

Information for applicants on the title „European Stork Village“

Background

Since 1994 the EuroNatur Foundation honors villages with the title “European Stork Village” for their exemplary dedication to the protection of the White Stork (*Ciconia ciconia*). Up to 2016 EuroNatur has given this title to 15 villages from 15 different European countries – i.e. to 1 village per country exclusively – and thereby we have created a network of enthusiastic nature-conservationists and stork-friends across Europe. More information on the background of the “European Stork Village Network” can be found under the following link:

<https://www.storkvillages.net/villages>

Selection process

We are always looking for potential new members for the European Stork Village Network. In principal the initiative is open for any village, but only for one village per country. An overview on which country already has a European Stork Village can be found under the link provided above. Interested villages may apply to EuroNatur (via email to storkvillages@euronatur.org) for the title “European Stork Village” at any time and in any format. There is no standard template for the application and applicants are encouraged to be creative. The EuroNatur board decides on its annual meetings in October which village will be designated in the spring of the following year. Due to the nature of this selection process, it might also happen that no village is designated in a certain year (e.g. because no village applied or because none of the applying villages was found suitable by the board).

Criteria

The application should highlight why the village would deserve the title “European Stork Village”. As stated above, there are no formal rules and no templates for the application. The following criteria are relevant for the designation as „European Stork Village” and may thus help applicants to focus their application. However, please note the list is by no means exclusive and villages are encouraged to add also additional information to their application in order to strengthen their uniqueness:

1. The village holds a significant number of stork nests on its area or close-by, compared to other villages in its country.
2. There is a connection to a protected area in the vicinity of the village.
3. The village dedicates a special event to the White Stork and /or to nature conservation (on an annual basis).
4. The village cooperates with a professional organization/institution, which is active in biodiversity conservation and ready support the village in the implementation of joint conservation projects.

5. The village implements measures for the protection of the White Stork and/or for nature in general (e.g. installation of nesting platforms, habitat restoration, insulation of dangerous power lines, etc.).
6. The village implements activities in the field of nature education and awareness raising for children and adults.
7. The village has good contacts to local/regional/national media and manages to be mentioned in the press regularly, e.g. when special events take place or projects have been completed successfully.
8. The village implements any other activities/projects or has any other attribute/feature, which makes it especially suitable for the title “European Stork Village”.

Responsibilities and opportunities

The European Stork Village Network meets on an annual basis in one of its member villages in order to enhance the exchange among the villages across Europe. It is therefore expected that each village sends at least one English-speaking delegate to these annual meetings and at some point organizes such a meeting on its own (but with support by EuroNatur and other partners and villages, if necessary), as the network can only be kept alive by the contribution and exchange of dedicated people. The European Stork Villages should not rest on their title, but strive to become (or remain) best-practice examples and ambassadors for the conservation of White Storks and nature on a national level. It is therefore expected that the villages take pro-active efforts for the implementation of nature conservation measures (together with their partners) and also initiate and contribute to the fund-raising for such measures.

A membership in the “European Stork Village Network” is a great chance for the sustainable development of a village, especially if it is located in a rural area. The villages get a lot of attention in the local and national media, which can be used to promote a nature-based tourism. EuroNatur and its partners support the villages and their respective NGO partners in a variety of conservation measures related to nature in general and to the White Stork in particular – both technically, and wherever necessary and possible, also financially. Each village profits from the experience of all other villages in the European Stork Village Network across various topics, like for instance nature conservation, sustainable tourism or environmental education. The annual meetings, as well as regular contacts via phone, email, social media and joint initiatives and projects ensure that the European Stork Villages are not just a collection of loosely connected stork-fans, but an enthusiastic and vivid network of stork-enthusiasts and nature conservationists across Europe.