

# Forest bathing establishment and dynamisation in the Biosphere Reserve of Urdaibai, Spain

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## Organisations involved

Union of Foresters of Southern Europe (USSE), Association of Relatives and Persons with Mental Illness from Bizkaia (AVIFES), Forest Owners Association from Bizkaia, Urremendi Rural Development Association, Basque Country Government (Eusko Jauriaritza-Gobierno Vasco), European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and Shinrin-Yoku Barcelona.

## Aim

To implement forest therapy as a healing activity and to offer forest bathing for human health and well-being promotion.

## Target group

The project in its first stage is focused on people with mental illnesses. At the end, the forest bathing path will be opened to the public.

## What happens

From the first week of July until the end of October 2018, three controlled groups of participants with mental illnesses, limited to 10 people in each group, were taken to a natural path (part of the pilgrims way Camino de Santiago) in the Biosphere Reserve of Urdaibai (Northern Spain) once a week for two hours with a trained forest bathing guide. These interventions are free of charge for all users. AVIFES is carrying out forest therapy users' evaluation: physical measurements before and after each session (oxygen saturation, blood pressure and heart rate) are taken and, for the psychological purpose, they are using a quality of life model for people with intellectual disabilities, adapted by AVIFES for people with mental illnesses. This model analyses different factors that serve as indicators to evaluate quality of life. These factors are analysed for each user after each intervention. Once the project is over, information boards will be installed and the site will become a public forest bathing location. Forest owners of the land where the path runs have received 500 € each for a three-month use of their land. All costs in the project were met by the Basque Country Government and EAFRD funds.

## Results of the programme/project/intervention

Physical measurements are showing that there is a general trend towards an increase in oxygen saturation, a decrease in blood pressure and a decrease in heart rate after forest bathing. The first results of the psychological evaluation also described positive trends (overcoming barriers such as panic to physical contact, refusal to socialise, refusal to participate in group activities, refusal to leave home).

In addition, the project will offer a signposted nature path for health promotion for all people interested, especially for people from Bilbao and its surrounding areas.

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## Reference

“El Correo” newspaper, cover page on 2018 July 29th. Digital version including a video report: [www.elcorreo.com/bizkaia/bosque-cura-mente-20180729230504-nt.html](http://www.elcorreo.com/bizkaia/bosque-cura-mente-20180729230504-nt.html)

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## Website

[www.basoan.net](http://www.basoan.net)

[www.usse-eu.org/en/proyectos](http://www.usse-eu.org/en/proyectos)

[www.youtube.com/channel/UCrP-b--1iem7dQaKNBl67hg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrP-b--1iem7dQaKNBl67hg)

