If 2015 showed us anything, it is that there is a true and desperate need for innovation across the board in Europe’s agricultural and environmental sectors. From a new global alignment on climate change and the new Sustainable Development Goals, to truly local issues such as the state of our (agri-)environment, it is obvious that Europe must embrace the new and let go of its old, ingrained ways.

Fostering a new appreciation of agricultural innovation will be crucial in the coming years. In 2015, we have seen so many great new ideas, from plant breeding to drones to the incredible power of big data that one cannot help but feel inspired. In our fields and laboratories, so many are hard at work to realise a new paradigm, and the best we can do here in Brussels is to give them our full support. However, this must also mean being brave and taking a stand against biased scientific reporting, widely held myths about crop protection and GM technology and other societal attitudes that prevent us from unleashing the full potential of our countryside. To be sure, we must always be rational and make sure that the positives largely outweigh any negatives, but we cannot stick our head in the sand either. In this area, perhaps there needs to be more common sense for consumers; an awareness of all that it takes to produce your food, and the severely low prices at which it is offered. In order to overcome global and local challenges, one thing is certain: our land managers need a better place in the food chain, and certainly better prices in order to keep their enterprises going and growing.

The impact of innovation needs to be felt for our environment as well. Two important reviews, that of the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the State of Environment, show that Europe is not on the right track. While the last few years have seen some improvement for our biodiversity, it is not sufficient to reach Europe’s goal of halting and reversing biodiversity losses by 2020. We believe that the best way forward is a new and innovative partnership between land managers who cherish biodiversity, and environmentalists who see that land managers must be profitable in order to protect the environment. At the end of the day, our goals align: a vibrant and prosperous countryside that supports people, flora and fauna.

Hovering over all these challenges is the impact of climate change on our rural environment. There is no disputing the scientific evidence that it is taking place, and many of our members have seen shifting seasons and extreme weather events up close. To avoid catastrophic effects on our countryside, we must find new ways to reduce emissions, to keep producing our crops and to mitigate the consequences as best we can.

We need to keep what is best about our countryside; its variety, spectacular beauty and its multi-functional nature; these are timeless traditions that all Europeans can get behind. However, we must see that behind these traditions there should be a continuous quest to make it new. Our countryside, our food chain and our biodiversity depend on nothing less and we owe it to future generations of European to make it so.
Nutrient recycling and reuse is an essential component of the growing realisation that we need to re-orientate our systems to create a more circular economy. Nutrient pollution from both crop and livestock production is causing a great deal of harm to our environment through GHG emissions, air pollution and water pollution. A more circular nutrient system could have the potential to support land managers to reduce nutrient leakage (and therefore pollution), to increase agricultural productivity levels and to reduce Europe’s reliance on imported phosphorus (from scarce phosphate rock) and the manufacture of nitrogen fertilisers with fossil fuels.

Yet whilst the concept appears straightforward, as is often the case, it is in fact the very opposite. Different countries and regions have differing legislations, ways of dealing with waste and produce varying levels and types of waste. It became clear to RISE that if nutrient recycling and reuse in Europe is to advance, policy makers needed to be able to see a clearer picture of the situation. With this in mind, RISE is developing a report which aims to address the following questions:

- What are the issues and opportunities for recycling and reusing nutrients from waste in agriculture?
- What are the actions and policies that could support the development of nutrient recycling and reuse in European agriculture?

As part of the intensive research work carried out on this subject in 2015, the Foundation was invited to hold a debate on the issue at the EU Pavilion during the EXPO in Milan, and later was invited by both the EP Chair of the Committee of the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, Giovanni La Via and EP Agriculture Committee Member and Rapporteur on the CAP, Paolo de Castro to debate the issue at the European Parliament.

The final report will be released and available on the RISE website as of the 21st March 2016.

www.risefoundation.eu
This vision can best be realised through a thorough grounding in fundamental property rights that underlie long-term projects that are planned over generations. The collaboration between the ELO and FCS, combining tradition and innovation, makes their work both stronger and more effective.

General Assembly in Newmarket

On the 22nd May, over 250 Friends gathered in the Newmarket, UK for the 18th Friends of the Countryside (FCS) General Assembly. The Friends were welcomed by FCS President Michael Prinz ZU SALMSALM and Michael SAYER in the name of UK Friends. Both noted the continued collaboration between FCS and ELO, which allowed the organisations to create events such as the Forum for the Future of Agriculture, the Wildlife Estates Label, the Welcoming Estates Website and collaboration with the European Historic Houses Association.

What’s next for 2016

The 19th General Assembly of the Friends of the Countryside will take place on the 27th and 28th May in Wolfsburg, North Germany, where members will be able to contrast how the two Germanies have been able to become one.

www.friendsofthecountryside.org

After the General Assembly a topical and engaging conference was held on the theme of ‘Rising to the Challenge: Diversification, Innovation and Environment for a Green and Pleasant Land’ with a keynote speech from Richard BENYON, who focused on the risk and opportunities facing landowners in the UK, the event was closed by Ladislav MIKO who reflect on the state of Europe’s environment, and the challenge of promoting sustainable development and biodiversity management.

Like every year, the next day saw a series of countryside visits that represent a unique opportunity to share experiences and learning more about the local families who have managed their estates for generations.

The Young Friends of the Countryside

Many Young Friends also highly enjoyed attending the General Assembly of the Friends of the Countryside (FCS) in Newmarket and look forward to continuing the cooperation with the Friends of the Countryside. The Young Friends also met up for the yearly CLA Game Fair in Harrogate. It proved to be a great weekend with the Young Friends being introduced to many different brands and potential start-up ideas.

This year’s Assembly took place in Denmark from the 28th to the 30th of August. The Young Friends were very generously hosted by John MUNRO at Ledreborg Castle. It proved to be an exceptional weekend with many stimulating discussions and a fantastic tour of Ledreborg Castle. Of particular interest proved to be a discussion about food politics. As new land managers, the Young Friends share concerns over the future of agriculture and look forward to continuing these debates in the future. We would like to particularly thank the MUNRO family and our Danish and Swedish Ambassadors Jacob WACHTMEISTER, Jacob DE NEERGARD and Johan SUNDBY for hosting this year’s General Assembly.

The Young Friends are also very much looking forward to presenting the winner of the FAMIGRO Award at the 2016 Forum for Countryside Entrepreneurship. This Award rewards the most promising entrepreneurial start-up with a prize of €5,000 and a full-year’s coaching from our sponsor Edmond de ROTHSCHILD. This year we have received outstanding applications and we are impressed by the great variety of projects and interests, which drive our members.
The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

After almost two years of negotiations a political agreement on the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has been reached on 26 June 2013. Since then, the European Commission adopted several packages of delegated (DA) and implementing acts (IA) for the fully implementation of the reformed CAP from January 2015.

During this year Members States struggled to implement the new rules, which provide a higher degree of flexibility for national governments to adapt those rules to their realities. These rules are considered more complex than in the previous reform, not only due to the introduction of greening measures and a higher degree of flexibility, exacerbated by the negotiation process.

Therefore, it is not surprising that since accepting to assume the position of Commissioner for Agriculture, Phil Hogan has been focusing on CAP simplification. Among the five policy areas identified, the new greening rules are seen to lead to many of the technical problems and impractical demands.

In 2016, the ELO expects to see the results of the twelve-week public consultation on the greening measures and the subsequent proposals to be presented. A package of changes to DA and IA is expected before the Summer 2016 and changes should become applicable as of claim year 2017.

While Brussels is still in the aftermath of a long, complicated and controversial CAP reform, the discussions will start over the mid-term review of the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) and that of the CAP budget. The ELO established, as part of the ELO’s Policy Group (EPG), a Working Group to develop our vision for the European agriculture and the required features of the next CAP. Its first meeting took place in February 2015 and our thinking is expected to take form during 2016 in order to feed the discussions before the Commission presents its proposal in 2018.
The ELO members agreed that the REFIT was a prime opportunity to address the issues related to the Natura 2000 network. To demonstrate its support of the objectives of these Directives, the ELO sent a letter to President JUNCKER of the Commission outlining its position.

If EU biodiversity targets are to be met there is a clear need to improve the way in which EU regulations are applied across the Member States. A good first step should be a greater involvement of (local) stakeholders. This exercise will continue during 2016 with the adoption of a work plan by the Commission in spring.

The Commission also presented the results of the mid-term review of the EU Biodiversity Strategy after the launch of the State of Nature Report. These two documents show progress in many areas but highlight the need for much greater efforts by the Member States to deliver commitments. The ELO’s Wildlife Estates Label has been highlighted as a concrete response to the EC biodiversity targets, showing how private land conservation can contribute to halt the loss of biodiversity. With 50% of Label territories in Natura 2000, the ELO has developed its expertise in nature conservation.

As an active member of several Commission expert groups, such as the Coordination Group for Biodiversity, the Working Group of managing Natura 2000, the MAES, and the Nature Directors’ Meeting, the ELO is at the forefront of many areas of environmental policies. The ELO also closely follows the biogeographical process, which included in 2015 a joint kick-off seminar for the Continental, Pannonian, Black Sea and Steppic regions. Finally, ELO participated to the elaboration of a Guidance Document on Natura 2000 and Forests which have been published in December 2015.

The ELO also regularly presents its positions on biodiversity and Natura 2000 at events such as during its European Biodiversity Conference but also during major events organized by the EC such as during the Sustainable energy week, the Green Week and the BEES X-mas market.

Agricultural Innovation

To meet these challenges, the modern farm business should not just embrace the latest tools and technologies, but also work out his or her own innovative practices. This quest, therefore, does not just take place in the laboratories of agricultural industries, but very much in the fields of our members.

Over the last few years, the EU has shown increased support to integrate the concept of innovation into European policy. In 2015, the European Commission set up the European Innovation Partnership (EIP) which is acting “across the whole research and innovation chain, bringing together all relevant actors at EU, national and regional levels.” This is in addition to the Horizon 2020 programme, which is the largest EU Research and Innovation programme ever with nearly €80 billion of funding available over 7 years (2014 to 2020). Horizon 2020 is the financial instrument implementing the Innovation Union, a Europe 2020 flagship initiative aimed at securing Europe’s global competitiveness.

In 2015, agricultural innovation was again a highlight for ELO, with a new consultation on drone technology, the long-awaited renewed circular economy package, and many inspiring demonstrations of big data that will revolutionise our industries. However, signs such as decision to re-nationalise of GM crop production, an uncertain future for many crop protection tools and a lack of financing means that Europe is still not at the top of its game. On balance, though, there is still a strong support for agricultural innovation in Europe, especially in terms of IT technology.
Crop Protection

Nearly all forms of European agriculture depend in some measure on the effective and safe management and use of crop protection tools to combat pests, diseases, and weeds.

This is not just done to ensure that crop losses are kept to a minimum, but also with the vital objective of securing a safe food supply for global consumption. However, the vast majority of these products have achieved a negative reputation throughout Europe, when it comes to conventional farming tools.

The reputation of conventional crop protection products, the balance between risk and hazard and the collision between agriculture and environment mean that crop protection remains a highly controversial. In 2015, the issue of endocrine disruption (the possible effects of chemicals on the human hormone system) meant the 2014 roadmap established by the Commission is being followed, with more than 400 synthetic substances provided for the agricultural production being examined for endocrine disruption effects. This includes the azole class of crop protection chemicals which are a vital part of the struggle against fungal infections in wheat.

After last year’s public battle of neonicotinoids, the battlefield moved on to the issue of glyphosates, which was noted as “probably carcinogenic” on the basis of “limited evidence” by the UN’s International Agency for Research on Cancer. However, the European Food Safety Authority could not identify any chronic or acute risks for consumers, but requested further information from producers regarding its fate in the environment.

The use of crop protection products will always remain a controversial subject that will attract highly charged ethical debates over their uses and effects. Europe recognizes, though, that their use is essential for its safe food supplies.

Climate Change

2015 was the year of Climate Change as the world prepared for the post Kyoto with the adoption of the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate deal reached at the COP21. The agreement sets out a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to below 2°C or to 1.5°C.

The agreement brings great momentum to raise the profile of landowners who are investing in a climate-proof agriculture and who are already managing their land for both adaption and mitigation of climate change. Their efforts have resulted in the reduction of GHG emissions while keeping productivity levels. However, without additional efforts, this trend is not likely to continue.

See the ELO’s publication on Climate Change page 43
Forestry and cork

The publication of the new European Union Forest Strategy (EUFS) remains the most decisive development to affect the forest sector this year. While the responsibility remains in the Member States, the EUFS will provide synergies and coherence with the different policy areas that affect forests. In order to manage forests through a holistic approach, the EUFS seeks to incorporate all aspects of the forest value chain by not limiting itself purely to forests. Therefore, it not only addresses key issues like rural development and biodiversity, but stresses the importance of forests in terms of the forest based industries, bio-energy and climate change mitigation.

This year the Commission outlined Multi Annual Implementation Plan (MAP) of the EU Forest Strategy aimed at ensuring the continuing development of sustainable management of forests (SFM) in the EU. To draw up the purview which we will monitor and contribute to substantially in the coming year.

In order to deal with all these issues, the ELO is an active member of the Commission’s Advisory Group on Forest and Cork and works closely together with the main forestry producer’s organisations in Brussels. ELO member Bernhard BUDIL is now chairing this Civil Dialogue Group. The ELO also keeps close contact with other stakeholders involved in the sector namely industry representatives and NGOs, or through initiatives such as the ThinkForest platform.

ELO member, Algis GAIZUTIS, represented ELO at the Informal meeting of EU forest Directors meeting on the 18-19 June in Riga, organised by the Latvian presidency, together with the Latvian Ministry of Agriculture.

Recent initiatives like the circular economy package (published on the 2nd December) will also be influential for a more resource efficient society, and include several initiatives that can have an important effect in the sector such as the sustainable criteria for biomass and the cascade principle. This principle would provide a cascading set of uses for wood materials interfering with free market principles, thus minimising the bargaining position of foresters across the EU. Making this principle legally binding would also drastically increase the bureaucratic and administrative burdens already faced by foresters. The ELO continues to argue against the adoption of this principle in the appropriate forums.

The ELO has also been following closely the Commission’s Fitness Check exercise over the thick and Habitats Directives which may have a great impact on European forestry. As more than half of all Natura 2000 sites are located in forests, this is another important process that is very much under the ELO's purview which we will monitor and contribute substantially to coming the year.

In order to deal with all these issues, the ELO is an active member of the Commission's Advisory Group on Forest and Cork and works closely together with the main forestry producer's organisations in Brussels. ELO member Bernhard BUDIL is now chairing this Civil Dialogue Group. The ELO also keeps close contact with other stakeholders involved in the sector namely industry representatives and NGOs, or through initiatives such as the ThinkForest platform.
Energy Issues and Building Sector Challenges

The EU agenda related to energy efficiency has been packed in 2015. The main aspect of ELO’s work and mainly our coalition1 was to focus on the revision of the Energy Performance of Building Directive (EPBD).


Property Rights and Rural Areas

Property rights are a core issue for ELO members and partners. 2015 was a busy year for the Secretariat who organized or participated in several conferences or debates linked to ownership or land management, taking place as well in Brussels as in various Member States such as France, Poland and Romania.

The ELO believes that private ownership and property rights are the foundation of prosperous rural areas and continued entrepreneurship. In order to defend these rights, the ELO actively supports its Member States in their attempts to secure the right to access to land by all EU citizens or enterprises within the European Union.

A second issue with regards to property rights is the debate on access to agricultural land, especially as far as Chinese companies interested in farmlands seek to expand their activities. As the transitional period, where some strictures on land sale were permitted, ends in Poland in March 2015. In its procedures, the EC has asked the Polish authorities to implement a law which regulate the sale and purchase of agricultural land, observing that “there exist several provisions which, under EU law, may be considered to restrict the free movement of capital and freedom of establishment”.

The ELO is convinced that there is no similar process going on in Europe, and well therefore continue to secure the right to access to land by all EU citizens or enterprises within the European Union. In 2016, the ELO will continue to advocate for property rights demonstrating best practices in land and forest management, i.e. during the opening events of the 9th FFA or organized directly by its members.

II Coalition of real estate organisations: European Historic Houses Association; European Landowners’ Organisation; European Group of Valuers’ Associations; European Property Federation; International Union of Tenants; The European Landowners’ Organisation

The nature of ownership requires special consideration by the Commission at the earliest stage of the legislative process. In particular, the ELO and coalition by the Commission explained that it is important to learn from the difficulties encountered by implementation of the revision of the Energy Performance of Building Directive (EPBD).
existing Directives to ensure that further legislation does not cause EU energy efficiency policy to be a source of public frustration and rejection of the European Union. Our concern was to address in the first phase of the legislative process when the Commission envisaged the consultant’s terms of engagement and during the IA exercise. The ELO contributed by reviewing certain challenges that we foresee concerning the review of the provisions on measures to ensure minimum energy performance requirements, scale of renovation, financial incentives, and certification and overlap with the Energy Efficiency Directive and Renewables Directive. It is striking to see that Impact Assessments on EPBD, etc. have long passages on the positive impacts in terms of job creation and benefits for the construction sector and less on the real estate sector (owners, investors, and landlords). In our view, the Impact Assessment should also address the impact of the very unequal degree of energy efficiency development across the Union and the Energy performance certificates issue.

The temptation at EU is to expand energy efficiency to the sustainable buildings concept. Last year, the ELO replied to the EC consultation on this broader concept. In 2016, we will make sure to avoid any new regulations that could underpin private built sector. This is linked to several own initiative reports that were adopted in the Parliament related to Resource efficiency and more recently on Energy Union.

**Real estate related activities**

The ELO together with its partners is involved in the European Semester work related to rent control regulation. A coalition paper on France was sent in June and followed by a meeting with European Commission DG ECFIN. It was the 2nd paper of this kind prepared by our united organisations, following the previous one on the impact of Danish rent control. This paper provides an analysis of the French rental legislation, focusing mainly on the initial consequences and estimated expected impact of the French ALUR Act (Loi pour l’Accès au Logement et un Urbanisme Renové) of March 2014 preceded by the 2012 “DUFLOT Decree”.

We are also following the activities of the URBAN Intergroup at the European Parliament which since 2004 ensures that urban and housing related issues are reflected in European Parliament’s discussions and we are member of the European Housing Forum (EHF) an informal group of organisations involved in the housing sector.
In 2015, the ELO continued its stakeholder engagement activities and supported a series of workshops both at EU and study landscape level to link research with policy and practice, and in doing so raising awareness of the importance of cultural landscapes to social well-being, economic prosperity, and ecological functioning. The project identifies local needs for landscape management, and to provide a forum for exchange on the findings developed across the project consortium.

The second EU level workshop focused on landscape stewardship and how to integrate a broad suite of landscape values into rural development policies was linked to the Green Week where the project was present with a shared stand under the slogan ‘Linking Culture and Nature’. In this occasion the project launched its second leaflet which was widely distributed in French and English.

In 2016, the ELO will take the lead on the design of policy recommendations for landscape policy and practice on specific topics such as agriculture, biodiversity and economics. These topics will be further discussed during the third EU level workshop and the final findings of the project will be presented to stakeholders in the frame of a final conference in October.

For more information on the project and our activity please visit www.hercules-landscapes.eu or follow us on Twitter : @HerculesFP7 and Facebook : Hercules Project.

Wildlife Estates Label

2015 was marked by the 10th Plenary Session of Wildlife Estates Label (WE Label) that celebrated 1.000.000 ha of private conservation management.

The WE Label is a European initiative that establishes a network of exemplary estates that demonstrate good management and conservation. By establishing a set of principles, criteria and indicators that take into account the three pillars of sustainability (environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects), it introduces an objective and transparent system to demonstrate how wildlife management undertaken by landowners is in line with the principles of biodiversity conservation which deliver multiple benefits for society and rural communities (Environmental Services).

Over the 10 years of operations of the programme, labelled hectares passed from a mere 23,000 to more than 1,000,000 when counting the estates that are undergoing evaluation, and the trend in the more recent years is upward. Currently, 191 estates are Wildlife Estate Label holders.

To celebrate this outstanding achievement and to set new targets the WE National Delegations gathered together in Trujillo, Spain on September 14th – 16th. The plenary session included a half day conference entitled ‘What benefits does the Wildlife Estates Label bring to land managers and the whole of society?’ Attendees debated the role and benefits of the WE Label not only from the nature conservation point of view but also in economic and social terms. The issue of private land conservation and its integration in environmental policies at the European, national and regional level was also discussed.

Apart from the Plenary Session the project was disseminated to a wide range of stakeholders via its new website and a new leaflet that was launched on the occasion of the 8th Forum for the Future of Agriculture.

For more information visit www.wildlife-estates.eu and subscribe to the WE Newsletter.

Sustainable Futures for Europe’s Heritage in Cultural Landscapes (HERCULES)

HERCULES is a unique transdisciplinary research project that aims to increase understanding of drivers, patterns, and values of European cultural landscapes and to use this knowledge to develop, test, and demonstrate strategies for their protection, management, and planning.
Different designs of field margins can be utilised for environmental enhancement and resource protection — including establishing grass strips, sowing wildflower pollen and nectar sources for insects or sources of seed for birds. Which option, or combination, is selected depends upon the objective required and to supplement existing natural habitat available. In the framework of the project several estates received agronomic advice and facilitated access to targeted seed mixes during 2015 in order to successfully implement the desired measures and retain biodiversity in the field and offer natural protection for areas beyond the margins.

The PNi was also strongly communicated within the Wildlife Estates network where members were invited to join the initiative. As part of this project, the ELO started an assessment in 2014 on the numbers of hectares of implemented biodiversity friendly farming measures in its network. During this assessment flowering margins, buffers trips, beetle banks, game crops, cover crops and hedges were considered as biodiversity friendly farming measures. As part of this exercises the ELO questioned 58 estates, covering 141,188 hectares all around Europe. Among the questioned estates the owners and managers established 3769 hectares of biodiversity friendly measure, which means that 2,7% of their territory is covered by features specifically designed to enhance farm biodiversity. In 2016 the ELO’s objective is to support even more managers in the implementation of field margins and to continue its internal assessment to better understand in what way farmers are contributing to safeguard Europe’s biodiversity.

For more information please visit our website www.elo.org/projects

This has led the loss of centers of rural living because there are no further uses for existing agricultural buildings. The potential for reuse of existing agricultural buildings is huge, but there is a lack of possibilities to get to real experiences in this field from entrepreneurship to en- trepreneur.

The aims of the REVAB project are:
- To foster the entrepreneurial approach of the use of existing agricultural buildings in different regions of Europe (IT, ES, BG, DE, PL)
- To stimulate rural entrepreneurship, rural land and real estate owners and young farmers to think about possibilities of (re-) use and valorization of existing agricultural real es- tate and farmstead respecting economic, ecologic and social effects.
- To avoid further consumption of agricultural land through settlement and industrial real estate.

In the end, the REVAB project will produce the first comprehensive, flexible and fully open- source training system for the reuse and valorisation of agricultural buildings. As one of the main training tool of the system will be case studies, trainees will have the opportuni- ty of learning through real successful experiences and, for the first time, an entrepreneurial exchange about the topic will be possible on regional, on national as well as on European level. The REVAB training system will include all the aspects of sustainability (social, environ- mental and cultural) in addition to pure eco- nomic, and will be achieved through the use of ICT and e-learning.

For more information follow us on www.revab-erasmus.eu

Funding programme: Erasmus+/KA2/Strate- gic Partnerships for VET.
Duration: 02/11/2015-02/05/2018 (30 months).
Coordinator: ELO
Grant: 201-1-BE01-KA202-013183
The partners signed a Horizon 2020 grant agreement in 2015 with the Innovative & Networks Executive Agency (INEA) with as starting date the 1st of January 2016 for the duration of 36 months.

As underlined in the proposal itself the competition with other uses of the land is only one component of the sustainability of bioenergy and a number of cross-cutting environmental, social and economic aspects may present challenges to the extended deployment of these value chains, while assuring that biofuels sustainability standards are met.

Therefore, FORBIO’s target is to develop a methodology to assess bioenergy production potential on available “underutilised lands” in Europe (contaminated, abandoned, flood lands, etc.) at national and local level.

Biogeographical Seminars

The EU Biodiversity Strategy calls for significant improvements by 2020 in the conservation status of species and habitats protected under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives. In 2012, the European Commission launched the Natura 2000 Biogeographical Process to help meet this target.

Biogeographical Seminars and ELO Pilot Twinning Project

The Process assembles Member States and key stakeholders to manage Natura 2000 as a coherent ecological network by:

- Collecting up-to-date information on threats and conservation needs for species and habitats.
- Exchanging experiences, case studies and best practices.
- Identifying common objectives, priorities and management actions.
- Developing new management insights, (cross-border) stakeholder cooperation frameworks, networks of specialists and site managers, etc.
- Promoting Natura 2000 management that integrates socio-economic objectives.

ELO was invited to join the consortium in charge of the process for the Commission for 3 years. ELO is more specifically in charge of the Alpine Review seminar and the organization of a thematic networking event on Integrated Forest Management, which will take place in June 2016 in Padova with the support of Veneto Region and the University of Padova.

For more information:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/platform or legal@elo.org

ELO Pilot Twinning project

In parallel to this process, the ELO at the request of some managers of Natura 2000 areas, launched in June 2015 an own initiative called “Pilot Twinning”, after a series of bilateral meetings between 5 sites located in Atlantic Biogeographical Region. These sites are managed either by private owners or with a strong component of private properties on the site. They all develop both rural and touristic activities on the site. A morning working session with the participation of the European Commission was held on 11 June at the Herkenrode Abbey to enable the 5 site managers to exchange experience and discuss concrete management issues with the DG Environment representatives.

The 5 twinning participants are:
1. Midden Limburg – 3water area (BE) which received the first Natura 2000 Award in 2014 in the category ‘reconciling interests’.
2. Back-Littoral mires of the Somme (FR)
3. PNR Caps et Marais d’Opale - St Omer (FR)
4. Mazerolles estate (FR)
5. De Hoge Veluwe (NL)

For more information: legal@elo.org

Projects and awards

This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 691846.
In 2015, the award was bestowed on Mr. Stuart CATH for the project “Soil Regeneration at West Woodhay Farms”. The prize of €5,000 was awarded during the Gala Dinner following the 8th Forum for the Future of Agriculture.

West Woodhay Farms is a traditional English estate on the Hampshire/Berkshire border in southern England. The Estate is 830ha of challenging land with 520 ha arable fields at 900ft above sea level. The remaining land is woodland and permanent grassland.

West Woodhay Farms explored the possibilities of developing its arable farming practice into a more sustainable and profitable business as well as improving and maintaining the natural environment, and improving the soil for future generations. This was achieved through moving from a full tillage-based arable system through to a zero-tillage system, changing rotation from all winter cropping to a spring/fallow based system, changing the fleet of agricultural machinery and a commitment to invest in long-term profitability.

West Woodhay Farms feel that this is a sound, profitable and sustainable approach to arable farming, leaving the soil in an improving state of health for future generations. Furthermore, their projects provides a successful model that other farms can adopt.

The Belleuropa Award 2015 was presented on the occasion of the European Biodiversity Conference to the owners of the French Bois Landry estate. The non-enclosed private domain, located in the Loire Valley 1h30 west of Paris, extends over a total of 1210 ha, of which 1160 ha is covered with woodland. This large forested area is characterized by its particular geographic location in between Beauce and Perche, as well as by the presence of the Roe deer called Capreolus.

A long family history of woodland and deer management took on a new dimension in 1998 when, following an idea of his mother, Bertrand MONTHUIR decided to modernise the management of the forest. The agri-environmental measures implemented by this engineer of Agro-Sciences Po, created a kind of Renaissance in the Bois Landry.

The approach he has implemented during the past fifteen years follows three main axes: firstly, an integrated approach to the management of the deer population to a level that allows for the regeneration of the forest, while improving the physical condition of the animals. Secondly, the status of “Hunting and Research Territory”, which has contributed to the creation a simple Biodiversity Management Plan, while making it possible to monitor different wildlife species as part of a regional project to maintain biodiversity. Thirdly, the implementation of eco-tourism, which allows people to spend a night in “tree houses”. This has helped raise awareness of the environmental measures implemented in Bois Landry, forest utilisation combining production and nature preservation.

Land and Soil Management Award

For the past 8 years, the ELO, under the auspices of the European Commission (DG Environment and the Joint Research Centre), in association with the BOKU and Ljubljana Universities and Syngenta International, have granted the ‘Land and Soil Management Award’. The prize encourages new concepts of land and soil protection and their implementation in land management, and it also serves to enhance awareness about the importance of land and soil functions.

Belleuropa Award 2015

Every year, the Belleuropa Award honours a Wildlife Estate territory which has realised an important step forward to maintain, protect and improve biodiversity, using agri-environmental measures. The award, supported by the NATTA family, highlights the commitment of managers who combine agricultural productivity with a real respect for nature.
In 2015, the second edition of the award was highly successful in terms of number of applications and their content, making the choice of the jury very difficult. Two projects were selected as winner and runner-up.

The winner, the Dutch project “Bee Deals” from the Centre for Agriculture and Environment (CLM) was rewarded for its innovative approach involving all the relevant actors along the food chain. By signing a Bee Deal, key actors commit themselves to promoting bee friendly practices in their day-to-day work and activities, such as efficient spraying machinery methods or establishing bee-corridors.

The runner-up, “Czech Bumblebee” is a successful project led by Agricultural Research Ltd, consisting of the repopulation of local bumblebees. Nests of these local bumblebees are sold to farmers and any interested people in the community to foster crop pollination while supporting local biodiversity. Another key element of the project is to raise awareness on the importance of pollinators in local landscapes and communities.

The Award Ceremony was hosted in Brussels by Franc BOGOVIČ, MEP and Member of the Jury, and brought together a hundred participants, including the EU institutions, civil society and the agri-food sector, to celebrate bees, exchange best practices and show the best way forward. Members of the Jury Gilles DRYANCOUR, Thierry de l’ESCAILLE, Walter HAEFEKER and Ladislav MIKO congratulated the winners in a very inspiring round of addresses. Belgian honey and seed mixture bags were distributed to participants to encourage them to plant bee-friendly flowers in their gardens.
Hosted each time by the national organisation(s), the ELO meets high-level stakeholders and its members are often invited on a countryside tour in order to explore the best of Europe’s extraordinary agricultural variety. In 2015, the General Assemblies took place in Luxembourg and The Netherlands.

The Luxembourg General Assembly was in the theme of the impending COP21 climate summit of Paris, with multiple speakers such as Luxembourg’s Environment Minister Camille GIRA as well as their agricultural minister, Fernand ETGEN. The Luxembourg countryside was with its high levels of farm consolidation as well as a lack of domestic farm workers presenting two of its current challenges. At the General Assembly, ELO members concentrated on GM imports, the greening of the CAP, as well as the ReFIT of the Birds and Habitats Directives.

The last week of November saw the ELO staff and members meet up in The Hague in The Netherlands. Welcomed by both the Dutch members of the The FPG and the wet weather, the General Assembly provided a strategic look ahead. It featured visits to a Dutch estate, water management companies and a dinner where former prime minister Jan-Peter BALKENENDE spoke with great passion and enthusiasm of the need for a circular economy, noting that we cannot depend forever on finite resources.

Taking place on the 31st of March in Brussels, the Forum’s mission has remained the same: to meet the challenges of providing both food and environmental security to a growing global population. Over the years, the FFA has remained true to these ideas and grown from 200 participants to over 1,500 at this year’s event. As attendance has grown, so has its scope, now looking beyond the borders of Europe to achieve a truly global outlook. This was especially important to the 8th Forum, which took the new UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to heart.

The 8th edition of the Forum also saw the handover from its first Chairman, former agricultural Commissioner Franz FISCHLER to Janez POTOČNIK, the outgoing Commissioner for Environment. Taking the reins, Mr POTOČNIK explained that he had always seen the FFA as “a place where people can exchange views, listen and – even when they disagree – have a chance to come together.”

The 9th Forum for the Future of Agriculture will take place on the 22nd of March 2016. It will focus on the necessary changes the enforcement of the SDGs implies for the agricultural sector, in coherence with the environmental, economic and social challenges.

www.forumforagriculture.com
The first panel focused on the role of institution in the future of agriculture and the importance of cooperation between the governments and the farming sector was highlighted. The second panel presented existing models of sustainable agriculture, such as an efficient use of water resources, new technologies and tools for enhancing biodiversity. The closing panel focused on the particularities of the Italian sector: with a valuable food chain, it is still very fragmented to be competitive.

The FFA Milan event ended with the signing of the Milan Charter. This is the legacy commitment of EXPO 2015, affirming right to food as a fundamental human right, by supporting environmental sustainability and raising awareness about the challenge of feeding a growing population.

The day before the FFA event at EXPO, the participants had the opportunity to visit one of the most significant properties in terms of biodiversity in Italy, La Casinazza (Agroittica Acqua&Sole), covering an area of 1,400 hectares in the Pavia region.

The two panels demonstrated that ecology and economy are bound together. In order to pay for the environmental measures to protect our biodiversity, farms must be profitable. Especially in the context of a small country like the Netherlands, that means a need for innovation for more yields and better results.

Everyone agreed that greening is vital for agricultural growth but, nature conservation is never free of charge and it is not always easy for land managers to find the necessary funds. Cooperation therefore was key, and this was supported by panellists from Dutch NGOs, private landowners and the government.

During the second panel, innovation and new tools took centre stage. The high-tech Dutch farming industry represented the ideal time to examine some of these new farm ideas. These new farm ideas included both new visions of sustainability in terms of plan breeding, hybridization, even at its current early stage, allowed a breakthrough by understanding the genome better. This will be accompanied by breakthroughs in terms of precision agriculture, new sensors, big data and GPS systems.
This year’s winner was the “Oak tree in a football field” from Estonia, a tree rooted in a curious location that has been part of the team, and helped the football players of the near school for many years.

In the month of April, the ELO and the Environmental Partnership Association celebrated the Award Ceremony of the European Tree of the Year 2015 in Brussels, under the patronage of Pavel POC MEP, vice Chair of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety of the European Parliament, and with the support of Tetra Pak.

Around 250 people attended the ceremony including national organizers of the contest, policy makers, stakeholders and tree lovers. The event was chaired by Rodolphe de LOOZ CORSWAREM, executive president of the European Historic Houses Association, which worship a lot of majestic ancient trees, parks and gardens.

The wooden amulet that is passing from winner to winner every year was handed by Stefan STEFANOV from Sliven, Bulgaria, winner of the European Tree of the Year 2014 and Pavel POC, to Heiki HANSO, who received the prize for the “Oak tree in a football field” on behalf of the Estonian organizers of the contest.

Participants enjoyed a photo exhibition of all the finalist trees, and wines from the South Moravian Region, kindly offered by the Mendel University in Brno.

These days, the ELO is a regular and enthusiastic member of the event. In 2015, ELO Secretary General Thierry de l’ESCAILLE was a panelist on the conference’s last day on the question of “Engaging and rewarding private landowners: can we find new ways?” He reminded the audience that many landowners are willing to adapt their management and practices to the Natura 2000 requirements, in order to ensure the conservation of the multiple habitats and species one can find on their estate. However, they too often are deterred by related constraints, possible loss of earnings or a lack of financial incentives.

In addition to providing valuable input to the debate, the ELO also actively promoted its vision of a sustainable and prosperous countryside inside the Grand Exhibition Hall, by assuring its presence on 3 different stands. Together with the RISE Foundation and the Scottish Land and Estate Association, the ELO enabled the many visitors to play through many of the challenges landowners and land managers face every day, as well as the sustainable yet economically viable practices they can adopt as a response to these challenges. A second stand presented HERCULES, a project funded by the EU Seventh Framework Program that develops, tests and demonstrates strategies for the protection and the management of European cultural landscapes. Finally, the stand of the Environmental Partnership Association introduced the participants to the Tree of the Year Award; a Europe-wide contest that this year had 200,000 people casting their votes for their favorite trees.

During the next Green Week, the ELO will once again demonstrate the contributions of private landowners, as well as the challenges they face in ensuring prosperous and sustainable countryside.
This year, the workshop questioned the role of mechanical, scientific and social innovation and these represent significant solutions to adapt to the deep transformations the 21st century will require. Keynote speaker Achim DOBERMANN, from the UK’s oldest agricultural research institute Rothamsted, made an accurate analysis of today’s global agricultural trends, and emphasized the necessity to move towards a transformation in the entire food value change. Panelists came from the industry sector, the European Commission, the academics and the civil society. All gave examples of how technologies can be at profit of the farming community, the environment and the consumer.

The development of drone technologies for the farming sector, but also mobile applications and use of GPS, is increasingly transforming the agricultural activities, requiring a different kind of knowledge from farmer and manager. The integration of digital technology in agriculture and the data flow collected can help to better manage resources and production. But global trend of food demand seems to challenge the sustainability of the food production. This comes in addition to rising land prizes that farmers cannot afford, while climate pressures are challenging yields.

The agreement is due to enter into force in 2020 and sets out a global action plan to put the world on track to avoid dangerous climate change by limiting global warming to well below 2°, or to 1.5°C. This will drive emissions cuts from all countries, including major economies which compete with Europe, like China.

This brought great momentum to raise the profile of landowners who are investing in a climate-proof agriculture and who are already managing their land for both adaption and mitigation of climate change. Their efforts have resulted in the reduction of GHG emissions while maintaining productivity levels. However, without additional efforts, this trend is not likely to continue. The ELO showcase some of these efforts in the paper entitled “Climate Change and the rural economy: managing land in face of climate change”.

The COP21 ELO was again one of the accredited organisations attending the UN climate conference, this time in Paris in December 2015 (COP21), where 195 countries adopted the first-ever universal, legally binding global climate deal. The ELO used the second day, the COP21’s ”forestry and agriculture” day to make public our paper and a leaflet detailing ELO’s expectations on the new climate deal. Both were distributed on site, which accommodated the 40,000 attendees, including politicians, business leaders, and NGO representatives.

ELO’s interests on climate do not stop at this event and our paper will serve to support the future discussions on climate change, particularly as the European Commission plans to present their proposal on Land Use, Land Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) on the second half of 2016. The energy sector is also a key to reduce emissions and the ELO will keep an eye on the expected new renewable energy Directive (REDII) for the period 2020-2030 and an updated EU bioenergy sustainability policy.

ELO’s climate change papers are on the website www.elo.org
That is why on the 9th of December 2015, the European Landowners’ Organization (ELO) organised the European Biodiversity Conference on the topic of soil carbon storage. A topic that was especially timely as the COP21 negotiations were taking place in Paris at the same time.

ELO Secretary-General Thierry de l’ESCAILLE opened the European Biodiversity Conference with a reminder that climate change is a central issue for landowners, who are often the first to notice the adverse effects of global warming. The dangerous and destabilising effects of climate change, including droughts, storms and unstable weather patterns, have a profound influence on Europe’s biodiversity and agriculture. The European Landowners’ Organization sees the need for sustainable land management, involving the reduction of GHG emissions, but also better management of existing carbon stocks.

The keynote speaker, Daniel CALLEJA CRESPO (Director General of DG Environment) echoed this point on the importance of sustainable land management, noting that climate change is clearly the major crisis facing the EU. The panellists, Mr. MATHEWS, Mr. de POUS and Mr. WEHRHEIM reaffirmed the importance of safeguarding and improving European soil carbon stocks. They pointed out that a good management can shift agriculture from massive carbon emission to significant carbon storage. With so much unused potential still locked into Europe’s soils, and advancement still needed for better soil management, this year’s European Biodiversity Conference provided an urgent and much-needed look at climate issues from the European countryside.

For more information, please visit www.beescommunity.be and biodiversity.europa.eu/maes.

The event took place at the Palace of the Royal Flemish Academy of Sciences and Arts, co-hosted by MAES (Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystem and their Services), of which the ELO is part, and LNE (Department Leefmilieu, Natuur & Energie van de Vlaamse overheid).

This year, in order to raise stakeholders’ awareness on the essential role of farmers in safeguarding Europe’s natural environment, the ELO was present with a stand. On the stand, apart from showcasing our projects, the team encouraged the participants to interact through a role play where they take-on the role of a land manager. Different scenarios affecting an estate were given to the participants and two choices of a possible decision they can take to adapt to these scenarios was proposed. The aim for the participants was to take the appropriate decision to the scenario given to maximise ecosystem services on the estate.

Through this game, we hoped to provide fun but also to educate the public in an accessible manner to good practices in terms of land management. By enabling participants to become a land manager we helped them better understand the impact that sometimes small changes can have on the natural capital, but also visa-versa, how by investing in an estate’s biodiversity can have a positive impact on agricultural productivity.

For more information please visit www.beescommunity.be and biodiversity.europa.eu/maes.

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**European Biodiversity Conference**

Europe’s soils contain fifty times the amount of Greenhouse Gases (GHG) that the EU emits annually. This means that soil management is central to the mitigation of the risks associated with climate change and Europe’s landowners have an important role to play in this.

**BEES X-mas Market**

The Belgian community of practice on ecosystem services organized the second edition of the BEES X-mas Market, on 15th of December 2015 to gather together various stakeholders to discuss and share best practices about the maintenance of ecosystem services.

The event took place at the Palace of the Royal Flemish Academy of Sciences and Arts, co-hosted by MAES (Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystem and their Services), of which the ELO is part, and LNE (Department Leefmilieu, Natuur & Energie van de Vlaamse overheid).

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For more information please visit www.beescommunity.be and biodiversity.europa.eu/maes.
In the ELO’s publication “Farming and Innovation: Natural Partners” we explore our thinking around the need for agricultural innovation. It argues that every type of innovation is sorely needed to meet future challenges, and that what is most needed is a change in the way we perceive agriculture and innovation.

To read the paper go to: www.elo.org

In order to demonstrate the impact of climate change on the work of every-day land managers, as well as to provide achievable solutions, the ELO has released its paper “Climate Change and the Rural Economy,” which was distributed during the COP21 in Paris in December.

The paper stresses the actions required to keep food chains reliable and the countryside flourishing. Land managers are already investing in a climate-proof agriculture; from precision farming and more secure water storage to renewable energy and sustainable woodland management practices.

To read the paper, visit our website: www.elo.org
Throughout the years, the magazine has remained the voice of land managers and rural entrepreneurs, giving space for their opinions as well as those of policy makers and academics with an interest in the future of the European countryside and beyond. The magazine informs its more than 15,000 readers on the latest EU policy developments and presents local, regional and national points from inside the EU and the world. Global and European experts, members of the ELO team, and many others contribute articles and give the magazine a broad and sharp perspective.

Its readership includes members of the EU institutions, land managers, academics, as well as decision makers in all EU capitals.

Edited every two months in English and French, with a German and Spanish 4 page abstract, the paper version is composed of 16 pages. It is distributed in the EU and beyond. An electronic format is sent when needed.

All issues published in 2015 and before are available on the ELO website.

For more information please contact countryside@elo.org
Entitled, “our Natural Capital: Strengthening the link between business and biodiversity”, the first meeting organised by ELO in 2015 reasserted the issue of a proper evaluation of ecosystem services and how to encourage a sustainable economic and financial system which could support not only their existence but also their integration of the green economy.

On the 30th of June 2015, ELO organised a new session which focused on land management practices to climate change. Konstantin KOSTOPOULOS, ELO Adviser and Wildlife Estate COO, stressed that it has become increasingly important to manage land resources and use methods that combine production with the provision of environmental goods and services. Other speakers spoke about adaptation to climate change and climate evidence in the rural sector. Ross MACLEOD, Adviser for Wildlife Estates Scotland (WES), presented the work achieved by WES and underlined that WES has the potential to provide information on private land types and management that would otherwise be hard to learn.

Finally, the Intergroup last meeting of the year organised by the ELO was dedicated to the current review and the implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives. The EU’s Birds and Habitats Directives are among the most important pieces of EU legislation for conservationists, farmers, land managers, hunters and all those with a stake in Europe’s biodiversity. The 100 participants, speakers and delegates recognised that innovation, both in terms of practice and of knowledge, was much needed in order to make sure that the results of these European policies were visible in the field and achievable for Europe’s land managers.
Due to increases in their prey and forest cover and favourable legislation the last few decades have seen a positive response, with most populations stabilizing or increasing again. A result has been the return of these species to many areas from which they have been absent for decades. At least one of these species is currently found in 21 EU countries.

To make sure that land managers, foresters, and all those active in the European countryside can co-exist with these large carnivores, the EU is a member of the EU Platform on coexistence between People and Large Carnivores.

In 2015, Regional meetings took place in two EU countries with great local interest for these issues. The first one was held in Bulgaria in April in cooperation with CIC, the international hunters’ association, and the second one in Rovaniemi (Finland), in October and was hosted by the Finnish Reindeer Herders’ Association.

For both meetings, ELO acts as co-Chair of the Platform and pledge for a balanced approach to the management of large carnivores. During these meetings, a number of case studies gathered from a range of EU Member States were reviewed. At this occasion, the Platform recognized the relevance of the Rural Development Programmes in supporting livestock protection measures and has decided to follow the process through its members during 2016. Two other regional meetings are foreseen for 2016 in Germany.
The Association has cooperated with ELO on the revision of the EU’s Energy Performance of Buildings Directive. The Association remains vigilant that any changes to this Directive do not impose regulatory or financial burdens restricting the freedom of owners to renovate their buildings based on their own judgement.

Similarly, the European Historic Houses Association has been working with its partners on the issue of reduced VAT rates for the renovation of historic buildings. The campaign for this type of fiscal incentive was helped significantly by the adoption by the European Parliament of the resolution “Towards an Integrated Approach to Cultural Heritage in Europe”, which urges member states to apply lower VAT-rates for the renovation of Europe’s built cultural heritage. Getting these measures adopted on the national level will be one of the challenges on which the association will pursue its cooperation with its member associations and partners.

These themes also came back during the Association’s annual General Assembly that took place early October in Belgium and especially during an annual Historic Houses Conference that engaged numerous policy-makers, private owners and experts around the questions of ‘best ways to sustain our cultural heritage’ and ‘best ways to protect our cultural goods’. This last subject tied in with a long-term priority of the Association, the illicit trafficking of cultural goods, an issue that had already been central to a conference on March 18, organised in cooperation with Dorotheum.

For more information, visit: www.europeanhistorichouses.eu

The private owners of Europe’s historic houses often have an exemplary dedication to the sustainability of the historic landscapes on their estates. Therefore, the European Historic Houses Association is a natural partner for the European Landowners’ Organization, with whom it shares objectives like energy efficiency, environmental protection, sustainability and biodiversity.

For more information, visit: www.europeanhistorichouses.eu

The Full “Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe” report, with its Executive Summary and Strategic Recommendations, provides compelling evidence of the value of cultural heritage and its positive impact on Europe’s economic, cultural and social environment. The key findings of this project were first presented at a major conference in Oslo on 12 June, during the European Heritage Congress with the participation of EU Commissioner Tibor NAVRACSICS, Norwegian Secretary of State for European Affairs Jørn GjøBer, Vice-President of the Walloon Government, Maxime PREVOT.

2015 also marked the first year of the implementation of Europa Nostra’s network project ‘Mainstreaming Heritage’, which obtained funding from the EU Creative Europe programme. The first Capacity-Building Days were held in Brussels (15-17 April); the European Heritage Congress took place in Oslo (10-14 June), including a moving Awards Ceremony at the iconic Oslo City Hall; a policy meeting on cultural heritage as a key resource for sustainable development and a vital tool for promoting intercultural dialogue was held at the European Parliament in Brussels (16 September); and a policy session on ‘Funding Cultural Heritage in Europe’ was organised by Europa Nostra and the European Investment Bank at its headquarters in Luxembourg with an introduction by Maggy MAEGEL, Minister of Culture of Luxembourg and Acting President of the EU Council of Ministers (27 November), among many other activities. Europa Nostra also gave special focus to the promotion of the proposed European Year of Cultural Heritage in 2018.

In present times of alarming radicalisation, both inside and outside Europe, Europa Nostra’s mission and action are even more important than before in raising awareness and respect about the value of our shared heritage.

For more information, visit: www.europanostra.org
For FRH, the past year has seen both a continuation of efforts already started before, as well as an unfolding of new developments. For one, we have continued to reach out to politicians and policy makers at the European level. We have been very happy with the growing attention and enthusiasm that meets our message about the need to safeguard religious heritage. Its importance is more and more formally recognised.

Moreover, on several occasions the international press has reported on Europe’s places of worship and the work of FRH, including the Wall Street Journal, the Guardian, and the New York Times. And we make sure to add our own publications and material through print, our website, the monthly newsletter, Facebook, Twitter and even a newly launched YouTube channel.

Finally, 2015 saw the close of ALTERheritage, a European project led by FRH on the availability of learning material on the conservation of cultural and religious heritage. It concluded with the publication of a report on its key achievements. Participation in such projects enables us to develop high-level content and outcomes that relate to and influence religious heritage. That is also why we are very satisfied to be partner in a newly selected European co-operation project, Europetour, that started in December 2015.

For 2016 many more activities, big and small, are already in the planning. A highlight will be our biannual conference, taking place in Vicenza, Italy, on 9th until 11th of November of this year. And so we continue our work to put places of worship all over Europe in the spotlight!
The members of the Coalition reiterated that the policy should help to maintain economically viable and competitive rural areas, preserve cultural landscapes and at the same time enhance the provision of ecosystem services. It must also be easy to apply and we must avoid increasing red tape for farmers, land managers, forest owners, hunters and other rural actors.

Following the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy and the implementation of the new EU Rural Development Policy, the Coalition took a stand in favour of the increased flexibility and thematic approach and urged the new Commission to make work of regulatory simplification. A simplification package on Rural Development is expected in 2016.

The Coalition is also active on the ENRD (European Network for Rural development), to follow the implementation of the new RD policy, make proposals for the EIP focus groups, and support the work on the Natura 2000 Users Forum.

Members of the Coalition:

- COPA-COGECA: European farmers and European agri-cooperatives
- CEJA: European Council of Young Farmers
- ELO: European Landowners’ Organization
- FACE: The Federation of Associations for Hunting and Conservation of the EU
- UECNV: The European Livestock and Meat Trades Union
- CEPF: Confederation of European Forest Owners

The last meeting took place in February 2015, and provided an occasion to discuss the numerous projects running on the European level. The two important decisions of the new European Commission and the on-going "own-initiative" report of the European Parliament on cultural heritage adopted in 2014 and 2015 have been extensively discussed. It was noticed a strong commitment from both the European Parliament and the new Commissioner for Culture to the cause of cultural heritage preservation. This commitment was made clear by the continuation of the "New Narrative for Europe" initiative and the growing support for a European Year of Cultural Heritage in 2018.

www.europeanheritagealliance.eu

1 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage for Europe, COM(2014) 477 final

2 European Parliament Resolution, "Towards an integrated approach to cultural heritage in Europe", 8 September 2015, 2014/2149(INI)
Firstly, the coming year offers many opportunities to prove ourselves in Europe; the discussions over the Multi-Annual Financial Framework will mean that we need to demonstrate the value of the Common Agricultural Policy. The first part of this defense will come from the first in-field evidence of the greening elements, where we will now see whether or not our industry is on the right track.

More globally, 2016 will see the debate on the new Commission proposal on the renewed Economy Strategy, as well as new policies that flow from the important Paris Climate Summit and the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals from the UN.

Together, these challenges mean that we have a real opportunity to innovate in our sector, towards a climate-conscious agricultural system that takes better care of its natural resources. If we use this time wisely, we can present results and forward thinking to a European audience.

As always, the ELO will first showcase the best global thinking on these issues, highly relevant to our members and all land managers, at our 9th Forum for the Future of Agriculture. This year, we will feature economist Jeffrey Sachs, Commissioner Phil Hogan and a special message from UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon. We invite all of you reading this report to meet us there.

Perspectives for 2016

With a continuously escalating migrant crisis, crashing energy prices and the negotiations over a possible Brexit, perhaps agriculture will not dominate the headlines in the coming year. To us, this means it is time to get our house in order so that we can demonstrate positive changes when the European spotlight turns to us.
Abbreviations & Acronyms

**3E**: Economy, Ecology, Education  
**CAP**: Common Agricultural Policy  
**COD**: Chief Operating Officer  
**COP**: Convention of Parties  
**DG**: Directorate General  
**EC**: European Commission  
**EFB**: European Family Business  
**EHHA**: European Historic Houses Association  
**EED**: Energy Efficiency Directive  
**EIP**: European Innovation Partnership  
**EP**: European Parliament  
**EPA**: Environmental Partnership Association  
**ELO**: European Landowners’ Organization  
**ETS**: Emissions Trading System  
**ETY**: European Tree of the Year  
**EU**: European Union  
**EUFS**: European Union Forestry Strategy  
**EUTR**: European Timber Regulation  
**FCS**: Friends of the Countryside  
**FFA**: Forum for the Future of Agriculture  
**FP7**: Seventh Framework Program  
**FRH**: Future for Religious Heritage  
**GA**: General Assembly  
**GI**: Green Infrastructure  
**GMO**: Genetically Modified Organism  
**GPS**: Global Positioning Satellite (system)  
**IAS**: Invasive Alien Species  
**ICT**: Information and Communication Technology  
**LULUCF**: Land Use, Land Use Change, and Forestry  
**MAES**: Mapping and Assessing Ecosystems and their Services  
**MEP**: Member of the European Parliament  
**MFF**: Multiannual Financial Framework  
**MFLR**: MultiFunctional Landscapes Roadshow  
**MS**: Member States  
**NIM**: Non-Intervention Management  
**NGO**: Non-Governmental Organization  
**TotY**: Tree of the Year  
**TTIP**: Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership  
**PNi**: Pollinator Network initiative  
**RDP**: Rural Development Policy  
**RISE**: Rural Investment Support for Europe  
**SFM**: Sustainable Forest Management  
**UN**: United Nations  
**UNFCCC**: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change  
**WE**: Wildlife Estates (Label)  
**YFCS**: Young Friends of the Countryside