

European Greenways Association



Green

Interviews



Greenways contribute to the economy, health,
and the well-being of our planet and societies

Interview with Àngel Planas

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Catalonia, Spain



by Dominika Zaręba

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CONSORCI DE
LES VIES VERDES
DE GIRONA



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What are the origins of the Consorci de Vies Verdes de Girona?

The Consorci de Vies Verdes de Girona is a public body established in 2003. We are responsible for the maintenance, promotion and dissemination of greenway sections, as well as other cycling and walking routes whose management is entrusted to us by the municipalities.

This is not an exclusively tourism-oriented project. Tourists are just one of the user groups who enjoy our routes. **Our main users are local residents.** In other words, we manage mobility infrastructure for local communities. This is very important when it comes to making decisions and promoting public policies.

In the “Study on the Use of Girona’s Greenways and Their Economic, Social and Environmental Impact”, have you assessed the impact of greenways in the province of Girona?

Greenways have a positive impact on the territories they pass through, but their benefits go beyond the economic impact. We have presented an update of the study we carried out in 2018. According to its findings, the greenways and cycling routes managed by the Consorci generate a direct **economic impact of around €6 million** annually. I think this is a significant figure for a region like ours.

Furthermore, for the first time, we have been able to assess the **savings in healthcare costs, which amount to €200,000**. Finally, we have assessed the impact associated with **reducing CO₂ emissions, valued at around €60,000**. This represents a significant reduction in emissions that we want to prevent.

Greenways are therefore a living project that continues to grow, both in municipalities that already have this infrastructure and in those that don't yet have it but recognise its value for local communities and are committed to developing new routes.



It is truly inspiring to be able to assess how greenways contribute to sustainable development, health, and the well-being of our planet and our societies. Thank you very much for sharing this experience. What message would you like to convey to other European greenway projects and public institutions?

In our case, considering the experience of a small territory located somewhat on the periphery, I believe what is needed is better planning and, above all, adequate funding. I am referring to the resources required to implement projects that go beyond the local level. For example, in the case of European routes, the section in Girona is already connected to France, but there is still no continuous connection towards the south.

Secondly, I believe it is important for higher-level authorities to establish mechanisms to recognise and reward those territories that have demonstrated a genuine commitment to maintaining this infrastructure by allocating public funds for that purpose.

For example, in our case, the Girona Provincial Council and the 80 municipalities that are part of the Consorci allocate €2 million from their regular budgets to maintenance. We are not talking about investments in building new infrastructure, but rather about resources dedicated to maintaining what already exists.

For us, this is a considerable amount of money. However, if we do not invest these resources, we will lose the quality standards we have achieved. **We have reached a level of quality that users value and appreciate, and we must ensure that it is maintained.**



What is your vision or dream for the greenways of Girona and Catalonia?

To have an annual budget allocated to investment in new routes. Also, greater involvement from regional and national administrations in maintaining existing routes. Finally, at the Catalan level, to create a network of connected greenways, coordinated and managed jointly by the different administrations.

Moltes gràcies Àngel!





The routes managed by the Consorci de le Vies Verdes de Girona cover a total of **325 kilometres of cycling and hiking trails**, connecting the regions of Girona from north to south and east to west, and forming an integrated mobility and leisure network.

Within this framework, the Consortium has conducted the ***Study on the Use of Girona's Greenways and the Economic, Social and Environmental Impact of the Routes Managed by the Girona Greenways Consortium*** to measure and assess the contributions of these routes across four main areas: usage patterns and user profiles, economic impact, and public health impact.

>>>see more:

www.viesverdes.cat

Pictures:

Archive of Consorci de les Vies Verdes de Girona: Rubèn Borràs, David Rueda Basquetour



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