

Co-Management Maritime Board of Litoral del Baix Empordà

Case Study Database

A compilation of good practices and lessons learned to bring innovative subnational solutions to global problems

Introduction

Natura 2000 is a network of key breeding and resting areas for rare and threatened species, as well as certain rare natural habitat types. It encompasses all 27 EU states. The network's objective is to safeguard the long-term survival of Europe's most significant and endangered species and habitats, which are designated under both the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive.

One of the policy possibilities to protect these and deal with complex environmental and biodiversity challenges is the introduction of participatory processes. These policies are especially useful in conditions that need flexibility, transparency and the inclusion of a wide range of knowledge and values. They allow for the improvement of governance and for implementing measures that respond to local needs.

The project Co-Management Maritime Board of Litoral del Baix Empordà is an example of how including a diverse range of stakeholders can be translated into practice.

Project Summary

The Co-Management Maritime Board of Litoral del Baix Empordà project centers around the creation of a permanent space for participation where proposals can be debated and concretized to improve the management and organization of maritime uses and activities in the area. The project seeks to increase compatibility between those uses and activities and the conservation of the natural heritage of the region.

This experience focuses on a "bottom up" management system with the participation of the main actors involved, the scientific community, civil society and administration. Its objectives are to:

- Ensure the conservation and improvement of the natural, cultural and landscape heritage of the area
- Safeguard the accounting of the uses and socioeconomic activities that take place in the space with the conservation of its heritage
- Facilitate the cooperation of the different stakeholders represented

Key Information

Location

Catalonia, Spain

Areas of focus

Stakeholders collaboration and governance, maritime conservation of habitats and species, invasive alien species

Founded in

2019

Investment

Autonomous financing + several minor contracts in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 (max. € 17,000 VAT included)

Aichi Biodiversity Targets addressed

Strategic goals C and E

Sustainable Development Goals addressed

SDGs 13, 14, 15 and 17

Author

Regional Government of Catalonia

"Economía azul y turismo" by Daco

"Implementación protocolos MPA-ENGAGE" by Cristina Linares, Universidad de Barcelona



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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The area of the Co-Management Maritime Board of Litoral del Baix Empordà is a protected marine area included in the Natura 2000 Network of the Baix Empordà. It is located in the Costa Brava, a coastal region of Catalonia in northeastern Spain, of exceptional beauty, high landscape values and rich natural heritage. The area is located in front of the municipalities of Palamós, Mont-ras, Palafrugell and Begur and concurrent with the marine protected areas (AMP) of the Plan of Spaces of Natural Interest of Catalonia (PEIN) of “Muntanyes de Begur” and “Castell-Cap Roig”, the latter with a Protection Plan approved in 2006.

In this area, a great variety of uses and activities are developed with different spatio-temporal intensities and different levels of interaction between them. Recreational activities are abundant and predominate during the summer season; fishing takes place regularly throughout the year.

At present, the Biodiversity Sections of Territorial Service in Girona of the Department of Climate Action, Agriculture and Rural Agenda carries out preventive management of the conservation of biodiversity in the protected area based on the management instruments of Natura 2000.

The Board (or “Taula” in Catalan) is a joint initiative of both units of Biodiversity and Marine Policies and Sustainable Fisheries that aims at responding to the

concern expressed by the users of the territory.

In 2017, a first diagnosis was carried out to identify the actors and the specific problems of the different uses and activities that are developed in the area. Surveys were conducted through pre-assessment and diagnosis files, and later after the participants were invited to a participatory diagnostic session. As a result, and in response to the main conclusion derived from the requests of the actors involved, the first steps were taken to create and constitute the Co-Management Board.

During 2018, the mission was to support this local initiative to constitute the Board with the support of the General Directorates of Environmental Policies and Natural Environment (DTES) and Fisheries and Maritime Affairs (DARP) from the Regional Government of Catalonia. A proposal for structure and general operation was drawn up, which was contrasted with all the different stakeholders through various participatory sessions.

The permanent space for participation where proposals are debated and specified to improve the management and organization of uses and activities, has a website that can be accessed by all users: **<https://participa.gencat.cat/assemblies/tcmbaixemporda>**.

Water temperature monitoring in Ullastres by Quim Garrabou



Map of the Baix Empordà Littoral Zone



KEY ACTIVITIES AND INNOVATIONS

The main objective of the Board is to be a permanent space for participation where proposals to improve the management and ordering of uses and activities are discussed and concretized, within the scope of the marine protected area Litoral del Baix Empordà, included in the Natura 2000 network. As a public administration, Catalonia had a lack of proactive governance in marine protected areas and this Co-Management Board has improved both the implications of regional government and stakeholder participation.

The Board is, at the same time, a place for dialogue where stakeholders are empowered, and those who have different and seemingly opposing interests can talk, discuss and empathize, and eventually arrive to agreements.

The Board seeks to make those uses and activities compatible with the conservation of natural heritage through more participatory management. The objectives of the Board are to:

- Ensure the conservation and improvement of the natural, cultural and landscape heritage of the area;
- Safeguard the accounting of the uses and socio-economic activities that take place in the space with the conservation of its heritage; and
- Facilitate the cooperation of the different stakeholders represented

The Board is structured in the following areas and sub-areas: civil society entities, blue economy and activities at sea, professional fishing, recreational fishing, underwater activities, nautical activities, leisure - sea sports, socioeconomic promotion, scientific community, public administration, including own Councils, County

Council and Provincial Council and Departments of the Government of Catalonia.

Some of the key activities developed in 2018 are the following:

- 2 global sessions of the Board, in June and November 2018
- 2 rounds of 4 sectoral workshops, each round in July and September 2018
- 1 Council of Facilitators in October 2018
- Act of constitution of the Board, on February 1, 2019, in Palamós

And the tasks and results were the creation of the Board itself, with the definition of its structure and operation. The Board structure document defines the areas and sub-areas, and the Working Guidelines documents defines the 13 lines of work and 83 actions; the Decalogue also includes the 10 commitments of the members of the Board.

In 2019, the following activities were held:

- 2 rounds of 4 sectoral workshops each round
- 4 sessions of the Council of Facilitators
- Act of public presentation of the Board, February 26, 2020

The main outputs of the actions were:

- Video summary of the process developed during 2018
- Informative PowerPoint presentation of the Board
- Internal information session on competitions and season plans, November 2019.
- Internal operating regulations, December 2019

- 2020 Action Plan, December 2019
- Public session to present the Board, objectives and Action Plan 2020, February 27, 2020

In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all meetings and activities were held online and, due to the transversality of the topics and issues to be discussed, working groups (WGs) were created. The WG Scientists and Administration held 2 meetings; WG Beaches Seasonal Plan held 4 meetings and the WG Communication held 3 meetings.

In addition, the facilitators of each area had 5 meetings in total. The main results were:

- Competence framework document
- Basic communication manual
- Proposal for the “Beaches seasonal use plans”
- Good practices document (summary of the conference online)
- The Board was presented with the II Prize for “Society and Protected Areas” experiences, at Europarc Spain, and received a special mention

Biodiversity and socioeconomic activities by Daco



ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ●

The results are partially measurable. Catalonia hasn't developed a set of project indicators or metrics to measure their impact. However, it can be stated that, after three years of implementation, several actions have taken place and the members of the Board have been able to sit and work together to develop them, and as a result, have advanced their common goals and produced documents and reports. These include:

- The realization of a day of presentation and debate on the good practices of the blue economy in the marine area of the Baix Empordà Coast
- Presentations of the training day on Load Capacity and Adaptive Management organized by the Institute of Environment of the UdG and developed in the Co-Management Maritime Board of Litoral del Baix Empordà. These presentations have effectively shared relevant environmental information with the members of the Board. The presentations covered the following topics:
 - Towards Integrated Coastal Zone Management based on Ecosystem Management
 - Coastal and marine zone concepts and boundaries for integrated management based on carrying capacity

and ecosystem values

- Co-responsibility, co-participation and co-management through integrated socioecological evaluation
- Coastal management through the study of ecological, physical and perceptual carrying capacity
- How to analyze and regulate uses based on the establishment of an adaptive load capacity
- Co-management of the ecological status and pressures of hake, shrimp and sonso fisheries
- Presentations made within the framework of the Informative Session on the Competency Framework on the Baix Empordà Coast

Apart from the concrete and tangible results and outputs listed in this and the previous chapter, in the past three years there has been a shift, on the one hand, from having a protected space where active environmental management was, basically maintenance and prevention, to having a collaboratively designed Action Plan where each body and entity contributes with their expertise and implements it.

Castell-Cap Roig (Baix Empordà) by Isidro Jabato



SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS

The main recipients of the project are the people who work and develop their activities in this MPA, from the different administrations, the private sector or blue economy, research centers, and NGOs and civil society in general.

Regarding stakeholders' empowerment, there has been a shift from a situation in which the different stakeholders in many cases did not relate to each other or did not know each other personally and where there was a lot of resistance to having a safe and trustworthy workspace to address common problems and discrepancies, to where they could establish common objectives for the benefit of the protected area.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The objective and, at the same time, the challenge, is that the Board can coordinate and manage itself autonomously. This means that the Board itself finds its financing mechanisms for its coordinating team or secretary and for the actions that it wishes to develop, such as other public administrations, European funds, private support (sponsorships, patronage...), etc.

Since the end of 2019, some actions are being implemented with European funds from the MPA-ENGAGE project linked to the InterregMed programme. This project aims to improve adaptation to the impacts of climate change in the Mediterranean and strengthen marine protected areas as a key tool to prevent the loss of biodiversity and maintain the good condition of ecosystems. The abbreviation responds to the name of the Project: "Engaging Mediterranean Key Actors in Ecosystem Approach to Manage Marine Protected Areas to Face Climate Change".

Currently, the regional government of Catalonia is "backstage" financially supporting all the administrative contracts:

- a contract was made in 2017 for the surveys and the participatory session
- minor contracts in 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 (max. € 17,000 VAT included) for the constitution, dynamization and accompaniment of the members of the Board through an external consultancy specialized in participatory processes and mediation. These contracts have been paid alternately between the Departments of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food and the Department of Territory and Sustainability. A small technical team was in charge of coordinating the work between both departments.

The next important step, now that the Board is "stable" in terms of its functions, is to create a new governance and financial step or paradigm to secure its sustainability in the long term.



“Caminos de Ronda y Calas del Baix Empordà” by Calafellvalo

PARTNERSHIPS

The most important partnership at the beginning of the constitution of the Board is the one created between the Environmental and the Fishery departments inside the Catalan administration, which are, with the help of the municipality of Palamós represented by its Fishery Museum, along with the external consultant in charge of the dynamization, the “engine” that made possible the creation and continuation of the Board.

Once the Board was constituted, the partnership opened up to gather all the stakeholders that take part and belong to it. At the Board of the Litoral del Baix Empordà, we can estimate that around 76 organizations among public administrations, the scientific community, users (companies and the primary sector) and entities of civil society are currently participating.

REPLICATION AND APPLICABILITY ●

Regarding the impacts on other MPAs nearby, this new governance structure is an example for other MPAs in Catalonia in a similar management or governance deficit situation. In that regard, it has inspired other MPAs to implement a Co-Management Board or an equivalent management instrument, with local administrations and other stakeholders.

Some of the conditions that are necessary to replicate this instrument in other regions are to carry out a diagnosis to further understand the problems and specific needs of the region; to create strong partnerships between relevant departments in the regional government; to include multi-sectoral and multi-level stakeholders in the activities through the creation of a participatory process as well as a space of dialogue and coordination between these different actors. This allows the formulation of measures and policies that are compatible with the economic and social needs of the local population and the protection of the ecosystem. It is also important to organize regular meetings and working sessions, so that the efforts are sustainable and adaptable to changing needs and conditions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about this project, please visit
<https://participa.gencat.cat/assemblies/tcmbaixemporda>

You can also contact us at info@regions4.org to set up an informative meeting, solve doubts and get support in implementing similar projects.



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RegionsWithNature

ABOUT

Regions4 (formerly known as the nrg4SD) is a global network that solely represents regional governments (states, regions and provinces) before UN processes, European Union initiatives and global discussions in the fields of climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development. Regions4 was established in 2002 at the World Summit in Johannesburg and currently represents over 40 members from 20 countries in 4 continents. Through advocacy, cooperation and capacity building, Regions4 empowers regional governments to accelerate global action.

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