

BID-REX INTERREGIONAL THEMATIC WORKSHOP - MATCHING INFORMATION TO NEEDS

Our wellbeing and quality of life is based on nature. Nature provides us with clean air and water, food, materials and medicines, health and recreation; it supports pollination and soil fertility, regulates climate and protects us from extreme weather.

World's governments agreed the 2011-20 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. The plan aims to halt the loss of biodiversity in order to ensure that by 2020, ecosystems are resilient and continue to provide essential services. Aichi Target 19 explicitly sets the goal of improving, sharing and applying knowledge about biodiversity; but in fact biodiversity information will be fundamental to the achievement of all of the Aichi Targets.

Conserving and protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency is one of the priorities of the Basque Environment Framework Program 2020. The Basque Government has incorporated the environment as a transversal and decisive element contributing to the well-being, job creation and the development of a strong and future economy.

The Biodiversity Strategy of the Basque Country 2030 is the instrument that sets the priorities and commitments on nature conservation, a regional implementation initiative, but with a global vision, in accordance with international strategic objectives. Goal 3 of the Strategy, "Promotion of knowledge and the culture of Nature", points out that the availability of spaces for participation is a key to fostering communication, dialogue and the generation of knowledge.

BID-REX aims to enhance natural value preservation through improved regional development policies by creating/reinforcing the link between relevant biodiversity data and conservation decision-making processes.

At the interregional seminar in Wallonia in February, we addressed the subject of information needs for decision-making and identified the strengths and weaknesses in this area.

This second workshop will focus on analysing how information can help to satisfy the needs identified and whether the information we currently generate meets those needs or not.

Public authorities must face a large number of obligations contained in the strategic documents and regulations. We must understand the links between biodiversity, the condition of ecosystems and their capacity to deliver ecosystem services. We must also evaluate public policies, the effectiveness of public funding and the past and potential future change in key thematic or sectoral fields. Society must internalize this knowledge and understand why it is necessary for their well-being the protection of nature and its services.

Sometimes the problem is not the lack of data. It is just that too often it is locked up in museums or printed publications, in isolated desktop computers or in incompatible digital formats, and in multiple human languages. Fortunately we live in an increasingly networked world where more and more people understand that information gains most value when it is shared.

The new social media and the development of the Internet, as well as advances in data capture and handling 'big data', have transformed our approach to information. The potential and capabilities of modern ICT systems is an opportunity for new business developments in particular for SMEs, and will contribute to boosting competitiveness, creating jobs and supporting growth.

Data acquisition (including monitoring), data management, analysing of data, modelling and simulation, illustration, visualization, communication, dissemination of results and of conclusions, tools for education, teaching, networking and the exchange of knowledge are good opportunities to develop innovative solutions that can benefit decision making.

Much of current understanding of nature and biodiversity is derived from data that have been collected, transcribed, or processed by volunteers. Citizen science initiatives are also a very useful tool both for collecting data and for raising citizen awareness.

In conclusion, access to information on biodiversity and ecosystem services allows people to work together more effectively, collaborating with each other, with policy-makers and with service providers to improve governance, public life and public services to make more informed decisions.

In Basque Country we have used a bottom-up approach to enhance collaboration and networking, improving the knowledge and data flow between different systems/communities that we integrate in a public, open data infrastructure: the Nature Information System of the Basque Country, also linked to other public repositories of data like GBIF and to platforms of citizen science like ornitho.eus. Our main objective is to make biodiversity data open, shared and reusable, to provide an essential foundation for economic, social and political progress, by strengthening the transparency of institutions.

This network of knowledge that we are building must also be developed through social innovation, to meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations. Promoting social innovation requires clear strategies and institutional support. We have the technical support of Innobasque, a non-profit, public interest association which has been created to encourage and boost the development of innovation in the Basque Country.

These days we are going to talk about all this: the information we need and the information we have, how to adapt information to our needs, the innovation opportunities in new tools for the capture and understanding of the information and their potential application in decision making. We will exchange good practices, doubts, problems, needs, challenges, in order to learn from each other and find solutions to common problems.

We hope you enjoy these days and that the workshop will be helpful to you.

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