

An initiative to increase knowledge exchange and promote best practices among stakeholders involved in transport and biodiversity issues

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Abstract : The integration of biodiversity into economic sectors is a key goal of sustainable development. The planning and construction of transport infrastructures involves new challenges, to satisfactorily pass the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) processes, which address habitat fragmentation and other biodiversity-related issues. However, new and more appropriate mitigation measures are progressively being implemented. One of the key mechanisms for achieving comprehensive, suitable management goals is effective governance. This is required to manage communication between the experts, scientists and decision-makers involved in all stages of a project, including its design, planning and programming.

Spain has established an effective governance tool through a specific working group, which brings together professionals who work in the sectors of transport infrastructure and nature conservation.

This working group was formally constituted in 1999 in the framework of the COST 341 Action (1998-2003). At the end of the project, the group was maintained to continue its activities. At present, it is supported by the Spanish Ministry of Environment, Marine and Rural Affairs and is comprised of approximately 60 people, designated by the transport and environment administrations of the 19 autonomous communities and by the Spanish State. The group's work has led to several publications on wildlife and traffic and to a collection of technical prescriptions for the design and monitoring of fauna passages. Two additional volumes are currently in press on habitat fragmentation indicators and the prevention of fragmentation during the planning of transport infrastructures. The guidelines on fauna passages have been adopted by several regions as criteria to be accomplished during the EIA process.

The group also promotes knowledge dissemination by organising meetings every two years and producing an electronic bulletin that reaches approximately 1500 people. The bulletin includes information about projects, monitoring of results, publications and events in the field.

The results obtained by the working group in its 10 years of operation have been very positive. It provides a coherent and comprehensive way of finding common ground and of attaining specific targets and measures that enable us to move forward together. The high number of projects carried out in Spain during recent years, including the construction of hundreds of wildlife passages, several defragmentation projects and other measures to diminish the effects of habitat fragmentation caused by transport infrastructures, is evidence of the positive impact of bringing transport and environment professionals together.