



Case study #02: Deba river restoration

Case study cluster: small streams and basins

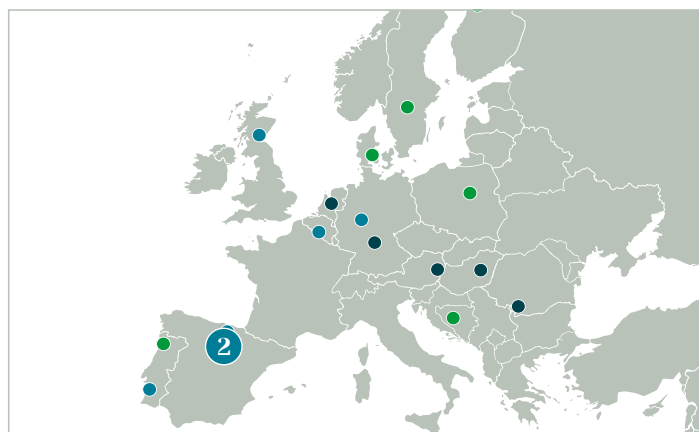
Country: Spain

Scientific partner: University of the Basque Country

Implementation partner: Gipuzkoa Provincial Council

Twinning case study:
Catalan Water Agency (ACA)

Website: <https://www.gipuzkoa.eus/en/web/council>



Demonstration

- **Type of restoration:** Hydro-geomorphological restoration of the Deba river
- **Size:** Basin total area: 518 km², total main channel length: 58 km.
- **Location(s):** Deba river basin
- **Value of the case:**
 - ✦ Disaster risk reduction (floods)
 - ✦ Mitigation of environmental degradation
 - ✦ Biodiversity enhancement
 - ✦ Climate change mitigation and adaptation
 - ✦ Human health improvement
- **Stakeholders involved:** municipal councils, Basque Country Water Agency, Society for the Economic Development of Deba Basin, Deba Basin Rural Development Association, Commonwealth of the Upper Deba and Eibarko Baso Biziak
- **Sectors involved:** sectorial governance and regulation, forestry, environmental and hydroelectric sectors

- **Innovations being applied:** Stakeholder engagement linking local communities, institutions and governments to advance environmental education and nature-based restoration.

Implemented within MERLIN

- **Type of restoration:** removal of 8 dams to restore river connectivity
- **Size:** 28 km of river reach
- **Scope:** local
- **Vicinity:** urban, peri-urban and agricultural
- **Stakeholders involved:** tourism, education, local industries and communities, policy makers and local authorities
- **Estimated costs:** 528,500€ (including project planning, dam demolition and monitoring as well as stakeholder engagement events)

Lessons learnt

- ✦ Engage stakeholders early and continuously.
- ✦ Build trust to overcome opposition.
- ✦ Persevere through delays and permitting challenges.



Strengths

- Multiple Green Deal benefits
- Continued ecological monitoring
- Strong public-sector leadership

Weaknesses

- Catchment stressors remain
- Challenging stakeholder engagement
- Benefits difficult to quantify

Opportunities

- Increased public awareness
- Restoration showcase
- Future restoration partnerships
- Knowledge exchange

Threats

- Multiple stressors obscure benefits
- Misinformation
- Political polarisation
- Land-use conflicts

