

## Project Summary

LIFE EUROBUSTARD (09/2025-12/2032) is a cross-border project to protect the Great and Little Bustards across 8 European countries with 29 partners and the leading beneficiary ÖGG. The measures implemented within the LIFE EUROBUSTARD project are divided into three categories: (1) actions to actively reduce mortality rates, (2) measures to stabilise populations, and (3) supporting actions for these two main objectives. With the help of these measures the project will halt the decline of Great Bustard and Little Bustard populations in Europe compared to the current breeding population (in most countries data from 2022/2023), reduce the mortality rate by 10 % and reduce bird collisions with railway power lines by 90% in the respective area.

### **(1) Reducing mortality rates:**

To reduce mortality, a total of approx. 29 km of overhead power lines will be buried in Austria, Germany, Hungary, and Portugal. Additionally, approx. 110 km of overhead lines will be marked in Austria, Germany, Romania, and Spain, with new marking methods developed during the project. Another key action targets policymakers and grid operators to ensure that all new power lines in bustard habitats are installed underground from the start.

### **(2) Stabilising populations:**

For population stabilisation, well-established habitat improvement methods already exist, but they are often not specifically tailored to the needs of bustards. Great Bustards and Little Bustards, in particular, depend on fallow land, undisturbed breeding areas during the nesting season, and structurally diverse, insect-rich habitats. In some countries, existing subsidy programmes support the implementation of these measures. The LIFE EUROBUSTARD project will not only raise farmers' awareness of these funding opportunities but also work towards introducing subsidy programmes that benefit the Great Bustard and Little Bustard in regions where they are not yet available.

Additionally, the project will also address the future impact of CAP mechanisms on traditional agricultural practices: The LIFE EUROBUSTARD team will propose new agri-environmental schemes, tools and CAP modifications with measures specifically designed for the conservation of bustards and other steppe birds.

Another key aspect of this category is land acquisition, which ensures long-term habitat protection for bustards. Through targeted habitat management and climate-friendly design of these areas (e.g., solar-powered water ponds), LIFE EUROBUSTARD will ensure that these habitats meet the species' specific needs in the long term and provide a foundation for population growth.

### **(3) Supporting actions:**

All remaining measures support the two main objectives (reducing mortality and stabilising populations). This includes tagging approx. 215 Great Bustards and approx. 160 Little Bustards with GPS transmitters across all eight project countries, including Ukraine if feasible, to identify causes of mortality, carry out monitoring, and support public outreach and scientific research.

The conservation measures implemented through LIFE EUROBUSTARD will not only benefit bustards but also numerous other species within the same ecosystem that are similarly affected by habitat loss or collision risks. LIFE EUROBUSTARD has a high demonstrative value for conservation projects related to large bird species in areas heavily influenced by power lines, as well as for many other species living in agricultural landscapes.