



# Priority areas for implementing European area-based conservation targets

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the European Union**

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# Welcome

- ✓ The presentation part is recorded.
- ✓ Write your questions and comments in the chat.
- ✓ All presentations and recordings will be available at [naturaconnect.eu/past events](https://naturaconnect.eu/past-events) and shared with registered participants.
- ✓ Feel free to rename and state your organisation by clicking on the three dots ... next to your name!
- ✓ Please start/stop your camera at your convenience :)

# Agenda for today

## **Presentation:**

- 10:00-10:25
- Setting the scene & updates since last year
  - Overview of prioritisation: methods and outputs
  - Introduction to online feedback tool (PriorityCheck)

10:25-10:40 **Open questions and feedback** on general methods and scope

10:40-11:20 **Breakout groups** to explore and provide feedback on priority maps

11:20-11:40 **Reporting back** from each breakout group discussions, issues or feedback raised.

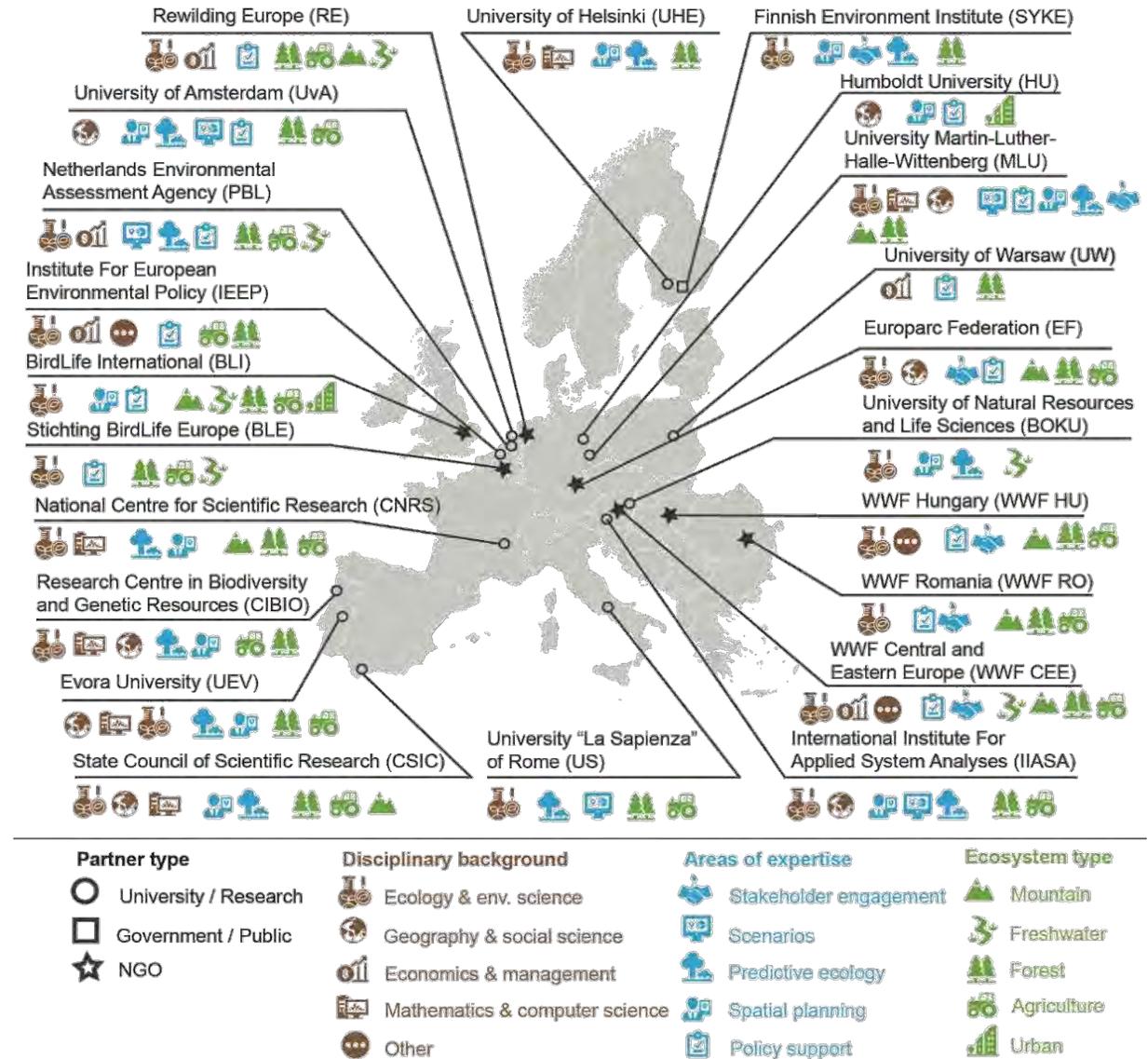
11:40-12:00 **Next steps** and outlook for 2026.



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The ambition of NaturaConnect is to co-create with key decision-makers and stakeholders, **knowledge, tools and capacity building to support EU Member States in realising an ecologically representative, resilient and well-connected network of conserved areas that contribute to achieving the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030**

- 15 Research organizations
- 7 Policy and conservation organisations
- 6 Case studies across scales



# Objectives of NaturaConnect

To support countries in designing a Trans-European Nature Network



to **protect at least 30% of the land**, with at least **10% under strict protection** (EU Biodiversity Strategy)



to implement **ecological restoration on 20%** of land (Nature Restoration Regulation)



to maintain and restore **ecological corridors** to prevent genetic isolation, allow for species migration, and maintain healthy ecosystems



© Louise O'Connor

# Mentimeter

Tell us about you

Join us at: [www.menti.com](https://www.menti.com)  
and enter code number: **6112 8646**



# Updates since the first Webinar

How your input helped us improve our methods and results

- ✓ We fixed or adjusted errors in several input layers.
- ✓ We improved the prioritization constraints, including what is allocated in terms of area.
- ✓ We added functionality to the feedback elicitation tool to understand ‘why’ a site is selected.
- ✓ We integrated further data or information where available.

For Recording of first webinar  
[recording and detailed responses:](#)



SCAN ME

# How your input today will help us?

We have developed **maps to identify priority areas where expansion of protection and restoration** would provide the biggest improvement for biodiversity.

We welcome

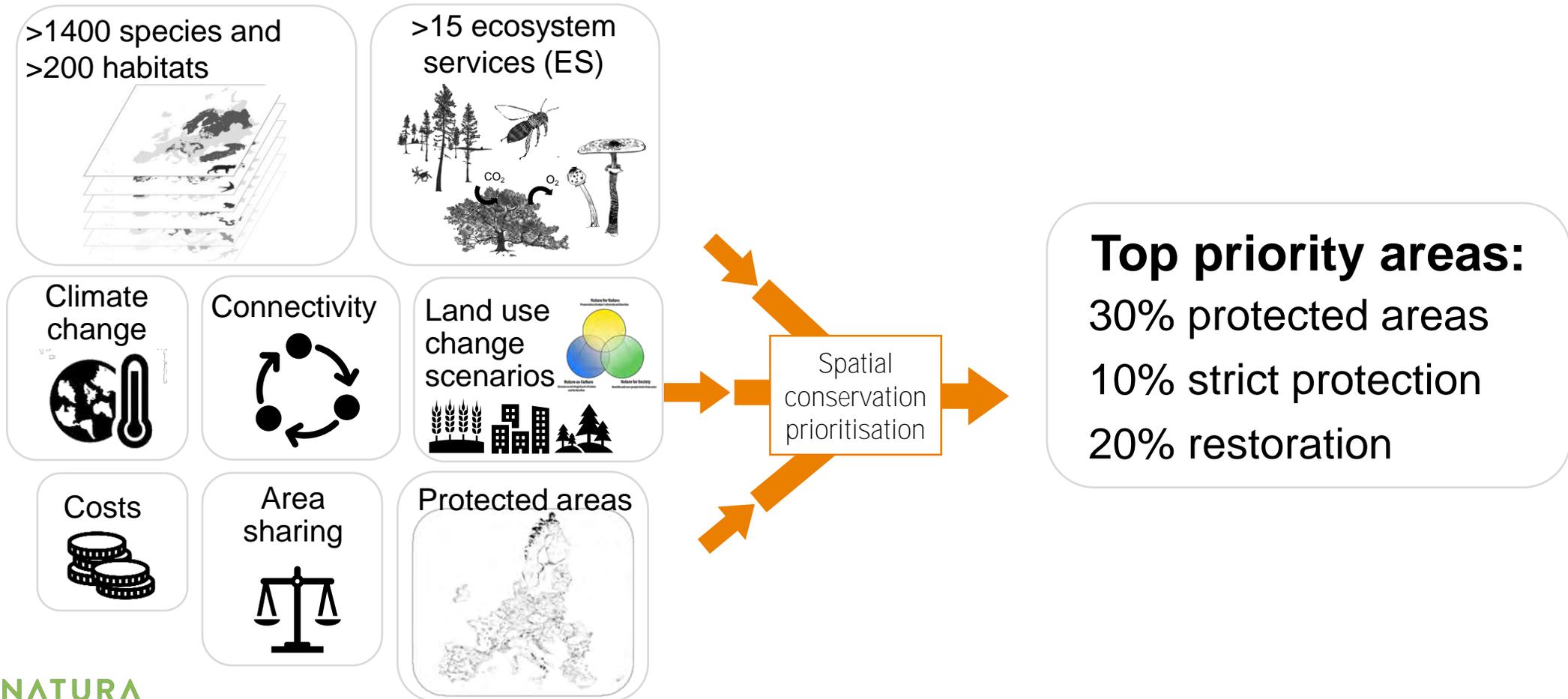
- General feedback on the methods, data and objectives
- Spatially-explicit feedback directly on the map



# Methods for identifying European priority areas

# Where to protect & restore ecosystems in Europe?

Designing a TEN-N that is comprehensive, resilient, connected, and feasible



# Comprehensive:

All species and habitats in the Nature Directives, IUCN red lists and endemics

## 1406 species

-  Mammals
-  Birds
-  Reptiles
-  Amphibians
-  Plants
-  Invertebrates

## 214 habitat types

-  Forests
-  Grasslands
-  Wetlands
-  Freshwater
-  Coastal ecosystems
-  Scrub & Tundra
-  Sparsely vegetated

## Other important ecosystems

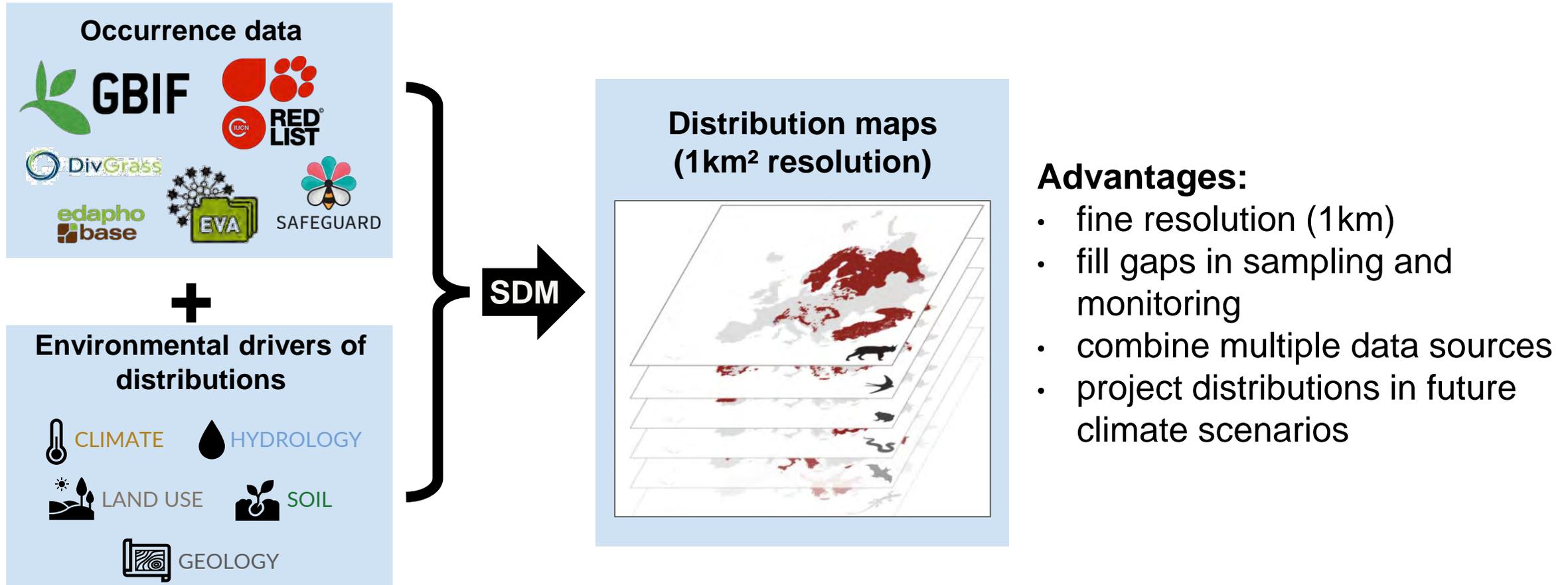


Primary and old-growth forests  
Carbon-rich ecosystems

**Regulating NCP:** Carbon storage and sequestration; Soil retention; Agricultural pest control; Forest pest control; Pollination...

**Cultural NCP:** Nature recreation; Wildlife watching; Wild foods; Medicinal plants...

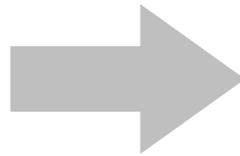
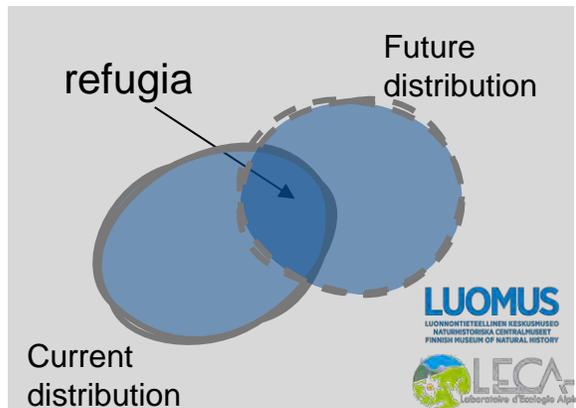
# Comprehensive: Species and Habitats Distribution Models (SDM)



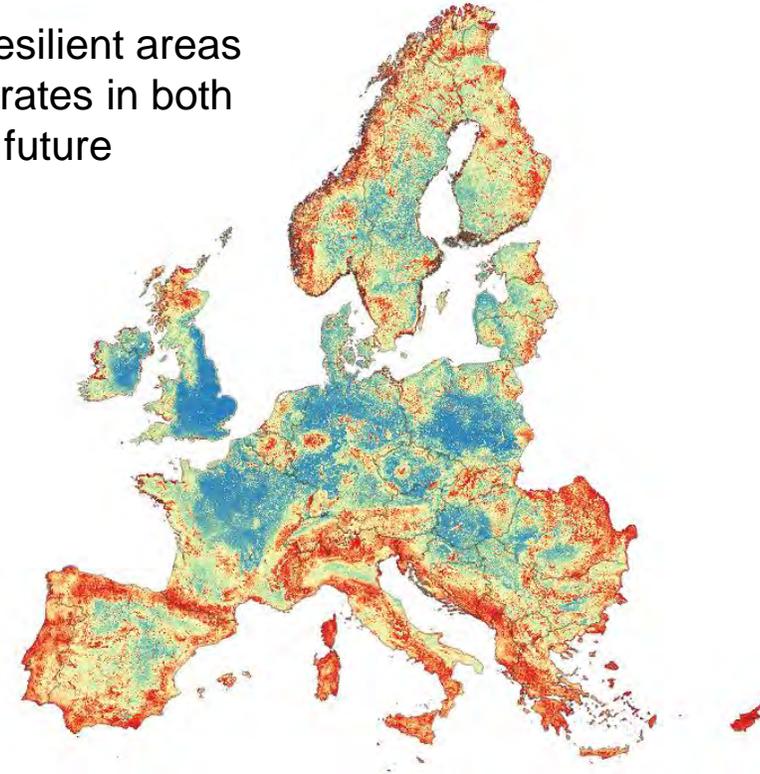
# Resilient: Accounting for climate-driven range shifts

Article 14 NRP: "take into account [...] the **projected changes to environmental conditions due to climate change**"

Prioritise areas that will remain suitable under future climates

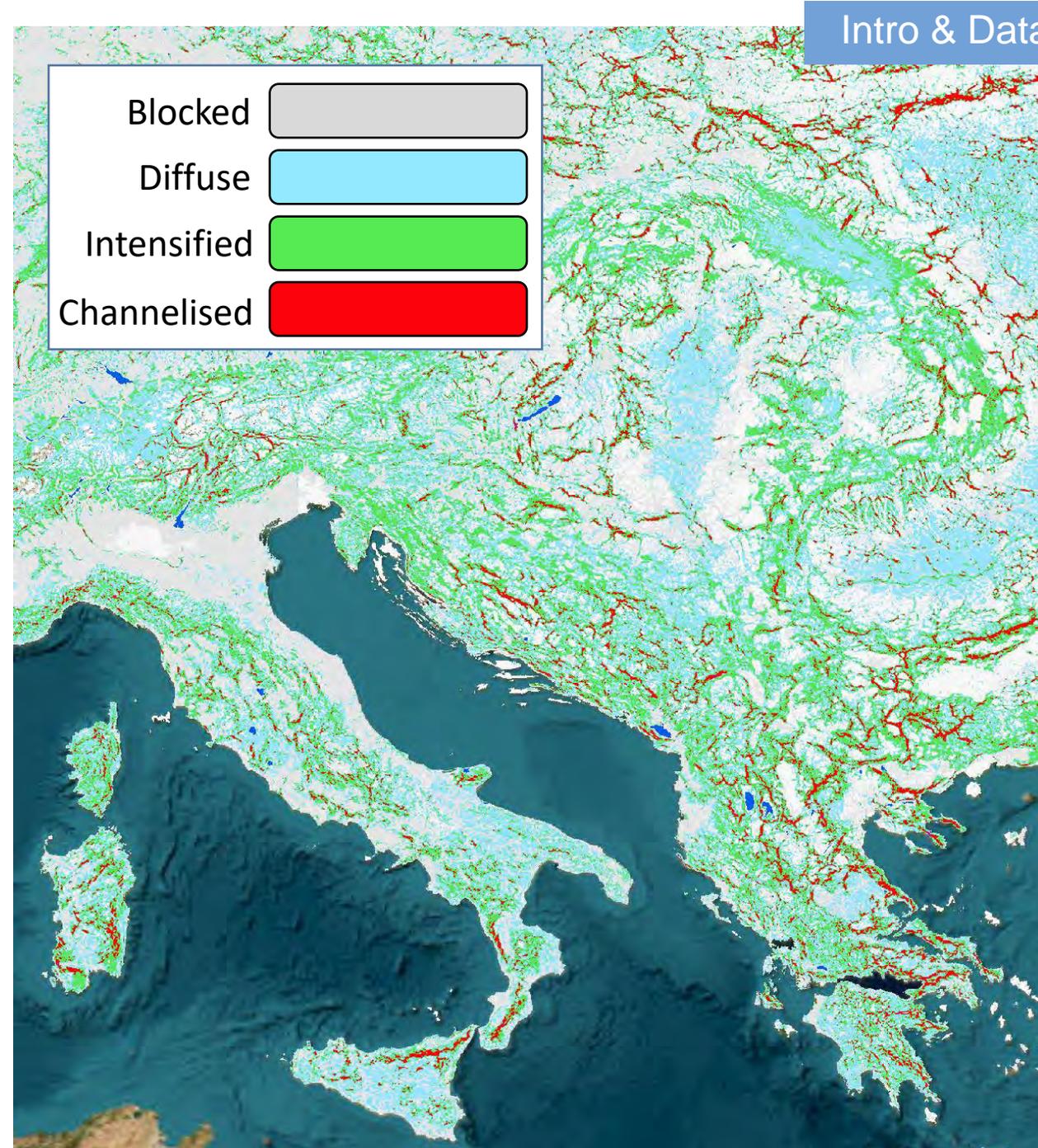


Climate-resilient areas for vertebrates in both current & future climates



# Connected: Integrating wildlife corridors in spatial planning

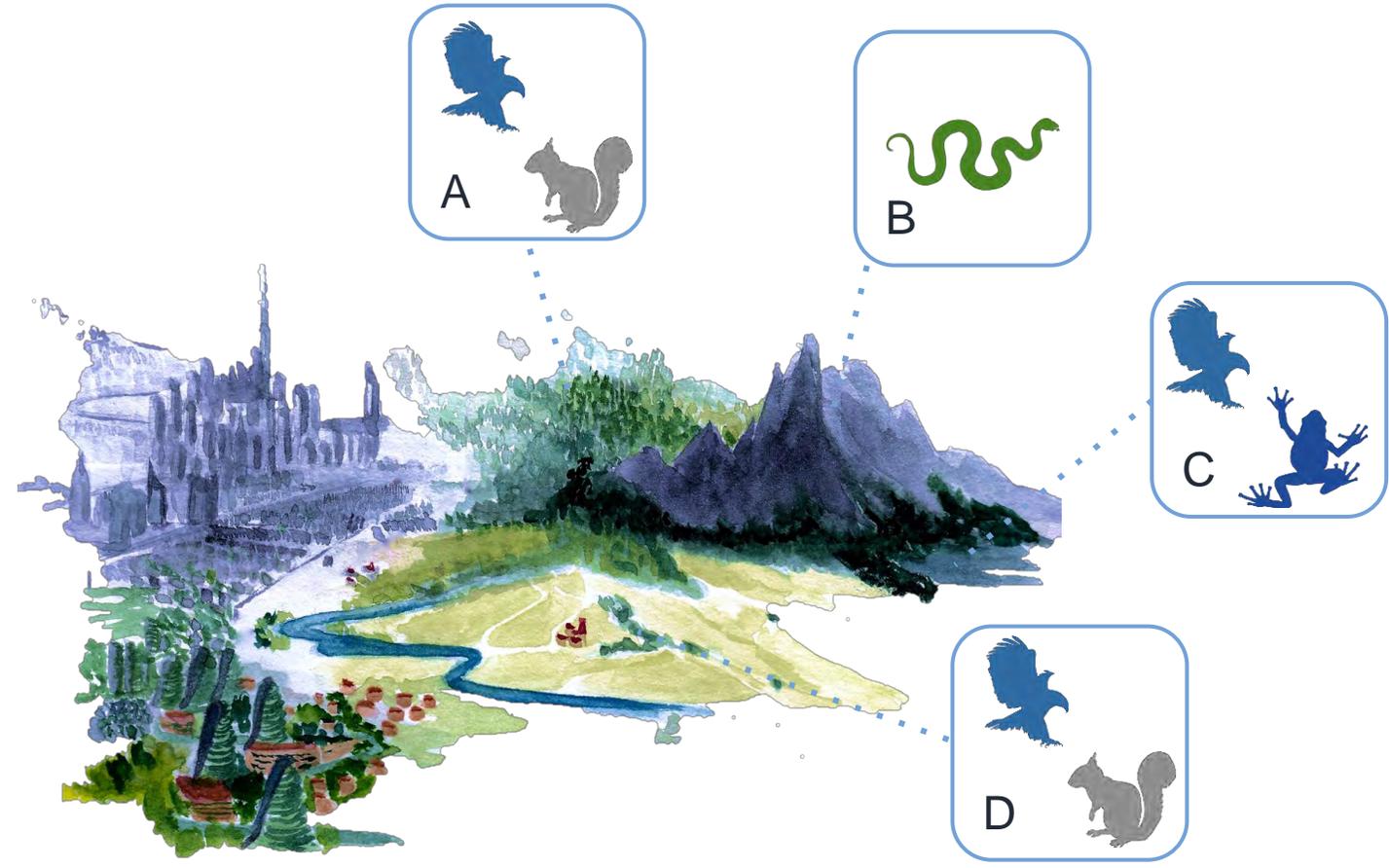
- Conservation and restoration of connectivity across Europe is essential for species movements & tracking climate change
- Connectivity results feed into spatial conservation planning



# Spatial conservation prioritisation

Aim: identify a set of key **irreplaceable** and **complementary** areas that maximize gains for each species and habitat, across their geographic range.

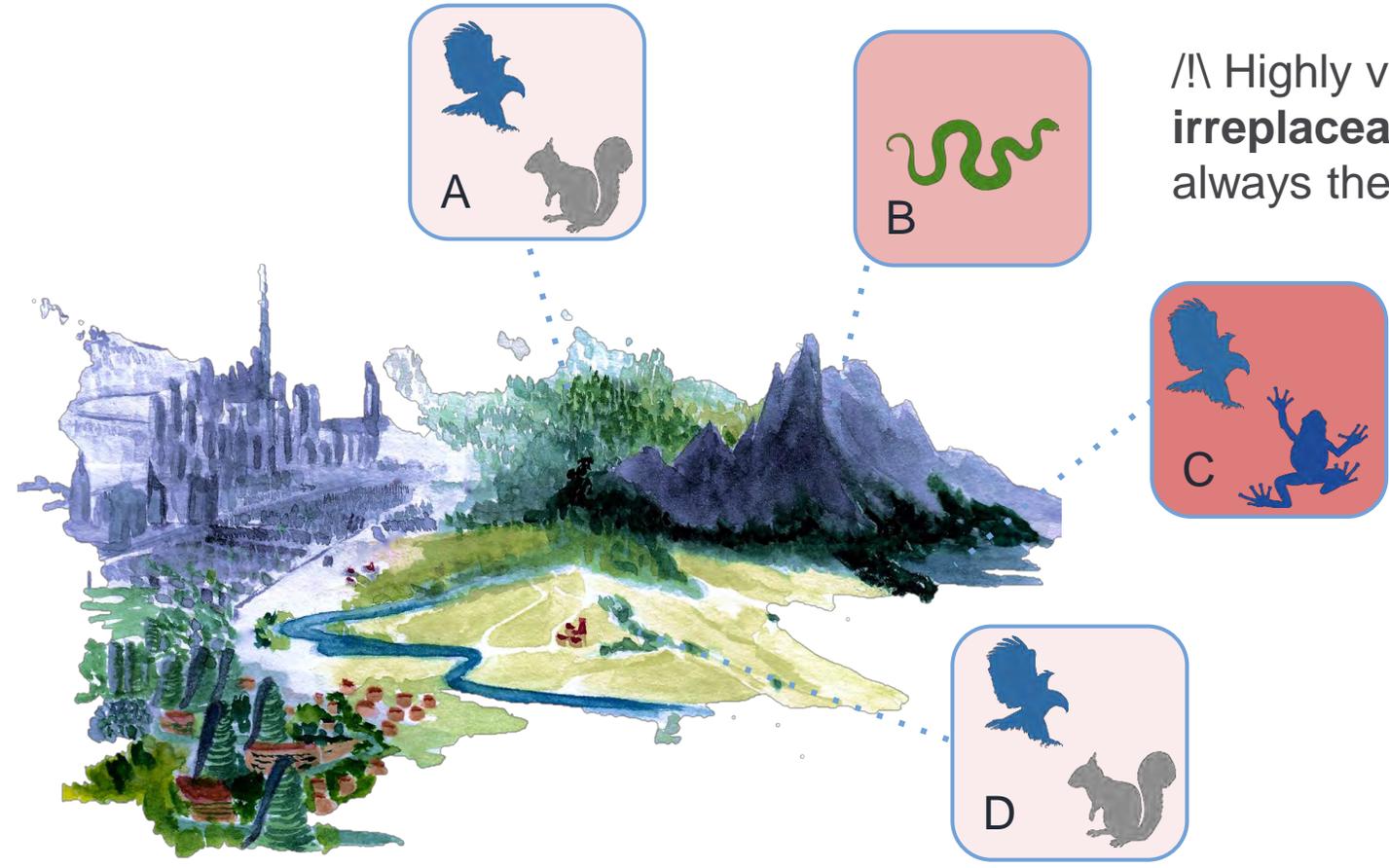
| Number of occurrences:  |   |
|---|---|
|    | 3 |
|    | 2 |
|    | 1 |
|  | 1 |



# Spatial conservation prioritisation

Aim: identify a set of key **irreplaceable** and **complementary** areas that maximize gains for each species and habitat, across their geographic range.

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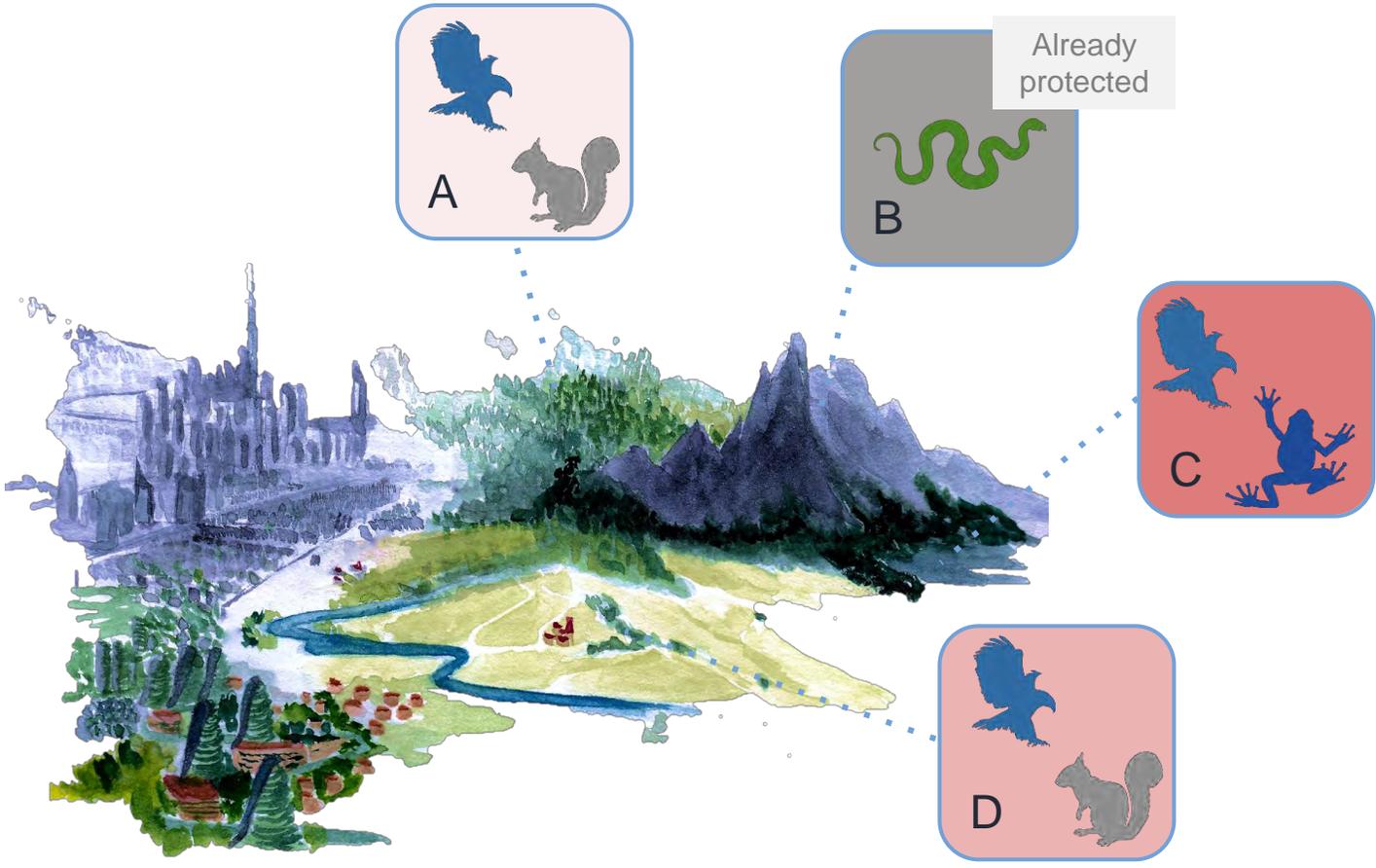


!/\ Highly valuable and **irreplaceable** sites are not always the most species-rich!

# Spatial conservation prioritisation

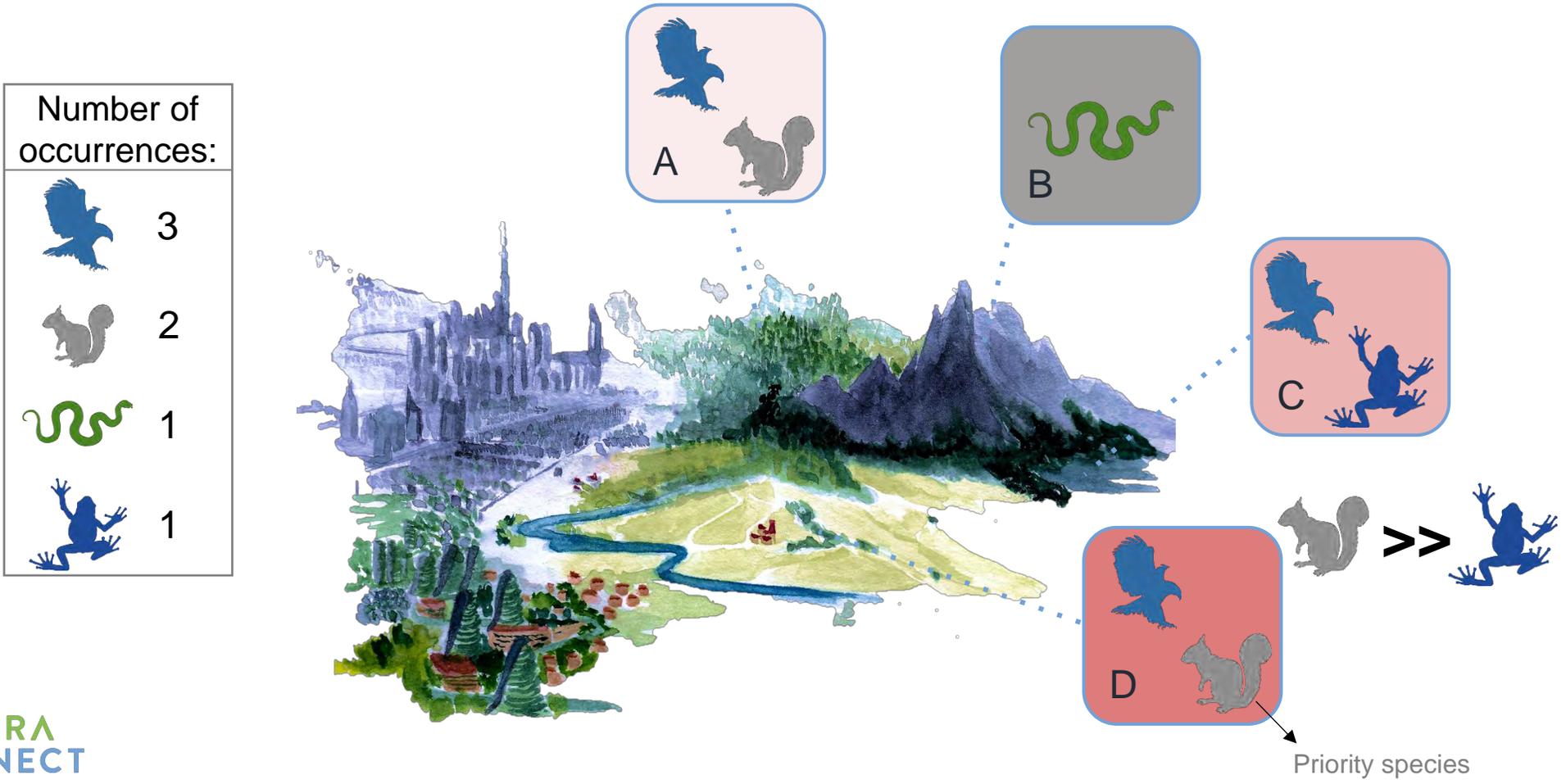
Priority areas should **complement** each other - and existing protected areas - to maximize the **representativeness** of the overall protected area network

| Number of occurrences:  |   |
|---|---|
|    | 3 |
|    | 2 |
|    | 1 |
|  | 1 |



# Spatial conservation prioritisation

We use feature-specific **weights** to prioritise certain species and habitats



# Spatial conservation prioritisation



**prioritizr/prioritizr**

Systematic conservation prioritization in R



**MARXAN**  
conservation solutions

# We create 144 alternative TEN-N scenarios:

For 30% conservation, 10% strict protection, 20% restoration

- **Equitable area sharing** between countries, bioregions, or none (x3)
- **Baseline for 30%:** all protected areas; Natura2000 only (x2)
- **Climate:** prioritise climate-resilient areas or not (x2)
- **Connectivity:** prioritise protection of important corridors or not (x2)
- **Nature's values:** Nature for Nature, for Society, as Culture (x3)
- **Costs:** focus on biodiversity only, or avoid high opportunity costs (x2)

# Today, we will explore results across 12 scenarios

For 30% conservation, 10% strict protection, 20% restoration

- **Equitable area sharing** between countries
- **Baseline for 30%:** all protected areas
- **Climate:** prioritise **climate-resilient areas or not (x2)**
- **Connectivity:** prioritise protection of important **corridors or not (x2)**
- **Nature's values:** **Nature for Nature, for Society, as Culture (x3)**

# Priorities for protected area expansion

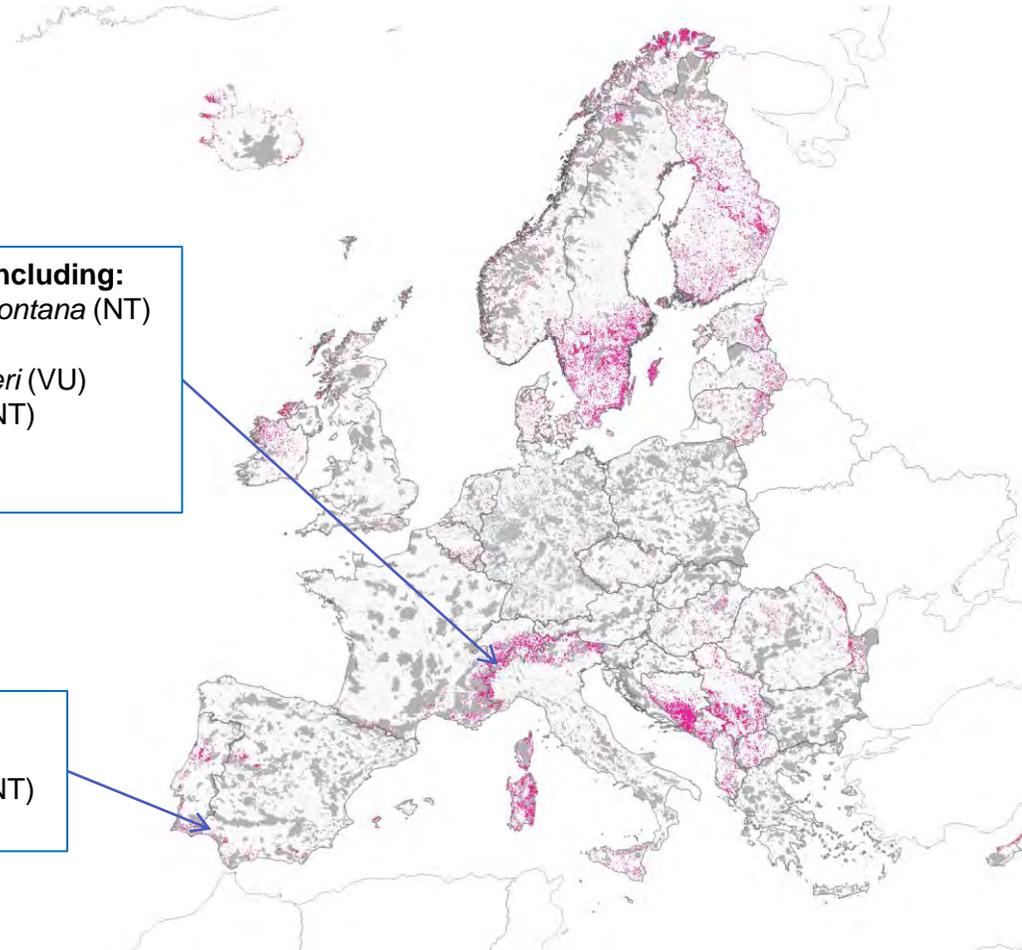
30% per country with coordinated planning at the European level



**107 species/km<sup>2</sup>, including:**  
*Epipodisma pedemontana* (NT)  
*Aquilegia alpina*  
*Bombus gerstaeckeri* (VU)  
*Bombus mucidus* (NT)  
*Pyrgus cacaliae*  
*Capra ibex*



**93 species/km<sup>2</sup>, including:**  
*Apus affinis*  
*Marmaronetta angustirostris* (NT)  
*Lynx pardinus* (VU)



Priority areas minimize gaps in coverage for species and habitats, are complementary and expand on existing protected areas.

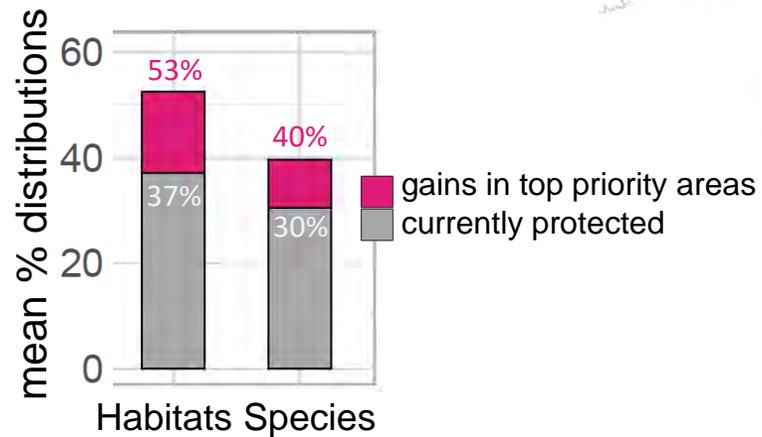
This scenario **focuses on species and habitats**, without climate change or connectivity.

■ Protected areas

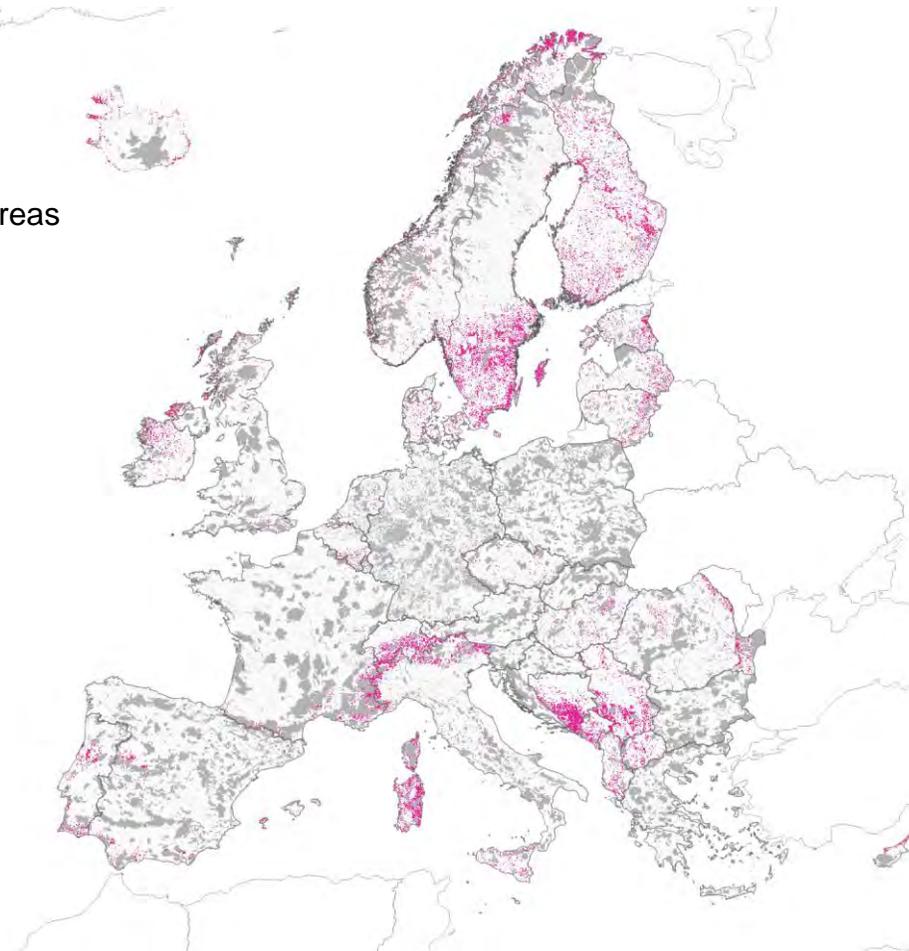
■ Expansion priorities for 30%

# Priorities for protected area expansion

30% per country with coordinated planning at the European level



Just 5% of additional area **in the right places** can lead to **large gains** for species and habitats in **irreplaceable** areas, as well as protect carbon-rich ecosystems and provide essential NCP.



Priority areas minimize gaps in coverage for species and habitats, are complementary and expand on existing protected areas.

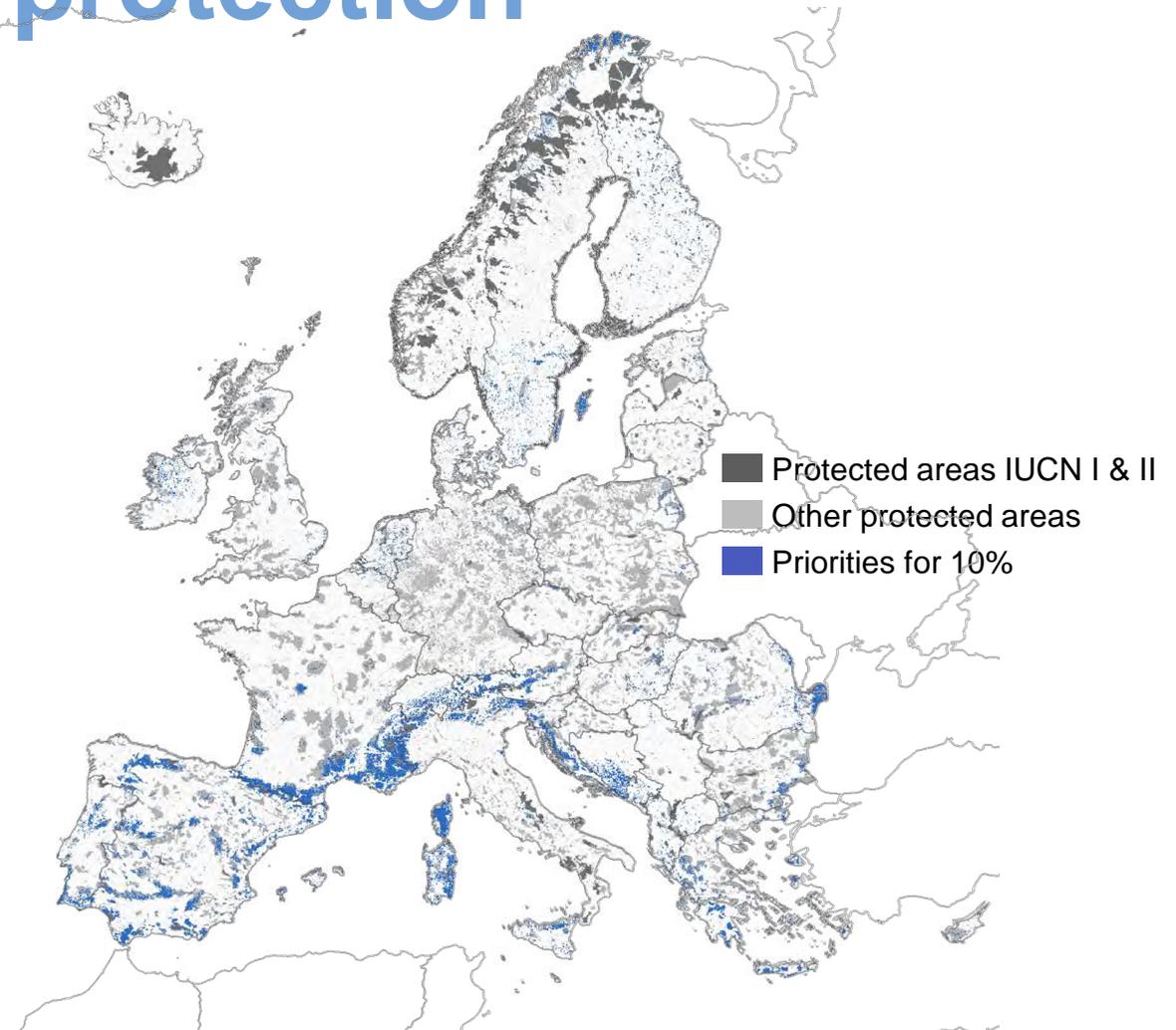
This scenario **focuses on species and habitats**, without climate change or connectivity.

■ Protected areas  
■ Expansion priorities for 30%

# Priorities for 10% strict protection

## What criteria for the 10%?

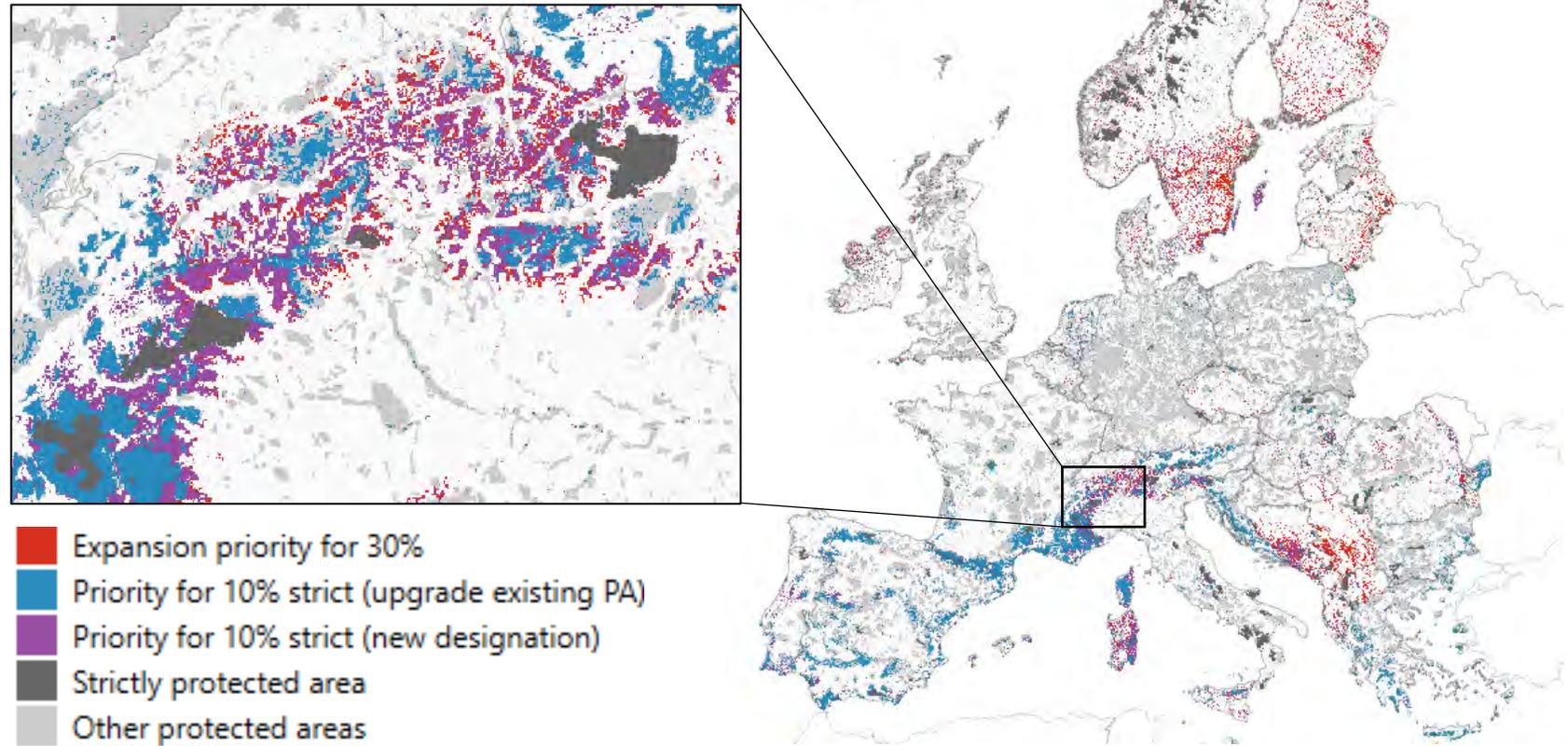
1. Top **priorities expand on reserves and national parks (IUCN I and II)**, which we use as baseline for strict protection
2. 10% are nested within the 30%, and include **upgrading** of non-strict protected areas, with a core & buffer spatial structure when possible
3. The 10% are the areas with the **highest biodiversity value** for species and habitats, including carbon-rich ecosystems (peatlands, old-growth forests), and areas of high ecological integrity.



This scenario focuses on current distributions of species and habitats.  
This is one of many options for defining priorities for strict protection.

# Priorities for 30% + 10%

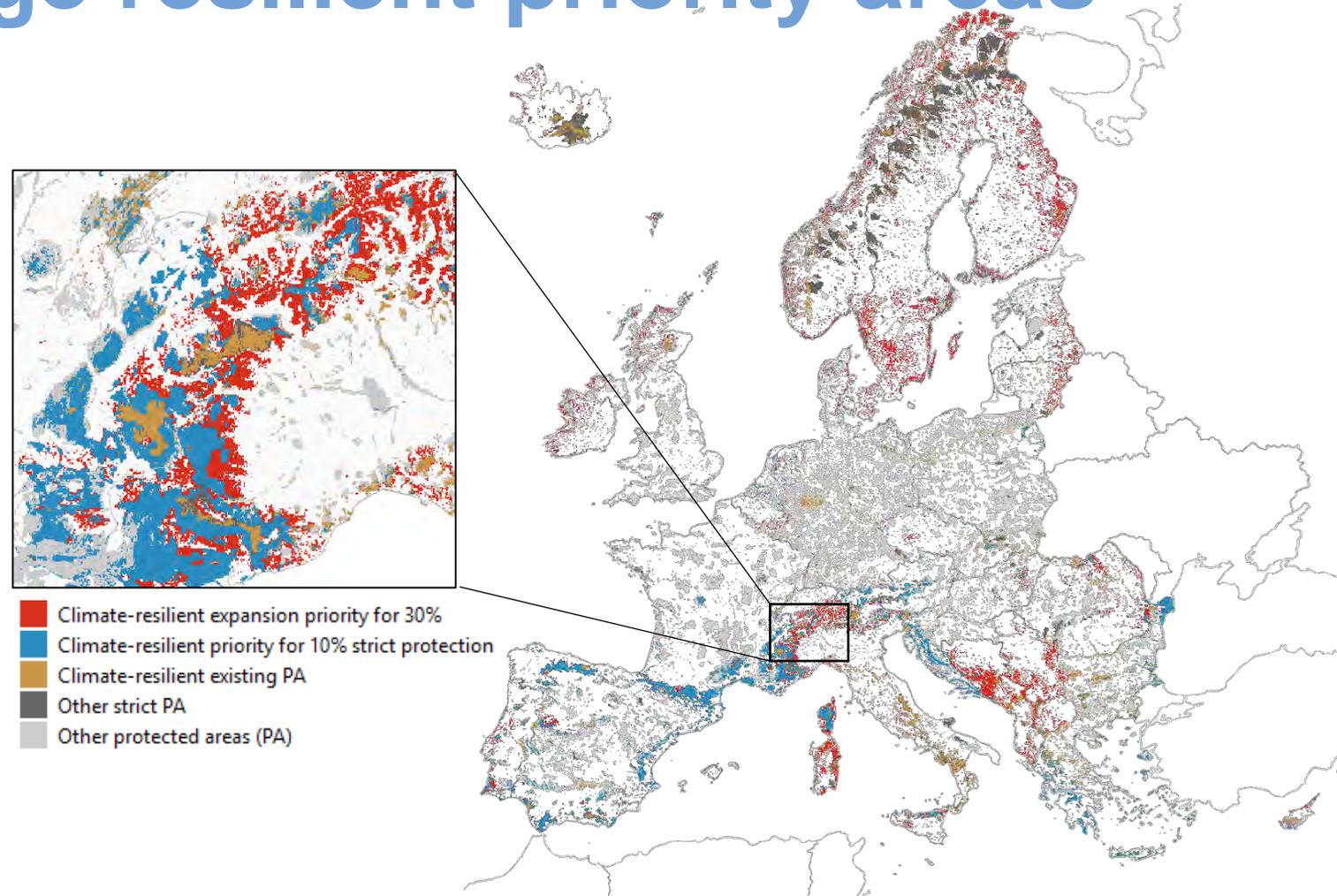
What you will see online:



Based on biodiversity only. Climate change resilience and connectivity are not explicitly included.

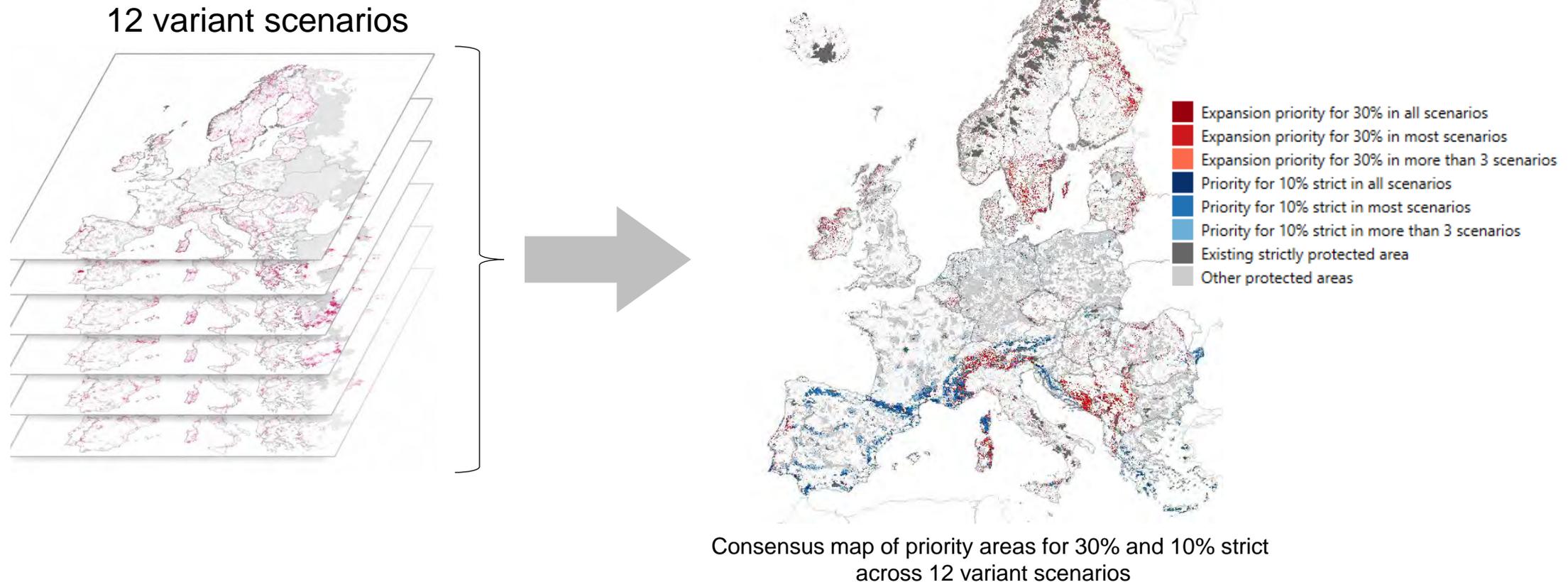
# Climate-change resilient priority areas

**With just 5% additional land, this climate-resilient scenario protects 55% of the most important areas for climate resilience, compared with 33% under the current protected areas, and 45% when climate change is ignored.**



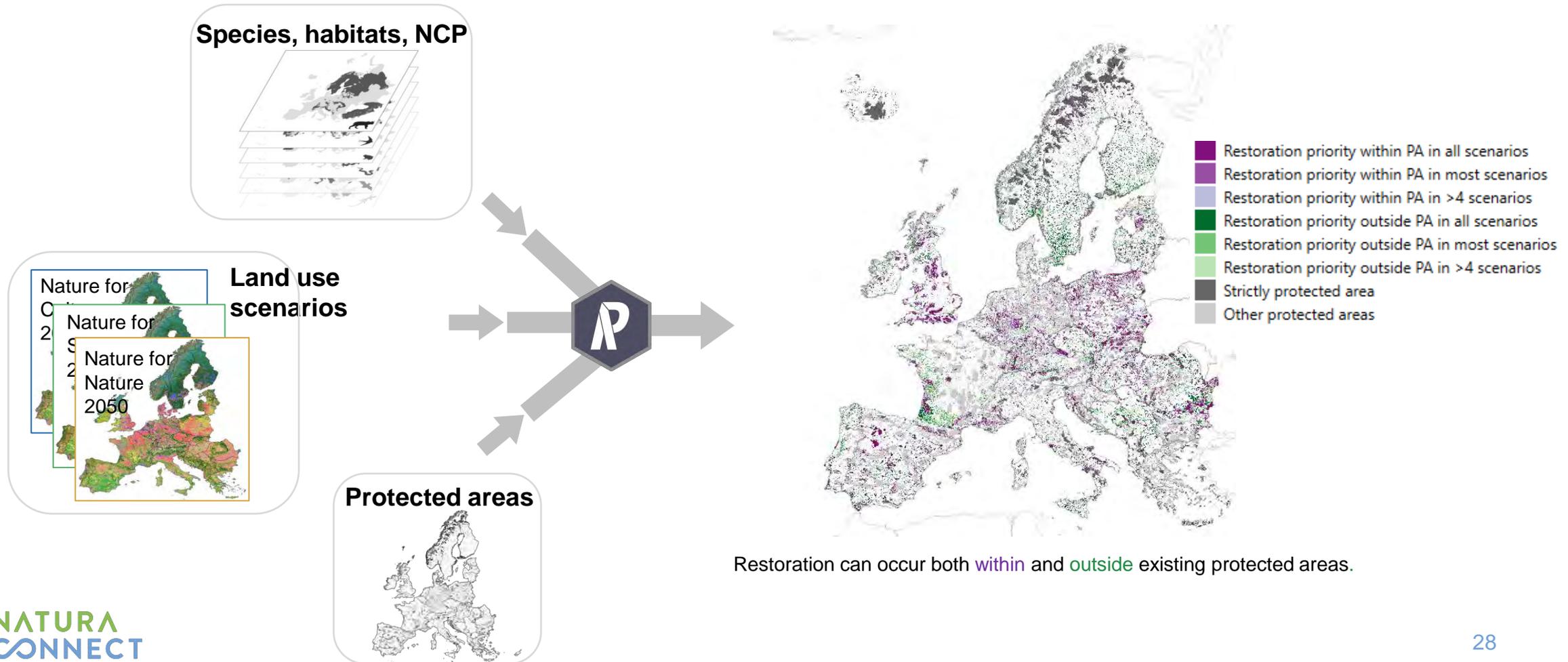
# Which areas are always selected across scenarios?

‘Consensus’ areas are of high importance across all planning criteria



# Identifying priorities for 20% restoration

Areas that are **degraded**, but **can be restored**, and that have the top **20% highest potential value** for species and habitats if restored.

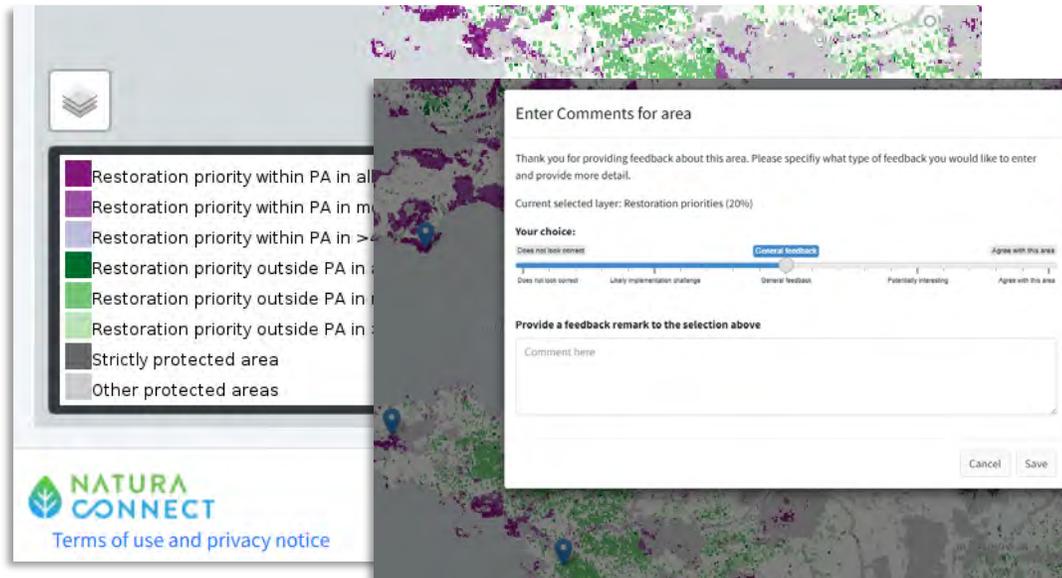


# Next steps: provide feedback on the maps!

Now during breakout groups

## PriorityCheck

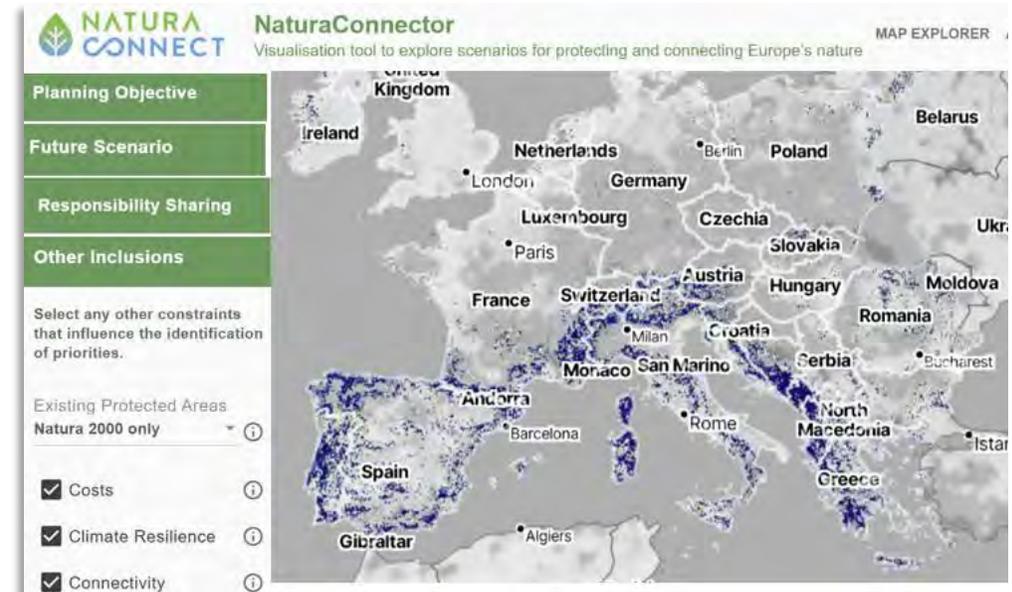
Check and provide feedback on top priority areas



Today

## NaturaConnector

Navigate and explore all variant scenarios



→ Public launch in June

# Questions so far? (Q&A)

# Spatial feedback on expansion priorities

- We use a specifically developed online platform to gather your feedback (PriorityCheck).
- The platform shows prepared and specifically colored version of protection and restoration expansion priorities.
- We encourage you to leave comments directly on the map!

No personal data will be stored.

Only feedback and information entered by you is being saved for the purpose of improving our maps!

# Today, we focus on the following outputs:

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b><i>"Biodiversity only"</i></b>                      | In this map, only species and habitats (in current climate conditions) drive the selection of expansion priorities.  |
| <b><i>"Climate-resilient expansion priorities"</i></b> | The map shows priority areas that focus on species and habitats (i.e. biodiversity-only) but account for climate-driven range shifts in species and habitats, prioritizing areas of their range that are projected to remain suitable in future climate scenarios. |
| <b><i>"Priorities for 30% and 10% "</i></b>            | The map shows consensus priorities for 30% and 10% strict protection.  |
| <b><i>"Strict protection"</i></b>                      | Consensus layer for 10% strict protection, colored by type of expansion (new designation, or upgrade of existing PA from non-strict to strict).  |
| <b><i>"Restoration priorities"</i></b>                 | The 20% consensus restoration priority layer will be shown and colored differently depending on whether restoration priorities are identified within or outside existing protected areas.  |
| <b><i>"TEN-N"</i></b>                                  | Shows the consensus for conservation and strict protection plus wildlife corridors that connect protected areas (from WP6)   |
| <b><i>"Land-use challenges"</i></b>                    | This map shows potential risks/conflicts between conservation and land use. Colored areas show the overlap between priorities for 30% (consensus) and 1) croplands; 2) medium to high intensity grasslands (pastures) and 3) high intensity forest plantations.    |

# Demonstrating PriorityCheck

# What you will see in the online tool:

**Click to add Feedback**

**Layer selection**

**Toggle Query mode**

**Legend**

**Map**

**Remember to save before end of session**

**Instructions and selection**

[Info](#) [Help](#) [Instructions](#)

**Pick a layer**

Protection expansion (30% + 10%)

**Currently loaded:**  
Protection expansion (30% + 10%)  
Spatial grain: 1000 meter

OFF

**Show feedback**

Display the collected feedback so far.

[SHOW FEEDBACK](#)

[DOWNLOAD FEEDBACK](#)

[SAVE FEEDBACK](#)

**Legend**

- Expansion priority for 30% in all scenarios
- Expansion priority for 30% in most scenarios
- Expansion priority for 30% in more than 3 scenarios
- Priority for 10% strict in all scenarios
- Priority for 10% strict in most scenarios
- Priority for 10% strict in more than 3 scenarios
- Existing strictly protected area
- Other protected areas

# Explore the maps & provide feedback



We have 6 breakout groups:

- 1. International**  
(EU institutions, IUCN, KBA secretariat, CMS...)
- 2. Northern Europe**  
(Baltic states, Scandinavia, Poland)
- 3. West Europe**  
(France, UK, Ireland, Belgium, Germany, Netherlands)
- 4. West Mediterranean**  
(Iberian peninsula + Italy)
- 5. Central and Eastern Europe**  
(Austria, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania)
- 6. East Mediterranean and Balkans**  
(Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Bulgaria...)

➔ Join the zoom breakout group for the region you know best

1. Get familiar with the tool  
(zoom, feedback, optional:  
query)
2. Facilitators will guide through  
sessions.
3. Remember to save at the end.

# 40' breakout groups

Go to this webpage: [prioritycheck.iiasa.ac.at](https://prioritycheck.iiasa.ac.at)

Enter a username of your choice (e.g. name, organisation)

Password: pa

Note that the feedback platform will remain accessible for 3 weeks after this webinar.

# Reporting back (on Menti)

## Overall impression

**What is your overall impression of the results and their usefulness?**

**What knowledge not presented would be relevant to you?**



Join us at: [www.menti.com](https://www.menti.com)  
and enter code number: 6112 8646

# How we will use your feedback

- ✓ Summarize (anonymously) your feedback thematically and investigate spatially.
- ✓ Provide (anonymized) responses to each comments on the map on how we addressed it (hosted on the NaturaConnect website).
- ✓ Identify commonalities and areas of consensus among participants (to be described in a Report).

Following this webinar, we will inform everyone by May 2026 of the summary outcomes.

# Connect with NaturaConnect!

 [www.naturaconnect.eu](http://www.naturaconnect.eu)

 [naturaconnect@iiasa.ac.at](mailto:naturaconnect@iiasa.ac.at)

 [facebook.com/NaturaConnectProject](https://facebook.com/NaturaConnectProject)

 [linkedin.com/company/naturaconnect/](https://linkedin.com/company/naturaconnect/)

 <https://bsky.app/profile/naturaconnect.bsky.social>



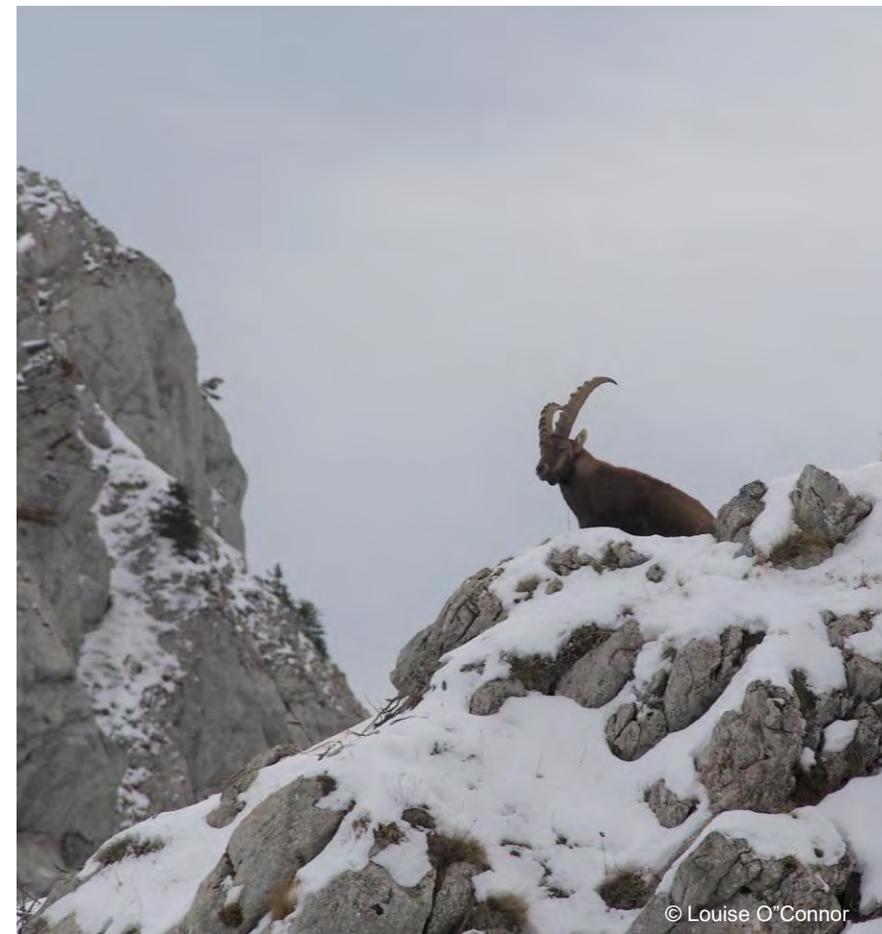
<https://tinyurl.com/evaluationNaturaConnect>

**Evaluation survey for this webinar:  
Share your feedback with us!**

# Appendix slides

# Resources

1. Coming soon: NaturaConnector platform
2. Learning Platform on biodiversity models, spatial planning, financing mechanisms:  
<https://tinyurl.com/ENA-NC>
3. All our spatial data (1km<sup>2</sup>) are available on Zenodo:  
<https://zenodo.org/communities/naturaconnect/records>:
  - Priority areas for restoration, conservation, connectivity
  - Spatial distributions of species and habitats in current and future scenarios of climate change
  - Climate risks to protected areas
  - Maps of ecosystem services
  - Opportunity cost data resolution for different land systems in Europe
  - Nature-positive land use change scenarios



# More info on SDM