



## Newsletter N°1

### LIFE UNCINATA\* project is born

On February 14, 2023, the kick-off meeting of the LIFE UNCINATA\* project was held at the Forest Science and Technology Centre of Catalonia (CTFC). The project's goal is the restoration, conservation, and resilience of black pine (*Pinus uncinata*) forests on calcareous soils in the Pyrenees.

LIFE UNCINATA\* is a project coordinated by the CTFC with the participation of a consortium formed by CREA, the Forest Ownership Center of Catalunya, the Catalunya La Pedrera Foundation, Integra Pirineus, and Gestión Ambiental de Navarra SA. With a budget of 3,736,434 €, 75% of which comes from the EU LIFE program, the consortium has five years to develop demonstrative actions focused on the improvement of biodiversity, the compatibility of human activities and the mitigation of impacts, such as those derived from extreme fires or intense herbivory, on black pine forests.

During the meeting, the importance of the conservation of this unique habitat was highlighted, since the characteristics of the calcareous substrate influence the vegetation that grows on it, making this type of black pine forests a priority conservation habitat for the EU. "This is a habitat that is only found in the Pyrenees and the Alps, and it is an important element for preserving the biodiversity of ecosystems, as indicated in the EU Habitats Directive. Apart from the interest of the species that form it, multiple productive and recreational interests converge, and it is essential to prevent soil loss," explains Victor Sazatornil, CTFC researcher and project coordinator.

With the general objective of restoring, conserving and making black pine forests more resilient, the research team will carry out actions in different protected areas of the Pyrenees, such as the Aigüestortes National Park,

the natural parks of the Alt Pirineu, Cadí-Moixeró and Capçaleres del Ter i Freser, the national hunting reserve of Boumort, the forest reserve of Larra-Aztaparreta in Navarra, and in three large private estates, such as the mountain of Alinyà, Pedró-Rasos, and L'Estany.

Based on an initial diagnosis of the state of the pine forests on calcareous substrate, the research team will create habitat conservation plans for each of the Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) in which they will work. Among other actions, the project contemplates making improvements in forests that will be left to free evolution, as well as in forests where different objectives other than conservation coexist. Depending on the location and the problems previously identified, the grazing of domestic livestock and wild herbivores will be redirected in certain areas; actions will be taken to regulate excessive human traffic; and the vulnerability of some forests to wildfires will be reduced. "The introduction of new models of multifunctional forest management can contribute to mitigating the problems faced by this habitat," claims Pol Guardis, CTFC researcher. In addition, as with other LIFE projects, actions aimed at enhancing the value of the habitat and the actions to be carried out are also contemplated.

It is hoped that the conservation and restoration actions developed by LIFE UNCINATA\* will serve as a model and be transferable to the rest of the *Pinus uncinata* forests in Europe that suffer, or may suffer, in the not-too-distant future, the same conservation problems as the forests in which the project will work. "We hope that the results will help us to create new conservation plans and actions transferable to the whole habitat on a European scale," says Sazatornil. In this way, the project aims to contribute to the development and management of the Natura 2000 network and the achievement of the objectives of the European Biodiversity Strategy 2030.

## Field visits begin to determine the stands to be worked on

Within the framework of the actions for the improvement and conservation of habitat 9430\*, the spring and summer of 2023 have been dedicated to field visits to evaluate the possibilities of actions, to look for suitable forest structures, to recognize sensitive areas affected by pressures and to identify those stands with the most characteristics close to maturity, for example.

All the sectors previously defined in cartography (habitats, lithology, threatened and sensitive species, etc.), have been covered, which represents a good biogeographical representation of the habitat present in Catalonia, ranging from the Natural Park of Capçaleres del Ter i Freser to Montgrony in Ripollès, through the entire central axis of the Central Catalan Pre-Pyrenees, with the Natural Park of Cadi-Moixeró, with Berguedà, Cerdanya, Alt Urgell, reaching the two Pallars, with Boumort-Collegats and the Natural Park of the Alt Pirineu and, ending with the last sector of the National Park of Aigüestortes and Estanys de San Maurici, in the Alta Ribagorça.

Thanks to these field visits, together with several actors of the territory, Natural Parks, County Engineers, private owners, etc., the team has been able to determine the stands where project's actions will be carried out.



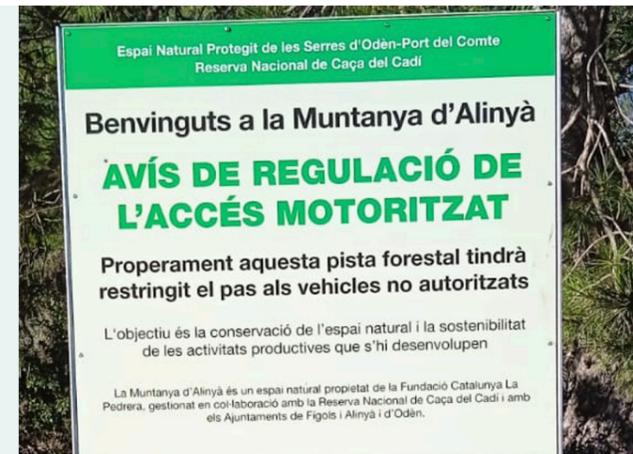
## New project website

From the beginning of October 2023, the LIFE UNCINATA\* project website is up and running. ([www.lifeuncinata.eu](http://www.lifeuncinata.eu)) In it, visitors will find information related to the conservation of the habitat and the actions that the project will develop.

## The first actions to regulate access to motorized vehicles in sensitive areas

This autumn, together with the relevant procedures with the town councils of Odèn and Fígols i Alinyà, the team has promoted the installation of the pre-warning signs to regulate the access of motorized vehicles to the private natural area of the Alinyà Mountain, property of Fundació Catalunya La Pedrera, managed in collaboration with the Cadí National Hunting Reserve and the town councils of Fígols i Alinyà, and Odèn.

The signage placed has a preventive message to explain that soon, motorized access to these forest trails will be restricted to authorized motorized vehicles only, to preserve the natural space, its landscape and biodiversity values, and the maintenance of the productive activities developed.



It is expected that in the coming years, within the framework of the LIFE UNCINATA\* project, other accesses and sensitive areas will be regulated for the conservation of the biodiversity associated with habitat 9430\* Black pine forests on calcareous substratum (Habitat of Community Interest).

## First meetings with local councils for the search for agreements

During the last months of 2023, the LIFE UNCINATA\* team has started to meet with the local councils of the various sectors where actions for the improvement and conservation of habitat 9430\* (HIC) are planned. As a first contact, the team explained the actions the project will undertake and discussed the perceptions related to the management of the pressures affecting the habitat.

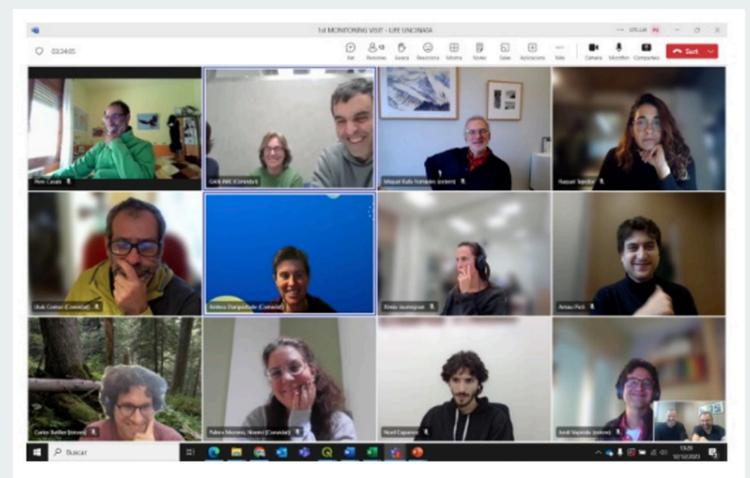
The municipalities contacted were Martinet i Montellà, and Urús (Cerdanya), Baix Pallars and Tornafort (Pallars Jussà), Ars, Josa de Cadí and La Vansa (Alt Urgell) and Queralbs, Planoles, and Campelles (Ripollès).



## 1st Monitoring meeting

On December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the first monitoring meeting of the project was held telematically. The meeting included a review of every one of the tasks foreseen in the different Work Packages of the project.

All the entities participating in LIFE UNCINATA\* presented the work done during this first year of the project. The participants exchanged opinions, comments, and doubts with the other partners, as well as with the technical monitor of ELMEN-EEIG (<https://www.elmen-eeig.eu/>), a company that aids with the technical and financial monitoring of LIFE projects, under the direction of CINEA ([https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/index\\_en](https://cinea.ec.europa.eu/index_en)), a European climate and environment company.



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Co-funded by  
the European Union

Con la contribución del instrumento financiero LIFE de la Unión Europea Referencia: LIFE21-NAT-ES-LIFE UNCINATA /101074730 | Acrónimo: LIFE21-NAT-ES-LIFE UNCINATA

