



LIFE is good for governance!

Photo: Pixabay

Good governance is essential to environmental protection. LIFE is the EU's fund for the environment, nature and climate action. Many LIFE projects have had a strong governance component, ensuring compliance enforcement and avoiding environmental crime. Since 2014, that support has been strengthened through 75 dedicated governance and information projects. LIFE has invested some €74 million in these projects, which have mobilised more than €125 million in total. The programme has helped local, regional and national authorities to develop promote, monitor and enforce compliance with EU environmental legislation at all levels.

Investing in governance:

- **Good governance is crucial to ensuring environmental legislation is correctly implemented.** It helps to combat infringements that undermine EU wildlife, waste, air and water legislation. It recognises and encourages the role of citizens and stakeholders by making them aware and by empowering them.
- **LIFE projects have increased the capacity of a European network of environmental prosecutors** to share information and develop best practice to tackle environmental crime. They have developed strategic partnerships with organisations representing inspectors (IMPEL), judges (EUFJE) and police and other enforcement agencies (EnviCrimeNet) and shared information relating to environmental prosecutions throughout the EU and the rest of the world.
- **To combat wildlife crime, LIFE has boosted the operational capacity of police, customs, prosecutors and other enforcement officials.** Projects have provided training and handbooks, set up bird crime and poisoning databases and established networks of stakeholders to stop illegal killing of protected species.
- **LIFE is helping to ensure more uniform application of the EU Waste Shipment Directive.** To stop waste being trafficked and dumped illegally, LIFE is helping environmental inspectors to work jointly across the entire EU.
- **LIFE has empowered NGOs and citizens to take legal action** when environmental laws, such as on air quality, are not being enforced by statutory bodies in Member States. Projects are giving 'citizen enforcement' a boost by sharing knowledge about rights of access to justice and bridging the gap between lawyers, judges, authorities and the public for better environmental governance. They are giving local authorities and regional administrations guidelines on air quality legislation and building capacity among NGOs to push for better enforcement of the EU Air Quality Directive.
- At the same time, **LIFE projects are promoting training for public authorities, environmental inspectors and other professionals.**
- **LIFE has developed guidance and tools for industrial sectors and individual enterprises,** enabling compliance with legislation on chemicals, plastics, waste, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions and nature protection, among others. Projects have shared best practice and provided incentives for change or simplified administration to make it easier to follow the rules.
- By putting statutory bodies and stakeholders together, **LIFE has helped establish management plans for Natura 2000 sites.** This inclusive approach to governance of conservation areas improves the implementation of the Birds and Habitats directives and the Natura 2000 network.
- By making citizens more aware of how well environmental legislation is currently implemented (e.g. through web portals and apps), **LIFE projects are sowing the seeds for more effective implementation in future.**



Saying no to illegal wildlife poisoning

The **VENENO NO** ('No Poison') project developed effective and innovative methods and strategies for tackling wildlife poisoning in Spain. It implemented actions recommended by Spain's national strategy against the illegal use of poisoned bait in the countryside. This work focused on three pillars: prosecution of the crime; prevention and deterrence; and refining knowledge and information. VENENO NO involved all Spanish Autonomous Communities in the preparation of plans and protocols against the use of poison. Seven regions have subsequently put those plans in place. It also supported efforts to start criminal court proceedings for illegal use of poison. This has resulted in 13 convictions, with large fines and jail sentences for some perpetrators. In Castilla-La Mancha, VENENO NO created a poison investigation unit (UNIVE) to patrol conservation areas, and more than 500 police officers were given specialised training. This has shown other Spanish regions practical ways to prevent illegal poisoning. Finally, the project collected extensive data on the poisons used to illegally kill birds. The resulting database is a valuable resource for understanding and fighting wildlife crime.

Impact on governance:

- built capacity to investigate and prosecute wildlife poisoning cases - before this LIFE project, few such cases reached the courts in Spain;
- put poisoning of protected wildlife firmly on the political agenda in Spain;
- created an impetus for the approval of plans against the use of poison in Aragón, the Canary Islands, Castille-Leon, Catalonia, Madrid, Navarre and Valencia;
- recommended stronger controls over the marketing and use of phytosanitary products, to prevent their use in poisoned baits; and
- raised awareness: since the start of the project in 2010, the number of cases of poisoning in Spain has decreased.

"One of the main outcomes of LIFE VENENO NO was the development of action plans for tackling poisoning. These have informed an action plan to tackle illegal poisoning throughout the EU that has been drawn up by the European Network against Environmental Crimes (ENEC)." - David de la Bodega, project coordinator (2010-2014) and currently Head of Legal Unit and coordinator of ENEC at SEO/BirdLife

Read more:

<https://www.venenono.org/>

Photo: LIFE08-NAT/00062/ARules-Cataluña

Helping prosecutors apply environmental law

Interpol and the United Nations Environment Programme estimate the cost of international environmental crime to be around €188 billion per year. High levels of environmental crime can be partly attributed to inefficient and ineffective prosecution and sanctioning. The European Network of Prosecutors for the Environment (ENPE) was founded in 2012 with the goal of making sure that environmental law is applied in a more consistent manner across Europe. Since 2016, the network has been running a LIFE project – the **'LIFE-ENPE project'** – designed to build a self-sustaining network of environmental prosecutors, improve the sharing of information on environmental crime, and improve capacity and consistency for combating transnational waste, wildlife and air pollution crimes.

Impact on governance:

- established four thematic working groups (wildlife crime, air pollution, waste crime and a cross-cutting theme of sanctioning and judicial practice);
- submitted a report to 39 states identifying inconsistencies, weaknesses and recommendations for the prosecution of environmental crimes;



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- built a database of good practices for prosecutors;
- developed training materials delivered by environmental crime prosecution specialists in workshops for priority actions such as identifying trafficking in endangered species;
- collaborated with organisations representing regulators and inspectors (IMPEL), judges (EUFJE) and police (EnviCrimeNet) and other enforcement agencies (Interpol; EUROPOL). This included holding joint conferences and drafting a Memorandum of understanding in ways of working;
- added new member organisations representing Greece, Cyprus, Romania, Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; and
- contributed to key EU regulators documents such as the Waste Shipment Regulation in April 2018.

"If we, as prosecutors, can catch those who committed the crime, if we can prosecute, obtain damages and remove the proceeds of crime, then we can make others stop and think twice." - Anne Brosnan, ENPE President and LIFE-ENPE Project Sponsor

Read more:

<https://www.environmentalprosecutors.eu/>

Giving the public effective access to justice



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The European Commission's Environmental Implementation Review suggests actions that Member States can take to better implement EU environmental law. The **LIFE A2J-EARL** project is complementing these actions by making sure the public can challenge law-breaking in court. Such 'citizen enforcement' requires knowledge of the law and access to justice. Led by the Czech NGO, Association Justice & Environment, in partnership with Client Earth, this LIFE environmental governance and information project is producing handbooks and national toolkits on access to justice, EU procedural rules and case law. These are being sent to judges, public interest lawyers, public administrations and other justice administrators in nine EU Member States (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Spain). The project is creating an online platform where citizens can 'ask a lawyer' about specific cases and a directory of environmental lawyers. At least 1 000 people will take part in workshops, seminars and webinars to broaden stakeholder involvement and improve access to environmental justice.

Impact on governance:

- better compliance with and enforcement of EU environmental legislation;
- helping public administrative bodies be more inclusive towards NGOs and civil society with regards to access to justice;
- making judges more aware of the public right of access to justice in environmental matters;
- making legal professionals more aware of environmental law; and
- broadening stakeholder involvement in environmental governance.

"Individuals and NGOs are often blocked from bringing cases to court. Most of the time, lack of information and awareness is to blame for this democratic deficit. To prevent such blockages, our project focuses on sharing knowledge about access to justice rights and bridging the gap between lawyers, judges, public authorities and the public to improve environmental governance." - Csaba Kiss, Justice & Environment lawyer and A2J-EARL project manager

Read more:

<https://www.clientearth.org/access-justice-greener-europe/>

Putting a stop to waste trafficking



Photo: (Stockphoto)

The EU has introduced a number of measures to prevent the illegal shipment of waste, including obligations on Member States to carry out waste shipment inspections and to cooperate with each other.

LIFE SWEAP promotes enforcement activities by providing training for inspectors and increasing the capacity of police, customs and the judiciary to tackle waste crime in all 36 member countries of IMPEL, the EU Network for the Implementation and Enforcement of Environmental Law. Information sharing and an improved tool for visualising the scale and routes of illegal shipments will help detect, disrupt and prevent illegal waste trafficking. Enforcing the EU Waste Shipment Regulation promotes the efficient use of resources, in line with circular economy policy.

Impact on governance:

- more uniform application of the EU Waste Shipment Regulation;
- establishing an EU-wide dataset for the development of intelligence products (new enforcement, tracking and e-reporting tools);
- setting up a network of 150 trained customs officers across five countries – first customs training held in Estonia in May 2019;
- analysing data from 12 000 waste shipment inspections per year;
- developing a tool to visualise waste shipments; and
- inspector exchange programmes to compare structural differences in competent authorities, compare the way that physical inspections are carried out and gain best practice from these inspections.

"LIFE SWEAP is a unique project as it helps to coordinate and align EU-wide operational enforcement actions on trans-frontier shipments of waste. The capacity-building activities and the new reporting tools enhance a more uniform approach to preventing and tackling illegal shipments of waste. By involving all actors in the project, the impact of inspection and enforcement activities is improved." - Nancy Isarin, LIFE SWEAP project officer, IMPEL

Read more:

<https://www.sweap.eu/>

Managing floods and flood risk



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Italy's Alpine regions are highly vulnerable to extreme weather. The **LIFE FRANCA** project has increased awareness of flood risks in these areas.

To do this it has built an online portal with flood risk maps that are customised to the needs of different user groups (from those responsible for managing floods to scientists/technicians and the general public).

The project has also held more than 40 workshops with stakeholder groups and citizens across Trentino province. The magnitude with which natural hazard phenomena occur is changing and this change creates uncertainty.

LIFE FRANCA is helping people to learn to live with natural hazards and has tailored its communication campaign to the needs and capacity of different stakeholders.

Impact on governance:

- improved communication on flood risks through training for public bodies and awareness raising among stakeholder groups;
- increased cooperation between the public and private sectors;
- produced guidelines on communicating and anticipating flood risk; and
- supported the implementation of the EU Floods Directive and Italy's National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change.

"The adoption of a forward-looking perspective is the best and most efficient strategy for understanding the ways in which nature and society may change, developing programmes for mitigating natural risks, managing unfolding novelties and equipping decision-makers, technicians and the population at large with the capacity and the tools for addressing both risks and opportunities." - Prof. Roberto Poli, LIFE FRANCA project manager

Read more:

<https://www.lifefranca.eu/en/>

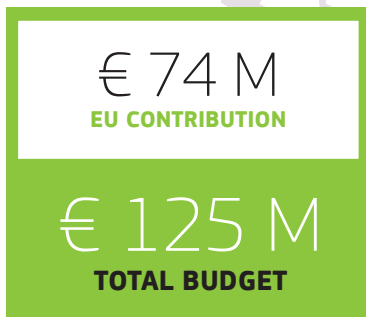
Facts & figures

Thematic distribution of governance projects linked to nature

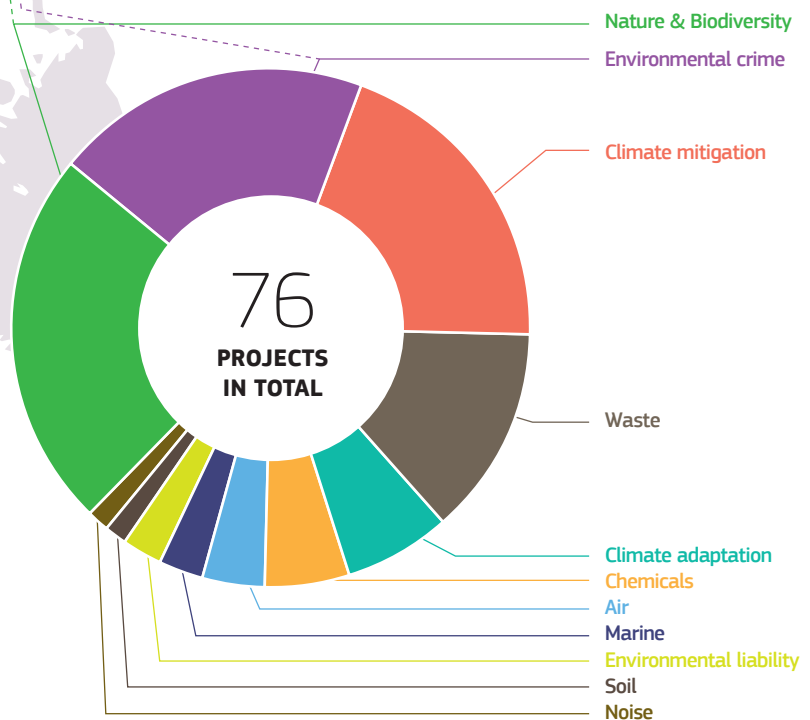


LIFE funding is available for innovative ideas to improve compliance with environmental legislation. From tackling air pollution to stopping waste being dumped, preventing wildlife crime to boosting the capacity of law enforcement, the LIFE programme could fund your solution.

See how LIFE has supported good governance to date.



Source: LIFE Project database



Learn more

ec.europa.eu/life LIFE programme
@LIFEprogramme LIFE programme

How to apply for LIFE funding

The European Commission organises annual calls for proposals. Full details are available at <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/funding/life.htm>

Contact

European Commission – Directorate-General for the Environment – B-1049 Brussels (env-life@ec.europa.eu).
European Commission – Directorate-General for Climate Action – B-1049 Brussels (clima-life@ec.europa.eu).
European Commission – Executive Agency for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (EASME) – B-1049 Brussels (EASME-LIFE-ENQUIRIES@ec.europa.eu).

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