



“Conservation of Natural Heritage for Life in Ukraine”
ConNaturLIFE Ukraine; 101148569 — LIFE23-PRE-CZ-ConNaturLIFE Ukraine

Project: Conservation of Natural Heritage for Life in Ukraine

Programme: LIFE Programme of the European Union

Grant number: 101148569 — LIFE23-PRE-CZ-ConNaturLIFE Ukraine — LIFE-2023-PLP

Prague, 11 February 2026 – The final Monitoring Mission of the LIFE Ukraine project took place at the headquarters of the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic (NCA CR) in Prague. The mission marked an important milestone at the completion stage of the project, bringing together Czech and Ukrainian partners, representatives of the Ministry of Economy, Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine (MEEAU), and external monitor from the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA).

The Monitoring Mission was attended by representatives of the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic, the Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group (UNCG), Environment People Law (EPL), and high-level officials from MEEAU, including Deputy Minister Igor Zubovych. Monitoring representatives included Michaela Mariňáková, Technical Monitor, ELMEN EEIG – Institute of Landscape Ecology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Evaluation of Results After Two Years of Implementation

The mission aimed to assess the overall implementation of the LIFE Ukraine project, evaluate achieved results and impacts, review sustainability measures, and agree on follow-up actions and further cooperation.

During the opening session, the project consortium presented:

- The final status of implementation
- Key achieved deliverables and milestones
- Strategic outputs supporting Ukraine’s alignment with EU nature protection legislation

Particular attention was paid to the role of the Ministry of Economics, Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine in ensuring the institutional anchoring and further development of project results, especially in the context of Ukraine’s EU accession process.

Work Package Discussions: Legal Alignment, Governance and Sustainability

Structured discussions were organised around the project’s core Work Packages:

- WP2 – Legal Alignment with EU Directives, focusing on harmonisation with the Birds and Habitats Directives and strengthening the Emerald Network transition towards Natura 2000

principles. Presenting the outcomes of WP2, Dmytro Skrylnikov and representatives of Environment People Law (EPL) emphasised that the project delivered comprehensive legal tools to support Ukraine’s alignment with the EU Birds and Habitats Directives.

Mr. Skrylnikov highlighted the preparation of detailed Tables of Concordance, gap analyses, summaries of EU case law, and draft legislative amendment proposals designed to facilitate harmonisation with EU environmental legislation.

He stressed that a key added value of the work was the close cooperation between legal experts and conservation scientists, which enabled thorough analysis of the technical annexes of both Directives. According to the presenter, the outputs of WP2 now provide a clear and structured legislative roadmap for Ukraine’s further approximation to EU standards within the accession process.

- WP3 – Governance and Management Models, addressing institutional reform and long-term management structures. The governance component of the project was presented by Solomiia Baran and Jindrich Chlapek, who closely worked on the component outcomes.

They outlined the institutional analysis conducted within WP3 and highlighted structural challenges affecting biodiversity governance in Ukraine. Ms. Baran emphasised that the current system concentrates numerous functions within a single Ministry, while administrative and financial capacities remain limited.

She also drew attention to budgetary imbalances between environmental protection and other policy sectors and stressed the need for clearer distribution of competences and strengthened institutional capacity. According to her presentation, the project provides analytical foundations to support future institutional reforms aligned with European governance models.

- WP5 – Sustainability and Future Planning, identifying mechanisms to secure continuity of project outputs beyond its formal completion. WP5, currently in its finalisation phase, was addressed by David Lacina, who explained the current status of sustainability planning and follow-up measures.

He noted that the project consortium is working to ensure that all outputs remain operational and integrated into institutional practice beyond the project’s formal duration. Mr. Lacina added that continued cooperation with state authorities, integration of materials into educational frameworks, and further dissemination among key stakeholders are essential to maintaining long-term impact.



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He concluded that the LIFE Ukraine project should be seen not as a final step, but as a strategic foundation for future reforms and deeper Czech–Ukrainian cooperation in implementing EU environmental standards.

- WP4 – Natura 2000 Promotion in Ukraine, highlighting communication, awareness-raising, and stakeholder engagement. WP4 results were presented jointly by Oleksandra Rieznyk (Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic), RNDr. Petr Roth (AOPK ČR), Olena Kravchenko (EPL), and Anastasiia Drapaliuk (Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group).

The presenters highlighted that communication, awareness-raising, and education were central to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the project’s outcomes.

They introduced the comprehensive publication covering 74 Emerald Network sites, emphasising its role in documenting habitats and species of European importance and assessing the war’s impact on ecosystems across Ukraine.

The bilingual Natura 2000 Toolkit was presented as an accessible and practical guide for policymakers and practitioners preparing for EU alignment. The team also highlighted the development of a 14-module university course aimed at strengthening academic capacity in the field of habitat and species conservation.

Special attention was given to the First All-Ukrainian Bioblitz initiative, which generated more than 105,000 biodiversity observations and documented over 5,000 species. The presenters stressed that this citizen science initiative demonstrated strong civic engagement and growing public interest in biodiversity conservation, even under wartime conditions.

- WP1 – Project Management and Coordination, reviewing administrative, reporting, and coordination aspects. David Lacina, representative of the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic, emphasised that the project had successfully delivered its objectives despite challenging wartime conditions.

They noted that structured weekly coordination meetings, active Steering Committee involvement, and close cross-border cooperation enabled the consortium to complete all key milestones on time. The presenters highlighted that the project created not only technical outputs, but also a stable Czech–Ukrainian partnership framework for long-term cooperation in nature conservation.

Financial matters and detailed instructions for preparing the final report were also discussed in cooperation with the monitoring representative.

Strengthening Czech–Ukrainian Cooperation in Nature Conservation

The Monitoring Mission confirmed that the LIFE Ukraine project has successfully built a strong cross-border partnership and delivered strategic foundations for the development of a Natura 2000-type system in Ukraine. The project has contributed to:

- Improved legal and institutional frameworks
- Strengthened capacity of Ukrainian conservation authorities
- Enhanced communication and public awareness
- Deepened cooperation between Czech and Ukrainian experts

Director of the Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic, RNDr. František Pelc, emphasised the importance of long-term cooperation and knowledge exchange between the two countries.

The monitoring representatives acknowledged the significant progress achieved under challenging conditions and provided constructive recommendations to ensure sustainability and future scaling of results.

Looking Ahead

The Monitoring Mission concluded with a joint discussion on next steps, including the finalisation of reporting, consolidation of outputs, and continued institutional cooperation between Czech and Ukrainian partners.

The LIFE Ukraine project demonstrates how European partnership and technical support can contribute to strengthening nature conservation governance in Ukraine, supporting its path towards EU integration and the implementation of EU environmental standards.

Participants:

Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic (AOPK ČR)

- RNDr. František Pelc – Director, Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic
- Mgr. David Lacina – Director of the Department of Special Nature Conservation
- Ing. Lenka Jobová – Head of the Department of Project Economics
- Ing. Marta Vacková – Project Manager, Department of International Projects

- Mgr. Jindřich Chlapek – Head of the Biodiversity Monitoring Department (Regional Office Olomouc)
 - Mgr. Eva Knižátková – Head of the Department of Specially Protected Areas
 - RNDr. Petr Roth, CSc. – Lawyer, Independent Legal Department for Public Administration
 - Ing. Oleksandra Rieznyk – PR Manager, Independent Department of External Relations
 - Jonáš Gajgr, MSc. – Zoologist, Department of Species Monitoring (Animals)
 - Mgr. Lenka Tomášková – Zoologist, Department of Species Protection (Animals)
 - Mgr. Zdeňka Bohalová – Financial Manager, Department of International Project Economics
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Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group (UNCG)

Ukrainian Nature Conservation Group is a non-governmental environmental organisation focused on biodiversity conservation and protected areas in Ukraine – formed by biologists and specialists with over 50 professionals nationwide.

- Anastasiia Drapaliuk – UNCG member, conservation expert, project manager
 - Anna Kuzemko – UNCG board member, botanist & conservation scientist
 - Svitlana Korobova – UNCG participant (conservation professional) - online
 - Olesya Bezsmertna – UNCG member, Ph.D researcher / biodiversity specialist
 - Serhii Matvieiev – UNCG participant – Deputy Director of the Department – Head of the Division for Development of Natural Areas and Protected Areas, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine
 - Vladyslav Artamonov – UNCG member, Co-Founder of UNCG; Expert in Protected Areas Management and Biodiversity Conservation
 - Yana Diachkyna – UNCG participant (field specialist / project associate)
 - Dmytro Mats – UNCG participant representing Mykolaiv Regional State Administration (ODA) (field liaison and regional conservation expert)
 - Yuliia Kutsokon – UNCG member, Ichthyologist - online
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Environment People Law (EPL)

Environment People Law is a Ukrainian public interest environmental law organisation focused on environmental rights, legal advocacy, and biodiversity protection.

- Olena Kravchenko – Executive Director, EPL; Chief Editor of *Environment. People. Law* Journal
- Hanna Khomechko – Development Director, EPL
- Iryna Vasylakiy – Chief Accountant, EPL
- Solomiia Baran – Lawyer, EPL
- Zoryana Kopylchak – Manager, EPL
- Dmytro Skrylnikov – EPL participant (project associate) - online

Ministry of Economy, Environment and Agriculture of Ukraine (MEEAU) (*National Government Partner*)

- Igor Zubovych – Deputy Minister at MEEAU (Deputy Minister responsible for protected areas and biodiversity)
- Maksym Zhelezniak – Deputy Director of the Department of Protected Areas and Biodiversity, Head of Unit for Development and Expansion of Protected Areas, MEEAU
- Bohdan Semenenko – Head of the Department of Environmental Protection, Prevention & Control of Industrial Pollution, MEEAU
- Olha Nahnybida – Head of the Department of Analysis, Exchange and Implementation of World Experience in the Field of Environmental Protection, MEEAU
- Anna Balsanko – Chief Specialist, Department of External Coordination and Development in the Field of Environmental Protection, MEEAU





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