

WILDLIFE ESTATES Initiative

“WE act for biodiversity”



Public recognition of private biodiversity enhancement; is it enough?

Wildlife Estates (WE) Initiative celebrated its 2018 Plenary Session at Bückeurg Palace. Challenges and opportunities for private landowners were discussed by stakeholders from 13 countries



This year 2018, HSH A. Prince of Schaumburg-Lippe welcomed the WE Plenary Session at his already labelled estate Bückeurg – Schaumburger Wald (Germany) between 4th and 5th September, 2018. The WE Conference, intitled “Private Conservation: Challenges and opportunities for private landowners”, was open for the general public and included interesting presentations and debates between foresters, technicians, farmers,

hunters, landowners, scientists and politicians from across Europe and America. The attendees could hear about the challenges that landowners are facing to continue providing a high number of environmental benefits to the whole society. The first panel discussion was on the latter quick resettlement of wolf through Europe whilst the second debated the need for more public compensation for private conservation.

One of the speakers, Dr. Humberto Delgado Rosa –director for Nature Capital, European Commission- reminded: “Nowadays we are seeing in several EU countries a recovery of some protected species, such as the wolf, together with the expansion of other non-protected wildlife species, such as wild boar. Wolves are returning to territories from which they had been extinguished, as that is raising concerns and conflicts, namely where livestock is unprotected or more susceptible to predation. There are several preventive measures against wolf attacks that can be adapted to local circumstances, and that may be financed by EU and national funds. If properly implemented, preventive measures often reduce the problem, and should be accompanied by adequate compensation for when damage does occur.”

A consensus was reached that large carnivores have to find a place in the environment but respecting economic, social and biological limits –wolf population in Germany is growing at a rate of 50% every 3 years-. Some people are starting to question Natura 2000 network as a result of the problems that wolves cause.

Natura 2000 was the main aspect addressed when the public restrictions to private activities were discussed. At the estate holding the Session, the compensation for public restrictions imposed on their forest activities only reaches 18% of the economic burden that such restrictions imply.

A representative of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) let know that, in the USA, NGOs and landowners sign contracts which allow for conservation together with private activities. The WE adviser remarked that a lobby in the same way that TNC would be very positive in Europe. In the USA, 85% species exist thanks to private territories.



Mr. Christoph zu Stolberg-Stolberg uttering a speech after receiving a label during the WE Ceremony at the end of the Gala Dinner

At the very Bückeburg Palace, HSH A. Prince of Schaumburg-Lippe presided over a Gala Dinner, at whose dessert took place a Label Ceremony. In this event, Mr. Konstantin Kostopoulos -WE adviser- and Mr. Thierry de l'Escaille -European Landowners' Organization secretary general- awarded the estate Fürstlich Stolberg-Stolberg'sche Forstverwaltung. Mr. Christoph zu Stolberg-Stolberg received the diploma and expressed his joy for such a recognition for his family's good management of environment in that estate where forestry, hunting, tourism, education and science are excellently coordinated.



The session finished with a visit to the zone of the host estate concerned by Natura 2000 in which attendees learnt with its manager (Eng. C. Weber)'s interesting explanations

Land Is For Ever

The European Union (EU) has formally committed to halt its biodiversity decrease by 2020. Much of this European biodiversity is found on the 60% of Europe's acreage which is privately owned. Therefore, it has become clear that the EU nature conservation goals cannot be accomplished without the engagement of these private landowners. In this line, most EU Member States created a range of voluntary programs whereby landowners and land managers can receive payments and other benefits for participation in land management contracts for conservation purposes. However, many of those conservation programs are relatively new and unknown to European private landowners. In some cases they may not even exist in regional or national laws and policies.



www.landisforever.eu

European Land Conservation Network (ELCN) organized a workshop in Madrid the first week of November 2018 for explaining its LIFE+ project. ELCN invited European Landowners' Organization -ELO- to the workshop, where ELO explained its own LIFE+ project, which is twin of ELCN's: Land Is For Ever. The overall purpose of this project is to expand the use of private land conservation methods and approaches in the EU. Through dialogue with landowners and field tests in

different EU member states, Land Is For Ever intends to develop recommendations for new and more effective private land conservation policies and how these policies can be rolled out effectively at a larger scale. This bottom-up approach to policy development makes the project unique and gives the recommendations that emerge a great chance of success in the future. Wildlife Estates Initiative was presented by Ms. Anne-Sophie Mulier (ELO) at that workshop as a very useful tool for Land Is Forever for being an exceptional incentive for quality environment enhancement.



Political developments at the European Union in 2018

In a meeting between the German chancellor Ms. Angela Merkel and the president of the European People's Party (EPP), Mr. Joseph Daul, they decided to support the head of the group EPP Deputies, Mr. Manfred Weber as a candidate for the presidency of the European Commission. Other names which are circulating



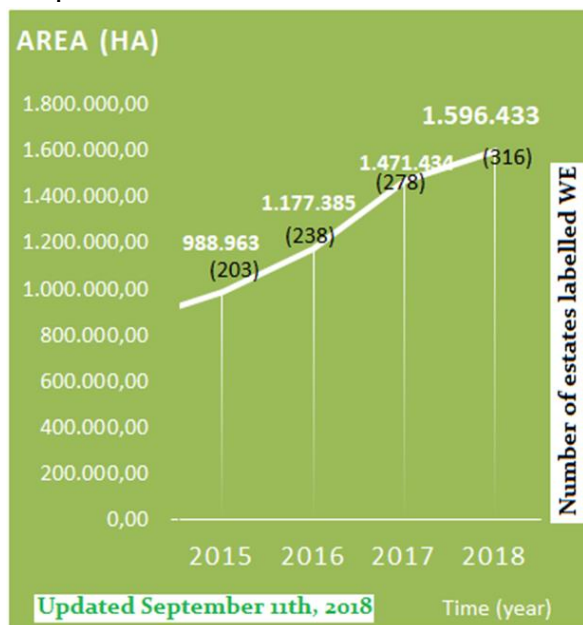
in the Brussels circles are those of Mr. Michel Barnier, a conservative politician now leading the Brexit negotiations, the vice-president of the Commission Mr. Franch Timmermans and Mr. Maroš Šefčovič, Slovakia's European commissioner.

The selection of the next president of the European Commission is the prerogative of the heads of State Council of the European Union which should take into account the result of the elections for the European Parliament.

Wildlife Estates Steering Committee meeting. September 4th, 2018

The WE Steering Committee gathered together with the occasion of the WE Plenary Session in Bückeberg (Germany).

Provisional figures for 2018 show a total of 316 Wildlife Estate labels corresponding to approximately 1.6 million hectares in 17 European Union countries.



Increase of the Wildlife Estates Initiative in surface (white) and number of estates (black)

The average annual rate of growth of the number of estates labelled for the period 2014-7 is 20%. If this growth is maintained -and there is reason to believe in that given the high potential of many of the countries where the label is established-, the 3 million hectares benchmark would be exceeded in 5 years. An indication of the keen interest that our members are showing for the Initiative is demonstrated by the renewal of about 80% of the labels which have expired since 2012.

The Plenary Session 2019 was decided to be held at Esterházy Betriebe estate (Austria), proposal submitted by the German delegation.

Developments of the WE Scientific Committee.

The chairman of the Steering Committee -Mr. Konstantin Kostopoulos- announced on behalf of his equivalent for the Scientific Committee -Dr. Carlos José Otero Muerza- that the methodologies developed by the latter workgroup have been registered so as to protect the intellectual property of those procedures. The second edition of the "WE Objective Evaluation Methodologies" has been published for internal use; they define the WE Conservation and Management Strategies as tools for landowners to manage wildlife while enhancing biodiversity. These strategies consist in establishing small areas with measures designed for every species at a low cost which will influence large territories.

CAP Reform and Biodiversity: Opportunities and Obstacles.

Mr. Konstantin Kostopoulos -WE chief operating officer- informed the following with regards to the new CAP:

On June 1st, 2018 the Commission made public three draft Regulations on the new CAP: the first relates to establishing rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by member states; the second is about the financing mana-

gement and the monitoring of the CAP; the third deals with the common market organization in agricultural products and some other issues such as quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs, geographical indications of wine products and specific measures for agriculture in outermost regions.



Mr. Konstantin Kostopoulos, Wildlife Estates Initiative chief operating officer

With the new CAP, it seems that the European Commission aims to lay the burden for the management more on the national administrations. However, more freedom to national governments to set in their national strategic plans the implementing measures for the CAP is accompanied in the draft Regulations by heavy and detailed requirements for the completion and approval of these plans as well as enhanced conditionality for their implementation relating to the environment. The rules referring to the content, assessment, approval and control of these strategic plans are bound to prove very cumbersome for the national authorities leaving aside the fact that serious penalties are foreseen in cases of missing the targets in the plan. The new CAP rules integrate environment and climate in a more substantive way than before.

What makes things worse is that the Commission proposals for the overall CAP budget foresee considerable reductions, in particular as regards the Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. The Council of Ministers for Agriculture has discussed the European Commis-

sion proposals in two meetings on June 18th and July 16th, 2018. In July the German and French ministers signed a joint statement protesting against the reduction proposed in the CAP budget and recalling that the decrease is “consistent neither with the reinforced environmental and climate objectives, nor with increasing societal expectations towards the agricultural sector” and that “capping should remain optional”. Moreover, 10 ministers (Finn, Czech, Dane, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Luxemburg, Dutch, Romanian and Swede) signed another document referring to the “conditionality to ensure environmental performance” in the new CAP. In it, they recall that according to the new CAP rules, “to receive support, all farmers would have to fulfil the requirements of the new conditionality, i.e. an enhanced list of statutory management requirements (SMRs), a revised version of the greening requirements and other agricultural and environmental conditions established at EU level”. Ministers underline that “this implies a compliance-based approach” contrary to the Commission claim that the new CAP is “result-based” because it “limits room for member states to develop targeted interventions tailored to specific national and regional needs”. Ministers propose to “simplify and reduce the requirements for conditionality and include only those that are relevant and necessary”.

The new CAP means less funding available, more obligations especially as regards the environment which is integrated in the new policy under a new conditionality, higher management responsibilities for governments which will be responsible for the new national strategic plans, enhanced controls by the European Commission and penalties for delays and non-compliance.

There is an increased ambition with regard to environmental and climate-related objectives: another novelty in the new draft regulation on the CAP shows once more the intention of the Commission services to integrate the environmental objectives in the policy. This is the requirement that member states make a “greater overall contribution” to the achievement of the three environmental objectives:

- contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation,
- foster sustainable development and efficient management of natural resources, such as water, soil and air and
- contribute to the protection of biodiversity, enhance ecosystem services and preserve habitats and landscapes.

Member states are specifically required to explain how they intend to achieve this greater overall contribution. On the basis of result indicators, the Commission will monitor and control the progress in the strategic plans as regards the three environmental objectives and, through implementing acts, it can suspend or permanently reduce payments.

Another innovation is the introduction of voluntary schemes for the climate and the environment. These practices should be conceived to go beyond the mandatory requirements prescribed by the system of conditionality. Support for such schemes can be granted either as payment in addition to direct payments, or as payment compensating beneficiaries for all or part of the costs incurred and income foregone as a result of commitments relating to environment, climate and other management commitments.

It is not specified which agricultural practices will be supported. However, in the recitals of the draft regulation, some examples are given:

enhanced management of permanent pastures and landscape features, and organic farming.



The 2013 reform of the Common Agricultural Policy granted member states the option to ‘cap,’ i.e. to limit the amount of the basic payment that any farmer receives. The funds saved under this mechanism stay in the member state concerned and are transferred to the Rural Development envelope. In the current CAP there is no provision for a deduction of labour costs before the capping is applied. With the new CAP, regulation limits to direct payments become compulsory. Basic income support to genuine farmers will be reduced from 25% for the tranche between 60,000 and 75,000 € to 100% for an amount exceeding 100,000 €. Salaries, including taxes and social contributions and the equivalent costs of regular and unpaid labour of persons working in the farm and who do not receive a salary are deducted before capping is applied. The funds saved from the above reduction shall be used primarily for the financing of the complementary redistributive support from bigger to smaller or medium sized farms or can be transferred all or part of it to finance rural development types of interventions. Some analysts have concluded that capping will result in only very few farms receiving positive net direct payments (which is the case

for farms in Bulgaria, Romania and Lithuania in which labour costs are low).

The enhanced conditionality implies an administrative penalty on beneficiaries receiving direct payments who do not comply with the statutory management requirements and the standards for good agricultural and environmental conditions of land established in the CAP strategic plans.

All the current exemptions, which limit the scope of the greening practices in the current CAP, namely organic farms, farms below a certain size or below a certain arable area, are eliminated in the new CAP.

The protection of carbon-rich soils through appropriate protection of peat land and wetland is added; it will be compulsory the use of the new Farm Sustainability Tool for Nutrients. Finally, a new requirement introduces a “ban on converting or ploughing permanent grasslands in Natura 2000 sites”.

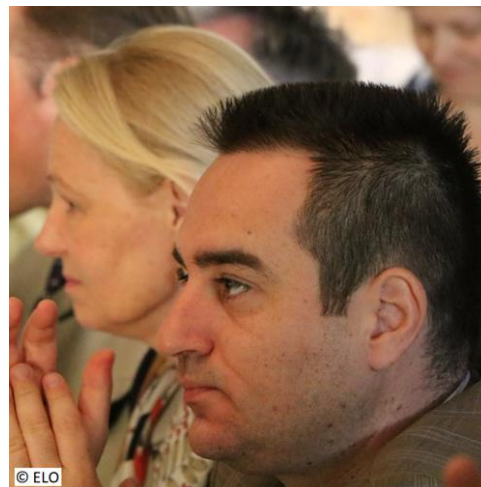
The administrative penalties for non-compliance to the above conditionality shall be applied by means of reduction from or exclusion -for one or more years- of the total amount of payments granted or to be granted to the beneficiary concerned. It is somewhat strange the fact that, although the minimum standards and the penalties are to be set by the member states, the Commission reserves the right to set new rules with delegated acts in the adoption of which member states play in most cases an advisory role. It should be noted that, in a great number of Articles in the new CAP Regulations, there is this provision empowering the Commission to establish implementing acts or delegated acts which is in contradiction with the principle of subsidiarity.

During the discussions in the last two Council meetings, many ministers expressed their concerns that instead of real simplification, implementation is made more complex by the conditionality provisions.

Developments in some of the WE national delegations

WE Bulgaria

Wildlife Estates Initiative has a new national delegation: WE Bulgaria is run by members of the Bulgarian Association of Agricultural Land Owners and of the National Association of the Bulgarian Black Sea.



Mr. Dimitar Kanariev, member of the Bulgarian WE national delegation and chairman of the Management Board of the National Association of the Bulgarian Black Sea

The WE Scientific Committee is adapting our methodology to the Bulgarian particularities. Then, the first candidates in this country will be evaluated and, if awarded WE, start enjoying our network.

WE Italy



New qualified WE evaluators holding their diploma

WE Italy is another national delegation which is establishing. Mr. Francesco Natta and Ms. Justine Bengough are running WE Italy and have already identified an independent business who could do the evaluations for the estates applying for our label: Studio ECOS. The ornithologist Dr. Violetta Longoni and the ECOS team participated in an evaluation training course in Madrid in July 2018, together with new evaluators for WE from Romania, Bulgaria and the Netherlands.

WE Spain

On August 30th, 2018, the number of estates labelled WE in Spain reached 100, which is the highest in the whole network. A remarkable estate labelled during 2018 is Parque Regional del Curso Medio del Río Guadarrama y Su Entorno, a public natural park covering 22,656 ha, wholly affected by the Natura 2000 Network.



On the left, Dr. Humberto Delgado Rosa -Director for Nature Capital, DG Environment, European Commission- delivering our label to Mr. Carlos Izquierdo -minister of environment and zoning of the Region of Madrid-

WE Spain is carrying out the project “Improving Habitat Holding Capacity for Wildlife in Fuerteventura Biosphere Reserve WE”, whose main goal is reaching the sufficient water availability for conserving de-

sert wildlife, specially focused on *Chlamydotis undulata*. WE Spain has established a relation of cooperation with Guardia Civil, the Spanish military police, in charge of the environment surveillance.



Dr. Carlos José Otero Muerza -chair of the WE Scientific Committee- between two officers of Guardia Civil

The WE Initiative was promoted at Forum Ibérico in Badajoz on September 14th, 2018.

WE Sweden

So far, Sweden is the country with most new estates labelled WE in 2018: 21.

WE Belgium

The Wallonian Ministry of Agriculture has realized that WE is much more than a green project and is ready to provide funds for the Initiative. Flemish authorities are on the way to recognizing the questionnaire that candidates for our Label have to fill in as an official document in a process of getting a management plan for territories.



Presentation of the scientific review “Wild Boar (*Sus scrofa*) populations in Europe. A scientific review of populations trends and implications for management”

European Landowners' Organization (ELO) has edited in 2018 this scientific review on European wild boar populations trends. This compilation is based on 550 peer-viewed scientific papers published between 1977 and 2017. The European Parliament (Brussels) held a presentation of the report on June 26th, 2018 by Dr. Jurgen Tack, scientific advisor at ELO. The event, organized by the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, and ELO, included a panel discussion on the topic integrated by Mr. Stefan Leiner - head of Biodiversity Unit, European Commission- and Mr. Andrea Marsan -zoology expert at the University of Genova-. This was a conference of the European Parliament Intergroup “Biodiversity, Hunting & Countryside” which gathers MEPs from different political groups and various stakeholders promoting wildlife conservation, sustainable hunting and fishing, as well as the sustainable management of the countryside and cultural heritage. The objectives of the Intergroup are to promote the role of hunting and other forms of sustainable use of wild species for biodiversity, wildlife management, rural development and forestry issues. Additionally, the Intergroup regularly focuses on cross cutting issues that affect socio-economic activities in rural areas and seek to build bridges between the civil society and decision makers. In 2004, ELO (European Landowners' Organization) joined the Intergroup as Co-Secretariat, bringing expertise in countryside-related topics.

The growing environmental and social concerns about wild boar reflects its increasing presence in most areas of Europe. These populations have undergone an increase in both size and distribution range over the 30 past years. For some hunters, landowners or environmentalists, this trend indicates better habitat conditions and the presence of an additional hauntable species in our continent; other stakeholders cite increasing negative impacts of an expanding population of boar such as environmental problems, and forest and agricultural damage. For the latter, the increased wild boar populations are challenging their combined environmental, social and economic business models.



The spread of African swine fever within European borders implies new risk, keeping in mind the lack of data and understanding about the trends in populations of this animal. Therefore, the species is becoming an increasing concern not only to farmers and hunters, but also to national authorities and the scientific community.

The growth of these populations no doubt can be explained largely by climate change and new agricultural practices. Instead, possible solutions are hard to be found in the scientific literature. This paper tries to identify elements which could -after being discussed in order to reconcile natu-

ral and economic arguments- help mitigating the negative impacts of the pairing growing wild boar populations and human activities for both the latter and the environment. Such elements are connected with hunting, supplementary feeding, fencing, better support and policy.



De Hoge Veluwe National Park wins Belleuropa Award 2017

Each year the Belleuropa Award honours a member of the Wildlife Estates Initiative for exceptional achievements in improving rural landscapes and enhancing biodiversity

The Belleuropa project was created by the environmentalist Mr. Giuseppe Natta. The Belleuropa Award recognizes the exceptional initiatives undertaken by private land managers and public-private partnerships in the protecting and preserving local landscapes and wildlife. It promotes sustainable business models based on responsible agriculture, rural tourism, and the preferment of low-impact products or activities. The last years, this honour is awarded to an estate already under the Wildlife Estate Label. The Hoge Veluwe National Park epitomizes the values and philosophy that underpin this award and received the last Belleuropa prize.



The park covers 5,400 ha and boasts a spectacular mosaic of pre-industrial, man-made landscapes including heath, drifting sands, extensive wetlands as well as old-growth woodland. It is home to an extraordinarily diverse range of flora and fauna.



Ms. Annie Schreijer-Pierik, Ms. Justine Bengough, baron Seger van Voorst tot Voorst

Due to its central position in the Netherlands, the Hoge Veluwe National Park plays a key role in the country's National Ecological Network and is also part of the European Natura 2000 Network. The careful and systematic management of the land has created a diversity of biotopes which act as a sanctuary for many protected and rare species -marsh gentian, sand sedge, pine marten-. For several of these species, the Park is the last refuge in the Netherlands. The award -a beautiful painting by

Mr. Andrew Kamiti of the iconic Cavaliere d'Italia or black-winged stilt, a species which has been successfully brought back from the brink of extinction in Italy- was presented to baron Seger van Voorst tot Voorst, director of the Hoge Veluwe National Park, by the member of the European Parliament Ms. Annie Schreijer-Pierik, and Ms. Justine Bengough -WE Italy-. The ceremony took place on December 5th, 2017 in the European Parliament.

many heritage house owners as possible are needed. Get involved in the upcoming online survey and let us know what is your reality as a heritage house owner.

Contact person: Marie Orban (marie.orban@elo.org)

Wildlife Estates might cooperate with Butterfly Conservation Europe

Some ELO personnel visited Limbourg (Belgium) on October 15th, 2018, to see whether the assessing methodology and procedures of Butterfly Conservation Europe (BCE) is suitable as to estates labelled WE could collaborate with this institution.



Mr. Thierry de l'Escaille -ELO secretary general-, Mr. Pierre Crahay -ELO Belgian contact for LIFE+ and Natura 2000-, Ms. Servane Morand -ELO project officer-, Dr. Dirk Maes, Ms. Valérie Vandenabeele -project manager at Hubertus Vereniging Vlaanderen, Aanspreekpunt Privaat Beheer - Natuur en Bos- and Ms. Maeve Howe -ELO project officer at that moment-.

A scientist at the Research Institute Nature and Forest of Flanders -Dr. Dirk Maes- explained and answered, in the terrain, the questions of Mr. Gerardo Gil de la Calle -WE coordinator- about the procedure of BCE for testing the dynamics of

Heritage Houses for Europe, Exchange & Innovate

On November 6th, 2018, the European Landowners' Organization (ELO) and the European Historic Houses Association hosted the first workshop of the project "Heritage Houses for Europe, Exchange & Innovate".

20. GOYA - Nicholas Wills (c. The Curries)
© ELO



This event was the first step for researching and promoting the added-value of family-owned heritage houses, culturally, economically and socially. The workshop gathered some of the members of ELO's project Heritage Houses for Europe (HHE) and key stakeholders of the heritage houses sector to discuss business models and innovation. The report of the findings will be released shortly on the website: www.europeanlandowners.org/heritage-houses-for-europe, where also further information can be found on HHE.

To make this project as relevant as possible, as

the populations of butterflies. The monitoring is being developed by BCE in 20 European countries for more than 25 years, all the information being sent to a centralised database. Each country makes its monitoring for the abundance of butterflies in its own territory. Every 3 years, a European report is issued with the data from all the countries with the objective of stating the trends of the populations of butterflies in our continent.

Most of the people sampling for BCE are volunteers, whose access to estates WE might be facilitated if this cooperation is set in the future. WE members will get informed about developments on this matter.



Enjoy the beautiful countryside, nature and facilities of several European estates, most of them owned or managed by members of the Friends of the Countryside and/or the European Historic Houses Association.

4th Interreg Partridge meeting in Flanders

Partridge is a pioneer cross-border project funded through the North Sea Region Interreg programme of the European Regional Development Fund.

Facing the fact that there is a continuing loss of farmland biodiversity, Partridge was born in 2016 and is now present in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and the United Kingdom. This project aims for a 30% increase in farmland biodiversity by 2020. The method for achieving this is performing seven agri-environmental schemes, supplementary winter feeding and predator management -where possible- at ten 500 ha farmland demonstration sites.

This project aims as well to influence agri-environmental policy and demonstrate how to encourage farmland conservation.



Walk in the demonstration site at Ramskapelle

During the morning of November 15th, 2018, there was a visit to the demo area at Ramskapelle, Nieuwpoort, Occidental Flanders, Belgium for partner Steering Group, farmers and other stakeholders. During the afternoon, the Wildlife Estates coordinator joined the Partridge 4th Steering Committee meeting, where very good results and intention of expanding the Pro-

ject were highlighted and the methods for doing so, discussed.

Perhaps this project will issue its own label in the near future or maybe its demo sites will apply for joining the Wildlife Estates Initiative. Anyway, exchange of good environmental practices and other ways of collaboration between Wildlife Estates and Partridge will come in the near future for sure.



Upcoming events

- **December 4th, 2018** - Biodiversity Conference (Intergroup session on “Concrete implementation of the Nature Action Plan”, organized by the European Landowners’ Organization) and Belleuropa Award 2018. Brussels, Belgium.
- **December 20th, 2018** - WE France meeting 2018. Fondation François Sommer, Paris, France.
- **February 11th, 2019** - WE Belgium event. Brussels, Belgium.
- **April 8th, 2019** - WE Steering Committee and Scientific Committee meetings. Brussels, Belgium.
- **April 9th, 2019** - Forum For the Future of Agriculture. WE Award Ceremony during the FFA Gala Dinner. Brussels, Belgium.
- **June 4th and 5th, 2019** - European Landowners’ Organization General Assembly. Finland.

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