

Module 2 → Students' preparation for the partner visit to Ikast, Denmark

Students are divided into 5 internationally mixed groups that work in Denmark. However, before they go on a partner visit, they choose to work on one of the following areas:

	GROUP	STUDENT
1.	conservation	Agata Godlewska
2.	decline of biodiversity and invasive species	Aleksandra Trela
3.	rewilding	Mikołaj Słotwiński
4.	interdependence and vulnerability of ecosystems	Julia Lato
5.	changes in our views on nature	Hanna Gawda

Tasks:

1-2 Give examples of how your country/another European country has faced or faces challenges connected to conservation, biodiversity or invasive species.

3-4 Give an example of a project (or projects) in your country/ another European country that works with either rewilding or the preservation of ecosystems.

5 Give an example from your own country/ another European country to show how people's views on nature have changed over time.

1. conservation

Conservation is one of the most important issues raised in the countries of the European Union. On May 28, 2007, the State Council for Nature Conservation sent an opinion to the Minister of the Environment, entitled "Position on the nature conservation crisis in Poland".

<https://pracownia.org.pl/pracownia-aktualnosci/138-problemy-ochrony-przyrody-w-polsce-wedlug-prop>

According to this article, there are many different problems that relate to several aspects of nature conservation activities: policy, law and organization, recognition of natural values and conservation planning, financing, management of protected areas and habitats, species management, education and public awareness. These are very important problems, but we are able to reduce them.

Poland has many different possibilities to protect plants and animals, natural areas as well as interesting and important structures and buildings.

<http://crfop.gdos.gov.pl/CRFOP/search.jsf>

According to this article the number of such objects/forms of nature protection in Poland is approximately 43,600.

These forms consist of: national parks, nature reserves, landscape parks, protected landscape areas, Natura 2000 areas, nature monuments, documentation positions, ecological lands, nature and landscape complexes, species protection of plants, animals and fungi. The first two of them are the most important area-based forms of conservation.

<https://www.gdos.gov.pl/formy-ochrony-przyrody>

The purpose of creating such protection forms is detailed in the article above, but the main function of conservation is not only to preserve biological diversity, inanimate nature and landscape values in the area covered by their borders, but also to restore distorted natural habitats, habitats of plants, animals or fungi. Among the protected areas there are also those with historical value.

Protected remains of ecosystems are also important for the conservation of biodiversity. Among them

we can find: natural water reservoirs, mid-field and mid-forest ponds, clumps of trees and shrubs, swamps, peat bogs, dunes, patches of unused vegetation and much more.

As part of the higher efficiency of environmental protection, it is possible to visit the website (<http://www.gdos.gov.pl/ochrona-gatunkowa>) of the General Director for Environmental Protection and read the ordinances of the Minister of the Environment, find out how to proceed when we see irregularities in the protection of species, and report the capture, killing or finding of a dead or injured individual of a protected species.

2. decline of biodiversity and invasive species

Lots of European Union's countries have faced a decline of biodiversity. Spain is unfortunately one of them.

<https://www.eyeonspain.com/blogs/spains-top-ten/14104/Spains-most-endangered-species.aspx>

According to the article, in 2014 Spain was acknowledged as the country with the weakest biodiversity and the largest number of species in danger of being extinct in the whole Europe.

(This link lists 5 animals in Spain that are most at risk of becoming extinct in the future)

According to the article below, the loss of biodiversity can be often caused by forest fires, and climate changes. These factors also lead to destruction of natural habitat and this can also affect biodiversity in a negative way.

<https://www.cbd.int/countries/profile/?country=es>

According to the article, Spain faced losing important ecologically regions. One of the main reasons why it was happening is because this country experienced invasive species appearance.

https://english.elpais.com/elpais/2019/08/23/inenglish/1566570682_047933.html

In this article, a situation from 2019 was described, when brown-colored algae invasion happened in Spain. The invasion occurred in the sea and because of that nobody could catch any fish, just the algae. Then, the algae was spread in up to 50% of the sea area between 5 and 25 meters of depth of the sea. Because of that, the fish weren't able to move in the sea and the sea area was littered. Lots of money had to be spent to get rid of that issue. For example, in Tarifa the algae took only 600 meters of the beach, but still 10 000 euros had to be spent to remove it.

<https://naturalcapitalfactory.es/en/2020/11/10/spain-15th-among-countries-highest-share-territory-including-fragile-bes/>

The table presented in the article shows world countries with the most fragile biodiversity. This report is from 2020. Spain is still at a very high position – because it's 4th when it comes to European countries with the weakest biodiversity and 15th in the world. Although it's a slightly better result than it was in 2014, that's still a dangerous place. Undoubtedly, lots of species there are still in danger of becoming extinct.

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/article/partner-content-setting-standard-for-sustainability>

This link illustrates one of many reasons why Spanish biodiversity got a little better. Near Totana in Spain, lots of solar panels have been installed. Because of that, it is possible for many people living around to have warm houses without using carbon, so without littering the atmosphere.

Another reason for that could be the presence of Spain in the European Union. EU countries aim to increase ecology and fight climate changes for example by reducing plastic use, or deciding to become carbon neutral by 2050. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-57833807>) Because climate changes are factors that decrease the stability of biodiversity (for example by forests fire and therefore ruining the natural habitat), aiming to fight against it is extremely beneficial for Spain, especially when lots of countries are determined to do it together.

3. rewilding

There is an organization. It is called Rewilding Europe. It was formally established on 28 June 2011 as an independent, non-for-profit foundation (ANBI status) registered in the Netherlands. The co-founders of Rewilding Europe were Frans Schepers, Staffan Widstrand, Neil Birnie and Wouter Helmer. As an independent organisation, Rewilding Europe has established itself as a pan-European initiative, operating at the frontline of rewilding at a European scale. Today Rewilding Europe is working in eight large rewilding areas across Europe, with staff- and board members, ambassadors and volunteers from 18 European countries.

People from Rewilding Europe want to bring back wild nature back to European countries. And not only bring, because the philosophy of this organization is to make nature coexist with humans.

As I said, Rewilding Europe works in many countries in many areas. One of them is the Danube Delta located near Romania, Ukraine and Moldova. The 580,000 hectare delta is home to massive amounts of waterbirds of all kinds, most notably pelicans of two species, herons, storks, cormorants and terns.

Rewilding Europe and their partners are working to actually improve the natural functioning and ecological integrity of the Danube Delta by using rewilding principles on a landscape scale. As they said on their official webpage: "One of the least populated areas in Europe, the Danube Delta offers a unique opportunity to restore a whole spectrum of biodiverse habitats – from open estuarine systems, naturally grazed grassland and vast reed beds through to freshwater marshes, coastal lagoons, shallow lakes and riverine forests". In short simple words, the Danube Delta has a big potential to create a rewilded area which process of rewilding will be fueled by construction of its own environment. Rewilding Europe is directing this potential to reality.

Also, this whole project's idea is to make nature coexist with human society. They want to show people that living with nature could give us benefits. This company promotes creating business based on nature. It is called a nature-based business. In the Danube Delta, they focus on Local eco products like honey made by bees from water flowers on the banks of the river, bessarabian brynza (sort of feat cheese) produced from wild sheeps' milk. And of course we can not forget about tourism. The Danube Delta gives life to beautiful places like Ermakov Island.

It is only a taste of Rewilding Europe potential and achievements. It is a very promising vision. Human and nature working together.

<https://rewilding-danube-delta.com/what-we-are-doing/nature-based-economies/>

<https://rewildingeurope.com/>

4. interdependence and vulnerability of ecosystems

Nowadays, more specifically since the latest years of the 20th century, our society has started more closely paying attention to extinction, due to industrial revolution during the 19th century, ecosystems. As a result, governments of many European countries decided to create strategies in order to protect natural habitats of wild species. That includes e.g. joining internacional programs designed for that purpose or coming up with ideas to protect habitats of many wild species.

That was the main factor, which led to the introduction of the **Natura 2000** in Poland. It is a network taking action to protect wild ecosystems. Places encompassed by this program cannot be for the entertainment industry, as construction land or agriculture to keep the wild as undisturbed and intact as possible. What is more, most of the started and planned programs are somehow connected to **Natura 2000**.

<https://mst.dk/natur-vand/natur/natura-2000/>

One of the first programmes introduced to prevent wild species extinction is **Nature Conservation Act**, which started in 2004. It's main aims are prevention of species of plants, animals and mushrooms, including their habitats. Protected areas, which are provided by it are: national parks, nature reserves, landscape parks, protected landscape areas, **Natura 2000** areas, documentation sites, ecological areas and landscape nature complexes.

<https://www.ecolex.org/details/legislation/nature-conservation-act-lex-faoc113664/>

Other example of such a project is **CBD NBSAP: The Programme of Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity and Action Plan for the 2015-2020** with following aims:

- improving the level of knowledge and increasing the activity of society insofar as biodiversity actions are concerned,
- improving the nature protection system; preserving and restoring natural habitats and the populations of endangered species ,
- maintaining and reconstructing ecosystem functions,
- increasing the integration of the operations of the economic sectors in biodiversity protection targets,
- limiting hazards resulting from climate changes and pressures from invasive species,
- increasing Poland's participation in international fora

<https://www.cbd.int/nbsap/about/latest/>

<https://www.gdos.gov.pl/legal-acts>

<https://biodiversity.europa.eu/countries/poland/green-infrastructure>

5. changes in our views on nature

Our view on nature has definitely changed in the past few years. Some Polish people are trying to care more about being bio and eco-friendly to the environment. According to data made by Havas Intelligence, five times more respondents than back in 2009 see the impact not only of their own, but also of the whole society on ecology. In 2009 only 4% of Polish people responded that they want to be informed if their products are not causing huge damage to nature. In 2020 it was 55% so it is a big change. More people are willing to buy more expensive, but bio products. But there are only declarations. In other research made in 2020 only 12% of Polish people live an eco-friendly lifestyle and approve increasing the costs for climate protection. Many of the respondents (29%) want but don't know how to become more nature caring. Some Poles don't agree with bearing the taxes to help the environment because they think it should be captured by the government. And there is a group which doesn't believe in climate change and says that nature can cope with itself. In 2004 the Polish Government decided to create the Nature Conservation Act which includes several nature protection laws.

https://www.eib.org/attachments/press/2019-01-11_pl_v02f-eib-climate-survey_media-brief-3_141218.pdf

<https://ziemianieatakuja.pl/raport-2020/>

<https://wyborcza.biz/biznes/7,177151,26569659,jak-przez-ostatnia-dekade-zmienila-sie-swiadomosc-ekologiczna.html>

<https://www.forbes.pl/biznes/polacy-a-ekologia-czy-zyjemy-tak-ekologicznie-jak-to-deklarujemy/s70v6ht>

In Germany the ecological awareness is huge. In a survey taken in 2018 and again in 2019, where Germans were asked what is the main problem facing their country, the environmental protection was chosen over every other challenge for the people surveyed. It is seen compared to 2016 where this topic was not on the top of the list. (main problems in 2016 war and terrorism, immigration and migration, crime and public safety, along with social justice)

The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) collected data which show that in Germany people are the most concerned about climate change.

“According to data from PwC, the consumption of organic food in Germany has experienced remarkable growth in recent years. In 2016 only 16% of buyers preferred to consume organic food that was certified, a figure that has risen to 24% today (2021), according to the consultancy.”

<https://www.freshplaza.com/article/9290206/organic-food-consumption-increases-in-germany/>

<https://www.dw.com/pl/rekordowa-popularno%C5%9B%C4%87-zdrowej-%C5%BCywno%C5%9Bci-w-niemczech/a-41036894>

<https://www.umweltbundesamt.de/en/topics/sustainability-strategies-international/environmental-awareness-in-germany>

<https://www.carbonbrief.org/germans-worried-climate-change-analysis-shows>