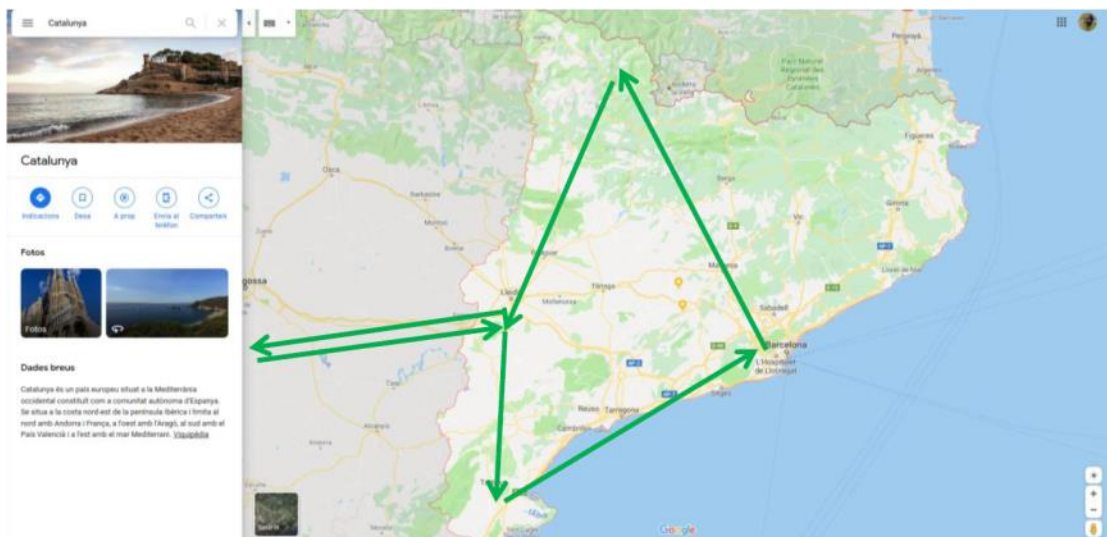




Conservation and Sustainable Management of Turkey's Steppe Ecosystem Project GCP/TUR/061/GFF

“Establishment Enabling Environment for the Effective Conservation of Steppe Biodiversity across
Large Landscapes”

13-19 October 2019 Spain Study Visit Report



November 2019



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Executive Summary

In the framework of the “Establishment Enabling Environment for the Effective Conservation of Steppe Biodiversity Across Large Landscapes” study under the Conservation and Sustainable Management of Turkey’s Steppe Ecosystem Project (GCP/TUR/061/GFF) a study visit was held in Spain on 13-19 October 2019 with the participation of the project technical team.

Scope of the Study Visit: Knowledge and experience of the project technical staff were intended to be increased in the subjects of steppes in Spain, planning of these areas, as well as the management and monitoring of the protected areas. The visit was planned to take place in Spain and in particular in two or more protected areas (one should preferably include a steppe ecosystem). During the 5-day visit, the participants were aimed to be presented with the following topics:

- Nature conservation approaches and protected areas
- Governance and participatory management approaches
- Participation of stakeholders and the duties and responsibilities of different stakeholders in protected area management
- Ecological corridors and buffer area applications in protected areas (where applicable)
- Monitoring and evaluation studies (on biodiversity and management effectiveness)
- Park infrastructure, visitor management and awareness raising activities
- How protected areas that include steppe ecosystems in Spain are managed
- Administrative and institutional structure for the protection of steppe ecosystems
- Examples of protected area management and monitoring of activities for the protection of steppe species (if any)
- Basic threats to steppe areas, protection solutions and participatory management in steppe protected areas
- Visits to protected areas, on-site demonstrations of planning, management, monitoring and, if applicable, species conservation programs. It is preferred that one of the protected areas be a steppe ecosystem; other protected areas can be selected among wetland or mountain ecosystems. Choosing one of the sample areas as Biosphere Reserve will provide information about buffer zone applications and governance model.

Expected results and outputs:

- Information on national approach to nature conservation and protected areas is gathered.
- Knowledge and experience of the project technical team on the management, planning and monitoring of steppe and protected areas is increased.
- Protected steppe areas and other protected areas are visited.
- Examples of management and monitoring and actions taken in protected areas regarding the protection of steppe species are examined.
- Examples of park infrastructure, visitor management and awareness-raising activities are observed.
- Information on the involvement of different stakeholders in protected areas, their duties and responsibilities are shared.
- Planning, management, monitoring and conservation programs, if any, are shown on site.
- Common ground for cooperation between technical experts from two countries is enhanced.

Within the scope of the project, different people and institutions were contacted to conduct a study visit in Spain, including the Federal Government of Barcelona and an NGO (Xarxa per a la Conservació de la Natura; XCN, www.xct.cat) through the Eurosite network, of which Nature Conservation Center Foundation is a member. As a result of the communications during August and September, the preliminary study visit program was agreed upon. Accordingly, the study visit was decided to be implemented on 13-19 October 2019.

Within the scope of the study visit, the Nature Conservation Center organized the visit together with XCN. In this context, a list of participants was created (Annex 1) and information regarding the preliminary program and issues to be considered was shared with the participants.

The study visit was carried out successfully on the scheduled dates. Annex 2 provides the names and contact details of the foreign experts participating in the study visit. Below are the details of the daily flow of the program and the photos taken. The Ministerial visits, which were foreseen only on October 18, could not be realized due to the general strike in Barcelona. This meeting is determined to be

carried out after the study visit via skype at an appropriate date for both Turkish and Spanish authorities. This process will be coordinated by DKM.

Finally, two surveys were conducted on the participants' expectations and gains within the scope of the study visit. One of them was filled by the participants prior to the visit and the other one after the study. According to the questionnaires, the question "Did this trip meet your expectations?", which was evaluated by a point between 1 and 5 by the participants, 9 participants gave 4 points and 4 gave 5 points. These results show that the trip met the expectations of the participants to a high degree. The surveys indicated that they saw remarkable examples in the planning and management of protected areas and participation on this technical trip. The evaluation of these surveys are given in Annex 3.

Program Details

Day 1, 14.10.2019 – Visit to Alt Pirineu Natural Park (The Parc Natural de l'Alt Pirineu) (pasture and grasslands)

On the first day of the visit, Alt Pirineu Natural Park was visited. During this visit, Rodrigo Jofre from XCN and Alt Pirineu Natural Park Director Marc Garin accompanied the group from Turkey and a field trip was carried out.

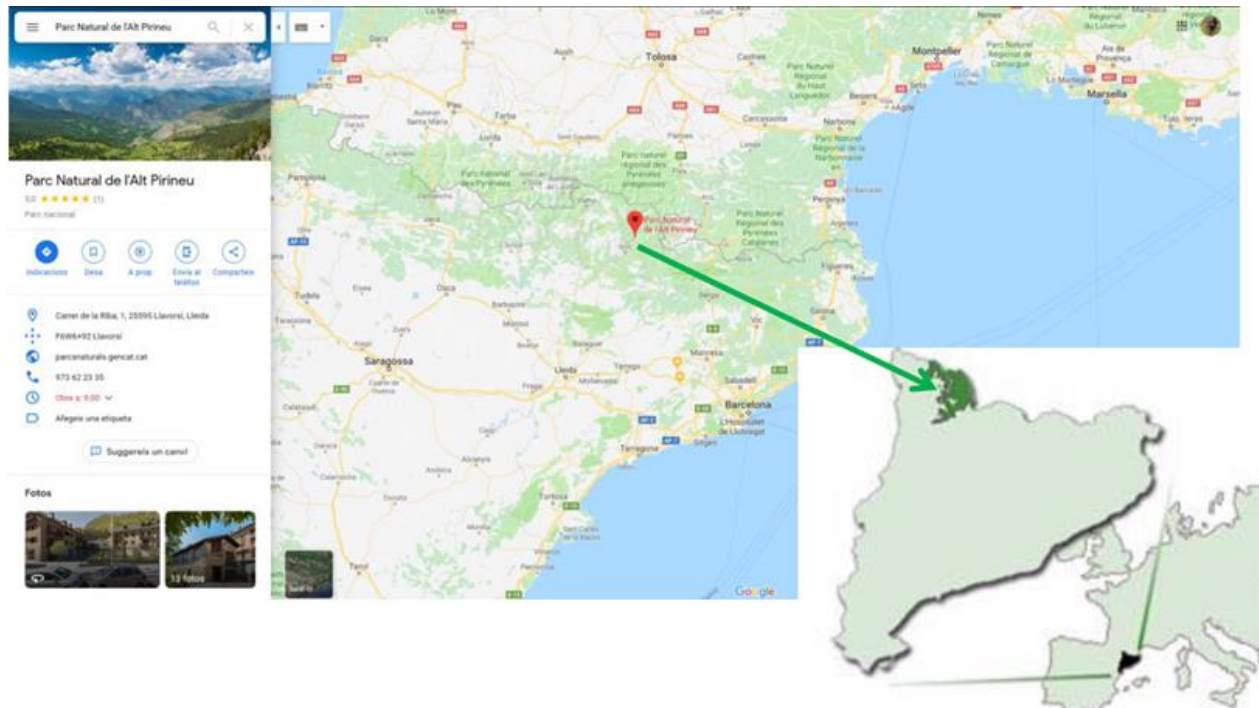


Figure 1. Location of Alt Pirineu Natural Park

After the field visit, a presentation was made to the participants on the following subjects:

- Monitoring and evaluation activities (biodiversity and management).
- Site infrastructure, visitor management and public awareness activities.
- Management monitoring and species conservation programs, if any.
- Stakeholder participation processes, roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in protected area management.
- Visit to the goat farm where mountain meadows and wetland ecosystems are protected and the risk of bear attacks is managed with trained dogs.
- Visit to a large cow farm where mountain meadows and wetland ecosystems are protected.

Day 2, 15.10.2019 – Visit to Belchite Steppeland

On the second day of the visit, Belchite, which is dominated by steppes and managed by a non-governmental organization, was visited. During this visit, Anna Subirina of XCN and Sofia Morcelle from SEO BirdLife (Sociedad Española de Ornitología), the Spanish partner of BirdLife International, guided the field trip. During the day, the site was visited and the following information was given to the participants by the SEO BirdLife expert:

- Introducing the site and land management strategies under the guidance of the SEO BirdLife team.
- Presenting the nature conservation legal framework of Aragon Autonomous Community, the collaboration with the Government and how SEO Birdlife manages the protected land.

In the second part of the day, during the afternoon, the wildlife rehabilitation center "Center de Fauna Vallcalent" in the center of Lleida town was visited. Information regarding the practices implemented here was provided to the participants.

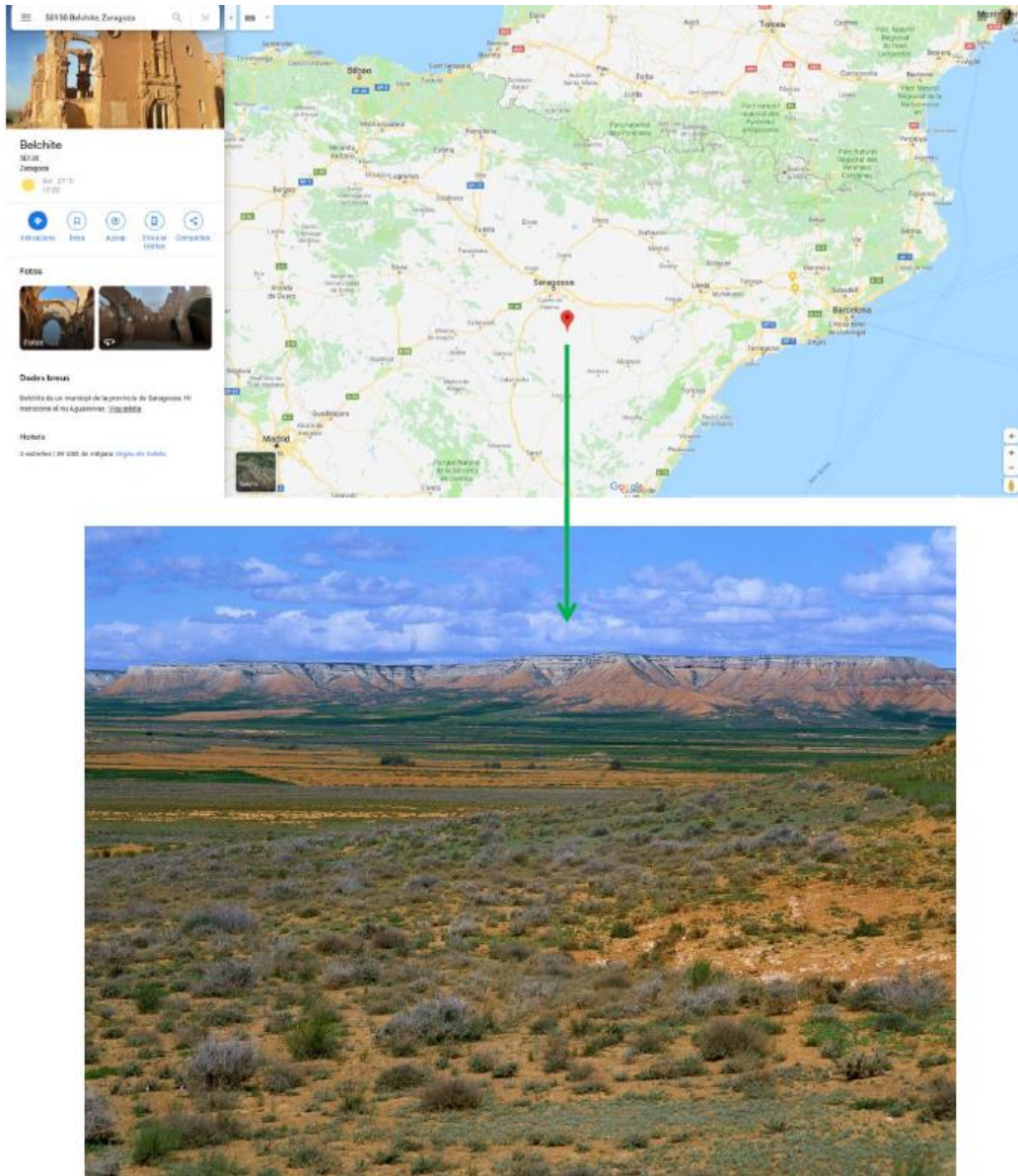


Figure 2. Location of the Belchite Steppeland

Day 3, 16.10.2019 – Visit to Mas de Melons Natural Reserve and Thyme of Alfés

On the third day of the study visit, the Mas de Melons Natural Reserve, which is a protected area, and then the Thyme of Alfés, a Natura 2000 area, were visited. Clara Blasco of XCN and Mariano Rojo of the SG Biodiversitat Department Territori Sostenibilitat, as well as Marc Gawež of Trenca, a non-governmental organization, accompanied the group during this visit.

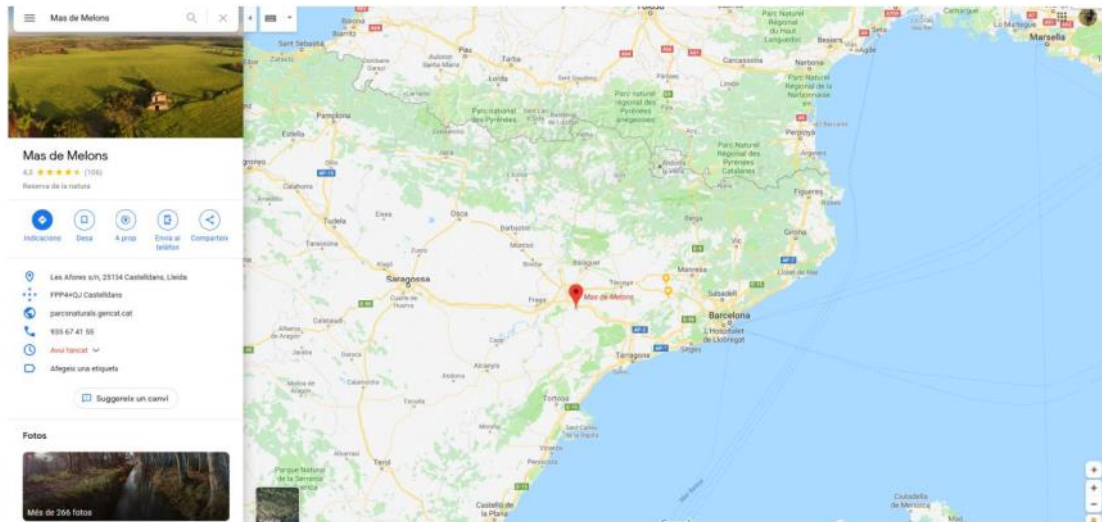


Figure 3. Location of Mas de Melons Natural Reserve

Firstly, the Visitor Center of the Mas de Melons Natural Reserve was visited and a presentation was made to the participants. This presentation provided information about:

- Protected area management planning tools.
- Examples of integration of conservation activities of steppe species into protected area management and monitoring.
- Main threats to steppe ecosystems, solutions for protection, and participatory planning and management of steppe protected areas.
- Management and monitoring programs.

In the second part of the day, during the afternoon, a private land and a Natura 2000 area, Thyme of Alfés was visited. Here, an NGO official from Trenca provided informed about the species conservation and how agricultural practices are implemented by taking biological diversity into account.

Day 4, 17.10.2019 – Visit to Ebro Delta and Biosphere Reserve

The 4th day of the program was dedicated to the visit of the Ebro Delta, one of the biosphere reserves in the Catalonia region. Mireia Salazar Gabarro from XCN accompanied the group during this visit. The afternoon program involved the technical team meeting with senior representatives from the Consell Comarcal del Montsià (Montsià County Council). In this context, a presentation was made and it included information about the biosphere reserves in Catalonia and their management. Following the presentation, a discussion section provided detailed information about Biosphere Reserves. Subsequently, a museum called the Delta de l'Ebre EcoMuseum was visited. During the museum visit, Inma Juan made a detailed presentation about the Ebro Delta Nature Park.

In the second part of the day, during the afternoon, a boat trip to the Ebro Delta took place.

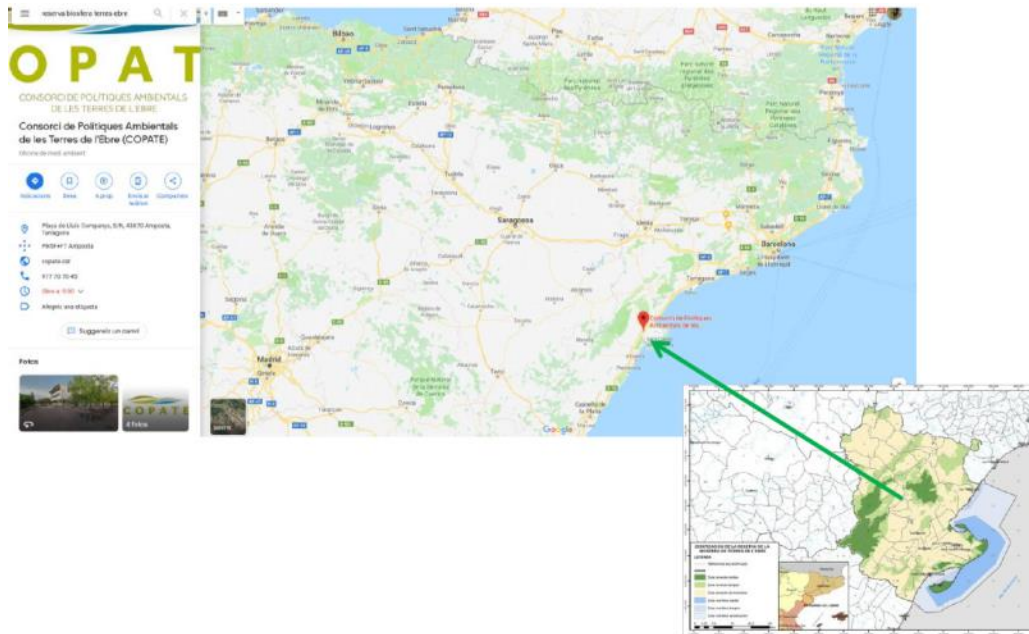


Figure 4. Spatial representation of Ebro Delta

DAY 5, 18.10.2019 – Meeting with the General Directorate of Environmental Policy and Biodiversity experts

To compensate this meeting, a 1.5 hour Skype meeting was organized on 19th November with the below stated participants on the topics to be cleared after the study visit.

Jaume Vicens	Directorate of Environmental Policy and Biodiversity	Deputy Director of Biodiversity
Sara Pont	Directorate of Environmental Policy and Biodiversity. Natural Environment Planning Service	Head Officer
Santi Pérez	Directorate of Environmental Policy and Biodiversity. Natural Environment Planning Service	Technician
Anna Espadalé	Directorate of Environmental Policy and Biodiversity. Natural Environment Planning Service	Technician
Jofre Rodrigo	XCN	Executive Director

Annex 1. Participants of the Study Visit

no	Name	Position	Organization
1	Mustafa BULUT	Deputy General Director	General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks
2	Tuğba USTA	Department Manager	General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks
3	Osman Uğur AKINÇ	Department Manager	General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks
4	Burak TATAR	Biologist/Specialist	General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks
5	Ümit BOLAT	Forest Engineer/ Specialist	General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks
6	Fatih KÖYLÜOĞLU	Biologist/Specialist	General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks
7	Serhat ERBAŞ	Forest Engineer/ Specialist	General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks
8	Ömer Faruk ASLAN	Urban Planner/ Specialist	General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks
9	Süleyman ÜNER	Forest Engineer	General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks
10	Abdulsamet HAÇAT	Forest Engineer	General Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks
11	Fecir ÖRNEK	Forest Engineer	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry III. Regional Directorate, Directorate of Provincial Department of Şanlıurfa
12	Reşat EKTİREN	Veterinarian	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry III. Regional Directorate, Directorate of Provincial Department of Şanlıurfa
13	Mehmet GÜRKAYNAK	Department manager	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry III. Regional Directorate, Directorate of Provincial Department of Şanlıurfa
14	Nihan YENİLMEZ ARPA	National Project Coordinator	FAO
15	Yıldırım LİSE	Deputy Director	Nature Conservation Center (DKM)
16	Fethiye ARSLANTAŞ	Project Assistant	Nature Conservation Center (DKM)

Annex 2. Representatives of the Organizations who were met during the study visit

no	Name	Organization	Position	E-mail address
1	Jofre Rodrigo	XCN	Executive Director	jrodrigo@xcn.cat
2	Marc Garriga	Alt Pirineu Natural Park	Director	mlujen@gencat.cat
3	Sofia Marcelle	Seo/ BirdLife		smorcelle@seo.org
4	Merce Mariano	COPATE	Technician	m.mariano@copate.cat
5	Mariano Rojo	SG Biodiversitat Department Territori Sostenibilitat	Agronomy engineer	mariano.rojog@gencat.cat
6	Marc Gawez	TRENCA NGO	Director	info@trenca.org
7	Anna Subirana	XCN	Communication officer	asubirana@xcn.cat
8	Mireia Salazar Gabarro	XCN	Lawyer	msalazar@xcn.cat
9	Clara Blasco	XCN	Project technician	cblasco@xcn.cat

Annex 3. Evaluation of the Study Visit

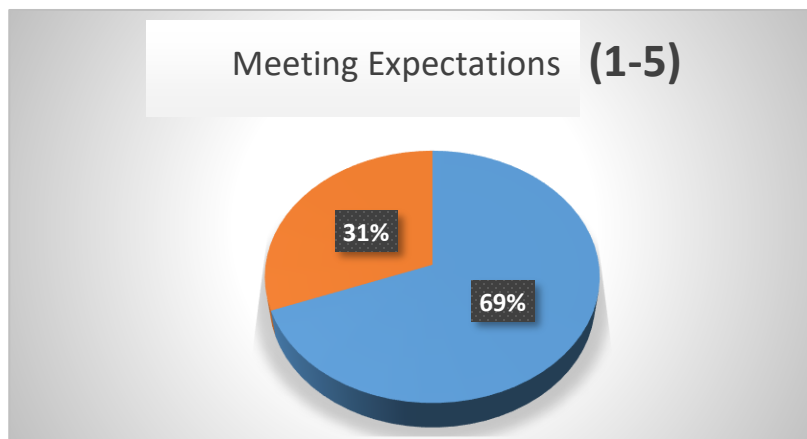
The results of the pre-assessment and post study visit surveys with 13 participants are described in this section.

1. Expectations:

Did this trip meet your expectations? (Choose the most suitable option between 1 to 5)

1 (Expectations not met at all)	2	3	4	5 (Expectations fully met)
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To the above question, 9 among 13 participants responded with 4 points (69% – blue) and 4 responded with 5 points (31% – orange).



Blue: 4 points – Orange: 5 points

2. Level of knowledge:

What is your knowledge of the planning and management of protected areas in Spain and your level of knowledge of the areas visited? (Choose the most suitable option between 1 to 5)

1 (Have no knowledge)	2	3	4	5 (Have good knowledge)
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The answers to the question above showed that the level of knowledge of all participants in both the planning and management of protected areas in Spain as well as the 5 different protected areas visited has increased significantly.

Participant	Protected Areas of Spain		Al Pirineu		Belchite		Mas de Melons		Thyme of Alfés		Ebro Delta	
1	2	4	2	4	2	4	2	4	2	4	2	4
2	2	4	1	5	1	5	1	4	1	4	1	5
3	2	4	2	5	1	5	1	4	1	3	1	4
4	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	4
5	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	3	1	4	1	4
6	1	5	1	5	1	5	1	5	1	5	2	4
7	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	4
8	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	4
9	1	3	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	3	1	3
10	3	4	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	3
11	3	4	2	4	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	4
12	1	4	1	4	1	4	1	3	1	4	1	4
13	1	3	1	3	1	4	1	4	1	3	1	4

Red columns: Points prior to the study visit.

Blue columns: Points post study visit.