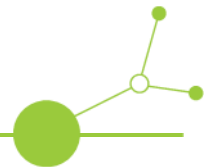


Strategy and action plan to engage stakeholders and end-users in using the Central European database

WP1 - Identification of the main problems related to the degraded agricultural land in the CE regions



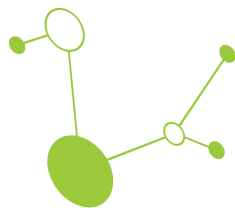
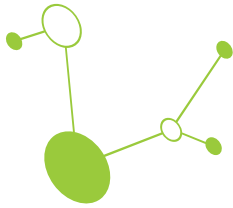
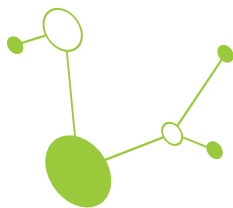


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Executive summary

Land degradation represents one of the major environmental challenges affecting the sustainable development of Central Europe. Large areas of agricultural and post-industrial land remain underutilised due to chemical pollution and other forms of degradation or the lack of reliable information supporting their future management. At the same time, increasing demand for renewable biomass, ecosystem restoration and climate-resilient land management creates new opportunities for the productive reuse of degraded land, provided that appropriate information, planning tools and stakeholder cooperation are available.

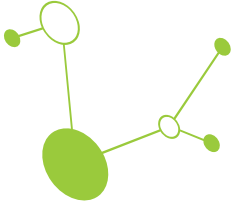
The PoLaRecCE project addresses these challenges through the development of a Central European database containing information on degraded land potentially suitable for non-food agricultural production. The database is designed as an open decision-support tool facilitating sustainable land management by public authorities, land managers, researchers, investors and other stakeholders involved in regional development.

The present strategy and action plan establishes a comprehensive framework for engaging stakeholders and end-users in the long-term use, maintenance and further development of the database. It builds upon the results of stakeholder surveys conducted in eight pilot regions of six Central European countries, which revealed common challenges including limited knowledge of degraded land management, fragmented environmental information, insufficient access to specialised databases and relatively low awareness of soil-related environmental issues among local administrations.

The strategy identifies six principal stakeholder groups:

- local administrations;
- regional administrations;
- farmers and farmers' organisations;
- citizens and local communities;
- universities, schools and young people;
- small and medium-sized enterprises together with potential investors.

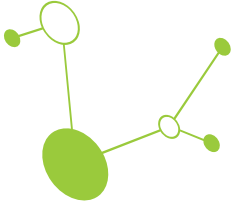
For each stakeholder group, the document defines strategic objectives, communication approaches, capacity-building activities and implementation measures aimed at increasing



awareness, strengthening cooperation and promoting the practical application of the Central European database.

The accompanying action plan translates these strategic objectives into a coordinated programme of activities to be implemented by the project partners. It identifies communication channels, training activities, promotional events and cooperation mechanisms that will support both the effective dissemination of project results and the long-term sustainability of the database after completion of the PoLaRecCE project.

By integrating scientific knowledge, stakeholder participation and practical implementation measures, the strategy contributes to improving environmental governance, promoting sustainable land management and facilitating the wider application of nature-based and non-food agricultural solutions on degraded land throughout Central Europe.

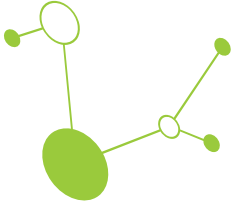


1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Soil degradation is recognised as one of the most significant environmental challenges affecting the sustainable development of Europe. Industrial activities, mining, waste disposal, intensive agriculture, urbanisation and flooding events have resulted in numerous degraded sites that currently provide limited environmental, economic and social functions. Although many of these areas remain unsuitable for conventional food production, they offer considerable potential for alternative land uses, including the cultivation of industrial crops, biomass production and other forms of non-food agriculture. Successful recovery and sustainable management of degraded land require not only appropriate technical solutions but also reliable spatial information, effective communication among stakeholders and evidence-based decision-making processes. Public authorities, landowners, researchers and investors frequently face difficulties in identifying suitable sites because information on degraded land is fragmented among numerous institutions or is not publicly available. To address these challenges, the PoLaRecCE project has developed a Central European database integrating information collected within pilot regions located in Poland, Italy, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia. The database provides harmonised information on degraded land and constitutes one of the principal outputs of the project. It is intended to support local and regional administrations, facilitate sustainable land-use planning and encourage the productive reuse of degraded land for non-food agricultural purposes. However, the long-term success of the database depends not only on its technical performance but also on its acceptance, regular use and continuous updating by its end-users. Consequently, effective stakeholder engagement represents a prerequisite for ensuring that the database becomes a practical decision-support instrument rather than merely a repository of information. This strategy and action plan has therefore been prepared to establish a coherent framework for communication, stakeholder participation and long-term utilisation of the Central European database.

1.2. Purpose of the strategy and action plan



The overall purpose of this document is to provide a common strategic framework supporting the effective dissemination, practical application and long-term sustainability of the Central European database developed within the PoLaRecCE project.

More specifically, the strategy aims to:

- improve awareness of degraded land management among public authorities and other stakeholder groups;
- promote the practical use of the Central European database in environmental planning and decision-making;
- strengthen cooperation between scientific institutions, public administrations, land managers and private stakeholders;
- encourage the continuous updating and expansion of the database beyond the lifetime of the project;
- support sustainable management and productive reuse of degraded land in accordance with the principles of non-food agriculture and environmental protection.

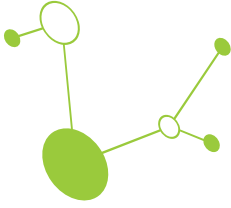
The action plan complements the strategic framework by defining concrete implementation measures, communication activities and stakeholder engagement actions to be carried out by individual project partners during the implementation of the project and beyond.

1.3. Scope

The strategy covers all pilot regions participating in the PoLaRecCE project and addresses stakeholder groups involved in the identification, management and future utilisation of degraded land across Central Europe.

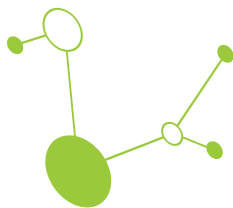
The document is primarily addressed to:

- local administrations;
- regional administrations;
- public authorities responsible for environmental management;
- farmers and agricultural organisations;
- landowners;
- universities, educational institutions and students;



- citizens and local communities;
- small and medium-sized enterprises;
- potential investors interested in non-food agricultural production on degraded land.

Although the strategy has been developed within the framework of the PoLaRecCE project, its recommendations may also support future initiatives addressing sustainable land management and the recovery of degraded areas in other European regions.



2. Situation Analysis

2.1. Current challenges in the management of degraded land

The sustainable management of degraded land remains one of the major environmental and governance challenges across Central Europe. Although many degraded areas represent valuable resources for future non-food agricultural production and other environmentally beneficial land uses, their potential is frequently constrained by fragmented information, limited institutional capacity and insufficient stakeholder awareness. Within the PoLaRecCE project, a comprehensive survey was conducted in eight pilot regions located in six Central European countries in order to identify existing barriers affecting the inventory, management and future utilisation of degraded land. The survey results demonstrated that, despite differences in national legislation and administrative structures, similar challenges are encountered throughout the participating regions.

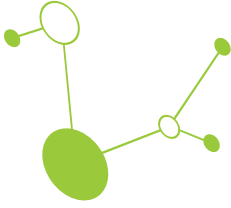
The most significant problems identified include:

- limited knowledge of degraded land and soil contamination among local authorities;
- insufficient availability of comprehensive databases describing degraded land resources;
- fragmented environmental information dispersed among different institutions;
- relatively low priority assigned to soil protection compared with other environmental issues such as air and water quality;
- insufficient exchange of information between public authorities, research institutions and land users;
- limited awareness of opportunities offered by non-food agricultural production and nature-based solutions.

These challenges considerably reduce the efficiency of land-use planning and often prevent degraded land from being incorporated into regional development strategies.

2.2. Institutional challenges

Local administrations constitute the primary providers and future users of information contained in the Central European database. Nevertheless, the initial survey revealed that many



municipalities possess only limited information regarding the existing forms of land degradation, their location, characteristics and environmental condition of degraded land situated within their administrative boundaries.

In many cases, environmental responsibilities are divided among several administrative departments, resulting in fragmented information management and reduced institutional efficiency. Moreover, many municipalities do not maintain dedicated databases describing degraded land, while existing national or regional information systems often lack sufficient spatial resolution or detailed environmental data required for local decision-making.

Another important challenge concerns communication between research institutions and public administration. Traditional communication methods remain labour-intensive, whereas electronic communication frequently fails to reach the appropriate officials responsible for environmental management. Experiences gained during the preparation of the PoLaRecCE database demonstrated that cooperation with municipalities requires continuous communication, institutional support and direct engagement rather than one-off information campaigns.

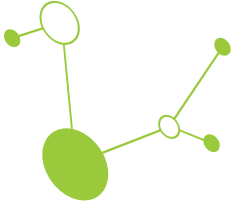
2.3. Opportunities for sustainable land management

Despite the challenges identified, the survey also demonstrated considerable opportunities for improving degraded land management through enhanced cooperation and knowledge exchange. The development of the Central European database provides, for the first time within the project regions, a common platform integrating environmental information relevant to degraded land suitable for non-food agricultural production. The database has the potential to become an important decision-support instrument facilitating:

identification of degraded land suitable for sustainable utilisation;

- exchange of information between different administrative levels;
- planning of environmental restoration measures;
- identification of potential locations for biomass production;
- support for regional planning and sustainable investment;
- dissemination of good practices developed within the PoLaRecCE project.

The long-term value of the database will depend not only on its technical quality but also on its continuous updating and practical use by stakeholders representing different sectors.



2.4. Stakeholder landscape

Successful implementation of the strategy requires active cooperation among numerous stakeholder groups representing different sectors of society.

Within the PoLaRecCE project six principal stakeholder groups have been identified.

Local administrations

Local administrations constitute the most important target group because they are responsible for spatial planning, environmental management and, in many cases, ownership of degraded land. They also represent the principal contributors of information to the Central European database.

Regional administrations

Regional authorities play an important coordinating role by supporting municipalities, disseminating information and facilitating data collection across larger territorial units.

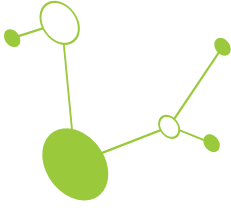
Farmers and agricultural organisations

Although relatively few pilot sites are privately owned, farmers remain important future users of degraded land, particularly in regions where non-food agricultural production may become an economically viable alternative.

Citizens and local communities

Public awareness is essential for increasing social acceptance of land restoration activities and promoting sustainable environmental management. Citizens also represent potential users of publicly available information contained in the database.

Universities and educational institutions



Research organisations and educational institutions contribute scientific knowledge, provide training activities and ensure the long-term transfer of knowledge to future professionals involved in environmental management.

Small and medium-sized enterprises

SMEs and potential investors constitute an important stakeholder group because the database may facilitate identification of suitable locations for biomass production, industrial crops and other environmentally sustainable business activities.

2.5. Stakeholder needs

Although stakeholder expectations differ according to their institutional roles, several common needs were identified during consultations carried out within the project.

These include:

- easy access to reliable information;
- user-friendly database functionality;
- practical guidance on degraded land management;
- examples of successful restoration practices;
- opportunities for training and knowledge exchange;
- continuous communication with scientific institutions;
- long-term availability and maintenance of the database.

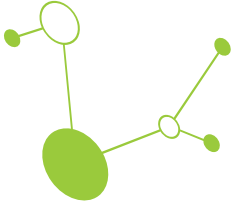
Addressing these needs constitutes one of the principal objectives of the present strategy and action plans.

2.6. Strategic Implications

The findings presented above clearly indicate that successful implementation of the Central European database requires considerably more than the creation of an online information platform.

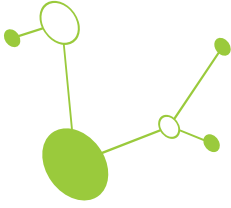
Long-term success depends upon:

- increasing stakeholder awareness;



- strengthening institutional cooperation;
- improving environmental knowledge;
- facilitating access to reliable information;
- supporting capacity building at local and regional levels;
- promoting continuous stakeholder engagement beyond the duration of the PoLaRecCE project.

Consequently, the strategy presented in the following chapters adopts an integrated approach combining communication, education, institutional cooperation and practical implementation measures to ensure that the database becomes an effective instrument supporting sustainable management of degraded land throughout Central Europe.



3. Strategic Framework

3.1. Vision

The vision of the strategy and action plans is to establish the Central European database as a long-term knowledge and decision-support instrument enabling sustainable management, restoration and productive reuse of degraded land across Central Europe. The database should become a recognised platform supporting cooperation between public authorities, scientific institutions, land users and private stakeholders by providing reliable information on degraded areas and facilitating evidence-based decisions regarding their future management. In the long term, the strategy aims to contribute to a transition from fragmented and reactive management of degraded land towards integrated, knowledge-based and sustainable land-use planning.

3.2. Mission

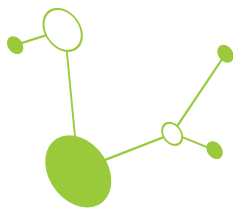
The mission of the strategy is to ensure that the Central European database developed within the PoLaRecCE project is actively used, continuously improved and effectively integrated into decision-making processes related to degraded land management.

This mission will be achieved through:

- strengthening stakeholder awareness and knowledge;
- improving communication between institutions responsible for land management;
- supporting capacity building among database users;
- promoting cooperation between public authorities, research institutions and private stakeholders;
- encouraging continuous data collection and updating;
- facilitating the practical application of information on degraded land for sustainable non-food agricultural activities.

3.3. Strategic approach

The strategy follows an integrated stakeholder-oriented approach based on three complementary pillars:



Pillar 1 - Knowledge and Information accessibility

Reliable and accessible information represents the foundation for effective degraded land management. The Central European database provides a common platform for collecting, organising and sharing information on degraded areas.

The strategic objective under this pillar is to ensure that relevant stakeholders are aware of the database, understand its functionality and can effectively use the available information.

Key directions:

- dissemination of information about the database;
- development of user-friendly access mechanisms;
- promotion of database use among public authorities and potential land users;
- support for continuous improvement of data quality.

Pillar 2 - Stakeholder capacity building and cooperation

The sustainable management of degraded land requires cooperation among institutions representing different sectors and administrative levels.

The strategy therefore places strong emphasis on:

- training activities;
- workshops and seminars;
- knowledge exchange;
- cooperation between municipalities, regional authorities and research institutions;
- involvement of farmers, businesses and educational institutions.

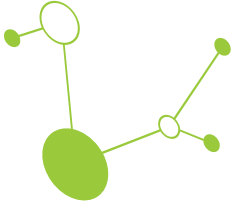
The objective is to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders to identify, evaluate and sustainably manage degraded land.

Pillar 3 - Long-term sustainability and integration

The effectiveness of the database depends on its continued use after the end of the PoLaRecCE project.

Therefore, the strategy promotes:

- integration of the database into existing planning processes;
- continuous data updating by stakeholders;



- institutional ownership and responsibility;
- development of future cooperation mechanisms;
- use of the database as a support tool for environmental and regional development policies.

3.4. Strategic objectives

Based on the challenges identified during the project and the needs of stakeholder groups, five strategic objectives have been defined.

Strategic objective 1 (SO1)

Increase awareness and knowledge regarding degraded land management among stakeholders

Many local and regional authorities have limited knowledge regarding the identification, evaluation and management of degraded land. Improving awareness represents a fundamental condition for effective use of the database.

Main directions:

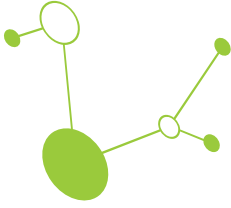
- organisation of information meetings and workshops;
- dissemination of guidance materials;
- presentation of examples of sustainable degraded land management;
- promotion of project results through communication channels.

Expected results:

- increased stakeholder awareness;
- improved understanding of degraded land management options;
- wider recognition of the database as a useful information source.

Strategic objective 2 (SO2)

Promote the effective use of the Central European database as a decision-support tool



The database should not function only as a repository of information but as a practical instrument supporting environmental management and land-use planning.

Main directions:

- providing information about database functionalities;
- supporting users in accessing and interpreting available data;
- encouraging municipalities and regional authorities to use database information in planning processes.

Expected results:

- increased number of database users;
- improved access to information on degraded land;
- enhanced evidence-based decision-making.

Strategic objective 3 (SO3)**Strengthen cooperation among administrative levels and stakeholder groups**

Effective degraded land management requires cooperation between local authorities, regional institutions, research organisations and private stakeholders.

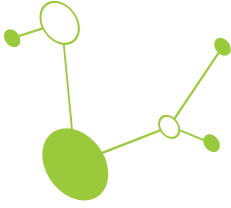
Main directions:

- establishing communication channels between stakeholder groups;
- organising joint meetings and workshops;
- promoting exchange of experience between regions.

Expected results:

- stronger institutional cooperation;
- improved coordination of activities;
- wider dissemination of good practices.

Strategic objective 4 (SO4)



Develop stakeholder capacity through education, training and knowledge transfer

Long-term sustainability requires that future users possess adequate knowledge and skills.

Main directions:

- educational activities for students and young professionals;
- training for public administration staff;
- workshops for farmers and SMEs;
- dissemination of scientific knowledge in accessible formats.

Expected results:

- improved competence among database users;
- increased involvement of educational institutions;
- better transfer of knowledge between science and practice.

Strategic objective 5 (SO5)

Ensure long-term sustainability and further development of the database

The continuation of database use after the project period represents a key success factor.

Main directions:

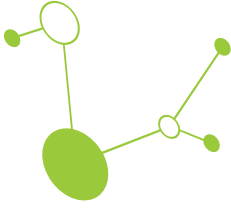
- encouraging regular updating of information;
- promoting institutional responsibility;
- integrating database use into future environmental management activities;
- exploring possibilities for further expansion of the database.

Expected results:

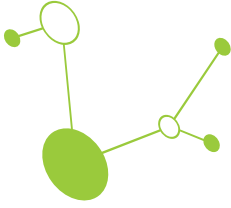
- continued availability of the database;
- increasing geographical coverage;
- long-term contribution to sustainable land management.

3.5. Strategic principles

Implementation of the strategy is based on the following principles:



- All activities should be supported by reliable environmental information and scientific knowledge.
- Users and beneficiaries should be actively involved in database development and further improvement.
- Information should be provided in a clear and accessible manner to facilitate broad utilisation.
- Successful degraded land management requires collaboration across administrative, scientific and economic sectors.
- Activities initiated within the PoLaRecCE project should generate lasting benefits beyond the project duration.



4. Stakeholder engagement strategy

4.1. General approach

The successful implementation and long-term sustainability of the Central European database depend primarily on the active participation of stakeholders representing different administrative levels, economic sectors and social groups. Stakeholder engagement should therefore be regarded as a continuous process rather than a single dissemination activity undertaken during the project lifetime.

The engagement strategy adopted within the PoLaRecCE project is based on five complementary principles:

- inclusiveness;
- transparency;
- knowledge sharing;
- long-term cooperation;
- continuous communication.

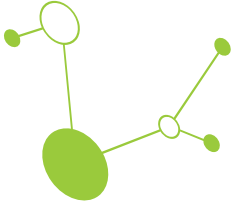
Rather than promoting the database as a standalone project output, the strategy aims to integrate its use into everyday environmental management, spatial planning, education and investment planning.

4.2. Local administrations

Strategic rationale

Local administrations represent the primary users and contributors of the Central European database. They are responsible for spatial planning, local environmental management and, in many cases, the ownership or administration of degraded land.

The stakeholder survey carried out within the PoLaRecCE project demonstrated that municipalities frequently possess only fragmented information regarding degraded areas. Environmental responsibilities are often divided among different departments, while soil-related issues generally receive less attention than air quality, waste management or water protection. As a consequence, municipalities rarely maintain comprehensive inventories of degraded land and often lack practical guidance regarding its future utilisation.



Strategic objective

To strengthen the capacity of local administrations to identify, manage and sustainably utilise degraded land through regular use and continuous updating of the Central European database.

Engagement approach

The strategy adopts a capacity-building approach combining knowledge transfer, institutional cooperation and practical support.

Priority will be given to direct communication with municipalities through workshops, seminars and technical meetings, enabling local authorities to become active partners in database development rather than passive recipients of project information.

The engagement process should encourage municipalities to regard the database as an operational planning tool supporting environmental management and local development policies.

Key actions

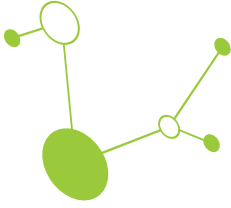
The following activities will be implemented:

- organisation of regional workshops;
- practical demonstrations of database functionality;
- dissemination of user guidelines;
- technical support for database users;
- promotion of regular database updating;
- exchange of experience between municipalities participating in the project;
- dissemination of information through official administrative communication channels.

Expected outcomes

Implementation of these activities is expected to result in:

- increased awareness among municipal staff;
- improved knowledge of degraded land management;
- wider use of the database during local planning;
- systematic updating of database records;
- stronger cooperation between municipalities and project partners.



4.3. Regional administrations

Strategic rationale

Regional authorities play an essential coordinating role between national institutions and local administrations. Although they frequently possess regional environmental datasets, they often lack detailed information concerning degraded land at municipal level. Regional administrations may therefore significantly contribute to improving information exchange and supporting municipalities in database implementation. Their institutional position also enables them to promote the database beyond the pilot regions.

Strategic objective

To establish regional administrations as facilitators of database dissemination, institutional cooperation and regional capacity building.

Engagement approach

The strategy promotes cooperation through:

- regional coordination meetings;
- policy-oriented seminars;
- joint communication with municipalities;
- integration of database promotion into regional environmental initiatives.

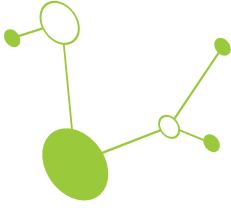
Regional authorities should be encouraged to include the Central European database within their broader environmental information systems whenever appropriate.

Key actions

- regional workshops;
- presentations during regional meetings;
- dissemination through administrative networks;
- support for questionnaire distribution;
- promotion via regional communication platforms;
- cooperation with regional associations.

Expected outcomes

- stronger institutional coordination;



- increased regional visibility of the database;
- improved communication between administrative levels;
- expansion of database use beyond pilot municipalities.

4.4. Farmers and farmers' organisations

Strategic rationale

Although municipalities constitute the principal owners of degraded land included in the project, farmers remain important stakeholders due to their potential role in future non-food agricultural production. The importance of this stakeholder group is particularly evident in the Hungarian pilot regions, where agricultural organisations directly participate in project implementation. Farmers may become future users of degraded land for biomass production, industrial crops and other environmentally sustainable agricultural activities.

Strategic objective

To increase farmers' awareness of opportunities related to sustainable utilisation of degraded land and to promote practical application of project results.

Engagement approach

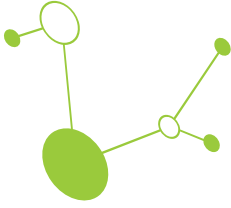
Communication with farmers should emphasise practical benefits, demonstration activities and peer-to-peer knowledge exchange. Activities should combine technical information with practical field experience obtained during pilot implementation.

Key actions

- field demonstrations;
- tree-planting events;
- workshops;
- cooperation with agricultural chambers;
- dissemination through farmers' organisations;
- promotion via agricultural media.

Expected outcomes

- increased awareness of non-food agriculture;



- improved cooperation with municipalities;
- greater interest in degraded land utilisation;
- wider dissemination of project solutions within farming communities.

4.5. Citizens and local communities

Strategic rationale

Public acceptance represents an important prerequisite for successful implementation of sustainable land management initiatives. Although citizens are not expected to contribute directly to database maintenance, they constitute an important audience for communication activities promoting environmental awareness and understanding of degraded land restoration.

Strategic objective

To improve public awareness regarding degraded land management and promote wider recognition of the environmental and social benefits associated with sustainable land restoration.

Engagement approach

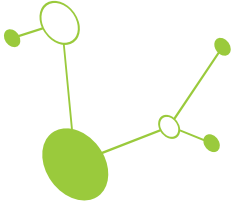
Communication activities should focus on accessibility and practical examples rather than technical aspects of database management. Public events should present successful pilot activities and demonstrate the potential environmental benefits resulting from degraded land recovery.

Key actions

- promotional events;
- public presentations;
- demonstrations at pilot sites;
- municipal websites;
- social media campaigns;
- educational materials.

Expected outcomes

- increased public awareness;
- greater acceptance of project activities;



- stronger community support for sustainable land management.

4.6. Universities, educational institutions and youth

Strategic rationale

Higher education institutions and secondary schools play a fundamental role in ensuring the long-term sustainability of the project outcomes. Universities are not only users of scientific information but also important multipliers capable of transferring knowledge to future professionals involved in agriculture, environmental protection, landscape planning, spatial management and regional development. Within the PoLaRecCE project, several academic partners have already incorporated project results and the Central European database into educational activities. These experiences provide an excellent foundation for developing long-term educational programmes that extend beyond the project lifetime.

Strategic objective

To strengthen education and knowledge transfer by integrating the Central European database and the project's scientific results into university curricula, vocational education and lifelong learning activities.

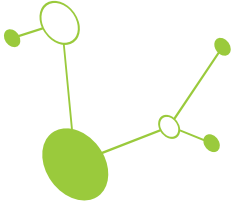
Engagement approach

Educational activities should combine theoretical knowledge with practical experience obtained from demonstration sites and pilot actions. Particular emphasis should be placed on developing interdisciplinary competences by linking environmental sciences, agriculture, spatial planning, economics and public administration. Students should be encouraged not only to use the database but also to understand the wider environmental, economic and social context of degraded land management.

Key actions

The strategy foresees the following activities:

- integration of the database into university courses;
- practical classes using project case studies;
- field visits to demonstration sites;
- seminars and workshops for university students;



- educational activities in secondary schools;
- involvement of students in communication and dissemination campaigns;
- development of educational materials supporting sustainable land management.

Expected outcomes

Implementation of these activities is expected to:

- increase environmental awareness among young people;
- strengthen practical education in land management;
- promote interdisciplinary cooperation between universities;
- encourage future professionals to apply sustainable approaches to degraded land management;
- ensure long-term dissemination of project knowledge through educational systems.

4.7. Small and medium-sized enterprises and potential business partners

Strategic rationale

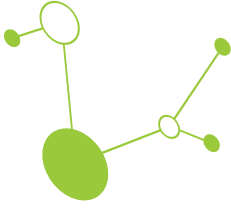
Small and medium-sized enterprises represent an important stakeholder group because they may become future users of degraded land for biomass production, industrial crops and other non-food agricultural activities. Reliable information regarding land availability and environmental conditions reduces investment uncertainty and facilitates identification of suitable locations for sustainable economic activities.

The Central European database therefore has the potential to become an important source of information supporting environmentally responsible investments and the development of regional bioeconomy initiatives.

Strategic objective

To promote the Central European database as a practical decision-support tool facilitating sustainable investments on degraded land.

Engagement approach



Communication with businesses should focus on practical benefits rather than technical characteristics of the database. Potential investors should be provided with clear information demonstrating how the database may support site selection, environmental risk assessment and identification of opportunities for biomass production and other industrial applications. Cooperation with business organisations and regional development institutions should further enhance dissemination among potential investors.

Key actions

The strategy includes:

- seminars dedicated to SMEs;
- workshops presenting project solutions;
- individual meetings with potential investors;
- participation in regional business events;
- presentations during exhibitions and conferences;
- electronic dissemination of project information;
- promotion through business networks and social media.

Expected outcomes

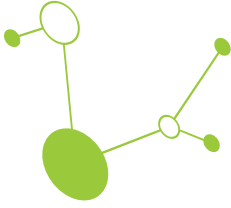
Implementation of these activities is expected to:

- increase awareness of investment opportunities associated with degraded land;
- encourage environmentally sustainable business initiatives;
- improve cooperation between businesses and public authorities;
- facilitate wider application of non-food agricultural production in Central Europe.

4.8. Cross-cutting communication principles

Although individual stakeholder groups differ considerably in their institutional responsibilities and information needs, several communication principles should be applied consistently throughout the implementation of the strategy.

Tailored Communication



Communication activities should be adapted to the characteristics, expectations and responsibilities of individual stakeholder groups. Technical information should be presented in a form appropriate to the knowledge and professional background of each audience.

Continuous Engagement

Stakeholder engagement should be regarded as an ongoing process rather than a sequence of isolated dissemination events. Regular communication strengthens trust, encourages cooperation and increases the likelihood of long-term database utilisation.

Two-way Communication

The strategy promotes active dialogue rather than one-way dissemination of information. Stakeholders should be encouraged to provide feedback, propose improvements and actively contribute to further database development.

Practical Demonstration

Wherever possible, theoretical information should be supported by practical examples, demonstration sites and pilot activities illustrating successful approaches to degraded land management.

Digital and Face-to-face Communication

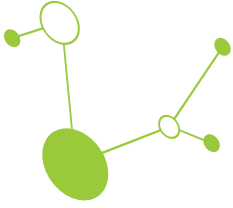
The strategy combines traditional meetings, workshops and conferences with digital communication channels, including project websites, social media, newsletters and online training activities. This integrated approach increases accessibility while maintaining opportunities for direct interaction.

4.9. Expected strategic impact

Implementation of the stakeholder engagement strategy is expected to generate benefits extending well beyond the duration of the PoLaRecCE project.

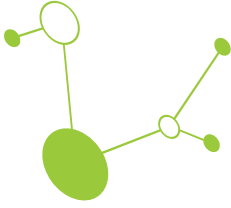
In particular, the strategy will contribute to:

- improving institutional cooperation across administrative levels;
- strengthening environmental governance related to degraded land management;
- increasing the practical use of scientific knowledge in decision-making;



- supporting wider application of non-food agricultural solutions;
- improving environmental awareness among public authorities, businesses and citizens;
- enhancing the long-term sustainability of the Central European database.

By creating an active network of informed and engaged stakeholders, the strategy establishes favourable conditions for the continued development of the database as an important instrument supporting sustainable land management throughout Central Europe.



5. Communication and capacity building strategy

5.1. Purpose

Effective stakeholder engagement requires not only the dissemination of information but also the continuous development of knowledge, practical skills and institutional capacity. Communication and capacity building therefore constitute essential components of the overall strategy and action plan. The communication activities proposed within the PoLaRecCE project aim to increase awareness of degraded land management, promote the practical use of the Central European database and encourage long-term cooperation among public authorities, research institutions, businesses and civil society. At the same time, capacity-building activities are designed to improve stakeholders' ability to interpret environmental information, apply project results in everyday practice and actively contribute to the further development of the database.

5.2. Communication objectives

The communication strategy pursues five complementary objectives.

C01 - Increase awareness

Improve understanding of degraded land issues and promote recognition of the Central European database as an important information resource supporting sustainable land management.

C02 - Facilitate knowledge transfer

Ensure that scientific knowledge generated during the project is effectively transferred to public authorities, practitioners, educational institutions and businesses.

C03 - Promote stakeholder participation

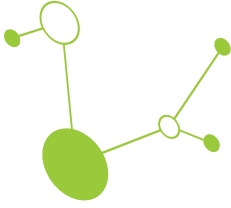
Encourage active involvement of stakeholders in the use, updating and continuous improvement of the database.

C04 - Support evidence-based decision-making

Promote wider application of reliable environmental information in spatial planning, environmental management and regional development.

C05 - Strengthen long-term cooperation

Develop permanent communication channels supporting cooperation among institutions after completion of the project.



5.3. Communication principles

Implementation of communication activities should follow several general principles.

Transparency

Information should be presented in a clear, understandable and objective manner. Stakeholders should receive reliable information concerning both the capabilities and limitations of the database.

Accessibility

Communication materials should be adapted to different stakeholder groups, avoiding unnecessary technical terminology where possible while maintaining scientific credibility.

Consistency

All project partners should communicate using consistent terminology, common visual identity and harmonised messages reflecting the objectives of the PoLaRecCE project.

Inclusiveness

Communication activities should involve representatives of all stakeholder groups identified within the strategy, ensuring equal access to information regardless of institutional background.

Continuity

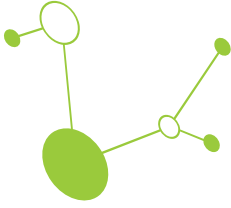
Communication should continue throughout the project lifecycle and, whenever possible, beyond project completion in order to support long-term database utilisation.

5.4. Communication channels

A combination of complementary communication channels should be used to maximise stakeholder outreach and ensure effective dissemination of project results.

Project website

The project website constitutes the primary source of information concerning the Central European database, project objectives, demonstration activities and publicly available project outputs.



It should provide:

- information about project activities;
- access to the database;
- project news;
- publications;
- guidance documents;
- contact information.

Social media

Social media platforms enable rapid dissemination of project information to diverse stakeholder groups and facilitate interaction with citizens, students and professional communities.

Regular communication should include:

- project updates;
- promotion of events;
- presentation of pilot activities;
- examples of good practice;
- educational materials.

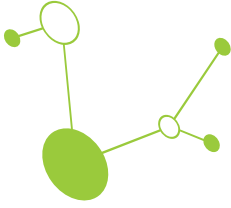
Workshops and seminars

Interactive workshops represent one of the most effective methods for improving stakeholder knowledge and promoting practical use of the database.

Depending on the target audience, workshops may focus on:

- database functionality;
- degraded land identification;
- sustainable land management;
- non-food agricultural production;
- environmental legislation;
- project case studies.

Conferences and Scientific Events



Participation in scientific conferences provides opportunities for disseminating project results among researchers, policymakers and international organisations.

Conference presentations should highlight:

- scientific achievements;
- innovative project methodologies;
- practical applications of the database;
- future research perspectives.

Demonstration Sites

Pilot sites established within the PoLaRecCE project constitute valuable communication tools illustrating practical implementation of sustainable land management solutions. Demonstration activities enable stakeholders to observe project results directly and facilitate discussion of practical implementation challenges.

Educational Activities

Educational institutions represent important multipliers of project knowledge.

Educational communication should include:

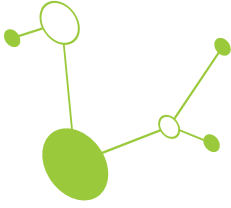
- university lectures;
- student workshops;
- field exercises;
- school presentations;
- educational competitions where appropriate;
- teaching materials developed using project results.

5.5. Capacity building

Communication alone does not ensure effective implementation of project results.

Therefore, the strategy places particular emphasis on strengthening stakeholder capacity through systematic education and training.

Capacity-building activities should focus on:



- improving understanding of degraded land management;
- increasing practical skills related to database use;
- strengthening institutional cooperation;
- developing competencies required for sustainable land-use planning.

Training Activities

Training programmes should be adapted to the needs of individual stakeholder groups.

Typical training modules may include:

- introduction to degraded land management;
- practical use of the Central European database;
- interpretation of environmental information;
- examples of pilot implementations;
- good practices from participating regions.

Knowledge Exchange

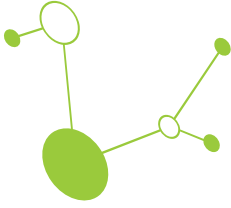
An important element of capacity building is the exchange of practical experience among project partners and stakeholders.

Knowledge exchange should be promoted through:

- thematic workshops;
- study visits;
- peer-learning activities;
- technical meetings;
- exchange of educational materials;
- presentations of successful pilot implementations.

5.6. Dissemination of good practices

The pilot activities implemented within the PoLaRecCE project provide numerous examples of sustainable degraded land management that should be widely disseminated. Communication should emphasise practical experience obtained during project implementation rather than only theoretical recommendations.



Good practice examples should demonstrate:

- successful stakeholder cooperation;
- effective restoration approaches;
- innovative land management techniques;
- practical application of database information;
- environmental and socio-economic benefits achieved through project activities.

5.7. Long-term communication

The effectiveness of the strategy depends upon maintaining communication after completion of the project.

Project partners are therefore encouraged to continue promoting the database through their institutional communication channels whenever possible.

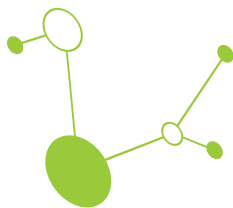
Long-term communication should include:

- continued dissemination of project publications;
- presentations during scientific and professional events;
- integration of project results into educational programmes;
- continued cooperation with municipalities;
- promotion of future initiatives building upon the PoLaRecCE project.

5.8. Expected results

Implementation of the communication and capacity building strategy is expected to deliver the following results:

- increased recognition of the Central European database among target stakeholder groups;
- improved knowledge of degraded land management;
- stronger cooperation between research institutions and public authorities;
- greater involvement of municipalities in database maintenance;
- wider dissemination of project outputs;
- improved stakeholder capacity to apply project results in practice;
- enhanced long-term sustainability of the database.



6. Action plan

6.1 Introduction

The action plan translates the strategic objectives presented in Chapter 3 into a coordinated set of implementation measures. It provides a practical framework supporting stakeholder engagement, communication and long-term utilisation of the Central European database developed within the PoLaRecCE project.

The proposed actions are based on experiences gained during project implementation, stakeholder consultations and pilot activities carried out in the participating regions. They are designed to strengthen institutional cooperation, improve knowledge transfer and ensure the sustainable use of the database beyond the project lifetime.

Implementation of the action plan requires close cooperation among all project partners and active participation of the identified stakeholder groups.

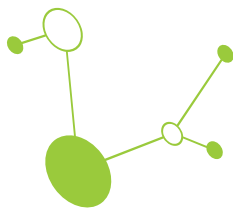
6.2 Strategic objectives

Strategic Objective 1 (SO1)

Increase awareness and knowledge regarding degraded land management among stakeholders

Limited awareness of degraded land management remains one of the principal barriers to the effective use of environmental information and sustainable land-use planning. Surveys conducted within the PoLaRecCE project demonstrated that many local and regional authorities, as well as other stakeholder groups, possess only fragmented knowledge regarding soil degradation, available restoration measures and opportunities for productive land reuse. Increasing awareness therefore represents a fundamental prerequisite for the successful implementation and long-term use of the Central European database.

The strategy seeks to improve stakeholders' understanding of degraded land management by combining scientific knowledge with practical experience gained through pilot activities. Communication activities should promote both the environmental importance of degraded land restoration and the practical benefits of using the database as a decision-support tool.



Main directions

- organise information meetings, workshops and awareness-raising events;
- disseminate guidance materials and practical recommendations;
- present successful examples of degraded land restoration and non-food agricultural production;
- promote project achievements through communication and dissemination activities;
- encourage dialogue between scientific institutions, public authorities and local communities.

Expected results

- increased stakeholder awareness of degraded land management;
- improved understanding of sustainable land-use opportunities;
- wider recognition of the Central European database as a reliable source of environmental information.

Strategic Objective 2 (SO2)

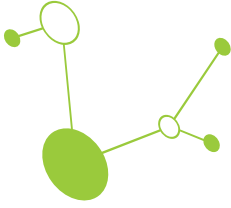
Promote the effective use of the Central European database as a decision-support tool

The Central European database has been developed to facilitate evidence-based decision-making related to the identification, assessment and sustainable utilisation of degraded land. Its long-term value depends not only on the availability of reliable information but also on the willingness and capacity of stakeholders to integrate this information into everyday planning and management processes. The database should therefore function as an operational decision-support instrument rather than merely a repository of environmental data.

The strategy promotes practical application of the database by improving accessibility, demonstrating its functionality and encouraging regular use by public authorities, researchers, land managers and potential investors. Particular emphasis is placed on supporting stakeholders in interpreting available information and applying it in environmental planning and investment decisions.

Main directions

- promote the functionality and practical applications of the database;
- provide guidance on accessing and interpreting environmental information;



- encourage municipalities and regional authorities to integrate database information into planning processes;
- support regular use of the database through training and technical assistance;
- promote the database among potential users from the public and private sectors.

Expected results

- increased number of active database users;
- improved access to reliable information on degraded land;
- enhanced evidence-based environmental planning and decision-making.

Strategic Objective 3 (SO3)

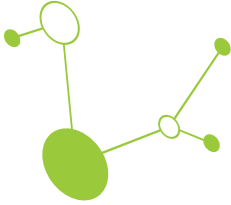
Strengthen cooperation among administrative levels and stakeholder groups

The sustainable management of degraded land requires effective cooperation among public authorities, research institutions, landowners, businesses and civil society. Although these stakeholder groups often pursue different objectives, they share a common interest in improving environmental quality and promoting the productive reuse of degraded land. The Central European database should therefore serve not only as an information repository but also as a platform facilitating communication, cooperation and joint decision-making.

The strategy promotes stronger institutional cooperation by encouraging regular interaction between local administrations, regional authorities, universities, farmers' organisations, SMEs and environmental agencies. Particular emphasis should be placed on exchanging practical experience among pilot regions and transferring successful solutions to other territories facing similar environmental challenges.

Main directions

- strengthen cooperation between local and regional administrations;
- establish permanent communication channels among stakeholder groups;
- organise joint workshops, seminars and thematic meetings;
- promote exchange of experiences between pilot regions;
- encourage cross-border cooperation on degraded land management;



- support networking among scientific institutions, public authorities and business organisations.

Expected results

- improved coordination of activities among stakeholders;
- stronger institutional partnerships;
- wider dissemination of good practices;
- increased participation in database development;
- enhanced regional cooperation supporting sustainable land management.

Strategic Objective 4 (SO4)

Develop stakeholder capacity through education, training and knowledge transfer

Long-term success depends on the knowledge and competences of database users. Building stakeholder capacity therefore represents one of the key priorities of the strategy. Training activities should not be limited to technical aspects of database use but should also improve understanding of degraded land management, environmental legislation, nature-based solutions and sustainable non-food agricultural production.

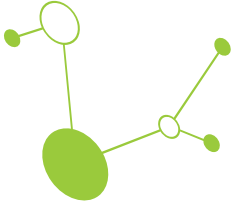
Educational activities should address different target groups according to their specific needs and responsibilities. Public administration requires practical guidance supporting environmental planning, whereas universities and schools should focus on developing future professionals capable of implementing innovative approaches to land restoration.

Knowledge transfer should combine scientific evidence with practical examples generated during the PoLaRecCE project.

Main directions

- organise training sessions for local and regional administrations;
- integrate project results into university curricula;
- develop educational materials and practical guidance documents;
- organise field demonstrations and study visits;
- support lifelong learning activities for professionals;
- encourage participation of students and young professionals in dissemination activities.

Expected results



- increased stakeholder competence;
- improved understanding of degraded land management;
- stronger links between science and practice;
- wider application of project results;
- long-term knowledge transfer through educational institutions.

Strategic Objective 5 (SO5)

Ensure long-term sustainability and further development of the Central European database

The Central European database represents one of the principal outputs of the PoLaRecCE project. Its long-term value depends on continuous maintenance, regular updating and practical application after completion of project activities. Sustainability should therefore be considered throughout the implementation process rather than only after the project ends.

The strategy promotes institutional ownership of the database by encouraging public authorities and partner organisations to integrate its use into routine environmental management and spatial planning activities. Future expansion should include additional municipalities, regions and countries, enabling the database to evolve into a broader European knowledge platform supporting sustainable land management.

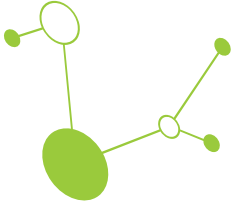
Further development may also benefit from future European research and territorial cooperation projects addressing soil health, climate adaptation, circular bioeconomy and ecosystem restoration.

Main directions

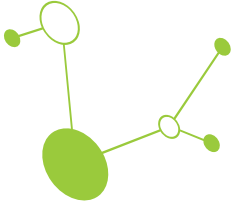
- ensure continuous technical maintenance of the database;
- encourage regular updating of environmental information;
- integrate database use into regional and local planning procedures;
- promote long-term institutional cooperation among project partners;
- expand geographical coverage beyond pilot regions;
- seek complementary funding opportunities supporting database development.

Expected results

- continued availability and functionality of the database;
- increased geographical coverage;
- sustainable institutional ownership;



- wider use in environmental planning and policy development;
- long-term contribution to sustainable management of degraded land across Central Europe.



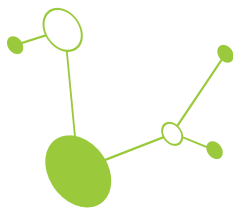
7. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Effective implementation of the strategy requires continuous monitoring of progress and regular evaluation of achieved results. Monitoring activities will enable project partners to assess whether the planned stakeholder engagement measures effectively contribute to increased awareness, wider use of the Central European database and stronger institutional cooperation.

The monitoring framework combines quantitative indicators with qualitative assessment, allowing evaluation not only of project outputs but also of behavioural and organisational changes among stakeholder groups.

Indicator	Target	Monitoring method
Number of stakeholder events	according to partner action plans	event reports
Number of participants	increasing annually	attendance lists
Number of database users	continuously increasing	database statistics
Number of new database records	annual increase	database monitoring
Number of communication activities	according to dissemination plans	dissemination reports
Stakeholder satisfaction	>60% positive feedback	evaluation questionnaires
New institutional collaborations	increasing	partner reports

The Lead Partner, together with project partners responsible for communication and stakeholder engagement, will coordinate monitoring activities. Results should be reviewed regularly during project meetings and used to improve future implementation.

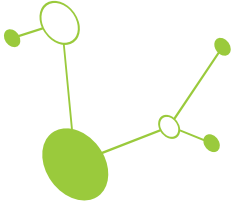


8. Risk Assessment

Successful implementation of the strategy may be affected by several organisational, technical and institutional risks. Early identification of these risks enables project partners to implement appropriate mitigation measures.

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation measures
Low stakeholder participation	Medium	High	targeted communication, personalised invitations, cooperation with regional authorities
Limited database updates after project completion	Medium	High	define institutional responsibilities, provide user guidance and technical support
Insufficient awareness among municipalities	High	Medium	continuous training and dissemination activities
Technical problems affecting database accessibility	Low	High	regular maintenance, backup procedures and technical support
Limited financial resources after project completion	Medium	Medium	integration into future projects and institutional funding mechanisms
Changes in administrative structures or legislation	Medium	Medium	maintain flexible governance and cooperation with regional authorities
Low engagement of SMEs	Low	Medium	targeted business communication and demonstration of economic benefits

Regular review of risks should form part of annual implementation meetings, allowing corrective measures to be introduced whenever necessary.



9. Sustainability Plan

Long-term sustainability represents one of the principal objectives of the strategy. The Central European database should remain operational and continue supporting environmental decision-making after the completion of the PoLaRecCE project.

Project partners will promote continued cooperation through existing institutional networks, ensuring that the database remains accessible to public authorities, researchers, businesses and citizens.