

Progress summary “Landcare Europe” (April 2022)

Improving guidance and knowledge sharing between land managers, conservationists and local communities to preserve cultural heritage landscapes under and outside Natura 2000

In 2021, the German Landcare organisation [DVL](#) received funding from the European Commission for a 2-year pilot project for establishing a Landcare network at EU level in cooperation with 7 European partners, with which DVL has been collaborating over years: [Agri-Cultura-Natura Transylvaniae](#) Association (Romania); [Baltic Environmental Forum](#) (Lithuania); [BoerenNatuur](#) (Netherlands); [Fédération Conservatoires d’Espaces Naturels](#) (FCEN, France); [Legambiente Lombardia](#) (Italy); [SICONA-Sud-Ouest](#) Syndicate for Nature Conservation (Luxembourg) and [Trashumancia y Naturaleza](#) (Spain).

The project entitled “Improving guidance and knowledge sharing between land managers, conservationists and local communities to preserve cultural heritage landscapes under and outside Natura 2000” aims to define key factors for successful cooperative nature conservation and share best practices geared towards better implementation of EU environmental targets, in particular implementation of Natura 2000 within an agricultural context. Through a workshop series in 4 different countries the network partners will exchange expertise and knowledge on working areas they identified as core activities in their work programme for the 2-year project:

1. Local & suburban food production in & outside Natura 2000 areas – direct marketing from farm to fork
2. Innovative approaches for species & habitat restoration in & outside Natura 2000 areas – fostering good-practice-based payment schemes
3. Human-wildlife co-existence – managing large carnivores in rural grassland farming in & outside Natura 2000 areas
4. Improving water management, biodiversity, ecosystem services & yield in intensively farmed systems & agroforests in & outside Natura 2000 areas

Each working area will also allow discussions on additional topics that Landcare organisations are involved in, such as: supporting rural sustainable agritourism, raising awareness about the socio-economic benefits of natural and cultural heritage sites linked to agriculture, promoting new income sources for land users and helping farmers in the application of agri-environmental measures supported by the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

These topics are the focus of the network’s communication, networking and outreach strategy and will give rise to a publication summarising best practices and guidelines of Landcare in Europe.

In addition to the workshops, which are organised between April 2022 and March 2023 in 4 of the partner countries the network elaborated the concept of Landcare Europe with a definition, vision and mission, its objectives as well as ways of operating based on the results of a preceding online survey of all partners and some of their network. The survey collected information on organisational structure, objectives, location, number of projects, types of actions/measures, funding sources, number and types of stakeholders they work with as well as the agri-environmental measures they help implementing, achieved results but also challenges Landcare organisations are facing in the different countries.

Moreover, research on 22 networks, initiatives and organisations in conservation, farming and rural development collected information on their vision, target groups, technical focus (e.g. CAP or Natura 2000), status, scale of activities, members and potential interest points for networking. The conclusions from this comparison study summarise the unique selling point of Landcare Europe and what makes the LE network different from other existing organisations and networks: Landcare brings together a diversity of stakeholders by working in a cooperative approach and is therefore the missing link between agriculture and nature conservation. Information from the online survey and comparison study also fed into a study on future funding options for the network after its 2-year pilot phase.

After an intensive identification and definition period in online sessions the partner organisations now look forward to in-person exchanges in the workshop countries (Italy, Lithuania, Romania and Spain), learning from each other and other participants as well as expanding the network and the Landcare approach to more European countries. The results of their exchanges will be documented on the Landcare Europe website (coming soon) and in a final publication and presented in late spring 2023 in Brussels to a wider audience, including EU institutions and other organisations.