

IALE 2025

European Landscape Ecology Congress
Landscape Perspectives in a Rapidly Changing World

Bratislava, Slovakia, September 2-5, 2025

Book of Abstracts

Editors:

Juraj Lieskovský, Zuzana Baránková, Viktória Miklósová, Hubert Hilbert, Zuzana Ponecová



European Landscape
Ecology Congress

Title: IALE 2025 European Landscape Ecology Congress, Landscape Perspectives in a Rapidly Changing World: Book of Abstracts

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Publishers: Institute of Landscape Ecology, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, Slovakia

Year of publication: 2025

Electronic edition: DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/2025.9788089325344>
ISBN 978-80-89325-34-4
EAN 9788089325344

Recommended citation:

[Authors surname][Initial/s](2025)[Title of abstract].In: J.Lieskovský, Z.Baránková, V.Miklósová, H.Hilbert, Z.Ponecová, (Eds.), IALE 2025 European Landscape Ecology Congress. Book of Abstracts (pp. xx-xx), ILE SAS, Bratislava.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/2025.9788089325344>

The IALE 2025 European Landscape Ecology Congress (2-5 September 2025) was organised by Institute of Landscape Ecology, Slovak Academy of Sciences (ILE SAS) and Faculty of Natural Sciences, Comenius University Bratislava (FNS CU), European Association for Landscape Ecology (IALE Europe), Czech Society for Landscape Ecology (IALE-CZ), and Mendel University in Brno (MUB). Patronage over the Congress was granted by Mr. Juraj Droba, Chairman of the Bratislava Self-Governing Region, and Mr. Matúš Vallo, Mayor of the City of Bratislava.

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Graphic design: Jakub Košša, AI tools



European Landscape
Ecology Congress

Lost in translation: from monitoring in the field to policy evaluation

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In northwestern Europe, atmospheric nitrogen deposition is one of the pressures for habitat restoration. The Dutch government introduced the Integrated Approach to Nitrogen (PAS), allowing future nitrogen reduction to justify permits. In 2019, the Council of State ruled PAS invalid, triggering the 'nitrogen crisis,' which restricted economic development unless nitrogen effects were mitigated. In response, the Netherlands launched the Nitrogen Reduction and Nature Improvement program in 2021, which includes monitoring and evaluation of the effects of nitrogen reduction and nature restoration measures. However, this evaluation turned out to not be so easy. Monitoring effects of restoration measures is quite complex as they occur on different spatial and time scales and differ depending on the type of measures taken. The Netherlands is known for its extensive monitoring data, but it is collected (opportunistically) following varying protocols, often without baseline measurements, not long-term or inconsistently over time. This information is scattered across various documents and databases, and data on the same metric—for example the area of a specific habitat type—can differ between sources. There is a risk of 'shifting baselines' as policymakers, under pressure to meet targets, may gradually redefine what is considered 'good quality' in nature restoration and ecological effects are usually visible on different time scales than policy is made. Since nature restoration involves customization in different areas, extrapolating from site-specific data to a national or EU level proves to be particularly challenging. A considerable amount of information gets 'lost in translation' between the diverse worlds of nature conservationists who focus on practical aspects and customize management to the field situation, and policy officials who require a clear and consistent overview to account for spent subsidies. This leads to the conservation status of Natura 2000 areas becoming a 'virtual reality,' essentially existing only on paper.

Poster presentation

