

Transforming Passive Nature Conservation into Active Stewardship: A Conversation with Pille LIGI

Pille LIGI is a passionate advocate for nature stewardship. As the head of the landowners' Nature Fund, she has dedicated the past three years to boosting private nature care and dissemination of landowners privately done actions on this field in Estonia. She is a Board Member at Sihtasutus Loodushoiu Fond, Estonia, and a member of Wildlife Estates Steering Committee, and Project Director of WESEM Erasmus.



Pille describes herself as "Carried by the wish of connecting different people and forestry, for finding the best possible solutions for positive change, I can see the potential development perspectives of implementing new ideas today, for the future. Initiating abilities with creative practicality and interest in optimisation guides my steps."

ELO Countryside Magazine: Pille, tell us about the primary goals of the WESEM project.

Pille LIGI: The WESEM (Wildlife Estates and Land Ethic Mentorship) project is close to my heart. Our main goal is to transform how landowners approach nature conservation. Instead of being allowed only to be passive observers, we want society to see them as kind and ethical but nevertheless, active stewards of their land. So we are enhancing biodiversity and promoting practical sustainable ideas through vocational education training.

ELO Countryside Magazine: How does WESEM integrate VET to promote ethical and sustainable land management?

Pille LIGI: We have analyzed the gaps in forestry and agriculture curriculum and we created a specialized training modules for students and professionals in forestry, agriculture, and environmental sciences. As the nature restoration law has been voted to be implemented, we actually designed the course so that our landowners would know how to restore, not only conserve. This isn't just about imparting knowledge; it's about equipping them with practical skills they can use to advise landowners on

ethical land management. It's incredibly rewarding to see how this education can change perspectives and inspire action.

ELO Countryside Magazine: What are the key components of the WESEM training modules, do you really go out and guide them to sow differently?

Pille LIGI: We develop and test training content and platforms, create practical tools for land management, and establish a robust mentorship network. Practical tool includes a database with recommendation. Landowners frequently think - is it 10 or 100 meters feasible. We also organize workshops to foster a community of like-minded individuals who are passionate about nature stewardship.

ELO Countryside Magazine: How do micro-credentials play a role in WESEM's training program?

Pille LIGI: Micro credentials are a fantastic way to recognize and validate the skills and knowledge our participants acquire. Lets say Scotland landowner is interested of gaining nature restoration knowledge. The landowners union could approach to VET school and ask them to copy the microcredential study to be taught in school. At the end of the curricula successful end, landowner has a microcredential on the field of environmental science and he can apply for some restoration certification. It's a portable and shareable proof of their expertise, which can be combined into larger qualifications.

ELO Countryside Magazine: How does the mentorship model contribute to knowledge transfer?

Pille LIGI: Mentorship is at the core of WESEM. By connecting experienced pro-



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fessionals with trainees and landowners, we facilitate the exchange of practical experiences and best practices. It's a two-way street where both mentors and mentees learn and grow. This model ensures that the knowledge gained is not just theoretical but applied in real-world scenarios. It's actually inspired from Sand County Foundation in USA, where one landowner advises other. As this is the source of info we believe in.

ELO Countryside Magazine: What role do the Wildlife Estate Label and its criteria play in promoting sustainable land management?

Pille LIGI: The Wildlife Estate Label is opportunity to prove that ideas and knowledge landowner has gained, has also been put into practice and reward has been Wildlife Estates label, that shows your sustainable practices. It's a way of celebrating and promoting excellence in nature stewardship.

ELO Countryside Magazine: How does WESEM ensure that the training content remains accessible and aligned with European standards?

Pille LIGI: We prioritize accessibility by developing e-learning platforms and practical tools. Our mentorship networks further enhance this accessibility. By adhering to quality assurance standards and integrating microcredentials into national qualifications frameworks, we ensure that our content is practical and aligned with European standards.

For more information:

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WESEM students