

What is LIFE?

LIFE, the acronym for the Financial Instrument for the Environment, is a fund through which the European Union supports environmental and nature conservation projects in the member states. Since 1992, the LIFE instrument has co-financed thousands of environmental protection projects throughout the European Union. In particular, it contributes to the realisation of the objectives of the Natura 2000 network. Further information can be found at: cinea.ec.europa.eu/programmes/life_en

What is the Natura 2000 network?

Born out of two European directives - the Birds Directive (1979) and the Habitats Directive (1992) - the Natura 2000 network is the world's largest network of protected areas, covering almost 850,000 km², i.e. more than 20% of the European Union's territory. This vast ecological network is the result of Europe's commitment to slowing the decline in biodiversity. The aim is to ensure the conservation of endangered habitats and species in Europe.

TO TAKE PART IN THE PROJECT OR TO OBTAIN INFORMATION, CONTACT US! www.life-ardenneislek.eu
lifae@natagora.be or lifae@naturemwelt.lu



Seven years to let nature blossom again!

Over the course of the **seven-year** project (2025-2031), **four major areas of action** will be mobilised to achieve the environmental objectives set: **protect, restore, share and raise awareness**. Recurrent management of the restored habitats is in many cases undertaken by local farmers in order to maintain the conservation status. Finally, biological monitoring of the restored areas during and after the project will also be important to ensure the continuity of the measures and their success.

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PROTECT

To expand the network of nature conservation areas by **110 hectares** through the acquisition of new land inside and outside the **Natura 2000** network in order to improve ecological connectivity.

RESTORE

To restore and create **450 hectares** of emblematic habitats, to replant hedges and individual trees in open landscapes for the Red-backed Shrike and the Great grey Shrike and to reintroduce the marsh fritillary butterfly.

SHARE

To strengthen the cross-border cooperation and ease the exchange of knowledge between partners, scientists and conservationists.

RAISE AWARENESS

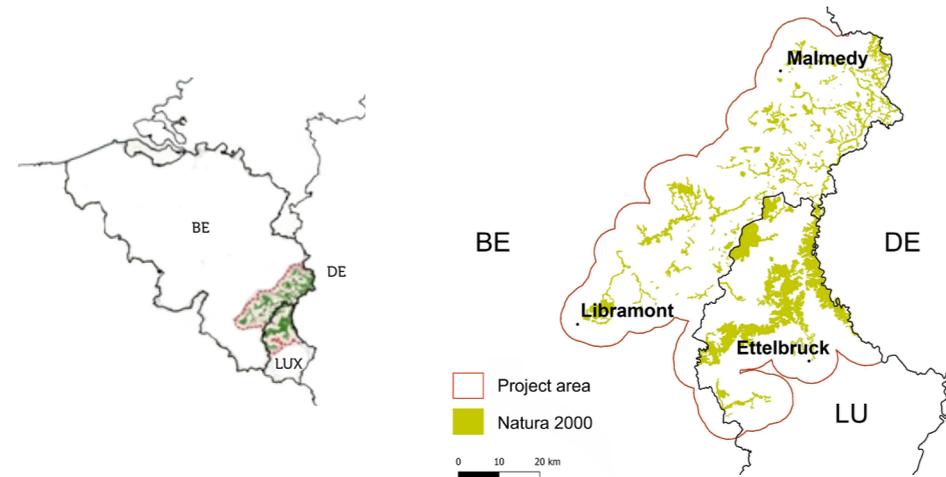
To raise the general public's awareness about the challenges involved in biodiversity's preservation. To introduce citizens to restored nature reserves.



Zone of the projet

The eastern and upper Ardennes in Belgium and the Luxembourgish Ardennes (Eislek) face numerous anthropogenic pressures that impact biodiversity. With the help of the European Union's LIFE programme, Wallonia, the Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Biodiversity of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Natagora, the Fondation Hëllef fir d'Natur and natur&ëmwelt have committed to protecting, restoring and maintaining the typical habitats of the Ardennes regions in a good state of conservation through the LIFE ArdennEislek project.

The project area covers 47 Natura 2000 sites and a buffer zone of 5 kilometres around these areas. It includes more than 45 municipalities, which corresponds to a total project area of just over 338,000 hectares.



HEATH AND NARDUS GRASSLANDS

Wet heaths, dry heaths and nardus grasslands are maintained by grazing. These habitats are distinguished from one another by the soil type and grazing intensity. The former have moist para-moor soils, the latter rather dry soils. Both are dominated by shrubs (heather, blueberry). The nardus grasslands are to a certain extent dry heaths with more intensive grazing pressure. The vegetation here is short and dominated by grasses.



MOOR GRASS MEADOWS AND BUTTERFLY MEADOWS

The project also aims to restore and create new moor grass and butterfly meadows. Affected species include the violet copper and the marsh fritillary. The former depends on the presence of its host plant, the common bistort, on which it feeds and which it uses to lay its eggs. For the second, the reintroduction of several hundred individuals is planned. These two butterflies require a network of interconnected habitats that are in a good state of conservation.

450 HECTARS, 10 HABITATS & 4 TARGET SPECIES, OVER 7 YEARS, IN 2 COUNTRIES



MOWN MEADOWS

Submontane (300 to 550 metres above sea level) and montane (above 550 metres above sea level) meadows are home to a wide variety of plants. Grasses (tall oat, golden oat...) accompanied by blooming flowers (bitter vetch, black knapweed...) thrive there. As part of the project, 20 km of hedges and 300 individual trees are also to be planted to encourage Red-backed Shrikes and Great Grey Shrikes, which depend on these hedgerow landscapes for nesting and foraging.



FORESTS

Bog forests and alluvial forests are two naturally preserved wetland habitats. The former are dominated by birch trees and peat moss and develop on acidic, oligotrophic (very low levels of nutrients) soils. The latter, species-rich habitats (alder, ash, willow...) are thriving due to the influx of alluvial soil deposited by river flooding. Potential sites are jeopardised by drainage and afforestation of these habitats and are one of the causes of their deterioration or even disappearance.



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