ORIENTARIUM ZOO ŁÓDŹ

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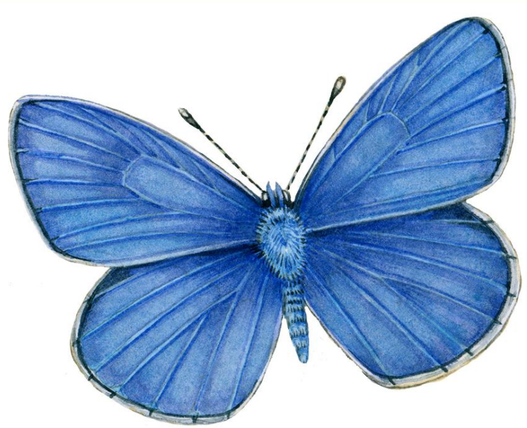
EU LIFE PROGRAMME & THE ZOO LIFE POLLINATORS PROJECT



Leveraging EU funding for pollinator conservation in zoos

EUROPEAN SPECIES INITITIATIVE WORKSHOP

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ZOOM

What is the LIFE Programme?

Created in 1992, the LIFE programme is the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action, which has co-financed more than 5,000 projects helping Europe to become greener.

The overall budget for the implementation of the LIFE programme 2021-2027 will be EUR 5.432 billion.

The LIFE programme is divided into two strands: one for the environment and another for climate action.

The **environment strand** has two sub-programmes:

- Nature and biodiversity
- Circular economy and quality of life

The **climate action strand** also has two sub-programmes:

- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Clean energy transition (continuation of H2020 Energy Efficiency market uptake)

What are the focus of LIFE Programme?

The LIFE programme will help the EU to reach its European Green Deal & Biodiversity Strategy ambitions by:

- **Transforming the EU into a fair and prosperous society**, with a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are zero net emissions in 2050 and where economic growth is separate from resource use.

- Protecting, conserving, and enhancing nature across the continent, in line with the **EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030** and the Habitat Directive, which set binding targets to halt biodiversity loss and restore degraded ecosystems.

- Supporting the implementation of the **Nature Restoration Law**, by financing large-scale projects that restore habitats, enhance ecological connectivity, and reverse the decline of pollinators and other key species.

- **Safeguarding the health and well-being of citizens**, by reducing climate- and environment-related risks, ensuring access to healthier ecosystems, and delivering multiple co-benefits such as clean air, water, and resilient landscapes.

THE PROBLEM

Pollinators are declining, many are threatened, and we lack the knowledge to protect them

🌎 Pollinators in Peril: A European Snapshot

📊 Decline & Extinction Risk by Group

Pollinator Group	% of Species in Decline	% of Species Threatened with Extinction
🐝 Bees	**1 in 3** (~33%)	**1 in 10** (10%)
🦋 Lepidoptera	**1 in 3** (~33%)	**1 in 10** (10%)
🪰 Hoverflies	**1 in 3** (~33%)	**1 in 3** (33%)

🧠 IUCN Status of Wild Bees in the EU

IUCN Category	% of Species
Critically Endangered	0.3%
Endangered	2.4%
Vulnerable	1.3%
Near Threatened	5.4%
Data Deficient	**55.6%**

🐝 Pollinators in Peril: Policy Gaps in the EU

Threat	Policy Link
Data Deficiency	Over 50% of pollinator species lack IUCN assessments; EU policy does not mandate comprehensive monitoring.
Urbanization Pressure	Urban and peri-urban areas (24.2% of EU land) are hotspots of decline, yet land-use policies rarely prioritize pollinator habitats.
Limited Legal Protection	Only 38 Lepidoptera species protected under the EU Habitats Directive; wild bees and other pollinators largely excluded.
Fragmented Conservation Strategies	No unified EU framework for pollinator conservation; efforts vary by Member State.
Low Public & Political Awareness	Cardoso et al. (2011) describe a “public and political dilemma” — lack of commitment hinders policy reform.

ZOO LIFE POLLINATORS: Our journey to starting this project

Inspiration from the Bee Friends Project

Our journey began with the Bee Friends Project (Bee Zoom research line by Fondazione Zoom), which demonstrated how zoos can act as pollinator refuges and engage communities in conservation.

Building on EAZA Resources

We explored the EAZA Conservation Database to identify partners already working on pollinator research and habitat management.

European Species Initiative (ESI)

The launch of the European Species Initiative (ESI) further encouraged us to frame a collaborative project where zoos could share expertise, resources, and best practices for pollinator conservation.

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ZOO LIFE POLLINATORS

Zoos as local restoration and conservation hotspots in urban and peri-urban areas and citizen science ambassadors to reverse the decline of pollinators in anthropic spaces

Project location: seven European countries - Italy, Croatia, Sweden, Denmark, Spain (Canary Islands), Romania and Hungary.

Total Budget: €5 408 361.01

% EC Co-funding: 60%

Duration: 48 months

Coordinator: Immersive Park srl

Beneficiaries: 12
8 Zoological Institution
1 Zoo's Research Foundation
2 University
1 Consultancy company
+ 4 Associated partners

ZOO LIFE POLLINATORS: Goals

📖 **Knowledge**

Improve information on native wild pollinators & insect-pollinated plants, through standardised monitoring methodologies and research.

♻️ **Habitat**

Increase pollinator abundance by creating and restoring pollinator-friendly habitats (meadows, green roofs, hedgerows).

👥 **Stakeholders**

Encourage behavioural change of key stakeholders and involve zoos, NGOs, municipalities, and communities in pollinator protection.

🏛️ **Governance**

Promote pollinator-friendly governance & strategies by positioning zoos as active conservation hubs within the LIFE framework.

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ZOO LIFE POLLINATORS: Objectives

1. Develop standardised monitoring tools

Create a Pollinator Monitoring Handbook with clear protocols for transect surveys and data collection.

Ensure comparability of results across different zoological institutions and regions.

2. Build capacity within zoos

Train staff and volunteers in species identification, monitoring techniques, and breeding protocols.

Provide continuous technical support and exchange of best practices among partners.

3. Implement breeding and conservation protocols

Pilot ex-situ breeding programmes for selected pollinator species (wild bees, butterflies, hoverflies).

Define husbandry and release guidelines to strengthen wild populations.

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ZOO LIFE POLLINATORS: Objectives

4. Restore and enhance habitats

Establish new pollinator-friendly areas within zoos and in surrounding landscapes.

Revitalise existing habitats (e.g. green roofs, flower meadows, hedgerows) to increase connectivity.

5. Engage and educate the public

Deliver large-scale awareness campaigns targeting zoo visitors, schools, and local communities.

Promote citizen science activities to involve the public in pollinator monitoring.

6. Establish a European platform under EAZA

Create a long-term knowledge-sharing hub for pollinator conservation in zoos.

Facilitate replication of methods across Europe and integration with EU biodiversity initiatives.

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ZOO LIFE POLLINATORS: Results & Impacts

Habitat restoration & green management

- ✅ 926 ha of urban/peri-urban land restored
- 🌸 Flower-rich habitats created
- 🐝 Nesting sites and larval food plants introduced
- 🦋 30% Increase in pollinators richness & protection of at least 10 threatened species

Education, Citizen Science & Public awareness

- 📣 Raise awareness of 5.5 million citizens that visit zoos
- 🏫 25,000 students & 300 teachers educated
- 🧑‍🤝‍🧑 16,000 citizens engaged in citizen science
- 📈 40% increase in positive attitudes expected
- 🧰 2 set of guidelines for municipalities and other zoos
- 🏛️ Raise awareness of 1120 representative of municiaplities and other stakeholders

Conservation activities for pollinators

- 🦋 Harmonisation of assesment methodology
- 👩‍🔬 50 zookeepers trained in monitoring & rearing
- 🧪 Development of 11 rearing protocols
- 🌐 European Pollinator Flagship Initiatives within EAZA

ZOO LIFE POLLINATORS: Compliance with LIFE Programme

Alignment with LIFE priorities:

Halting biodiversity loss.

Restoring degraded ecosystems.

Enhancing the Natura 2000 network and promoting sustainable development.

Contribution to EU flagship strategies:

European Green Deal → supporting the transition towards a climate-neutral, resource-efficient, and biodiversity-positive Europe.

EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030 → increasing protected areas and restoring ecosystems for pollinators.

Nature Restoration Law → directly addressing the restoration of habitats critical for pollinators, contributing to legally binding EU restoration targets.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships: zoos, NGOs, municipalities, universities, and local communities.

Measurable outcomes: standardised monitoring, replicable conservation models, and capacity building across Europe.

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Applying to LIFE: Tips for Zoos

🎯 **Align with EU priorities**
Make sure your proposal clearly responds to EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030, the Green Deal and the Nature Restoration Law.

🤝 **Build strong partnerships**
Involve zoos, NGOs, universities, local governments, citizen groups – balance scientific expertise with public outreach capacity.

📖 **Develop a robust monitoring & evaluation plan**
Define baseline data, measurable indicators, and a centralised reporting system from the start.

🗓️ **Plan finances & timelines early**
Secure co-financing commitments in advance and allocate buffer time for procurement & administrative delays.
Co-financing strategy
Operational budgets
In-kind staff time
Private sponsorships

Applying to LIFE: Tips for Zoos

💡 **Innovate & integrate**

Combine research and public engagement for higher impact and replicability.

👉 **Challenges**

Timeline & deadlines

Tight application → parallel workstreams.

Cross-country activities → flexibility & buffer time.

✅ **Learn from experience**

Use feedback from past applications and connect with other LIFE projects to strengthen your proposal.

Conclusion & Call to Action

The LIFE Programme empowers zoos to become leaders in biodiversity conservation.

With €5.4 billion available, LIFE offers the opportunity to design ambitious projects that restore nature, build circular economies, fight climate change, and accelerate the transition to clean energy.

Our ZOO LIFE POLLINATORS experience proves that zoos can act as true hubs of research, education, and community engagement.

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Call to Action

💡 A **Call for Expression of Interest** will be published — giving zoos the chance to engage directly in pollinator conservation.

👉 Reach out to join our **Pollinator Ambassador Movement** and collaborate with us to create pollinator-friendly habitats across Europe.

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THANK YOU!

"Pollinators conservation is not only an environmental task, but also the responsibility of our future generations."

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