



Project Title: ECOPOTENTIAL: IMPROVING FUTURE ECOSYSTEM BENEFITS THROUGH EARTH OBSERVATIONS

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1. Executive summary

The first science school of the ECOPOTENTIAL project was held from 26th of July until the 1st of August in the Gran Paradiso National Park, in northern Italy. The park is one of the sites of interest of the project. The deliverable contains a short description of the activities carried on by the school participants.

2. First ECOPOTENTIAL Science school

Directly after the start of ECOPOTENTIAL 20 international young researchers, students and professors met at the National Park Gran Paradiso in Northern Italy from 26th of July until the 1st of August. This course was focused on methods in field research especially in vegetation science in order to improve the understanding of ground truthing. Problems and advantages of field research and earth observation in situ were discussed. Various methods were tested in order to experience the effort and challenges when ground data are collected. The high diversity of alpine ecosystems, their intense dynamics mainly driven by mass movements (avalanches, mud flows), and the spatial heterogeneity of topography and vegetation cover are specific aspect that must be considered when earth observation is applied in high mountains. Monitoring the state and development of protected mountain landscapes is especially important to identify their vulnerability in face of climatic changes. After the course was finished two students stayed for the whole month of August in order to collect data in pilot areas of ECOPOTENTIAL to be compared with and adjusted to remote sensing data.



Figure 2-1. Students practicing vegetation surveys in the field in the Gran Paradiso National Park (Val Bardonne). High valleys above the tree line are an important habitat of Alpine Ibex (*Capra ibex*) which is a flagship species in this National Park.