



Wetlands, peatlands and good examples of paludiculture and preserving rich soil organic carbon

Thematic event: Agriculture

European Union
10 May 2017





Wetlands in Europe

- Wetlands are complex ecosystems with important environmental and economic functions:
 - **Reduce flooding events, improve water quality, store carbon, preserve biodiversity, recreational value**
- High potential for GHG mitigation
- Among most threatened ecosystems and landscapes in Europe due mainly to drainage, land reclamation, pollution and overexploitation
- Types: coastal wetlands, rivers and floodplains, freshwater marshes, peatlands, man-made wetlands
- Estimated 2/3 of Europe's wetlands disappeared since early 20th century



For the most part, this loss and degradation is caused by drainage for agriculture, infrastructure developments, forestation and malaria control, blocking and extraction of the water inflow, over-exploitation of groundwater resources, or the building of dams, to mention but a few of the many reasons why wetlands are deteriorating. Additionally, pollution from agricultural and industrial sources can increase the level of nutrients, pesticides or heavy metals, seriously impairing ecological processes



Instruments for protection

- Habitats and Birds directives, Water Framework Directive
- Other environmental directives, e.g. Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive, Nitrate Directive
- Common Agricultural Policy: protection of rural heritage – agri-environment schemes; environmental cross compliance – respecting environmental laws for payments
- LIFE and LIFE+: Financial Instrument for the Environment
- Natura 2000 network of protected sites





Best practice examples

Innovative ways to integrate conservation, hydrological management and land uses in surrounding area

- Netherlands: hydraulic engineering to better manage largest raised bog area, conserving entire peat body
- Greece: water buffalo and cattle grazing for restoration in transboundary park with Dalmatian pelicans and pygmy cormorants
- Latvia: nature management plan, blocking drainage ditches to restore natural flood plain in Kemeru nat. park
- North-Africa: capacity building for management of North African Wetlands (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria)

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/publications/lifepublications/lifefocus/documents/wetlands.pdf>



Greece: This LIFE-Nature project used water buffalo and cattle grazing to restore the wetlands of a transboundary park that straddles Greece, Albania and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and in so doing, has helped to protect Dalmatian pelicans and one of the biggest colonies of pygmy cormorants.

Wetland loss 1950-85: netherlands 55%, greece 63%