



WORKSHOP 5: Public policies for the promotion of volunteering

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**Support Plan to the Third Environmental Sector 2011-2014, Josep Planas,
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The Support Plan to the Third Environmental Sector 2011 – 2014 was presented last July 12. The Plan identifies action lines, measures and actions aiming at the promotion, consolidation and reinforcement of environmental volunteering programs. It also aims at recognizing the immense value of the work carried out by environmental organizations. The ultimate goal of environmental organizations is the protection of the environment and the promotion of the social benefits resulting from it. As part of the third sector, environmental organizations are committed with social transformation. As environmental organizations, they are committed to the environment protection.

The Plan, which is promoted by the DG for Environmental Policies is a tool of departmental planning. It describes the measures that are going to be implemented by the Land and Sustainability Department in the next 4 years in collaboration with other departments of the *Generalitat de Catalunya*, local organizations, social actors and environmental organizations.

We believe civil society has to participate in defining the strategies and plans that inspire our public action. This entails more dialog between both parts and more transparency in the decision making process.

For the Plan to be robust it needs to incorporate the perspectives of the third sector and the support of its economic and social actors such as local administrations, the economic and financial world and academia.

This is why the Department opened a dialog process to guarantee the effective participation of the above-mentioned stakeholders. We should not forget that professionals, volunteers working in the environmental third sector and representatives from social and economic actors are the ones who are more aware of the sector's weaknesses. The main objective of this process is to serve as a dialog, deliberation and information-sharing platform through which third sector environmental organizations and other social actors can see their views reflected in the Plan.

The Plan identifies several key points regarding the promotion of organizations and environmental volunteering such as professionalization, empowerment, quality and innovation enhancement, building a sectorial common identity that

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enhances its social repercussion and political influence, organizations' finance diversification and IT strategic use.

The Plan is divided in 4 areas: people, organizations, society and environment. Also, 2 of its action lines are considered to be transversal to all areas: the enhancement of R+D+I and the promotion of IT.

The first area includes action lines in volunteers' training, promotion and social recognition. A vast majority of environmental organizations (63% according to the report [*Diagnosi del tercer sector ambiental de Catalunya, 2010*](#)) relies on volunteers for the fulfilment of their mandates.

The Plan's action line 2 is entitled "Promotion of volunteers' social recognition" and it includes 3 measures:

- Raising awareness on the importance of the work carried out by volunteers.
- Putting together a professionals and experts directory as to boost their image among society and media.
- Opening communication channels between organizations' experts and the media in order to share and compare news.

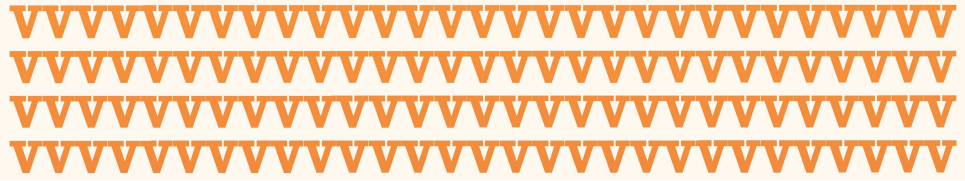
The Plan's action line 3 aims at enhancing organizations, volunteering and internal participation through the reinforcement of the social basis of volunteers' organizations, the promotion of youth participation and enabling generational change. 3 measures are foreseen:

- Identifying good practices regarding participation and volunteering in different social contexts (companies, schools, universities) and enabling debate within organizations.
- Getting a clear picture about people's knowledge of the sector and about the factors that determine their participation in volunteering programs. This requires gathering information regarding citizens' knowledge, perception and opinion about the third environmental sector in Catalonia. The messages and the image that organizations broadcast need to be taken into account.
- Promoting environmental volunteering within volunteering in general and provide it with its own character.

The above-mentioned action lines cover the whole volunteers' management cycle, from their first steps in an organization to their disengagement. A special focus is brought to the diffusion and recognition of the social task carried out by environmental volunteers as the main promotion tool.

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The transversal action line previously mentioned also needs to be highlighted. That is the spread of IT within organizations knowing that they apply to all areas. Thus, IT might have implications in third sector organizations' individual and collective strategies. More specifically, the Plan identifies IT as a strategic tool for training, social recognition and for bringing on board new volunteers.