

CARING TOGETHER FOR NATURE

Land stewardship as a tool to promote social involvement with the natural environment in Europe



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LANDLIFE PARTNERS:



ÍNDEX

4	PRESENTATIONS By European Commission By LandLife partners
7	EVERYBODY MATTERS: NATURE CONSERVATION THROUGH SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT Stakeholders involved Benefits to nature and people
11	HOW DOES LAND STEWARDSHIP WORK? Land stewardship organisations Voluntary agreements as the keystone First, motivate; after, negotiate and agree; and then, monitor
23	NATURE NEEDS YOU: ENGAGING CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES IN LAND STEWARDSHIP Citizens: connecting with nature Businesses: biodiversity as part of corporate social responsibility
29	OPPORTUNITIES FOR LAND STEWARDSHIP IN EUROPE Land stewardship in Europe: different contexts and approaches A tool to implement Natura 2000 network and the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 Connections with the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Other European policies and legal instruments that fit with land stewardship EU funding opportunities for land stewardship Recommendations to consider by stakeholders wanting to implement land stewardship
43	AVAILABLE RESOURCES References LandLife tools

PRESENTATION BY EUROPEAN COMMISSION

There are many factors contributing to continuing biodiversity loss at a global level and around Europe: significant factors can include an increase in pressure on natural systems, effects of climate change, the intensification of production systems, and the abandonment of traditional agricultural production.

The need to address such issues and strengthen the European approach for nature and biodiversity conservation has led to the creation of a groundbreaking framework of legislative and financial instruments: namely, the Habitats, Birds, and Water Framework Directives, in addition to the LIFE + Programme. These instruments are integral components of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, adopted in 2011. The Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 sets ambitious targets for biodiversity in Europe, to halt its loss, prevent degradation of ecosystems and restore them as best as possible.

Based on experience, to achieve the targets and ensure successful implementation of European policies, it is necessary to develop strategies and implementation methods that generate strong involvement of local stakeholders and land users. Methods that take into account local land uses and socio-economic contexts are particularly valuable. Land stewardship is a good example of a practical tool for nature and biodiversity conservation that

involves landowners and users (farmers, foresters, shepherds, hunters, fishers, etc.) through voluntary agreements with land stewardship organisations.

Land stewardship has enormous potential to contribute to the implementation and realisation of the objectives of the Birds and Habitats Directives across the European Union, as well as management of Natura 2000 sites and the wider European countryside. As an approach, it provides effective means to engage local stakeholders in the direct implementation of core nature conservation policies, also integrated with other policy priorities in areas such as agriculture, rural development and social cohesion. As reflected in this publication, land stewardship offers valuable opportunities for the application of an integrated approach in implementation of European policies directly, 'on the ground'.

We hope this publication – the first hands-on publication on land stewardship in Europe – will help foster greater understanding about land stewardship, as well as the value and importance of exchanging experiences and good practices to increase stakeholder awareness and involvement around Europe, and globally.



ANGELO SALSI
HEAD OF UNIT, LIFE NATURE, DG ENVIRONMENT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PARTNERS FOREWORD

Land stewardship promotes the idea that nature and biodiversity conservation is compatible with human activity, encouraging the involvement of people who work in and know their surrounding landscape. At the core of land stewardship lies the principle of co-responsibility in the management of natural resources. To describe the essence of land stewardship, we have to use words like *caring, respect, sharing, managing resources, responsibility, confidence, engagement, involvement*.

It is precisely these values and principles that make land stewardship an innovative and useful strategy to help manage and conserve the land through the involvement of stakeholders. Together, there is a valuable contribution to be made to strengthen implementation of European Union policies related to nature conservation, including key objectives to halt biodiversity loss and secure the common interest of all Europeans to share a healthy environment.

Land stewardship in Europe is embedded in a wide diversity of contexts and realities. This manual aims to show this variety by presenting a wide range of case studies, which reflect the different approaches that have developed in Europe and the rich mechanisms, which are adapted to respond to local and regional contexts.

This publication provides recommendations and ideas to start land stewardship agreements, or to improve existing ones from both technical and legal perspectives. In this sense, the manual is intended for a wide range of readers, from land owners, land users, public and private organisations and the general public (citizens), willing to implement the values promoted by land stewardship. The involvement of all sectors is key to ensure the success of this nature and biodiversity conservation initiative.

This document is not only the result of the LandLife partners' experience, but also the experience of many organisations and professionals who are working with land stewardship in Europe. The manual would not have been possible without the collaboration of many experts and organisations that have contributed towards its development. This publication reflects the enthusiasm and efforts of all those who, in different countries and contexts, work daily to promote and ensure a responsible use of the land and its natural resources.



LANDLIFE PARTNERS



“It’s a question of discipline”, the Little Prince told me later on.
“When you’ve finished washing and dressing each morning, you must tend your planet”.

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, 1943

EVERYBODY MATTERS: NATURE CONSERVATION THROUGH SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT

Land stewardship is a strategy that involves landowners and users in the conservation of nature and landscape, with support and inputs from a wide range of civil society groups. Through voluntary agreements between land owners/users and land stewardship organisations, nature, biodiversity, ecological integrity and landscape values will be maintained and restored. Today, land stewardship is used in most continents of the world as a nature and biodiversity management and conservation tool.

The stewardship approach offers a means of extending conservation practices beyond the boundaries of conventional protected areas led by governments and other institutions, to address needs on the “land in between”. Stewardship is an especially helpful concept in the many instances where sustainable management – rather than absolute protection or preservation – of natural resources is the objective. Although stewardship tools may be employed to preclude use of specific areas, they more often are used to restrict certain uses (conventional or intensive agricultural,

forestry or hunting practices, for example) or to maintain or restore others (extensive agriculture, use of ecologically sensitive lands, quality habitat). A stewardship approach is often implemented where a wilderness preservation approach may not be suitable.

When used with respect to natural resources, the term *stewardship* means – in its broadest sense – people taking care of the earth. The concept encompasses a range of private and public/private approaches to create, nurture and enable *responsibility* in users and owners to manage and protect land and natural resources.

In Europe, land stewardship can be more widely used as a practical tool to implement biodiversity conservation, to complement and reflect the priorities of many different policies and legal instruments. It can help to create opportunities for nature conservation in individual Member States as well as regions, and also contribute to biodiversity conservation across Europe by directly involving people.

STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED

One of the strengths of the stewardship approach is that anyone can participate in some way. Four main kinds of people and organisations are typically involved in land stewardship and can be characterised with reference to their primary role or functions. All of these stakeholders enter into partnerships, relying on trust and transparency.

ACTORS

Those owners and users that voluntarily take an action (including, in some cases, agreeing not to take deleterious action) to protect or restore nature. These include landowners, farmers, fishermen, foresters, hunters, and other resources owners and users.

FACILITATORS

Land stewardship organisations (or land trusts) that enter into stewardship agreements with actors, monitor compliance and distribute benefits (see page 12).

ENABLERS

They create the conditions for the first two groups to cooperate. These include government administration (local, regional, state and EU), donors, other NGOs, and funders. Universities and other research centres can be considered enablers, too.

PUBLIC

The general public who receive the direct (stewardship products and services) and indirect benefits of land stewardship and provide public support for it.

All of these categories can reach high levels of organisation. Owners at the individual level are often organised into groups (farm *bureaus*, wood producers, landowner associations, etc.). Stewardship organisations in some regions already work together through umbrella organisations (e.g., XCT in Catalonia) to provide guidance, technical assistance, coordination, lobby for policy change, and education of the public.

BENEFITS TO NATURE AND PEOPLE

BENEFITS TO NATURE

Many stewardship initiatives conserve biodiversity through protection of habitats. This is perhaps the most straightforward objective of many stewardship agreements, and a prime driver for protection under many of the European directives detailed later in this publication.

Similarly, stewardship can protect open space and fragile natural areas in the face of development pressures, especially in areas where planning controls are weak. In this case, stewardship acts as a voluntary mechanism in unison with regulatory tools. Through responsible farming, in the long term, it can improve the quality of soil and underground water, and also ensure local food production.

Many species are dependent on traditional land uses. Sustaining these uses, such as high nature value farming and small-scale forestry, is often a focus of land stewardship organisations because they recognise their importance for its ecological, economic and scenic values.

BENEFITS TO PEOPLE

Those landowners and land users engaging within land stewardship receive at first some intangible, but deeply rewarding benefits, such as social acknowledgement, learning or personal satisfaction. There are also material benefits, including free-of-cost conservation actions or economic benefits. The most obvious are subsidies, incentives, exemptions or other compensation for taking certain actions. These kinds of rewards are sustainable as long as there are existing funds to continually support them.

Stewardship can also generate economic benefit through the use of market approaches, encouraging people to buy locally from producers, or to visit their land as ecotourists. Stewardship can, therefore, be part of the new social green economy.

Land stewardship initiatives also offer a lot of benefits to the wider public, in terms of health, educational and ethical benefits for those who come closer to nature.

TAKING CARE OF THE BLACK FOREST IN SCHILTACH

The Landcare Association Central Black Forest (LACBF) is committed to preserve the cultural landscape of the Black Forest in the southwest of Germany. Due to traditional land use, this region reflects a mosaic of forests, pastures and grassland. The LACBF organises pasture management to keep the grasslands open, supports regional products and offers educational training to raise awareness about the very specific countryside in the Black Forest.

The LACBF seeks to cooperate with municipalities and landowners to maintain the landscape with open spaces, through the management of pastures. It also promotes marketing regional products (such as fruit juice from orchards) with added value for nature and economy.

In addition, the LACBF organises public events to explain the link between pastures, forests, grasslands, biodiversity and ecosystem services, educating and involving school children and also providing informative excursions for local politicians and decision makers.

More information: www.lpv.de

Figure 1. Land stewardship stakeholder model



Source: xct





HOW DOES LAND STEWARDSHIP WORK?

Land stewardship draws on an array of tools to conserve landscape and cultural values of areas withheld from strict protection for economic or political reasons, or where the objective is to maintain land uses, which are beneficial for nature. Methods generally focus on encouraging landowners – individuals and families as well as businesses, municipalities and other organisations –, and users – farmers, hunters, fishers –, to manage areas and protect or enhance these values, or to allow others to manage the biodiversity and natural heritage.

Land stewardship takes a holistic landscape view, addressing conservation needs on land that cannot be separated from its human and economic contexts. This approach can address, often compatible objectives of biodiversity conservation, rural economic development and maintaining individual and community connections to the land.

In this publication, we speak in terms of *land* stewardship, but we could also speak of *marine*, *river*, or *urban* stewardship, to name but a few. In most instances, land stewardship is applied in cases where there is “simple ownership” (full ownership by a single person or entity) and clear title to land. However, stewardship principles can be applied to common property resources, like rivers and lakes, locally or community owned mountain and forests, and including the marine environment.

This chapter presents the basis of the application of stewardship, as well as the tools that land stewardship organisations use to implement voluntary agreements with landowners and other stakeholders. Furthermore, the steps that encompass the negotiation, signing and long term follow-up of a stewardship agreement are also discussed.

LAND STEWARDSHIP ORGANISATIONS

Land stewardship organisations (land trusts in Common Law countries), together with landowners and managers, are an essential element in any process of land stewardship. These organisations are a growing force in land protection in Europe. In part, this is due to the fact that they can take multiple forms and because organisations can range from major foundations to small nature conservation groups, or associations of schools or volunteers, municipalities or county or regional administrations — the common feature though is that one of their goals is land conservation and they use land stewardship tools. Therefore, even though each form of group may have its own way of working, they all share some common interests.

Stewardship organisations should be prepared to use different mechanisms and work in partnership with many different actors to meet biodiversity and heritage protection goals. To do so, a land stewardship organisation must count on a well-prepared and trained professional or volunteer team, with good knowledge on nature and heritage features and their management,

and also on the territories where the organisation is settled. Of course, the stewardship organisation may not have expertise in all areas, but may be able to find the most reliable scientific information on best practices and help landowners initiate land stewardship activities.

DIFFERENT STRUCTURES AND WORKING SCALES

Depending on its governance structures, an organisation must have the support of a directing board, members, advisers, citizens, institutions, landowner and farming organisations, sponsors and patrons providing the necessary resources and skills for the proper functioning of the organisation.

Of course, the professional or volunteer profile, as well as other functioning aspects will depend on the scale of the organisation. Many organisations may start small and build up as needed in the future, updating knowledge and improving skills, and others may have a long-standing record as environmental groups, and start a new stewardship programme.

CASE STUDY

XCT, THE LAND STEWARDSHIP NETWORK OF CATALONIA

The Montesquiú Conference, held in November 2000 in Catalonia, is a milestone in the particular history of land stewardship in this region and in the rest of Spain. Promoted and sponsored by Foundation Territori i Paisatge-Caixa Catalunya (today Foundation Catalunya – La Pedrera), the Conference served to present the concept of land stewardship to experts and grass-root practitioners from Catalonia and the Balearic Islands. At that time, several NGOs and private foundations were already responsible for some natural areas, with different kinds of ownership and management agreements.

The main Conference output was the Montesquiú Declaration on land stewardship, which gave birth to what is now the Catalan Land Stewardship Network (xct in Catalan), a network bringing together more than 160 associations, foundations, government institutions, town councils, companies, universities & research centres and individuals. The mission of xct is to promote land stewardship as a strategy and as a practical means to achieve the participation of society in nature conservation and management.

More information: www.xct.cat



LAIÀ JIMÉNEZ - XCT

Despite many challenges, stewardship organisations are able to work effectively because:

- 1) many landowners are open to work with a private or local stewardship organisation, instead of dealing with government agencies.
- 2) stewardship agreements can confer material advantages to landowners.
- 3) private and local organisations can generally respond quickly, flexibly and in innovative ways to threats and opportunities.

The quality and good management of organisations is key to the development of sound agreements and

initiatives and to the recognition of their work. Fulfilment of commitments contained in the agreements will lead to greater confidence in land stewardship as a tool for conservation, and therefore a greater recognition. That will help, in turn, to consolidate a suitable legal framework and tax benefits for land conservation and the preservation of valuable landscapes. Land stewardship networks in some countries (Catalonia, Czech Republic, USA, Canada, etc.) have developed standards of quality and best practices for organisations, in order to improve their performance.

Box 1.

MOST RELEVANT ACTIVITIES IN THE DAILY TASK OF ANY LAND STEWARDSHIP ORGANISATION

Contacting landowners, negotiating and reaching land stewardship agreements so they become engaged in the conservation of nature.

Giving technical and financial support to willing landowners and municipalities, normally through a stewardship agreement.

Planning, restoring and managing valuable areas, with the help of landowners, volunteers and other organisations.

Owning valuable areas or rights through purchase or donation and managing them to maximise biodiversity and other values.

Monitoring stewardship agreements, ensuring compliance and optimal nature and landscape conservation.

Raising awareness amongst the general public and other targets that could become engaged in nature conservation.

Performing studies and research to improve the management of land under stewardship agreements.

Promoting sustainable economic activity, such as agriculture, forestry, learning in nature or ecotourism.

Networking with other organisations to reach common objectives, and to gather support for lobbying activities.

Fundraising so all the activities listed above can be provided by the organisation.



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VOLUNTARY AGREEMENTS AS THE KEystone

Land stewardship is built upon a large variety of instruments. However, there is one that is particularly representative of the whole strategy of land stewardship, and this is the voluntary agreement for nature and landscape conservation.

Also known as stewardship agreements, they usually involve a landowner and a stewardship organisation. However, sometimes more than one organisation or even more than one landowner can be part of the agreement. Its exact terms and conditions are variable and negotiable between the parties involved, and is to be tailored upon the characteristics of the property and the objectives of each party. In other words, there may not be two identical stewardship agreements. Some of the common applied characteristics are as follows:

Stewardship agreements usually take the form of a written document (contract or convention), but in some cases they can also be verbal in nature, secured with a simple and sincere handshake. Their contents vary from agreement to agreement (see page 16 for an example of typical contents) and can encompass the whole property or only a part.

The duration can vary depending on the stewardship options selected, but it is recommended to establish agreements for a long period of time, over more than 10 years and even on a perpetuating basis if possible, to make sure efforts made by all parties are long lasting. Establishing an agreement can take time, a long dialogue and negotiation process (see pages 18 and 20) between the stewardship organisation and the landowner — for this reason, it makes practical sense to think about the need for long-term commitments and to encourage long standing agreements.

There are three main options for land stewardship agreements (management support, management transfer and property transfer), depending on the subsequent relationship of the landowners with their property (see figure 2). Although agreements are the main and distinctive land stewardship initiatives, they are not the only available option. Land stewardship organisations also raise awareness through education campaigns aimed at the general public, and promote volunteer actions, or acknowledgement actions to support landowner’s activities. Though these actions do not imply an agreement as such, they may help setting a collaborative framework with the landowner, and to give support to ongoing stewardship agreements.

MANAGEMENT SUPPORT AGREEMENTS

Most landowners have continuously cared for their land for long periods of time, often spanning many generations. This is the case with most farmers, foresters, and other landowners that live in or close to their property.

These landowners know how to properly manage their land, but are likely to appreciate any advice, information on natural heritage and specificities on their lands, and directions from a land stewardship organisation, especially if that means a visible improvement in the property, or an opportunity to obtain extra income. On the other hand, some organisations have knowledge but do not have enough financial assets and staff capacity to manage a property, so what they can best offer is their technical expertise to help landowners.

In this type of agreement, the landowner retains responsibility for management of the land, but he or

she commits to conservation-oriented actions (see case studies for some examples). Land stewardship organisations and landowners agree to a set of actions to be developed in the property, according to the terms and conditions of the agreement. The stewardship organisation will ensure that the agreed actions are implemented, and will assist the landowner with any management issue that may arise.

These types of agreements usually take a written form such as a collaboration convention, sometimes supplemented with a management plan document, written by the land stewardship organisation, with the help of the landowner.

MANAGEMENT TRANSFER AGREEMENTS

Some other landowners may prefer someone else taking care of their lands whilst retaining the property rights, or the land stewardship organisation may want to undertake their own specialised management of valuable lands. Whatever the reason, the landowner probably desires to maintain and upgrade the value of the estate, and will appreciate a land stewardship organisation taking practical responsibility of its management. Of course, this stewardship organisation should carefully evaluate the challenge of managing a property before accepting, as this may in time become potentially resource consuming.

Figure 2. The ladder of land stewardship options and tools



Source: compiled by authors

As in the previous type of agreements, the landowner and organisation agree which actions will be developed in the land, but in this case it will be the stewardship organisation itself that will carry them out.

Other kinds of options available to land stewardship organisations are the lease, the cession and the afore-mentioned verbal agreements. The land stewardship organisation may write a management plan, elaborated with the participation of the landowner, to establish the priorities in the management of the site.

PROPERTY TRANSFER AGREEMENTS

There is yet another kind of agreement, where ownership of the property changes hands. This means that the landowner transmits his/her property (or part of it) to a land stewardship organisation, which commits itself to developing responsible management of the property. Of course, once the conservation organisation owns the land, it is free to develop the conservation strategy that it deems most appropriate, without having to negotiate the latter with the landowner. Although giving away a property for nature conservation purposes is undoubtedly an



MARIO KLESZEWSKI

Box 2. BASIC CONTENTS OF A STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENT

Presentation of parties involved

Scope of the agreement: a whole property, or part(s) of it, identification of pieces of land involved in the agreement, referring to a precise map annexed to the agreement.

Description of values and items of interest that justify the agreement: habitats, species, landscapes, particular architectural elements, historic, cultural heritage, symbolic or identity elements, local services (soil and water quality...) etc.

General and specific **objectives of the agreement.**

Commitments (or actions) of the steward-

ship organisation and the landowner, referring to maps and plans.

Management guidelines (sometimes a management plan may be attached to the agreement).

Access to property: who can access it, with what aims, when, etc.

Public communication of the agreement and signposting of the property.

Expenses derived from the agreement by the owner and the organisation.

Duration of the agreement: usually with mention of a tacit renewal if none of the

parts communicates the opposite.

Baseline and annual monitoring procedures of the agreement by the stewardship organisation.

Other: transfer of the property, dispute resolution...

Plus any adaptation required by certain legal form of agreements (lease, will, donation, sale...).

See Land Stewardship Toolkit for more information (www.landstewardship.eu).

act of responsibility, the probable effect is that the landowner will get detached from the land, hence terminating the landowner commitment.

The typical legal tools for these kinds of agreements take the form of a sale, legacy, donation or other means of exchange of property ownership. Transfer of the property does not always mean that a stewardship organisation actually buys the land — for example, donation of private land to stewardship organisations can also occur in order to guarantee its long-term protection and can become a usual procedure in countries where land donations receive tax incentives, or where conservation has a

social recognition. In some countries, donation via payment schemes or tax compensation payment schemes (payment in kind) can help place land under public property ownership, sometimes transferred to a stewardship organisation. Another way to receive land is through individual legacy.

Organisations must consider the costs of purchasing and maintaining the land, and the responsibility that ownership implies. Of course, the more consolidated the organisation is, the more chances it will have to receive (and be able to accept) donation proposals, or even to purchase land if they deem it necessary.

FIRST, MOTIVATE; AFTER, NEGOTIATE AND AGREE; AND THEN, MONITOR

The process to get a signature for a land stewardship agreement can be quite time consuming, or perhaps relatively straight forward. During this process (see figure 3), each party's perspectives about the land are to be mutually understood and respected, and with the aim being to arrive at a common vision of land stewardship to be applied.

The following recommendations are proposed for land stewardship organisations to prepare and carry out landowner contacts and negotiations addressed to reach an agreement (see box 3). However, every agreement is different, so the procedures presented will have to be adapted to each case.

BEFORE THE VISIT: INFORMATION TO SEARCH

A good preparation prior to contact is essential. Since the main task of personal contact is to provide information, the land stewardship organisation must research different types of information.

If the organisation has developed a strategy to prioritise its actions, it will find it easier to focus efforts on the most important values of the property that it will visit. It is critical to collect maps and aerial photos to become familiarised with natural areas, waterways, buildings, roads and other important features. Furthermore, it is important to check the municipal planning and legal information. Land registry maps are useful for identifying property limits and the area dimensions, and also the name of the owners.

PREPARING FOR THE VISIT: THE FIRST CONTACT

The next step is to contact the landowner to arrange a visit. Some organisations may move forward on the basis of previous contact with an acquaintance

of the landowner (a friend, a relative, a neighbour or a member of the city council...). When contacting an unknown landowner for the first time, the organisation has to be prepared to respond properly to any reluctance the owner may show.

Once the visit has been arranged, it is essential to prepare written information, such as brochures of the land stewardship organisation or some of its stewardship agreements. It is also important to offer a brief presentation on the property with the main values, maps and aerial photos. To explain how land stewardship works, it is useful to provide a guide or a manual (like this one you are reading).

DURING THE FIRST VISIT AND FOLLOW-UP VISITS

This first visit gives the landowners an opportunity to obtain information on land stewardship options and allows the organisation to hear them talk about their land, how they manage it, what they know about the resources, as well as the history of the land.

The first contact and visit are key steps to begin a good relationship. This first visit is meant to make an initial exchange of positions, and to open lines of communication. Finding out how a landowner protects or manages natural and cultural features of their property and providing landowners with information on how to further protect these features is a first step to build a long-term relationship.

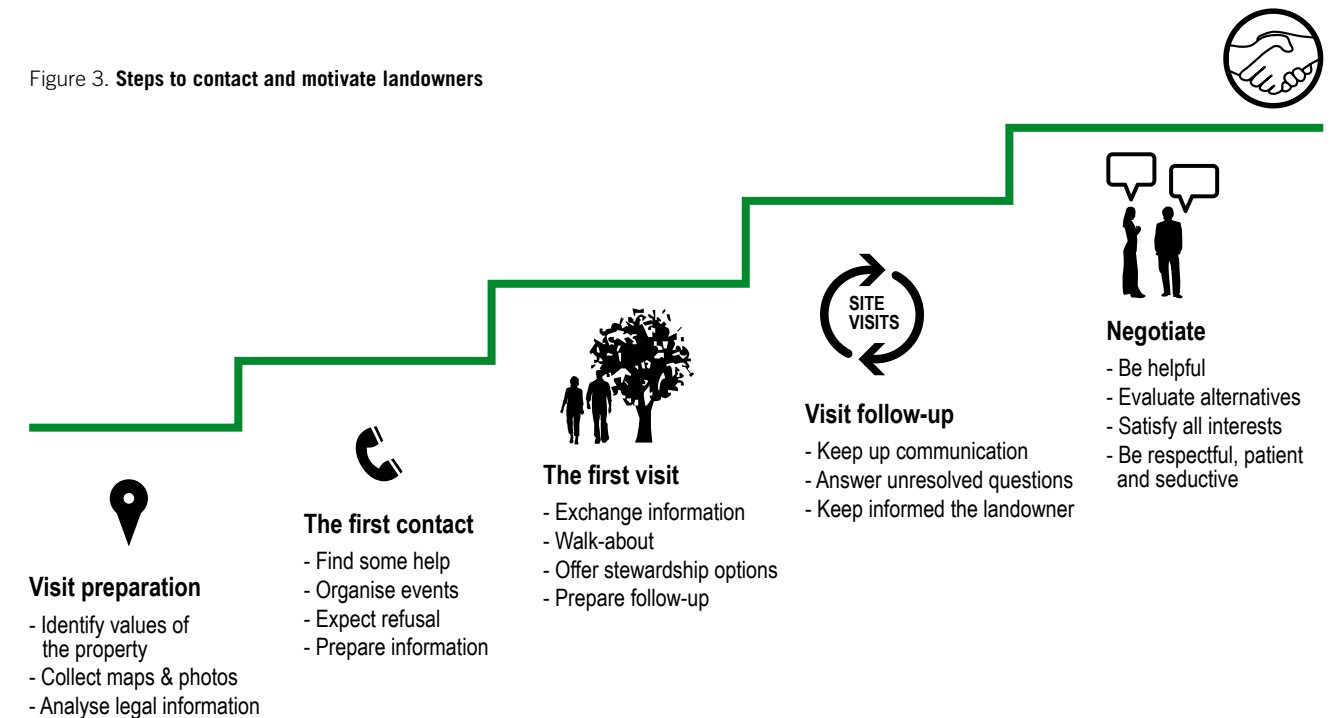
After the first visit, there will be further meetings to define and negotiate the agreement. Therefore it is important to arrange a follow-up visit after the first and the following encounters. Short-term follow-up generally consists of a simple thank-you letter or e-mail one or two weeks after the visit. That gives

enough time for the organisation to review the main comments discussed during the visit and to incorporate responses to any unanswered questions.

NEGOTIATING AN AGREEMENT

Depending on the results of the first visit, organisations may require more visits and contacts (even involving any other parties) to negotiate and conclude a land stewardship agreement. The rules of the negotiation (treatment, time and location of meetings, formality, media between parts, etc.) are unique to each agreement.

During the negotiations of the agreement, the two parties have to resolve many aspects depending on the property features, such as landowner interests and concerns, and organisation goals – and available resources. As explained on pages 14 to 17, there are three main options for land stewardship agreements and different tools according to the legal framework of each country. It is important to write a good agreement as a first step to achieve full compliance, so the terms and commitments must be clear, unambiguous and applicable to ensure good monitoring.



Source: Compiled by authors

AFTER SIGNING THE AGREEMENT: LONG-TERM RESPONSIBILITIES AND MONITORING

Beyond specific commitments under each agreement, once the collaboration between stewardship organisations and landowners begins, there are two long-term responsibilities that require special attention: basic advice from the stewardship organisation to the landowner and maintaining contact between them. These duties are essential because the land stewardship organisation needs the involvement of the owner to ensure compliance with the commitments.

Basic advice usually involves guiding the owners in the interpretation of the agreement and advising them on all questions affecting the daily decisions related to the management and conservation of the property. If the landowners need it, organisations can inform them about changes and new technical and legal issues that may affect their land (subsidies, tax reliefs, new management techniques, etc.). Additional information that organisations can provide are: participation opportunities that may arise as celebration of events, opportunities for volunteer supported action in the

property or fairs and public events where to present their conservation efforts and to show the products and activities at the property as a conservation-quality product.

Moreover, the relationship between landowner and organisation is built through regular contact between the two parties. The purpose of this long term contact can be multiple: calling landowners periodically to talk about the land and to keep in touch, informing them before a staff or volunteers visit to the property, planning workshops with them, sending greetings for special season events, etc.

Meanwhile, the owners also have to establish contact with the organisation if they think it is necessary. In fact, one of the deals that usually include the stewardship agreements is the owner commitment to inform the organisation when they are conducting an important action on the property and, in particular, the intention to sell (or donate, etc.) or lease the property to a third party.

Monitoring is an essential tool for social acceptance, transparency and accountability of land stewardship (see Land Stewardship Toolkit). Generally, monitoring procedures within

CASE STUDY

THE OLD TREE OF SOUTH BOHEMIA CZECH REPUBLIC

22 meters high and 4 meters wide, Podlesak's elm is the second biggest tree in South Bohemia (Czech Republic).

Members of the Czech Union for Nature Conservation (ČSOP) found it when it was threatened to be felled for timber. After long negotiations between the land stewardship organisation and the owner of the tree, both parts agreed to include the elm in the list of protected trees in Czech Republic, as a memorial tree.

The owner also agreed the lease of land around the tree to the stewardship organisation, for an indefinite period at the symbolic fee of only 1 Czech crown (0,04 €). Through this lease, the land stewardship organisation committed to the health care of the tree.

The main goal of ČSOP was to attract residents and tourists to visit the tree as a special feature of the region. For this purpose, a bench and an information board about the tree were installed, with the help of a sponsor, to inform on the particularities of the tree.

More information: www.csop.cz.



ZDENKA TYCOVA

agreements are a responsibility of land stewardship organisations, however, it can be a good idea to involve landowners in monitoring, for example by accompanying the organisation's staff during a visit to the property. If issues of non-compliance arise, it may prove useful discussing the latter with the owner and the other parties involved to find out why the agreement was not respected. Helping the owner implement some action might be necessary to adjust the terms of the agreement to achievable actions.

Monitoring must be a regular and methodical activity (i.e. performed and at the same time of the year, to increase comparability). The number of visits can be set according to the real need for each agreement. However, one or at most two visits per year are recommended. Although the monitoring system can be tailored to each agreement, it is strongly advised for organisations to create a protocol or method to be followed for each property/agreement.

Box 3.

TIPS FOR STEWARDSHIP ORGANISATIONS WANTING TO MOTIVATE AND INVOLVE LANDOWNERS

Generate a relaxed atmosphere before starting to talk about land stewardship options. Start by asking the owner about subjects he or she is comfortable with.

A visit is a two-way conversation, not an interview. Don't bring a questionnaire with you, or make extensive notes during your visit. If you want to know something, ask informally.

Pay attention and detect the owners' main interests and worries in order to offer them the solutions to be included, if possible, in the agreement.

Provide the owners with clear information about the value of their land and the importance of its conservation.

Clarify the confidentiality of your conversation right away. Any information retained in your records won't be released without the

owner having first given permission.

Explain and remark the benefits that the organisation can offer the owner, such as commitment, advice, support, information...

Remark the importance of the owner's implication to ensure a long-term conservation of land's values.

Avoid critiquing the owner's land management practices.

Inspire credibility by explaining the good results achieved in other agreements done by the organisation.

Have ready responses to frequently asked questions from landowners. See the frequently asked questions section in www.landstewardship.eu.

Source: Compiled by authors, based on Duynstee (1997).



LEVENTE VISZLÓ



NATURE NEEDS YOU: ENGAGING CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES IN LAND STEWARDSHIP

Land stewardship provides a good framework to boost many ways of social involvement with land and nature. Obviously, landowners are the main stakeholders that can become involved in land stewardship through agreements with organisations. However, land stewardship offers an excellent opportunity to empower citizens and allow for active involvement in the conservation of biodiversity, nature and landscape. In fact, the origin of a land stewardship organisation is often the interest of a group of people to improve land use and protect natural and cultural features.

Land stewardship organisations need a strong social involvement for many reasons: to obtain stable economic and human resources, to increase membership and social base, to achieve wider public legitimacy, to increase mobilisation capacity, to generate knowledge and new ideas, and to increase

power for advocacy. Reaching this social involvement with nature conservation usually is one of the main goals of any stewardship organisation, sometimes even part of the mission statement. As strong a land stewardship movement may seem, it will always be ineffective if it does not have a broad support from citizens. Accordingly, social involvement will need a lot of efforts, resources and time from organisations.

Organisations must define their target groups – it could be a long list – and subsequently decide the priority groups to engage. The priority groups for stewardship organisations, apart (obviously) from landowners, and land users (farmers, hunters, fishermen, foresters, etc.), are businesses, leisure organisations, the elderly, schools and teachers, university students and, of course, people interested in nature and landscape conservation.

CITIZENS: CONNECTING WITH NATURE

Land stewardship organisations have the opportunity to help people understand and appreciate the importance of natural and cultural resources. Land stewardship allows the development of personal connections with nature and landscape, so that citizens find ways to underpin long-term attachment to these values.

Involvement can be described as a process, or a ladder, with increasing levels of engagement into the stewardship organisation (see box 4). Land stewardship organisations use different strategies and tools to engage individuals.

Effective communication to mobilise people. Land stewardship, and messages like “people caring for the land” or “conversations on conservation” can be an appealing concept that connects with strong emotions and seduce for nature, so it is possible to use that to appeal to the public.

Membership. Membership funding and support, as small as it may be, is crucial to guarantee the structure of the organisations, and to keep them independent from external funding.

All organisations are always trying to recruit new members through different strategies. It is essential to show and highlight the benefits and services that an individual will receive and how nature benefits from the actions they will support. Usually, organisations offer different levels of subscription.

Volunteering. Volunteering is a powerful source and vital for all organisations, especially smaller ones. Volunteers are a great way to get the organisation’s message spread further. Volunteers can fit in different target groups: some tasks for volunteers do not require specific knowledge, whilst others need experience in specific areas.

Fundraising campaigns. Land stewardship organisations are always thinking about and working on new campaigns to obtain donations and other forms of financial support from people. Different campaigns enable different forms of financial contributions: however, most fundraising is also about raising awareness and generating people’s involvement. Crowd funding, through online platforms, is also a way of obtaining funds from a lot of small donors.

CASE STUDY

EUROPEAN LAND STEWARDSHIP WEEK (2012)

The first European Land Stewardship Week (from September 28 to October 7, 2012), an initiative of the LandLife Project, was a big success thanks to the active participation of citizens. A total of 231 conservation organisations, public agencies, volunteer groups, municipalities, businesses, schools and other institutions organised more than 420 events inspired by the common goal of preserving natural, cultural and landscape heritage. More than 15,000 people took part in the activities, making a contribution to land conservation and helping to take a step forward for land stewardship in Europe.

The *Connect with Nature* campaign, organised to engage people in the European Land Stewardship Week, encouraged people to relive the simple pleasures that we get from being in contact with nature, and to share those experiences through pictures. This campaign received more than 250 pictures of people around Europe. The highest-rated photos were used as part of a European traveling exhibition.

More information and photos:
www.landlifeweek.eu



Products and services. Land stewardship organisations may use market approaches to promote sustainable economic activity in the lands they own or that they take care of – for example, by promoting compatible activities such as agriculture, forestry, crafts, education or ecotourism. The products and services from lands under stewardship can provide some revenue income to the organisation and the landowners: also, such enterprises can be devel-

oped as a type of social entrepreneurship or ‘social green economy’ initiative.

Education strategies. Education is the most obvious and straight-forward way to raise awareness, as it involves the transfer of knowledge and the awakening of attitudes and values. School and outdoor training activities, and leisure education provide ideal arenas to promote land stewardship.

Box 4.

DIFFERENT WAYS PEOPLE CAN BECOME INVOLVED IN LAND STEWARDSHIP

Basic knowledge and interaction. As citizens, we can be informed of the organisations’ action through social networks, newsletters, websites, books, etc.

Visiting nature reserves and properties with land stewardship agreements. Visitors are an excellent source of potential new membership.

Participating in activities offered by organisations. Stewardship organisations are very active and offer a lot of activities for general public or local communities.

Shopping responsibly. Individuals can buy products (food, drinks, clothes, crafts...) made in sites with stewardship agreements. Books, posters, caps, T-shirts, toys, are other options.

Volunteering. Organisations offer different ways to recruit volunteers. People can participate in a specific activity as a volunteer or become a permanent volunteer.

Specific donations, social investment & crowd funding. People can donate money for specific actions or campaigns launched by stewardship organisations.

Membership. People can become member of a land stewardship organisation.

Advisor, opinion leader, ambassadors/champions. Individuals can invite contacts and friends to engage with land stewardship and nature conservation.



BUSINESSES: BIODIVERSITY AS PART OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Today, there is growing recognition within businesses that economic success is inextricably linked to environmental and social performance. Though not yet part of mainstream thinking, many companies, to some extent, are paying increasing attention to what is often referred to as ‘corporate social responsibility’ (CSR), a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations on a voluntary basis. In the context of their CSR, businesses can play a positive role in biodiversity conservation and land stewardship offers good opportunities in this sense.

Stewardship organisations should find out how they can help to contribute to bridging the gap between nature and business. One idea is to utilise businesses’ CSR agendas and jointly think about how to work together and for mutual benefit – for example, seek mutual gains where ‘green’ businesses have dedicated funding to implement CSR objectives. Furthermore, a strong partnership can be created providing financial resources to the organisation, and other non-economic forms of cooperation (by assessment and dialogue – e.g. via biodiversity checks, in products and services, through corporate volunteering, marketing campaigns, etc.). Through partnerships and cooperation, the private sector can increase its awareness and commitment to stewardship thereby encouraging long-term investment.

More obviously, there are companies whose activities are associated with major use of land (waste management facilities, public work construction sites, large business or industrial parks, for example). They can participate financially or as sponsors in partnerships with stewardship organisations as a

compensatory mechanism of their activities. Habitat banking is a developing model of compensation and investment in biodiversity, where land stewardship organisations can play a major role.

CORPORATE STEWARDSHIP

CSR may also lead to *corporate stewardship*, a variant of land stewardship that involves companies that own extensions of land (agriculture, forestry, etc.). Companies have a range of different options for engaging in active protection (Stolton and Dudley, 2007): 1) Sale of land to conservation organisations or similar; 2) Contributing land for biodiversity conservation and handing over management (e.g. through land stewardship agreements); 3) Owning and managing land for biodiversity conservation.

All these options are related to land stewardship, because companies can use (or sell) part of their properties, or create other imaginative partnerships for conservation purposes through an agreement with a stewardship organisation. For corporate landowners, stewardship offers opportunities for positive public relations and brand-building which can in turn be promoted and supported by networking at the EU level.

Many companies may not be direct owners of land but still be managers for biodiversity conservation. Most of the major resource management companies lease more land than they own outright. Similarly, in popular tourist destinations agreements between local land owners and tourism companies often result in land being managed for conservation and related ecotourism activities (such as wildlife watching).

OTHER PRIVATE INVESTORS

Social investors, philanthropic individuals and private foundations (or similar organisations) can be an important source of funding for land stewardship across Europe. Even key and substantial landowners such as churches and religious communities, health providers (hospitals and health centres) can be relevant here. A coordinated effort to build awareness and communicate issues involved is necessary in order to attract such funding. By communicating the long-term benefits of land stewardship, private funding streams may be uncovered

and accessed. Land donations are also a profitable source of private funding.

Governments and local authorities can also encourage private investment in land stewardship by providing appropriate incentives or benefits. Through tax relief, deductions or other incentives, private donors can be invited to invest in land stewardship. To strengthen this process, policymakers can develop mechanisms to encourage all businesses (including financial institutions) to pick up care for the land as an integrated share of Corporate Eco-Social Responsibility.

Box 5.

UTILITARIAN REASONS FOR COMPANIES TO BECOME INVOLVED IN MANAGING LAND FOR PROTECTION

Good press (or responding to bad press). There is clearly considerable gain from telling stakeholders, shareholders and the general public about philanthropic commitments a business is making.

Endorsement. Increasingly, some eco-labels, grants or even licenses are dependent on setting aside particularly sensitive areas for conservation.

Trade-offs. Some companies have set up protected areas as a trade-off for land they have transformed in other places. However, loss of one area will not always be compensated by conservation of another.

Financial gain. Tax and direct profit, access to grants and commercial activities (like ecotourism).

Mitigation/protection linked to “core businesses”. Companies may also protect land and water for the direct benefits from the environmental services that they provide.

Biodiversity conservation. Companies that take their environmental responsibilities seriously are now increasingly prepared to invest in biodiversity conservation as part of their best practice or their CSR.

Source: Stolton and Dudley (2007).





OPPORTUNITIES FOR LAND STEWARDSHIP IN EUROPE

The land stewardship approach to conservation is versatile and adaptable, and utilises a wide variety of tools and resources and involves many different stakeholders, landowners and users. Land stewardship can be used as a practical tool to implement biodiversity conservation in Europe as it complements and reflects the priorities of many different policies and legal instruments. It can help to create opportunities for nature conservation in individual Member States and contribute to biodiversity conservation in common ways across Europe.

Land stewardship also embraces enough elements to become a key communication platform that engages Europeans in nature, therefore providing an opportunity for active and direct participation in the Natura 2000 network, the Water Framework Directive, the European Green Infrastructure concept and local and regional nature priorities across Europe.

Europe and its Member States comprise rich and diverse habitats, species, ecosystems, landscapes and cultures. As a result of this diversity, European nature conservation policies and legal instruments must be applied and implemented by Member States in ways that generate feasible, workable and meaningful solutions to biodiversity conservation. Local stakeholders are well positioned to give advice and to support new legislation. Reciprocally, land stewardship can promote local knowledge and experience in both the development and implementation of European policies and instruments.

Through policies and strategies such as the Natura 2000 network, Water Framework Directive, Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection and European Green Infrastructure, along with the European Landscape Convention, the multi-faceted, cross-cutting approach of land stewardship can be harnessed to support European nature conservation policies and strengthen the long-term protection of biodiversity across Europe.

LAND STEWARDSHIP IN EUROPE: DIFFERENT CONTEXTS AND APPROACHES

The first thorough analysis of land stewardship in Europe is a report to the Council of Europe entitled, “*Private or voluntary systems of natural habitats’ protection and management*” (Shine, 1996). This research revealed an extension of diverse approaches throughout Europe and cited conservation associations from different countries like the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, France, Switzerland and Germany.

The Council of Europe report concluded that, “... the status of voluntary habitat protection and management is often determined by a country’s legal traditions and political and popular culture”. For example, it compared the case of some Scandinavian countries with that of the United Kingdom and the Netherlands. The former countries have long upheld public ownership as the most appropriate method of nature conservation, with private organisations playing a complementary but secondary role. In contrast, in the UK and the Netherlands, joint working with private landowners and private organisations is an integral component of national conservation policies, where land stewardship organisations, such as The National Trust and Natuurmonumenten, play an important role in nature conservation. In fact, there are large differences between regions in terms of the different roles fulfilled by land stewardship organisations in the conservation of European landscapes.

According to the Council of Europe report, “it is in the national interest of any country to make legal and economic instruments available to private actors — individuals, conservation associations or companies — which facilitate their active participation in countryside conservation”. Despite this goal, it highlights that this interest has been “a slow process”. 15 years after the aforementioned report, the LandLife project is attempting to address the challenge to increase leverage and use of these concepts and instruments throughout Europe.

As a preliminary action of the LandLife project, the “Study of the development and implementation of land stewardship in the Mediterranean Arc and Europe” (Quer et al., 2012) aimed at analysing the degree of development of land stewardship at European level, with special emphasis on three western Mediterranean regions. The general conclusion of this first analysis is that the degree of knowledge about land stewardship in Europe and its development differs considerably between regions and countries (with differences about the forms of agreements, what may or may not constitute an agreement, etc). Further and deeper analysis of this matter would be worth exploring in the near future.

Box 6.

A SHORT HISTORY OF LAND STEWARDSHIP IN EUROPE

Founded in 1895, the UK National Trust can be considered the original land stewardship organisation in Europe. Soon, other organisations followed, such as the Dutch Natuurmonumenten (founded in 1905), the provincial Landschappen, and the French Conservatoire du Littoral (1975), the last not a charity or NGO, but a public agency using voluntary agreements that can also be framed as a stewardship approach. In fact, all these organisations are owners of lands of natural and landscape value; managing sites that they own is usually part of their core business.

The use of *land stewardship* as a term to name these approaches in Europe has a connection to North America, and New England (USA) in particular. In 1989 several Central European countries (Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia) started a decade of exchanging and debating new approaches to land manage-

ment and conservation together with land trusts, public agencies and other organisations and experts from New England under the concept of land stewardship.

At the same time, Catalonia (Spain) started contacts that eventually lead to the *Montesquiu International Seminar on Land Stewardship* (2000), where the concept was presented to an expert and grassroots audience, together with international examples from Canada, France, Italy and the USA. The Seminar promoted the creation in 2003 of the (Catalan) Land Stewardship Network (XCT in Catalan).

Soon after some European exchanges started under this unifying concept. The Czech Union for Conservation of Nature (ČSOP) and XCT shared three exchange visits (2006-2009), and they also joined Legambiente-Lombardia and the German Association for Land Care (DVL) in seminars and exchanges, linked to the 2009

Milano Declaration on Land Stewardship, a proposal to promote and extend the concept throughout Europe. Interestingly, DVL promotes a similar approach based on the term “land care”, as used in Australia.

Between 2004-2006 the concept extended throughout Spain as well, which led to the creation of the Land Stewardship Platform, managed by the public Fundación Biodiversidad, and the development of regional stewardship networks in different parts of the country, which created the Spanish Forum of Land Stewardship Networks and Organisations in 2011.

This compact historical review, mostly referencing recent years since the inception and promotion of the land stewardship concept in Europe, brings us to the start of the LandLife project in September 2011. This project aims at developing new steps in this process (see pages 43).



XAVIER BASORA

A TOOL TO IMPLEMENT NATURA 2000 NETWORK AND THE EU BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY TO 2020

Natura 2000 network is regularly referred to as the ‘cornerstone’ of EU biodiversity policy. Natura 2000 plays a crucial role in protecting threatened or endangered habitats and species across Europe and is integrated into many other programmes in addition to legislative and financial instruments.

The Natura 2000 network is comprised of Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which are identified and designated by the individual Member States under the Birds Directive (2009/147/EC) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). Currently, Natura 2000 is the largest coordinated Network of protected areas in the world, covering 18% of EU territory and including approximately 26,000 sites.

The overall aim of the Natura 2000 network is to ensure that the habitats and species identified as being of European importance are restored to ‘favourable conservation status’ within their natural range in the EU. In order to achieve that goal, the implementation of EU policy and effective long-term management of Natura 2000 sites is the legal responsibility of the individual Member States.

CONTRACTUAL MEASURES

Although land stewardship is not specifically mentioned within the Directives, as an approach and tool, it can be considered a form of ‘contractual measure’ as referred to in Article 6 of the Habitats Directive: *‘For special areas of conservation, Member States shall establish the necessary conservation measures involving, if need be, appropriate management plans specifically designed for the sites or integrated into other development plans, and appropriate statutory, administrative or contractual measures which*

correspond to the ecological requirements of the natural habitat types in Annex I and the species in Annex II present on the sites’.

Natura 2000 is not a network of strictly protected sites, but a flexible framework for land use practices. The policy contains sufficient scope to embrace and positively encourage traditional agricultural practices that are sensitive to biodiversity across Europe: indeed, many Natura 2000 protected habitats and species depend on certain agricultural practices being maintained.

The successful implementation, management and restoration of the Natura 2000 network will play a central role towards achieving the EU Biodiversity Strategy headline target of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2020. To date, much of the network has been designated, however many sites still lack effective management plans. The management planning process can be a useful way to involve individual stakeholders, organisations and civil society. The variety of land stewardship tools can significantly contribute to and support the Natura 2000 network and assist in the effective, long-term management of the sites across Europe.

The Natura 2000 network, with its legal, financial and administrative framework at the European, biogeographical and national levels, can provide a solid institutional basis for the development of land stewardship in the EU. Promoting land stewardship as a useful tool to involve stakeholders in the management of Natura 2000 sites is timely, relevant and appropriate. In fact, land stewardship could become an icon concept for social involvement and participation in the European network of nature and biodiversity.

THE EU BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY TO 2020

Member States have developed ambitious and long-term goals to halt the loss of biodiversity across the EU and contribute to global biodiversity conservation. In March 2010, EU leaders established a headline target for biodiversity in 2020: ‘Halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss’. In May 2011, the EC adopted a new strategy that sets out the necessary actions to reach the 2020 headline target.

This EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 involves six individual, but complementary, targets that address the main drivers of biodiversity loss. Each target includes a set of actions along with a clear timeframe. The individual targets and their specific actions clearly explain how the strategy will be developed. Land stewardship has a relevant and important role to play in this strategic approach to biodiversity and ecosystem services conservation. For example, in order to fully implement the Birds and Habitats Directives (Target 1), good management

(Action 1) and increased stakeholder awareness and involvement (Action 3) are listed action points. Land stewardship involves stakeholders and civil society, enabling them to be contributors and partners in European biodiversity conservation.

The EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 is ambitious, time sensitive, and will require cooperation and increasingly integrated contributions from all Member States, stakeholders and civil society. The EC and Member States have a clear outline for developing partnerships to meet the targets and land stewardship is a versatile and instrumental tool that can significantly contribute to the strategy and the long-term protection of biodiversity across Europe. Through the conservation of soil, landscapes, water and biodiversity, land stewardship can work with the land users, Member States and the EC to protect the ecosystems across Europe and the valuable services that they provide: in addition, it is a working tool to generate associated and matched social and economic benefits, making care of the environment and protection of biodiversity an efficient means and integral way to meet cross-cutting policy priorities.

The Natura 2000 site Rekijoka river valley, with its 1,209 hectares of semi-natural grasslands, wooded pastures, forests and deep rivers slopes, hosts some of the most vulnerable habitats in Finland. The majority of the habitats are protected and managed through voluntary agreements with private landowners.

These agreements are framed under the Finnish Forest Biodiversity Programme Metso. The main objectives are to increase managed meadows and pastures, increase conservation agreements for herb-rich forests, improve effectiveness of management practices, protect species and ecosystem services, and increase understanding about the importance of the habitats through communication.

With these agreements, long-term management of the grasslands is ensured. Other areas are purchased and managed by the Government. There is also public funding and NGOs are involved in management activities.

More information: Ministry of the Environment of the Republic of Estonia (2004). *Coastal meadow management. Best Practice Guidelines.*



EUA HAGELBERG

CONNECTIONS WITH THE EU COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP)

Nature conservation has progressed from a focus on single-species rescue to recognition of the need for a comprehensive approach. In parallel, there is a growing recognition of the interaction between human influences and the natural world. Indeed, most of European landscapes need some sort of management to be maintained.

HIGH NATURE VALUE FARMLAND

Traditional, local, agricultural practices have shaped the unique landscapes across Europe for thousands of years. Through the long-term relationship between farming and nature, European landscapes have evolved and their biodiversity has increased. Such biodiversity rich agricultural areas are often referred to as *high nature value* farmland (HNV). These lands differ between Member States, biogeographical regions and habitat types, but they all rely on local farmers for their long-term management and survival.

Many studies have shown that biodiversity benefits mostly from low-intensity agriculture. In order to maintain these cultural landscapes and HNV agricultural lands, extensive and traditional agricultural practices must be encouraged throughout the European Member States. As the farmer is crucial to the long-term management of such lands, they must be supported, both economically and socially to continue working on the land.

As Oppermann *et al.* (2012) states, 'a robust strategy for biodiversity in Europe needs to take account of the full range of HNV farmland, within and outside the Natura 2000 network'. So, in order to achieve the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, HNV farmland must be recognised. By supporting local and traditional agricultural practices, communicating their benefits and involving local people in their biodiversity and culturally rich landscapes, land stewardship can continue to protect HNV farmland and contribute towards the 2020 targets.

CASE STUDY

TRADITIONAL GRAZING AND NEW FINANCING INSTRUMENTS IN IRELAND

The Burren is one of the finest examples of a glacio-karst landscape in Western Europe. Located in the west of Ireland, covering approximately 720 km², its nature value is recognised with most of its area being designated under Natura 2000. Typical management practices are predominated by extensive grazing systems. The area is isolated and the farming population is aging.

The BurrenLIFE Project (2004-2009) started as a pilot scheme, which developed a sustainable agricultural approach in order to conserve and restore the important habitats and to develop strong relationships and partnerships among the relevant stakeholders. It has been enlarged by the Burren Farming for Conservation Programme (2010-2013) aiming to find a new model for the sustainable agricultural management of the Burren by the farmers themselves with the strong support from the agricultural advisory services. Through this programme, the farmers get paid on the basis of the work that is carried out, and bound to achieve an improvement in habitat quality.

More information: www.BurrenLIFE.com



BRENDAN DUNFORD

COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENTS

The reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) holds key opportunities for land stewardship. Although during the development of this publication the 2014-2020 CAP period is still under discussion and many details are pending, it is clear that land stewardship can contribute significantly to the reform process and the successful implementation of the new CAP by promoting environment friendly farming practices and communicating HNV farmland across the Member States.

In fact, land stewardship organisations can be in a good position to provide biodiversity information and advisory services much in need for farmers having to apply the new CAP instruments, with their obligatory or voluntary measures. Land stewardship networks and organisations must explore these opportunities at European, national and regional levels, and make the best use of comparative research for regions and member states applying the CAP funds with the best land stewardship and biodiversity conservation approaches.

The greening of the first pillar of the CAP holds solid opportunities (through green direct payments in association with cross compliance measures), but so do the European rural development instruments and funds used for the second pillar (see page 38). Many actions related to stewardship agreements in farm and forests, as well as other rural areas, can be part of European rural development projects. The Leader programme and the potential to work with the Local Action Groups is an opportunity to put in place land stewardship practices. Most of Local Action Groups are already concerned with caring for their land, which means an opportunity to reach out local stakeholders on stewardship through Leader, which has a wide base of local actors at the EU scale. There is also the possibility for farming and nature conservation interests to join together within the context of the proposed European Innovation Partnerships, particularly those based on the theme of sustainable agriculture.

Further, updated information on CAP reform can be found on the European Commission's website (<http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture>).

CASE STUDY

CARING FOR WADERS AND GRASSLAND BIRDS IN AGRICULTURAL AREAS | THE NETHERLANDS

Ronde Hoep, a 1.260 hectares polder in the lower provinces of the Netherlands, consists of wet grasslands which are being managed by the organisation Landschap Noord-Holland and farmers together to promote the conservation of threatened Black-tailed godwits (*Limosa limosa*).

In the central part of the polder, there is a 160 hectares bird sanctuary, where the young godwits find a very wet and quiet area, both conditions being difficult to combine with agricultural practices. Farmers adapt their management practices to the godwits' needs — for example they limit the use of fertilization (rough manure) and have adapted mowing regimes.

About 9.500 volunteers throughout the Netherlands contribute to the maintenance of grassland bird populations. In the case of polder Ronde Hoep about 20 volunteers are involved, searching for nests to be protected, tracking nesting bird pairs, discussing the agricultural and management activities with farmers, and advising on management to farmers.

More information: www.landschapnoordholland.nl



AAD VAN PAASSEN

OTHER EUROPEAN POLICIES AND LEGAL INSTRUMENTS THAT FIT WITH LAND STEWARDSHIP

Land stewardship also connects with other European strategies, policies and legal instruments such as the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), the Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection, the European Green Infrastructure and the Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention. In addition, land stewardship, as a participatory tool for nature conservation, is consistent with the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. This was signed on June 1998 and is applicable in the EU through specific directives on public participation in environmental issues, and other directives, such as the WFD.

THE EU WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE (WFD)

The WFD was adopted in 2000 and establishes a legal framework for community action in the field of water policy within the EU and includes an integrated approach to water policy. The WFD aims to involve the water users (stakeholders) in every step of the process to achieve the overall objective – reaching good water status in all watersheds across the EU. This ambitious aim fits with the land stewardship approach to conservation and its variety of tools available. The WFD is due for renewal in 2015.

The WFD directly affects farmers, landowners and land managers, as they need to implement changes in management and farming practices in accordance with the Directive. But other stakeholders may be involved in stewardship initiatives related to water resources, such as fishermen, energy producers, mineral water bottling companies, and other organisations with interest on water uses.

The WFD is oriented to different kinds of water bodies, from lakes, ponds, to rivers and groundwater. The work of many stewardship organisations to reach good water status in freshwater public domain lands, that fall under the concept of *river stewardship*, is quite developed in countries such as Spain. In most countries, rivers and aquatic ecosystems are of public domain, and of course that means adaptation of land stewardship techniques to fit the transition between public water courses and adjacent private properties is critical.

THE THEMATIC STRATEGY FOR SOIL PROTECTION

Soil plays a central role in agriculture, biodiversity, water quality, climate change, human health and ecosystem services. The 'Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection' was adopted in 2006 and the objective was to protect and sustainably use soil through the prevention of further degradation, the preservation of soil function and the restoration of degraded soils.

Land stewardship can support healthy soils across Europe through the exchange of information and best practices, along with the integration of soil knowledge into agreements and activities. Healthy soil across Europe can significantly contribute towards achieving the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020. Through increased awareness, civil society can become more informed about the importance of healthy soil across the EU. Sustainable agricultural practices and land management that support healthy soil and its biodiversity can be promoted and implemented through the land stewardship approach.

THE EUROPEAN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The European Commission defines Green Infrastructure as 'a strategically planned and delivered network of high quality green spaces and other environmental features'. When successfully implemented, it can address the needs of both nature and people, offering multiple uses and services. It includes semi-natural areas, natural and man-made areas in terrestrial, marine, coastal and freshwater areas in both rural and urban settings.

Green Infrastructure aims to improve the connectivity of Europe's biodiversity and ensure the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network. Land stewardship has an important role to play both within Natura 2000 and outside the network. The land outside the Natura 2000 network (both private and public land) can support biodiversity and green infrastructure across Europe by creating 'stepping stones' or 'ecological corridors'. The fact that lands involved in the Green Infrastructure do not have a legal frame means that land stewardship can even be a more important tool to make the Green Infrastructure work in the future.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

The European Landscape Convention is the first international convention specifically aimed at landscapes. The Convention presents a new approach to the landscape and implies that it is a right of all individuals to enjoy and benefit from it, but also a duty to keep it in good condition. Precisely this complements and reflects the land stewardship approach to conservation.

Land stewardship poses clear, specific and interesting opportunities for protecting, maintaining and managing the landscape. Indeed, many of the areas for which stewardship agreements are reached have high aesthetic and landscape values. Moreover, stewardship promotes and increases the public's awareness of the importance of landscapes across Europe. Therefore, the European Landscape Convention can help giving a relevant framework to stewardship initiatives.

CASE STUDY

RIVER STEWARDSHIP AT THE TER BANKS | CATALONIA

The Study Center of the Mediterranean Rivers - Ter Museum (CERM), together with 3 municipalities (Torelló, Masies de Voltregà and Manlleu) reaches river stewardship agreements with various owners (public and private) in the upper Ter basin (Catalonia) since 2009.

The main objective is to generate greater responsibility for river stewardship among users and owners, but also with authorities associated with rivers and wetlands conservation. The main actions are intended to gradually preserve and restore all the rivers in the basin of the Upper Ter. Also, conservation measures are developed to protect and rehabilitate existing values, restore good ecological status and reach high levels of biodiversity, as far as possible and within available resources. There are monitoring and research studies to evaluate the results of the actions.

CERM also delivers an environmental education programme in the area and has designed nature trails as well. CERM is member of xct's River stewardship working group, created in 2008, to promote stewardship initiatives in rivers, especially in Catalonia.

More information:
www.mitmanlleu.org/cerm/custodia



NÚRIA SELLALES - CERM

A NEW LIFE FOR THE SALT WORKS OF VILLENEUVE | FRANCE

The salt works of Villeneuve is a Natura 2000 site in a highly urbanised coastline with high, seasonal tourism activity. The area has been exploited from the 12th century to the last part of the 20th century (until 1989).

The first areas were purchased in 1992 by the Conservatoire du Littoral, a public agency that aims to protect nature and maintain economic activities, whilst promoting public access to nature. Then the Conservatoire reached agreements with the *Conservatoire d'espaces naturels de Languedoc-Roussillon* (CEN L-R) and local authorities, and with economic stakeholders (for example, with farmers for their flocks to maintain the habitats, and with fishers to respect some basic rules about resources use) to ensure a sustainable management of the site.

Every two months, CEN L-R, the owners and their land managers get together to talk about various management actions and discuss progress, in order to inform management decisions.

More information:
www.conservatoire-du-littoral.fr



EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LAND STEWARDSHIP

Land management and nature protection across Europe is financed through a variety of local, regional, national, European Union (EU) and international level funding. The location of the land, the biodiversity living there, the Natura 2000 status and the activities being carried out will all affect the public funding available for land management and land stewardship. Every site is unique and the funding sources available will vary accordingly. Land stewardship in Europe is characterised by its diversity, variety of legal approaches and stakeholder involvement. The various financial instruments and funding opportunities can reflect this diversity as land stewardship fits the requirements of many funding streams.

There are a wide variety of grants and public subsidies available to stewardship organisations and landowners in order to develop various actions included in a stewardship agreement. Stewardship organisations can play a role in assisting landowners in the search for relevant funding opportunities and also in the specific submission of their application.

Currently, some of the most relevant EU financial instruments for land stewardship include the Structural Funds, especially the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the Financial Instrument for the Environment (LIFE+).

The up-coming EU programmatic period (2014-2020) offers interesting new opportunities to finance an integrated approach to land conservation and to cooperation between different stakeholders

under different EU programmes. That's especially important relating to the Natura 2000 network, the CAP reform, and rural development programs (Leader and others). However, readers must be aware that at the time of writing this publication the 2014-2020 funding framework is still under discussion at the institutions of the European Union, and therefore its final format may differ.

NATURA 2000

If land stewardship activities occur within Natura 2000 sites, Member States will be responsible for funding the management of the land in increasingly integrated ways. Although Natura 2000 is the key piece of EU biodiversity policy, it does not have a dedicated financial instrument as such. It does however, benefit from a variety of funding sources both at the EU and national level, such as the LIFE programme, The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), Structural Funds and private funding. Land stewardship within Natura 2000 can also benefit from such funding.

Moreover, Natura 2000 as a policy has introduced new ways of working together with landowners and land managers. New participative, financial and fiscal tools have been introduced by some Member States to encourage landowners and land managers engaging in nature conservation. For example, in France voluntary agreements can be signed under agri-environment schemes, and a tax relief is offered to landowners who have signed a Natura 2000 charter that commits to sustainable management within clear limits.

THE EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUND (ERDF)

The ERDF aims to support economic and social cohesion by redressing regional imbalances. It supports regional and local development by co-financing investments in a variety of areas, including the environment and mitigation of climate change, and has the potential to supply financial assistance to land stewardship.

Member States are responsible for the management and control of the operational programmes, and thus they decide the funds' allocation according to its priorities. A land stewardship approach to biodiversity conservation can potentially meet many of the requirements of the budgetary categories and thus gain access to funding through the ERDF. However, access to ERDF by non-governmental land stewardship organisations depends on decisions by member states on how to apply these funds.

LIFE + PROGRAMME

The LIFE+ programme, the EU environmental funding instrument, has co-financed many projects that involve land stewardship to date. In an attempt to better link it to the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020, the LIFE+

programme was recently reviewed and adjusted by the European Commission.

The new programme for 2014-2020, under discussion, may contain sub-programmes for 'environment' and 'climate action' and promote partnerships. Many land stewardship activities will probably fall under these categories and may be suitable for funding. E.g., LIFE + Nature includes the purchase, lease and use rights of land amongst its eligible actions.

EUROPEAN AGRICULTURAL FUND FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT (EAFRD)

There is potentially a large amount of funding available for land stewardship within the EAFRD as many of its activities fit within the set criteria. The proposed EAFRD (2014-2020) sets out six 'Union priorities for rural development' to contribute to the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020. Land stewardship may be suitable for funding under priority 4 that aims at: 'restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems dependent on agriculture and forestry'. Land stewardship can also help successfully implement the both the agri-environment climate and the co-operation measures of the proposed EAFRD.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONSIDER BY STAKEHOLDERS WANTING TO IMPLEMENT LAND STEWARDSHIP

The following guidelines may be useful for all types of organisations and institutions interested in promoting land stewardship in their region or country.

EUROPEAN LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Introducing the concept and promoting land stewardship within Europe's policy agenda, especially EU's conservation and protection of the environment programs and regulations, and the greening of the CAP.
- Developing relationships between land stewardship and green economy and social economy.
- Exploring, defining and securing opportunities for the development of land stewardship, that support and strengthen the implementation of various EU policies, such as the CAP (in particular in areas of High Nature Value farming), Green Infrastructure, the Water policy, the Soil strategy, Forest, Climate change.
- Promoting EU specific references to land stewardship as an effective tool for biodiversity conservation and land management when implementing policies, such as Natura 2000, the CAP or the European Regional Development Funds, amongst others.

NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

- In dialogue with stakeholders involved, introducing the concept and promoting land stewardship into national or regional policy agenda, especially in relation to conservation and protection of the environment programmes.
- Analysing on-going examples across Europe, visiting them, and establishing land stewardship promotion as one of the functions of the national or regional government, and developing actions performed by the responsible public body, in partnership with the stewardship movement.
- Creating the conditions for land stewardship agreements with adequate legal recognition at state or regional level.

- Giving support to land stewardship organisations and networks, promoting their creation if it is necessary.
- Creating funds and tax benefits that help make land stewardship agreements more attractive for landowners and stewardship organisations.
- Ensuring that the possibilities of co-funding coming from the European Union can be accessed by Land Stewardship programmes including the concept in the national Prioritized Action Frameworks for Natura 2000.
- Engaging local authorities and municipalities with land stewardship by showing them the opportunities available if they use land stewardship agreements as a means for participation and local involvement in the protection and management of natural areas of local interest.

LAND STEWARDSHIP NETWORKS (AT NATIONAL OR REGIONAL LEVEL)

- Getting acquainted with land stewardship strategies developed in other parts of Europe, and trying to share and to learn from their experience.
- Organising congresses, meetings, and exchanges that create momentum and nurture the drive for a joint stewardship vision. Using these events will sketch a strategic plan for your stewardship network. Developing specific models in accordance with your geography, society, culture and legal context.
- Involving as many parties as possible (and as diverse as possible) into the land stewardship project.
- Setting a plan to involve government and public agencies into the land stewardship network strategy.
- Gathering information on stewardship organisations and local stewardship practices in some sort of national or regional databases so that sharing experience is made easier.

LAND STEWARDSHIP ORGANISATIONS AND CONSERVATION NGOS AND FOUNDATIONS

- Prioritising quality over quantity in land stewardship agreements, and using best practices and quality systems for land stewardship organisations.
- Establishing new quality partnerships within one's own capacity, even if that means refocusing existing ones, with a range of institutions and constituencies.
- Presenting yourselves to landowners as key partners to face together the opportunities of a changing political and economic framework, especially that derived from the multiannual financial framework for 2014-2020.
- Ensuring core funds for your organisation and allocating them to reach land stewardship agreements and boost new projects. Linking these projects with social involvement in your area of influence.
- Promoting citizen responsibility and care for their environment/surroundings and a beautiful landscape.
- Initiating or taking part in developing land stewardship networks in your country or region.
- Networking internationally with other land stewardship organisations through training activities, project visits, R&D projects, Euroregional initiatives, etc.

PRIVATE LANDOWNERS, LAND USERS AND ITS ORGANISATIONS

- Discovering land stewardship and its opportunities, and networking with land stewardship organisations and networks.
- Learning from other landowners and farmers already involved in land stewardship agreements. Organising debates and presentations on land stewardship is a good option.
- Searching for advice on the natural values of your property and its management. Participating in local conservation groups that might evolve into land stewardship organisations.

- Asking the land stewardship organisations in your area how they work and how you can become involved in projects to develop agreements of higher legal standards and best conservation results.
- Partnering with land stewardship organisations and networks through your landowner and farming, forestry, hunting and alike organisations.
- Relating your land stewardship agreement to green economy activities in your property (i.e. commercialisation of products and services). Discussing options and joint opportunities with your land stewardship organisation.

BUSINESSES AND CORPORATIONS AS SPONSORS AND LANDOWNERS

- Analysing the impact of your business activities on biodiversity. Searching for specialists or land stewardship organisations that can help you.
- Considering land stewardship as an approach that can help you deliver or implement your Corporate Eco Social Responsibility objectives. Benefiting from the experience of existing land stewardship organisation through partnering.
- Contacting land stewardship organisations in your area and getting to know their work. Learning the needs of each other in relation to biodiversity and land stewardship. Looking for opportunities within an open range (marketing and promotion, volunteering, client prizes and experiences, fundraising campaigns, labelled quality products, expertise sharing, etc.).
- Partnering and contributing with land stewardship and its organisations.
- Organising volunteer stewardship days with your workers, clients or stakeholders.
- Promoting corporate stewardship in company lands.



AVAILABLE RESOURCES

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LANDLIFE TOOLS

This publication is part of the LIFE+ funded project *LandLife. Boosting land stewardship as a conservation tool in the western Mediterranean arc: a communication and training scheme* (LIFE 10/INF/ES/540). This project runs from 2011 to 2014 and aims to boost land stewardship as an effective and successful tool for nature and biodiversity conservation in Europe.

The main actions (and tools) related to the project are:

- Comparative Study of the development and implementation of land stewardship in Europe (Quer *et al.*, 2012).
- "Caring together for nature. Manual on land stewardship as a tool to promote social involvement with natural environment in Europe" (electronic and printed versions).

- European Week of land stewardship, autumn 2012 (www.landlifeweek.eu).
- Regional land stewardship and European networking workshops in Catalonia, France and Italy, spring 2013.
- European land stewardship Congress, autumn 2014.
- Multimedia materials for communication and participation in land stewardship.
- Help desk for the development and implementation of initiatives in land stewardship.
- Land Stewardship toolkit.
- Online course on land stewardship 2013-2014.

For more information, go to:
www.landstewardship.eu.

The LandLife project involves the following partners:

Xarxa de Custòdia del Territori (xct)
(leading partner)
www.custodiateritori.org

Conservatoire d'espaces naturels Languedoc-Roussillon (CEN L-R)
www.cenlr.org

Legambiente Lombardia
www.custodiadelterritorio.org

Eurosite
www.eurosite.org

Prysmat Calidad y Medio Ambiente
www.prysmat.es

As an inclusive concept, bringing people together and engaging diverse local organisations into caring for the land and waters they appreciate most, land stewardship offers many possibilities for development in Europe, contributing to conservation, the green economy and green jobs. With its long tradition and diversity of cultures, landscapes and biodiversity, Europe can build upon the evolution of the governance of its protected areas towards an active participation of all stakeholders.

Properly recognised, supported at the European level and imbedded within an integration approach to land management, Natura 2000 and High Nature Value farmland can become the core areas for the development of land stewardship in the wider countryside all over Europe. The landscape is rich with opportunities for the maintenance and restoration of biodiversity by local people motivated to care together for nature.

This publication is presented in two formats: a printed version and an electronic version (e-Manual). The e-Manual, written only in English, is the extended version, with detailed contents about how land stewardship works and the opportunities for nature conservation in Europe. You can read the e-Manual at www.landstewardship.eu.

LandLife partners:

