

SUSTAINABLE TOP 100 DESTINATION SUCCESS STORY

Terres de l'Ebre - Spain

LIFE CLINOMICS, an Earth, Environmental and Climate Success Story from the Terres de l'Ebre

The Terres de l'Ebre region was declared a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO in 2013. The Ebre region, in the southernmost part of Catalonia, is characterised by its high ecological value, low intensity of tourism and the identity of its inhabitants, all demonstrated through their history, traditions, folklore and gastronomy. The region encompasses four counties in a unique landscape shaped by the River Ebro as it winds its way down to the Mediterranean Sea.

This is one of the best-preserved coastlines on the Mediterranean, thanks to the effort of its people in developing sustainable economies. The task of developing tourism under sustainability principles began in 1983. June of that year saw a series of demonstrations by residents of the Ebro Delta protesting against the drying up of the Canal Vell lagoon. These mobilisations surprised public opinion and the following August the Catalan Government passed legislation creating the Ebro Delta Natural Park.

In 2001, Els Ports Natural Park was created just a few kilometres from the coast in a mountainous area of more than 35,000 hectares, with peaks of up to 1,400 metres above sea level.

On 25 July 2007, the Ebro Delta Natural Park was awarded the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism by the EUROPARC Federation, an accreditation covering the entire delta. The implementation of the CETS methodology became a strategic instrument for the development of sustainable tourism.

In 2013, the whole region was declared a Biosphere Reserve. Thanks to this designation the region has been able to implement a new model of governance comprising a management committee and an advisory board. This participatory body includes the territory's main stakeholders, sixty organisations from the most representative groups: universities, research centres, cooperatives, farmers' associations, business associations, environmental groups, trade unions and tourism associations.

The Terres de l'Ebre Biosphere Reserve is one of the territories that is most sensitive to the effects of global warming, especially the estuary area of the River Ebro and the delta itself. In this area, the effects of a rise in sea level are added to the subsidence of the deltaic platform and the reduction in sediment.

LIFE CLINOMICS is a project that aims to increase the resilience of the local society and step up adaptation to climate change in three territories of Catalonia and three different



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economic sectors, fishing, agroforestry and tourism, all closely linked to the sustainable use of the natural and landscape environment.

In its diagnosis, the study observed different risks, although the most worrying are the increase in temperature, the reduction in water resources, the loss of biodiversity, the increase in invasive species and the morphological changes to the delta.

Once the participatory and prioritisation processes have been carried out, the plan proposes two main actions. The first is to set up the Drought Observatory and the second is to establish a nursery or hatchery of native oyster seeds. Currently, pathogens and high temperatures are forcing producers to import seeds. This action is very important to the tourism sector, as visits to the oyster and mussel beds in the two bays of the delta are now one of the most popular activities for our visitors. An added bonus is that this tourism experience is based on a traditional activity.

The ultimate objective of this project is to extend the network to other parts of the Mediterranean, providing local governments with useful tools for inclusive and participatory governance, allowing them to tackle adaptation to climate change on a territorial and sectorial scale.

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