



ACTION PLAN EVALUATION **CH3 RESTORING LIVING LANDSCAPES** **2017-2022**

13.9.2022

1. INTRODUCTION

A united community acting for nature: Luc Hoffmann's vision comes to life in Vaud.

Up until 2016, nature conservation in the canton of Vaud was carried out by several different organisations acting in relative isolation. Then, with support from the MAVA Foundation, NGOs, nature parks, and the Vaud government, came together to pool their skills, experience, and organisational diversity. A partnership charter was quickly adopted and the resulting 'Plateforme Nature Vaudoise' has since become a hub for nature conservation in Vaud.

Building on the Swiss national biodiversity action plan, the Plateforme quickly developed its own. This contains six strategies through which members act, and which complement other tools, approaches, and public policies:

- Strengthen ecological connectivity through improving wildlife corridors and key habitats - CHF 3,036,000;
- Evaluate and apply an ecosystem services approach - CHF 200,000;
- Strengthen education on biodiversity - CHF 265,000;
- Conserve and improve biodiversity through tourism and recreation - CHF 200,000;
- Improve biodiversity in urban spaces - CHF 200,000;
- Strengthen organisational synergies and promote active coordination within Plateforme Nature Vaudoise - CHF 50,000.

MAVA FOUNDATION TOTAL BUDGET

CHF
3,951,000

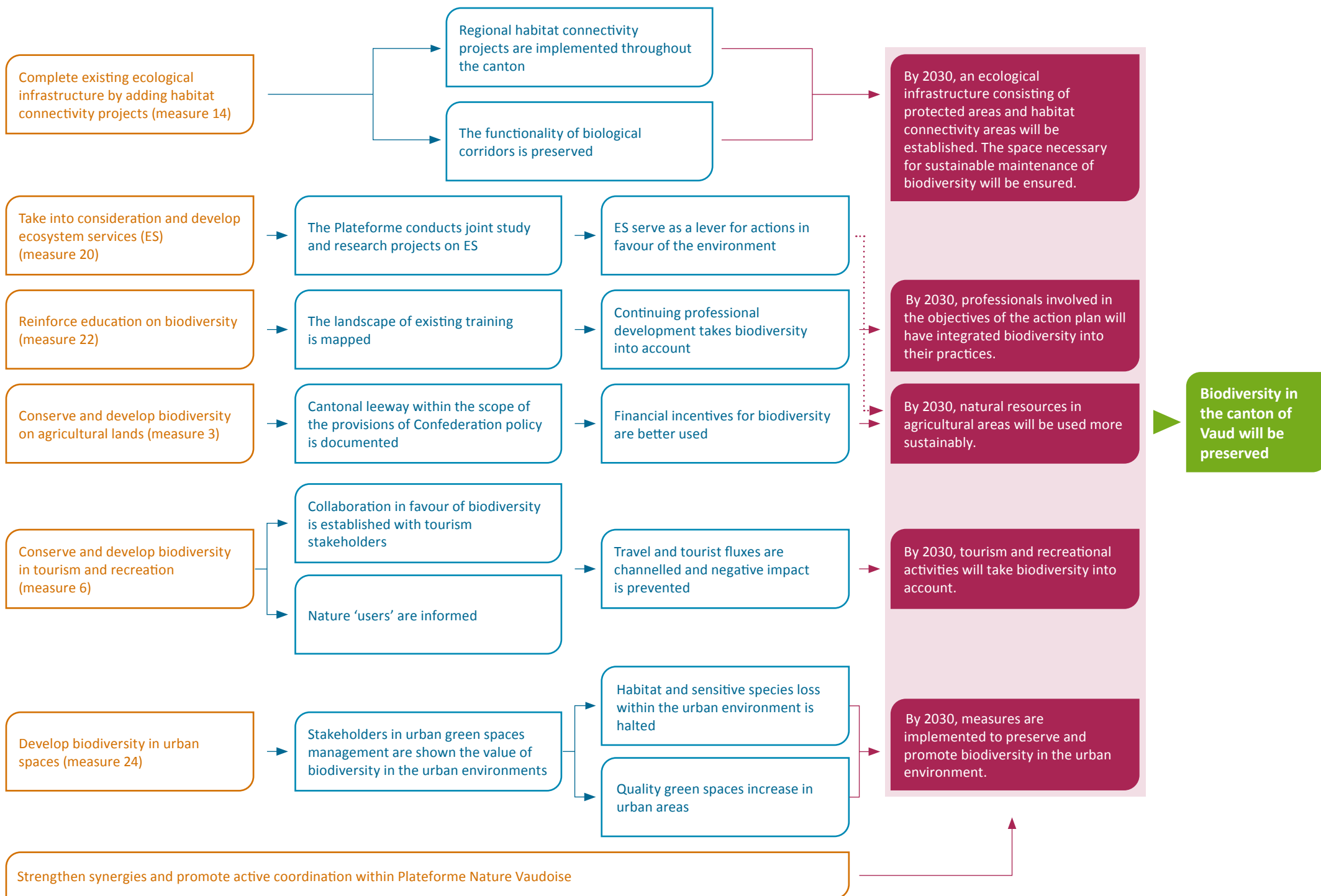


**Plateforme
Nature vaudoise**

Substantial support from the MAVA Foundation, complemented by Plateforme member fundraising, has made it possible to implement a series of projects that deliver on these strategies.

SIGNATORIES OF THE PLATEFORME NATURE VAUDOISE CHARTER





2. STRATEGIES AND PROGRESS

Most of the 10 projects that we conducted have had tangible impact on the ground through the creation and restoration of natural habitats. Others have laid lasting foundations for changes in professional practice, whether through professional development or through the adoption of new strategies and approaches that favour nature. We implemented seven main strategies:

STRENGTHEN ECOLOGICAL CONNECTIVITY THROUGH IMPROVING WILDLIFE CORRIDORS AND KEY HABITATS

This strategy was at the heart of our action plan. In line with their respective missions and resources, each member of the Plateforme took action on the ground to promote biodiversity and strengthen Vaud's existing network of natural habitats. Together, we carried out five area-based projects covering two-thirds of the canton, including many of its woods, hedges, high-value forests, ponds, lakes, and restored streams and rivers.

EVALUATE AND APPLY AN ECOSYSTEM SERVICES APPROACH

Jorat Nature Park took steps to encourage visitors to explore the benefits of natural areas. Together with Vaud's two other nature parks, we hired and trained 'nature ambassadors' so that they could explain the value of nature and ecosystem services to visitors.

STRENGTHEN EDUCATION ON BIODIVERSITY

With three institutions joining forces to implement this strategy, we established a series of training courses targeting professions that have a direct impact on nature and for which basic training in biodiversity was lacking. Following analysis of the existing training landscape and identification of gaps, we focused on delivering continuing education for professionals in tourism, construction, and urban green spaces management.

CONSERVE AND IMPROVE BIODIVERSITY THROUGH TOURISM AND RECREATION

Through this strategy, we sought to promote more sustainable tourism by informing tourists and tourism sector stakeholders about the challenges facing biodiversity conservation. We implemented this cross-cutting strategy by integrating it within several Plateforme projects.

CONSERVE AND IMPROVE BIODIVERSITY ON AGRICULTURAL LAND

Having drawn up our initial action plan, it became clear to us that cantonal services in charge of biodiversity were already implementing a number of conservation measures in collaboration with the farming community. To avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, we decided to await initial results of their activities before fully engaging in this strategy via the Plateforme.

IMPROVE BIODIVERSITY IN URBAN SPACES

To improve biodiversity in the urban environment, we sought to raise awareness amongst stakeholders involved in public and private green space management. We did this by supporting conservation initiatives in which both citizens and public authorities could participate. Through this strategy, the canton of Vaud, the Alliance Vaudoise Pour la Nature, and the three Vaud nature parks together developed and monitored several dozen projects, at the heart of all of which were habitat creation and native hedge planting.

STRENGTHEN ORGANISATIONAL SYNERGIES AND PROMOTE ACTIVE COORDINATION WITHIN PLATEFORME NATURE VAUDOISE

The Plateforme's regular quarterly meetings and the many bilateral exchanges within Plateforme projects allowed us to strengthen relationships and trust between members and breathe life into the principles of coordination and synergy set out in our founding charter.

SUMMARY

The creation of Plateforme Nature Vaudoise in 2019 marked a turning point for conservation in the canton of Vaud. It not only strengthened links between institutions active in the field of biodiversity but also led to the emergence of a multitude of projects within a common strategic framework. Coordination between members, coherent action, and financial support from the MAVA Foundation made it possible for us to change and significantly improve our activities while maximising positive impact for species and the natural environment.

KEY FINDINGS

Financial support from the MAVA Foundation and the creation of Plateforme Nature Vaudoise was a powerful catalyst for action.

1. The development of a Vaud biodiversity action plan based on the Swiss national biodiversity action plan played a unifying role across the Plateforme. And by explicitly selecting six strategies focused on areas with the greatest potential for improvement, we were able to deliver real impact and a strong return on investment.
2. Coordination within the Plateforme allowed us to use resources efficiently by avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort (e.g., on biodiversity and agriculture).
3. Initial support from the MAVA Foundation made us eligible for additional funding of nearly CHF 10 million in federal and cantonal subsidies. In addition, more than CHF 7 million was added to the budget for implementing the action plan.
4. Plateforme Nature Vaudoise has helped strengthen links between its members and improved coordination between all our activities in Vaud. It has also led to us setting up numerous inter-institutional projects.

3. RESULTS AND IMPACTS

STRENGTHEN WILDLIFE CORRIDORS THROUGH HABITAT CONNECTIVITY PROJECTS

This strategy had by far the most direct positive impact on the natural environment in the canton of Vaud.

More than 10 km of waterways restored
59 water bodies created or restored
33 forest habitats created
265 hedges and groves planted
78 small wildlife structures built
671 fruit trees planted
Several dozen projects to combat invasive species implemented

While unquestionably enhancing local and regional biodiversity, its contribution to supra-regional ecological connectivity remains to be determined.

EVALUATE AND APPLY AN ECOSYSTEM SERVICES APPROACH

Discussion of the concept and value of ecosystem services is something that is generally limited to research and policy circles but following training sessions organised for Plateforme Nature Vaudoise, we built this approach into several projects. While it is too early to assess how and in what circumstances the approach can be used to leverage action for nature in Vaud, the activities that we carried out in Jorat Nature Park show there is interest in applying the concept, especially when it comes to increasing public awareness and understanding.

STRENGTHEN EDUCATION ON BIODIVERSITY

As part of this strategy, we made an extensive inventory of existing training programmes. Mapping gaps and challenges, we identified tourism, and green spaces and urban management, as being especially important sectors for strengthening opportunities for continuing professional development in biodiversity and conservation. For each of these areas, we developed and delivered three training courses in 2022. Available to all members of the Plateforme, these training courses will be offered on an ongoing basis.

CONSERVE AND IMPROVE BIODIVERSITY THROUGH TOURISM AND RECREATION

We hired nature ambassadors in nature reserves and nature parks to raise awareness amongst visitors. In addition, many Vaud tourism sector stakeholders and outdoor enthusiasts were informed about the impacts of leisure activities on nature and how they can be reduced. This strategy complemented our professional training programmes for the tourism sector.

IMPROVE BIODIVERSITY IN URBAN SPACES

Following several calls for projects, numerous measures taken by municipalities and citizen groups helped improve biodiversity in the urban environment. One key measure was the replacement of non-native exotic shrubs with the planting of more than 4,000 m of native hedges. Although our activities directly improved the natural environment locally, we still need to secure change in municipal regulations to prevent unnecessary damage to biodiversity and to protect the few remaining natural areas in urban environments. We were, however, able to increase understanding amongst elected municipal officials, and in some cases to change regulations, for example, by introducing a ban on planting invasive species.

CASE 1: A NEW ALLIANCE FOR NATURE

L'Alliance Vaudoise Pour la Nature (AVPN) was founded by four NGO Plateforme members. Our shared objective was to improve biodiversity in the Orbe Plain. Over four years, the project team established good relationships with local municipalities and the public. And in a region with intensive agriculture and high population density, we implemented biodiversity measures, including green, blue, and black infrastructure grids, and created links with local stakeholders while conducting important awareness-raising. The initiative acted as a catalyst for action by authorities, landowners, associations, and the public, and in total, we carried out 75 projects and awareness-raising activities, and 11 more are already underway.



The Orbe Plain

CASE 2: INTEGRATING BIODIVERSITY IN PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Through this project, we sought to strengthen understanding of biodiversity in several professions that have a direct impact on nature. Our initial inventory of actors and existing educational programmes identified training gaps in three key professions: construction (design and planning), outdoor facilities management and tourism, and outdoor sports and recreation. In all, we created seven training

courses tailored to these three professions. Reaching dozens of participants daily, the courses have a multiplier effect by helping disseminate best professional practices beyond participants. All training materials are open access and available to all members of Plateforme Nature Vaudoise so that they can be easily distributed throughout the canton of Vaud and beyond.

OUR CONCLUSIONS FOLLOWING PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION CAN BE SUMMARISED AS FOLLOWS:

- Measures that favour biodiversity carried out by private owners or citizen groups have worked particularly well. Several hundred quality projects have been implemented.
- Most measures designed to improve ecological connectivity were carried out on sites made available by landowners. Where access, and the ability to manage land directly, were lacking, projects were much rarer. This opportunity-led way of operating makes the creation of a strategic set of projects on habitat improvement and ecological connectivity extremely difficult.
- While small and medium-scale projects are easy to implement, large projects regularly come up against administrative or technical constraints that take several years to overcome.
- Using the concept of ecosystem services to increase public awareness and understanding, and secure positive impacts for nature, has proven to be complex. However, it has helped us explore how the links between natural and cultural heritage, and related traditions and practices, might support conservation.
- The continuing professional education offer on biodiversity and conservation is relatively well-developed in Switzerland but not necessarily accessible to the most relevant stakeholders (green spaces managers, outdoor sports instructors, etc.). The impact of training in biodiversity would be much greater if it were integrated into basic professional training.
- In a densely populated country like Switzerland, the use of natural areas for recreational activities is intense, and it remains challenging to ensure such use respects nature. Awareness-raising campaigns need to be undertaken to reach a wider audience.
- The public underestimates the decline of biodiversity in Switzerland. Although the situation is improving, public outreach must be strengthened, especially with municipal elected officials.

4. WHAT COMES NEXT?

Plateforme Nature Vaudoise is now well-established. As a group, we were able to put the right framework in place, including agreeing a charter and setting up regular meetings, to allow us to combine resources for the protection of nature in Vaud. Aware of the urgent need for action for nature in the canton, the Plateforme will continue its activities despite the end of funding from the MAVA Foundation, and we will maintain the collaboration and momentum we've generated in recent years. Members have already committed to long-term funding for the secretariat, which has been driving activities since 2016. And several projects have already secured funding for the coming years from the Hans Wilsdorf Foundation ('Toile verte' from the Parc Jura Vaudois, 'Trames vertes' from the Parc Gruyères Pays d'Enhaut, 'Broye Source de Vie' for the revitalisation of rivers and maintenance of Pro Natura Vaud reserves).

However, realising other large-scale projects will require new sources of financing. The new legal framework and evolving budgets at national and cantonal level that promote biodiversity, as well as new recommendations from the Confederation, present an opportunity for action. From a financial point of view, the Plateforme will undoubtedly benefit from contributions provided by new programme agreements starting in 2025. Additionally, the Plateforme is continuing its search for funding for other projects.

Refining and adapting the Plateforme's action plan and objectives according to member interests and available resources is now necessary. Since 2016, political and legislative contexts within the canton have developed remarkably, and include adoption of biodiversity and climate action plans, and a new law on nature protection. That said, with biodiversity conservation often competing with other interests, the overall political context remains uncertain and potentially threatens natural resources.

The MAVA Foundation has helped Vaud institutions learn to work together by valuing their differences and their complementarity. Today, thanks to the experience we have gained, ambitious large-scale projects can be carried out by all or a number of Plateforme members working together. This is the greatest achievement of the last six years and augurs well for a coordinated and constructive future, and many more projects that favour the natural world which is so near and dear to our hearts.

“Together, we will go further. MAVA has made this possible.”

Marie Gallot-Lavallée, project manager at Gruyère Pays-d'Enhaut regional nature park

“When you invite a partner to join your project, make sure their seat is comfortable.”

Lorenzo Poglià, business manager at WWF Vaud



Members of Plateforme Nature Vaudoise together in the Orbe Plain, summer 2022