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LIFE CAP PT II - N° 101101821

Portugal Capacity Building for Better Use of LIFE II

Best practices technical exchange with Spanish LIFE NCPs and projects: Synthesis Report

October 2025



Secretaria Regional do Ambiente
e Ação Climática



Summary

This report covers the visit to Spain for best practices technical exchange between the Portuguese LIFE CAP PT II team, the Spanish LIFE National Contact Points (NCPs), and relevant organizations involved in support and training within the CET framework. The visit also included interactions with Spanish LIFE project teams.

The main objective of this task was to share experiences dealing with LIFE issues, as well as good practices regarding the applicants' support, project preparation, and management. The organizational structures and frameworks of Spain and Portugal as LIFE NCP were also discussed.

The visit took place from 6 to 9 October and comprised both in-room meetings and project presentations, as well as on-site field visits to various project locations in Madrid, Arévalo, and Barcelona.

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List of abbreviations

- **CEQL** - Circular Economy and Quality of Life LIFE sub-programme
- **CET** - Clean Energy Transition LIFE sub-programme
- **CLIMA** - Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation LIFE sub-programme
- **CSA** - Coordination and Support Actions
- **ES** - Spain
- **EU** - European Union
- **IDAE** - *Instituto para la Diversificación y Ahorro de la Energía* - Institute for the Diversification and Saving of Energy
- **MITECO** - *Ministerio para la Transición Ecológica y el Reto Demográfico* - Ministry for the Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge
- **MS** - Member State
- **NAT** - Nature and Biodiversity LIFE sub-programme
- **NCP** - National Contact Point
- **PT** - Portugal
- **SAP** - Standard Action Projects

Introduction

Within the scope of the project LIFE CAP PT II - Portugal Capacity Building for Better Use of LIFE II (N° 101101821), several technical exchanges on best practices with other projects addressing critical issues are foreseen¹.

Task 4.3 focuses on the exchange of technical knowledge with other teams, particularly through face-to-face visits and meetings with project teams from other Member States (MS), to share experiences, strengthen skills and tools, and address common challenges. Among the key LIFE issues to be explored are governance and policy uptake, transnationality, replication, co-financing, and strategic projects.

This second visit of technical exchange, prompted by the LIFE CAP PT II consortium, was hosted by the Spanish NCP. Spain is widely recognized for its success and experience in using the LIFE Programme. Alongside Italy, it consistently ranks among the top Member States in Europe in terms of the number of approved projects. According to CINEA country factsheets, Spain has coordinated 1,052 projects since 1992, along with an EU overall contribution of €1140.9, which is the biggest among all MS.

The aim was to visit various types of projects, with and without Portuguese partners, from different LIFE subprograms: SAP projects (1 NAT, 1 ENV, and 1 CLIMA), CSA projects (CET), and strategic projects (2). This includes a Bauhaus project, which, like strategic projects, are still not very representative in Portugal.

This synthesis report seeks to describe this visit and summarize the main outcomes and addressed issues.

¹ Work package 4 – Communication & Dissemination Plan – General and Tailor-made Communication | Task 4.3 Best practices technical exchange with other projects on critical issues.

Visit schedule

The agenda / schedule for the visit, as it took place, was the following:

1st day: Monday, 6 October

Welcome, reception and NCP presentations (MITECO, Madrid)

10:30 a.m. – PT NCP & LIFE CAP PT II presentation

11:00 a.m. – ES NCP (sub-programmes NAT, ENV, CLIMA) presentation

12:00 p.m. – ES NCP (sub-programme CET) presentation

Sub-programme CET: Regional foment mechanisms and CET projects (MITECO, Madrid)

12:45 p.m. – *Empresa Municipal Getafe Iniciativas S.A. (GISA)*

01:15 p.m. – *Instituto de Fomento de la Región de Murcia (INFO)*

Sub-programme CET: Built up skills projects (*Fundación Laboral de la Construcción*, Madrid)

04:00 p.m. – Presentation of LIFE Construye 2030plus & other projects

05:00 p.m. – Facility visit

2nd day: Tuesday, 7 October

Visit to IP DUERO project (Arévalo region)

10:00 a.m. – Project introduction (Arévalo)

01:00 p.m. – Field visit (Medina del Campo)

3rd day: Wednesday, 8 October

Visit to LIFE ALNUS project (*Escuela Técnica Superior de Ingeniería de Montes, Forestal y del Medio Natural*, Madrid)

09:00 a.m. – Project presentation in room

Visit to LIFE RedBosques Clima project (*Fundación Interuniversitaria Fernando González Bernáldez*, Madrid)

12:00 p.m. – Project presentation in room

Visit to IP INTEMARES project (*Fundación Biodiversidad*, Madrid)

04:15 p.m. – Visit of *Fundación Biodiversidad*'s facilities

05:00 p.m. – Foundation and project presentation in room

4th day: Thursday, 9 October

Visit to BIG4LIFE project (Barcelona)

11:00 a.m. – Field visit: Tibidabo (Pl. del Tibidabo,)

01:00 p.m. – Field visit: Urbaser (Carrer de Fra Juníper Serra, 75)

02:00 p.m. – Field visit: Escola Pérez Iborra (Carrer del Consell de Cent, 323)

The Spanish NCPs: experience to share

The visit began with a welcome and reception by the Spanish NCP at the premises of MITECO (*Ministerio para la Transición Ecológica y el Reto Demográfico*), followed by presentations from all participants in the meeting.

The Portuguese NCP team gave a presentation on its activities as an NCP and on those carried out under the national capacity-building project for the LIFE Programme: LIFE CAP PT II.

On the Spanish side, the hosts from MITECO also presented their roles, structure, and functions as NCP, within the scope of the NAT, ENV, and CLIMA subprogrammes. The IDAE (*Instituto para la Diversificación y Ahorro de la Energía*), part of MITECO, gave a presentation on its responsibilities, background, and achievements within the CET subprogramme, with special mention of the in-depth analysis of results, focusing on the returns from European funding in relation to national investment.

The organization of NCPs in each country differs considerably, being distributed among several public entities, particularly in the Portuguese case.

LIFE sub-programmes	Spain	Portugal	
		(1)	(2)
 Nature and Biodiversity	MITECO	ICNF	SRAAC IFCN
 Circular Economy and Quality of Life	MITECO	APA	SRAAC IFCN
 Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation	MITECO	ApC	SRAAC IFCN
 Clean Energy Transition	IDAE	DGEG LNEC	SRAAC IFCN

(1) Mainland: ICNF - *Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas*; APA - *Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente*; ApC - *Agência para o Clima*; DGEG - *Direção-Geral de Energia e Geologia*; LNEC - *Laboratório Nacional de Engenharia Civil*

(2) Autonomous regions: SRAAC - *Secretaria Regional do Ambiente e Ação Climática - Região Autónoma dos Açores*; IFCN - *Instituto das Florestas e Conservação da Natureza - Região Autónoma da Madeira*

In summary, the main functions/activities of the ES and PT NCPs in supporting potential beneficiaries are highlighted:

NCP activities	Spain	Portugal
Regular direct support	All year	All year
Phone line	▼ MITECO: One way (NCP > applicant)	▼ Two ways
Email	▼ bzn-life@miteco.es CET: bzn-life-cet@idaes.es	▼ NAT: pedro.arriegas@icnf.pt CEQL: life@apambiente.pt CLIMA: financiamentoclima@apclima.pt CET: catia.brito@dgeg.gov.pt; paula.gomes@dgeg.gov.pt; avasconcelos@lnec.pt
Online meetings	▼ MITECO: requires pre-filling a registration form	▼
Mailing list	-	▼
LIFE website	▼ [link]	▼ New [link]
Social media	through the social media channels of the institutions	
National Info Day	▼	▼
Regional Info Days	▼	Regional Information Sessions (LIFE CAP PT II)
Following of project monitoring visits (with ELMEN EEIG/CINEA)	▼	▼
Participation in other workshops and dissemination events	▼	▼

During and after the presentations, there were opportunities for discussion, clarification and exchange of experiences between the two countries, regarding their approaches to assisting potential candidates and the way their support structures are organised.

Although the functions and methods are similar, the different organisational structures significantly affect the outcomes. In Spain, for instance, regional Info Days are organised by autonomous communities and local authorities, reflecting a stronger shared interest beyond the NCPs in promoting the LIFE Programme and building a wider LIFE community.



Figure 1 – Reception and NCP presentations at MITECO

CET: Fostering organizations and built up projects

In addition to and complementing the assistance provided by NCP-CET, regional support projects and mechanisms were presented by local development and promotion organisations from the municipality of Getafe and the region of Murcia.

Empresa Municipal Getafe Iniciativas S.A. (GISA)

GISA is a local economic development agency (municipal company of Getafe) that supports and advises businesses and industry on accessing EU funds and facilitates the formation of partnerships and consortia, among other tasks. GISA presented some projects in which it has been involved, highlighting the following LIFE CET projects:

WE-SHARE | Empowering businesses to develop energy community models for a successful energy transition

- Reference: LIFE23-CET-WESHARE/101167685
- Start-end date: 01.10.2024 - 30.09.2027
- Project website: <https://futurium.ec.europa.eu/es/weshare>
- LIFE Public Database: [[link](#)]
- Coordinating beneficiary (Italy): RIMOND SRL
- Portuguese partners: *AICEP Global Parques; Agência de Energia e Ambiente da Arrábida (ENA)*

The project aims to support the creation and development of business energy communities by tackling existing legal, financial, administrative and technical barriers. It has three demonstration sites (pilots), one of them in Getafe (Spain) and other in Sines (Portugal), which are at different stages in the development of energy communities. Besides identifying the existing barriers for establishment of energy communities, the project has promoted so far business models and the financing of energy communities.

GREENSPIRE | Green Strategies and Partnerships for Industrial Renewable Heat

- Reference: LIFE24-CET-GREENSPIRE/101216207
- Start-end date: 01.10.2025 - 30.09.2028
- LIFE Public Database: [[link](#)]
- Coordinating beneficiary (Denmark): ENERGY CLUSTER DENMARK

The project, which has recently started, aims to address the barriers to implementing renewable heat solutions in European businesses and industries. It introduces the concept of sustainable heat symbiosis models, in which companies share assets based on different renewable heat technologies through innovative and collaborative business models.

The consortium includes partners from different sectors: local agencies, research institutes, consultancies, associations, private companies and key actors involved in the renewable heat field. The project involves five pilot sites, including a business park in Getafe.

Instituto de Fomento de la Región de Murcia (INFO)

This Regional Development Agency supports companies in the Murcia region, especially SMEs, to become more competitive, innovative and sustainable, providing assistance in preparing proposals for EU funding. In addition to the capacity building and training on preparing proposals for the LIFE Programme, communication, and information (through event promotion, European networks, online information), the following initiatives presented by INFO are noteworthy:

EUROPE VOUCHER

- Provides advice and support in the preparation of applications for EU funding programmes, targeting SMEs in the Murcia region, particularly those operating in sectors related to innovation and competitiveness
- Covers the costs of advisory, consultancy, and technical assistance services for the preparation of proposals to European funding calls (including LIFE)
- Example of a successful case supported through the Europe Voucher: [LIFE CET E-BUSCO](#) | Energy BUSiness COoperation schemes that underpin the decarbonization by maximizing the technical and economic viability of PV installations

INFO SHERPA

- Service designed to foster networking and the creation of intra-regional consortia across Europe

The presentations led to a discussion on the importance of establishing third-party mechanisms to secure project co-financing beyond the LIFE Programme. In particular, the CET subprogramme is especially well suited to combining other funding instruments that can support the implementation of projects by covering actions and expenses that are not eligible under this subprogramme.

The discussion also highlighted the importance of having organisations operating at the local level acting as facilitators in accessing funding - especially for the private sector - and in fostering connections among key stakeholders to promote the creation of balanced partnerships.

The role of consultants in supporting LIFE projects was also addressed. However, it was emphasised that the main experts should always be the project team itself, and that the project coordinator must retain full control over the project's objectives and implementation.

Fundación Laboral de la Construcción

The *Fundación Laboral de la Construcción* is an institution that provides education and training for professionals in specialized areas of the construction sector, providing specialized labour

and professional qualifications. It has 52 training centres and has participated in more than 70 co-funded projects. Its focus is on digital skills, sustainability and environmental performance training in the construction sector, promoting equality and social inclusion among its trainees.

Fundación Laboral has been at the forefront of implementing the European BUILD UP Skills initiative in Spain, which aims to increase the number of trained and qualified construction professionals to meet the challenges of the energy and ecological transition in Europe. As part of this initiative, Esther Rodriguez presented the LIFE CET Construye2030plus project.

CONSTRUYE 2030PLUS | Training and certification in micro-skills for the green transition of the construction sector

- Reference: LIFE23-CET-Construye2030plus/101167718
- Start-end date: 01.10.2024 - 31.03.2027
- Project website: <https://construye2030plus.fundacionlaboral.org/>
- LIFE Public Database: [[link](#)]
- Coordinating beneficiary: FUNDACION LABORAL DE LA CONSTRUCCION

Its main objective is to promote training and certification in key micro-skills for the ecological transition of the construction sector. For that, one of the main expected results is an on-site training, through the ‘Skills Bus’, that will offer training directly to the professionals’ workplace, in construction sites in different regions of Spain. The training is focused on thermal insulation, window installation, and heat pump systems, and is especially relevant for deep renovation projects.

Other EU projects (Erasmus+ programme) coordinated by the Foundation were also presented:

- the “Construction Blueprint 2” project - strategic and cooperative approaches to address the training needs of the sector and contribute to the Construction Skills Pact.
- the “Women can Build LatAm” initiative - inclusion of women in the construction sector, with an expanded scope to Latin America.

This was followed by a guided tour to the Foundation’s training centre facilities in Madrid, where practical classes are taught on various specialties in the construction sector.



Figure 2 - Visit to Fundación Laboral de la Construcción's facilities

NAT, ENV and CLIMA projects: meetings and visits

On the following days – 7, 8 and 9 October – there was a series of visits to projects, in the room and/or in the field.



LIFE-IP DUERO

Implementation of the river Duero basin management plan in the Central-South part of the river Duero basin

- Acronym | Reference: LIFE16 IPE/ES/000019 | RBMP-DUERO
- Project start-end date: 01.01.2018 - 31.12.2026
- Project website: <https://www.lifeduero.eu/>
- LIFE Public Database: [[link](#)]

Coordinating beneficiary:

- Coordinating beneficiary: *Confederación Hidrográfica del Duero*
- Contact person: Carlos Marcos Primo
- E-mail: lifeipduero@chduero.es

Project Summary:

This project concerns the development of the river basin management plan for the south-central area of the River Duero basin, addressing the challenge of sustainable groundwater management.

The evolution of water resources in the central area of the Duero basin has long been a challenge for the Duero River Basin Authority. The decline in groundwater levels and the deterioration of water quality have prompted detailed studies to identify effective solutions to address these issues.

The main objective is to improve the status of the Medina del Campo groundwater body through the implementation of the hydrological plan for the south-central part of the Duero basin, covering the Trabancos, Zapardiel and Arevalillo rivers – tributaries of the River Douro. The Medina del Campo aquifer lies within the catchments of these tributary rivers. This is one of the driest areas of the Iberian Plateau, characterised by intensive agriculture and irrigation, which in turn have significant impacts on water availability and nitrate pollution.

The project involves a range of actions focused on digital technologies and irrigation modernisation to enhance water-use efficiency and monitor groundwater quality, as well as the promotion of alternative agroforestry crops with lower water requirements. At the surface water level, the project also includes river restoration activities aimed at mitigating flood impacts, particularly those that cause sudden inundation of the surrounding floodplains.



Figure 1 - LIFE -IP DUERO: Project presentation at the restored mill “Don Álvaro de Luna” (project information center, in Arévalo) and field visits (ex- wetlands of Lagunas Reales, in Medina del Campo)

Visit remarks:

The visit to this project was particularly significant for the Portuguese delegation, given Portugal's limited experience in managing LIFE Strategic Projects. The visit was also attended by the coordinator of a Portuguese Technical Assistance project ([LIFE23-TAE-PT-CORREDOR DO RIO LECA](#)), who exchanged contacts with the host team. This preparatory project, aimed at a future Strategic Integrated Project (SIP) for the implementation of a water management plan for the River Leça, greatly benefited from this networking opportunity, given the synergies and shared themes related to basin management in the northern Iberian Peninsula.

One of the key recommendations made by the project coordinator was the importance of having a well-structured consortium, which is particularly crucial in projects involving governance issues and multiple types of key stakeholders. A major strength of Strategic Projects lies in their catalytic capacity to remove barriers and put planning instruments into practice. Given their long duration, conditions inevitably evolve, and what was initially envisaged at the proposal stage may not necessarily remain the right path, while the originally defined metrics and indicators may lose relevance over time. Strategic Projects are not static projects; they must be continuously adapted – as is the case with the IP DUERO, which has become increasingly focused on governance aspects and on working closely with local communities and stakeholders.

The project provides support to farmers through measures promoting water-use efficiency, irrigation management, and sustainable cultivation practices – essential for the preparation of their crop plans. It involves real-time water metering (via telemetry) and monitoring through satellite imagery analysis. To achieve this, the project has encouraged the creation of voluntary groundwater 'irrigation communities', which play a key role in ensuring sound governance of the initiative.



LIFE ALNUS TAEJO

Conservation and restoration of mediterranean alder forests priority habitat in western International Tajo River Basin

- Reference: LIFE20 NAT/ES/000021
- Project start-end date: 01.09.2021 - 31.08.2026
- Project website: <https://lifealnustaejo.eu/>
- LIFE Public Database: [[link](#)]

Coordinating beneficiary:

- Coordinating beneficiary: *Polytechnic University of Madrid*
- Contact person: José Luis García Rodríguez
- E-mail: josel.garcia@upm.es

Portuguese partners: Universidade de Évora; ECOSALIX (Sistemas Ecológicos de Engenharia Natural, Lda)

Project summary:

The LIFE ALNUS TAEJO project seeks to protect, conserve, and restore rivers and riparian zones dominated by remnant alluvial forests (priority habitat 91E0*), which host rich biodiversity and influence river ecosystem quality. The project demonstrates how integrated watershed management, awareness, training, and networking enhance conservation outcomes.

Its main goals include improving hydrological ecosystem management through collaboration with public authorities and stakeholders; restoring and reinforcing native 91E0* species and degraded river areas to enhance ecological connectivity; reducing agricultural, social, and urban pressure on riverbanks; and improving water quality and flow by removing illegal barriers and extractions.

The project also aims to increase public awareness, strengthen climate change adaptation, limit invasive species, and control *Phytophthora alni*, a disease affecting alder trees. Finally, it promotes scientific and administrative networks to support knowledge transfer and replicability of these restoration approaches in other river basins.

The project focuses on the sites of Community Importance (SCIs) of the Western Tagus International Basin, in Spain and Portugal.



Figure 4 - LIFE ALNUS TAEJO: Project presentation at Escuela Técnica Superior de Ingeniería de Montes, Forestal y del Medio Natural

Visit remarks:

This project has Portuguese beneficiary partners, the University of Évora and the company Ecosalix, with whom the coordination team has had a good experience of working together. It shares areas of intervention with Portugal (Serra da Malcata, Fundão, Serra de São Mamede and Montargil), as well as problems in common to both countries: the degradation of riparian galleries, the threat of invasive species (such as the water hyacinth), and in particular *Phytophthora alni*, which attacks *Alnus* trees. Among the solutions recommended by this project, it was found that promoting the natural

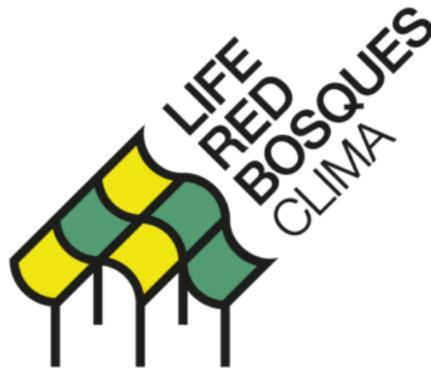
regeneration of vegetation and creating *in situ* nurseries to prevent the spread of the *Phytophthora* were good practices, along with an innovative pilot test involving the use of opaque plastics to eliminate the rhizomes of the invasive species *Arundo donax*.

Legal and private property issues in river basins and along rivers, which differ between Portugal and Spain, were discussed. In Portugal, there are more privately owned lands along rivers and a stronger sense of ownership, which makes more difficult integrated territorial interventions and can lead to conflicts with local farmers. Additionally, administrative constraints related to licensing and permits required for implementing actions have delayed the project. To address these challenges and ensure conservation and restoration objectives in natural areas, the project has developed territorial management and conservation models based on 'land custody agreements', involving municipalities, landowners, and farmers.

In terms of adopting good governance practices, the importance of coordination and joint work was emphasised, bringing together public administrations and responsible authorities through annual meetings of all stakeholders and working groups.

These governance models – the 'land custody agreements' and 'roundtable working groups' – are expected to be maintained beyond the project's lifetime (after-life) and replicated as tools in future projects.

The involvement of public authorities in LIFE projects is not always straightforward. The role of an 'associated partner' within the consortium, or support from an NCP in liaising with responsible institutions, may help facilitate this process.



LIFE RedBosques Clima

Nature-based solutions to improve adaptation of forests to climate change

- Reference | Acronym: LIFE20 NAT/ES/000021 LIFE20 CCA/ES/001624 | LIFE RedBosques_Clima
- Project start-end date: 01.09.2021 - 30.11.2025
- Project website: <https://redbosquesclima.eu/>
- LIFE Public Database: [[link](#)]

Coordinating beneficiary:

- Coordinating beneficiary: *Fundación Interuniversitaria Fernando González Bernáldez para los espacios naturales*
- Contact person: Marta Múgica
- E-mail: oficina@redeuroparc.org

Project summary:

The main objective of RedBosques Clima is to achieve a greater capacity to climate change adaptation in forests, promoting forestry practices that incorporate biodiversity conservation objectives (through the promotion of maturity, increased heterogeneity and diversity), under the umbrella of an “Ecosystem-based Adaptation”.

To achieve this objective, actions will be developed in the following workstreams:

- Provide tools to assess the vulnerability of forests to climate change, and to ensure the quality and effectiveness of adaptation measures;
- Apply these tools in three pilot cases, easily replicable, selected from representative situations of the most frequent state of conservation of Spanish forests, with the participation of the responsible administrations, landowners and other local agents;
- Promote the replication of the proposed management models by the main agents involved in forest management, so that the adaptation measures can be extended to the whole territory.

The project aims to facilitate the transfer of existing scientific and technical knowledge to forest management and nature conservation professionals in public administrations and companies in their service. In addition, the advances and results will be shared with all the agents involved, from landowners to consultants, NGOs and policy makers.



Figure 5 – LIFE RedBosques Clima: Project visit at Fundación Interuniversitaria Fernando González Bernáldez

Visit remarks:

Among the tools presented for climate adaptation in forests, which are also available online, were: technical manuals providing design criteria for forest management to enhance resilience to climate change, the creation of a 'vulnerability index' for assessing forest risks under climate change, and the "Adaptometer" sheet for qualitative evaluation of adaptation to drought and fire.

In terms of project dissemination, the LIFE RedBosques Clima has been taken advantage of the potential reach of the Europarc international network. Regarding experience exchange with Portuguese projects, contacts have been made with the Portuguese [LIFE Resland](#) project, given the thematic synergies between the projects.

One of the recommendations shared by the project coordinator concerned the selection of key project indicators, which should accurately reflect the intended outcomes. Indicators must be appropriate for the project's objectives (not esoteric) and may require adaptation over time.

As Life Alnus Taejo, this project also emphasised the importance of strengthening 'land custody networks' as a strategy for forest and landscape conservation.

Concerning the participation of governmental entities in forming the consortium, some regions in Spain opted to receive funding only for direct actions (not for personnel costs) or to act as co-financiers (without incurring additional expenses), to have less administrative burden.

Looking towards the after-life phase, a working group was established to expand the application of the methodology developed for the forest vulnerability index under climate change.

INTEMARES

LIFE-IP INTEMARES

Integrated, Innovative and Participatory Management for N2000 network in the Marine Environment

- Reference | Acronym: LIFE15 IPE/ES/000012 | LIFE-IP INTEMARES
- Project start-end date: 01.01.2017 - 30.06.2026
- Project website: <https://intemares.es/>
- LIFE Public Database: [[link](#)]

Coordinating beneficiary:

- Coordinating beneficiary: *Fundación Biodiversidad*
- Contact person: Ignacio Torres
- E-mail: itorres@fundacion-biodiversidad.es

Project summary:

The main objective of the LIFE-IP INTEMARES project is to implement the Prioritised Action Framework (PAF) for Spain's marine Natura 2000 network, ensuring a consolidated, effectively managed network with demonstrative and integrated practices, active sector participation, and research-based decision-making.

Specific objectives include maintaining or restoring the favourable conservation status of habitats and species listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives, ensuring effective management of the marine Natura 2000 network, training managers and stakeholders, and fostering cooperation and information exchange. The project also aims to improve critical knowledge, monitoring, and assessment of habitats and species, promote

innovative management approaches (particularly funding), provide awareness and training to achieve conservation targets, and support sustainable tourism and employment linked to Natura 2000.

In addition to the LIFE-IP budget, the project foresaw the use of €22 million in complementary funding from EMFF, ESF, and national sources, but effectively allocated €43 million until 2025. The expected overall outcome is the coherent implementation of the PAF, integrating stakeholder interests and relying on the best available scientific knowledge for effective marine conservation.



Figure 6 – LIFE-IP INTEMARES: Project visit at Fundación Biodiversidad

Visit remarks:

During this visit, the work of the *Fundación Biodiversidad* and its involvement in various LIFE projects was presented. In addition to the LIFE-IP INTEMARES project, the Foundation will coordinate a new strategic project, starting in April 2026, the IP Humedales, aimed at implementing a wetland management plan.

This extensive experience with LIFE projects, particularly large-scale strategic projects, allowed for the sharing of experiences with Portugal, focusing the discussion on the capacity to manage a high volume of projects with varying complexities. In the case of the Autonomous Region of the Azores, which coordinates two strategic projects in Portugal, part of this capacity stems from investment in the expansion of the organizational structure, providing it with the necessary resources.

The case of *Fundación Biodiversidad* in Spain has the significant advantage of combining multiple EU funding sources, thereby securing complementary co-financing to the LIFE Programme. Its scale in terms of resources, autonomy, and project management skills are key factors enabling the Foundation to handle a large number of projects. Although many projects are coordinated under the responsibility of MITECO, as is the case of LIFE-IP INTEMARES, the implementation of European projects is, in practice, ensured by the Foundation in a more agile way.



BIG4LIFE

Building-integrated Greenery: Collaborative xeriscaping-based maintenance and monitoring in Mediterranean cities

- Reference: LIFE22-ENV-ES-BIG4LIFE/101114024
- Project start-end date: 01.09.2023 - 31.08.2026
- Project website: <https://www.big4life.eu/>
- LIFE Public Database: [[link](#)]

Coordinating beneficiary:

- Coordinating beneficiary: *Universidad de Lleida*
- Contact person: Gabriel Perez
- E-mail: gabriel.perez@udl.cat

Project summary:

The BIG4LIFE project aims to achieve the co-design of framework plans for co-maintenance, co-monitoring and co-evaluation of impacts, of Building-Integrated Greenery (BIG) systems, i.e. green roofs and facades, under the demanding conditions of the Mediterranean climate. For this scope, the BIG4LIFE project will demonstrate that by applying xeriscaping and networking approaches, supported by the suitable smart solutions, not only the long-term viability of BIG systems is feasible, but also their positive service life, in terms of ecosystem services provided, is possible to be enhanced.

Co-designed with key stakeholders, and following a "by building typology approach", the elaborated plans will be tested and validated in real BIG projects under operational phase, both

failed and successful ones. The aim is to demonstrate that by means of establishing “networking approaches” through involving owners, users, maintenance companies, among others, as well as also taking advantage of the Community Service-Learning methodologies, it is possible to achieve long-term sustainability.

The BIG4LIFE project aims to promote the building sector’s transition towards a more sustainable, circular, toxic-free, energy-efficient and climate-resilient model, considering the restoration and improvement of life quality. As a result, the project will contribute to the New European Bauhaus initiative through the reduction of environmental impacts of new and refurbished buildings, the creation of circular value chains to boost urban economies whilst producing urban and territorial regeneration, as well as enhancing citizen’s well-being and supporting biodiversity in the urban environment.



Figure 7 – BIG4LIFE: Field visits to green walls/roofs in 3 pilot sites, in Barcelona

Visit remarks:

In Barcelona, three of the seven pilot sites of the project were visited, each with its own characteristics and located in buildings with different uses: Tibidabo – amusement park, Urbaser – offices, and Pérez Iborra School – educational institution. The project coordinator highlighted the relevance of the work carried out by each of these entities in the maintenance and monitoring of the green walls/roofs, as well as the awareness and engagement of staff at each site and the benefits arising from the collaborative efforts.

Some technical aspects related to the construction solutions were discussed which, although already well known within the technical community, still need a closer integration among the different design and construction disciplines (interior and exterior architecture, technical networks, green roofs, etc.).

Green roof maintenance is sometimes treated as a traditional gardening activity, but it encompasses more complex issues, not only regarding structural design and the building's load-bearing capacity, but also in the maintenance phase, which requires careful control and regular monitoring of key parameters (moisture, drainage, plant health, etc.). Therefore, the training of personnel and coordination among architecture and construction disciplines are essential.

Other aspects discussed included investment costs and the cost-benefit relationship of these types of green solutions.

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Conclusion and final comments

The main findings and insights drawn from this exchange of best practices – considering the particular contexts, similarities, and differences between Portugal and Spain – can be summarised as follows:

Countries organization in their LIFE promotion

From the information shared, Spain has several regional bodies that promote access to different EU funds, including the LIFE Programme, supporting proposal preparation and consortium building – particularly in the business sector and within the framework of the clean energy transition. In addition to the NCPs, which operate at ministerial level (under MITECO), Spain has complementary structures that enhance and accelerate the use of the LIFE Programme. This represents a clear advantage compared to Portugal, which does not have such a well-structured system.

In Portugal, there is a larger number of NCPs, divided among agencies and departments under different authorities, according to their competences in each LIFE subprogramme. This dispersion ends up not facilitating interaction with interested parties or potential LIFE beneficiaries.

The model of a foundation – even under the supervision of the environmental authority – following the example of the *Fundación Biodiversidad*, proves to be an agile solution. With strong project management capacity and extensive experience, it not only aggregates several EU funding streams, creating synergies and economies of scale, but also brings greater flexibility to project implementation and financial management, streamlining procurement and administrative processes.

CET: Support for the business sector, training and professional specialization

The meetings and presentations under the CET subprogramme highlighted a rich set of approaches and mechanisms that successfully support the energy transition across different levels – from policy implementation to local business facilitation and professional training.

At the **national level**, IDEA/MITECO, building on previous experiences (e.g. Horizon 2020 programme), acts as a well-structured and experienced NCP, ensuring effective dissemination of the LIFE CET Programme, strong alignment with European and national energy policies, and continuous guidance for potential beneficiaries. Its example shows how close coordination between the NCP and main stakeholders, like regional and local actors, professional associations and universities can significantly enhance programme outreach and proposal quality.

At the **regional and local level**, the LIFE - CET experiences of GISA (Getafe) and INFO (Murcia) demonstrated the importance of a long-term vision and strategy and of the proximity and tailored support to companies, particularly SMEs, but also the value of networking provided by a good consortium across the EU in order to achieve sustainability and replication. Both organisations have established practical instruments – such as innovation vouchers, networking platforms, and pilot projects – that identify and aim to lower barriers for business participation in clean energy transition. These mechanisms also strengthen the regional innovation ecosystem around clean energy and sustainability.

Finally, the *Fundación Laboral de la Construcción* stands out as an inspiring example of how training and qualification initiatives can accelerate the energy transition. Through projects such as LIFE Construye2030plus and BUILD UP Skills Spain, it combines technical education, gender inclusion, and mobility of knowledge, creating a strong bridge between the labour market and the green transformation of the construction sector.

Overall, these examples illustrate how diverse and complementary strategies – institutional coordination, regional facilitation, and specialised training – can together promote a more integrated, inclusive, and effective implementation of the LIFE CET subprogramme.

Strategic projects

The visits to the strategic projects IP DUERO and IP INTEMARES were highly valuable for Portugal, given its limited participation in this type of large-scale project. The exchange of experiences with the coordinator of the Portuguese project ‘LIFE-TA-PP Corredor do Rio Leça’ and the Portuguese NCP from the Azores Autonomous Region was particularly important.

Currently, the only Integrated Projects coordinated by Portugal are LIFE IP AZORES NATURA, LIFE IP CLIMAZ and LIFE IP AGRILLOOP, all in Azores.

Financial autonomy, with flexibility in fund mobilisation (as in the case of *Fundación Biodiversidad*, IP INTEMARES) and own-source revenue (as in the *Confederación Hidrográfica del Duero*, IP-DUERO), facilitates the management of strategic projects and helps overcome the inherent complexity of their large scale, long duration, and high budgets.

Land ownership and governance in territorial management

Land-use conflicts between public domain and privately owned areas pose challenges to integrated planning and management of natural areas at the required scale. To overcome these constraints and facilitate territorial intervention, the projects presented several good practices involving alternative governance models and tools, such as ‘farmers communities’, ‘land custody agreements’, and ‘roundtable working groups’.

Recommendations and experience exchange from project coordinators

Based on their experience, several projects shared valuable recommendations for LIFE project applications and implementation, which are also useful for NCPs as a reinforcement of the guidance they provide to applicants. The following were the most frequently mentioned suggestions from the projects visited:

- Multiple submissions may be needed: Many projects went through several application attempts, improving their proposals based on CINEA’s feedback before finally being approved – it is not always successful on the first try.
- Align proposals with the LIFE call: One of the most common mistakes is failing to fully meet the call requirements. Always ensure the project idea and proposal are aligned with the LIFE priorities and financial rules.
- Careful partner selection: When building partnerships and consortia, choose only essential partners directly involved in implementing the actions. Actions should be co-designed from the outset with their participation. Seek strategic partners but avoid an excessive number of participants.

- Plan realistic timelines: Time is always limited. Careful planning is essential, allowing for delays and adequate time for the transfer and consolidation of results.

Among LIFE's key strengths, coordinators highlighted the flexibility in project design (types of actions) and implementation. Overall, projects reported good communication with monitors and project advisors, who showed adaptability in accommodating unforeseen needs and adjustments during project management.

Finally, participants underlined the unique opportunity LIFE provides to bring together diverse stakeholders — something that is not as common in other EU funding programmes.