.1. The General Assembly (“GA”) is composed of all registered Members.

3.6.2. The GA is convened once per year, either online or in person.

3.6.3. The GA provides non-binding recommendations concerning strategic priorities, needs, and the progress of the Community.

3.6.4. Where required, decisions are adopted by simple majority of Members present.

Article 3.7 – Steering Committee

3.7.1. The Steering Committee (“SC”) is the principal decision-making body of the Community.

3.7.2. The SC is composed of all Founding Members and all Ambassador Members.

3.7.3. The SC shall meet only when convened, at the initiative of the Chair or upon written request of at least two SC Members. No periodic meeting obligation applies.

3.7.4. The SC shall:

- (a) provide strategic direction;
- (b) approve amendments to this Governance Framework;
- (c) validate orientations for Community activities;
- (d) address governance matters requiring coordination or oversight.

3.7.5. Decisions are taken by simple majority of Members present.

3.7.6. Amendments to this Framework require a qualified majority of two-thirds of SC Members present.

Article 3.8 – Local Coordination Units

3.8.1. Local Coordination Units (“LCUs”) ensure operational and administrative support at regional or local level.

3.8.2. Each Local Coordination Unit is organised and managed by the respective Founding Partner responsible for that territory.

3.8.3. Functions of the LCUs include:

- (a) maintaining local stakeholder engagement;
- (b) supporting implementation of Community activities within the territory;

3.8.4. TCUs may operate autonomously within their territory while respecting the principles and provisions of this Framework.

Article 3.9 – Duties of Members

3.9.1. Founding Members shall support strategic orientation, implement territorial coordination, and contribute to governance activities.

3.9.2. Ambassador Members shall promote the Community, support networking, and facilitate dissemination and stakeholder mobilisation, participate in activities, share knowledge and data, and support initiatives

within their capacities.

3.9.4. All Members shall act in good faith and uphold the principles of the Community.

Article 3.10 – Decision-Making

3.10.1. The General Assembly issues recommendations.

3.10.2. The Steering Committee adopts governance decisions.

3.10.3. In absence of specific provisions, decisions are taken by simple majority of Members present.

Article 3.11 – Transparency and Record-Keeping

3.11.1. Documentation relating to meetings, decisions, and governance shall be maintained by the Territorial Coordination Units and shared with the Steering Committee.

3.11.2. Publicly accessible documents may be disseminated through the Community's platforms.

Article 3.12 – Final Provisions

3.12.1. Nothing in this Framework shall create legal or financial liabilities for Members unless expressly provided in a written agreement.

4. Implementation of Actions

4.1 – Annual Identification of Priority Actions

4.1.1 – Each year Local Coordination Units identify a set of priority actions to be carried out within the regional territory, in line with the objectives and scopes of Central BIC.

4.1.2 – Priority actions shall be selected based on:

- a) relevance to biodiversity protection or ecosystem services enhancement;
- b) feasibility in the local socio-economic and territorial context;
- c) complementarity with existing public or private measures;
- d) availability of actors willing to implement or support the activity.

4.2 – Nature and Typology of Actions

4.2.1 – Actions implemented under this Plan may include, without limitation:

- local biodiversity restoration or conservation measures;
- pilot testing of PES-related schemes and enabling measures;
- awareness, education and behavioural change programmes;
- participatory planning with landowners and civic actors;
- conflict mitigation initiatives between conservation rules and rural uses;
- integration of stewardship principles into local planning instruments.

4.3 – Responsibility for Territorial Execution

4.3.1 – Actions assigned at regional level are executed within the respective territory of the stakeholders.

4.3.2 — The Community does not assume operational liability for actions of individual members; responsibility remains with the implementing stakeholder.

5. Reporting

5.1 — Reporting

Each year Local Coordination Units will inform the Project Local partner about the actions implemented.

6. Communication and Monitoring

6.1 — Internal Communication

Internal communication shall ensure the timely exchange of information required for coordination, reporting and decision-making. Procedures for internal communication shall be defined in the Internal Regulation.

6.2 — External Communication

6.2.1 — Public communication concerning activities under this Plan shall respect Central BIC communication standards, crediting obligations and visual identity rules.

6.2.2 — No public communication shall contradict, undermine or pre-empt the official results, deliverables or positions validated under Central BIC.

7. Renewal and Review

7.1 — Five-Year Cycle

This Action Plan is adopted for a duration of five (5) years from the date of its entry into effect. In the absence of renewal or amendment, this Action Plan shall remain provisionally valid until replaced or expressly revoked.

8. Final Provisions and Continuity

8.1 — Complementarity with Applicable Law

This Action Plan does not create legal obligations. Its purpose is to organise voluntary stewardship and policy coherence within the Central BIC framework..

8.2 — Continuity Clause

The withdrawal or replacement of a member does not affect the validity or continuity of this Action Plan for the remaining stakeholders.