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## **The European Life Project STOPVESPA: first year of activity and most relevant results.**

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The yellow legged hornet *Vespa velutina* Lepeletier 1836 is an Asiatic hornet species introduced in France in 2004 that is rapidly colonizing other European countries. In Italy *V. velutina* was observed for the first time in 2012 and first nests detected in 2013; since then the species is quickly spreading throughout the northwest part of the country, and at the end of 2015 *V. velutina* occupied an area of about 930 km<sup>2</sup>.

*V. velutina* is an invasive alien species in Europe because of its impact on natural ecosystems, apiculture and human well-being. In fact, *V. velutina* could actively prey honeybees, wild bees and other native insects, producing economic and biodiversity losses. In addition nests can be constructed in urban areas and might be considered a risk for human population.

For these reasons, an European Life Project (LIFE14 NAT/IT/001128 STOPVESPA) recently started in Italy. The actions carried out by this project in the first year of activity are: *i*) monitoring the evolution of *V. velutina* populations in Italy; *ii*) controlling the populations by nest-localization and nest-destruction (in 2015 181 nests were observed and 23 collected for nest analysis); *iii*) developing an harmonic radar to track the hornets while flying back to their nests; *iv*) evaluating the impacts of *V. velutina* on natural communities, ecosystems and beekeeping; *v*) establishing of an Early Warning and Rapid Response System at a national level.

In this work we present the most relevant results obtained by the STOPVESPA project in the first year of activity.