

Life+ and Natura 2000 Network

The European Union has a series of instruments and figures in order to support the environmental and nature conservation projects throughout its territory.

Life+

Life+ is the only EU financial instrument that is exclusively devoted to the environment during the period 2007-2013. Its overall objective is the contribution to the implementation, development and enhancement of the Community environmental policy and legislation, including the integration of this one into other policies in order to contribute to sustainable development. It consists of three main thematic components: Life+ Nature and Biodiversity, Life+ Environmental Policy and Management and Life+ Information and Communication.

Since the year 1992, the Life+ programme has co-financed more than 3.000 projects on environmental protection within the European Union. This means an estimated investment of 2 billion Euros.

Natura 2000 Network

Natura 2000 is a network for protected natural species within the European Union. It was created by virtue of the Directive 92/43/CEE of the Cabinet Meeting from May 21st, 1992. This one is related to the conservation of natural habitats and wild flora and fauna (the so-called Habitats Directive) in order to safeguard the most important European natural spaces. They consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), which were declared by all the Member States in relation to the Habitats Directive, and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) for birds, which are designed in accordance with the Directive 79/409/CEE of the Cabinet Meeting from April 2nd, 1979. This one is related to the conservation of wild birds.

The purpose of the Natura 2000 network, regarding the objectives that were established in the Agreement on Biological Diversity –which was passed in the Summit of Río de Janeiro in 1992–, is to ensure the long-term survival of the most threatened species and habitats across Europe; and stopping the loss of biodiversity that is caused by the adverse impact of human activity.

Depending on the characteristics, variety of vegetation, climate and geology of each area, the European Union has established nine bio-geographic regions within the Natura 2000 Network. The Galician territory is included in the Atlantic one.

Regimen of protection within the territory of Margal Ulla

To get the introduction of a certain territory within the Natura 2000 Network, the different countries must designate Sites of Community Importance (SCI), protected ecosystems in order to help biodiversity by means of the conservation of natural habitats.

In the basin of the Ulla River there are some of the aforementioned SACs: Ulla-Deza, Brañas do Xestoso, Serra do Candán, Monte Faro, Serra do Caerón and Sobreirais do Arnego fluvial systems.

All these areas are also considered as Special Protection Areas of the Natural Values (SPAsNVs) according to the Galician Law 9/2001, August 21st, of the Nature Conservancy.

As a measure to support the objectives of the Margal Ulla Project, the Rural Ministry in the Galician Government, *Consellería de Medio Rural*, plans to enlarge the Natura 2000 Network within its area of operation and to improve the connectivity of the species which can protect the critical areas of *Margaritifera margaritifera* and *Galemys pyrenaicus*.

