



33rd session of the International Coordinating Council of the UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere Programme

13-17 September 2021

SPANISH REPORT

Period: from November 2020 to September 2021

1. DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE MAB PROGRAMME IN SPAIN AND OF THE SPANISH NETWORK OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES IN APPLICATION OF THE LIMA ACTION PLAN 2016-2025 (LAP), WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL PARKS AUTONOMOUS AGENCY OF THE MINISTRY FOR THE ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION AND THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE

The National Parks Autonomous Agency (OAPN) of the Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge is in charge of the coordination and promotion of the MAB Program in Spain. The Spanish MAB Committee, attached to the OAPN, and its two advisory bodies, the Board of Managers of the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves (52 members) and the Scientific Council (22 members), are institutional coordination and promotion bodies of the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves.

1.1. Actions to boost the MAB Programme in Spain

• MAB Programme Secretariat in Spain

The Secretariat carries out the functions of the Spanish MAB Committee and its advisory bodies (the Scientific Council and the Board of Managers) as well as the coordination functions of the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves (RERB). It also works as focal point for information exchange and external dissemination. This Secretariat also hosts the Secretariat of the IberoMaB Programme.

• Spanish Committee of the MaB Programme and advisory bodies activities

The Spanish Committee of the MaB Programme has held two meetings in the period considered in this report. The first meeting took place on 18 November, 2020, and the second meeting was convened in extraordinary session, on 7 May 2021. Both meetings were held online due to the health situation caused by COVID 19.

Besides that, the two advisory councils of the National Committee have organized the following meetings during this period:

- The Board of Managers held an extraordinary meeting on April 27, 2021. On September 14 and 15 it will hold the ordinary meeting of 2021.
- The Scientific Council held a meeting on July 18 2021.

The following are the proposals for new biosphere reserves and periodic reports approved by the Spanish Committee of the MaB Programme for the 32nd and 33rd sessions of the International Coordinating Council of the MaB Programme:

- 32nd session of the MAB-ICC (October 2020): Approval of new proposals and modification proposals of existing biosphere reserves and periodic review reports. At the 32nd session of the ICC (October 2020), held online, no new reserves or modifications were approved for the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves. During this meeting, Spain presented to the CIC the proposal for the approval by the United Nations of the “International Day of Biosphere Reserves” which was unanimously endorsed by the 34 ICC countries.
- 33th session of the MAB-ICC (September 2021): Presentation of new proposals for biosphere reserves and periodic review reports for the 2020 CIC. For this 33rd session of the ICC, the Spanish Committee of the MaB Programme, in its 2020 meeting, approved the referral to the Secretariat of the MaB Programme of the proposal of the RB of the Ribeira Sacra e Serras do Oribio e Courel and the following five 10-year periodic reports (decennial reports) for their review:
 - Decennial report of Bardenas Reales BR.
 - Decennial report of Cabo de Gata-Níjar BR.
 - Decennial report of El Hierro BR.
 - Decennial report of Somiedo BR.
 - Decennial report of Urdaibai BR.

- **Training Programme for the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves**

During the reference period of this report, two seminars have been held (online due to the health situation). Both seminars were aimed at managers and technicians of the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves:

- *Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change in Spanish Biosphere Reserves*, co-organized by the OAPN and the Spanish Office for Climate Change, held on May 27 and 28, 2021
- The role of biosphere reserves in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Co-organized by the OAPN and Transitando, member of the Spanish Network for Sustainable Development (REDS) on June 15, 2021

- **Coordination and support to the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves (RERB)**

During this period, different specific actions have been developed to support Spanish biosphere reserves in the fulfilment of their functions:

- Preparation of a report on depopulation in the Spanish biosphere reserves of the Atlantic biogeographic region. This document analyzes the depopulation process and the environmental, social and economic consequences and risks that it has entailed in the region's Biosphere Reserves, as well as the role that they have been able to play to mitigate it.

- Phenological Monitoring and climate change Programme: This citizen science programme promotes the awareness of school children towards biosphere reserves and climate change.

- Promotion of the "Reservas de la Biosfera Españolas" Brand. During this period, the Secretariat continued working with the companies located in the biosphere reserves for the licensing of the "Reservas de la Biosfera Españolas" brand. Two licenses have been granted to different products from the reserves. The registration of the trademark that expired in 2021 has also been renewed in the Spanish Patent and Trademark Office.

- "Open catalogue of demonstrative experiences of the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves". It is an open catalogue of demonstrative experiences that aims to constitute a sample of good practices that can serve as an example for other geographical contexts and whose dissemination can help increase the capacity for innovation and replication in other territories. The catalogue can be consulted [here](#)

- National Youth Forum of the Spanish Biosphere Reserves. After the first informal meeting of the Forum that took place in October 2019, there is an ongoing work on the creation of youth forums for each of the Spanish Biosphere Reserves and on the composition and regulation of the National Youth Forum of the Spanish Biosphere Reserves.

- In 2021, a Strategy to Strengthen compliance with the MaB Programme and governance in the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves has been approved. This text has been agreed through a participatory process by the two advisory councils of the Spanish Committee of the MaB Programme (Board of Managers and Scientific Council) and, finally, approved by the Spanish MaB Committee.

This Strategy defines the points to be developed to improve the development of the Programme and establishes a series of actions, deadlines, and persons responsible for achieving these goals.

- Preparation of a Guide to include the gender perspective in the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves. Although the Secretariat of the MaB Programme in Spain (in collaboration with the Board of Managers) has been working on this issue for a long time, in 2021 a consultant was hired and a working group was set up to prepare a reference document that highlights the inequalities between women and men and provides the Spanish BR with tools to develop their own Equality plans.

- **Communication and Dissemination of the Spanish Network of BRs**

Continuing the usual line of information and communication, and in order to expand its dissemination, various communication actions have been carried out, such as:

- Electronic edition of the Spanish MaB Committee and the RERB Newsletter (2 issues in the period to which this report refers, up to number 31 that was published in July 2021). [See all the newsletters](#)
- Content update on the web of the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves and the MaB Programme (<http://rerb.oapn.es/>). This website consists of a public space with information on the MaB Programme, the Spanish Committee of the MaB Programme, biosphere reserves, the Spanish Network and its activities, and a space dedicated to the MaB Programme networks in which Spain participates.
- Various communication activities related to the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the MaB Programme have been developed. These dissemination and promotion activities can be consulted at this [link](#). These include television and radio interviews, publishing a commemorative calendar in collaboration with National Geographic, publishing articles in *Quercus* and *Ambienta* magazines, distributing promotional material and advertising products to the 52 Spanish BRs and the replacement of a photographic exhibition on the MaB Programme and the Biosphere Reserves in different Spanish cities and other countries.
- Collaboration with the organization of the V National Ecotourism Congress to be held in the Menorca Biosphere Reserve in which the biosphere reserves will play an important role coinciding with the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the MaB Programme.

- **Other activities:**

Support to the Scientific Council through agreements with universities or research centres for the fulfilment of its functions and preparation of reports on new BR proposals and decennial reports. In the reference period of this report, an investment in this concept of € 90,748 has been made.

In 2021 the Scientific Council is preparing the reports of new proposals and decennial reports that will be presented to the next Spanish Committee of the MAB Programme, which will consider their submission to the MAB Secretariat in Paris in September 2021:

- Evaluation of the new proposals for the Irati Biosphere Reserve (Navarra) and the extensions of El Hierro (Canary Islands) and Sierra de El Rincón (Madrid) biosphere reserves.
- Decennial review reports of five biosphere reserves: La Gomera BR (Canarias), Las Ubiñas- La Mesa BR (Asturias), Sierra Nevada BR (Andalusia), Doñana BR (Andalusia) and Montseny RB (Catalonia).

- **Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan (PRTR)**

In order to alleviate the economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the European Union has created a European Recovery Plan (NextGenerationEU) with which to boost the economy of the member states. These funds are aimed at transforming the economy to make it more sustainable and social.

The Spanish State has presented the "Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan" for the management of these funds, which has been approved by the European Commission on June 16, 2021 and by Ecofin on July 13, 2021. Through the National Parks Autonomous Agency (OAPN), it has been decided to dedicate 50 million Euros to finance projects and specific investments in Spanish biosphere reserves, with the main objective of the conservation and restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity.

To distribute these funds, extraordinary meetings of the Board Managers of Spanish biosphere reserves were organized to define the criteria for the territorial distribution of these funds and the bankable actions, which were subsequently ratified by the Spanish Committee of the MaB Programme. The distribution criteria were finally approved by the Environment Sector Conference, which is the body of territorial representation in Spain, agreeing on the amounts to be transferred to each of the 16 Autonomous Communities that have declared biosphere reserves. The approved criteria were: 1. number of biosphere reserves, 2. surface area, 3. population loss rate (2000-2020), 4. population density, 5. unemployment rate, and 6. number of municipalities.

In addition to the Board of Managers of the biosphere reserves, these funds will be also accessible, through a competitive competition procedure, for entities and social and economic agents based in the Spanish biosphere reserves that present projects that favour the sustainability and conservation of the biodiversity.

2. INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION OF IBEROMAB AND OTHER NETWORKS

During this period, Spain has continued its collaboration with UNESCO and its intense international participation in the MaB Programme:

2.1. IberoMaB Network

- **19th Meeting of the IberoMaB Network, 2021.**

The XIX annual meeting of the IberoMaB Network, scheduled for May 2020, in Costa Rica, had to be cancelled due to the pandemic caused by COVID 19, being replaced by an online meeting. It is planned to organize the next meeting in December 2021, in person, if the evolution of the pandemic allows it.

- **IberoMaB 2021 Training and Seminars**

- Online Seminar IberoMaB 2021: "Management and governance in the Network of Biosphere Reserves of Ibero-America and the Caribbean, IberoMaB Network".

Organized by the OAPN in collaboration with the Training Center of the Spanish Agency for Cooperation and Development (AECID) of La Antigua (Guatemala), from May 25 to 27, 2021.

In order to continue the training actions of the Network, this online seminar was held to address one of the most demanded training topics among IberoMaB members. More than a hundred people, linked to biosphere reserves in 19 countries of the Network, participated in this online meeting.

As a result of this seminar, a "Strategy for Strengthening governance in the IberoMaB Network and in the biosphere reserves of Ibero-America and the Caribbean" is being elaborated. This is a participatory document, created by the members of the network and aims to give a boost to governance throughout the network, taking advantage of the experience and lessons learned during the seminar.

- IberoMaB Gender Working Group and Seminar. In July 2021, the Gender Working Group of the IberoMaB Network was reactivated to prepare a "Methodological Guide on Gender Equality in the IberoMaB Network". This document is being elaborated with the help of an external consultant. The objective is to prepare a document that will be presented and discussed in the next "IberoMaB virtual seminar", scheduled for October 2021, and that will be called "Working on gender equality in the Network of Committees, Focal Points and Biosphere Reserves of Ibero-America and The Caribbean (Red IberoMaB)". The document resulting from this seminar will be approved by the IberoMaB Network at its meeting next December in Costa Rica.

2.2. World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere

- **Projects to mitigate the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on islands and coastal biosphere reserves**

With funding from Spain (OAPN) and the Republic of South Korea and, in collaboration with UNESCO, the Jeju Biosphere Reserve and the Menorca Biosphere Reserve, in 2021 four projects were selected among the thirty-two proposals received in response to the call *Mitigating the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on island and coastal biosphere reserves*, launched last September 2020 by the [World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves \(WNICBR\)](#). UNESCO, the MaB National Committee of Spain and the RB of Menorca participated, together with the Jeju BR and the South Korean National Commission participated in the evaluation of these proposals. The objective of the call is to promote island and coastal reserves as places where innovative solutions are applied in response to the pandemic, and to promote initiatives that move towards more resilient territories.

2.3. UNESCO MAB Category II International Centre on Mediterranean Biosphere Reserves

- Given the success and the large number of activities carried out under the first Collaboration Agreement signed between UNESCO and the Kingdom of Spain, to promote the BRs of the Mediterranean and which has the support of the Abertis Foundation. In 2020, the processing of a new Agreement was agreed with a term of four years extendable for four additional years. This process is already well advanced, and already has the support of UNESCO and the Government of Spain, and the signature of its ratification is expected for the next few months.

2.4. Other International Cooperation activities

- After the latest events in the Republic of Haiti and the earthquake last August, which unfortunately caused numerous personal and material damages in this country, Spain plans to continue its support for the “Reforestation and Sustainable Development Project in the La Selle Biosphere Reserve (Haiti, 2018-2020)” and is promoting its expansion to the Transboundary BR of La Selle BR (Haiti) / Jaragua-Bahoruco-Enriquillo BR (Dominican Republic).
- Likewise, Spain plans to continue supporting the declaration of new biosphere reserves in the Latin American and Caribbean region, especially transboundary ones.