



## **34th session of the International Coordinating Council of UNESCO's Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme**

**14-17 June 2022**

### **REPORT FROM SPAIN**

**Period: September 2021 to June 2022**

#### **ACTIVITIES OF THE MAB PROGRAMME IN SPAIN AND THE SPANISH NETWORK OF BIOSPHERE RESERVES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LIMA ACTION PLAN 20162025, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE AUTONOMOUS NATIONAL PARKS AGENCY OF THE MINISTRY FOR ECOLOGICAL TRANSITION AND THE DEMOGRAPHIC CHALLENGE OF SPAIN.**

The Autonomous National Parks Organisation (OAPN) of the Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge is in charge of coordinating the MaB Programme in Spain and promoting its activities. The Spanish Committee of the MaB Programme, attached to the OAPN, and its two advisory bodies: the Council of Managers of the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves (53 members) and the Scientific Council of the MaB Programme (22 members), are bodies for institutional coordination and promotion of the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves.

#### **1. ACTIONS TO PROMOTE THE MAB PROGRAMME IN SPAIN**

- **Secretariat of the MAB Programme in Spain (OAPN).**

This office carries out the secretariat functions of the Spanish Committee of the MaB Programme and its advisory bodies (the Scientific Council and the Management Council), as well as the coordination functions of the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves (RERB). It also functions as a centre for information exchange and external dissemination, hosts the headquarters of the IberoMaB Network Secretariat and coordinates the participation of the Spanish Biosphere Reserves in the regional (EuroMaB, IberoMaB) and thematic networks of UNESCO (RMRB Islands and Coastal Zones, Mediterranean RRB, Mountain RRB, etc.).

- **Activity of the Spanish MaB Programme Committee and its advisory bodies**

On 24 September 2021, due to the health situation, the Spanish MaB Programme Committee held a virtual ordinary meeting for the period considered in this report.

For their part, the two advisory councils of the MaB National Committee have held the following meetings during this period:

- The Board of Directors held its regular annual meeting on 14-15 September 2021.
- The Scientific Council met on 18 July 2021.

The proposals for new biosphere reserves and ten-years periodic reports approved by the Spanish Committee of the MaB Programme for submission to the International Coordinating Council (ICC) of the MaB Programme were:

- 33rd session of the ICC (September 2021): At the 33rd session of the ICC held in hybrid format in Abuja (Nigeria), the declaration of the Ribeira Sacra e Serras do Oribio e Courel Biosphere Reserve was approved. With this addition, Spain now has 53 biosphere reserves.
- 34th session of the ICC (June 2022): For this 34th session of the ICC, the Spanish MaB Programme Committee approved the submission to the MaB Programme Secretariat of two extension proposals and 5 ten-year reports from Spanish biosphere reserves:
  - Proposal for the extension of the BR El Hierro
  - Proposal for the enlargement of the RB Sierra del Rincón
  - Ten-year report of the Doñana BR
  - Ten-yearly report of the RB La Gomera
  - Ten-yearly report of the RB Las Ubiñas-La Mesa
  - Decennial Report of the RB Montseny
  - Ten-yearly report of the RB La Gomera

#### ● **Training Programme for the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves**

During the period covered by this report, the first face-to-face seminar for managers and technicians of the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves was held.

- *Citizen Science and Ethnobotany*, co-organised by the OAPN and the Valles de Omaña y Luna Biosphere Reserve and held from April 20th to 22nd 2022 at the National Centre for Environmental Education.

#### ● **Coordination and support to the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves**

During this period, a number of specific actions have been developed to support biosphere reserves in fulfilling their functions:

- Promotion of the "Spanish Biosphere Reserve" brand. Work has continued with the companies located in the biosphere reserves for the granting of the licence to use the "Spanish Biosphere Reserves" brand. Five licences have been granted for different products

from the reserves. In addition, work is underway to launch a website that will serve as a "showcase" for the products and services of the Biosphere Reserves.

Moreover, 250,000 € has also been committed for a communication campaign of the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves, to be developed in the coming years, where the Spanish Biosphere Reserves Brand will play a prominent role.

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

- Following the approval of the Strategy for Strengthening MaB compliance and governance in the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves in 2021, work has started on its implementation. The Scientific Council and the Council of Managers have held several coordination meetings and are working on updating the system of indicators of the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves.

- Approval of the Guide to include the gender perspective in the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves. This document, on which the gender group of the Spanish Network worked with the coordination of a specialised consultant, was approved by the MaB Committee at its meeting of 24 September 2021.

## ● **Communication and Dissemination of the RERB**

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

- Electronic edition of the Newsletter of the Spanish MaB Committee and the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves (RERB): 2 issues in the period covered by this report, the last one published in April 2022. [See all bulletins](#).
- Updating of the contents of the RERB website (<http://rerb.oapn.es/>). This website consists of a public space with information on the MaB Programme, the Spanish MaB Programme Committee, the reserves, the Spanish Network and its activities and a space dedicated to the MaB Programme networks in which Spain participates. There is also a special tab dedicated to the [50th anniversary of the MaB Programme](#).
- Various communication activities have been developed in connection with the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the MaB Programme. In particular, a table-top calendar dedicated to marine reserves was published and a commemorative book entitled [50th Anniversary of the Programme and its evolution in Spain](#) was published.
- Within the framework of this anniversary and the Communication Strategy for the Spanish Network of Biosphere Reserves (approved in 2018), the first "Biosphere Reserve Environmental Commitment Awards" were announced and presented to

17 organisations for their contribution to the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of these areas and their socio-economic development.

- A catalogue of maritime Biosphere Reserves has been prepared and will be published shortly.
- The publication Información básica de las Reservas de la Biosfera Españolas has been updated and will be published soon.

- **Other activities:**

Support for the Scientific Council through contracts with universities or research centres for the fulfilment of its functions and the preparation of reports on new BR proposals and ten-year reports. In the reference period of this report, an investment of €77,530 has been made in this concept.

In 2022 the Scientific Council is preparing the reports of new proposals and ten-year reviews commissioned by the OAPN, which will be submitted to the next Spanish MAB Programme Committee for consideration and, if appropriate, referral to the MAB Secretariat in Paris in September 2022:

- Evaluation of the new proposal for the Vall d'Aran Biosphere Reserve (Catalonia)
- Ten-year review reports for five biosphere reserves: BR Ordesa-Viñamala (Aragón), BR Redes (Asturias), BR San Ildefonso-El Espinar (Madrid), BR Mariñas Coruñesas e Terras do Mandeo (Galicia) and BR Terres de l'Ebre (Catalonia).

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

In order to mitigate the economic effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the European Union created a European Recovery Plan (Recovery and Resilience Mechanism - NextGenerationEU Funds) to boost the economies of member states. These funds are aimed at transforming the economy to make it more sustainable, social and resilient.

The Spanish State drew up the "Recovery, Transformation and Resilience Plan" for the management of these funds and, through the National Parks Autonomous Body, decided to transfer 50 million euros to the Autonomous Communities to finance specific projects and investments in Spanish biosphere reserves, with the main objective of conserving and restoring ecosystems and their biodiversity.

Furthermore, an additional 15 million euros have been sent to the La Palma Biosphere Reserve for recovery after the consequences of the volcanic eruption in 2021.

## **2. INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION: SUPPORT TO IBEROMAB AND OTHER NETWORKS**

Following the endorsement at the 32nd session of the ICC of the Spanish Proposal for the declaration of 3 November as International Biosphere Reserve Day, Spain, together with Uruguay, presented the proposal at the 41st General Conference of UNESCO, which was

held from 9 to 24 November 2021. At that conference the proposal was approved and will have to be ratified by the United Nations General Assembly.

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, was finally held in virtual format from 18 to 20 January 2022, due to the health situation. Despite being a virtual meeting, different personalities from Costa Rica participated. Among the agreements reached at the meeting were:

- The election of the new Executive Board chaired by Honduras, with Peru as Vice-President and Spain acting as IberoMaB Secretariat.
- The approval of the documents: Strategy for Strengthening the IberoMaB Network and the Guide to include Gender Equality in the IberoMaB Network.
  - The agreement to hold the II Congress of Biosphere Reserves of the IberoMaB Network in 2023, for which candidatures have been requested to host the congress.

In addition, an extraordinary meeting of the Network's Executive Board was held on 5 May 2022 (in virtual format) to vote on some modifications to the IberoMaB regulations proposed by the Bureau, as well as the proposals of the IberoMaB gender working group to change the name of the MaB Programme to a more inclusive one. Both the modifications to the regulations and the proposals to change the name of the MaB Programme were unanimously approved by those present.

## **Training and Seminars IberoMaB**

- IberoMaB 2021 virtual seminar: "Working on gender equality in the Network of Committees, Focal Points and Biosphere Reserves of Ibero-America and the Caribbean (IberoMaB Network)". Organised by the OAPN in collaboration with the Training Centre of the Spanish Agency for Development Cooperation (AECID) in La Antigua (Guatemala), from 26 to 28 October 2021.

In order to give continuity to the Network's training activities, this virtual seminar was held to address one of the most requested training topics among IberoMaB members. Fifty-five people linked to biosphere reserves from 15 countries of the Network participated in this meeting.

Experiences of some of the Network's reserves for the promotion of gender equality were shared and the draft of the "Guide for Including the Gender Perspective in the IberoMaB Network", on which the IberoMaB gender working group had previously been working, was presented.

- On the other hand, in collaboration with AECID, work is being carried out on the design of new training activities for 2022 and 2023, and it has been agreed that the topics to be covered will deal with indigenous peoples and Transboundary Reserves.

### **IberoMaB Publications**

- Strategy for Strengthening the IberoMaB Network
- Guide to include Gender Equality in the IberoMaB network
- IberoMaB Biosphere Reserves Basic Information Update

All three publications are being typeset and will be published soon.

### **2.2. UNESCO Category 2 Centre on Mediterranean Biosphere Reserves (UNESCOMED)**

- Following the successes and the large number of activities carried out under the first collaboration agreement signed between UNESCO and the Kingdom of Spain and with the support of the Abertis Foundation to promote the BRs of the Mediterranean, on 18 May 2022, the Director-General of UNESCO and the Permanent Ambassador of Spain to UNESCO signed an extension of the agreement for a period of six years, with the possibility of renewal by mutual agreement.

### **2.3. Other International Cooperation activities**

- Exchange with Honduras: A group of young people from Honduras visited Spain in November 2021. The OAPN organised a visit to several Biosphere Reserves and accompanied them on part of the trip.
- In June 2021, the OAPN provided UNESCO with a voluntary contribution of 300,000 euros to carry out the following activities:
  - Continuation of the Forest Ecosystem Restoration project for Promoting Sustainable Socio-Economic Development in the Biosphere Reserve Transfronteriza de la Selle (Haiti) / Jaragua-Bahoruco-Enriquillo (Republica Dominican Republic).
  - Presentation of the proposal for the Transboundary Biosphere Reserve between the Galapagos Archipelago (Ecuador) and Cocos Island (Costa Rica) to UNESCO.
  - Support for the holding of regular meetings between the members of the IberoMaB Network.

- Spain also plans to continue supporting the declaration of new biosphere reserves in the Ibero-American and Caribbean region, especially transboundary ones.