

A close-up photograph of a sunflower head, showing the intricate details of the dark brown, textured center and the bright yellow petals. The lighting is warm, creating a golden glow.

ELO

European Landowners' Organization

2025 Activity report



Innovators by Nature event

© Thibault BELVAUX

TABLE OF CONTENT

<u>ELO FOREWORD</u>	1
<u>ELO IN 2025: KEY EVENTS AT A GLANCE</u>	2
<u>AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS</u>	4
<u>FORESTS & FORESTRY</u>	10
<u>ENVIRONMENT & BIODIVERSITY</u>	13
<u>CLIMATE & NATURAL RESOURCES</u>	18
<u>LAND & PROPERTY RIGHTS</u>	20
<u>ELO COMMUNICATION</u>	21



The European Landowners' Organization (ELO) is a unique federation of associations from Europe, dedicated to representing the interests of landowners, farmers, foresters, and rural entrepreneurs.



FOREWORD



Thierry de l'ESCAILLE
ELO Executive President



Dr. Jurgen TACK
ELO Secretary-General



Field visit to Biowanze

Europe's countryside stands at a decisive moment. Rural land covers most of the European Union and provides far more than food: it sustains renewable materials, biodiversity, cultural heritage and economic vitality. At the heart of these landscapes are the farmers, foresters, land managers and rural enterprises who are represented by the European Landowners' Organization. Our mission remains clear: to ensure that European policies recognise the essential role of those who actively manage the land and shape the Countryside every day.

Over the past year, ELO has been actively engaged in several major European policy debates that will shape the future of rural land management.

A central priority has been the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). ELO has consistently advocated for a CAP that supports productive agriculture while fairly rewarding environmental stewardship. Farmers and land managers must be able to contribute to food security, climate resilience and biodiversity protection without being weighed down by excessive administrative complexity. Simplification therefore remains a key priority.

Another key area of focus has been the EU Nature Restoration Law. While halting biodiversity loss is an important objective, ELO has underlined that private landowners must be recognised as essential partners in this effort. It will only succeed if it is built on incentives, workable governance structure and respect for property rights.

Forestry policy has also remained high on the agenda. ELO has closely followed the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) and its potential impact on European forest owners. While tackling global deforestation is a legitimate goal, we have raised concerns about the disproportionate administrative burden the regulation may place on sustainable European forestry operations and forest-based businesses.

Likewise, the debate on the proposed EU Forest Monitoring Framework raised important questions of subsidiarity and proportionality. The negative vote in the European Parliament reflected concerns that the proposal risked adding new reporting obligations without delivering clear benefits for forest management.

Beyond these legislative debates, ELO has continued to contribute to broader European initiatives on biodiversity, soil health, climate action and nature-based solutions. Through partnerships, research projects and initiatives such as the Wildlife Estates Label, we continue to demonstrate that productive land management, entrepreneurship and biodiversity conservation can go hand in hand.

Across all these policy areas, one principle remains fundamental: Europe's environmental and agricultural ambitions will only succeed if those who manage the land are fully involved. ELO will continue to represent landowners and rural entrepreneurs in Brussels, helping to shape policies that support both a thriving countryside and a resilient natural environment.

ELO IN 2025: KEY EVENTS AT A GLANCE

Biocontrol: how to remove regulatory obstacles to a greener agriculture

March 2025, European Parliament

Hosted by MEP Stefan KÖHLER (EPP), organised by ELO and Agriodor

The event brought together policymakers, industry leaders and farmers to address the slow approval process for biocontrol products in the EU.

Key takeaways from the event included the urgency of harmonising biocontrol regulations across EU Member States, the need for increased investment in regulatory expertise, and the importance of involving farmers in shaping policy decisions. Industry experts highlighted how Europe's slow regulatory pace discourages investment and pushes agricultural start-ups to seek opportunities elsewhere. Drawing inspiration from Brazil's fast-track approval system for biocontrol, panellists urged the European Commission to deliver on its commitment to accelerate access to these essential tools. ELO is and remains committed to advocating for a regulatory environment that supports both innovation and agricultural sustainability. As such, it welcomed the Commission's Omnibus X proposal, that followed the event's conclusion on biocontrols.

[More on ELO website.](#)



©European Parliament

Biofuels: growing sustainable energy

June 2025, European Parliament

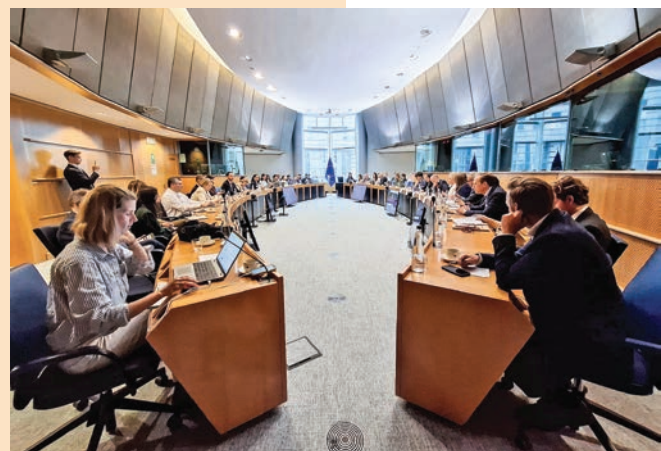
Hosted by MEP Elsi KATAINEN (Renew), organised by ELO and John Deere

As global interest in renewable energy continue to rise, biofuels play an increasing role in the energy market. At the EU level, biofuels are part of the EU's renewable energy strategy and considered a key component in decarbonizing transport. Under the Renewable Energy Directive, the EU had set binding targets for renewable energy in transport, while requiring a phasing out of high ILUC-risk biofuels by 2030. As a result, the focus has shifted to second- and third-generation biofuels to meet those targets.

This event brought together farmers, scientists, industry leaders, and policymakers to explore how biofuels could support the EU's twin goals of climate neutrality and rural economic development. It addressed the central question: How could the European biofuel sector evolve to support the EU's energy transition and strategic autonomy, decarbonize the farming sector, and provide additional revenue to farmers, while safeguarding food security? And how far could it realistically evolve to meet those targets? The takeaway? With clear rules, cooperation, and innovation, Europe can deliver both food and fuel in a sustainable way.

The event was followed by a field visit to Biowanze, organised with the support of ePure, which demonstrated biofuel circularity in action.

[More on ELO website.](#)



EUROPEAN BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE

MONEY TALKS: CLOSING THE FUNDING GAP FOR NATURE RESTORATION

December 2025, Brussels

The conference brought together financial experts, policymakers, scientists, land managers, investors and civil society representatives to discuss how to make biodiversity restoration financially viable and scalable.

Europe has the resources to support biodiversity, yet practical deployment remains a challenge. Discussions focused on how to turn biodiversity ambition into credible, investable solutions.

Speakers from various backgrounds (EIB, Research, IUCN, companies) highlighted that scaling up biodiversity finance will require robust metrics, pilot projects, appropriate financial infrastructure and enabling policy frameworks. The event also underlined the importance of combining innovation with practical, on-the-ground implementation.

The conference reflected a growing shift from fragmented efforts towards a more structured and investable nature-based solution. Success will depend on policy clarity, market infrastructure and long-term partnerships that treat nature as an economic asset rather than a cost centre.

[More on ELO website.](#)



INNOVATORS BY NATURE

Be part of the future of nature-driven innovation



Across eight thematic sessions, companies, practitioners, and organisations presented concrete and sustainable solutions, showing how landowners and land managers can develop new revenue streams while accelerating more resilient and nature-positive practices. The programme featured practical use cases and collaborative models in regenerative and climate-resilient agriculture, soil health, biomass recovery, circular resource use, habitat restoration, biodiversity management, sustainable forestry, renewable energy integration, and rural innovation partnerships.

As Secretary-General of ELO, Jurgen TACK highlights how innovation and sustainable stewardship are not opposed,

ELO and Friends of the Countryside hosted *Innovators by Nature*, a full-day event showcasing innovative business models to an audience of landowners, farmers, foresters, entrepreneurs, and policymakers from across Europe.

but mutually reinforcing: “Those who own and manage land will be judged by the state in which we hand it over to the next generation. Innovation is not a threat to this responsibility - it is a necessity, both moral and economic. If we want nature to thrive, we must find ways to make sustainability and economic resilience work together.”



SAVE THE DATE FOR 2026.

The next edition will take place on **3 December 2026** in Brussels. For partnership opportunities, please contact: anne.marchadier@elo.org and beatrice.croce@elo.org

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SYSTEMS

In 2025, European agricultural policy entered a new phase of strategic reflection and reform. The European Commission published several key initiatives shaping the future of the sector, including the *Vision for Agriculture and Food* and the proposals for the post-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) together with the future structure of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Legislative work has also been advanced on innovation, regulatory simplification and generational renewal. Throughout the year, ELO closely followed these developments, advocating for policies that strengthen the economic viability of farming, support innovation and ensure that land managers can continue delivering food security, environmental stewardship and rural vitality across Europe.

Common Agricultural Policy and MFF

In 2025, the European Commission published its proposals for the post-2027 MFF, setting out a new structure for the EU budget and signalling significant changes for the future of the CAP. The proposals reflect a broader shift in EU priorities, with increased resources allocated to emerging challenges such as security, defence and migration. Within this context, traditional policies, including agriculture, face increasing budgetary pressure. In real terms, the proposed framework would result in a substantial reduction in funding available for the agricultural sector compared with the current programming period.

A central element of the Commission's proposal is the restructuring of EU funding instruments through the creation of a broader framework bringing together several shared-management funds. Under this approach, the CAP would be integrated into a new governance architecture based on National and Regional Partnership Plans. The Commission argues that this model would improve coherence between policies, simplify funding streams and strengthen performance-based budgeting.

However, the proposed model also raises important concerns. Integrating the CAP into a broader financial framework risks weakening the policy's distinct identity and long-standing EU-level governance. Moving towards a system where agricultural funding is embedded within wider national plans could lead to increased fragmentation, with Member States setting different priorities and implementation approaches. Such a shift may ultimately result in a gradual "renationalisation" of agricultural policy, reducing policy coherence across the Union.

Budgetary reductions combined with governance changes also raise questions about the EU's capacity to meet the objectives established in Article 39 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, including ensuring a fair standard of living for farmers, stabilising markets and safeguarding food security. At a time when European agriculture is expected to contribute simultaneously to environmental, climate and food security goals, maintaining adequate and predictable funding remains essential.



2025 Land & Soil Management Award winner

As negotiations on the next MFF progress, the debate will therefore focus not only on the overall budgetary envelope but also on the institutional future of the CAP. For ELO, preserving a strong, clearly identifiable CAP remains crucial to ensuring stability, investment and sustainable land management across Europe's rural landscapes.

Vision for the Future of Agriculture

In February 2025, the European Commission published its Communication *A Vision for Agriculture and Food: Shaping together an attractive farming and agri-food sector for future generations*. The document outlines a long-term strategic direction for European agriculture and the wider agri-food system. Among its key priorities are improving farmers' position in the food chain, fostering innovation, simplifying regulatory frameworks and encouraging generational renewal in the agricultural sector.

Innovation remains a cornerstone of the sector's future. In this context, the file on New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) is of particular importance to ELO. The organisation welcomed the political agreement reached in trilogue at the end of 2025, which represents an important step towards enabling innovation and strengthening the resilience of European agriculture.

The Commission also presented a Generational Renewal Strategy during 2025. In its reaction, ELO emphasised the importance of farm succession as a key element for the long-term continuity of agricultural activity and rural land management.

While the Vision sets an important strategic direction, ELO stressed that its success will depend on concrete implementation and a coherent policy framework that enables farmers and land managers to invest with confidence in Europe's rural landscapes.



Pile LIGI
Chairman of the Management Board,
Loodushoiu Fond (The Nature Fund),
Estonia



In 2025, ELO strengthened our work by helping to explain the cumulative impact of EU policies on landowners in our country. When national authorities do not listen, speaking directly at European level becomes the only real option. ELO's presence in Brussels helps land managers react, respond and adapt to changing legislation. At a time when the European Commission is producing more laws and directives than national parliaments, it is essential to have strong representation in Brussels.

Plant protection and precision agriculture

Another trademark for 2025 was the publication of the *Food and Feed Safety Simplification Omnibus*, a legislative package aimed at streamlining EU rules while maintaining high standards for food safety and environmental protection. The proposal seeks to reduce administrative burdens across the agri-food chain and improve the efficiency of regulatory procedures.

ELO welcomed the initiative as a positive step toward making EU legislation more workable and predictable for farmers and land managers. In particular, the organisation supported measures designed to accelerate access to bio-control solutions, which can expand farmers' toolbox while contributing to sustainability goals. Simplifying procedures and removing unnecessary regulatory bottlenecks can help ensure that innovative plant protection alternatives reach the market more quickly, while preserving high safety standards.

Trade

International trade policies increasingly shape the conditions under which European farmers and foresters operate. ELO has followed the EU's evolving trade agenda, including MERCOSUR, emphasising the importance of fair competition and coherent standards. European producers must not be disadvantaged by imports produced under significantly lower environmental or social requirements. At the same time, trade can offer opportunities for Europe's sustainable products, provided that agreements recognise the value of high environmental standards and support resilient rural economies.

Looking ahead to 2026, these discussions are expected to intensify. Negotiations on the CAP and the next MFF will remain central to determining the resources and governance framework for European agriculture after 2027. At the same time, the legislative process on NGTs is expected to reach its final stage, with a vote anticipated that could unlock new opportunities for innovation in plant breeding.

Further progress will be required to translate the *Vision for Agriculture and Food* into concrete policy actions, while ensuring that farmers and land managers can operate within a stable and coherent regulatory framework. This includes the ongoing work and planned advancements for the *Food and Feed Simplification Omnibus*. In parallel, ELO will continue to closely monitor international trade developments, advocating for safeguards that ensure fair competition and protect European farmers from imports produced under lower standards.



FORUM FOR THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE

The Forum for the Future of Agriculture (ForumforAg) is the premiere meeting place to debate **sustainable agriculture and environmental challenges**. As one of the leading international forums, it is dedicated to building a more resilient, competitive, sustainable, climate-smart, and nature-positive food and agriculture system. The Forum's growing network comprises over 15,000 people across 42 countries and five continents. Its Chairman is Janez POTOČNIK, former European Commissioner for the Environment, President of the Rise Foundation and Co-president of UNEP.

Our Annual Conference in Brussels, was again well attended and featured illuminating presentations from keynote speakers including the former NASA astronaut, Mike MASSIMINO, and world record holding freediver, Fred BUYLE. We attracted interventions from the EU Commissioners for Agriculture and the Environment, and leading

stakeholders from across the food and agriculture system, finance, civil society, political leaders and policy-makers. It was also the opportunity to celebrate on main stage the Land and Soil Management Award.

2025 was an important year as the Commission focused on how to implement its Vision for Agriculture in Europe in the context of the new Multi-Annual Financial Framework. It was also the year to build up to COP-30 in Brazil, where the future sustainability of the agri-food system was feature prominently on the agenda. The Forum contributed substantively to both these processes. Our message has been reinforced through a series of workshops exploring the opportunities and challenges on how to take a systemic approach for a comprehensive inquiry into *Financing the Transition*, which lead us to a *Perspectives report* published in September. In addition, we have continued to be guided by and push forward with the *Call to Action* and will make a further update on our collective progress by the time of the 2026 Annual Conference.

Over the course of the year, we also held a number of important workshops and mini-conferences including our second edition of Market Outlook which took place in November. Our regional meeting, linked to the incoming Presidencies of the European Council, took place in Denmark (June) with both attracting Member State Ministerial representation, as well as stakeholders from across the EU and the world.

Additional meetings covered important topics including the role of trade policy in sustainable agriculture; artificial intelligence and digitization in agri-food-system transformation; the role of innovative crop nutrition; the future of sustainability and innovation in the livestock sector; and, of course, on building a sustainable recovery for agriculture in post-conflict Ukraine.



Algis GAIŽUTIS
Chairman of the Board, Forest and
Landowners Association of Lithuania

In 2025, we made sure that the voices of land managers and foresters were heard where decisions are made, and that property rights were defended. We brought owners, farmers and foresters into the heart of the Brussels debate through ForumforAg and events at the European Parliament and the EESC, engaging directly with DG AGRI, DG ENV and MEPs. We also put forward clear proposals for the post-2027 CAP, the next EU budget, and practical financing for nature restoration through nature credits. At the same time, we highlighted real on-the-ground stewardship through the Wildlife Estates Label and our flagship awards.





[2025 Annual Conference](#) inspirational talks from Mike MASSIMINO and Fred BUYLE

We have also continued to expand our work internationally contributing to the USDA Outlook Conference in February and the Transatlantic Policy Network's *Transatlantic Week* in July. In addition, our collaboration with the Australian Farm Institute, Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute and Farm Foundation, in the Global Forum on Farm Policy and Innovation, GFFPI has also substantively progressed over the past twelve months. In November GFFPI has published a report on [Finding Common Ground in a Divided World](#).

We are also delighted that the Forum has continued to be engaged as thought partners across the EU institutions; the

OECD; and governments and legislators around the world including Ukraine, Japan and the United States.

Finally, we are pleased to have established and been able to draw upon the Advisory Council, comprised of leading food system thinkers, including Tassos HANIOTIS, Geneviève PONS and Ann TUTWILER. It was also joined by Mark TITTERINGTON, who moved on from his current role in the Forum. These highly experienced individuals will continue to provide independent counsel as well as acting as Ambassadors for our work and leveraging their own network to support the Forum where appropriate and relevant.



Jurgen TACK, ELO Secretary-General, Rose O'DONOVAN, AgraFacts Chief Editor

FOOD SYSTEMS PODCAST

Our reach and influence also continued to grow across all our digital and social media channels in 2025, particularly through the Food Systems Podcast series, which has now exceeded 35,000 downloads. This reflects the strong interest across our network in conversations with high-profile guests such as environmental campaigner Jane GOODALL, NASA astronaut Mike MASSIMINO, regenerative agriculture leader and TV personality Benedikt BÖSEL, Máximo TORERO, Chief Economist of the Food and Agriculture Organization, and ELO Secretary-General Jurgen TACK. We are excited by our plans to continue the development of the series with our new studio anchors.

INNOVATION CONFERENCE – ONE TOOLBOX, ONE MARKET: ACCESS TO INNOVATION FOR EU FARMERS

**October 2025, European Parliament
Hosted by MEP Stefan KÖHLER,
organised by ELO and CropLife Europe**

This conference brought together EU policy-makers, researchers, farmers, and industry leaders to discuss how biocontrol and new genomic techniques (NGTs) can strengthen the sustainability, competitiveness, and resilience of Europe and agriculture.

Innovation can support agricultural climate resilience, and give EU agriculture a competitive edge. Yet both remain stuck in regulatory and political limbo, delaying access for farmers and SMEs. For ELO and its partners, the message is clear: to be a leader of sustainability, Europe must give its farmers a toolbox that is both safe and usable, allowing innovation to flourish at home - not just abroad.

[More on ELO website.](#)



© European Parliament

THE FUTURE OF DIRECT PAYMENTS

February 2025, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

Speakers included Commissioner Christophe HANSEN, MEP Paulo do NASCIMENTO CABRAL, Stoyan TCHOUKANOV, Prof. Alan MATTHEWS, Tassos HANIOTIS, and other experts

Held several months ahead of the publication of the next MFF and post-2027 CAP proposals, this event provided a timely platform to explore possible directions for the future of EU agricultural policy. As farmers navigated the early implementation of the current CAP amid economic and regulatory pressures, discussions focused on how direct payments could evolve to better respond to emerging challenges.

Discussions at the EESC made clear that, while direct payments remain essential, their structure must evolve to reflect new agricultural and environmental realities. Whether through soil-based indicators, multiannual contracts or performance-based incentives, the CAP must continue to ensure that European farming remains both competitive and sustainable.

[More on ELO website.](#)



FARMING FOR POLLINATORS: UNLOCKING ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL GAINS

April 2025, Brussels

Organised by ELO and the Institute for European Environmental Policy (IEEP)



SAFEGUARD

Safeguarding European
wild pollinators

This event highlighted the essential role of pollinators in agricultural production and healthy ecosystems. Held as part of the **EU-funded Safeguard project**, the conference explored how pollination can improve crop quality, increase market value and strengthen ecosystem resilience. Experts, policymakers, farmers and researchers discussed economic incentives, sustainable farming practices and policy solutions to help reverse pollinator decline while supporting agricultural productivity and biodiversity across Europe.

[More on ELO website.](#)

FUTURE FOR RURAL EUROPE: FROM ETHICAL LAND MANAGEMENT TO AGROTOURISM INNOVATION

October 2025, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

Welcoming address by Stoyan TCHOUKANOV, NAT Section President, EESC



STAY



WESEM

Rural areas are central to Europe's natural and cultural heritage, but they face major challenges, including depopulation, economic fragility and the need to balance productive land use with environmental sustainability.

Two Erasmus+ projects, WESEM and STAY, were presented as practical responses to these challenges. **WESEM** supports skills development in sustainable and ethical land management, while **STAY** helps farmers and rural entrepreneurs diversify through agrotourism. The joint final conference provided an opportunity to present project results, exchange views on sustainable rural development, and discuss how education and innovation can support more resilient rural areas in line with the *Vision for Agriculture and Food* and the *Rural Action Plan Simplification Omnibus*. If you are looking for additional resources, both projects offer on-line courses available on their websites.

[More on ELO website.](#)



FORESTS & FORESTRY

Forestry policy remained highly active at EU level in 2025, with three major files directly affecting forest owners and managers: the proposed Forest Monitoring Law, the new EU Bioeconomy Strategy, and continued discussions on the implementation of the EU Deforestation Regulation (EUDR). Throughout the year, ELO engaged with EU institutions to ensure that forestry policy remains proportionate, practical and supportive of sustainable forest management.

Forest Monitoring Law

One of the year's most debated initiatives was the proposed Forest Monitoring Law. While ELO supports efforts to improve the resilience and sustainability of Europe's forests, we warned that a new EU framework risked creating unnecessary administrative burdens and overlapping with existing national monitoring systems and European tools such as European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS). ELO instead called for stronger cooperation and better methodological harmonisation between existing systems. Following the European Parliament's rejection of the text in October 2025, ELO welcomed the Commission's decision to include its withdrawal in the 2026 Work Programme.

EU Bioeconomy Strategy

Another important development in 2025 was the publication of the new *Strategy for a Competitive and Sustainable EU Bioeconomy* in November. ELO welcomed the strategy's recognition that agriculture and forestry are central to Europe's transition away from fossil-based products and towards a circular, climate-neutral economy. ELO stressed that this transition depends on farmers, foresters and landowners as the primary providers of renewable biomass, and that unlocking this potential requires simpler rules, reduced administrative burdens and greater coherence across EU legislation affecting land management. It also underlined the need to preserve flexibility in the use of biomass, warn-

ing that overly restrictive interpretations of the cascading principle or strict limits on biomass for energy could discourage active forest management and reduce the investment needed to maintain resilient forest ecosystems.

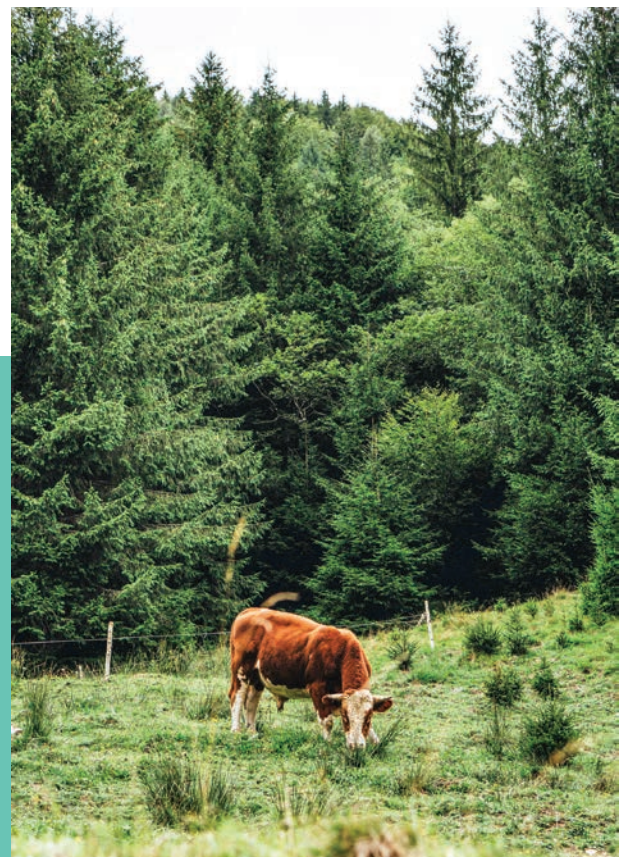
EU Deforestation Regulation

The EUDR remained a major concern throughout the year. Despite the postponement of its application and the publication of additional guidance, forest owners continued to highlight significant administrative burdens, legal uncertainty and complex reporting requirements. In response, the Commission proposed a targeted revision in December 2025 and postponed application until 30 December 2026, with an additional six-month extension for micro and small operators. ELO continued to advocate for a more risk-based and workable approach, including simplified obligations for sourcing from low-risk countries and clearer definitions in the regulation.



Max von ELVERFELDT
Vice-President ELO, President German
Landowners' Organization

ELO plays a vital role in ensuring that the voice of Europe's private landowners is heard in Brussels. By connecting landowners, farmers and foresters from across the continent, the organisation strengthens the defence of property rights and ensures that practical land management experience is reflected in European policymaking.



© Katerina Senkevych



The EU-funded Small4Good project supports small forest owners in adopting multifunctional forest management and exploring innovative business models, backed by digital and AI-driven solutions. Its objective is to promote more sustainable forest management practices while strengthening biodiversity and carbon farming through payment for ecosystem services schemes.

A central feature of the project is its network of Living Labs, which act as open innovation ecosystems in real-world settings across four European regions: the Nordic region (Norway), the East (Romania), Central Europe (Germany and Switzerland), and the South (Spain). These Living Labs bring together forest owners, researchers, policymakers and other stakeholders to better understand owners' motivations and to co-develop and test new management approaches and business models in practice.

By combining research, innovation and local collaboration, Small4Good aims to deliver regionally adapted solutions that support sustainable forest management and contribute to a more resilient and inclusive bioeconomy.

More information: www.small4good.eu



PathFinder is developing Europe's first integrated, cross-border framework for forest monitoring and policy assessment. Combining National Forest Inventories, remote sensing and advanced modelling, it provides harmonised insights on forest carbon, biodiversity and climate mitigation across 26 countries.

The project is already delivering practical tools, including the PathFinder Platform, nFIESTA, a spatial forecasting framework to 2100, a standardised LULUCF reporting framework, and a proposed governance structure for a permanent European Forest Monitoring System.

Together, these outputs support a shift from fragmented national reporting towards more coherent, evidence-based European forest governance.

More information: www.pathfinder-heu.eu



INTERCEDE addresses a key challenge in European forestry: forests remain underused in their potential to provide a broad range of ecosystem services. While they contribute to biodiversity, carbon storage, water regulation, and recreational and cultural value, forest management often focuses on a narrower set of marketable outputs.

The project works to improve the design and implementation of Market-Based Instruments (MBIs) and Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) across Europe. By mapping existing schemes, assessing their impacts, and developing forward-looking tools, INTERCEDE aims to support more balanced and sustainable forest management. Through stakeholder engagement, it also helps co-develop policy solutions and business models that strengthen support for forest owners and the wider benefits forests provide.

More information: www.intercede-project.eu

EUROPEAN TREE OF THE YEAR AWARD

The 2025 European Tree of the Year was won by the Polish beech tree **“Heart of the Dalkowskie Hills,”** which received an impressive 147,553 votes. Second place went to the Portuguese ficus known as **“The Lovers Banyan Tree,”** while third place was awarded to the Spanish pine **“Pino de Juan Molinera.”** In total, 401,262 valid votes were cast for the 15 trees competing in the 2025 contest, demonstrating strong public engagement and appreciation for Europe’s natural heritage.

Launched in 2011, the competition was inspired by the Czech **Tree of the Year** contest organised by the Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation and is now coordinated by the Environmental Partnership Association, with support from ELO. By bringing together national winners from across Europe, it highlights the importance of protecting Europe’s natural and cultural heritage.

More info on the European Tree of the Year
www.treeoftheyear.org



FOREST INNOVATION WORKSHOP

(6TH EDITION)

February 2025, Brussels

Co-organised by ERIAFF, EFI, CEPF, EUSTAFOR, COPA-COGECA, ELO, Euromontana, and the projects FOREST4EU and OptFor-EU

The 6th edition of the Forest Innovation Workshop brought together policymakers, forest owners, practitioners, researchers, associations and NGOs to exchange on the latest innovations in the forest-based sector, discuss regional priorities, and strengthen collaboration among key stakeholders.

The two-day programme reviewed the European framework for innovation in forestry, examined practical and scientific evidence on “Forests of the Future”, and highlighted innovative solutions developed by EIP-AGRI Operational Groups in forestry and agroforestry. It also featured roundtable discussions with regional authorities on innovation priorities and supportive frameworks.



DigitAF is a Horizon Europe project aiming to accelerate the uptake of agroforestry across Europe as a key solution to achieve climate neutrality in the agriculture, forestry, and land-use sectors. By addressing existing barriers, such as limited knowledge, economic constraints, and institutional challenges, the project supports the integration of agroforestry practices that deliver benefits for climate mitigation and adaptation, biodiversity, and soil health.

Within DigitAF, ELO plays a key role in strengthening agroforestry and carbon farming policies and in developing tools to support evidence-based policymaking. In particular, ELO contributed to a dedicated deliverable on policies and MRV (Monitoring, Reporting and Verification) models for carbon farming in both voluntary and statutory sectors, supporting the development of credible and scalable frameworks for climate-smart land management.



Duarte MIRA

*CAP Permanent Representative in
Brussels, Confederação dos
Agricultores de Portugal*



The partnership with ELO is fundamental in strengthening the voice of Portuguese farmers in Europe. Through its advocacy for private property and sustainable land management, ELO helps ensure that the sector’s specific challenges are properly reflected in European policies, contributing to a more resilient agricultural landscape.

ENVIRONMENT AND BIODIVERSITY



Competitiveness vs. environmental ambition

A central theme in EU environmental policy in 2025 was the effort to reconcile ambitious environmental objectives with Europe's competitiveness and investment capacity. This tension was particularly visible in discussions on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (2028–2034). In July 2025, the European Commission proposed a budget of almost EUR 2 trillion, including new National and Regional Partnership Plans, a European Competitiveness Fund, reinforced support for Horizon Europe, and a target for at least 35% of EU spending to contribute to climate and environmental goals.

Within this broader debate, the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and related Green Deal legislation continued to raise important questions for land-use sectors, particularly around cost, feasibility, and the balance between environmental delivery and economic viability. In this context, ELO continued to bring practical land management experience into EU policymaking, including through participation in European Commission expert groups, while promoting nature-based solutions, ecosystem service valuation, nature credits and investment mechanisms that can align biodiversity objectives with long-term rural resilience.

Regulatory simplification and administrative burden

Regulatory simplification became a key theme in 2025, as stakeholders increasingly raised concerns about overlapping obligations, lengthy procedures and growing reporting requirements. This was particularly relevant for the implemen-

tation of the Nature Restoration Regulation alongside existing frameworks such as the Habitats and Birds Directives.

In response, the European Commission presented an environmental simplification package in December 2025, aimed at streamlining permitting and environmental assessments, while keeping core nature legislation intact. ELO continued to call for practical and workable implementation that reduces unnecessary administrative burden without weakening environmental objectives.

Water policy as a security and resilience issue

Environmental policy is increasingly being shaped through a security and resilience lens. Climate change, biodiversity loss and water scarcity pose growing risks to food security, economic stability and rural landscapes.

ELO welcomed the 2025 European Water Resilience Strategy for its focus on water quantity, resilience and the role of land managers in climate adaptation. It also underlined the need for measures that are practical to implement and that recognise the contribution of land managers to long-term water resilience.

From ambition to implementation

As the EU reaches the mid-point of the decade, attention focuses on the gap between ambition and implementation. ELO has contributed to the Nature Restoration Regulation, including feedback on reporting formats, pollinator monitoring methodology, and national restoration plans.

The organisation also engaged with the European Commission on Natura 2000 implementation, advocating for realistic consultation timelines and practical guidance in areas such as fisheries, tourism, climate adaptation and bird protection. ELO continued to facilitate dialogue between policymakers and stakeholders, drawing attention to operational challenges such as forest management restrictions and monitoring requirements.

Participation in the 2025 Nature and Forestry Directors' Meetings, contributions to biodiversity financing discussions, and follow-up on nature credits issue exemplify ELO's central role in shaping pragmatic, inclusive solutions to deliver Europe's biodiversity objectives.



In Austria, many land and forest enterprises are managed across generations and shape our cultural landscapes. Through ELO, we can exchange experience with landowners across Europe and strengthen sustainable land management for future generations.



Konrad MYLIUS
President of the Association of
Austrian Land and Forest Owners

EUROPEAN BEE AWARD

December 2025, European Parliament

[Award ceremony](#) hosted by Paulo do NASCIMENTO CABRAL and organised by ELO and John Deere



European Bee Award winners (EcoCut) together with jury representatives. From left to right: MEP Paulo do NASCIMENTO CABRAL (EPP), Prof. Dr. Reiner BEUTEL (EcoCut), Matthias REBER (EcoCut), Gilles DRYANCOUR (John Deere, Member of the Jury), Dieter REBER (EcoCut), Thierry de l'ESCAILLE (ELO, Member of the Jury), Prof. Dr. Michael GARRATT (University of Reading, President of the Jury).

Since 2014, the European Bee Award has celebrated innovative projects that protect pollinators and promote biodiversity across Europe.

The 2025 winner was **EcoCut** (Germany), developed by Fisher MASCHINENBAU. Its mowing system uses an air blowing mechanism to divert pollinators before mowing, helping to protect up to 90% of bees.

A Jury Special Mention went to **Apiluz** (France), a project that encourages farmers to maintain flowering strips in alfalfa fields, supporting pollinators and fostering stronger cooperation between farmers and beekeepers.

[More on ELO website.](#)



BELLEUROPA AWARD

Each year, the prize honours a member of the Wildlife Estates Label Network for outstanding work in preserving and enhancing biodiversity. The 2025 Belleuropa Award was granted to **Eriksberg Castle**, a historic estate in Sweden's Södermanland region. The estate exemplifies how heritage and innovation can coexist while supporting biodiversity and sustainable land management. From forestry and renewable energy to tourism and local engagement, its activities reflect a careful balance between environmental stewardship and economic vitality.

Created by **Giuseppe NATTA**, the award recognises estates that enhance rural landscapes and protect natural habitats through responsible management. It also promotes sustainable rural business models such as eco-tourism and the valorisation of local products.

[More on ELO website.](#)



EXPLORE OUR TRAINING COURSES IN SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT



To continue the Wildlife Estates Label efforts and ensure best practices are widely disseminated, the WESEM (Wildlife Estates Sustainable & Ethic Management) program trains students and professionals in agriculture and forestry to become advisors in sustainable and ethical land management. It aims to promote sustainable practices, support Wildlife Estates certification, and foster coexistence between agriculture and nature conservation.

The course consists of four modules: Basic Principles of Ecological Restoration • Forest Ecosystem Restoration • Agricultural Ecosystem Restoration • Nature Conservation Certification and Labelling available at www.wesem-erasmus.eu.

WILDLIFE ESTATES LABEL



The Wildlife Estates (WE) Label continues to consolidate its role as a voluntary framework promoting sustainable land management and biodiversity conservation across Europe. Built on nearly two decades of development, the Label represents a growing network of privately managed territories demonstrating that environmental stewardship, economic viability, and social responsibility can be successfully combined.

2025 was characterised by strategic reflection on the Label's future direction. Within ELO, efforts focused on improving internal coordination. This process is closely linked to broader ambitions to expand the network, strengthen its credibility, and enhance its recognition within European policy frameworks, notably in the context of the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the Nature Restoration Regulation.

At the national level, the Label continued to progress unevenly but positively. France reported significant growth, nearing 100 labelled territories, while regions such as Flanders and Spain confirmed continued interest from landowners. At the same time, several delegations highlighted persistent challenges in promoting the Label, particularly where its added value remains insufficiently understood or supported. These discussions confirmed that clarifying the benefits of the Label for land managers is a key priority moving forward.

In parallel, notable achievements illustrated the ambition and potential of the network. On 4 July 2025, three Scottish estates - Finzean (Aberdeenshire), Glen Creran (Argyll), and Reay Forest (Sutherland) - were awarded accreditation under Wildlife Estates Scotland at the GWCT Scottish Game Fair. Covering over 120,000 acres, the estates achieved the highest scores ever recorded within the network, reflecting outstanding biodiversity management.

Two Wildlife Estates in Flanders have been honoured with the Baillet Latour Award for the Environment, recognising

private landowners' role in preserving Belgium's natural heritage. Loye Estate received the main 2025 award (€20,000), while De Zeshonderd Estate earned the Honorary Diploma and Encouragement Award (€5,000). The awards are organised by Natuurmakers.Vlaanderen with support from the Baillet Latour Fund.

The two Steering Committee meetings reiterated the importance of scale, with more than 2.3 million hectares currently under the Label. This provides a strong basis to position the WE network as a credible contribution to European conservation objectives. However, this ambition requires stronger links with EU and national funding instruments, including the CAP, alongside the exploration of complementary funding sources such as private investment and emerging biodiversity markets.

A major focus of the year was the reflection on the scientific methodology underpinning the Label. While widely recognised as robust, discussions centred on simplifying the questionnaire while maintaining scientific credibility, including through the use of indicator species and improved guidance for landowners.

The Plenary Session held in Paris in September 2025 further supported these reflections. It culminated in the high-level Conference under the theme "Recognition and Governance: The Wildlife Estates Label as a Strategic Tool for Biodiversity Conservation." Bringing together policymakers, researchers, landowners and practitioners, the conference provided a platform to position the Label within broader biodiversity policy debates, while highlighting its role as a practical governance tool for private land conservation. It also facilitated exchanges on best practices and showcased concrete field actions, further reinforcing the visibility and credibility of the initiative.

Reay Forest, one of the three Scottish estates awarded accreditation under Wildlife Estates Scotland at the GWCT Scottish Game Fair.



EU LARGE CARNIVORES PLATFORM

In its role as co-chair of the EU Platform on Coexistence between People and Large Carnivores, ELO advanced evidence-based dialogue, stakeholder engagement, and practical support tools throughout 2025.

On 2 April, ELO presented the Platform's work at the DG Agriculture civil dialogue group on environment and climate change. This session highlighted coexistence challenges, the value of multi-stakeholder approaches, and the need for practical tools to support rural actors.

The Platform's 12th meeting on 5 June in Lunteren, held alongside the Wolves Across Borders conference, focused on the European Commission's proposal to align the wolf's protection status with the Bern Convention. Following amendments to the Habitats Directive annexes, ELO stressed that increased management flexibility must be matched by strong monitoring and accountability to maintain favourable conservation status. Discussions also covered CAP funding for coexistence measures,

A key technical development was the *Commission's Favourable Reference Value* report, proposing a harmonised methodology for species including wolf, brown bear, Eurasian lynx, golden jackal, and wolverine. ELO assessed its implications to ensure future frameworks remain science-based and practical.



12th Plenary Meeting - EU Platform on Coexistence between People and Large Carnivores

Regionally, the Dinaric-Balkan-Pindos Platform met in Ioannina, focusing on livestock protection, habitat connectivity, and stakeholder cooperation. ELO welcomed exchanges of management experience and programme updates.

The Platform also advanced ten case studies on local wolf impacts and upgraded its website with new materials, maps, and multilingual tools.

Looking ahead, preparations began for a 2026 regional workshop in Finland on ecotourism and wildlife-watching.

COCO PROJECT



The CoCo project is a Horizon Europe research initiative exploring how wildlife conservation and rural activities can coexist across Europe. As wildlife populations recover in many regions, these interactions are becoming increasingly complex, sometimes creating tensions between conservation objectives and rural livelihoods.

A central component of the project was a large-scale survey designed to capture the experiences and perceptions of three key groups: pastoralists, hunters, and landowners. Within this framework, ELO dedicated a significant part of its efforts to disseminating the questionnaire among landowners across Europe. Ensuring strong participation from this group was essential to ensure that the perspectives of those managing a significant share of Europe's agricultural and forest land were adequately represented.

With the data collection phase now complete and the survey officially closed, the project is moving into its next stage: analysing the results and translating stakeholders' insights into concrete recommendations.

[More on ELO website.](#)



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S INTERGROUP "BIODIVERSITY, HUNTING, COUNTRYSIDE"

Europe's countryside, wildlife, and rural communities took center stage in 2025 as the European Parliament's Intergroup on "Biodiversity, Hunting, Countryside" reasserted itself as a leading forum for policy dialogue. One of the Parliament's oldest Intergroups, it brings together policymakers, scientists, and stakeholders to tackle the complex intersections of conservation, agriculture, and rural livelihoods. Backed by ELO and FACE, the Intergroup ensures that the voices of landowners, hunters, and local communities are heard in shaping EU decision-making.

The 2025 session began with strong political momentum, with Spanish MEP Juan Ignacio ZOIDO as President and a team of dedicated Vice-Presidents steering the agenda. Early discussions tackled pressing topics such as CAP reform, biodiversity, and the sustainable management of Europe's rural territories.

One standout event, "Reforming the CAP—Economic & Sustainable Transformation," convened policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders to explore how EU agricultural policy can balance economic resilience with environmental responsibility, weighing farmers' challenges - from rising costs to sustainability requirements - against the need to protect biodiversity and rural livelihoods.

The Intergroup also turned its attention to wildlife management. At "The Future of Wolf Protection in the EU,"

participants debated innovative approaches to safeguard wolf populations while supporting farmers and rural communities, demonstrating the Intergroup's capacity to tackle complex, real-world conflicts.

Building on this momentum, 2026 saw the Intergroup return to CAP reform with "Future Fields: Innovation, Sustainability & Competitiveness in the Next CAP." Panels explored how innovation, advisory services, and policy tools can strengthen agriculture and forestry while advancing biodiversity, climate action, and rural economic growth. Policymakers, industry leaders, and EU experts showcased how the Intergroup bridges science, policy, and practice.

From CAP reform to large carnivore management, the Intergroup's work proves that sustainable rural development and biodiversity protection go hand in hand. By convening stakeholders across sectors, the Intergroup - supported by ELO - keeps Europe's countryside, wildlife, and communities at the heart of EU policy debates.



"Biodiversity, Hunting,
Countryside" Intergroup

More information on
www.biodiversityhuntingcountryside.eu



Reforming the CAP: Finding the balance between economic viability and environmental ambition

November 2025, European Parliament

Hosted by MEP Herbert DORFMANN and co-hosted by MEP Juan Ignacio ZOIDO, in conjunction with ELO and FACE



Downlisting the Wolf: a way forward for the EU

April 2025, online

Co-organised by FACE and ELO

Speakers included MEP Juan Ignacio ZOIDO, MEP Herbert DORFMANN, Andrea VETTORI, Dr. John LINNELL, Niall CURLEY, Friedrich WULF and Dr. Jurgen TACK, in conjunction with ELO and FACE

CLIMATE & NATURAL RESOURCES



In 2025, ELO strengthened its engagement in EU climate and natural resource policies, advocating for frameworks that recognise landowners as key actors in delivering both environmental and economic outcomes.

The debate on the EU 2040 climate target further reinforced the role of agriculture and forestry in climate mitigation. In parallel, the Carbon Removals and Carbon Farming (CRCF) Regulation marked a major step towards integrating land-based solutions into climate policy, creating new opportunities for landowners to access carbon markets.

In this context, ELO actively contributed to the development of CRCF methodologies through its participation in the relevant expert group throughout 2025, when the first three methodologies were drafted. This process culminated in the publication of the delegated act establishing the final methodologies in February 2026. ELO's engagement helped ensure that these methodologies remain practical, science-based and aligned with the realities faced by land managers on the ground.

ELO also advanced discussions on nature credits, promoting a landowner-centred approach to unlock private investment in nature. Natural resource management remained central to its work, including contributions to the debate on the EU Soil Monitoring Law, broader land-use practices, and the growing importance of water resilience.

At international level, ELO actively contributed to discussions around COP30, highlighting the increasing relevance of land use, forestry and agriculture in achieving global climate objectives. Through its work, ELO emphasised the need to better integrate land-based solutions into climate strategies, ensuring that policy frameworks support both environmental ambition and the economic viability of land managers.

Looking ahead to 2026, ELO remains particularly vigilant on climate and land-use policies where EU rules directly affect rural landowners' operations. We are closely monitoring the planned ETS revisions, LULUCF and ESD updates, and the rollout of CBAM, which together risk increasing energy and fertiliser costs. At the same time, ELO has contributed to the forthcoming EU Climate Adaptation Plan, emphasizing practical support for soil health, water management, and landscape-level resilience. Across these files, our focus is on ensuring workable implementation, fair cost distribution, and recognition of active land stewardship as a central part of climate and biodiversity solutions.

EUROPEAN CLIMATE INITIATIVE (EUKI)

The EUKI Project (2022–2025) addressed the critical dual role of peatlands as both agricultural assets and significant carbon sources, which accounted for 25% of the EU's agricultural emissions despite occupying only 3% of farmland. The project established a European alliance to transition from traditional drainage-based management toward sustainable rewetting and resource management.

Key policy outcomes emphasized that farmers faced significant barriers, including financial risk, a lack of technical advisory services, and subsidy structures that historically favored drainage. The project highlighted the necessity of aligning CAP frameworks with peatland protection and developing

markets for paludiculture. To ensure long-term viability, the initiative focused on diversifying farmer income through the Carbon Removal Certification Framework (CRCF) and emerging Nature Credits. Ultimately, the project concluded that successful restoration required long-term regulatory certainty, financial compensation exceeding drainage-based returns, and the direct involvement of farmers in policymaking.



LAND AND SOIL MANAGEMENT AWARD

Benedikt BÖSEL and his team behind **Gut & Bösel** received the 2025 Land and Soil Management Award on stage during the annual conference of the ForumforAg. Based in Brandenburg, Germany, the 3,000-hectare project combines regenerative farming and forestry practices - including agroforestry, grazing, composting, reduced tillage and mixed cropping - with scientific research and community outreach.

Two additional outstanding projects received diplomas of recognition: **The San Giorgio Soil Regeneration Project** (Italy) and **Joseph's Dream** (Portugal).

Since its creation in 2008, the Land and Soil Management Award has recognised innovative and impactful practices that protect and restore soils while promoting sustainable land use.

[Read the press release on the ELO website.](#)



From left to right:
Thierry de L'ESCAILLE,
Martin H. GERZABEK
(Jury President), Lodovica von
FREYBERG-EISENBERG
(diploma of recognition: San Giorgio
Soil Regeneration Project),
Benedikt BÖSEL (winner: Gut & Bösel),
Jacques NAUDÉ (diploma of
recognition: Joseph's Dream),
Kerstin ROSENOW, and
Petra LAUX



Climate Farm Demo is a pan-European initiative bringing together a network of 1,500 pilot farmers across 28 countries to accelerate the adoption of climate-smart farming practices and contribute to the EU's climate neutrality objective by 2050. The project supports farmers in testing and demonstrating innovative solutions that enhance both climate mitigation and adaptation, while strengthening knowledge exchange and capacity-building across the sector. Within the project, ELO plays a key role in engaging with policymakers, analysing EU frameworks, including the Carbon Removal Certification Framework, and supporting the development of enabling conditions for the large-scale uptake of climate-smart agriculture across Europe.



SOILGUARD

FROM SOIL SCIENCE TO POLICY: HARNESSING THE BIODIVERSITY BENEATH OUR FEET FOR A CLIMATE-RESILIENT FUTURE

"From Soil Science to Policy: harnessing the biodiversity beneath our feet for a climate-resilient future" was held in March 2025 as a SOILGUARD event hosted by the Forum for the Future of Agriculture. It provided a unique opportunity to spotlight the critical role of soil biodiversity in sustainable land management. Attendees learned about the latest tools and methodologies for soil health evaluation, policy integration, and practical solutions. The event translated scientific findings into impactful policies through expert panels, innovative projects like Soilguard and others, and targeted sessions for diverse stakeholders. Focusing on a knowledge dialogue, actionable recommendations, and dynamic policy discussions, this conference shape the future of soil biodiversity strategies.

[More information on the ELO website.](#)

LAND AND PROPERTY RIGHTS

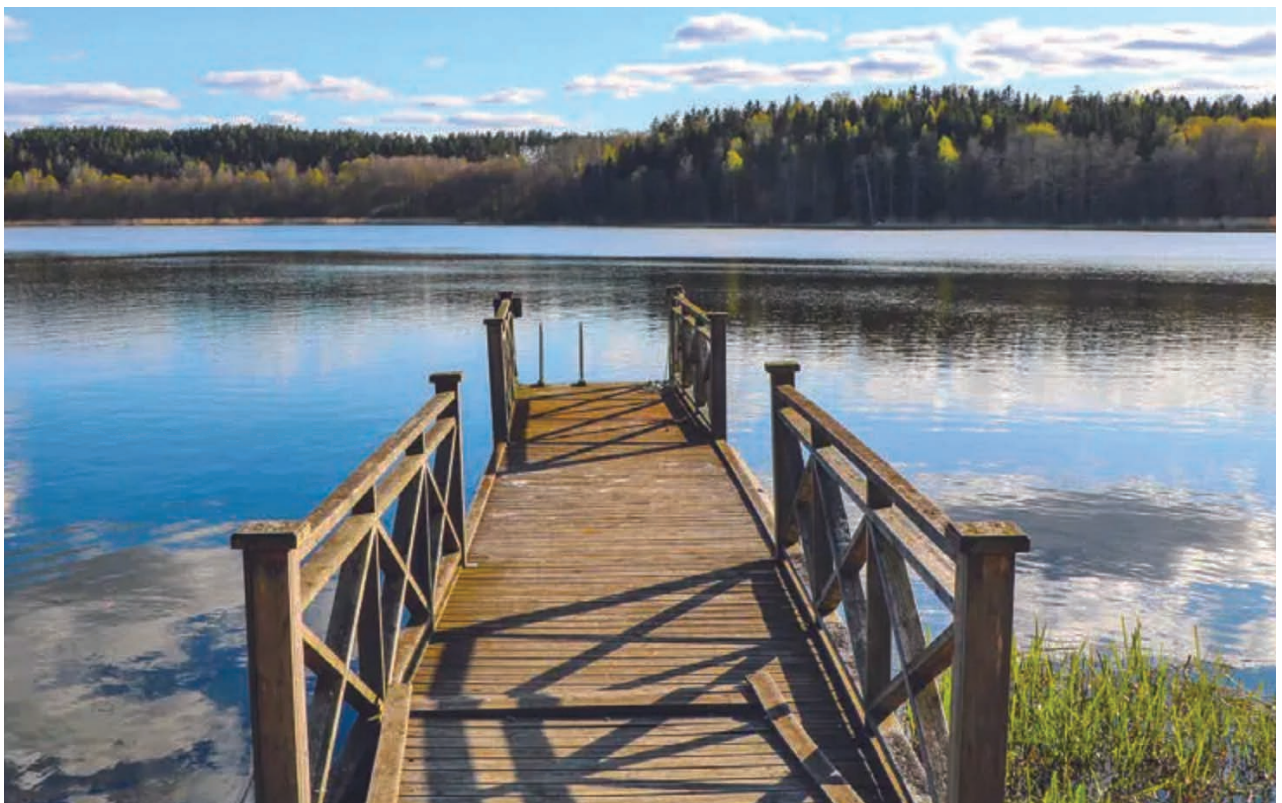
ELO strongly supports the free movement of capital and the protection of property rights across all EU Member States, as these are essential for a sustainable rural economy. With 27 national frameworks in place, it is crucial to avoid over-regulation. Access to land must benefit both current and future landowners, farmers and foresters, ensuring well-functioning land and forestry markets.

In 2025, ELO focused, among other priorities, on taxation, inheritance, land tenure, the diversification of income sources, the adaptation of business models, and infrastructure. It advocated for rural jobs, services, and economic diversity, while equipping its members with the tools needed to defend their fundamental rights. ELO also promoted these

priorities through its active participation in European Board of Agriculture and Food (EBAF).

ELO was selected as a key stakeholder organisation contributing to the launch of the Pilot Project on the EU Observatory on Farmland and actively participated in its workshops. This engagement supports its application to join the Expert Group on Farmland, expected to be established in April 2026.

Since its establishment, ELO has consistently provided feedback on reforms of the CAP, with a particular focus on ensuring that such reforms do not create excessive administrative burdens or undermine property values. This will remain a priority in the context of the upcoming CAP reform and discussions on the MFF.



© J. J. Verhaegen

LAND SHIFT PROJECT

Launching in November 2024, LandShift aims to develop sustainable land use and management methods to enhance ecosystem functions, including carbon sequestration and emission reduction. ELO plays a key role in connecting project findings with LULUC(F) political and stakeholder communities throughout its duration.





COUNTRYSIDE MAGAZINE

For nearly 26 years, **The CountrySide Magazine** has given a voice to land managers and rural entrepreneurs, fostering dialogue across agriculture, environment and rural business. In 2025, the magazine entered a new chapter with a refreshed visual identity. Published every two months in English and French, this 16-page publication highlights policy developments, innovative ideas, ELO projects and key events. With a readership including policymakers, academics, ELO members and rural enthusiasts worldwide, it helps connect perspectives and ensure rural voices are heard in decision-making.

For inquiries: media@elo.org

WOMEN FOR THE FUTURE OF AGRICULTURE 2025

The 2025 Women for the Future of Agriculture campaign highlighted inspiring women from across Europe who are shaping the future of farming, science, innovation and rural business. Through a series of portraits and interviews, the campaign gave visibility to their journeys, the challenges they have overcome, and the practical solutions they bring to a more resilient and sustainable agri-food sector.

[Read their testimonies on the ELO website.](https://elo.org)

ELO GENERAL ASSEMBLIES

Copenhagen | 3 June 2025



Brussels | 2 December 2025



← From left to right Thierry de l'ESCAILLE, ELO Executive President and Jeppe BRUUS, Denmark's Minister for Green Transition.

NETWORK

ELO is part of a vibrant ecosystem of partner organisations that share our commitment to a thriving countryside. What binds us together in 2025 is a common ambition: to bring unique insights and complementary expertise to the many challenges and opportunities facing rural Europe.

