

The EUROWILD project – improving life-long learning for oiled wildlife response

In 2025, the [European Oiled Wildlife Assistance \(EUROWA\)](#) Network received support through the EU's Erasmus Plus Programme for a new project known as EUROWILD. The ongoing project focuses on life-long learning of the EUROWA Network, aims to grow the pool of experts, develop new trainings in oiled wildlife response and engage authorities on preparedness. The project is being run by ProBird in Germany, Submon in Spain, WWF Finland, Wildlife Rescue Centre Ostende (WRCO) in Belgium and Sea Alarm as the coordinator.

Oiled wildlife response can be a crucial element in a response to oil pollution at sea. Wildlife such as birds, sea turtles and marine mammals may become affected by oil or other pollutants spilled at sea and arrive in high numbers on coastlines. The EUROWA Network was formally created in 2015 to provide international expert resources for dealing with affected animals in marine wildlife emergencies. Thanks to EU funding over the years, the Network has developed a portfolio of training courses and best practices for such incidents.

The European Oiled Wildlife Response Life-long learning Development (EUROWILD) project is the latest EUROWA supporting project and has already had a number of successes. In April of last year, a brand new course was developed and run in Germany. The [SPECIALIST Field: Search and Rescue](#) course teaches participants how to design, set up and make field departments operational on the beach or in a facility. The funding also allowed for a face-to-face network meeting in Spain in November last year, the development and delivery of a new oiled wildlife Assessment Course and manual and the adaptation of the existing Basic Responder course into an online format.

More recently, in February of this year an Authority Workshop was held in Helsinki, reflecting the Baltic Sea region's long-standing cooperation on oil spill response. This topic was particularly timely given increasing risks from 'shadow fleet' vessels and the potential for significant environmental damage from oil spills in the Baltic Sea. The workshop addressed gaps by fostering targeted discussions, enhancing cross-border collaboration, and strengthening cooperation between authorities and NGOs. To facilitate these discussions, a WildX serious game was created which focused on regional cooperation. WildX is a unique tabletop exercise portfolio that allows for playful simulation of marine pollution incidents that would need integrated management of wildlife impacts.

Building on these successes, there are still exciting things to come for EUROWILD. A second SPECIALIST: post-wash care training course is being developed for the portfolio, scheduled to run in November. There is also a new train-the-trainer course being developed which will serve the Network to formalise trainers receiving their qualification. It is an important course to ensure experts can pass on their knowledge using the EUROWA training structure.

All the above developments were only possible thanks to the EU funding under the Erasmus Plus Cooperation Partnerships Programme. The project partners are grateful for the opportunity to further the work of the EUROWA Network.