

Abstract

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Organisation : Barcelona City Council

Short description: City of Barcelona

Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, is the second largest city of Spain in terms of population (1,5 million inhabitants). The Mediterranean Sea nudges the coast of the city of Barcelona, while the Collserola ridge (part of the Serralada Litoral) borders the northwest of the city, with pine and holm oak woodland, fields and meadows, as well as wetland vegetation.

The Catalan capital, 166 kilometres from the French border and 120 kilometres south of the Pyrenees, is on a plain bordered by two rivers: the Llobregat in the south and the Besòs in the north. Barcelona has a surface area of 100.4 square kilometres. The climate in Barcelona is typically Mediterranean. Summers are hot and humid, winters mild, and most of the rainfall is in spring and autumn.

Presentation title: Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB) in Barcelona – facing current challenges and planning for the future

Executive Summary of your Abstract:

For several years the City of Barcelona has based its work on biodiversity on the implementation of its Local Agenda 21 and its objectives (period 2002-2012). After this time the Barcelona City Council strengthens its commitment to biodiversity conservation and takes the decision to develop and implement a specific biodiversity plan. This comprehensive plan, currently under development together with relevant stakeholders, should become the basis for a comprehensive strategy based on better knowledge, further commitment and multiple and transversal action at all levels.

Abstract:

The work that Barcelona City Council has carried out in recent years on matters of biodiversity has been based on the implementation of the Barcelona Local Agenda 21 in the city (period 2002-2012). The Objective 1 (*To protect open spaces and biological diversity and increase urban green spaces*) of this Agenda 21 and the lines of action arising from it have provided the guidelines for moving forward. After all these years of experience working together with all relevant stakeholders, the Barcelona City Council has taken the decision to develop and implement a biodiversity plan for the future.

Concerning the work carried out, during these years several actions and projects have been implemented. Here we can highlight something that may not be very common in (very urbanised) cities, this is the fact that “Biodiversity” has been incorporated into municipal political commitments, and also that work is done in a coordinated manner with various municipal departments (for example in connection with the Strategic Green Plan) and in collaboration with other institutions and bodies, which contribute with knowledge and oriented action. In addition to these activities that should be increased and spread further, Barcelona has made a commitment beyond its boundaries and is involved and participates in different initiatives such as the IUCN Countdown 2010 initiative, the Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB) network– the first global urban biodiversity initiative coordinated by ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability – and the Spanish Local Government Network +Biodiversity 2010. It can also be noted as remarkable that the new comprehensive local environment ordinance, currently in the process of being approved, incorporates the concept of biodiversity for the very first time.

In relation to the state of biodiversity in the city, it can be summarised that Barcelona’s natural heritage is still very rich and diverse. We cannot make a full analysis of the species and habitats being lost or gained (or no longer being lost) due to current urban pressure on the one hand and conservation management on the other. On the other hand, a diagnosis already provides relevant facts; data is

available for bird fauna, and the trend it shows is one of a slight overall decline in the number of common birds. Likewise, we know that there are vertebrates and garden plants that are behaving like invasive species. What our experience shows is that the management of species has, in general, positively helped conservation (birds in buildings, the grey heron, the falcon, amphibians, etc.), and habitats have been created or restored with clear signs of successful colonisation (reefs, allotments, marsh of Vallvidrera, etc.).

Facing current challenges and planning for the future. While continuing with actions and projects under the umbrella of our Local Agenda 21, the City Council has taken the decision to build on this know-how and experiences and to make a very relevant step forward in its biodiversity policies by developing for the first time a Barcelona Biodiversity Plan. The vision of this plan is: *A city where biodiversity is conserved, enriched and appreciated as part of the Earth's natural heritage, for the benefit of present and future generations.* Together with this vision, 10 lines of action have been identified. These strategic lines are the following:

1. *To strengthen municipal leadership with regard to conservation of the city's biodiversity*
2. *To increase knowledge applicable to conservation, in the context of climate change*
3. *To integrate criteria fostering biodiversity, from design to maintenance of the city*
4. *To create new nature spaces*
5. *To conserve the city's natural heritage*
6. *To extend the commitment to biodiversity beyond Barcelona*
7. *To communicate and disseminate knowledge of biodiversity and its values*
8. *To create opportunities for the enjoyment of and interaction with the city's nature*
9. *To foster citizen involvement in the conservation of biodiversity*
10. *To extend education on biodiversity and its connections with sustainable development at all levels*

With the implementation of the Biodiversity Plan we believe and expect that Barcelona will further increase its knowledge, commitment and actions to conserve biodiversity and therefore move towards being a better prepared city to face current challenges like climate change.

Resumé:

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Toni is an Environmental Scientist by the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) and holds a Master's degree in International Studies by the CIDOB Foundation. He has previously developed his professional activity in the field of local environmental management for more than 5 years at the Barcelona Energy Agency and at the Hornsby Shire Council (Sydney, Australia). At the international level he has been project coordinator at the European Secretariat of ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability (Freiburg, Germany). Among other short term professional involvements, Toni has been collaborating as independent expert for DG TREN of the European Commission, and as UNDP-Electoral District adviser for the United Nations Integrated Mission in East Timor (UNMIT).

Recommended reading (websites):

- Barcelona Local Agenda 21
www.bcn.cat/agenda21
- Barcelona City Council Environment Department
www.bcn.cat/mediambient
- The peregrine falcon in Barcelona
http://www.falconsbarcelona.net/Falco11/en_pagines/index.jsp
- Local Action for Biodiversity (LAB) network
www.iclei.org/lab