BID-REX
Interreg Europe

European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

Key lessons brief

Matching information to needs

Main conclusions of second BID-REX workshop

Lead project partner
Basque Government

14 and 15 June 2017
Bilbao (Basque Country)

BID-REX aims to enhance natural value preservation through improved regional development policies by strengthening the link between relevant biodiversity data and conservation decision-making processes. More specifically, it ams to promote the mobilisation of relevant biodiversity information to increase the impact of ERDF allocation for the preservation of European natural heritage.

This second workshop focused on analysing how biodiversity information can help to satisfy the needs identified by decision makers, whether the information currently generated meets those needs or not.

Key stakeholder representatives exchanged experiences and views on how biodiversity and environmental information is generated in different contexts ranging from citizen science platforms to research environments. The ways information is collected, maintained and validated were explored, and successful experiences documented and structured to serve as a basis for new applications in other regions.

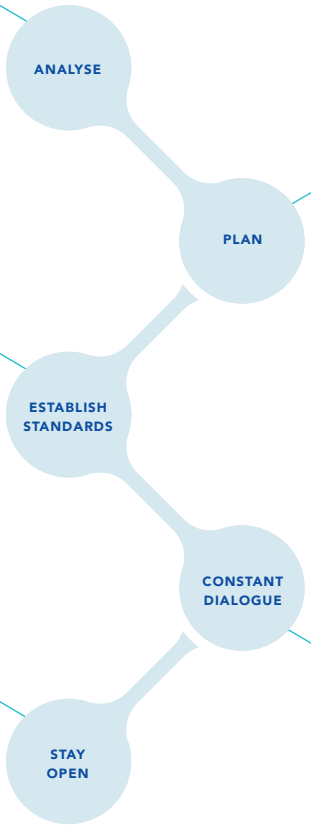
Fit-for-use information

One important consideration in the decision-making process is how the quality of information used can be evaluated. This means that some criteria and indicators should be defined to prevent decision-making processes being based on partial or incorrect information.
A regional scale network can be a useful tool for regional governments to inform their

decision-making processes. A public and private network can provide a strong support mechanism for public administrations to join forces and resources. But managing such networks can be very challenging if there is not a common goal, or if cooperative and trustful relations are not built. Sharing values, strategy and an implementation plan is essential to manage a regional-scale network.

Technology plays a key role in guaranteeing and facilitating access to information as it can be more efficiently accessed, interpreted, analysed, and manipulated.

Some of the main aspects to make information fit for use and relevant to users' needs relevant for each need and use



- Identify potential users of existing information
- Analyse needs
- Analyse existing information: e.g. publications, reports, peer reviewed articles
- Identify what is missing: e.g. data, knowledge, experts

- Identify the end goal which the data will contribute to achieving
- Define the process or steps needed to achieve this goal
- Focus on what would help to answer the questions
- Prioritisation
- Select the tools that best allow us to acquire the information and extract the answer to our needs

- Methodologies and harmonisation in data collection and management
- Criteria to define the information required for each need
- Build consensus through networking

- Talk – share thoughts and opinions amongst the relevant stakeholders
- Participatory processes – 'committee of stakeholders'
- Ask the end users – communication
- Organise technical meetings with providers and users
- Communication between administration and the scientific community
- Form a panel of experts including authorities, politicians, other stakeholders, data providers, etc.

- Incorporate novel approaches, thinking, and information, including technological solutions, smart tools and services, and spatial resources
- All knowledge is useful

In the decision-making process, the way we manage information is as important as obtaining it

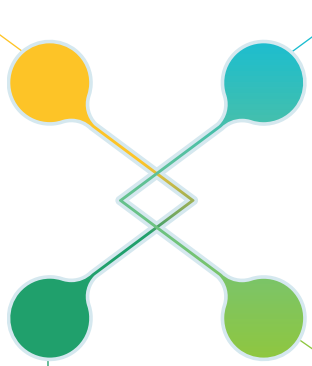
Ways to facilitate access to, and use of, information

Be sure that the information provided is the information needed:

- Encourage dialogue between producers and users
- Public administrations should inform scientific institutions about the species/habitats they are interested in
- Information should be provided as an interpreted product that meets the needs of the users/ authorities

Usability comes first – user experience approach:

- User-friendly interfaces andappropriate portals (websites/apps)
- Create simple tools for involving citizens in biodiversity knowledge
- The development of apps allows citizen scientists to record observations and experts to validate them
- Web portals for biodiversity data



Dissemination and communication:

- Public promotion
- Open/public data repositories
- Raise awareness on the importance of biodiversity knowledge

Unify structures, standards and methodologies:

- Make data compatible by unifying data structures as much as possible
- Metadata and structured data standards
- Ensure quality of information
- Unify methodologies
- Databases gathered/ managed in one place (or at least as few as possible)
- Make clear the intended limits of use of the data: identifiers for citation/reuse of information
- Public administrations should share information and maps openly

Good practice one: Cartography of habitats in Catalonia

The mapping of habitats in Catalonia at different scales is a useful tool for making decisions related to nature conservation. For example, mapping helps to inform the distribution of, and the area occupied by, the different habitats present in a territory, to improve land management, to generate reports for monitoring habitats and their conservation state, and to assess the evolution of habitats through time.

http://www.ub.edu/geoveg/en/semhaveg.php

Information needs for regulatory, policy, and strategic document-related obligations

	What is the problem?	What is the possible solution?
01 ***The relationship*** *between 'researchers' and 'regional governments' needs to evolve for the benefit of biodiversity*	• Researchers need to work on questions with the potential to be published • Governments need answers, but these questions are not attractive to researchers	• Showcase the positive impact of researchers' work • Influence researchers to work on certain "unattractive" questions via funding criteria • Promote a complementary citation index, connecting academic research with real needs
02 *The funding bodies need to* ***prioritise projects with positive impacts on biodiversity***	• Some habitats and species are easier to map/report • Some habitats are difficult to map when the definition and criteria are not clear	• Regional governments should be involved in project selection • Identify focus areas for funding and collaborating
03 *Some* ***non-biodiversity focused agencies also hold data on biodiversity*** *that could be useful for decision-making processes*	• Biodiversity data are held by agencies that do not have a primary focus on biodiversity • These data are not easily accessible	• Make agreements, founded by regions, with these agencies
04 ***Data need to be updated as much as possible*** *to detect trends and significant changes*	• Limited budgets for updating data • These data are key to detecting trends and change	• Focus on fist level indicators (not expensive) • Work on the scope, size and diversity of the baseline indicators • Make them available and ready for use

Good practice two: BioGeoNet

BioGeoNet is a taxonomic and biogeographic database of the species and habitats of Belgium, managed by the non-profit association Natagriwal. Included within BioGeoNet is data and information for agri-environment scheme monitoring. This tool represents an example of good practice of data management and data sharing as it supports farmers in the implementation of agri-environment schemes. In addition, it also supports land owners by providing information to inform the ecological restoration of their lands that make up part of the Natura 2000 network.

http://www.ub.edu/geoveg/en/semhaveg.php

Opening speech from the Vice-Minister of Environment of the Basque Country

Innovation opportunities: new tools for the capture and understanding of information

Key elements that should be considered to fulfil research and management perspectives

Setting priorities and timeframes to allocate resources: money (cost in euros), people

Coordination and capacity building–capacity of data use

Communication, bottom up dialogue and feedback to understand real needs

Integration and linking policy and research

Public accountability and transparency (guidelines, advertising data)

Data acquisition and management processes to respond to potential user needs: data structure, quality, and flow

Key points for making data gathering tools more useful:

- Keep in mind what the real question is from the beginnig to the end
- Look for the information that already exists–do not reinvent the wheel
- The cycle must be adjusted and repeated until the information is fit for use
- Focus on the audience: adapt the results accordingly and make them visual

Even if many new data sources have been developed during recent years, some of them are still not used to their full potential, so some information is lost

Key components of useful and predictive data processing and interpretation tools:

- Analyse and interrogate the original question as much as necessary
- Interpretation is key: adapt language, get feedback, improve dialogue
- Test and evaluate the the outputs you get–make the tool as usable a possible by customising it
- Select and prioritise the data you get and the steps you make

Good practice three: Ornitho.eus

The Ornitho.eus project represents an example of good practice in relation to data recording and gathering from citizen science approaches, and its subsequent use in decision-making. With this project, benefits are obtained both for public administrations and for volunteers, such as coordination of monitoring programs, promotion of networking, the development and use of basic statistics and indicators, the provision of an early warning system, and cooperation over large spatial scales. The information from Ornitho.eus is incorporated into the Nature Information System of the Basque Country.

http://ornitho.eus/

Attendees at the second interregional BID-REX workshop in Bilbao, Basque Country