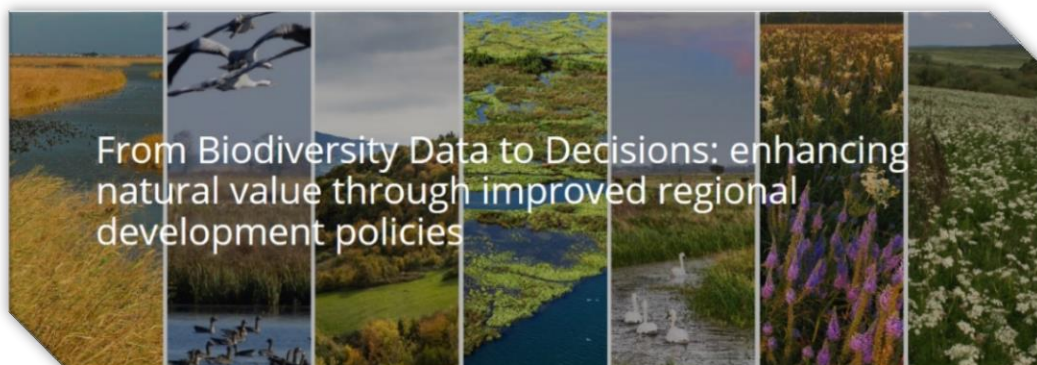


Action plan in Catalonia

March 2019

Executive Summary



Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament de Territori i Sostenibilitat
**Direcció General de Polítiques Ambientals
i Medi Natural**

INTERREG-EUROPE BID-REX PROJECT

From Biodiversity Data to Decisions: enhancing natural value through improved regional development policies

Partner organizations concerned:



ACTION PLAN IN CATALONIA

MARCH 2019 | Executive Summary

Country: Spain

NUTS2 region: Catalunya

Contact person: Pau Sainz de la Maza

Email address: psainz@gencat.cat

Phone number: 0034 934445000

Coordination

Pau Sainz de la Maza, The Ministry of Territory and Sustainability
Gerard Bota, Forest Science and Technology Centre of Catalonia (CTFC)
Xavi Basora, Espai TReS - Land and Social Responsibility

Writing

Xavi Basora, Espai TReS - Land and Social Responsibility
Marta Pujol, biodiversity consultant
Jordi Parpal, biodiversity consultant
Pau Sainz de la Maza, The Ministry of Territory and Sustainability
Leo Bejarano, The Ministry of Territory and Sustainability
Pilar Casanovas, The Ministry of Territory and Sustainability
Gerard Bota, Forest Science and Technology Centre of Catalonia (CTFC)
Núria Pou, Forest Science and Technology Centre of Catalonia (CTFC)
Lluís Brotons, CTFC · Centre for Ecological Research and Forestry Applications (CREAF) · Spanish National Research Council (CSIC)

Photography

Xavi Basora

Special thanks:

To the members of the Local Stakeholder Group (LSG), for their valuable contributions during the 8 working sessions carried out within the framework of the BID-REX project.

The Interreg Europe BID-REX project "From Biodiversity Data to Decisions: enhancing natural value through improved regional development policies" (hereafter **BID-REX project**) aims to improve the use of information on biodiversity and increase the impact of regional development policies for the conservation of Europe's natural heritage by providing appropriate biodiversity information to decision-making processes.

The Action Plan aims to impact the Policy Instrument "Priority Investment 6 from Catalan ERDF Operational Programme: Protecting environment and promoting resource efficiency", which is a European Structural and Investment Fund.

1. The project and the associated work methodology

The BID-REX project has 9 partners from 7 regions in the European Union (EU). The Forest Science and Technology Centre of Catalonia (CTFC) is the project's main partner. In Catalonia, the project is led by the Government of Catalonia, through the Ministry of Territory and Sustainability (DTES).

The basis for the Interreg Europe projects is an exchange of experience and good practices between regions. On the basis of this exchange, regions that are more advanced in a particular field (depending on the project) can share good practices with the other regions. These success stories or good practices might inspire other regions to improve their public policies

The objective of the BID-REX project is for information on natural heritage to improve public policies and, therefore, enhance the state of conservation of our natural capital and the well-being and lives of people. The specific objectives of the project in Catalonia are:

1. **Prioritise and properly manage ERDF funds so that they favour nature conservation policies in Catalonia.**
2. **Design the future Observatory of the Natural Heritage** which should be based on: the needs and legal mandates of the General Directorate of Environmental Policies in the field of biodiversity and geodiversity, the conclusions drawn from meetings with relevant local stakeholders and, finally, the lessons learned from other European regions thanks to the exchange of experiences and debates held throughout the project.

The duration of the project is 5 years and is divided into two phases:

- The **1st phase (April 2016 - March 2019)** has included a process of learning and exchange of experiences between partners, with themed workshops in various regions, as well as the drafting of regional Action Plans (APs) and technical guides. This document in particular corresponds to the Action Plan drawn up for Catalonia.
- The **2nd phase (April 2019 - March 2021)** focuses on monitoring the implementation of the respective action plans.

All information about the project can be consulted on the following web pages:

- Comprehensive website for the project: www.interregeurope.eu/bid-rex
- Website for the project in Catalonia: http://mediambient.gencat.cat/ca/05_ambits_dactuacio/patrimoni_natural/sistemes_dinformacio/interreg-europe-bid-rex

Within the framework of the BID-REX project, the exchange of experiences has been carried out through **interregional workshops** that have taken place during the 1st phase of the project in each of the regions involved. Between February 2017 and January 2019, five workshops were held, each with a thematic axis from which case studies from the different regions were presented and debates were generated in small groups to identify improvements or key aspects to be taken into account. The results of the workshops were then compiled into technical documents with summaries of the most relevant key findings.

As established by all Interreg Europe projects, partners must also work at regional level on the lessons learnt in interregional exchanges (workshops) with other project partners. To this end, the **Local Stakeholder Group (LSG)** was created in Catalonia in September 2016, consisting basically of three profiles:

- natural heritage managers
- generators and users of information on biodiversity
- managers and beneficiaries of European funds.

With a view to working in more detail on the two main objectives of the project in Catalonia, in March 2017 **two work subgroups** were created from among the members of the Local Stakeholders Group: the observatory for natural heritage subgroup and the European funds subgroup.

The working methodology of the two subgroups and the LSG itself revolved around working sessions, with clear and concrete objectives, and aimed at obtaining the intended results. Until the end of 2018, the LSG (either as a whole or by subgroups) has met in eight sessions.

Aside from the LSG sessions and the interregional workshops (and the resulting documents), during the learning phase of the BID-REX project, several reports have been drawn up that have also provided information for the formulation of this Action Plan.

2. Current Status: Needs and Difficulties

This Action Plan, based on the reports and documents that have been generated during the learning phase of the project (with contributions from the various types of agents involved), attempts to synthesise the current situation in Catalonia in terms of: 1) the status and use of biodiversity information in Catalonia, and 2) the use of European funds (especially the ERDF) to finance biodiversity conservation projects.

As a preliminary step towards analysing the current situation, the Plan briefly describes the framework strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity (on various levels), with special emphasis on the framework instruments that exist in Catalonia. In Catalonia, the **Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy of Catalonia 2030 (EPNCAT2030)**, approved by the Government of Catalonia on 17th July 2018, is particularly noteworthy. EPNCAT2030 is the framework document to guide the actions of the Government of Catalonia in the field of nature conservation up to 2030 as well as being the main reference tool of the Action Plan.

Information on Biodiversity

Information on biodiversity is essential for decision making in the planning and management of natural heritage. Catalonia's current knowledge of biodiversity can be

considered extremely broad. This knowledge is obtained in different fields and is not centralized.

The main needs and difficulties associated with the use of information on biodiversity that have been identified during the learning process of the project are:

- Lack of information in various areas of biodiversity
- The information available is very disperse and poorly integrated
- Difficulties in maintaining and updating existing platforms
- Lack of accessibility to information (due to format or lack of knowledge)
- Information generated not always adapted to needs
- The need of data validation and biodiversity monitoring programmes evaluation
- Insufficient coordination and knowledge transfer between information producers and administrations
- Information flow deficit between services and administrations
- The need to internationalize Catalan projects
- A lack of resources to mobilize information and achieve part of the established objectives

The use of European funds for projects related to biodiversity

The European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) are a set of five funds designed to promote greater economic and social cohesion within the European Community by co-financing member state public policies. These five funds, which are managed by the Member States on the basis of programmes developed by the Member States themselves and approved by the European Commission, are as follows:

- European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)
- European Social Fund (ESF)
- European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD)
- European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF)
- Cohesion Fund

Of these five funds, the BID-REX project focuses particularly on ERDF. Although this fund is mostly managed at national level by the Member States, there are 4 countries which, apart from their national programme, submit operational programmes (OPs) at a regional level. One of them is Spain, where each autonomous community has a regional OP.

As part of the learning process of the BID-REX project, a specific report was prepared analysing the ERDF projects in Catalonia carried out between 2007 and 2013. An approximate assessment of the use of biodiversity conservation funds during the current period (2014-2020) has also been carried out using various sources.

The main needs, difficulties and problems presented by the use of the ERDF fund to finance biodiversity conservation projects, which have been detected during the learning process of the project are:

- Lack of knowledge about how ERDF works and what its potential is for nature conservation
- Prejudice towards its inherent administrative complexity
- Lack of technical staff in the Administration to prepare and manage projects
- Insufficient collaboration between ERDF managers, users and other stakeholders (administrations and entities).
- Local bodies with no advice on submitting proposals
- Post-financing is a drawback

- There is not always a guarantee that financing by the department will be reimbursed by the Government of Catalonia
- Priority is given to projects with large budgets, which is viewed as a constraint for potential beneficiaries
- Difficult alignment of natural heritage conservation with fund objectives
- The perception of a lack of framework strategies within biodiversity conservation
- Poorly defined conservation priorities and a lack of tools cause difficulties for project managers
- Inadequate indicators for assessing the impact of conservation projects

3. The Observatory of Natural Heritage Proposal

The main instrument proposed by this Action Plan to address the needs and difficulties associated with the use of information on biodiversity is the creation of a new entity that could be called the Observatory of Natural Heritage of Catalonia (OPNC hereafter) and that would function as the **reference entity for natural heritage and biodiversity, collecting detailed information that would be useful for decision-making as well as being accessible for the scientific and education community, and for all interested sectors and citizens.**

In fact, EPNCAT2030 envisages a priority course of action (No. 7) aimed at "constitute an information and knowledge-oriented observatory for natural heritage".

The proposals made in the Action Plan on this new entity come from the EPNCAT2030, from the contributions made by members of the LSG, the lessons learned during the interregional workshops and the European good practices that were put forward.

In accordance with EPNCAT2030, and with the inputs raised during the LSG sessions, the **objectives of the OPNC** would include:

- Identify, collect, organize, process and integrate existing natural heritage information from diverse sources
- Promote initiatives to improve knowledge prior detection of existing gaps in information on natural heritage
- Periodically evaluate the state of natural heritage and the degree of compliance with certain instruments and strategic plans for nature conservation
- Transfer information collected to the agents that manage the natural environment and those who make decisions, and respond to specific demands for information prior to decision making
- Make information accessible and disseminate it to all sectors of society, helping to increase the social value of natural heritage

The future Observatory's actions, the information it centralizes and the products it generates are aimed at a wide range of public and private agents. Broadly speaking, this new body's enterprise could benefit or help four types of agents:

- Agents with decision-making powers over natural heritage: there would be a wide range of public stakeholders
- Agents who manage natural heritage
- Agents that generate information on natural heritage
- Citizens in general

In terms of the **governance** of the OPNC, the public administrations will have to take the lead, although it will not be an observatory exclusively for the Administration alone. The OPNC should be a legally independent entity, although so as to take advantage of existing infrastructure it may share personnel and resources from other institutions.

The OPNC is envisaged as having a structure that would include a **governing body and two advisory bodies**:

- a steering committee that would make decisions (this will determine *requirements?* and *directions to take?*)
- a scientific board to advise (this will determine *procedures?*)
- a fully independent evaluation (or 'external support') committee to ensure consistency and provide guidance (where necessary) in order to achieve the stated objectives.

In addition, the OPNC will have a technical office to act as its **implementing body**. As the driving and dynamic nucleus of human, material and economic resources contributed by the new body's member entities, this office will become the central component of the OPNC.

It must be said that the Observatory will not be starting from scratch. There are currently several partially or totally unconnected institutions working on the same objectives. There are also coordination initiatives (Government of Catalonia - Barcelona Provincial Council, Government of Catalonia - Catalan Ornithological Institute, etc.) as well as an abundance of information related to natural heritage. It is therefore necessary to focus on the coordination of existing resources and teams.

While it would appear that the consortium formula would best fit the objectives, characteristics and public-private structure defined for the OPNC, it is advisable not to rely on one single entity from the outset. A foundation could be a suitable alternative, as it has similar characteristics to a consortium. Within the framework of the BID-REX project, a specific report has been commissioned by a team of legal experts to analyse the pros and cons of the various alternatives, as well as to propose the most suitable option, and therefore enable the making of a more informed decision about the **legal status of the new OPNC**.

4. Proposals for improving the use of ERDF funds

The proposals for improvement which have been put forward (and which are set out below in the form of specific actions) have been organised into five areas:

- Visibility and diffusion of funds in terms of biodiversity
- Organization and functioning of fund planning and management
- Matching biodiversity projects to ERDF objectives
- Criteria for selecting and prioritizing the projects to be financed
- Evaluation of ERDF OPs and funded projects

Many of the ideas and proposals can be transferred to other European funds (not just ERDF), which can also be used to finance projects linked to natural heritage and the sustainable use of natural resources.

Three main types of measures have been proposed in order to **raise awareness about this fund** among potential users in the field of biodiversity and natural heritage, be they public administrations, private entities or academia:

- Create and disseminate specific information concerning ERDF and biodiversity
- Make existing resources visible and accessible for preparing new projects
- Strengthen practical knowledge on the use of ERDF for biodiversity conservation (through face-to-face spaces for information, consultation and the exchange of experiences).

The main proposals in terms of the organisation and functioning of ERDF planning and management are:

- Improve coordination and organisation between the different departments and units of the Government of Catalonia that plan and manage the fund.
- Increase the involvement of the DTES (The Ministry of Territory and Sustainability) in the definition and use of the ERDF fund, as it has access to the most expertise and knowledge related to conservation of the natural environment.
- Establish a system of advice and monitoring of proposals and projects
- Establish a system for monitoring the use of funds for biodiversity projects

The following tasks will need to be undertaken within the definition phase of the next Operational Programme, and in order to **improve alignment between biodiversity projects and ERDF objectives**:

- Incorporate biodiversity conservation objectives into many of the socio-economic activities that can be financed by ERDF funds.
- Extend the range of fundable actions linked to biodiversity conservation in axes that are not based on natural heritage (such as axis 1 or 2).
- Promote proposals that have a more transversal approach, and that demonstrate the importance of a combined effort between the business sector, the institutions that generate information and the stakeholders linked to natural heritage conservation.

Priorities include finding a way to give more weight to environmental criteria, with the utmost specificity in each case. EPNCAT2030 should become the main reference framework for new biodiversity projects to be financed by the fund. Apart from EPNCAT2030, the document Priority Action Framework for Natura 2000 should also be considered, which includes priority measures for habitat types and species in Catalonia, as well as management instruments for Special Conservation Areas (SACs), among others that already exist.

With a view to future calls for proposals and especially with a view to the future financing period, the **selection criteria for projects to be financed by the ERDF** are to be revised in order to incorporate more specific aspects related to the conservation of biodiversity, in accordance with the objectives and courses of action established by EPNCAT2030.

The evaluation of the impact on natural heritage of the ERDF OP as a whole and in terms of the projects financed from this fund offers several possibilities for improvement as the indicators used so far are mostly insufficient and fail to show the exact scope and impact of biodiversity conservation projects.

According to the members of the LSG, monitoring indicators are considered to be quite generic (e.g. number of visits or area benefited from the project), and for future operational

programmes, more specific indicators should be included that are less oriented towards assessing economic impact. These specific biodiversity indicators should be complementary to the minimum indicators set by the EC.

In addition, evaluation of the impact on natural heritage during the programming period is proposed on two levels:

- A detailed evaluation of each of the projects executed once their execution has been completed.
- A global evaluation of the impact on Catalonia's natural heritage for the application of the ERDF, to be carried out at least twice during the period.

5. Action Plan 2019-2021

The Action Plan specifies, in the form of actions, the proposals outlined in Chapters 3 and 4. It is structured into two lines of action in accordance with the two objectives of the BID-REX project in Catalonia:

- Actions to improve the generation and use of biodiversity information (with the code INFO).
- Actions aimed at improving the use of ERDF funds for biodiversity projects (with the code FONS).

In accordance with the phases of the BID-REX project, this plan will last approximately two years, from **April 2019 to March 2021**. However, some actions are more complex and may take longer to fully implement. On the other hand, a large proportion of the actions are intended to continue, and it would therefore be desirable for them to continue beyond March 2021. In fact, actions aimed at improving the use of ERDF funds will make the most sense during the design and especially during the implementation of the new programming period (2021-2027) of this instrument.

A section for each of the actions has been prepared consisting of the following fields:

- **Code:** to number the actions according to the line to which they belong (INFOx or FONSx).
- **Title:** concise description of the action.
- **Background and context:** explains how the proposed action arises from or is sustained by contributions made during phase 1 of the project dedicated to learning and exchange of experiences (either in the framework of interregional workshops or working sessions of the local stakeholder group -LSG-).
- **Description:** The steps to follow to implement the action. In fact, some actions are more like broad work streams that require several more specific sub-actions to be deployed.
- **Responsible:** identifies the main stakeholder who should lead and be responsible for the implementation of the action.
- **Other stakeholders:** other stakeholders are mentioned who should also be involved and collaborate in the implementation of the action.
- **Indicative costs:** specify human, economic or material resources that are necessary for the implementation of the action.
- **Sources of financing:** institutions, entities or economic and/or financial instruments that could be used to finance the action.
- **Implementation Schedule:** the period during which the action should be executed. This section also specifies whether it is desirable or even imperative that the action be continued beyond March 2021.

Before describing each of the actions using these sections, and in order to provide a comprehensive overview, a summary is shown of each of the actions and their implementation schedule.



ACTIONS	2018		2019		2020		2021	C
	1S	2S	1S	2S	1S	2S	1S	
INFO1. Include the creation of the Observatory of Natural Heritage of Catalonia as a priority course of action within the EPNCAT2030	■	■						
INFO2. Create the Observatory of the Natural Heritage of Catalonia, set up the technical office and draw up a 5-year master plan to programme its activity				■	■	■	■	■
INFO3. Create a centralized information hub on natural heritage and make it open to the public			■	■	■	■	■	■
INFO4. Establish a common research agenda between the Administration and the research sector in Catalonia to respond to the challenges of the EPNCAT2030 and the future observatory			■	■	■	■	■	■
INFO5. Bring existing biodiversity information closer to potential users for use in planning and management of the natural environment					■	■	■	■
FONS1. Create a working group led by the DTES to incorporate new criteria into the ERDF fund to increase the financing of projects related to natural heritage		■	■	■	■	■		
FONS2. Increase the involvement of the DTES in the definition and implementation of projects related to natural heritage financed by the ERDF fund				■	■	■	■	■
FONS3. Create advisory mechanisms for potential users of European structural funds to plan and implement projects for the conservation and management of natural heritage						■	■	■
FONS4. Carry out global monitoring of the use of European funds for natural heritage conservation and management projects						■	■	■

Notes: 1S and 2S refer to the semester of the year in question.

The Action Plan's period of validity ends the 1st semester of 2021. However, those actions that require continuity are indicated in the column headed with a "C".

Code INFO1	INCLUDE THE CREATION OF THE OBSERVATORY OF NATURAL HERITAGE OF CATALONIA AS A PRIORITY LINE OF ACTION WITHIN THE EPNCAT2030
RELEVANCE TO THE PROJECT	<p>Designing this new entity is one of the two strategic objectives of the BID-REX project in Catalonia. On the other hand, it responds to a need that has long been demanded by professional collectives dedicated to research and nature conservation. The example of England with good practices such as the NBN Atlas, has been relevant to the definition of this action.</p> <p>In addition, the European funds subgroup identified the need of having a framework strategy within biodiversity conservation, to improve ERDF funds allocation for conservation purposes (see section 2). The approval of EPNCAT2030 will also satisfy this need.</p>
NATURE OF THE ACTION	<p>This action aims to include the creation of the Observatory within the Natural Heritage and Biodiversity Strategy of Catalonia 2030 (EPNCAT2030) as a priority action. This strategy is a framework document for guiding the actions of the Government of Catalonia in nature conservation up to 2030 and therefore the OPNC must be a priority.</p> <p>One of EPNCAT2030's six fields of action is "Knowledge, information and monitoring of the natural heritage" and one of its strategic objectives is "Improve integration, processing and accessibility of information on the natural heritage".</p> <p>As a new entity the Observatory would serve to address the current difficulty in transversally integrating, ordering and managing the information available inside and outside the Catalan administration between the different stakeholders, as seen, for example, in England with the NBN Atlas.</p>
RESPONSIBLE	The DTES – General Directorate of Environmental Policies
OTHER AGENTS INVOLVED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government of Catalonia • LSG Members
INDICATIVE COSTS	There should be no associated cost as this will be undertaken by the DTES unit preparing the EPNCAT2030.
FUNDING SOURCES	The DTES budget.
IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE	At the time of completing the last version of EPNCAT2030 and its final approval by the Government of the Government of Catalonia.

Code INFO2	CREATE THE OBSERVATORY OF THE NATURAL HERITAGE OF CATALONIA (OPNC), SET UP THE TECHNICAL OFFICE AND DRAW UP A 5-YEAR MASTER PLAN TO PROGRAMME ITS ACTIVITY
RELEVANCE TO THE PROJECT	<p>The design of the Observatory, specifically, is one of the two main objectives of the BID-REX project in Catalonia. The project has provided the appropriate framework for bringing together all the relevant actors and designing what this Observatory should look like.</p> <p>Given the importance of this new entity, the local stakeholder group (LSG) was divided into two subgroups, one of which was specifically dedicated to discussing what the new OPNC should look like. Several LSG and subgroup sessions were devoted to dealing with various aspects of what the new entity should look like: objectives and functions, structure and governance, financing, etc.</p>
DESCRIPTION	<p>This action will involve the necessary steps (political, legal, administrative, etc.) to set up the OPNC and put the technical office into operation. These steps will require a series of sub-actions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaching a government agreement that urges work towards the creation of the new entity to begin. • Determining the appropriate legal status of the OPNC (see section 3) in accordance with the commissioned legal report. • Carrying out the legal and administrative steps required by the legal entity chosen for the OPNC, including the definition of the various governing bodies and their members (see section 3), the drafting of the new entity's statutes and their formal approval. • Specifying the financial resources available to the OPNC (see section 3), including the contributions pledged by members. Defining a first annual budget. • Establishing the OPNC's technical office (see section 3), including a definitive organisation chart and choice of geographical location. • Elaborating and approving the 1st OPNC Master Plan from 2021 to 2025 that establishes a 5-year action program. This Plan should be drafted through a participatory process involving the members of the steering committee and the scientific board.
RESPONSIBLE	DTES – General Directorate of Environmental Policies
OTHER AGENTS INVOLVED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public administrations, especially those that will form part of the OPNC's steering committee. • Universities, research centres, museums and other institutions producing information on biodiversity and natural heritage.
INDICATIVE COSTS	<p>During the first two years it will be necessary to have two people (manager and data manager profile) who will start working on the embryo of the future organism. The salary cost of these technicians will be about €70,000.</p> <p>Once the OPNC has been established, and in accordance with the structure envisaged for its technical office (see 3), the annual budget required will be €341,564.</p>
FUNDING SOURCES	<p>First two years: budgets of the Government of Catalonia.</p> <p>Once the OPNC and its technical office have been constituted: agreed contributions from the members of the OPNC's steering committee.</p>
IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE	From the 2nd semester of 2019 until the end of the Plan's validity.

By the first semester of 2021, the government agreement will have to have been reached and the ideal legal entity determined. The chosen legal entity will determine the time needed to set up the OPNC (since it may involve greater or lesser administrative complexity).

Code INFO3	CREATE A CENTRALIZED INFORMATION HUB ON NATURAL HERITAGE AND OPEN IT TO THE PUBLIC
RELEVANCE TO THE PROJECT	<p>Some good practices identified during the interregional workshops are and will be inspirational for this action. On the one hand, the Nature Information System of the Basque Country with regard to the structure and interoperability of information, and also on how they have ensured the long-term flow of information with the institutions that generate biodiversity information (with multi-year collaboration frameworks). The NBN Atlas may be a good example of how to make biodiversity information available to the public (in open data format).</p> <p>Moreover, in several LSG meetings the need for a common location from which to access all available information on natural heritage has been highlighted.</p>
NATURE OF THE ACTION	<p>A new web space will be created (prior assessment of the role and use of pre-existing platforms) where consultation and access to all biodiversity and geodiversity information from information generators will be facilitated and made available so that the public may consult it and make use of it. This information hub will include, among others, a raw data repository for some datasets and will redirect to accessible datasets, that are not directly included, for easy access.</p> <p>To ensure good use, there must be an effective search system and data formats that are compatible, open, and follow international standards.</p> <p>The implementation of this action should include the following sub-actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine which datasets will be included in the hub, using the non-repetition of already accessible data criterion. • Decide on the data model and format or formats the information is to be presented with, both raw data and more elaborate information (reports of results, synthetic products, interpreted information, etc.). • Define the agents responsible for managing this information hub (as long as the OPNC does not exist) and the agents providing information. • Development of a raw data repository. Among others, this will involve deciding and implementing the IT platform that will host it, valuing the usefulness of pre-existing platforms. • Design, program and develop the portal and data infrastructure as well as the database itself. • Feeding both the web space and the repository with first-rate data from existing information. • Open the website that acts as a centralised information hub on biodiversity and geodiversity in Catalonia. • Define the mechanisms and protocols that allow the updating, the maintenance of the portal and the flow of information from the generators, suppliers and managers of the information so that it is correctly published on the information hub.
RESPONSIBLE	<p>Observatory of the Natural Heritage of Catalonia (OPNC)</p> <p>Until this entity comes into being, the DTES-Directorate General for Environmental Policies will assume the responsibility.</p>

OTHER AGENTS INVOLVED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other ministries in the Government of Catalonia with competences in the field of research, knowledge and digital information (the Ministry for Business and Knowledge, the Ministry for Digital Policy and Public Administration, etc.). • Universities, research centres, museums and other institutions and public administrations that generate information on biodiversity and natural heritage (such as the Barcelona Provincial Council), for example from citizen science. • Other private users (such as environmental consultancies or companies that capitalize on biodiversity)
INDICATIVE COSTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • €30,000.00 for the opening and maintenance of a web space that operates as an information hub. • €50,000.00 to develop a raw data information repository.
FINANCING FUND	Assess the use of the ERDF fund (Objectives 1 and 2) to finance the implementation of this action.
IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE	Beginning in the first half of 2019

Code INFO4	ESTABLISH A COMMON RESEARCH AGENDA BETWEEN THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE RESEARCH SECTOR IN CATALONIA TO RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGES OF THE EPNCAT2030 AND THE FUTURE OBSERVATORY
RELEVANCE TO THE PROJECT	<p>Catalonia currently has a broad knowledge of natural heritage thanks to the work carried out over decades by the research sphere (universities, research centres, etc.) and civil society (citizen science). Unfortunately, despite existing knowledge, there are a number of shortcomings that preclude some conservation challenges. Among the shortcomings detected are the lack of knowledge of some key aspects of natural heritage, as well as a lack of coordination between the administration and the research sphere.</p> <p>During the interregional workshops the benefits of a more fluid dialogue between the administration and the scientific community in order to guarantee that the information is adapted to the uses and needs of the users were observed (BID-REX's 1st KLB). In this context, a common agenda must be created between the research sphere and the administration in order to respond to conservation challenges and society's information needs.</p> <p>To attain this agenda, it is fundamental to start with what we already have, by optimizing the structuring of information, the generation of products and improving the current information flows between stakeholders.</p>
NATURE OF THE ACTION	<p>The EPNCAT2030 includes this action and establishes that a work agenda will be agreed -detailed in themes and actions- promoted by the Government of Catalonia and coordinated with all the universities and research centres in Catalonia that work in the field of natural heritage and biodiversity.</p> <p>This agenda should integrate the needs of the Administration into public research plans and coordinate collaborative research, prioritising research projects that contribute to increasing knowledge on natural heritage and key components, as well as improving adaptive management.</p> <p>However, prior to obtaining this common agenda, a joint work plan can be established between the Directorate General for Environmental Policies and the research centres in relation to the projects for generating information and knowledge on biodiversity currently financed by the DTES itself. This plan should more explicitly relate the objectives and results of the most relevant projects for the conservation of natural heritage to the various challenges arising from EPNCAT2030 and the implementation of the future Observatory.</p> <p>The identification of the key components of natural heritage (habitats, species, geodiversity features and processes) and, above all, the appraisal of their degree of knowledge, is a preliminary step towards defining the agenda, also established by EPNCAT2030. As a result of this appraisal, priority issues on which to promote research will have to be decided.</p> <p>In order to determine these priority issues, the needs of agents managing the natural environment (Natural areas of special protection (ENPE) and National Game Reserve (RNC) managing bodies, Catalan Forestry, Forest Property Centre, fauna recovery centres, custody entities, etc.) as well as specialised private companies (environmental consultancies) should be consulted.</p>

	<p>Once the agreed agenda has been accepted and approved, it will also help to identify those projects that should obtain priority funding from public bodies promoting research.</p> <p>If necessary, need to offer training on the INSPIRE directive to the stakeholders that generate biodiversity data in Catalonia (in order for the data to be interoperable and standardised) should be assessed.</p> <p>The implementation of this action should include the following sub-actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a joint work plan between the Directorate General for Environmental Policies and the research centres in relation to the strategic projects for generating biodiversity information in order to respond to the challenges of the EPNCAT2030 and the future Observatory. • Identify key components of natural heritage (habitats, species, geodiversity elements and processes) • Diagnose the extent of knowledge about the key components of natural heritage • Agree, reach a consensus and approve the common agenda between the research sphere and the administration.
RESPONSIBLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observatory of the Natural Heritage of Catalonia (OPNC). Until this entity comes into being, the DTES-Directorate General for Environmental Policies will assume responsibility. • Universities, research centres, museums and other institutions producing information on biodiversity and natural heritage
OTHER AGENTS INVOLVED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agents managing the natural environment • Specialized private companies (environmental consultancies). • Public bodies promoting research
INDICATIVE COSTS	<p>No associated cost should be added to the cost of meetings as in principle the projects that are to be influenced already have an allocated budget.</p>
FUNDING SOURCES	<p>For the financing of the meetings to reach the common agenda: the DTES or Observatory budget.</p> <p>For the financing of research projects or the generation of information: that of each research project.</p>
IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE	<p>As of the 1st semester of 2019 and with continuity beyond the validity of the BID-REX Action Plan.</p>

<p>Code INFO5</p>	<p>BRING EXISTING BIODIVERSITY INFORMATION CLOSER TO POTENTIAL USERS FOR USE IN PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.</p>
<p>RELEVANCE TO THE PROJECT</p>	<p>During the 1st interregional workshop (Wallonia) it was concluded that there is a need to strengthen mutual trust between information providers and decision-makers in order to ensure the continuity of the flow of information and its usefulness in decision-making.</p> <p>The example seen in Norfolk (in relation to how biodiversity information can improve the planning of new infrastructure for the city of Norwich) was also an inspiring example of how the right information facilitates decision-making.</p> <p>During the LSG working sessions, the importance of information responding to the needs of decision-makers and natural heritage managers was also stressed.</p>
<p>NATURE OF THE ACTION</p>	<p>Mechanisms will be developed to ensure that available scientific information on biodiversity (and that generated by research centres and universities) reaches potential users of this information, is adapted to their needs and can be used effectively in the planning and management of natural heritage.</p> <p>These mechanisms should include, on the one hand, a protocol for the transfer of information that is applied periodically and, on the other, the preparation of executive reports on the state of natural heritage (in more general or specific terms as the case may be) that should be sent to the ministries of the Government of Catalonia and other public bodies with direct powers over the management of natural heritage or with other powers that may have an impact on the improvement or worsening of biodiversity.</p> <p>The implementation of this action should also include the following sub-actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize periodic training seminars specifically aimed at decision-makers who are often unclear about the relevant sources of information on biodiversity in order to carry out their daily tasks. • Create and disseminate a new instruction by the Central Services of the Government of Catalonia detailing the relevant information to be used to perform the Administration's tasks. Moreover, this should specify, in terms of new projects or contracts, the formats in which the information must be provided in order to incorporate it into the relevant information repository. • Create a newsletter on new information on biodiversity and geodiversity that would be sent to the users of this information, initially only to the Administration of the Government of Catalonia, and subsequently to other administrations and to society in general if deemed appropriate. • Periodically organize meeting days between the agents that generate information and potential users (inside and outside the Administration): these would serve to disseminate the available information and also enable potential users to express their information needs, and debate how the information generators could address them to create useful products to satisfy these needs.
<p>RESPONSIBLE</p>	<p>Observatory of the Natural Heritage of Catalonia (OPNC)</p>

	Until this entity comes into being, the DTES-Directorate General for Environmental Policies will assume responsibility.
OTHER AGENTS INVOLVED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decision-makers • Agents managing the natural environment • Other private users • Universities, research centres, museums and other institutions that generate information on biodiversity and natural heritage, for example from citizen science.
INDICATIVE COSTS	Related to the development of the Observatory of the Natural Heritage of Catalonia (OPNC).
FINANCING FUND	OPNC budget or DTES budget.
IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE	Beginning in the first half of 2020

<p>Code FONS1</p>	<p>CREATE A WORKING GROUP LED BY THE DTES TO INCORPORATE NEW CRITERIA INTO THE ERDF FUND TO INCREASE THE FINANCING OF PROJECTS RELATED TO NATURAL HERITAGE.</p>
<p>RELEVANCE TO THE PROJECT</p>	<p>The BID-REX project framework has made it possible to analyse the use and knowledge of ERDF funds for actions aimed at biodiversity conservation (see section 2).</p> <p>In the LSG subgroup working sessions dedicated to ERDF, the potential of ERDF funds for biodiversity conservation projects was highlighted, as well as the need for more interdepartmental collaboration to improve the end use of ERDF for the achievement of DTES objectives.</p>
<p>NATURE OF THE ACTION</p>	<p>The aim of this action is to create a working group made up of technicians from different ministries of the Government of Catalonia in order to incorporate biodiversity conservation objectives into many of the socio-economic activities that can be financed with ERDF funds, as well as to broaden the range of actions that can be financed in relation to the conservation of biodiversity in axes that are not based on natural heritage (see also 4.3.2).</p> <p>This working group would be led by the DTES (via its technical cabinet), but should incorporate technicians from other departments with expertise in economics, agriculture and livestock, research, digital media among others.</p> <p>The DTES should first make proposals for improvements to the new OP, which would then be discussed and agreed within the framework of this interdepartmental group. Once consensus has been reached, they should be transferred to the ERDF fund managers.</p> <p>On the other hand, this action should be coordinated with the Interreg Europe project CircE dedicated to detecting opportunities and barriers to implementing green economy and circular policies in economic sectors.</p> <p><u>Other ERDF improvement proposals to be dealt with and incorporated into the new OP:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the selection criteria for projects to be financed by the ERDF incorporates more specific aspects related to the conservation of biodiversity, in accordance with the objectives and courses of action established by EPNCAT2030 and by the new Priority Action Framework of the Natura 2000 Network. • Establish complementary result indicators that allow fund managers to evaluate projects in terms of their impact on biodiversity conservation. These indicators will be complementary to the result indicators specified for each strategic objective (see also 4) and the information to calculate them should be available through the OPNC. • Lower some minimum requirements defined in the various calls for proposals. For example, admitting activities with a minimum cost of €50,000 or municipalities with less than 20,000 inhabitants. • The administration of the Government of Catalonia should facilitate the realization of multi-fund territorial projects. • Promote proposals that have a more transversal approach, and that demonstrate the importance of joint work between public and private agents.

RESPONSIBLE	The DTES (through its technical cabinet)
OTHER AGENTS INVOLVED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of the Vice-Presidency and of the Economy and Finance • The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food • The Ministry of Business and Knowledge
INDICATIVE COSTS	No associated cost beyond the cost of meetings should be involved as the staff will come from the different ministries of the Government of Catalonia.
FUNDING SOURCES	The DTES budget.
IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE	From the 2nd semester of 2018 until the approval of the new OP.



Code FONS2	INCREASE THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE DTES IN THE DEFINITION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECTS RELATED TO NATURAL HERITAGE FINANCED BY THE ERDF FUND.
RELEVANCE TO THE PROJECT	A number of proposals for improvement were put forward during the LSG working sessions on European funds. Many of these contributions were aimed at increasing the involvement of the DTES in the use of the funds.
NATURE OF THE ACTION	<p>The DTES has the greatest expertise in biodiversity conservation and, therefore, the greatest knowledge of the main areas where action is needed. For this reason, the DTES should be encouraged to be more proactive and make better use of this fund. This greater involvement of the DTES should be aimed at improving the use of the fund in the current OP, introducing new criteria in the draft of the next OP, and also when it comes to proposing and implementing actions.</p> <p>The implementation of this action should include the following sub-actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that DTES technicians are on the technical commissions that evaluate project proposals linked to ERDF calls from other ministries but which have an impact on biodiversity and natural heritage. • Increase communication between the technicians of the different units of the DTES and the technical cabinet of the DTES, which coordinates the reception and management of proposals for ERDF actions. In this sense, it is necessary to encourage these technicians to be more active when proposing project proposals (in accordance with the most urgent needs established by EPNCAT2030), and this involves providing them with better information on the fund's potential and operation as well as creating mechanisms for participation. • Propose the creation of a specific management unit for European funds within the General Sub-Directorate of Biodiversity and Natural Environment. • Pre-defined large upcoming projects (such as the sum of small projects) that fit into the ERDF philosophy. • Create a DTES line of grants to finance biodiversity conservation projects with ERDF funds as well as to meet the needs set by EPNCAT2030. New grants that should be complemented by the EAFRD funds that already exist for protected natural areas. If this new grant proposal falls under the current OP, it should be linked to EO 6.4.1 "Promote the management, protection and maintenance of soil, natural areas and their biodiversity (...)". • Facilitate a working group with public and private agents involved in the conservation of the natural environment (continued from the LSG sub-group) that serves to reach a consensus on investment priorities, conservation priorities, project selection criteria, indicators of specific results, etc. From this group, a (simple) position paper on environmental considerations and European funds could be draft. The DTES should transfer these proposals from the public-private working group to the interdepartmental group mentioned in action FONS1.
RESPONSIBLE	The DTES – General Directorate of Environmental Policies

OTHER AGENTS INVOLVED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the LSG group (European funds sub-group, see Annex 1) • Agents managing the natural environment (managing bodies ENPE and RNC, Catalan Forestry, wildlife recovery centres, etc.).
INDICATIVE COSTS	No associated cost should be incurred since the action will be undertaken by the various technicians of the various units of the DTES or committee with Government of Catalonia department members.
FUNDING SOURCES	DTES budget.
IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE	Beginning in the second half of 2019



<p>Code FONS3</p>	<p>CREATE ADVISORY MECHANISMS FOR POTENTIAL USERS OF EUROPEAN STRUCTURAL FUNDS TO PLAN AND IMPLEMENT PROJECTS FOR THE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL HERITAGE.</p>
<p>RELEVANCE TO THE PROJECT</p>	<p>Within the framework of the interregional workshops, the work of Natagriwal was revealed. Natagriwal is a non-profit organisation whose mission is to inform, advise and supervise farmers, foresters and public or private owners in the implementation of the agri-environmental programme and the Natura 2000 network, covering the whole region of Wallonia (Belgium).</p> <p>This operation has served as an inspiration to propose various mechanisms to improve the advisory service currently available in Catalonia to users of European funds (especially the ERDF) in nature conservation projects.</p>
<p>NATURE OF THE ACTION</p>	<p>The creation and maintenance of various advisory mechanisms will be promoted in order to inform potential users of European funds in the field of nature conservation, eligible actions for funding, to attend consultations, to provide advice during the design of project proposals and to accompany users during their implementation. In addition to the ERDF, support could be provided for other funds related to the conservation of natural heritage, such as the EAFRD and the EMFF.</p> <p>The implementation of this action should include the following sub-actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and maintain a reference website that centralizes information on European funds and biodiversity projects. • Organise conferences and workshops to raise awareness on the possibilities of European funds, in particular ERDF, among potential users of the funds. • Draw up a guide for the use of European funds that specifies the link between funding possibilities and biodiversity conservation needs in Catalonia, including success stories. • Identify technicians from other departments of the Government of Catalonia who will act as a support network and who will help to resolve queries in relation to the alignment of proposals in the OP, as well as the execution of projects. <p>These mechanisms can be managed by the DTES itself or delegated to an external entity that has the necessary knowledge and experience in this field.</p> <p>Among the potential users of this office would be the various beneficiaries of the fund: local authorities; associations for the protection of nature and land, foundations, public and private companies; forest owners (public and private) and their associations; usage rights holders. This could also include farmers and livestock breeders who, based on their practices and productive activity, can and want to contribute to the conservation of biodiversity.</p>
<p>RESPONSIBLE</p>	<p>The DTES – General Directorate of Environmental Policies. Or, as an alternative, an external entity to delegate these functions to (via agreement or some other contractual arrangement).</p>
<p>OTHER AGENTS INVOLVED</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of the Vice-presidency and of the Economy and Finance. • The Ministry of the Presidency.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food (They have a similar service for CAP that can serve as a model).
INDICATIVE COSTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> €10,000.00 for launching a website. In the event that some of the tasks were delegated to an external entity, the necessary contributions would have to be made in order to perform the other actions indicated (preparation of guides, organisation of conferences and workshops and answering questions from potential users, etc.).
FINANCING FUND	Assess the use of the ERDF fund (Objectives 1 and 2) to finance the implementation of this action.
IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE	As of the 2nd semester of 2020 and with continuity beyond the validity of the BID-REX Action Plan.

Code FONS4	CARRY OUT GLOBAL MONITORING OF THE USE OF EUROPEAN FUNDS FOR NATURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT PROJECTS
RELEVANCE TO THE PROJECT	During the LSG working sessions and the drafting of this Action Plan it has been detected that there is no centralized information on how the ERDF and other structural funds are used for biodiversity and natural heritage conservation.
NATURE OF THE ACTION	<p>The necessary mechanisms will be defined so as to identify all the projects financed with European funds that may have an impact (positive or negative) on the conservation of biodiversity, regardless of the department that convenes or implements these actions.</p> <p>Once the projects have been identified, a monitoring and evaluation exercise will be carried out, which should serve to determine the distribution of funds in the area concerned, the various topics covered, the main implementing bodies and the impact on biodiversity conservation.</p> <p>Evaluation is proposed during the programming period on two levels: 1) a detailed evaluation of each executed project, once their execution has been completed. 2) a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the European funds on Catalonia's natural heritage (to be carried out at least twice during the programme period).</p> <p>The implementation of this action should include the following sub-actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define which funds will be subject to this monitoring. • Decide which unit or structure will undertake this monitoring: it could fall to some kind of specific monitoring committee on the use of European funds for conservation projects, or to the DTES technical cabinet. • Determine which parameters will be analysed and which indicators will be used (see 4), trying to link it (as far as possible) with the information available in the OPNC (once created). • Carry out in-depth evaluations of projects and comprehensive evaluation.
RESPONSIBLE	The DTES – General Directorate of Environmental Policies. When the OPNC is created, it could undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the impact on Catalonia's natural heritage for the application of European funds.
OTHER AGENTS INVOLVED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry of the Vice-presidency and of the Economy and Finance • The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food • The Ministry of the Presidency (Service for the Management of Cooperation and Structural Funds)
INDICATIVE COSTS	<p>The cost will depend on the number of projects to be evaluated. In case that a unit of the DTES or some specific monitoring committee undertakes the evaluation of the projects , it will be assessed whether these evaluations would be undertaken internally or outsourced..</p> <p>The comprehensive evaluation could be undertaken by the staff of the future OPNC. Until it is established, it could be taken over by a DTES unit, either internally or through a commission.</p>
FUNDING SOURCES	The DTES budget.

**IMPLEMENTATION
SCHEDULE**

As of the 2nd semester of 2020 and with continuity beyond the validity of the BID-REX Action Plan.



Date: 29 of March 2019

Name of the organization: Government of Catalonia

Representative:

Signature:

