



LIFE
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ShepForBio Pastoral School Newsletter #5

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Welcome to the fifth edition of the LIFE ShepForBio Newsletter dedicated to pastoral schools!

About LIFE ShepForBio

The LIFE ShepForBio Project aims to improve the conservation status of three grassland habitats, which have a high naturalistic value and fall into the Habitats Directive (codes 5130, 6210*, and 6230*). To ensure sustainable and lasting management of these environments, the development of pastoral activities in marginal upland areas should be enhanced. The Project aims to restore more than 340 hectares of land and improve the conservation status of an additional 147 hectares.

These areas will be grazed following management plans developed during the project, with the aim of maintaining the efficiency restored by the planned recovery actions. The Project's intervention areas fall in two Italian Apennine regions, Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna, mainly within the Casentino Forest National Park. In addition, the project will establish a School for Shepherds and Breeders to support aspiring professionals potentially interested in undertaking project-related activities.

Actions are also planned to disseminate the results, both in Italy and internationally, and to promote pastoralism as a tool for biodiversity conservation. In this context, a series of online discussion forums and three international conferences will be organised. The aim is to connect pastoral schools and relevant actors/networks promoting pastoral practices across Europe. Such international events are designed to exchange knowledge, best practices, and challenges among the attendants. The final aim is to encourage the dialogue between European pastoral schools that can build on each other's successes and difficulties and set up future collaborations.



Editorial

Dear friends of the LIFE ShepForBio project,

As we approach the beginning of springtime, we are pleased to share several important milestones and upcoming initiatives that continue to strengthen collaboration and innovation in pastoralism across Europe. Over the past months, our community has remained active and engaged. We successfully concluded our latest [Online Discussion Forum in December](#), which brought together pastoral schools, practitioners, researchers and stakeholders from across Europe. The exchange of experiences and perspectives once again demonstrated the **value of dialogue and cooperation** in advancing sustainable pastoral practices.



Looking ahead, we are thrilled to officially announce the **next Project [International Conference](#)**, which will take place on **22–24 September 2026 in Alberese** (Tuscany, Italy), in the remarkable setting of the Maremma Regional Park. This event will offer a unique opportunity to meet in person, share knowledge, and celebrate the diversity and vitality of pastoral systems at European and international level, in synergy with the [International Year](#)

[of Rangelands and Pastoralists](#). We look forward to welcoming you and will share further details in the coming months. Please be aware that a part of the venue will be dedicated to **exhibiting posters and materials** from relevant pastoral projects and initiatives: if you are interested, **we invite you to share an abstract of max. 250 words**, by sending an email to beatrice.bellavia@euromontana.org and campedelli@dream-italia.it.

In parallel, we will soon begin work on a **dedicated dossier on European pastoral schools**. This initiative will provide a **tentative overview of existing schools**, draw a state-of-the-art analysis of pastoral education, and collect proposals and perspectives for strengthening and valorising pastoral training in the future. We hope this work will contribute to reinforcing learning pathways, fostering innovation, and supporting the next generation of pastoralists. For this reason, your support will be greatly appreciated and we will soon circulate a survey to gather precious information. We will also continue documenting and sharing [good practices](#) from across Europe, expanding our knowledge base and supporting a stronger network for sustainable pastoralism. [Your contributions](#) remain essential in shaping a collaborative platform that reflects the diversity of pastoral communities and experiences across borders.

Thank you for your continued engagement and support! Together, we are building momentum towards deeper collaboration, broader impact, and a resilient future for pastoralism in Europe.



Wishing you an inspiring read,

Tommaso Campedelli, leading the consortium of LIFE ShepForBio (D.R.E.A.M. Italia) and Beatrice Bellavia (Euromontana)



Key outcomes from the third LIFE ShepForBio Online Discussion Forum

On 4 December 2025, the **third LIFE ShepForBio Online Discussion Forum**, titled “[Shepherding Futures: Training, Innovation, and Rural Revival](#)”, brought together 46 participants from around 15 European countries to exchange knowledge on pastoralism, training, and rural development. The event gathered a diverse community of shepherds, pastoral schools, researchers, public authorities, NGOs, and international networks, highlighting the growing interest in strengthening pastoral systems across Europe and fostering collaboration among emerging and established pastoral schools.



The forum focused on how **training, innovation and cooperation** can help pastoralism adapt to modern challenges while maintaining its cultural, ecological and economic value. Four expert contributions explored different dimensions of this transition, from rural tourism and cultural heritage to innovative training programmes and regenerative land management.

Among them, we discussed linking pastoralism with sustainable tourism in the Shar–Korab–Koritnik region across North Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania with **Frosina Pandurska** and **Stephanie Gentle**, and explored the efforts to strengthen the cultural and educational recognition of pastoralism in the Carpathian region with **Tamara Mitrofanenko**. We also listened to the experiences of two shepherd schools, learning about a new eco-pastoral diagnostics training module in the Escola de Pastors i Pastores de Catalunya with **Maria Diaz**, and discovering the Shepherd School of Alvão in Portugal and their combination between grazing and prescribed burning with **Marco Fernandes**.

The lively discussion that followed emphasised several shared challenges across Europe: the need to improve the social recognition of pastoral professions, attract younger generations, strengthen networks of pastoral schools, and ensure that pastoralists are recognised for the ecosystem services they provide. The full report can be found [here](#), the materials [here](#) and the recording is available [here](#).



Launch of the First Good Practices Brochure: Extensive Livestock and Conservation

We are pleased to announce the launch of the **first brochure in our Good Practices series**, developed within the LIFE ShepForBio project. This publication presents a curated selection of initiatives showing how extensive livestock farming and pastoral management can actively contribute to biodiversity



conservation and landscape stewardship. It will be followed by two other collections in 2026 and 2027.

Pastoralism has historically shaped many of Europe's most valuable open habitats. Today, however, the abandonment of traditional grazing systems threatens these ecosystems, leading to shrub encroachment and the loss of biodiversity-rich grasslands.

This first edition focuses on **conservation**, highlighting **practical experiences where pastoral activities help maintain ecosystems, protect cultural landscapes, and sustain traditional knowledge**. By sharing these examples from across Europe, the brochure aims to inspire land managers, pastoralists, researchers, and policymakers to recognise and support the crucial role of extensive livestock systems in nature conservation. Our mission to collect



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GOOD PRACTICES INSIGHTS COLLECTION

THEME 1: EXTENSIVE LIVESTOCK & CONSERVATION

new Good Practices continues, and you are more than welcome to [submit yours here!](#)

Discover the brochure and explore the featured practices [here!](#)



VIAE – Valuable Itineraries Across Europe Towards a shared European strategy for safeguarding pastoral routes



Pastoral routes have shaped Europe's landscapes for millennia, forming a resilient network of cultural, ecological, and economic corridors connecting mountains, plains, and communities. Recognised in 2023 as Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe through the [Transhumance Trails project](#), these itineraries today face multiple pressures, from land-use change, anthropic impact and rural abandonment to climate disruptions and the erosion of pastoral livelihoods. In the context of the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists [IYRP 2026](#), the Universities of Newcastle (UK) and Lleida (Catalonia, Spain) have launched VIAE – Valuable Itineraries Across Europe, a transnational initiative dedicated to **co-producing a European strategy for the safeguarding and sustainable management of pastoral routes**.

The initiative is grounded in the [ICOMOS 2025 Baku Declaration](#) on the Recognition, Safeguarding and Transmission of the Heritage of Pastoralist Transhumance, which stresses that: *"Pastoralist transhumance is a human-led animal husbandry practice based on mobility and extensive grazing, aimed at ensuring long-term feed and water availability and ecological regeneration within and across territories. It results from millennia of interaction and adaptation between humans, grazing animals, and their environment"*.

Building on the historical and legislative experience of the participating countries – and fully in line with the principles and vision already articulated within Transhumance Trails – VIAE approaches pastoral routes as cultural landscapes, ecological infrastructures, and community-driven heritage systems, aligned with the values of the [Faro Convention](#) on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society.

Objectives

VIAE aims to produce a shared and actionable European framework by:

- **Building an international network** connecting researchers, institutions, public authorities, local communities, livestock breeders and shepherds' schools;
- **Developing and validating a European Protocol** for the protection and enhancement of pastoral routes, including governance options and monitoring metrics;



- **Delivering policy-oriented outputs**, such as briefs, an endorsement pipeline, and an implementation roadmap;
- **Supporting a future UNESCO World Heritage nomination** for European pastoral routes;
- **Laying foundations for follow-on funding**, including **Horizon Europe**, **Erasmus+**, and a potential **ERC Synergy** project.

Working Approach

The project will officially start in **February 2026**. A **drafting committee of experts** from several European countries will begin working on the first version of the Protocol, which will be revised through iterative consultations and public discussion at the International Workshop in Lleida and finally presented in L'Aquila in September 2026.

International Workshop – Lleida, 9–11 April 2026

Hosted by the University of Lleida, this three-day international seminar will bring together experts from *multiple European countries* (including Italy, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Slovenia) to:

- collaboratively refine the structure and content of the European Protocol;
- assess the current legislative and management frameworks governing pastoral routes;
- share good practices and project experiences;
- explore governance models, socio-economic impacts, and climate adaptation strategies;
- participate in a field visit to the [Camí Ramader de Marina](#), an emblematic pastoral route and heritage corridor.

Final Presentation – L'Aquila, September 2026

The final Protocol will be presented publicly in **L'Aquila**, during the **"Festival delle Comunità Patrimoniali Italiane"**, as part of the programme of **"L'Aquila – Capitale Italiana della Cultura 2026"**, in collaboration with [Rete Faro Transumanza](#) e [Faro Italia Platform](#). This event will mark the international launch of the Protocol and the formal opening of the endorsement pipeline with regional and national authorities.

Outcomes and Impact





VIAE will produce:

1. **A co-created European Protocol** with clear recommendations for long-term protection and policy uptake;
2. **Decision-support tools** (indicators, GIS and Fuzzy Cognitive Mapping-based models) for authorities and heritage institutions;
3. **A robust European network**, ready to evolve through Horizon Europe, Erasmus+, and ERC Synergy initiatives.
4. **A coherent European narrative** of pastoral routes as climate-adaptive cultural landscapes and ecological corridors.

The initiative is currently awaiting the outcome of its request for **patronage from the Council of Europe Secretariat**, which would reinforce its institutional alignment within the wider Cultural Routes



framework. In conclusion, VIAE seeks to bring together knowledge, territories, and communities around a heritage that belongs not only to the past, but to our shared future. Pastoral routes are living infrastructures: ecological corridors, cultural landscapes, and moving memories. Through a participatory and transnational approach, VIAE aims to transform this widespread heritage into a shared European strategy capable of integrating protection, sustainable development, and climate adaptation. The European Protocol that will emerge from this initiative will be more than a governance tool: it will be an invitation to recognise the deep value of pastoral mobility, an ancient form of “territorial intelligence” that can inspire new visions of care, continuity, and resilience across Europe’s landscapes.

Author: Francesca Romana del Fattore - VIAE Project



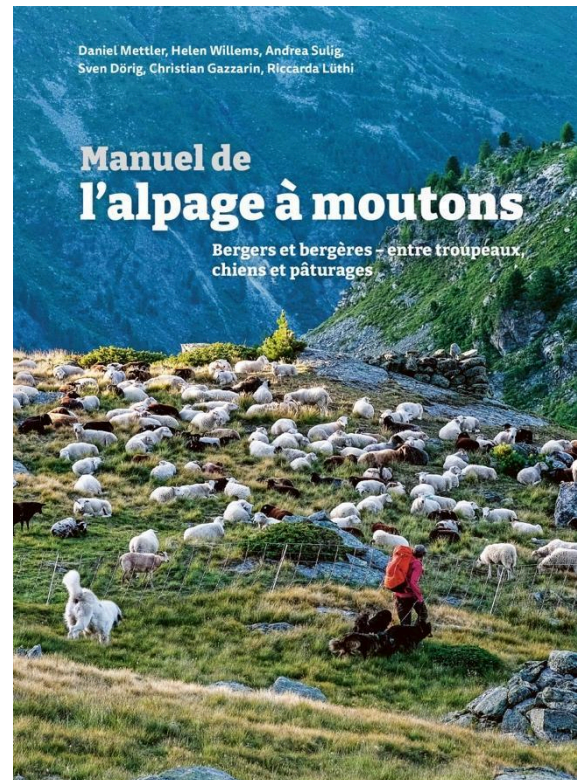
The manual for shepherds on alpine pastures: a new teaching aid for the Swiss shepherding school, a guide for newcomers and enthusiasts of alpine pastoralism.

The '[Manual for shepherds on alpine pastures](#)' transmits practical knowledge for shepherds and shepherdesses, from the basics of grazing and herd management with sheep, fences and working dogs, to the treatment of the most current health issues. It constitutes a precious support to organize the alpine pasture summer, and includes advice on collaboration with alpine pasture managers, **connecting the ancient tradition of shepherding with modern herd protection.**

You do not learn shepherding from books, but with the sheep themselves and by listening to experiences and stories of other shepherds. This profession cannot be captured by a simple job description: it often does not align with the current structured education system and the workplace might cover more than 100 hectares, to name a few aspects making it so unusual. Climate change, the return of large predators and increasing mountain tourism pose additional major challenges for modern shepherds. Working on alpine pastures, everyday experiences become lessons learned, finding their place between the shepherd's awareness, the flock of sheep and nature.

With the return of the wolf and increased requirements in animal welfare and nature conservation, the demand for shepherds has risen in Switzerland since the early 2000s. When **the first Swiss shepherding training course was launched in 2009**, it was difficult to predict the number of enrollments in the long term. Today, after more than 15 years of shepherding training, with one course in German and one in French every year, interest in the work of shepherding proved steady and participant numbers have even risen slightly — despite wolves, seasonal work and modest wage prospects. The participants come from a wide variety of backgrounds and stages of life, and only a few of them herd sheep for a lifetime. Around one third of participants usually completes this training, consisting of four theory modules and two practical internships with a final exam and certificate. Compulsory internships are a central part of the training, during which participants can gain their own practical experience, while professional shepherds can pass on their knowledge to newcomers.

The usually high turnover rate among alpine personnel from year to year implies the risk of losing valuable experience. The "Manual for shepherds on alpine pastures" gathers practical knowledge for





shepherds, sheep farmers and managers of alpine sheep farms. Authored by a diverse team, each chapter incorporates various areas of expertise. However, it is not only intended to convey technical knowledge and expertise, but also to inspire curiosity and passion for shepherding – as demonstrated by the interviews with shepherds and shepherdesses from three generations and different regions.

«One should not forget oneself—and always carry some chocolate with you»

G. Spänhauer

«One must be truly convinced of the value of working with sheep in nature. A good shepherd must work primarily in the interests of the animals—and should somehow enjoy solitude»

G. Cominelli

A printed book may seem old-fashioned, but it also has advantages. It does not require electricity and becomes a professional companion and, in the best case, a friend. To keep the book up to date, it is linked to a website where the twelve chapters are supplemented and updated with links, videos, templates, information sheets and references. Beyond the book and website, the sheep pasture remains above all a place of extreme experiences, a deep connection with animals and nature, and down-to-earth stories – of sore feet and hoof baths, surprise visits and sunsets, tears and cheers.

*Provision of the english text: Riccarda Lüthi,
Agridea*



Bibliographical references of the “Manual for shepherds on alpine pastures”

Daniel Mettler, Helen Willems, Andrea Sulig, Sven Dörig, Christian Gazzarin, Riccarda Lüthi

“Manual for shepherds on alpine pastures” *Shepherds and shepherdesses – between flocks, dogs and pastures*

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For further information, please contact: Giorgio Höfli, zalpverlag, mailbox@zalpverlag.ch

The book cover, images and a selection of pages from inside the book can be found at: <https://zalp.ch/medias>



The RepAir project launches 'Rangeland Myths' initiative

'Rangeland Myths' are the subject of a series of events and activities by the [REPAiR Project](#) throughout 2026, the [International Year of Pastoralists and Rangelands \(IYRP\)](#). The REPAiR Project is a research initiative that focuses on rangelands in Southern Africa, and considers the global context of how they are understood and managed.



For much of modern history, discourses around rangelands and pastoralism have been shaped by a long and well-documented legacy of flawed, incomplete and decontextualised but powerful and enduring stories – myths that have warped the lenses through which pastoralism and rangelands are 'seen' and judged by different actors.

Despite some recent shifts in understanding, rangelands and pastoralist systems remain widely misunderstood and knowledge about them is often contested. Our aim is not simply to 'debunk' myths, but rather to explore, disrupt, rethink and galvanise a shift in how we 'see' rangelands and pastoralism through storytelling, dialogue, sharing experiences, learning, reflection and debate.

Key questions and monthly themes

Where do rangeland myths come from and how have they evolved? What forms do they take in different places and spaces of debate? How and by whom are they contested? How are myths relevant to rangeland management, restoration and development? What counter-narratives and alternative stories exist, and how can they be amplified?

Monthly themes for 2026

For each theme, we publish a 'think piece' on our website, and host an online discussion which is open to all.

- January – The tragedy of the commons is inevitable
- February – Mobility drives conflict and insecurity
- March – Pastoralists need more markets to thrive
- April – Carbon is carbon
- May – People and livestock are bad for biodiversity
- June – Healthy ecosystems are always 'green'!
- July – Working with nature is a 'new' solution
- August – Fire is the enemy
- October – Consultation equals participation



- December – More data leads to better rangeland management

Event details, audio/video clips and think pieces are on the [REPAiR website](#).

Get involved

To take part, register for an event, complete the global survey of Rangeland Myths in [English](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#) or [Italian](#), or email us at repairinfo@ids.ac.uk

Author: Nathan Oxley, Impact Communications and Engagement Officer - REPAiR Project



In France, a national certification for transhumant shepherds and cowherds and a video series ensure a future for transhumance

Five French historic shepherd-cowherd schools worked together for the first time to submit a joint professional certification for 'Transhumant Shepherd-Cowherd' to France Compétences.

The professions of shepherd and cowherd in mountain pastures play an essential role in mountain livestock farming systems. They require a high degree of autonomy, versatility and detailed knowledge of the animals, the environment and the resources they provide. However, until now, **these professions did not have a dedicated professional reference framework**. Existing training courses were based on different qualifications: some relied on national standards with a fixed framework that was often ill-suited to the reality of working in mountain pastures, focused on the activities of versatile agricultural workers, and **did not consider the**

specific nature of pastoral practices in mountain pastures. In addition, the

context of summer pasture work is changing significantly as a result of climate change, the resurgence of epizootic diseases and the development of multiple uses in the mountains - including tourism, hunting and biodiversity protection - which complicates the tasks of shepherds and cowherds and reinforces the **need for appropriate and up-to-date training**. Finally, pastoral skills, particularly those related to transhumance, are not easily

passed on. As part of the [Plan to Preserve and Promote Transhumance](#), the same five schools are participating in the **creation of educational videos to pass on pastoral skills** with the [Florac agricultural institute](#).



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Methods

Five training establishments that have been providing training for shepherds and cowherds for many years – [CFPPA Savoie Bugey](#), [CFPPA des Hautes-Pyrénées](#), [CFPPA des Pyrénées Atlantiques](#), [CFPPA Ariège-Comminges](#) and [Institut Agro Montpellier - Domaine du Merle](#) – have decided to embark on a collaborative project to:

- Identify the **specific skills** of employees working in summer pastures;



- Build a **shared job reference framework**;
- Develop a **common assessment** framework, leading to a level 4 professional certification;
- Enrich **teaching materials** to facilitate the transmission of pastoral skills;
- Identify **barriers to access to continuous training** for shepherds already in the field.

The approach is based on close consultation between trainers, summer pasture workers, transhumant farmers, technicians and representatives of pastoral areas. Field surveys, co-construction workshops and technical working groups have helped to develop a shared vision of the profession, taking into account its evolution. To achieve the objectives, the project benefits from:

- Coordinated inter-school management to ensure national representativeness;
- Support from experts in the pastoral world and professional networks (livestock farmers' associations, pastoral services, shepherds' associations, employers and employees);
- Funding to enable workshops, field visits and shared validation sessions to be held.



The work benefited from [CASDAR](#) funding through the AMBER project, which aims to **support changes in the professions of transhumant shepherds and cowherds**. In addition to the schools involved, the consortium also includes the [Florac agricultural institute](#), which is developing innovative and relevant teaching tools for use in training, and [IDELE](#), which is studying the working conditions of transhumant shepherds/cattle herders (both employees and breeders) and ways of improving them in order to anchor local stakeholders in the

territories. A grant of €480,000 has been awarded over three years and the project will come to an end in autumn 2027. Such a collective effort has yielded several concrete and transformative results:

- A unique Level 4 **professional certification** for [transhumant shepherds](#) and cowherds, **meeting the requirements of employers** and the realities of the profession, was validated by France Compétences in December 2025.
- A consolidated and **shared job and training reference framework**, precisely describing the skills expected in summer pastures: autonomy and work organisation, herd health monitoring, fodder resource management, herd management on pasture, adaptation to the mountain environment, professional positioning, etc., guaranteeing consistent, high-quality training and skills assessment throughout the country;
- Specific **modules** for each region, enabling each school to promote local practices and the specific features of pastoral systems (milking in summer pastures, cheese making, use of herding dogs, lambing, etc.).
- Innovative educational content in the form of self-assessment videos currently being produced in mountain areas.



This project marks a milestone in the recognition of professions related to summer grazing and the professionalisation of those who practise them. It opens up several prospects:

- **Networking** between schools: the five establishments have laid the foundations for a lasting partnership, enabling the exchange of practices, trainer mobility, the pooling of teaching tools and technical monitoring;
- Continuous **development of the reference framework**: in line with changes in pastoral systems, societal expectations (animal welfare, adaptation to climate change, multi-use) and territorial dynamics;
- Development of **short training** courses: one of the major ambitions for the future is also to strengthen support for existing employees by developing access to continuous training specifically dedicated to the professions of shepherd and cowherd in summer pastures, in order to support their skills development throughout their professional careers. Currently, the majority of summer pasture employees are unable to access short training courses, as their seasonal contractual conditions make it difficult for them to qualify for funding. However, training centres have already developed and tested a catalogue of suitable modules and are ready to roll them out as soon as funding conditions allow.

In conclusion, this initiative illustrates the ability of agricultural training providers to collaborate with each other and with professionals to meet local needs. It reinforces recognition of the professions of shepherd and cowherd in summer pastures, while consolidating their local roots and their role in preserving pastoral areas.

Authors: Barnabé ACHARD, CFPPA Savoie Bugey, and Amandine FOUNAU, CFPPA Ariège-Comminges



The LIFE SOS Crau Plain Grasshopper projet

The LIFE SOS Criquet de Crau project, coordinated by the [Conservatoire d'espaces naturels de Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur \(CEN PACA\)](#) in partnership with the [Bouches-du-Rhône Chamber of Agriculture \(CA13\)](#), and the [La Barben](#) and [Muséum Citadelle de Besançon](#) zoos, will run for five years (2021-2026). Its objective is to improve the conservation status of the **Crau Plain Grasshopper**, *Prionotropis rhodanica*, an endemic species of the [Coussoul](#) (dry grassland typical of the Crau Plain) that is critically endangered, through four areas of action:

1. Restoring its habitat and adapting pastoral management.
2. Reducing threats to the species, such as predation by colonial macro-insectivorous birds.
3. Strengthening the Crau Plain Grasshopper population through conservation breeding for reintroduction purposes.
4. Communication and public awareness.



The Coussoul is at the centre of numerous actions due to the important challenges of biodiversity conservation, which includes the Crau grasshopper but also other steppe species, particularly birdlife, as well as pastoral challenges related to feeding sheep for meat, a traditional activity in the Crau. Indeed, while on the one hand the availability of resources in the Coussoul is fundamental for many farms based on a transhumant model, on the other hand, pastoralism is an essential component of this dry grassland ecosystem.

Several actions of the Life project closely related to pastoralism have been carried out since the beginning:

- **Eco-pastoral assessments were carried out on nine grazing areas** in 2021-2022 to gain a better understanding of pastoral practices and identify sites suitable for the reintroduction of the Crau Plain Grasshopper. The first reintroductions took place in 2024 and 2025 and will continue until at least 2028.



- Regular guidance for breeders and shepherds at sites where the Crau Plain Grasshopper is present, in order to adapt pastoral management to the conservation of this species, while taking agricultural needs into account.
- Implementation of pastoral management measures such as temporary and local exclusion from grazing through the installation of exclosures during the period when grasshoppers are present (from April to late June) to limit predation by birds associated with herds.
- Monitoring of the impact of grazing on vegetation and populations of the Crau locust.
- Restoring the habitat at several sites in order to increase the area favourable to the Crau grasshopper and other steppe species and to alleviate grazing pressure by improving the quality and increasing the quantity of pastoral resources.
- Ensuring the long-term future of herding, an essential practice for pastoral management adapted to the protection of the Crau grasshopper, by improving the housing conditions of shepherds at two sites (renovation of a shed and installation of a tiny house).
- The sharing of experiences on actions related to pastoralism carried out as part of the Life project in the form of a technical booklet currently being drafted.



Finally, a closing conference scheduled for **5 and 6 May 2026** entitled 'SOS Insects: reintroduction and conservation' to enable managers, scientists, pastoralists and naturalists to discuss our project and other insect conservation projects. Registration is free and CEN PACA looks forward to welcoming you! [Register here](#).

Author: Camilla Crifò - Project Manager for 'LIFE SOS Criquet de Crau'



Training as a tool to fight depopulation: shepherd school

The project "**Training as a tool to fight depopulation: Shepherd School**" is promoted by the Galician Association of Sheep and Goat Breeders – [OVICA](#) and was selected in the 2024 call by the [La Caixa Foundation Social Action and Rural Areas](#) as the only project in the Verín region (Ourense, Galicia). Its implementation is planned for a period of 3 years, through the last quarter of 2028. For the execution of this project, OVICA is supported by an external team ([Edintra Consulting SL](#)) with extensive experience in similar projects. This project involves the launch of the Galicia Shepherd School ([Escola de Pastores de Galicia](#)). This training initiative seeks to empower young people, women, and local professionals to ensure generational renewal in sustainable extensive livestock farming, valorize local resources, and strengthen community networks.

The project focuses on three strategic axes:

- **Comprehensive Training and Support:** Creation of a comprehensive program in extensive livestock farming, management of indigenous breeds, sustainable production, business management, and business diversification to train new livestock entrepreneurs and shepherds.
- **Promotion of Sustainable Rural Development:** Fostering entrepreneurship and sustainable production models as drivers for economic revitalization (job creation), population retention, and the valorization of the rural environment.
- **Community Coordination:** Involvement of the local population, current producers, and public and private institutions in the process of social and economic transformation, as well as generating synergies among these

This training initiative, the Galicia Shepherd School, receives financial support from the [Ourense Provincial Council](#) and, most notably, from the [Galician Agency for Food Quality \(AGACAL\)](#). The latter provides the formal accredited training. The first edition of the Galicia Shepherd School will begin in **March 2026** in **Xinzo de Limia, Ourense**, the province with the highest concentration of livestock farmers dedicated to these animals. It offers an accredited agricultural training course consisting of **250 theoretical-practical hours** (accredited) plus **320 practical hours** and farm stays.

The Galicia Shepherd School course **is free**. It will be conducted through a **blended learning modality**. To facilitate the work-life balance of the participants, classroom training will be concentrated into two days and combined with the virtual modality through AGACAL's training platform.

In addition to the course, the project includes the scheduling of a series of activities such as seminars and conferences on sustainable livestock farming, processing, associationism, cooperatives, and other topics of interest for active livestock farmers, course participants, and the local population in general. Within the framework of promoting the Galicia Shepherd School in other national and international



networks, various visits to other territories as well as participation in events and congresses are planned during the project implementation period.

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