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Dear readers of the *LIFE in Quarries project*,

Thank you for your interest in our project for 6 years. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to change the way we look at these unknown and misunderstood sites and the incredible biodiversity that is hidden there. This is our last Newsletter which will give an update on our last actions in 2021.

Final Conference

A successful closing

The final conference of the Life in Quarries project was held in compliance with sanitary measures on October 27th and 28th.

Day 1

The first day of the conference was held at the FEB in Brussels on Wednesday October 27th from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. and gathered (present and online) more than 170 participants!

Sustainability of actions carried out in the future, management of temporary environments both on a practical and legal level, biological results of actions carried out for 6 years, evaluation of ecosystem services of quarries and synergy between partners from very different sectors were some of the topics that were addressed during the presentations of the 17 speakers.

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Day 2

The next day, during the second day of the final conference, the Thursday 27th October, we had the pleasure to accompanying the participants divided in two groups (FR-EN) to two different quarries that are members of the project. The first group went to the quarry of Quenast (SAGREX) and the other group to the quarry of Clypot (CCB). This was an ideal way to discover the reality of the field and to show the different actions carried out in the active quarries.

At the end of the visit of the different quarries, everyone met in Soignies at the quarry of Clypot for a final drink accompanied by barbecue burgers. The opportunity to meet at the end of the event, to exchange on the information given during the last 48 hours, and, why not, to think, driven by the enthusiasm, about new projects between different partners?



Thanks again to everyone!

To the Belgian and Europeans speakers.

To the quarrymen who came or lent themselves to the game of a filmed interview to testify about their experience and, we hope,

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to the public, in Brussels and online, who chose to devote a day to learn more about the actions that can be implemented to preserve and enhance populations of animal and plant species that find refuge in active quarries.

Finally, thank you to the project team for organizing this event, for their accurate and enlightening presentations and, most importantly, for the effort, perseverance and motivation they have shown over the past years. The life that develops in quarries says: THANK YOU!



Administrative

Official signing of the first charters

As mentioned in Newsletter #9, the long-term commitment of the participating quarries and the legal security of the approach is based, at the end of the project, on the establishment of a management plan on which a commitment charter and a derogation to the Nature Conservation Law are based, both valid for a period of 15 years.

This approach allows the operators to perpetuate the reception of the present species thanks to proactive and scientifically validated measures, in order to participate in the conservation stakes at the regional level with the legal security necessary to the continuity of the implemented actions and of the industrial activity.

The first day of the final conference was the occasion to officially sign the first charters committing the quarrymen to perpetuate the actions implemented for a minimum of 15 years, in the presence of the Minister of the Environment, Nature, Forestry, Rurality and Animal Welfare, Ms. Céline Tellier and, for Fediex, the president and the managing director, Mr. Stephan Milis and Michel Calozet.

A strong act which clearly illustrates the desire of the sites member of the project and of the Federation (FEDIE) to which they belong to continue a path which, if it began to be traced several years ago, has become essential today.



Action

2021 translocation campaign

Thanks to the annual translocation campaigns, the provision of Natterjack toad and Great crested newt egg-laying fragments in the quarries contributes to the reinforcement of the populations of these two threatened species, by participating in the implementation of an ecological network favorable to their redeployment on the Walloon territory.

In addition to this first objective, the annual translocation campaigns allowed the different members of the project team to develop protocols and methods specific to the species they were responsible for, as well as to increase their knowledge of the regional populations of these species. Biological data that can, in fact, be useful to other projects than ours.

Classified on the red list of amphibians in Wallonia, the Natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*), one of the target species of the *LIFE in Quarries* project, can be recognized by the thin yellow line that crosses its back over its entire length and by its yellow/green pupil.



With the Crested newt, it's one of the two amphibian species to benefit from an annual translocation program within the LIFE in Quarries project.

And if the Natterjack egg-laying fragments will be released in shallow pioneer ponds, the Great crested newt lives almost exclusively in stagnant water in Wallonia and will therefore be released in vegetated permanent ponds.



From 10 to 15 cm long for the males and from 11 to 18 cm for the females, it has a granular skin and a yellow-orange ventral face often strewn with large irregular black spots. The sexual dimorphism is particularly marked: the female, larger and with duller colors, does not carry a dorsal crest. Threatened species, in strong regression, this little amphibian is the biggest and rarest of the 4 species of Tritons present in Wallonia.

Once brought to the appropriate area of the "receptive" quarry, the eggs collected in the "source" sites on plastic strips, must first be counted! And one stick (which represents about 20 strips) often contains several hundred eggs!

Finally, for the second consecutive year, young Yellow-bellied toads, an extremely rare amphibian species and the subject of a partnership between the LIFE in Quarries project and the Caves of Han were released in a quarry member of the project.



During the final conference at the end of October, the different people in charge of the translocation campaigns (Natagora, PNPE) were able to present the biological results of this action which seems to be on the right track for the establishment of new populations of Natterjack toad (5), Great crested newt (4) and Yellow-bellied toad (1).

Tool

AMBREs, the help of the quarrymen for the future

The interactive platform for biodiversity management in quarries AMBREs, also available on smartphones and tablets, is intended for quarrymen and site managers members of the LIFE in Quarries project.

Indeed, the dimensions of extractive sites are often vast, and it is not always easy for biodiversity managers onsite to keep a precise trace of the actions carried out in the past, of their locations, and of the results they had brought before being moved elsewhere during the quarry exploitation.



In order to coordinate the actions in favor of biodiversity implemented in the 26 quarries that are members of the project, the Biodiversity and Landscape unit of the Gembloux Agro Bio-Tech branch of the University of Liège has developed a management tool: the Action's Management Biodiversity site platform. Better known as AMBREs in French.

The platform has 3 main functions:

1. Offer an aerial view map of the site on which the quarry/sandpit managers can find in real time the present or past actions, according to the concept of dynamic biodiversity management at the heart of the project.
2. Offer a calendar that reminds when – in the year – it's appropriate to create/destroy actions and complete follow-ups.
3. To serve as a notebook for the quarrymen's observations and to allow staff members who use AMBREs – and who are not biodiversity specialists – to be able, at any time, to have access to factsheets on the actions but also on the animal and plant species that may be found onsite.

Apart from that, AMBREs also offers:

- The list of commitments made by the quarry according to the type of action and their status.
- A map showing the location of the destroyed elements and their date of destruction so that a permanent record can be kept of what has been done on the quarry and where.
- The possibility of submitting a new target species if it is found onsite.
- The possibility of encoding observations concerning biodiversity outside the monitoring period.



Thanks to the AMBRES platform, operator of extractive sites can effectively monitor and evaluate the life that develops in their quarries and, in this way, perpetuate the potential for biodiversity that the Walloon extractive sites in activity present, in which so many animal and plant species find refuge.

A significant portion of 2021 was devoted to a final site-by-site check to ensure that day-to-day biodiversity managers were familiar with this intuitive and practical tool.

This management tool will also make it easy for quarrymen who have not participated in the Life in Quarries project to engage in this proactive biodiversity management approach.

Photo Contest

Award ceremony

In 2021, the LIFE in Quarries project in partnership with FEDIEX organized its first photo contest "The target species of the LIFE in Quarries project". On this occasion, 11 participants were divided into 3 groups across 3 sites.

Unfortunately, the difficult weather conditions of this summer, the floods, the withdrawals and the departures on vacation of everyone did not make it possible to preserve an identical number of participants in each group. That's why the group that went to Moha's quarry, with twice as many participants as the other two, has two winners.

At the final conference, a prize was awarded to each winner:

Marc Bieviet, Marche-Les-Dames quarry (LHOIST)

Johan Civino, Moha quarry (CARMEUSE)

Philippe Thimister, Moha quarry (CARMEUSE)

Jonathan Sylvan, "Les Petons" quarry (SOLVAY)

Congratulations to them and thanks again to the members of the quarries and to Pascal Hauteclair for guiding the photographers onsite.

The prizes were awarded by Minister Tellier.



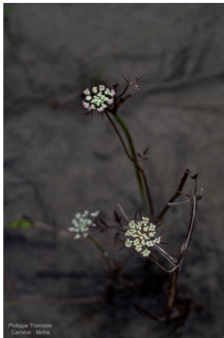
The photos of the winners are shown below:



Marc Bieviet



Jonathan Sylvan



Philippe Thimister



Johan Civino



For any questions or additional information about biodiversity in quarries, please contact Céline Petit, chargée de communication and Sébastien Loiseau, conseiller environnement chez FEDIEX.



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