



Press release | 12 June 2023

European Landcare Network founded

Sonairte is delighted to announce our contribution, in close cooperation with other associations from Belgium, Croatia, France, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Spain and Romania, to the foundation of LANDCARE EUROPE as umbrella organisation for Landcare in Europe. The network wants to establish the successful “cooperative approach” between agriculture, nature conservation and municipalities throughout Europe to preserve the diversity of the European agricultural heritage landscapes across national borders.

As the founding member organisation from Ireland, Sonairte was honoured to represent the Irish context in Europe at this historic event. As both a certified organic farm and ecology centre, Sonairte is uniquely placed to offer our successful fusion of the agricultural and environmental perspectives to the ongoing dialogue in Ireland and Europe on the collaboration of these interdependent sectors. Sonairte’s chairperson, **Dr Kim Reilly**, was elected to the board in LANDCARE EUROPE’s founding assembly and we look forward to further contributing to LANDCARE EUROPE’s mission from the Irish perspective.

Brussels, June 7th 2023 – Europe’s characteristic cultural heritage landscapes are unique and significantly marked by agriculture. However, extinction of species and climate change pose an existential threat to them. To secure the diversity of Europe’s rich cultural landscapes in a contemporary, innovative and sustainable manner, national Landcare organisations from 11 EU Member States contributed to the foundation of the non-profit organisation LANDCARE EUROPE in the European Parliament today.

Bridging the gap between agriculture and nature conservation

"Landcare associations are experienced bridge builders. Their cooperative nature conservation approach with farmers is a story of success. They help agriculture gain broader social recognition and income for specific environmental services. At the same time, they enable nature conservation goals to be achieved by consensus." emphasised **Maria Noichl**, MEP and elected 1st president of the non-profit organisation LANDCARE EUROPE.

Concha Salguero from Spain and **Simona Colombo** from Italy were elected as vice presidents. Already today, LANDCARE EUROPE cooperates with more than 250 Landcare associations in 11 EU countries with more than 2,000 employees and organizations in 29 countries.

Humberto Delgado Rosa, Director for Biodiversity of the Directorate-General for Environment, highlighted the importance of initiatives like LANDCARE EUROPE: "Landcare Associations substantially contribute to the conservation of our European cultural heritage landscapes. Their experience and work on the ground is very welcome to help in the implementation of the EU environmental targets, such as those deriving from the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030. They contribute to fostering the Natura 2000 sites, our continent's network of nature protected areas. The establishment of a European umbrella organisation of Landcare Associations is therefore welcome as a tool for fostering sustainable agriculture and food production in Europe."

For a nature-inclusive European agricultural system

During the founding conference, network representatives discussed with Members of the European Parliament and the European Commission how Landcare activities contribute to achieving relevant EU environmental and agricultural objectives and how the EU can support Landcare associations. The focus was on recommendations for the future CAP, which resulted from exchanges of the network partners. The participating associations underlined their demand for a nature-inclusive European agricultural system that provides healthy food and other public ecosystem goods and services.

Norbert Lins MEP, Chairman of the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development (AGRI) emphasised: "Landcare associations know the key factors for successful agricultural nature conservation that also benefits people. Their recommendations, based on decades of practical experience in all parts of Europe, must be considered in the further development of the Common Agricultural Policy."

Knowledge sharing, policy implementation and promoting Landcare

As an umbrella organisation, LANDCARE EUROPE focuses on three key areas:

1. The members exchange information about best-practice projects and apply the ideas to the farms in their home regions.
2. The members help to implement important European strategies and goals, such as the European Green Deal, the Common Agricultural Policy, the Water Framework Directive or the Farm to Fork Strategy.
3. The network supports the establishment of new Landcare associations and umbrella organisations throughout Europe. The long-term goal is to extend the network to all 27 EU Member States and beyond.

The foundation of LANDCARE EUROPE as a registered, non-profit association took place during a one-day founding conference at the European Parliament in Brussels on June 7, 2023. Legal founding members of the association are Boerennatuur Vlaanderen [Belgium], Brodsko ekološko društvo [Croatia], Fédération Conservatoires d'espaces naturels (FCEN) [France], Landcare Germany (DVL) [Germany], Sonairte [Ireland], Legambiente Lombardia [Italy], Baltic Environmental Forum (BEF) [Lithuania], BoerenNatuur [Netherlands], Agri-Cultura-Natura Transylvaniae Association (ACNT) [Romania]. SINCONA-Sud-Quest [Luxembourg], Trashumancia y Naturaleza [Spain] and the Barn Owl Foundation [Hungary] expressed their intention to join the network.

Further information: www.landcare-europe.org



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