



Institute for  
European  
Environmental  
Policy

## The Selvans programme: Tools for the conservation of mature forests in Spain<sup>i</sup>

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### Brief summary of the case

Selvans is a programme devoted to mature forest conservation through, amongst other tools, payment for ecosystem services (PES). The programme was originally designed starting 2005 as a public forestry aid call plus sponsorship from private donors aimed at financing the stumpage acquisition (i.e. buying the cutting rights of land owners) of mature forest spots under public and private property. These funds were accessed through official requests from land owners that, after evaluation, were designated as suitable projects. An agreement was then signed by which they committed to leave the area unexploited for the next 25 years (i.e. their timber stumpage was acquired). To compensate for the loss of revenues, the owner received a subsidy corresponding to the estimated opportunity costs, which are calculated according to either the productivity of the farm or the management plans in place (e.g. the quantities of wood foreseen to be sold).

In 2011, the public aid was constrained due to the financial crisis and the programme was finally split into two differentiated programmes in 2013. The public aid was kept as a standalone call within the public scope, focused on stumpage acquisition of public mature forests, whereas Selvans was hosted by the NGO *Acciónnatura*. In this second stage, the management tools and fundraising strategies within Selvans, focused on private donors, were expanded and diversified. Regarding fundraising, Selvans was included in the programme *CompensaNatura*, an online fundraising tool for nature conservation created by *Acciónnatura*, for companies and individuals. Meanwhile, management and stewardship tools were expanded beyond stumpage acquisition, including long-term voluntary agreements (i.e. without any economic exchange involved), short-term contracts and potential purchase of forest areas.

In 2015, 4,475 hectares of forest had been successfully included under one of these types of agreement, having raised EUR 18,495 from private donors for agreements already signed plus EUR 17,356 for agreements in the process of being signed. In turn, the Girona Provincial Council has contributed EUR 927,941 since 2008.

The programme has been successful in terms of reaching an operational stage although long-term financial resources are not ensured.

## 1 Description of the design, scope and effectiveness of the instrument

### 1.1 Design of the instrument

The Selvans programme originated in the city of Girona as the follow up to a pilot experience on the conservation of mature forests led by Jaume Hidalgo in the protected area “Parc Natural del Montseny”, in 2005. In 2007, it was applied to the whole province of Girona (north-eastern Catalonia) under the denomination “Selvans” (Gorritz and Prokofieva, 2011).

The programme was aimed at fostering the creation of a network of mature forest in Girona within current protected areas. The four main objectives were:

- Preserving the ecological, landscape and patrimonial values related to the vulnerable biodiversity of mature forests;
- Implementing compensation for the environmental benefits (i.e. positive externalities) of not exploiting mature forests;
- Achieving a proportional representation of all types of the existing forests in Girona;
- Fostering the enlargement of the network through sponsorship contracts.

The programme was originally designed for the stumpage acquisition<sup>1</sup> of mature forests by regional authorities, with two separate lines of action: one line focused on public forests and another devoted to private forests, both financed by public and private funds.

Public funds were articulated through a forestry aid call financed by the Girona Provincial Council and mainly (but not solely) oriented to forests under public ownership (i.e. municipalities). For each request received an onsite evaluation was undertaken to assess the ecological interest, according to a set of features (e.g. existence of centennial trees). The best rated requests were financed until the budget was spent.

For those requests accepted, the owners signed an agreement by which they committed to leave the area unexploited for the next 25 years (i.e. their timber stumpage was acquired). To compensate for the loss of revenues, the owner received a subsidy corresponding to the estimated opportunity costs, which are calculated according to either the productivity of the farm or the management plans in place (e.g. the foreseen quantities of wood to be sold).

The second line of action included the search for sponsors hand in hand with the NGO “*Xarxa de Custòdia del Territori*” (Land Stewardship Network). Mature forests are of particular interest for certain companies in search of environmental projects, given the high appeal of these landscapes and the related ecological values. The framework agreements under this call comprised the acquisition of the stumpage of 2.5 hectares of private and public mature forests during 25 years for EUR 2,500.

In 2012, after a budgetary cut, eligibility for the public aid was restricted to only local authorities owning public forests. As a result, the programme was split into two different initiatives according to the source of financial resources. On one hand the public call was continued and managed within the scope of the provincial government, following the same criteria and targets as originally developed by *Selvans*, aimed at financing public forests only. Table 1 shows the agreements signed between the Girona Provincial Council and public and private owners. Until 2014, 1,186.9 hectares had been included as mature forest reserves.

**Table 1. Agreements signed between 2005 and 2014 by the government of the province of Girona.**

Municipality	Property	Year	Main species	Area	Valid until
Santa Pau	B	N.a.	Beech	94.95	N.a.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. The right of the owner to cut trees is ‘bought’ from the owner by someone else so the owner does not extract timber for a given period of time. In this way, the owner is compensated.

Municipality	Property	Year	Main species	Area	Valid until
Viladrau	B	N.a.	Beech	309.36	N.a.
Viladrau	B	N.a.	Beech	51.40	N.a.
Arbúcies	V	2005	Beech	2.55	22/12/2030
Arbúcies	V	2005	Oakwood	7.23	22/12/2030
Arbúcies	V	2006	Beech	2.50	15/10/2031
Arbúcies	V	2006	Oakwood	0.80	15/10/2031
La Vall d'en Bas	B	2008	Deciduous, Pinus sylvestris	6.13	31/12/2033
Sant Miquel de Campmajor	V	2008	Deciduous	7.07	31/12/2033
Espolla	V	2008	Acer monspessulanum	27.45	31/12/2033
Montagut-Oix	V	2008	Deciduous	17.43	31/12/2033
Albanyà	V	2008	Oakwood	16.29	31/12/2033
Campelles	B	2008	Fir	7.00	31/12/2033
Queralbs	B	2008	Pinus uncinata	5.11	31/12/2033
Gombrèn	B	2008	Beech, Pinus sylvestris	6.55	31/12/2033
Ogassa	B	2008	Beech, Pinus uncinata, Pinus sylvestris	3.37	31/12/2033
Pardines	B	2008	Pinus uncinata	14.00	31/12/2033
Planols	B	2008	Pinus sylvestris	3.90	31/12/2033
Ribes de Freser	B	2008	Pinus uncinata, Pinus sylvestris	6.40	31/12/2033
St Joan de les Abadesses	B	2008	Beech	2.81	31/12/2033
Toses	B	2008	Pinus uncinata	4.13	31/12/2033
Vallfogona del Ripollès	B	2008	Beech, Pinus sylvestris	6.59	31/12/2033
San Pau de Segúries	B	2008	Beech. Deciduous	5.16	31/12/2033
Campdevàdol	B	2008	Beech, Pinus sylvestris and others	5.07	31/12/2033
Ripoll	V	2008	Beech	8.76	31/12/2033
Albanyà	V	2008	Oakwood	14.96	31/12/2033
Les Planes d'Hostoles	V	2008	Beech	7.94	31/12/2033
Les Planes d'Hostoles	V	2008	Beech	3.16	31/12/2033
Santa Pau	V	2008	Beech	2.54	31/12/2033
Albanyà	V	2008	Oakwood	20.03	31/12/2033
Ripoll	B	2008	Beech	4.64	31/12/2033
Mieres	V	2008	Oakwood	19.52	31/12/2033
Montagut-Oix	V	2008	Oakwood and hardwood	5.67	31/12/2033
Sant Hilari Sacalm	V	2008	Fraxinus excelsior and others	2.07	31/12/2033
Sant Hilari Sacalm	V	2008	Chestnuts	2.74	31/12/2033
Sales de Llierca	V	2008	Mixture	5.47	31/12/2033
Sales de Llierca	V	2008	Mixture	2.59	31/12/2033
Torroella de Montgrí	B	2008	Pinus halepensis	27.43	31/12/2033
Torroella de Montgrí	B	2008	Pinus halepensis	28.12	31/12/2033
Camprodon	V	2008	Oakwood	6.57	31/12/2033
Camprodon	V	2008	Oakwood	9.49	31/12/2033
Albanyà	V	2009	Beech	8.68	31/12/2034
Camprodon	V	2009	Oakwoods	6.02	31/12/2034
Campelles	B	2009	Spruce, Pinus uncinata	5.51	31/12/2034
Queralbs	B	2009	Pinus uncinata	6.02	31/12/2034
Ribes de Freser	B	2009	Pinus uncinata, Pinus sylvestris	6.51	31/12/2034
Toses	B	2009	Pinus uncinata	6.30	31/12/2034
Urús	B	2009	Tetrao urogallus, Athene noctua	10.46	05/03/2019
Urús	B	2009	Tetrao urogallus, Athene noctua	24.17	05/03/2019

Municipality	Property	Year	Main species	Area	Valid until
Alp	B	2009	Fir, Pinus uncinata. Pinus sylvestris	9.82	31/12/2034
Puigcerdà	B	2009	Tetrao urogallus	33.12	20/10/2019
Campdevàdol	B	2009	Beech, Pinus sylvestris	4.21	31/12/2034
Fontanals de Cerdanya	B	2009	Pinus uncinata	12.02	31/12/2034
Albanyà	V	2009	Quercus pubescens	15.72	31/12/2034
Camprodon	V	2009	Quercus pubescens	8.10	31/12/2034
Albanyà	V	2009	Quercus pubescens	20.73	31/12/2034
Montagut -Oix	V	2009	Deciduous, Mixture. beech	12.23	31/12/2034
Montagut-Oix	V	2009	Oakwood, deciduous	8.51	31/12/2034
Sales de Llierca	V	2009	Oakwoods	6.02	31/12/2034
La Jonquera	V	2009	Mixture	10.47	31/12/2034
La Jonquera	V	2009	Mixture	2.05	31/12/2034
Camprodon	V	2009	Oakwood	17.62	31/12/2034
Sant Miquel de Campmajor	V	2010	Mixture	20.00	31/12/2035
Ger	B	2010	Pinus uncinata	14.60	31/12/2035
Meranges	B	2010	Pinus uncinata	21.25	31/12/2035
Ribes de Freser	B	2010	Pinus uncinata, Beech	4.50	31/12/2035
Cruïlles-Monells	V	2010	Quercus suber	20.00	31/12/2035
la Vall de Bianya	V	2010	Oakwood and Beech	13.30	31/12/2035
Pardines	B	2010	Pinus sylvestris	4.76	31/12/2035
Planoles	B	2011	N.a.	2.04	31/12/2036
Ribes de Freser	B	2011	N.a	9.80	31/12/2036
Montagut-Oix	V	2011	N.a	10.00	31/12/2036
Ogassa	B	2011	N.a	2.00	31/12/2036
La Vall d'en bas	V	2011	Beech	4.50	31/12/2036
Camprodon	V	2011	N.a	3.00	31/12/2036
Toses	B	2011	N.a	3.10	31/12/2036
Planoles	B	2011	N.a	5.48	31/12/2036
la Vall d'en Bas	B	2012	Beech	7.77	31/12/2037
Das	B	2012	Pinus uncinata	7.49	31/12/2037
Arbúcies	N.a	2012	Oakwood	2.68	31/12/2037
Ogassa	B	2013	Pinus sylvestris	1.16	31/12/2038
Planoles	B	2013	Pinus sylvestris	3.40	31/12/2038
Arbúcies	N.a	2013	Oakwood	2.68	31/12/2038
Planoles	B	2014	N.a	4.13	31/12/2039

Source: *Acciónatura*. Personal communication. N.a.: not available; B: Public; V: Private.

On the other hand, since December 2013 (and after a one-year “stand-by” phase of the programme), the management of the *Selvans* programme was moved from the provincial government to be hosted as a standalone programme within the NGO *Acciónatura*, a non-profit organisation devoted to the conservation of biodiversity<sup>2</sup>. This configuration allowed *Selvans* to focus prominently but not only, on raising private funds for financing reserves in both public and private forests.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.accionatura.org/>

Under *Acciónnatura*, *Selvans* forms part of a broader initiative called *CompensaNatura*<sup>3</sup>. *CompensaNatura* is an online fundraising tool aimed at collecting online donations from individuals and companies. Seventy-five per cent of these donations are then invested in stumpage acquisition in Spain and other countries. These donations serve to compensate for the land occupation impacts of companies, as measured by the first official indicator of an organisation's biodiversity impact: the 'use of land', expressed in "m<sup>2</sup> of built-up area" (see Eco-Management and Audit Scheme – EMAS Regulation (EC) No 1221/2009 or "EMAS III").

Apart from *CompensaNatura*, a number of complementary conservation instruments have been implemented. Since September 2015, the available types of collaboration were expanded to include the following modalities:

- Voluntary forest stewardship agreements over high natural value forests, with its inclusion into the "Selvans" network, over a minimum period of 50 years. It is addressed to private (or communal) forest owners whom voluntarily want to ensure the conservation of a forest in the long-term (50-99 years), as "nature sanctuary" with minimal or no public use and clear regulation of the use of natural resources (hunting, berries, etc.). There are two possible ways (self-declaration or agreement with an entity of custody). None of them foresees economic compensation.
- Collaboration agreements with public administrations, over 10 years; It is addressed to public owners in order to foster (1) the establishment of reserves in forests of high natural value or (2) coordinate and reach consensus on the public use of activities associated with the conservation of these forests, by designating them "therapeutic forests" for the development of a specific guided activity called "forest bathing". No economic compensation is foreseen.
- Framework stewardship agreements with private forest owners, over an initial period of 5 years, to allow time to gather funds for stumpage acquisition, or the implementation of therapeutic walks/routes; the owner grants *Acciónnatura* a period of 5 years during which the property in which the forest is kept intact, or with only minimal intervention or management, always aimed at maximizing biodiversity. Moreover, *Acciónnatura* has permission to (1) seek funding to offset the stumpage said maximum value stands for 25 years, and in certain cases (2) seek funding for the possible implementation of forest therapeutic itineraries. Depending on the case, it is also included (3) seeking funding from *Acciónnatura* for a revision of the forest management plan, to maximize biodiversity. No economic compensation is foreseen.
- Contracts for stumpage acquisition, over a renewable 25 year period (cost of EUR 1,100 – 1,900/ha over 25 years, channelled mainly through the *CompensaNatura* initiative);
- Contracts for the implementation of therapeutic forest walks on certain forest areas, over a first period of 15 years; An agreement is signed in order to carry out a specific type of visits called 'therapeutic forest walks', inspired by similar experiences in Japan. No economic compensation is foreseen in principle.
- Purchase of forest areas of interest by a land stewardship organisation such as *Acciónnatura*, which could facilitate their long term conservation.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.compensanatura.org/>

Table 2 shows the area protected under the *Selvans* programme since December 2013, by type of instrument. Payment for environmental services through stumpage acquisition is the only one of these instruments that, at the moment<sup>4</sup>, encompasses monetary investments. In total, EUR 18,495 have already been invested in this tool (EUR 6,930 for public forests and EUR 11,565 for private owners). Additionally, two more contracts are in the pipeline, with an estimated investment of EUR 17,356.

**Table 2. Agreements signed by *Selvans* with private and public owners since December 2013.**

	Number of agreements, public ownership	Number of agreements, private ownership	Area (ha) of public forest under the instrument	Area (ha) of private forest under the instrument
Therapeutic forests	0	4	0	91.01
Voluntary network (50 years)	0	1	0	31.51
Payment for environmental services (25 years)	2	5	14.95	16.44
Stewardship agreements (25 years)	0	2	0	385
Collaboration agreements (10 years)	1	0	16.6	0
Change in forest/land use planning	1	0	17.7	0
Framework stewardship contacts (5 years)	1	11	55.77	2,656.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>104.75</b>	<b>3,180.05</b>

Source: *Acció natura*, personal communication

In terms of fiscal benefits, both individuals and companies are entitled to tax benefits, following the general framework in Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2015). In the case of individuals, it is realised as reductions in income tax depending on the amount donated plus its continuity (i.e. number of years of continued donations), whereas companies can choose between reductions in corporation tax or declare these donations as expenses<sup>5</sup>.

## 1.2 Drivers and barriers of the instrument

The key driver for the implementation of the instrument was the personal leadership and dedication of Jaume Hidalgo in 2005 when the pilot experience was carried out, and later in 2007, when it was implemented as a public call on forest aids. Furthermore, the synergistic interaction of the programme with other stakeholders (i.e. *Xarxa de Custòdia del Territori and the Girona Provincial Council*) made the programme feasible in technical terms and credible in political terms. Moreover, technical and scientific support for the initiative were also crucial to enable targets to be identified and prioritised at an early stage (i.e. identification and assessment of mature forests in Catalonia).

The key barrier is related to the lack of financial resources to ensure a long-term application of the programme. On one hand, once the public budget was diminished, these funds were restricted to publicly-owned forest. However, most mature forests are located within private farms. To overcome this barrier, the incorporation of *Selvans* into *Acció natura* was a crucial step forward, allowing for an expanded capacity to raise public and private funds from

<sup>4</sup> The implementation of therapeutic walks in forests is expected to be the next type of agreement which will encompass some kind of return to forest owners as payment for ecosystem services, both with an investment in the forests (for their conditioning for public use) and participation in the created (eco)health-tourism activity.

<sup>5</sup> This formula requires a collaboration agreement to be signed between the company and the NGOs.

additional sources and in turn to become more resilient to changes in the budgetary provisions from public funds.

Furthermore, the interviewees pointed out the following additional issues:

- Further engagement of the regional government (i.e. Generalitat de Catalunya) would be desirable now that the programme has expanded to the whole territory of Catalonia. For example, forest policy is not aligned with the conservation for mature forests (i.e. the forest planning tools are prioritising timber extraction against other options)<sup>6</sup>;
- Lack of information on the planning tools in place in private forests to allow evaluation of the impact of these plans on mature forests (i.e. through timber extraction plans);
- Lack of public awareness on the situation of mature forests in Catalonia.

### 1.3 Revenue collection and use

#### Scale of investment

Since 2008, EUR 927,941 of public funds have been invested for stumpage acquisition through forestry aids calls.

The *Selvans* programme, as a standalone programme within *Acció natura*, has already invested EUR 18,495 (EUR 6,930 for public forests and EUR 11,565 for private owners). Two more contracts are also in the pipeline, with an estimated investment of EUR 17,356 (EUR 13,800 for public forests and EUR 3,556 for privately-owned forests).

#### Use of the subsidies

The funds provided through the public forestry aid call are used for stumpage acquisition, so that owners cannot extract timber. Under *Acció natura*, the activities that may be carried out by forest owners are agreed in a land stewardship agreement between the forest owner and the NGO, and the agreement included in a register monitored by the *Xarxa de Custòdia del Territori*. Regular contact with the forest owners is also carried out continuously. Failure of the forest owner to honour the agreement would result in them having to return the funds,

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<sup>6</sup> The Agricultural Department is currently working on a first network of forests to be left to natural dynamics, with mature forests forming the centrepiece.

as well as pay a surplus as compensation. The regular contact also helps to prepare for the renewal of the agreement after 25 years.

There are no specific constraints/conditions on what the recipient has to use the subsidy for (as it covers part of their “lost” baseline “opportunity cost” had they harvested the wood), but certain active management options are recommended to forest owners.

The donations raised by the *Xarxa de Custòdia del Territori* from private donors until 2013 were largely channelled towards the provincial government (80%) with the remaining 20% going to the NGO for coordination expenses.

The funds raised by Selvans from private donors since 2013 are used for stumpage acquisition and buying forest areas.

### **Who pays and who collects**

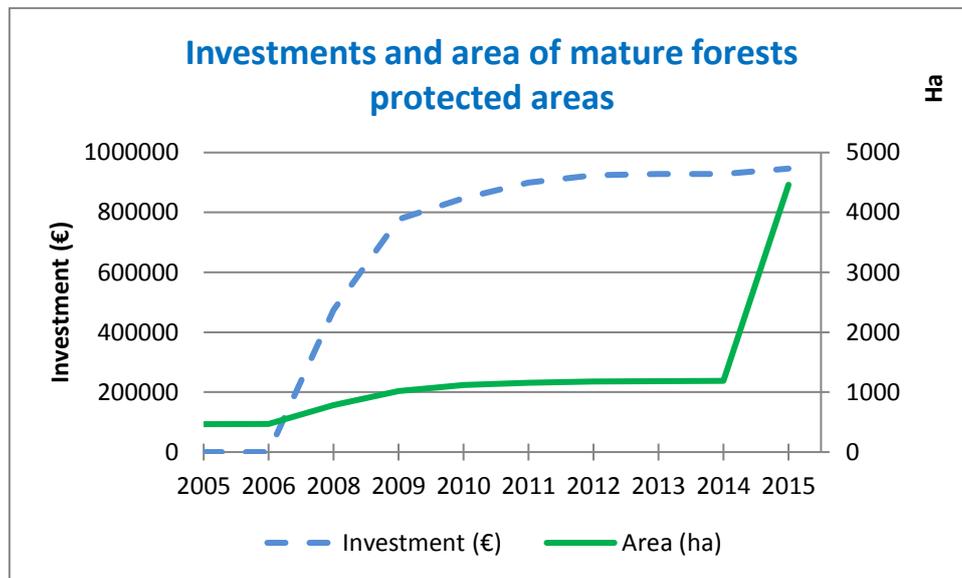
Until 2013 the public part of the budget (i.e. for the public forestry aid call) was paid from the general budget of the Girona Provincial Council. Private funds were paid by sponsors to the *Xarxa de Custòdia del Territori*, which in turn channelled these revenues to the Provincial Council. After 2013, the public forestry aid call remains the same. However, private donations are now paid by individuals and companies to *Accionatura* which in turn pays 80% directly to private and public landowners; the remaining 20% is kept by *Acciónatura* to cover expenses.

## **1.4 Environmental impacts and effectiveness**

The most visible indicator of the environmental impact is the area already preserved under the Selvans programme. Figure 1 shows the trend of this indicator for private and public forests plus the total accumulated investment raised by the programme either through the public forestry aid or private donors. The effect of changing the Selvans programme to a standalone project within *Acciónatura* can be seen in 2015, when the number and extension of protected areas dramatically increased thanks to the diversification of the available management tools. This explains why investment did not follow the same trend (i.e. more forests were protected but not only under payments for ecosystem services (PES) schemes). This situation is temporary since 82% of new forests protected in 2015 were included under 5-year agreements, so unless long term agreements are made soon for these areas, the total protected area might decrease by 2020. On the other hand, more than EUR 17,000 of new funds are currently in the pipeline for the conservation of an additional 14 hectares.

For the moment there are no specific indicators and no tracking in place as to *specific* species/habitats being conserved, apart from the protected area of the main tree species.

**Figure 1. Accumulated protected areas (ha) and investment (€) since 2005 under the Selvans programme.**



Source: personal communication: Carles Sunyer and Steffan Esser from the Selvans programme.

### 1.5 Other impacts

Apart from the typical benefits related to the conservation of mature forests, additional impacts were suggested by the interviewees:

- Impact on human health: Several of the reserves (4) have been selected for undertaking the so called “forest-bathing”. Taken from the Japanese culture (*shinrin-yoku*), these forest baths are a specific type of eco-tourism/health activity related to the therapeutic effects that forests can provide to human beings.
- Scientific research: Mature forests are scarce in Catalonia. The areas conserved under the Selvans programme are unique in terms of its potential for scientific research. These areas are of particular interest as a live laboratory for the study of the evolution of different types of forest in the absence of intensive human activities such as timber extraction. Moreover, mature forests are valuable indicators for observing the magnitude of climate change impacts on forest ecosystems.
- Internalisation of externalities: The inclusion of the Selvans programme within the broader initiative *CompensaNatura* has allowed for individuals and companies to explicitly compensate for the surface area of their houses and offices. The value per square metre (m<sup>2</sup>) depends on the projects donors choose to participate in. General stumpage acquisition is offered at EUR 0.19 per m<sup>2</sup>, whereas for tropical forests the rate is EUR 0.09 per m<sup>2</sup>.

## 2 Stakeholder engagement

Jaume Hidalgo was a key stakeholder, particularly during the first years of Selvans. Firstly, his personal leadership triggered the creation of the Selvans programme. Secondly, his scientific contribution has provided robust support for the instrument since the beginning. Finally, he successfully dealt with a budgetary cut-off in 2012-2013, bringing the programme to a NGO and thereby expanding its scope and relevance in terms of the area protected and number and type of instruments.

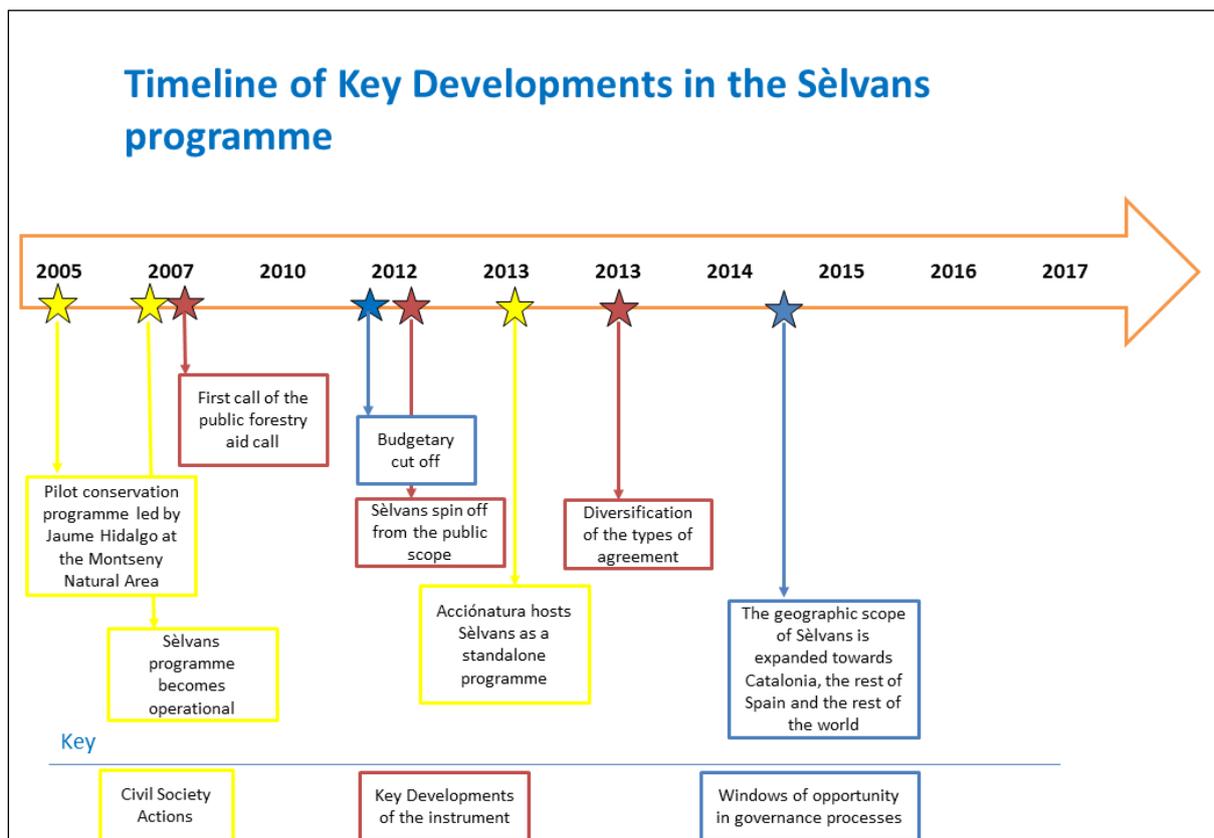
The Girona Provincial Council was key in supporting and articulating the financial dimension of the programme, particularly until 2012.

The NGO *Xarxa de Custòdia del Territori* was a key stakeholder in terms of fundraising from private sponsors until 2012, and in terms of support and coordination since 2008. The NGO *Acció natura* became the host organisation for the programme in December 2013. It has provided a robust organisational and legal base for the programme. Moreover, the synergy with other initiatives within *Acció natura* (e.g. *Compensatura*) has expanded the opportunities for private fundraising. *The Fundació Biodiversidad* (dependent on the State Government) and the *Barcelona Provincial Council* have been two main supporters of the programme since 2013.

Jaume Hidalgo and representatives from *Acció natura* were interviewed for this case study. All of them agreed on the need to differentiate between the two phases of the programme (i.e. according to the host organisation of the programme), and the flagship project it has become since 2013 under *Acció natura*, with the support of a growing number of institutions.

In this new stage, the programme is achieving its main environmental goals, but not without uncertainty about the financial support to be received in the future. Moreover, it is pointed out that more support from the Catalan government would be welcome in order to better coordinate forest and conservation policies.

**Figure 2. Key developments in the Selvans programme**



Source: Own elaboration from information provided during the interviews.

### 3 Windows of opportunity

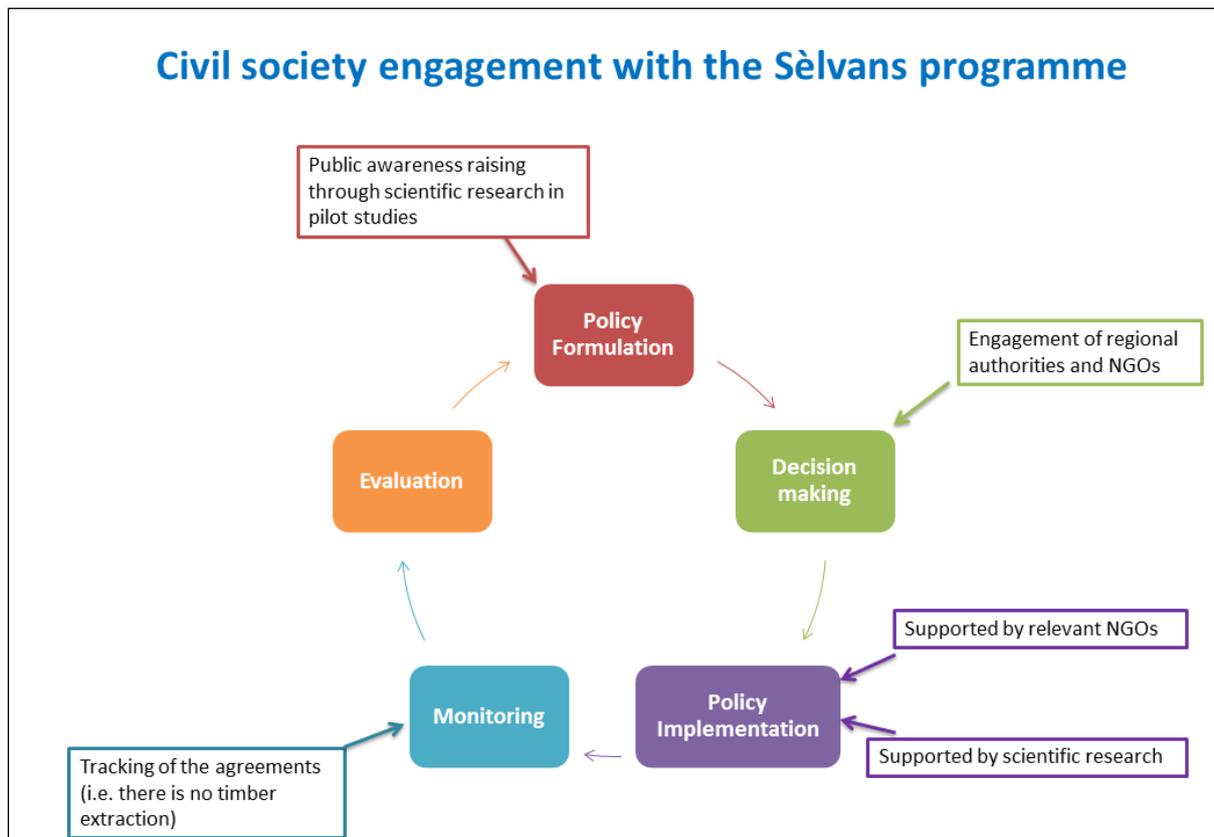
Figure 1Figure 3 aims to capture civil society engagement in the context of the Selvans programme. Specific actions were mainly associated with the policy formulation, decision-making, policy implementation and monitoring stages.

Firstly, academics played a key role in pushing forward the agenda on the conservation of mature forests, particularly through the pilot experiences carried out in the iconic protected area of the Montseny Natural Park. Next, the engagement of the *Xarxa de Custòdia del Territori* in the implementation stage was also vital. This NGO has a solid reputation in land stewardship projects and it provided coherence with other initiatives and presumably improved the acceptability of the project.

The implementation stage was made more focused and to a certain extent eased by the supporting scientific information provided by academics to undertake the identification and prioritisation of forest areas to be conserved.

Continuity of the programme since 2013 has been possible mainly thanks to Fundació Biodiversidad, and the Barcelona Provincial Council.

**Figure 3. Schematic overview of windows of opportunity throughout the policy cycle of the Selvans programme**



Source: Own elaboration from information provided during the interviews

## 4 Insights into future potential/reform

### 4.1 Actual Planned reforms and stakeholder engagement

The planned future steps for the programme include consolidating the short term agreements and converting them into voluntary long term agreements or payment for ecosystem services (PES) (from 25 to 50 years). This includes the raising of additional private funds in the short term.

Moreover, the programme aims to expand its geographic scope to the rest of the Catalan provinces, to the rest of Spain, and also to some other countries in Latin America.

### 4.2 Suggestions for future reforms – instrument design and civil society engagement

The comments here are based on the interviews undertaken for this case study.

The implementation of non-economic instruments to complement the payment for ecosystem services has contributed to a sharp increase in the area of protected forests in the short term. Additional innovative economic and non-economic formulas should be explored to engage both donors and owners.

Making the current tax benefits framework more visible/explicit might encourage new donors in search of projects to invest.

Developing additional ways of financing stumpage acquisition from public owners would help to diversify the funding sources. For example, the implementation of specific municipal charges to access specific forests or to use associated services (e.g. parking) could serve to finance stumpage acquisition in those municipalities owning mature forest areas.

### 4.3 Suggestions for replicability

Replicability in other countries seems feasible, but clear financial support is needed to cover the necessary structural/personnel costs. The instrument is apparently being well received in other places within the Catalan territory, other Autonomous Communities in Spain and other countries in Latin America.

The operational issues related to fundraising for stumpage acquisition from private donors are apparently straightforward, particularly when hosted by NGOs (e.g. there is a well-defined legal framework in terms of tax benefits for donors) and linked to online tools as in the case of *CompensaNatura*. Moreover, there is a significant body of literature describing and analysing PES in forest ecosystems around the world.

On the other hand the engagement of public bodies to fund the instrument seems to heavily rely on economic cycles and policy agendas. It follows that the diversification of the sources of funds and conservation tools (e.g. voluntary agreements) might help to deal with periods of public budgetary constraints. While the Provincial Council has to a great extent financed the instrument, the engagement of administrative bodies at the regional level is still lacking, which makes it more difficult to broaden the geographic scope of the project. Therefore it seems that ensuring the engagement of as many relevant administrative levels as possible might be crucial for expanding the programme.

It is noteworthy that the implementation of the programme was supported by scientific research, which facilitated the definition of specific targets and made the project credible.

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