



The LIFE Programme Turns 20

Since the passage of the LIFE Regulation by the European Union in May 1992, the LIFE Programme has helped fund over 3,500 environmental projects across Europe. It has served as one of the EU's primary tools for the protection of natural resources and ecosystems. LIFE projects have also championed the development and implementation of environmental policy and legislation. The current programme phase, LIFE+, runs until 2013 and has a budget of €2.143 billion.



LIFE celebrates its 20th year anniversary

This year, LIFE is celebrating its 20th anniversary with a photo and writing competition for current and past LIFE projects. After choosing the 20 "best" photos and 20 "best" texts, a panel of judges will conduct a final round of selections for the 3 "best of the best" photos and 3 "best of the best" texts. LIFE will award each "best of the best" winner a compact camera and publish their work on the LIFE website. Authors of the 20 "best" photos and the 20 "best" texts will receive a framed print of their work.

To help mark the programme's 20-year milestone, LIFE is encouraging all past and present projects to organise an open day during the month of May. The open day will allow LIFE participants to showcase their projects to local media, and public and private stakeholders.

LIFE Programme Successes Over the Years

The scope of the LIFE+ programme falls under three main areas: Nature & Biodiversity, Environment Policy & Governance, and Information & Communication. Information & Communication LIFE+ projects co-finance communication activities and awareness-raising campaigns, and have funded successful projects such as the [European Week for Waste Reduction](#).

For the year 2012, the [Directorate-General for the Environment](#) has declared water conservation, quality and management as a priority for EU countries. LIFE+ Information & Communication is supporting this initiative by funding several water projects on both a local and pan-European scale. Two LIFE+ projects promoting awareness around water issues are the RESTORE and InfoNitrates campaigns.

RESTORE: Sharing Best Practice for Restoring Europe's Rivers

According to the RESTORE website, barely 20 percent of Europe's rivers and floodplains remain in their natural state. The [Environment Agency \(EA\)](#) in England & Wales and 5 other European organisations have identified the restoration of estuaries, rivers and streams as a way to reestablish the relationship between people and wildlife. As an integral part of sustainable water management, river restoration also reduces flood risks, and improves quality of life in urban and rural communities.

To support existing and future river restoration activities, the EA; the River Restoration Centre (RRC) in the United Kingdom; Wetlands International (WI) in the Netherlands; the Government Service for Land and Water Management (DLG) in the Netherlands; the Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE); and the Italian Centre for River Restoration (CIRF) have formed the [RESTORE](#) partnership to share knowledge and promote best practice on river restoration in Europe. RESTORE projects also aim to change public perception about the role of rivers in towns and cities, and help urban developers understand the beneficial effects of rivers in people's daily life.



RESTORE helps to implement the EU Water Framework Directive

Upcoming Open Day Events on Water

- 1-20 May 2012: The [LIFE+ Delta-Lagoon project](#) in Spain commemorates LIFE's anniversary with a visit to the project sites at Ebro Delta and 2 conferences.
- 19-20 May 2012: "Wetland Work Wonders" in Goniądz, Poland will celebrate LIFE's anniversary during the [Second Polish Birds Festival](#).
- 20 May 2012: The [Oceanographic Museum](#) in Setúbal, Portugal will host "Celebrating our Marine Biodiversity" in Arrábida Marine Park.
- [Upload](#) your open day event by 30 March 2012 (LIFE login details required) and keep track of LIFE project events via LIFE's [anniversary calendar](#).



The partnership communicates and disseminates best practice on river restoration techniques using engagement events, field visits, a central website and [publications](#). Currently, RESTORE partners are developing an online wiki database containing key project contacts and case studies on successful river restoration projects. The [database](#) will be hosted on the RESTORE website and feature videos, presentations and guidelines from European and international stakeholders. Policy makers, river basin planners, European experts and practitioners will be able to use the RESTORE database to obtain and share practical information on restoring rivers, improving wildlife habitats and meeting the objectives of the [EU Water Framework Directive](#).



“*The main problem affecting river restoration is not a lack of expertise, but a lack of opportunities for sharing best practice and knowledge.*”

Antonia Scarr, RESTORE Project Manager

InfoNitrates: Helping Farmers Reduce Nitrates in Groundwater

Operating under the Water Framework Directive, the [EU Nitrates Directive](#) aims to prevent nitrates from polluting Europe's ground and surface water supplies by promoting good agricultural practices. The [InfoNitrates project](#) focuses on assisting Maltese farmers with understanding the directive's goals and their obligations under the Nitrates Action Plan.

Malta's Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs (MRRA) will use LIFE funds to deliver individual training sessions to farmers. These sessions will educate local stakeholders about the potential harmful effects of excessive application of nitrates on the environment and public health. Campaign coordinators will utilise informational brochures, CD-ROMs, a free telephone service and a dedicated website to clearly convey the obligations of the Nitrates Directive to the Maltese farming community. To ensure that farmers can easily access these campaign materials and resources, trainers will visit wholesale markets where farmers bring and sell their products.

Dr. Christopher Ciantar, Permanent Secretary of the MRRA, states, "Currently the InfoNitrates LIFE+ project is still in its early stages. However, the campaign will be a crucial tool in helping the MRRA and Directorate of Agriculture inform Malta's community about sustainable farming practices." As farmers and livestock breeders begin to properly implement and manage fertilisers in their daily work, the InfoNitrates project hopes to reduce the negative impact of nitrates on groundwater and the surrounding environment.

Continuing LIFE Beyond 2013

LIFE+ will conclude at the end of the year 2013. However, the European Commission has already released a proposal outlining LIFE's successor for 2014 to 2020. The [new draft regulation](#) proposes an increased budget of €3.2 billion and is designed to build on the successes of the existing LIFE+ Programme.

Some of the innovations contained in the proposal include clearer project goals, better governance, greater flexibility and the replacement of current LIFE+ components with *Environment and Climate Action* "sub-programmes." [Read more](#) about the continuation of LIFE+ from 2014 onwards, and the different steps of the proposal discussion process.

LIFE+ 2012 call for proposals

- The LIFE+ 2012 call for proposals will be published by 15 March 2012.
- [View](#) the selection procedure for LIFE+ 2012 or [subscribe to LIFE's](#) RSS feed for updates.
- LIFE+ proposals must be of EU interest and contribute to the general objective of the LIFE programme (information on [eligibility criteria](#)).