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Conservation of Natural Heritage for Life in Ukraine

101148569 — LIFE23-PRE-CZ-ConNaturLIFE Ukraine — LIFE-2023-PLP

After Life Plan

3/2026 – 2/2031



Ministry of the Environment
of the Czech Republic





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PROJECT DATA

Project number: 101148569
Project acronym: LIFE23-PRE-CZ-ConNaturLIFE Ukraine
Call: LIFE-2023-PLP
Topic: LIFE-2023-PLP-Bauhaus-Phoenix-Emerald
Type of action: LIFE Project Grants
Granting authority: European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency
Project starting date: 1 March 2024
Project end date: 28 February 2026
Project duration: 24 months
Project budget: 1 088 512 eur
EU contribution: 979 660 eur
(%) of eligible costs: 90%
Co-financing: 10% from the Czech Republic's state budget

Czech Republic – Ukraine Consortium:

Lead partner, coordinator:

Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic (NCA CR)

Contact person: David Lacina (email david.lacina@aopk.gov.cz)

Project web <https://aopk.gov.cz/web/en/ukraine>

Financial partners:

Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group (UNCG)

Contact person: Anastasiia Drapaliuk (email da@uncg.org.ua)

Project web: <https://uncg.org.ua/life/>

ENVIRONMENT – PEOPLE – LAW (EPL)

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Project web: <https://epl.org.ua/en/about-us-posts/zberezhennya-pryrodoynyi-spadshhyny-dlya-life-v-ukrayini/>

Non-financial partner:

Ministry of Economy, Environment, and Agriculture of Ukraine (MEEA)

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INTRODUCTION

The long-term goal of the project ConNaturLIFE Ukraine was the creation of an effective governance and management system of the Emerald network in Ukraine as a basis for implementation of Birds and Habitats Directives and Natura 2000 in that country upon its accession to the EU in the future.

The project was the first ever LIFE project implemented in Ukraine. Under the leadership of the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic, it was developed and managed in close cooperation with two Ukrainian NGOs - Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group (UNCG) and Environment-People-Law (EPL). From the Ukrainian part, the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (MEPR) served as a non-financial partner of the project; due to the changes in the Ukrainian government, it changed into the Ministry of Economy, Environment and Agriculture during the course of the project.

Although cooperation with the Ukrainian Ministry was challenged by the aggressive Russian war in Ukraine, changes in the government and the generally difficult financial, personal, and political situation, the results of the project set up a promising foundation for future changes in Ukrainian nature conservation that are necessary before EU accession.

The project identified necessary changes in Ukrainian legislation and prepared a clear roadmap for steps leading to full transposition and implementation of the Directives into the Ukrainian legal system. A road map to enhance and improve the Emerald network was provided, too. Organizational structure of nature conservation authorities in Ukraine was assessed, and enhancement meeting the future challenges proposed. Guidance documents highlighting best practice in several fields were elaborated and disseminated. Opportunities to train new leaders in this field were created, making it possible to improve and increase the capacity and expertise of a pool of personnel available to Ukrainian authorities in nature conservation. The project identified the necessary steps to improve the management and monitoring of Emerald/Natura2000 sites, together with a realistic implementation plan. The Ministry of Economy, Environment, and Agriculture of Ukraine, as an associated partner, is devoted to take the developed policy paper and proposals for increasing institutional capacity as a basis for the preparation of institutional reform in the field of nature protection with the purpose of bringing it closer to EU standards. Demonstration of the practical implementation of the requirements of the Directives on the example of an Emerald Network pilot site was carried out and the results are going to be replicated in other sites hosting similar habitats. The capacity and willingness of the young generation/future public officials for the implementation of the Directives is being improved. Key stakeholder groups and the wider public were engaged into establishment of a good governance and management system of nature protection. The partnership between Ukraine and the Czech Republic (as well as the EU) was strengthened, personal contacts established and further cooperation encouraged.



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Main project goals:

Common legislative space for Ukraine and the EU for nature protection (WP2)

- Legal establishment of Emerald network
- Practical transformation of Emerald to Natura 2000 network
- Legal and practical adjustment of species protection
- Effective monitoring, reporting, data management

Modern European model of governance and management for nature protection in Ukraine (WP3)

- Governance structure and professional capacity analysis
- Financial capacity analysis
- Development of the overall policy paper
- Piloting the case of steppe habitats restoration of enhancing management practices of Emerald Sites

Promotion of Natura 2000 network in Ukraine: moving from knowledge to application (WP4)

- NATURA 2000 toolkit
- Experience sharing via Study tour
- Publication and distribution of outreach materials
- Expanding the biodiversity open database through citizen-science involvement as a transparent tool for decision-making
- Raising environmental protection leaders in Ukraine: innovative training course for future public officials and civil society actors
- Communication of project goals and results

Sustainability, replication and exploitation of project results (WP5)

The After-LIFE Plan

The key output of the project is the policy paper that provides a complex analysis of the regulatory, institutional and financial framework for biodiversity conservation in Ukraine in the context of harmonization of Ukrainian and European Union environmental legislation. The focus is on transposition and implementation of the requirements of the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, and on the prospect of converting the Emerald Network of Ukraine into the Natura 2000 network after Ukraine's accession to the EU. The policy paper comprises a detailed description of the proposed future governance system, its financial costs and necessary legislative changes for introducing a new governance structure and thus presents a road map for implementation of the profound reform of the nature conservation system in Ukraine.

The following text is highlighting the next steps in each topic and is accompanied by a table as an attachment to this document, listing deliverables of the project and planned follow-up work. Numbers in parentheses in the text indicate objectives listed in the table, in which detailed information about each particular activity is described.

Common legislative space for Ukraine and the EU for nature protection

In the framework of the project, two plans of legislative changes were developed – the plan of legislative changes for full transposition of the Habitats and Birds Directives for site protection (*objective 2*) and the plan of legislative changes for species protection (*objective 1*). Some legal acts from these two plans have already been developed and submitted to the Ministry and the Parliament as there are two possible procedures for the submission of the draft laws to the Parliament - through the Cabinet of Ministers or - by submitting/registering the draft law by the MPs.

Draft law on the areas of conservation for natural habitats and wild fauna and flora (updated draft law On the territories of Emerald Network, registered in the Parliament, #4461) have been developed and provides for amendments to the following legislation:

- The Law of Ukraine "On Ecological Network of Ukraine" of 24.06.2004 No. 1864-IV,
- The Law of Ukraine "On Nature Reserve Fund of Ukraine" of 16.06.1992 No. 2456-12,
- the Law of Ukraine "On Environmental Protection" of 25.06.1991 No. 1264-12,
- The Law of Ukraine "On Fauna" of 13.12.2001 No. 2894-14,
- The Law of Ukraine "On Fish Farming, Industrial Fishing and Protection of Aquatic Bioresources" of 08.07.2011 No. 3677-VI,
- The Law of Ukraine "On Flora" of 9.04.1999 N 591-XIV,
- The Law of Ukraine "On the Red Data Book of Ukraine" of 07.02.2002 No. 3055-14,
- the Land Code of Ukraine
- The Law of Ukraine "On Environmental Impact Assessment",
- The Law of Ukraine "On Strategic Environmental Assessment", etc.
- Draft bylaws arising from the requirements of the new law, in particular on
 - o the register of areas,
 - o management plans,
 - o monitoring plans,
 - o the procedure for determining of and refunding for losses to land owners and land users
- Draft resolution of the CMU on approval of the List of the Emerald Network Sites (377 sites) was developed and submitted to the Ministry of Economy, Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine and further advocacy work will be performed to promote adoption of the resolution.
- Draft Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to certain laws regarding the prohibition of sale of animal and plant species taken from the wild" was developed and submitted to the Ministry of Economy, Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine and the Environmental Policy Committee of the Parliament of Ukraine. So far, the advocacy

is performed both ways – through the Ministry and the Environmental Policy Committee to identify the most feasible way of the law adoption. Further discussions of the law will be conducted to promote its approval.

- Draft Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to the Criminal Code of Ukraine concerning the prohibition of sale of the animal and plant species protected in Europe" was developed and submitted to the Ministry of Economy, Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine and the Environmental Policy Committee of the Parliament of Ukraine. Further advocacy work will be performed to promote its adoption.

The proposals prepared to supplement the annexes of the Habitats Directive on behalf of Ukraine with new animal and plant species and new habitat types (*objective 4*) will serve as a basis for negotiations with the European Commission and EU Member States. It is important to note that the proposals include not only lists of species and natural habitat types but also detailed descriptions of their current state, distribution, and all other relevant information enabling the EC as well as EU to responsibly assess the proposals and adopt those of them considered a specific contribution of Ukraine to the common natural heritage of the EU.

Within the framework of the project, an analysis of the sufficiency of the current monitoring, mapping, and data management practices in Ukraine and the Czech Republic was further carried out, identifying gaps in the national biodiversity monitoring system and proposing necessary improvements in the future (*objective 7*).

To prepare Ukraine for the practical implementation of the Habitats and Birds Directives, a number of guidelines have been developed/translated in Ukrainian language that provide detailed recommendations on specific articles of the Directives, namely:

- Guidelines for the monitoring, mapping, and data management schemes
 - Guidelines on species and habitat management
 - Guidelines on Concepts and Definitions. Article 17 of Directive 92/43/EEC. Reporting period 2019–2024
 - Reporting Format Referred to in Article 17 of Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive)
 - Explanatory Notes in Support of the Reporting Format Referred to in Article 17 of Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive)
 - Guidelines on Concepts and Definitions. Article 12 of Directive 2009/147/EC. Reporting period 2019–2024
 - Reporting Format as Referred to in Article 12 of Directive 2009/147/EC (Birds Directive)
 - Explanatory Notes in Support of the Reporting Format Referred to in Article 12 of Directive 2009/147/EC (Birds Directive)
- (*objectives 8, 9 and 10*)

Last but not least, for the future establishment of the Natura 2000 network in Ukraine, proposals on the transformation of the Emerald Network into the Natura 2000 network have been prepared (*objective 3*), the need for a functioning system of species action plans was addressed (*objective 5*) and guidelines on species and habitats management were prepared (*objective 6*).



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Modern European model of governance and management for nature protection in Ukraine

Based on functional analysis, comparison with institutional set-up in selected (comparable) EU countries and assessment of several options, establishment of the new central institution, ideally with regional branches, seems to be the best and at the same time quite realistic way to build a framework for introducing EU standards in the field of nature protection in Ukraine.

Establishment of the Agency for Nature Conservation of Ukraine (*objective 11*) is a necessary step for streamlining the accession process and implementing respective EU directives and regulations. The Agency will also serve as a coordinating authority to support PAs administrations in shifting nature conservation activities to a more up-to-date level and providing necessary expert services to the Ministry responsible for nature protection.

The Agency should organise and manage data collection as a key precondition for transformation of the Emerald sites to the Natura 2000 network, coordinate management planning and management of protected areas, supervise appropriate assessments and promote protected areas and carry out public relation activities in the field of biodiversity protection.

Draft Provision of the central executive body for biodiversity preservation – Agency for Nature Conservation in Ukraine – was developed and submitted to the Ministry of Economy, Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine for further review and advocacy.

The plan envisages development of the draft law on amending separate laws of Ukraine regarding protection of species (introducing terminology, approaches and mechanisms of the Directives), including:

- The Law of Ukraine "On Environmental Protection" of 25.06.1991 No. 1264-12,
- The Law of Ukraine "On the Red Data Book of Ukraine" of 07.02.2002 No. 3055-14,
- The Law of Ukraine "On Fauna" of 13.12.2001 No. 2894-14;
- The Law of Ukraine "On Fish Farming, Industrial Fishing and Protection of Aquatic Bioresources" of 08.07.2011 No. 3677-VI,
- The Law of Ukraine "On Flora" of 9.04.1999 N 591-XIV;
- The Law of Ukraine "On Hunting Economy and Hunting" of 02.02.2000 No. 1478-14-III
- The Law of Ukraine "On the protection of animals from cruelty" of 21 February 2006 No. 3447-IV and others.
- Draft resolution of the CMU on approval of lists of species (according to Annexes II, IV and V to the Habitats Directive and Annexes I, II та III to the Birds Directive), if these have not been transposed by the above amendments to the laws

Making amendments to legislative acts in the sphere of hunting, as well as fishing, taking into account requirements and lists of species of wild animals as stipulated by the EU law – EPL developed and submitted comments and proposals to the Order of the Ministry of Economy, Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine "On approval of the state recording of a number of game animals and scopes of their capture", received feedback on the proposals taken into account and will make another round of analysis of the amendments that still are needed to the Order.

As part of this workpackage, a pilot measure aiming at restoring about 10 hectares of degraded steppe grasslands was carried out in Buzkii Gard NP (*objective 13*). This area should be maintained and experience and practices gained from the restoration should be shared with other similar sites and subsequently implemented there. The intervention was carried out in accordance with the Action Plan for Conservation and Restoration of the Biotope E1.2 Perennial Calcareous Grasslands and Basic Steppes developed within the Life project (*objective 12*).

Promotion of Natura 2000 network in Ukraine: moving from knowledge to application

The training program “Conservation of natural habitats and species of flora and fauna in Ukraine and the EU” (*objective 15*) has been developed to include 14 modules on the following themes:

- the procedure of establishing nature conservation sites;
- protection of flora and fauna species in the EU and Ukraine;
- habitat inventory and mapping;
- impacts and threats to Emerald sites;
- Natura 2000 network;
- assessment of adverse impact of state planning documents on Emerald and Natura 2000 sites;
- assessment of SEA and EIA materials in cases regarding the Emerald sites.

The training program was approved by the Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and has been taught there to Master’s students since September 2025.

Also, State Kherson University and Bohdan Khmelnytskyi State Cherkasy University expressed their intention to include the course into their curricula and currently the procedure of formal approval of the course by the universities is in progress. The course will be updated to reflect the changes in the Ukrainian legislation and institutional set-up.

As for other PR activities within the project, there is an aim to repeat the highly successful iNaturalist Days (*objective 16*) in the following years, at least once in every two years, with the offer to freely use the PR materials generated within the project.

All publications produced are available for download at all partner websites (*objective 14*).

Sustainability, replication and exploitation of project results

The character of the LIFE PLP projects differs from the typical LIFE Nature and Biodiversity ones: most of their outcomes have no practical effects in nature (such as management of protected areas or protected species) but they should provide foundation for implementation of EU requirements for biodiversity protection and conservation in Ukraine and Moldova, the most recent candidate countries. Thus, the documents and tools developed within these projects should facilitate meeting those complex EU requirements rather than maintaining or improving particular natural habitats and habitats of species .



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The given project has more than fulfilled these requirements. Numerous legislative proposals, policy papers, guidelines and practical instructions developed within this project can really contribute to making a difference in the nature conservation sector in Ukraine in the near future. Experience gained during preparation of Emerald network, including taking into account and reflecting the differences between the Emerald and Natura 2000 networks, have a potential to substantially facilitate transition from Emerald to Natura 2000. Educational materials are in the process of approval for free use at all universities of Ukraine. Enormous interest in the citizen science event implemented within the project in 2025 showed the so far unused potential of citizen science - the potential of nature lovers, both educated and laymen, for collecting scientific data on habitats and species across the entire territory of the country without any necessity of funding. The publications written, printed and disseminated will have a lasting value. Also the experience of the only „field“ component of the project, pilot management actions aimed at restoration of steppe habitats in the Buzkii Gard National Nature Park, was very useful, identifying all administrative conditions and requirements to be met when replicating such field activities in similar habitats of other protected areas.

Last but not least, it needs to be mentioned that an initial group of strangers from two different countries transformed during the project into a genuine team of experts capable of producing outputs that are truly necessary for the implementation of demanding EU requirements, and this team is already discussing continuing their cooperation even after the project ends.

The project ends at a time when Ukraine is facing the fifth year of a full scale terrorist war and it is hard to imagine a more challenging time for the Ministry of Economy, Environment, and Agriculture of Ukraine which was given the responsibility to utilize the results of the project.

The whole project team is available for future cooperation and help with seeking tools and resources for carrying the hard tasks of the following years. We propose to explore together a variety of financial tools available to cover the continuous exploitation of project outputs and their utilization. While some steps can be covered by the already existing resources, the tools available range beyond the traditional sources. For instance, TAIEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange) should be used for both future study visits and expert missions. Within the project period, the team made various contacts with other important players in the field of nature conservation in Ukraine and the potential for future cooperation is being explored.