

# Why is Private Land Conservation essential?

## Private land is valuable on many accounts

Private land conservation is indispensable for Europe's nature conservation efforts, providing crucial land surfaces essential for meeting biodiversity goals, regardless of ownership. These initiatives safeguard biodiversity hotspots, valuable species, and critical habitats while fostering community engagement and enhancing local identities and civil society. Many private landowners have a generational perspective, viewing their land as a valuable asset to pass on to the next generation in improved condition.

ENPLC Ambassador *Viesturs Lārmanis*, Valka County, Latvia: “Knowing that 120 years ago, the great-grandfather worked on the exact same meadow that we care for today is a strong emotional motivation to continue what he started. It also helps to understand better and explain how certain natural values have survived to this day.”

## Voluntary action is essential

Private land conservation often involves voluntary initiatives to protect or restore habitats and species. Individuals, groups, corporations, or NGOs take on stewardship roles with the goal of preserving biodiversity through voluntary actions.

*Barbora Kukrechtová*, ENPLC Ambassador from Radiměř, Czech Republic: “As pastures and orchards were abandoned, woody plants took over without large herbivores. With the help of volunteers, we've been cutting, mowing, and grazing to revive the area. Initially, using saws and brush cutters, we revitalised the land, letting nature recover. Now, the critically endangered Large Blue butterfly has returned and thrives.”

## Stewardship agreements are crucial

Private land conservation also has a long-standing history of significantly contributing to European nature conservation through conservation stewardship agreements. These

Press kit: Why is Private Land Conservation essential in achieving EU biodiversity targets?

agreements, formed between organisations and landowners, have been instrumental in preserving biodiversity over time.

Private land conservation takes various forms, often structured through contractual agreements like conservation easements. In these agreements, landowners voluntarily relinquish specific rights to an "easement holder," typically a public authority or conservation organisation. Notably, these easements are tied to the land itself, ensuring continuity across generations, with durations commonly spanning 99 years in the US.

Conservation easements are highly flexible, allowing for various land uses as long as they align with conservation goals. Landowners may receive financial benefits, encouraging the preservation of their conservation efforts and the land's natural value. Overall, conservation easements offer a robust mechanism for long-term stewardship, securing conservation objectives over time.

## Private land is diverse, and so are the tools protecting it

Nature conservation needs vary widely, reflecting the diverse requirements of landowners. While certain situations necessitate strictly protected areas, others may not. Additionally, land often serves multiple purposes, offering potential benefits for nature alongside other uses. To maximise impact, a wide range of conservation tools is essential. As part of the LIFE ENPLC project, various conservation tools were thoroughly assessed to address this diversity.

ENPLC Ambassador *Bertrand Monthuir*, Domaine du Bois Landry, Eure-et-Loir department, France on sustainable forestry:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-a16b\\_hkYaU&t=95s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-a16b_hkYaU&t=95s)

The LIFE ENPLC project unites landowners and conservationists to conserve and restore private land to benefit nature and the climate across Europe. A key aspect of the project is fostering trust and collaboration among all stakeholders. To achieve this goal, Eurosite and ELO have formed the Conservation Landowners Coalition (CLC), a European partnership comprising landowners and conservationists. The project is scheduled to run from 2020 to 2024.-