LAND STEWARDSHIP: AN EFFECTIVE CONSERVATION TOOL

XCT: a non-profit organization to foster land stewardship

The Xarxa de Custòdia del Territori (XCT, Land Stewardship Network in English) is a non-profit organization working to foster land stewardship as a conservation strategy for the natural, cultural and landscape resources and values of Catalonia and its environment. Established in 2003 it has grown to become a reference second-level organisation for all stakeholders involved in land stewardship and Nature conservation.

Our strengths:
- Diversity of members: the members (over 160) are very diverse and every one of them contributes their own views and cooperation to develop land stewardship. These comprise associations, foundations, city councils, enterprises and persons working in the land stewardship network.
- A main achievement: land stewardship contract has been recognized by the Catalan Civil Code (2017).
- Working groups: Made up by members who deal with specific issues. At present, there are 5 groups: forestry, agricultural, marine, fluvial and municipal stewardship.
- Volunteering: involving citizens in Nature conservations has always been a main aim of XCT and is implicit in the Land Stewardship meaning.
- Networking: The philosophy and methodology of the XCT generate benefits for each of its members and for the organization as a whole.
- Strengthening strategy: we perform a permanent assessment and support programme to strengthen and improve abilities of land trusts to undertake technical actions, management and financing.
- Projects and collaboration: we collaborate in local, national and international projects.

Our work at an international level: we lead a LIFE+ Communication project (LandLife) and we are partners in various projects (Erasmus +, LIFE projects). We are advisors of the International Land Conservation Network (ILCN) and members of Access to Land network.

What is Land Stewardship?

It is a conservation strategy that involves a wide range of civil society stakeholders. Nature, biodiversity, ecological integrity, cultural heritage and landscape values are maintained and restored through voluntary agreements between landowners/users and land stewardship organisations, General Administration, funding institutions and research centers, usually act as enabling agents.

“ An innovative and effective private and public partnership that complements existing policies and legal instruments”

Who are involved?
Land Stewardship in Catalonia

Catalonia has developed a robust experience on land stewardship through a wide and deep knowledge and understanding among involved organisations, and with a deep political commitment and specific administrative framework.

The first land stewardship initiatives date back to 1989, when different public and private organisations undertook measures for the conservation and protection of the natural environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of land stewardship agreements</th>
<th>765</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total surface of land stewardship agreements</td>
<td>40,072 ha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of stewardship organizations</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Types of agreements

- 55% land stewardship contract
- 14% use transfer
- 9% lease contract
- 5% verbal agreements
- 2.5% property

Information from 2017 Land Stewardship Agreements Inventory in Catalonia

The role of Land Stewardship in nature conservation in Catalonia

Nearly half of Landstewardship agreements (LSA) in Catalonia work in Natura 2000 areas (44% of agreements, 26,560 ha., 66% of the total land stewardship area). A major part of these N2000 areas are not covered by national or regional protected areas, and thus Land Stewardship is revealed a key mechanism for performing nature conservation in N2000 areas.

Moreover, most of agreements contain habitats or species of man interest for conservation included in the Habitats directive. Thus 36% of the agreements contain habitats of community interest; 10%, priority habitats; and an important part contain species included in Annex II of the Habitats directive: birds (19%), amphibians and reptiles (8%) and mammals (7%), among others. Many agreements contain also threatened species according to regional legislation (9%).

For more info visit [www.xct.cat](http://www.xct.cat) or contact us pcarnicero@xct.cat