

English



# Layman's report

August 2021 - July 2024



*The project and all actions are made possible with support from the LIFE financial instrument of the European Community*



## EUROPEAN NATURE ACADEMY



This report is a project deliverable of the LIFE Preparatory project LIFE ENABLE (LIFE20PREDE000009). The project is funded by LIFE financial instrument of the European Community and is implemented by EUROPARC Federation with the support of seven partners: Alfred Toepfer Akademie für Naturschutz, E.C.O. Institute of Ecology, FUNGOBE, Fundación Interuniversitaria Fernando González Bernáldez para los espacios naturales, Metsähallitus, Parks and Wildlife Finland, MedPAN – Network of Mediterranean Marine Protected Areas managers, Propark Foundation for Protected Areas TESAF, University of Padua, The Department of Land, Environment, Agriculture and Forestry



The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the European Commission.

# About LIFE ENABLE

LIFE ENABLE set out to create a new, innovative training hub for Natura 2000 and Protected Area managers across Europe: the European Nature Academy (ENA).

Over the course of three years, seven partners, led by EUROPARC Federation, have transformed the approach to capacity building, training and professional development. Nine practical, competence-based, blended learning courses were developed and delivered, resulting in more effective, competent and confident nature managers.

## PROJECT IN A NUTSHELL

**Full name:** LIFE ENABLE: Creating the European Nature Academy for applied Blended Learning

**Total budget:** €1.6m

**Duration:** 1 August 2021 - 31 July 2024



# European Nature Academy

Through LIFE ENABLE, the European Nature Academy offered customised courses to selected participants from two application rounds. Both intakes targeted managers of forest and marine habitat types.

**The first intake of participants included 59 Natura 2000 and Protected Area managers from 24 countries**

**A portion of the initial group of participants became Trainers by successfully completing the Train the Trainers Course**

**Trainers delivered five Mini-Courses to the 2nd intake of ENA participants including 107 Participants from more than 30 Countries**



Photo: Sandra Grego

# Take a look at the ENA Platform

The European Nature Academy is a unique learning platform dedicated to the continuing professional development of all staff working in Natura 2000 sites and Protected Areas across Europe.

By offering a diverse array of courses tailored to the specific needs of conservation professionals, the platform equips participants with essential skills and knowledge. From mastering core competencies to engaging with stakeholders and understanding marine and forest ecosystems, the European Nature Academy fosters a community of growth, empowering individuals to apply their learning and improve their nature conservation practices.

**Explore some of the ENA features in a short video!**

Learn more at:

[www.europeannatureacademy.com](http://www.europeannatureacademy.com)

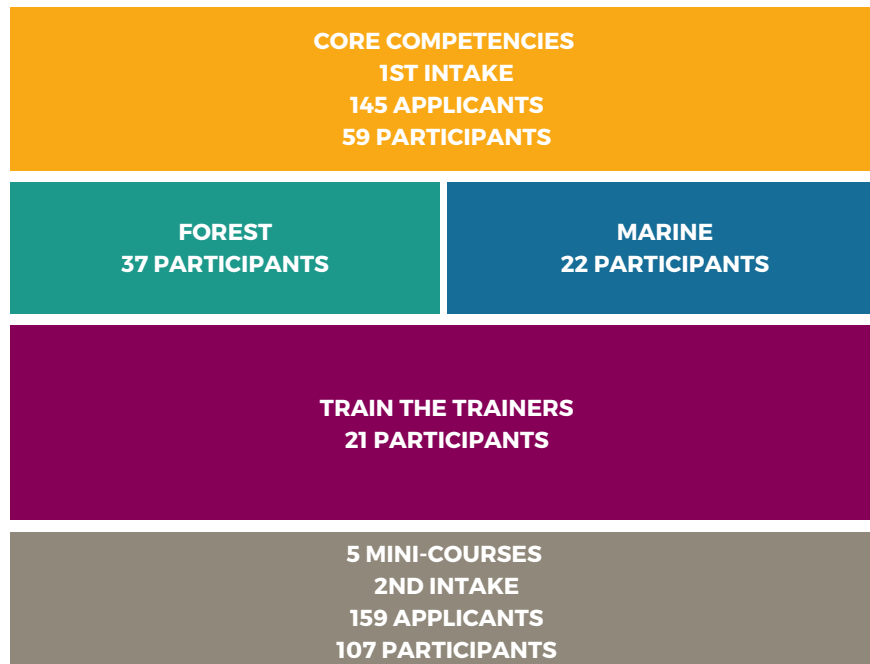


<https://tinyurl.com/2sa42mjc>

# Our Approach

Combining face-to-face and online learning opportunities, the ENA developed and delivered four main courses and five Mini-Courses with a specific focus on competence-based applied learning, marine and forest ecosystems, core communication skills, inclusive stakeholder engagement and governance practices, policy frameworks and more.

## COURSES AND PARTICIPANTS





# How the ENA worked

The blended learning experience began with an Induction Seminar in February 2023, which launched the online learning phase: between March and October, a total of 21 online interactive and co-learning sessions were delivered. In late September/ early October 2023, face-to-face workshops were organised for Forest participants in Austria and Marine participants in France. 2023 culminated with the Train the Trainers workshop in Schneverdingen, Germany, in December 2023.



Photo: Ozana Domijan



Photo: orecremedia



Photo: Sandra Grego



Photo: Sandra Grego

# What LIFE ENABLE Achieved

In response to policy-driven needs to improve the quality and effectiveness of Natura 2000 management practice and achieve ambitious targets for nature, people and economies, LIFE ENABLE has transformed the concept of capacity building for Natura 2000 and Protected Area managers. By creating the ENA, traditional approaches have been re-thought to increase access so that greater numbers of Natura 2000 and Protected Area practitioners than ever before can benefit.

## Testimonials from our participants

“

Despite my 8+ years of experience in protected areas, this course provided a new and insightful perspective, particularly in exploring the complexity of Natura 2000 sites. It equipped me with practical insights for daily management, enhancing my effectiveness, competence, and confidence in nature management.

Going beyond the educational aspect, the course created valuable networking opportunities—a platform to exchange management challenges and successes with colleagues across Europe.



# What participants liked the most about the ENA platform



## Testimonials from our participants

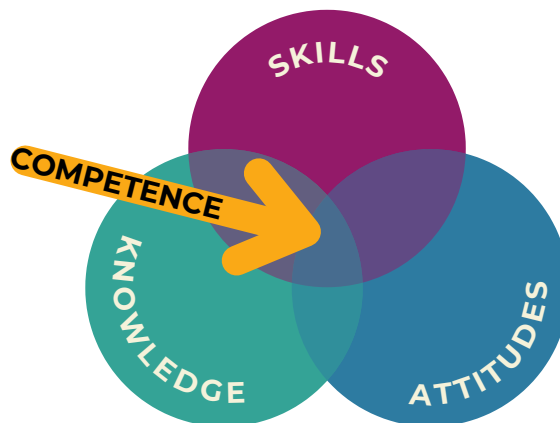
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Many many thanks to the organisers of the European Nature Academy for their hard work, dedication, and commitment to providing us with such a valuable learning experience. Building connections with fellow professionals from across Europe has been an invaluable part of this experience.

# Training Needs Analysis Tools

As part of the LIFE ENABLE project, we developed a Group Competence Assessment for Natura 2000 site managers, available in five languages. This tool evaluates competencies and identifies capacity-building needs for managing Natura 2000 sites. It is designed for teams working in Natura 2000 sites or local/national/regional Natura 2000 network coordination entities.

You can find out more about this work in “A3 | Competence-based approach using the Natura 2000 Group CAT - Guidelines for Natura 2000 managers on how to use the Natura 2000 Group Competence Assessment Tool”



**Assess your competencies!**

Individual competence assessment for  
Natura 2000 site managers:  
[conservation-cat.com/individualtna/](https://conservation-cat.com/individualtna/)

Group competence assessment for Natura  
2000 site managers: [conservation-  
cat.com/natura2000groupassessments/](https://conservation-cat.com/natura2000groupassessments/)

# ENA training impact

Externally evaluated participants' feedback highlights the impact of ENA courses on their work and core competencies. Participants reported that:



# Applying new skills and ideas

**96%**

OF THE 1ST INTAKE  
OF PARTICIPANTS

**found the  
content clear  
and easy to  
understand**

**92%**

OF THE 1ST INTAKE  
OF PARTICIPANTS

**strongly agreed  
that the ENA  
provided them  
with new ideas  
to apply in their  
work.**

OVER

**85%**

OF THE 2ND INTAKE  
OF PARTICIPANTS

**would  
recommend the  
course to a  
colleague**



# Most useful ENA content

Participants highlighted that the ENA is unique and that the courses have enabled them to apply their learning to improve their work, especially in the following areas:

**Communication and Stakeholder Engagement**

**Conservation Management**

**Conflict Management**

**Capacity Building, Best Practices, and Training**

**Training Delivery and Resources**

**Policy Understanding and Compliance**

**Empowerment through Communication**

**Stakeholder Engagement**

**Conflict Resolution and Management**

**Improving Management Planning Processes**

**Better understanding of Policy Priorities**

**Inspiration for Future Projects**



# Confidence in the online environment

ENA's courses were specifically designed to actively involve and inspire participants by using new digital technologies. This included interactive online sessions, diverse collaboration tools, practical group assignments, and quizzes, resulting in notable enhancement of digital skills.

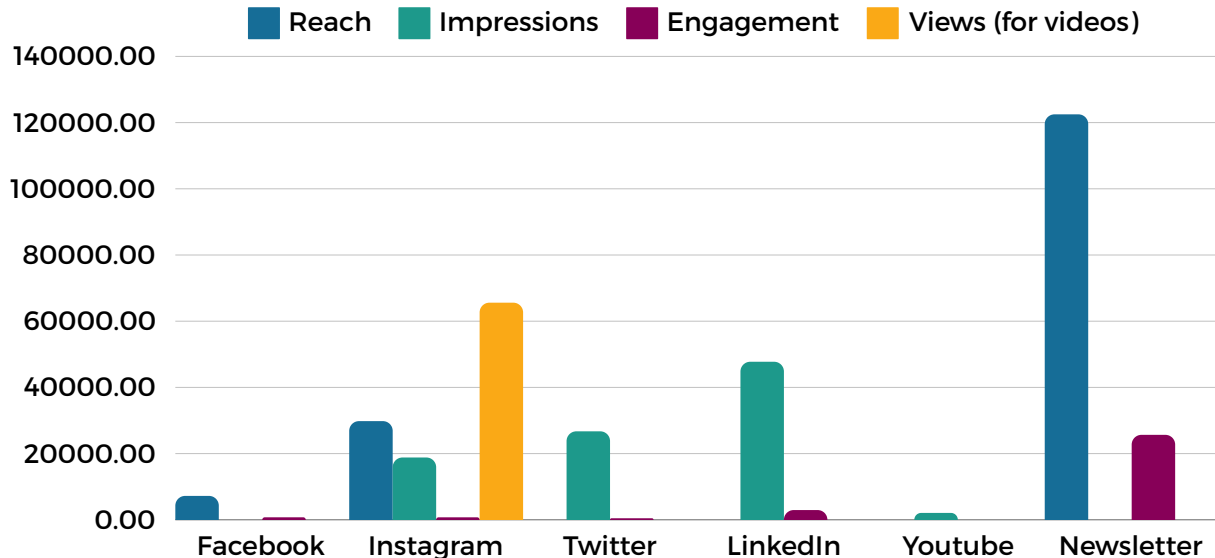


**89% of participants reported feeling more confident online, working with new digital technologies.**

**As a result, a significant majority expressed an interest in exploring the online environment further.**

# Social media impacts

Over three years, LIFE ENABLE achieved high visibility on several social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube. The quality, style and form of our communications outputs have been highly regarded. Additionally, we regularly engaged with our audience through specialised newsletters.



**Reach:** the total number of unique users who see your content. It measures how many individuals have been exposed to your message.

**Impressions:** the total number of times your content is displayed, regardless of whether it was clicked or not. This metric indicates how often your content has been shown on users' screens.

**Engagement:** the level of interaction users have with your content, typically measured by actions such as likes, comments, shares, and clicks. It reflects how actively users are participating with the content.

# Video and photo library

Throughout the ENA, LIFE ENABLE created and produced a diverse range of high quality video materials for content delivery, information sharing and promotion. This generated tremendous out-reach and deeper understanding about the project.

Versatile visual formats played a crucial role in enhancing our overall social media impact and enriching the European Nature Academy's library.

Take a look at some of the videos and photo albums which highlight our project milestones and events.



<https://tinyurl.com/mr23bxm4>



<https://tinyurl.com/yrsmysnv>



<https://tinyurl.com/4hxmhdz>



<https://tinyurl.com/2sh3swbj>

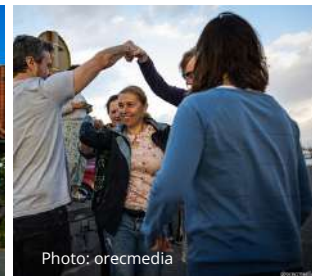


<https://tinyurl.com/3s4s59vc>

# Suggestions and recommendations: the future of capacity building

LIFE ENABLE's achievements are transformative for the future of capacity building provision for Natura 2000 and Protected Area practitioners. As a Preparatory project, it was necessary to work within constraints of time and funding; however, despite this, the results are remarkable.

The ENA's blended learning methods and the focus on practical, applied, peer-to-peer learning are ripe for future development: there is huge potential to reach greater numbers of people and organisations with responsibilities for nature's management.



# Suggestions and recommendations: the future of capacity building

Competence-based learning holds the key to continuous improvement of effective management practices.

Benefiting from the LIFE ENABLE experience, looking ahead and subject to finding sustainable funding for the ENA, we would:

**Deliver courses between  
Autumn & Spring**

**Continue to foster networking &  
participant engagement through  
a mix of short and long courses**

**Allow more time for  
modules & courses**

**Offer courses  
in different languages**

**Prioritise practical training  
& case studies**

**Use feedback for  
continuous improvement**

**Create courses for people  
working in similar functions**

**Organise an educational network  
with more ENA trained trainers.**



# LIFE ENABLE and ENA legacy

The European Nature Academy has assured a lasting legacy. Uniquely, it provides access to comprehensive, practical training and an established collaborative co-learning platform for Natura 2000 and Protected Area practitioners and experts. The practicing Natura 2000 managers trained as trainers to deliver the ENA courses are an integral part of the post-ENABLE ENA legacy. The externally evaluated evidence speaks for itself: the ENA's innovative, flexible, competence-based, blended learning approach is in prime position to be further developed to increase access to high-quality, cost-effective, capacity building courses required to improve management effectiveness.



Photo: Sandra Grego



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