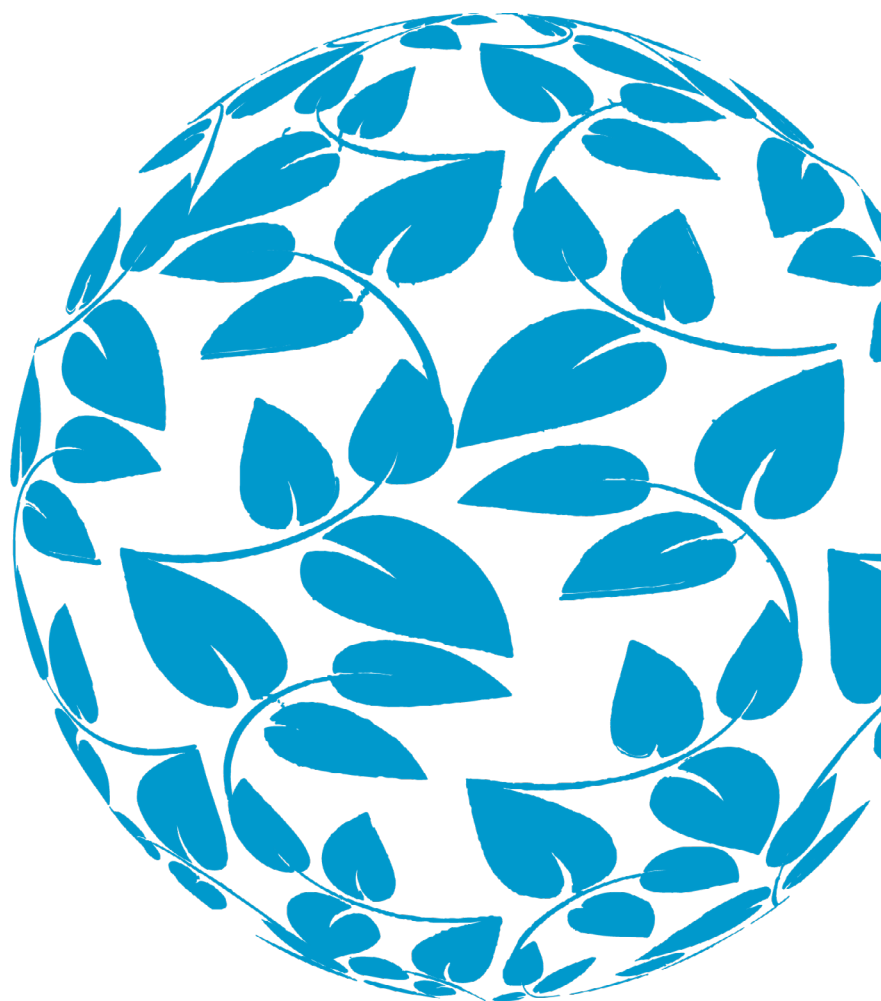


The role of Catalonia in the fight against climate change

5th anniversary of the Paris Agreement

Global debate organised by DIPLOCAT and the Advisory Board for Sustainable Development (CADS)

11 December 2020



Report by Lucas S. Barrero García, environmentalist, biologist and eco-social activist.



Location

La Rambla 14, principal
08002 Barcelona



Contact

+34 936 405 470

info@diplocat.cat

www.diplocat.cat



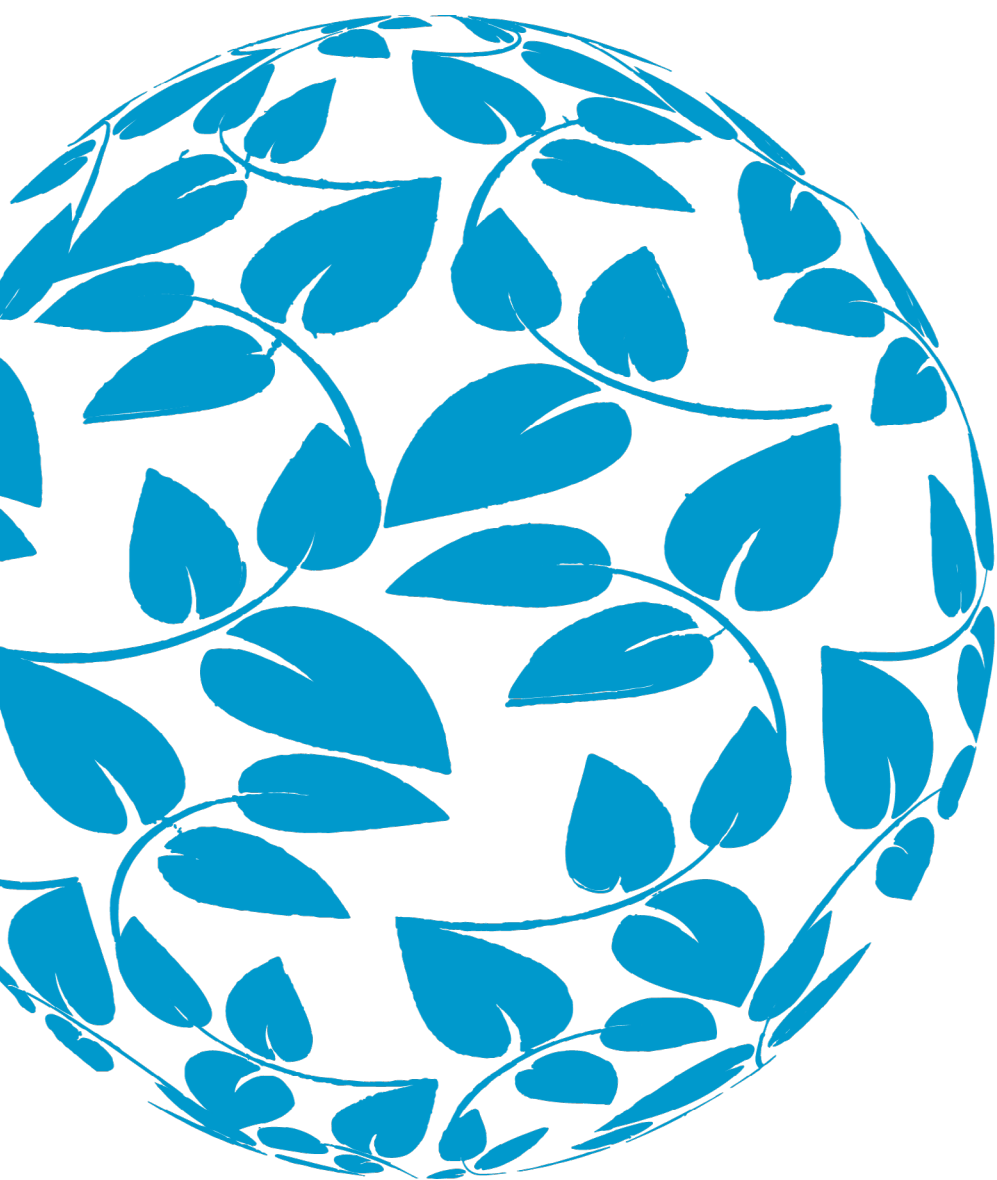
[@CataloniaPD](https://twitter.com/CataloniaPD)



[@Catalonia_Diplocat](https://www.instagram.com/Catalonia_Diplocat)

Contents

1. Presentation	4
Why this debate?	
The role of substate organisations in the fight against climate change	
2. The Paris Agreement: scope and future challenges	5
Geopolitical and legal context	
Key principles and aspects of the agreement	
Summary of the main points of the Paris Agreement	
3. What actions can we take?	8
Unprecedented opportunity to increase climate ambition	
The role of companies in the face of climate change	
How can we materialise optimism in Catalonia?	
The necessary transformation of commitments into climate action	
4. Conclusions	10
Annex. Participants	12
The member entities of the consortium	14



1. Presentation

2020 marks five years since two of the key elements in the fight against the climate emergency and towards sustainability were approved: the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda. However, this anniversary has been marked mainly by the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic is a historic global health emergency with devastating social, economic and political consequences and also has a direct effect on the health of our planet. Governments around the world are being forced to respond to this and other current global crises and challenges.

In this sense, [DIPLOCAT](#) and the [Advisory Council for Sustainable Development \(CADS\)](#) have organised this event online to commemorate the five years of the signing of the Paris Agreement and discuss where Catalonia is in relation to the fight against the climate emergency and how we can approach the future. The event was led by Miquel Royo, Director General of Global Affairs of the Department of Foreign Action, Institutional Relations and Transparency, and was attended by international experts in the field, institutional representatives and civil society.

Why this debate?

Laura Foraster, Secretary General of DIPLOCAT

With the motto “International dialogue: connect, project, empower”, DIPLOCAT works to build bridges between Catalonia and the rest of the world, facilitating the exchange of ideas, people and projects. In this framework, DIPLOCAT encourages the participation of Catalan institutions and civil society in major global debates.

This event is intended as a meeting point to discuss climate change and delve into the contents, scope and challenges posed by the Paris Agreement, in an exchange between international experts and civil society. This happens at a very opportune time, just five years after the signing of the Paris Agreement and when the change in the administration of the United States will presumably lead to the return of this country to the agreements reached in the French capital. In addition, major powers such as China, Japan and South Korea are strengthening and increasing their ambition in their carbon neutrality commitments. Thus, this is a good time to debate about climate action and reflect on the future we want to achieve together and what role we want Catalonia to play.

The role of substate organisations in the fight against climate change

Marta Subirà, Secretary of the Environment and Sustainability of the Government of Catalonia

This year we are more aware than ever of the global challenges we face as a society. We are experiencing a climate crisis, loss of biodiversity, a pandemic and a global migration crisis that all have a strong impact on the local level.

The Paris Agreement has marked a historic turning point in global climate action. In Catalonia, accession to the Paris Agreement meant a new commitment by the government in the fight against climate change and a further step in the desire to create greater prosperity for all, protect the natural environment and limit the increase in global average temperature below 1.5°C. For this reason, Catalonia was a pioneer

with the approval of the first climate change law by a non-state government, a law with a high degree of ambition and very clear objectives, such as providing us with a 100% renewable, denuclearised and decarbonised energy model for 2050, recover ecosystems and halt biodiversity loss, and move towards a circular emission-neutral economy.

On the other hand, it is necessary to point out the role in the negotiations of the treaties on climate change of the sub-state actors as a body of growing importance and prominence in the international sphere. Since 2003, a Catalan delegation has attended the United Nations climate summits without interruption. During these years, the delegation has incorporated into the negotiating texts aspects such as the introduction of the concept of “subnations”, known as the “Catalan amendment”. This has led to some states in the United States being able to actively join the negotiations. Catalonia was also a pioneer in the presentation of emission reduction commitments and the publication of environmental data in an approved format. In addition, during these years, the Catalan delegation has promoted and encouraged the creation of alliances between different actors around the world. For all these reasons, today we can consider Catalonia as a leading global climate player, associated with the principles set out in the Paris Agreement.

2. The Paris Agreement: scope and future challenges

Josep Garí, United Nations Political Adviser in the field of sustainable development

Now that five years have passed since the signing of the Paris Agreement it is a good time to reflect on this treaty. By itself, it stands as the most important and transformative international agreement of this 21st century, given its universality and the extensive implications and transformations that derive from it.

Geopolitical and legal context

Since the last century, scientists have warned that the continued emission of greenhouse gases from the burning of fossil fuels and the degradation of ecosystems would lead to an increase in global average temperature. In 1992, during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the international community agreed on three international conventions to address environmental issues, including the creation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which is responsible for stipulating and providing general guidelines for addressing climate change issues. The elaboration, negotiation and adoption of a set of agreements and protocols that define the objectives, obligations of the parties and the mechanisms for their application and evaluation depend on this agreement.

The first agreement on climate change in the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was the Kyoto Protocol. It proposed measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the most developed nations, which have historically contributed most to climate change. However, as the protocol was implemented, the problem grew and the measures contained in it were not sufficient to curb climate change. This highlighted the need for a more ambitious and innovative agreement, which would commit all countries and sectors of the world, taking into account the differentiated responsibility of the parties, and which would encourage a real change in the direction of the economic model, energy and territorial towards more environmental and social sustainability.

In 2015, after years of arduous negotiations, the Paris Agreement was reached, the fifth anniversary of which we are now commemorating. The Paris Agreement intertwines and shakes up key domains of our social and economic life. It is a very unique international political and legal instrument, which anticipates the system of governance of international relations in this century, and can be considered as the founding treaty of sustainable development.

Key principles and aspects of the agreement

The main feature of the Paris Agreement is that it is a universal agreement. Compared to the Kyoto Protocol, which involved the most developed countries, the Paris Agreement calls for universal commitment and action, with differentiated responsibilities. This ensures that countries commit based on their historical responsibility for carbon emissions and on their capacity for action. This universality also serves to challenge agents beyond states, such as jurisdictions (subnational agents, municipalities, etc.) and companies. With this, it is possible to join the institutional, social and economic efforts and, therefore, undertaking collective action.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the agreement provides that each of the parties involved must make public and assessable commitments to reduce emissions. Unlike most international treaties of the twentieth century, the agreement does not provide for mechanisms of legal coercion in fulfilling these commitments. Rather, there are criteria in accounting, transparency and independent and rigorous technical assessment mechanisms.

Finally, it should be noted that by not contemplating specified obligations, the Paris Agreement is based on the commitment and commonwealth of political and social forces to generate a movement of transformation mainly in the areas of the energy and territorial sector. As such, the consensus of the signatory and ratifying parties (189 at present) of the agreement is reached and the foundations are laid for what appears to be international relations and interaction between nations during the 21st century.

Summary of the main points of the Paris Agreement

The following are the most relevant aspects of the text of the agreement.

○ Preamble and Article 1

Although the preamble is the legally weakest part of the agreement, it develops the key principles and aspects of the agreement and manages to convey a common vision shared by the different signatory parties. Here we can highlight, first of all, the fact that it clarifies the concept of differentiated shared responsibility and blurs the idea of developed countries and developing countries, since in a certain way all countries are developing towards sustainability. Secondly, human rights (rights of indigenous peoples, food security, equality between men and women, etc.) are mentioned, presenting them as an element that cuts across the whole agreement. Finally, concepts such as “climate justice” and “Mother Earth” are incorporated, which until now were not part of the language of environmental treaties.

○ Article 2

This article presents the objectives of the treaty. First, ambition to mitigate climate change needs to be increased and this needs to be periodically revised upwards. In addition, countries should strive to ensure that the global average temperature does not increase by more than 2°C and, ideally, limit it to no more than 1.5°C. Equally, human societies must cooperate to adapt to climate

change by addressing those most affected by its consequences. Finally, there must be a substantial turnaround in financial flows, to turn finance into a clear driver for sustainability.

Articles 3 and 4

These articles constitute the political heart of the agreement. These are the national public commitments on climate action. All countries must make public, quantifiable and assessable commitments (both by themselves and by independent international institutions), which must be reviewed every five years to increase ambition. Carbon is being consolidated as a new unit of measurement for international relations, progress and transformation at different levels (country, substate, company, etc.).

Article 5

This article focuses on land management, with special reference to the situation of deforestation of tropical forests. A financial mechanism is being consolidated that provides incentives and compensation to countries that have reduced their level of deforestation in a publicly demonstrable way.

Article 6

This article is crucial because it consolidates accounting and carbon markets, which are one of the essential mechanisms for stakeholders to achieve their emissions reduction commitments through market mechanisms. It is a system of transfer and transaction of credits and efforts that serves to accompany the parties within a logic of structural and strategic change. Thus, for example, countries that cannot meet their targets can compensate for this lag by funding another nation's reduction success. In addition, other systems are recognised, such as green bonds or carbon rates, that can help meet emission reduction targets. The regulations are still in the negotiation phase due to the difficulty of developing a robust and credible accounting and transparency system.

Article 7

This article vindicates the importance of adaptation to climate change. The focus is especially on the countries most vulnerable to the risks associated with climate change and the importance of technical and financial cooperation for their adaptation is emphasised.

Article 8

This article allows for political and financial assistance to compensate for irreversible impacts. They develop what are known as losses and damages, that is, the compensation of irreparable damage caused by the effects of climate change.

Articles 9 to 12

This set of articles lay the foundations for the traditional mechanisms of international cooperation (finance, public cooperation, etc.), while also establishing the creation of an international fund of \$100,000,000 for cooperation between countries in the face of climate change and the implementation of climate policies.

Articles 13 and 14

These articles establish the criteria and requirements for carbon accounting and the mechanisms for transparency, adjustment and rigorous assessment.

Articles 15 to 19

These articles refer to the United Nations Framework Convention and the institutional framework for implementation.

Articles 20 and 21

These articles constitute the legal framework of the agreement.

In short, we can conclude that the Paris Agreement is the most important and transformative international treaty of the 21st century. It constitutes the political, legal and financial framework to accompany the transition to sustainability and carbon neutrality. The concept of differentiated global responsibility is used to achieve a comprehensive universal support agreement and takes carbon as a new unit of global measurement and indicator of transition to sustainability of the different parties involved. The Paris Agreement can be seen as the founding agreement of the 21st century, as a century in which humanity will make a pact with nature.

3. What actions can we take?

After the presentation, a round table was held with different experts and members of civil society, who reflected on the impact and changes of the last five years.

Unprecedented opportunity to increase climate ambition

Pep Canadell, Executive Director of the Global Carbon Project

During 2020, there has been a reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions of around 7%, according to the Global Carbon Budget. This annual study is a measure of human footprint in the climate system, as it conducts a global assessment of carbon emissions of both man-made and natural origin.

This reduction in emissions is a direct consequence of the decline in economic activity and the change in habits caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, it shows a decline unprecedented in the last 200 years, five times higher, for example, than that caused by the 2008 financial crisis. Then, emissions recovered quickly due to the lack of structural changes in the energy-production system.

Given this, this moment is an opportunity to increase the unprecedented climate ambition in the last 25 years of negotiations for several aspects:

1. In the last ten years, greenhouse gas emissions have begun to stabilise and there has been a reduction in the growth rate to virtually zero in 2019.
2. There is an unprecedented increase in the political will to tackle climate change. Thus, the major emitters of greenhouse gases, countries responsible for 60% of total carbon emissions, have committed to achieving neutrality of emissions between 2050 and 2060.

3. After 200 years, coal is no longer “king”. Emissions from coal burning peaked in 2013 and have declined rapidly since then.
4. It is currently setting a historic record in the level of investment to stimulate the economy and is therefore a unique opportunity to accelerate investment in green technologies and services to decarbonise the economy.

The role of companies in the face of climate change

Alba Cabañas, CADS advisor

In 2003, the European Parliament's directive establishing a regime for the trading of greenhouse gas emission allowances was approved. This directive focused on industrial facilities in the energy sector, ferrous metals and cement, among others. However, it left out others such as the chemical or waste incineration sector. The debate on how the climate issue should be addressed was mostly focused in terms of energy policy of some industrial sectors. In Catalonia and Spain, with a static energy system and little room for manoeuvre, this generated resistance to make progress. Thus, policies to stop climate change were not then understood as an engine of innovation but as a policy of command and control, perceived as an increase in absolute cost.

However, this view has changed a lot in recent years. Today we cannot imagine any sector that thinks it is excluded from climate policy and debate. In this regard, sectors such as finance and insurance are playing a very significant role in the business transition. Another phenomenon that illustrates this change of perspective is the approval a year ago of the *European Green New Deal*, which raises to the highest level the environmental and climate policies that until now were mainly sectoral policies.

Finally, in the current context of unprecedented economic crisis, an opportunity is opening up to face the two crises, the climate challenge and the economic challenge, in parallel, thus changing the vision that until now we saw from the major economic players on how these issues should be addressed.

How can we materialise optimism in Catalonia?

Marta Torres, senior researcher in climate and energy at IDDRI and member of the climate change committee of the Parliament of Catalonia

With the approval of the Climate Change Law in 2017, Catalonia became a world leader in climate policy. This included new aspects such as carbon neutrality for 2050. Today, five years after the signing of the Paris Agreement, a common vision for building an emissions-free society is beginning to emerge, and in recent years many of the signatory countries have followed the climate science to this point.

These clear commitments and broad lines now need to be translated into determined and coherent climate action with these goals. For this reason, a roadmap is needed that is the result of the debate between different sectors and agents of the territory, which includes a high level of coherence, coordination and alliance. It is necessary to understand the changes that are needed in the short and medium term and to know which part corresponds to each of the agents involved. Additionally, it is important to identify and anticipate possible conflicts that may arise, with special care for the most vulnerable groups.

Finally, once this action plan has been defined to achieve carbon neutrality, it is necessary to identify

external needs. The transformation needed to limit the increase in the global average temperature to no more than 1.5°C cannot be achieved in isolation, and therefore the international cooperation needed globally will be crucial in complying with the Paris Agreement.

The necessary transformation of commitments into climate action

Lucas Barrero, biologist, environmentalist and eco-social activist

Since the adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015, the debate on environmental and climate issues has extended and become normalised. However, one can make the mistake of falling into exaggerated optimism. This forces us to look back and analyse what has happened in terms of climate action in recent years.

On the one hand, greenhouse gas emissions have continued to increase and only a substantial decrease in global emissions has been achieved as a result of the economic shutdown caused by the pandemic. In addition, in the successive negotiations and climate summits after 2015, it has not yet been possible to develop the small print (rule book) of the Paris Agreement. In our country, the picture is not much better. While the law on climate change was a pioneering one, today many of the instruments and measures contained in it, such as the Social Climate Change Table or carbon budgets, have not begun to be implemented. All this makes it a bit incongruous when some sectors speak of a climate emergency when we see more and more delay.

In the current era of health, social and climate crisis, we need to understand the magnitude of the challenge of social transformation that we face. This understanding must be transformed into action built in a coordinated way and in dialogue between the different sectors (scientific, political, business, etc.) and civil society. In this sense, instruments such as the Social Table on Climate Change, contemplated in Catalan law, or citizen assemblies on climate change, can play a very important role.

4. Conclusions

This year has been marked mainly by the global health emergency caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. This year we are more aware than ever of the global challenges we face as a society. In this context, the Paris Agreement stands as the basis for the transition to more sustainable societies, as a guarantee to address the climate emergency and other crises that affect us today.

Now that five years have passed since the signing of the agreement, the first results are beginning to be seen, pointing to moderate optimism. In recent years, greenhouse gas emissions have begun to stabilise and there has been a reduction in the growth rate to virtually zero in 2019. In addition, there is a clear political will to tackle climate change. In this regard, Catalonia, as a substate level of government that participates in the negotiations around climate change, was a pioneer with the approval of a climate change law and the commitment to reach carbon neutrality in 2050. Thus, we can consider Catalonia a global reference player in climate action.

However, despite this moderate optimism, the idea that much remains to be done predominates. The Paris Agreement stands as the most important and transformative international agreement of this 21st century. Its universality and the extensive implications and transformations that derive from it. All this is based on the commitment and commonwealth of political and social forces. However, this

shared will must be reflected in an increase in ambition and in the translation of the commitments made into climate action. For this, we will need a close collaboration between the different parties and agents involved (countries, sub-state entities, companies, civil society, etc), to accompany, in short, the transition to a more just, equitable and resilient.

Annex. Participants

> JOSEP ANTONI GARÍ

He studied Biology and Philosophy at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. In 1995 he received a scholarship from La Caixa which allowed him to pursue a doctorate in Political Ecology at Oxford University. Since 2000 he has been working at the United Nations, promoting sustainable development through international cooperation and diplomacy. During the negotiation of the Paris Agreement he advised African diplomats and delegations, as he was then head of service in Africa and resided in Nairobi. He is currently a senior political adviser to the UN on matters of forests, climate and sustainable territories in Geneva.

> JOSEP CANADELL

He is an Earth science scientist specialising in climate change and global greenhouse gas budgets. He develops science to support international negotiations on the decarbonisation of the global economy.

> MARTA TORRES

She has more than 15 years of experience as an international climate policy analyst. She has been very involved in recent years in pursuing long-term scenarios for sustainable development in cooperation with various governments of the global South. She currently works at the IDDRI think tank, co-head of the Deep Decarbonisation Pathways Programme (DDPinitiative.org). She was responsible for the mitigation department of the Catalan Office of Climate Change of the Government of Catalonia between 2010-11 and is a Member of the Committee of Experts on Climate Change of the Parliament of Catalonia.

> ALBA CAÑADAS

Degree in Economics and Business Sciences from the University of Barcelona. Master's degree in environmental studies from the Autonomous University of Barcelona. She has pursued her professional career in the field of environmental sustainability and business. She advises on sustainability strategies for different institutions, including the 2030 Agenda in the Carmina Roca Chair and Rafael Pich-Aguilera for Women and Leadership, at IESE Business School. She was responsible for Sustainable Development, Energy and the 2030 Agenda for Foment del Treball, an organisation of which she was also technical director. As a business representative, she has been a member of the board of directors of the Catalan Water Agency, the board of directors of the Waste Agency of Catalonia, and the Environmental Quality Council of the Department of Territory and Sustainability, and vice president of the Labour, Economic and Social Council.

> LUCAS BARRERO

He is an environmentalist, biologist and eco-social activist. He is currently studying a master's degree in Agroecology. He was one of the promoters of Fridays for Future in Spain and has published the essay "El mundo que nos dejáis" (Ed. Destino, 2019).

The member entities of the consortium

» Public institutions and municipal entities

- Government of Catalonia
- Barcelona City Council
- Tarragona City Council
- Girona City Council
- Lleida City Council
- Vielha e Mijaran City Council
- Barcelona Provincial Council
- Tarragona Provincial Council
- Girona Provincial Council
- Lleida Provincial Council
- Conselh Generau d'Aran
- Catalan Association of Municipalities and Counties
- Federation of Municipalities of Catalonia

» Entities of the business sector

- General Council of the Official Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Navigation of Catalonia
- Entrepreneurs association Foment del Treball Nacional
- Association of Micro-, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises of Catalonia (PIMEC)
- Confederation of Cooperatives of Catalonia
- Multi-Sector Business Association (AMEC)
- Private Foundation of Entrepreneurs (FemCAT)

» Entities of the social, trade union and sports sector

- The Group of Entities of the Voluntary Sector of Catalonia
- Trade union Unió General de Treballadors de Catalunya (UGT)
- Trade union Comissions Obreres de Catalunya (CCOO)
- Football Club Barcelona

» Universities, business schools and academic institutions

- University of Barcelona (UB)
- Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB)
- Technical University of Catalonia (UPC)
- Pompeu Fabra University (UPF)
- University of Lleida (UdL)
- University of Girona (UdG)
- Rovira i Virgili University (URV)
- Ramon Llull University (URL)
- Open University of Catalonia (UOC)
- University of Vic - Central University of Catalonia (UVic-UCC)
- International University of Catalonia (UIC)
- Abat Oliba CEU University (UAO CEU)
- Barcelona Institute of International Studies (IBEI)
- EADA Business School
- Barcelona Graduate School of Economics (Barcelona GSE)