



AQUA-PLANN PROJECT - Integrated management of water resources and their application to the local planning of the SCI Abegondo - CECEBRE

LIFE07 ENV/E/000826



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Project description:

Background

The Mero-Barcés river basin in Galicia, northwest Spain, includes the Abegondo Cecebre reservoir (SCI). The basin has significant ecological and environmental value. It also provides drinking water for the 500 000 inhabitants of the entire urban area of A Coruña.

However, the quality of water in the river basin is currently under direct and indirect threat from numerous human activities including urban planning pressure, mining and intensive cattle rearing. Successful management of the river basin is complicated by the high number of public entities and private stakeholders involved in the use or management of different stretches of the river basin.

The current status of the river basin and the difficulties in controlling water quality provide a perfect example of the vital need to set up methods and techniques that integrate environmental, economic and social interests to reach a sustainable and efficient management system at the level of the river basin.

Objectives

The AQUA-PLANN project aimed to demonstrate successful implementation of an integrated approach to river basin management, based on the application of adequate governance methods, technologies, and public participation. It thus

aimed to preserve and protect the current and future ecological status of the hydrographic basins of the rivers Mero and Barcés and of the Abegondo-Cecebre Reservoir SCI.

The project's sub-objectives were to:

- Improve coordination and co-operation amongst the different stakeholders involved in the river basin's management and use;
- Establish effective governance of the water resources in the Mero-Barcés basin with a special emphasis on wide public participation in the decision-making process;
- Ensure consistency of legislation between the local/municipal level (Abegondo Council and the entire river basin area) and the regional (Autonomous Communities), national and European levels;
- Promote sustainable demonstrative environmental actions in the area of the Abegondo-Cecebre SCI;
- Contribute towards implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD);
- Promote information, education and awareness-raising among relevant stakeholders of the targeted water basin and in the urban area of A Coruña.

Results

The AQUA-PLANN project has delivered a clearly improved and more integrated management system for the Mero-Barcés river basin. It represents an excellent example of the application and implementation of the WFD in all its aspects at the scale of a small water basin, located in rural areas, where farming is the main activity and houses are sparsely concentrated.

The project was able to generate essential scientific and technical knowledge about the water basin. In particular, it provided the first ever detailed characterisation of groundwater resources and abstraction points in the river basin. This knowledge informed the definition of improved management practices and significantly influenced local land-use planning.

All the rivers and defined perimeters around the natural springs of the Abegondo Municipality were declared as 'Natural Sites of Local Interest' (ENIL). The project was also able to explore best practices for management interventions. It applied interventions including river bank restoration, pig manure management and wastewater treatment using green filters. The wastewater treatment plant was found to be effective, but not currently economically viable due to the cost of piping and pumping to the plant. This means that more local systems (such as individual systems or for a group of houses) would probably be more cost-effective than a centralised system. This is an important lesson for river basin management in rural areas.

A key success factor in improving river basin management was the creation of collaboration and exchange between water basin stakeholders, including water supply companies, city councils, big industrial companies, NGOs and regional governments. Another was the establishment of an effective public participation process from the start. The project organised events known as 'Water platform meetings', which focused on specific issues related to water governance and successfully engaged 450 stakeholders during the project.

The project offers good sustainability for improved river management in the project area and high transferability value for integrated water basin management in other rural areas. Project outputs will support these objectives. These include: an agreed 'Programme of measures' for continued integrated management; three best practice handbooks; a game for families focused on the water cycle in river basins; and a complete GIS with all project information.

Whilst the project saw conservation of the current ecological status of water resources in the Mero-Barcés water basin, its main environmental benefits are expected to become visible only in the medium and long term.

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Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Water - River basin management
Water - Water resources protection

Keywords

river, integrated management

Natura 2000 sites

Not applicable

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Beneficiaries:

Coordinator	Ayuntamiento de Abegondo
Type of organisation	Local authority
Description	The Ayuntamiento de Abegondo (Council of Abegondo) is a local government body situated in a rural region of Galicia. Over the last decade, the council has participated in several European programmes and initiatives, in cooperation with other bodies, dealing with rural development, employment and training (Proder, EQUAL, etc.). The council counts on the support of an agency for "local sustainability" that deals specifically with environmental

issues and projects.

Partners

Empresa Municipal de Aguas la Coruña SA,
Spain Aguas de Galicia, Spain Consejería del
Medio Rural-Dirección General de
Investigación, Tecnología y Formación
AgroForestal-Xunta de Galicia, Spain

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Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE07 ENV/E/000826
Duration	01-JAN-2009 to 31-MAR -2013
Total budget	987,564.00 €
EU contribution	333,304.00 €
Project location	Galicia(España)

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Read more:

Project web site	Project's website
Publication: After-LIFE Communication Plan	Title: Plan de Comunicación After-LIFE Year: 2013 Editor: Ayuntamiento de Abegondo No of pages: 13
Publication: After-LIFE Communication Plan	Title: Layman report Year: 2013 Editor: Ayuntamiento de Abegondo No of pages: 63
Publication: Layman report	Title: Informe layman Year: 2013 No of pages: 58

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