

## SPAIN

# Biodiversity restoration, preservation & enhancement

**Location**  
Andalusia

**Programming period**  
2014 - 2020

**Priority**  
P4 – Ecosystems management

**Measure**  
M7 – Basic services and village renewal

**Funding (EUR)**  
Total budget 312 739.76  
EAFRD 234 554.82  
National/regional 78 184.94

**Project duration**  
2016 – 2017

**Project promoter**  
Consejería de Medio Ambiente y Ordenación del Territorio

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The project aimed to develop local participatory activities within the Natura 2000 sites of Andalusia.

## Summary

Natura 2000 sites cover 29% of the territory of Andalusia. The project aimed to build connections between citizens and the protected areas, with a special focus on the population living within these areas, through voluntary actions. It was based on the principal that only through understanding the value of nature can people assume a sense of direct and personal responsibility for the conservation of sites.

The project supported the development of local participatory activities in sites within the Natura 2000 network. During 2016 and 2017, awareness-raising activities were carried out by environmental associations with volunteers who live close to Natura 2000 sites.



## Results

A total of 2 213 people participated in 312 activities carried out in 18 protected areas. This translates to a total of 21 412 volunteering hours.

Participants have learnt about the participating Natura 2000 sites and acquired specific knowledge of environmental protection actions.

## Lessons & Recommendations

- ❑ Encouraging participation and awareness actions in sites of the Natura 2000 network is an indispensable tool when implementing any protected natural area management plan.
- ❑ It is possible to promote social volunteering organisations at local level to reinforce the associative network of the area, and bring closer together citizens and managers from the natural areas. Some financing is needed to develop concrete activities, but these don't need to be costly, and many people who are living in or visiting these areas just want a place to share their concerns and look for more sustainable development solutions for these areas.
- ❑ It is necessary to strengthen civil society to engage people living in rural areas, ahead of their involvement in environmental protection objectives.

### Context

Natura 2000 is the largest coordinated network of protected sites in the world. It offers a haven to Europe's most valuable and threatened species and habitats. Natura 2000 sites cover 29% of the Andalusian region. According to the managing authority, "an indispensable condition to advance towards sustainable development and achieve a balanced and respectful use of natural resources, lies in an informed, sensitised and actively committed society to its environment".

For the Andalusian government it became clear that it was important for programme measure 7, including sub-measure 7.6, to finance studies, investments for maintenance and restoration of natural heritage and awareness-raising activities. To achieve the last goal a series of volunteering projects have been financed in order to tackle habitat destruction or modification, and fight other threats to natural heritage in vulnerable areas in the Mediterranean region.

### Objectives

The overall objective of the project was to build connections between citizens and protected areas, with a special focus on the population living in those areas, through voluntary actions.

Specific objectives of this project were to:

- Promote the values of Andalusian natural heritage and of the Natura 2000 network by improving the knowledge and appreciation of citizens;
- Highlight the value of biodiversity and nature;
- Improve the network and connections among stakeholders in protected areas;
- Evaluate and design a collaborative programme for each of the participating Natura 2000 sites, with the aim of developing specific conservation activities that will improve the natural habitats.

### Activities

Over the two years of the project's duration 312 actions were planned and carried out. In the design of the actions an attempt was made to diversify the content (fauna, flora, craftsmanship, maintenance and conservation of the environment, ethnological heritage, etc.) and types of habitats, in order to inform volunteers about the different ecosystems of the protected areas, the value of protection and conservation, their singularities, and how the local population is operating in these areas in a traditional and respectful way towards the environment in most cases.



Some of the activities implemented include:

- Tracking lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) to contribute to the Climate Change Monitoring Programme in Sierra Nevada. For this purpose, a specific training course was organised on how to observe and identify butterflies in order to incorporate volunteers into the programme.
- The restoration of vegetation and recovery of traditional irrigation ditches, which needed to be cleaned up to facilitate the water flow. In the restoration area, previous planting actions had taken place. The previous plantations were inspected by measuring the trees and protecting young plants against animals, herbicides and the wind. Additional activities to protect pine regeneration areas (of the *Pinus sylvestris* species) against herbivores were organised.
- Sampling odonata, an order of carnivorous insects, focusing on dragonflies (anisoptera) and damselflies (zygoptera), in the meadows adjacent to the main water stream in Sierra de Gata. A training course was organised on sampling aquatic invertebrates and explaining their role as bio-indicators of water quality.
- Organising a campaign for environmental awareness about the geological heritage of Natural Parks in Andalusia. Information tents were set up for distributing brochures to visitors at the parks, a task made possible thanks to the involvement of numerous volunteers.
- Improving the habitat in the Tíscar lagoon, an activity that involved the development of an interpretative route along the Sendero del Río Genil river, by identifying suitable observation points along the river. Also, several points of interest were geo-referenced so information could be available in Apps. A volunteer in the activity explains that it was most useful to be directly involved in "cleaning the water area from cartridges and plastic waste and learning how this influences the water quality and the presence or absence of certain species".

- Marking passerine birds for migration studies.
- Delivering bird identification courses in the area of the Barbate Marshes.
- Providing information to visitors at the bird-watching spots in the salt pans of Cabo de Gata on the ecological value and the species of the habitat, as well as on good environmental practices to protect them. In addition, written information was provided on the salt pans (brochures) and binoculars for bird watching.
- Communication actions in restaurants, hotels, the town hall, tourist offices, and yacht clubs in order to promote the values of the protected littoral areas.
- Promotion of responsible littoral aquatic activities. Kayak trips were taken to give information on how to avoid anchors from boats harming *Posidonia oceanica* communities. Information, brochures and stickers were delivered to the boats that were found during the route from Aguamarga beach to Cala del Plomo.

From all these actions, the managing authority highlights the value of the environmental volunteering in Doñana that was harnessed in June 24, 2017, after a major forest fire in the Natural Park. "It was our intention to explore ways of citizen participation for the development of environmental volunteering actions in the restoration and monitoring of the burned area. Three work tables were held, whose theme were 'Actions of environmental restoration', 'Actions of environmental awareness' and 'Monitoring of species of flora and fauna.'" The participation of the hundreds of attendees reflected the interest of people in finding solutions to environmental problems and the full willingness to collaborate as an environmental volunteer in the restoration of the fire.



### Main Results

- A total of 2 213 people participated in 312 activities carried out in 18 protected areas. This translates into a total of 21 412 volunteering hours.
- Participants have learnt about the participating Natura 2000 sites and have acquired specific knowledge linked to the actions that were carried out. Special emphasis was placed on promoting the natural and ethnographic value of the Natura 2000 network.
- Activities included discussion of the conservation challenges for these areas, and compatible socio-economic activities, including new areas of work ('green employment').

### Key lessons

- Encouraging participation and awareness actions in areas of the Natura 2000 network is an indispensable tool when implementing any protected natural area management plan.
- Promoting knowledge of natural values and encouraging the participation of social actors in existing participatory channels is very important for engaging volunteers.
- It is possible to promote social volunteering organisations at the local level in order to reinforce the associative network of the area, and bring closer together citizens and managers from the natural areas. Some financing is needed to develop concrete activities, but these don't need to be costly, and many people who are living in or visiting these areas and just want a place to share their concerns and to look for more sustainable development solutions for these areas.
- Managers of protected natural areas have welcomed all the activities and expressed a great willingness to continue these projects in the future.
- Unexpectedly differences exist either within certain regions in Spain. For example, attendance at volunteer activities was considerably higher in those areas in which there is a larger associative space, and more grassroots or sectoral organisations. It was more difficult to involve people in activities in areas with weaker connections to the Natural Parks, such as Sierra de Baza. Therefore it was necessary to strengthen civil society as a way of improving engagement with the rural territory, including its Natural Parks.

### Additional sources of information

[www.juntadeandalucia.es/medioambiente/site/portalweb/menuitem.7e1cf46ddf59bb227a9ebe205510e1ca/?vgnxtoid=cc4c1d2f5378a510VgnVCM2000000624e50aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=d033e156217d4310VgnVCM2000000624e50aRCRD&vgnnextrefresh=1](http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/medioambiente/site/portalweb/menuitem.7e1cf46ddf59bb227a9ebe205510e1ca/?vgnxtoid=cc4c1d2f5378a510VgnVCM2000000624e50aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=d033e156217d4310VgnVCM2000000624e50aRCRD&vgnnextrefresh=1)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZyxHyLqhJs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZyxHyLqhJs)