

The Environmental Education and Communication Program L'Observatori: Tordera River Basin Monitoring Station

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SUMMARY

L'Observatori: Tordera River Basin Monitoring Station is a regional project that arises to define indicators of the ecosystems state and the maintenance of the watershed catchments. It started in 1996 as a result of an agreement between the Catalan Water Agency (called ACA and belonging to Catalan Government), the Institute of Environmental Sciences and Technology belonging to Autonomous University of Barcelona, and the Council of Sant Celoni.

The main goals of the project are: A) define Integrated Assessment (IA) indicators tools and methodologies for water sustainability improvement at river basin scale according to Water Framework Directive. B) Apply in a policy relevant manner the developed IA tools and methodologies within pilot projects. C) Promote and improve social learning processes in river basin management supporting public participation and dissemination activities. D) Design and develop an Environmental Education and Communication Program, called PROECA.

L'Observatori has two main work fields: 1) the scientific research on the socioecological status of the river basin; and 2) the implementation of an environmental education and communication program.

The research is focused on the periodic set of information about different floristic, faunistic, hydrological and social economy parameters to know the evolution of the Tordera river basin, to identify the trends and the dynamics of the riverine ecosystems and evaluate systematically their preservation state. Moreover, the project tries to develop innovative decision support systems (DSS) under an Integrated Environmental Assessment (IEA) approach, for the monitoring of the River Basin Areas in Catalonia, Spain.

Its research-action group is integrated by multidisciplinary scientists from natural and social sciences, including experts in hydrology, geography, biology and environmental sciences. The interdisciplinary research approach allows developing an integrated monitoring methodology based on environmental short-term and long-term indicators.

In order to achieve the purpose of promoting social learning processes, *L'Observatori* set up its own Environmental Education and Communication Program in 2004. Thus, by enhancing the social and ecological values of the river basin and showing the results of the scientific research to the society in an interactive way, the project acts as a link between the scientific, political and social spheres. Playing this role, *L'Observatori* aims to increase the social awareness of the need to adopt management measures that promote the conservation of the riparian ecosystems.

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THE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATION PROGRAM

The Environmental Education and Communication Program of *l'Observatori* expects to generate social learning mechanisms based not only on the results obtained from the Integrated Environmental Assessment but also on the knowledge of the stakeholders involved in the water uses and management. These mechanisms start active and dynamic social processes, and search the highest level of social participation defined by the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC): active participation.

The three general objectives of the program are:

- Start a communication program in order to make the activities of the project known among the society.
- Develop an environmental education strategy that enhances the values and makes people aware of the socioecological heritage in the river basin, and thus promoting changes in social attitudes towards a new water culture.
- Become a scientific reference in sustainability analysis of Mediterranean river basins by sharing the methodology and facilitating the exportation of the model to other river basins in the Mediterranean area.

In addition, there are some specific objectives:

- Design and implement the protocol, the mechanisms and the tools of an education and communication strategy reaching different social and geographical levels.
- Carry out education and dissemination activities adapted to the requirements of the different focus groups (general population, policy makers, scientists)
- Elaborate educational materials and popular science publications according to the three types of education: formal, non-formal and informal education.

Finally, the project develops a set of different activities included in strategic fields and tools:

- Dissemination of the project.
Activities: dissemination materials, flyers, posters, CD's, webpage, mass media.
- Environmental Education
Activities: Exhibitions, Meetings, lectures and conferences, environmental education materials, *Observe!* Program (set of dissemination and pedagogical activities)
- Scientific Communication
Activities: Scientific meetings, seminars, workshops, lectures, papers,
- Research training
Activities: lectures at university, participation of junior researchers in the project