



2023 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title: A green infrastructure plan for the fight against climate change

Destination, Country: Terres de l'Ebre, Catalonia, Spain

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In the category: ☒ Destination Management ☒ Environment & Climate ☐ Thriving Communities
☒ Nature & Scenery ☐ Culture & Tradition ☐ Business & Marketing

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Summary:

In recent years the Ebro Delta has been faced with an increasingly difficult situation due to the effects of climate change and the need to organise the territory in this respect. A diagnosis has been made to ascertain what can be done and an action plan has been drawn up, taking into account the opinions of all the actors.

This project is designed to promote a technical, economic and social transition aimed at achieving a sustainable exploitation model of our natural capital and to establish a stable and innovative environment across the Ebro Delta. All this will be possible with the structures and tools to transform the Ebro Delta economy based on the implementation of innovative businesses that make sustainable use of the region's natural and human capital.

The main proposed solutions can be divided into two parts. Firstly, the objective of the green infrastructure is to achieve a continuity of the naturalised systems on the Ebro Delta coast with improvements to the following: the Ebro Delta lagoons; the contribution of sediments and quality fresh water to the deltaic and fluvial ecosystems; and the green infrastructure of public parks and gardens. Secondly, the ecotourism infrastructure aims to increase the sustainable mobility network with an ecotourism function and to generate new ecotourism reception areas in the Ebro Delta.



Good Practice Story:

Destination description

Brief background of the destination.

Des de l'any 2013 la UNESCO ha declarat les terres de l'Ebre com a Reserva Mundial de la Biosfera en reconeixement de la biodiversitat d'espais com el Parc natural dels Ports i del Parc Natural del Delta de l'Ebre i el mateix riu Ebre. Concretament, el delta de l'Ebre té una superfície d'uns 330 km², dels quals aproximadament 210 Km² tenen un ús agrícola de producció intensiva d'arròs, i 80 km² són aiguamolls naturals. Com deiem, degut al seu elevat interès ecològic, aquest espai natural està protegit com a Parc Natural des de l'any 1983, va ser declarat Zona d'Especial Protecció per a les Aus (ZEPA) l'any 1987, Lloc d'Importància Comunitària (LIC) i és considerada una zona humida d'importància internacional en la convenció RAMSAR des de l'any 1993. A més a més des de l'any 2000, el delta està inclòs en la Xarxa Natura 2000. Tot i que la producció d'arròs és la principal activitat econòmica de la regió (amb una producció mitjana de 6500 kg d'arròs per hectàrea), l'economia del delta està en transició, ja que l'agricultura té un pes decreixent i activitats relacionades amb l'ecoturisme van guanyant força. No obstant, cal potenciar-les i, en la mesura del possible, vincular-les a la realitat territorial, tenint en compte el capital social, humà, cultural i natural.

Issues faced

Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.

In 2013 UNESCO declared the Terres de l'Ebre a World Biosphere Reserve in recognition of the biodiversity of areas such as the Els Ports and Ebro Delta Natural Parks, as well as the River Ebro itself. The Ebro Delta covers area of around 330 km², of which approximately 210 km² are used for intensive rice cultivation and 80 km² are natural wetlands.

Due to its high ecological interest, this natural area has been protected as a Natural Park since 1983. In 1987 it was declared a Special Protection Zone for Birds (ZEPA) in 1987 and a Site of Community Importance (LIC). In 1993 it was designated a wetland of international importance under the RAMSAR convention. Since 2000, the Delta has been included in the Natura 2000 Network. Although rice cultivation is the region's main economic activity (with an average production of 6500 kg of rice per hectare), the Delta's economy is in transition, as agriculture is decreasing in importance and activities related to ecotourism are gaining strength. Nevertheless, it is necessary to strengthen the latter and, as far as possible, link them to the reality of the territory, taking into account its social, human, cultural and natural capital.

Methods, steps, and tools applied

Solutions implemented to address the sustainability problems or issues.

This project began thanks to a participatory process in which different ideas, proposals and necessities detected in the territory in relation to the promotion of green infrastructure were compiled. The objective was to create an economy based on the sustainable use of natural resources, in which the tourist component played a fundamental role with a view to the future. Based on all the information collected, a preliminary diagnosis of the territory was carried out, taking advantage of the technical expertise of the team from the Centre for Climate Resilience. This resulted in 58 proposed actions to improve the green and ecotourism infrastructure of the Ebro Delta.

Next, the different key stakeholders of the territory that were part of the quadruple helix of the Ebro Delta were identified, including the administration, NGOs and the economic and research sectors.

All these efforts were aimed at undertaking a co-creation session with all of them. This is considered an essential tool for the transition towards the sustainability of socio-ecological systems and for deploying a new governance and territorial model that will protect the Ebro Delta and integrate all the sectors that form part of the natural area.

A prioritisation of the 58 actions proposed by the territory was extracted from this session. It was based on the assessment of each of the actors of the quadruple helix. From now on, this prioritisation would be the road map, the basis for organising the territory and inspiring administrations and municipalities to focus their economic efforts jointly, while taking into account the needs of the entire territory. This avoids isolated actions that unfortunately become of little use or are underutilised due to the lack of continuity and coherence with the rest of the territory.

Key success factors

Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.

Economic recovery and ecological transition can only be achieved quickly and efficiently if they include three pillars as basic transversal elements: climate resilience, innovation and research, and the sustainable management of natural capital, especially in an area such as the Ebro Delta. In terms of the climate emergency, the Ebro Delta is one of the most threatened areas in the European Union. There is an urgent need to adapt it to the rise in sea level and other global change factors. At the same time, it has major climate change mitigation potential thanks to its wetlands and rice paddies. With regard to a fair and inclusive transition, the Ebro Delta is a priority territory due to its low economic income, social inequalities and governance deficits. In terms of innovation and research, the Delta is a territory in which the impetus of the knowledge-based economy will represent a qualitative leap in its economic and social potential. This situation justifies the preparation of projects with a territorial focus to obtain financing from European Union funds, as is the case of Next Generation. The compiled actions have been prioritised in technical and territorial terms, depending on their feasibility and suitability under the criteria of the Next Generation Programme, the European Green Pact and Agenda 2030.

The tasks have been based on identifying opportunities and local initiatives in a participatory manner aimed at promoting sustainable development in the Ebro Delta and moving towards an ecological transition, seeking innovation and wealth creation in a transformative and resilient way in the climate emergency. Various techniques have been used to encourage local bodies and key agents in the territory to participate and cooperate in the identification of sustainable development proposals (see methods section). At the same time, synergies have been sought with existing initiatives, such as the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism on the Ebro Delta and the Incircle Sustainable Mobility Project, both coordinated by the Ebro Delta Natural Park. Subsequently, the most relevant proposals have been integrated and completed through discussion in expert groups.

On the other hand, and no less important, this project is the result of the integration of proposals based on the information generated by previous work. This particularly includes the Strategy for the Deployment of Agenda 2030 and the European Green Pact in the Terres de d'Ebre; the Participatory Project for the Detection of Opportunities in the Territory to Structure Sustainable Development in the Terres de d'Ebre; and the Guidelines for the Preparation of a Green Infrastructure Plan in the Terres de d'Ebre, commissioned by the IDECE (Institute for the development of the Ebre Region Counties)

Lessons learned

Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.

The design of a good governance of the project, favouring the participation of all the agents who have something to say, gives it sufficient solidity and authority to allow the different administrations responsible for the government of the territory apply it.

Achievements and Results

Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.

A roadmap for coordinated, cooperative and collaborative work to achieve climate change mitigation objectives and improve the sustainable tourism proposal.

The plan proposes 58 actions that are organised under the following areas of action:

1. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

1.1 Achieving continuity of the naturalised systems on the Ebro Delta coastlines

1.1.1. Restoring badly degraded areas on the Delta's coasts

1.1.2. Restoring the Delta's beaches and coastline by rearranging accesses and adapting to climate change

1.2 Improving the Ebro Delta's lagoons

1.2.1. Physically connecting the Delta's wetlands

1.2.2. Restoring the environment of the Delta's wetlands

1.3 Improving the contributions of quality sediments and fresh water to the deltaic and fluvial ecosystems

1.3.1. Improving the River Ebro's capacity to bring sediment to coastal areas suffering a deficit

1.3.2. Improving the quality of effluents from the Ebro Delta's wastewater treatment plants

1.3.3. Taking advantage of quality water from springs

1.3.4. Improving river ecosystems

1.4 Improving the green infrastructure of public parks and gardens

2. ECOTOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE

2.1 Increasing the sustainable mobility network with an ecotourism function

2.1.1. Converting the banks of the River Ebro into an axis of ecotourism communication

2.1.2. Increasing the network of cycling routes to connect urban centres with each other and with tourist attractions

2.2 Generating new ecotourism reception areas in the Ebro Delta

2.2.1. Opening new spaces for public ecotourism use around the natural areas of the Ebro Delta

2.2.2. Opening new reception areas on the Ebro Delta's outskirts

2.2.3. Regulating access to the Ebro Delta's natural areas

Tips for other destinations

Your suggestions or recommendations for other destinations facing the same issues or implementing similar solutions

Encouraging the participation of agents to achieve a solid result and to take advantage of existing governance tools to establish synergies (ECST).

Recognitions and Additional references

Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

The project has not yet been officially published.