



# Are Wetland Contracts useful governance processes to work on ecosystem services such as contamination control?



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## INTRODUCTION

Wetlands are in the core of global economy and local development as they provide water for drinking, irrigation, manufacturing, energy, navigation and leisure. They also provide sediments, vegetation and fishes, and suppose the base for farming, fishing and tourism local and global economies. These supplies and their landscape and cultural heritage have strengthened a local identity linked to ecosystem services that often are not recognized as so by society.

This background explain how relevant governance processes have emerged from these habitats. Recently, after River Contract agreements success in several regions of Europe, Wetland Contracts raised as voluntary and inclusive agreements that allows to adopt a set of regulations in which criteria of public utility, economic return, social value and environmental sustainability equally take part in the search for effective solutions for wetlands recovery. Wetland Contracts act as a collaborative tool and obligations trigger where all different interests are at stake.

WETNET project, funded by Med Programme, is working on testing Wetland Contracts processes in Western Mediterranean as a tool for maintaining biodiversity and natural ecosystems through strengthening the management and networking of protected areas. Wetland Contracts include a preliminary, targeted diagnosis and alternative scenarios assessment in the participation process. For this reason, they suppose useful tools to know how regulation framework, biodiversity and conservation values and stakeholders relate to each other, and how diverse, referred to the area the stakeholder are, and how much experienced they are in these kind of participation processes.

## METHODS

An exhaustive diagnosis was made in 9 wetlands of different typology in Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, Malta and Slovenia. For each wetland it was described the regulation framework related with the protection and conservation of their biological values, as well as the most relevant interests in conservation and stakeholder typology, experience and influence in participative processes.



The diagnosis was focused on retrieving key information to focus the participation processes through unravelling what do contexts have in common and what factors drive to diverge the process:

- Are protected Med region wetlands protecting similar values?
- How do the regulatory framework of the protected wetland allow us to figure out what are the threats and pressures facing their conservation status?
- How do the stakeholders are implicated in the wetland management?
- Do the regulatory framework for wetlands protection at regional and national level promote participative processes for their integrated management?
- Are stakeholders diverse and experienced enough to ensure a successful participation process?

## DISCUSSION

Mediterranean wetlands host a wide biodiversity of conservation concern at an European level. With the 9 freshwater and brackish water wetlands of different typology here studied, 61 different habitats and 335 species of conservation concern are represented.

The richness of values for the conservation of biodiversity in Europe is variable within wetlands: Melides lagoon and Verdier marshes (Camargue) host more than the half of the whole of represented habitats; birds are best represented in Verdier Marshes (Camargue), Odiel Marshes, and Albufera; and Ljubljansko Barje is richer in invertebrate protected species.

As a result of their representativeness, 8 of 9 wetlands are protected under Natura 2000 regulation. Only one (Cañizar lagoon, Spain) is at this moment protected only by regional legislation, as it is an intermittent wetland of recent recovery, and it is in the procedure to be included in Natura 2000. Some wetlands have additional protection agreements, i.e. being included in Ramsar convention or declared under UNESCO's Biosphere Reserve figure.

The mapping of stakeholders in the wetlands resulted in a wide typology, with predominance of private non profit entities (NGO) and public bodies. The most of the stakeholders fully develop their activity in the reference area, thus reflecting both intense relationship with the reference wetland through economic, cultural, emotional or leisure links. The most of the stakeholders implicated in the Wetland Contract process have high or medium experience, and them have high or medium experience in processes similar to Wetland Contracts.

## CONCLUSIONS

As the representativeness of biodiversity at the international level increase in wetlands, they boost their protection by international figures. By means of this, regulation applicable to the wetland management, regulation of uses, and opportunities for public participation is wider.

Regional and local regulation framework give better tools to develop participative, integrative processes as Wetland Contracts are. But there is a clear need to improve them to ensure a satisfactory public participation, biodiversity protection and integrated management.

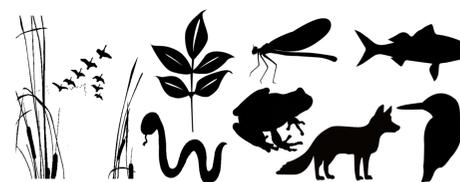
Stakeholders on wetlands are properly diverse, mainly involved and rooted at the local level. They have experience in inclusive governance processes.

**To sum up, we have on the table all the pieces to run Wetland Contracts in Europe: we have well known wetland contexts, proper regional or local regulation framework and involved stakeholders.**

## RESULTS

### BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION OVERVIEW

How much conservation concern values do our pilot areas host (protected by Habitats or Birds Directives)?



61 habitats (mean = 16)  
20 fish species (mean = 2)  
4 amphibian species (mean = 1)  
4 reptile species (mean = 1)  
35 plant species (mean = 4)  
14 mammal species (mean = 2)  
17 invertebrate species (mean = 2)  
251 bird species (mean = 57)

### REGULATION FRAMEWORK ASSESSMENT

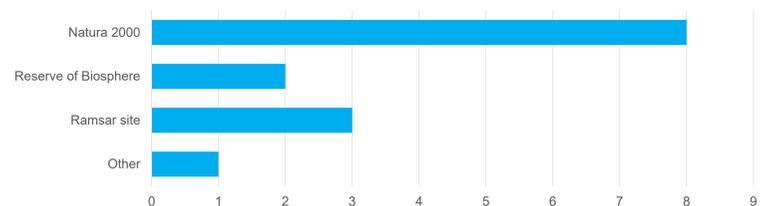


Figure 1 – Regulatory framework for the protection and management of the pilot wetland

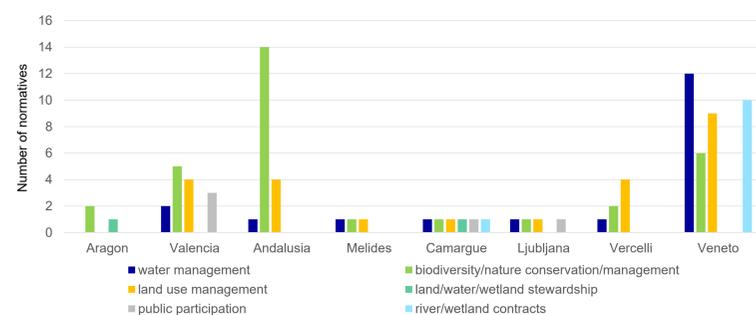


Figure 2 – Legislation in which national regulatory framework for the protection, management and governance of wetlands are framed

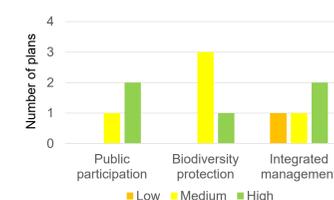


Figure 3 – Assessment of how the planning tools for management of the pilot wetland foreseen at national level consider the three pillars for processes driving to Wetland Contracts

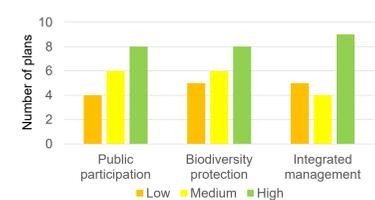


Figure 4 – Assessment of how the planning tools for management of the pilot wetland foreseen at regional or local level consider the three pillars for processes driving to Wetland Contracts

### STAKEHOLDER ANALYSIS

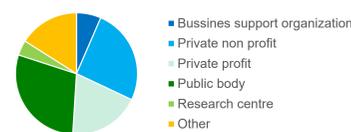


Figure 5 – Stakeholder typology

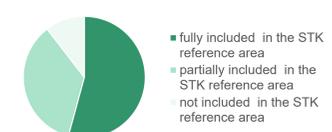


Figure 6 – Area of activity



Figure 7 – Previous experience in inclusive governance processes



Figure 8 – Influence of the stakeholder in the Wetland Contract or similar processes

