

LIFE Project Number

Interim Report Covering the project activities from 01/01/2020 to 30/06/2022 corresponding to Phase I

Reporting Date¹ <30/09/2022>

LIFE PROJECT NAME or Acronym <LIFE-IP ForEst&FarmLand>

Project Data				
Project location:	Republic of Estonia			
Project start date:	01/01/2020			
Project end date:	31/12/2029			
Total budget:	19 561 784 €			
EU contribution:	11 611 434 €			
(%) of eligible costs:	59,36%			
	Data Beneficiary			
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¹ Include the reporting date as foreseen in part C2 of Annex II of the Grant Agreement

Package completeness and correctness check

Obligatory elements	✓ or N/A
Technical report	
The correct latest template for the type of project (i.e. integrated project) has been followed and all	✓
sections have been filled in. in English. In electronic version only	
Index of deliverables with short description annexed, in English. In electronic version only	✓
Interim report: Covers the phase concluded; Deliverables due in the phase being reported on (or due	✓
in previous phase(s) and not yet submitted) annexed.	
Final report: Covers the entire project duration (see instructions on exceptions to this in next page);	
Deliverables not already submitted with the Interim reports annexed including the Layman's report	
and after-LIFE plan.	
Deliverables in language(s) other than English include a summary in English.	
In electronic version only	
Financial report	-
The reporting period in the financial and technical reports is the same; the period corresponds to the	✓
duration of the phase being reported on. For the Final report, an additional consolidated financial	
statement covering the entire project duration is included showing all costs and income incurred,	
requesting a budget shift if needed (up to 20% of budget) and demonstrating compliance with 2%	
rule.	
In the case of corrections / changes to costs submitted in a previous period:	
• An updated financial statement for the previous period is provided with the changes highlighted	
in a different colour;	
The difference (+ or -) per cost category is included in the financial statement of the new period	
in the related cost category at the bottom in one single line 'changes to financial statement	
$\frac{XX/XX/XX - XX/XX/XX'}{1 - T + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 +$	
 I ne auditor has validated the changes (if needed); Evaluations on the changes are maxided in section 0 of the technical report. 	
 Explanations on the changes are provided in section 9 of the technical report. Consolidated Einspeid Statement(a) with all 5 forms duly filled in and signed and dated 	
Consolidated Financial Statement(s) with all 5 forms duly filled in and signed and dated.	v
file)	
NR In case a Qualified Electronic Signature may be used the electronic version is sufficient	
Financial Statement(s) of the Coordinating Beneficiary of each Associated Beneficiary and of each	✓
affiliate (if involved) with all forms duly filled in The Financial Statement(s) of Beneficiaries with	
affiliate(s) include the total cost of each affiliate in 1 line per cost category	
The overall summary forms of each beneficiary on paper (signed and dated originals [*]) and	
the entire statements in electronic version (pdfs of signed sheets + full Excel files)	
NB In case a Qualified Electronic Signature may be used the electronic version is sufficient.	
Names and other data (e.g. bank account) are correct and consistent with the Grant Agreement /	✓
across the different forms, and amounts are consistent across the different forms (e.g. figures from	
the individual statements are the same as those reported in the consolidated statement).	
Beneficiary's certificate included for beneficiaries claiming 100% cost for durable goods.	N/A
On paper (signed and dated originals*) and in electronic version (pdfs of signed sheets)	
NB In case a Qualified Electronic Signature may be used the electronic version is sufficient.	
Certificate on financial statements (if required, i.e. for beneficiaries with EU contribution ≥750,000	N/A
€) once the cumulative amount of payment requests reaches $325,000 \in$).	
On paper (signed original*) and in electronic version (pdf)	
NB In case a Qualified Electronic Signature may be used the electronic version is sufficient.	
Other checks	
Clarifications and supporting documents requested in previous letters from the Agency.	✓
In electronic version only	
This table, page 2 of the Interim / Final report, is completed - each tick box is filled in.	✓
In electronic version only	

*original signature by a legal or statutory representative of the beneficiary / affiliate concerned

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List of keywords and abbreviations

MoE - Ministry of the Environment of Republic of Estonia (coordinating beneficiary) EB - Environmental Board (associated beneficiary) KEMIT - Information Technology Centre of the Ministry of the Environment (associated beneficiary) RMK - State Forest Management Centre (associated beneficiary) MoRA - Ministry of Rural Affairs of Republic of Estonia (associated beneficiary) EOÜ - Eesti Ornitoloogiaühing / Birdlife Estonia (associated beneficiary) UT - University of Tartu (associated beneficiary) TLU - Tallinn University (associated beneficiary) PFC - Private Forest Centre (associated beneficiary) EEML - Estonian Private Forest Union (associated beneficiary) SIUTS - MTÜ Siuts (associated beneficiary)

AB - Associated beneficiaries

CB – Coordinated beneficiary

EMT – External Monitoring Team

SC – Steering Committee

ELF - Estonian Fund for Nature

PAF - "Prioritized Action Framework for NATURA 2000 in Estonia for the Multiannual Financial Framework period 2021-2027

1. Executive Summary

The aim of the LIFE-IP project "*Comprehensive management of forest and farming landscapes to improve the conservation status of Natura 2000 habitats and species*" (LIFE-IP ForEst&FarmLand) is to fulfil the forest, agriculture and awareness raising parts of the "Prioritized Action Framework for NATURA 2000 in Estonia for the Multiannual Financial Framework period 2021-2027" (PAF).

Project activities take place all over Estonia, the exact project sites are selected while implementing the project actions. The duration of the project is ten years (2020-2029), which is divided into four phases of two and half years.

The project's coordinating beneficiary is the Estonian MoE. Associated beneficiaries are state agencies, a state foundation, a profit-making state agency, universities and NGOs. This composition of beneficiaries includes the formulation and implementation of (nature conservation) policy, a research-based approach and the participation of the private sector and stakeholders, which provides a good basis for the project's activities and objectives. The project Lead, Management and Monitoring Teams were formed at the beginning of the project and the SC was formed in autumn 2020.

The first phase of the project was primarily a preparatory period to create conditions for fulfilment of the project actions and the PAF, i.e. drawing up plans, developing methodologies, selecting project sites, mapping the expectations of interest groups, etc. During the first phase, the action plan for wet forest was compiled, the consultation system for semi-natural communities was launched, restoration plans were drawn up for coastal meadows, innovative methods for the eradicating of alien species were prepared, sites for eradication were selected and different monitoring schemes were developed to name some important achievements.

Numerous actions were also started and together with the complementary actions, a significant contribution was made to fulfil the objectives of the project and PAF. 6307 ha of semi-natural grasslands were restored: 1000 ha as a project activity and the rest as a result of the complementary action (PAF target is 10,000 ha). 516 ha of private land was purchased for the purpose of nature conservation: 152 ha as part of the project and the rest as a result of the complementary action (PAF target is 1500 ha). PAF's goal of restoring 60 small water bodies has already been achieved by 95 small water bodies restoration, 17 of them restored within the project.

Financing from various funds and the state budget was included to fulfil complementary actions. The results of the 1st phase of the project are described in chapter 6 and the implementation of the complementary actions are described in chapter 5.

The core principles of project communication, visualisation, awareness raising and stakeholder participation were created during the first year of the project. As Covid-19 did not favour close communication or interaction, 2020 was a great year for the preparation of future work: communication and participation strategy for 2021-2029 was created and communicated with the project partners, internal and external communication rules were agreed, project visuals, logo and

slogans were developed. Since 2021 the communication/stakeholders involvement is planned annually and essential communication plans are jointly created with the project partners. The coverage by media has been good during the 1st phase of the project, although the project has fully functional and up-to-date website, the biggest audience is reached out via social media.

The Pillar approach was not used when the project application was prepared. According to the Agency's recommendation, we switched to the Pillar approach and grouped the project actions according to the PAF structure. The Pillar structure of the project was prepared in cooperation with EMT and sent to the Agency in 2021. The use of the Pillar system significantly improves the assessment of the project's role and success in meeting PAF goals.

The implementation of project actions further contribute to the objectives of several policies and plans ("Estonian Environmental Strategy 2030", "Estonian National Strategy on Sustainable Development "Sustainable Estonia 21" 2030", "Climate Change Adaptation Development Plan until 2030", EU Birds Directive and Habitats Directive and others).

The project also plays an important role in the design of nature conservation policies and the preparation of different plans. The project staff and officials associated with the project participated in the drafting of several policies, laws and plans in the first phase ("Estonian National Environmental Development Plan 2030", "Nature Conservation Law", "Estonian Forestry Development Plan 2030", "Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan 2023-2027", "Biodiversity Strategy for 2030").

At the end of the 1st phase, the Amendment Request was prepared and submitted to the Agency on 23/08/2022. In addition to technical and financial amendments, the request included two significant changes: (1) to include to the consortium a new beneficiary, MTÜ SIUTS in connection with the creation of the bird application, and (2) to merge the phases of the budget and proceed with a single budget for the whole project duration.

As the Amendment Request was submitted to the Agency only after the end of the 1st phase (phase 1 finished on 30/06/2022), we also asked the Agency and EMT to submit the current report in January 2023 for taking into account the amendments approved by the Agency. Otherwise, we should have been obligated to describe and justify in this report amendments that we had already requested and that had been approved.

The work arrangements of the project are in place and functional. The activities are implemented according to the plan, some delays that occurred at the beginning (mainly due to Covid-19) are solved. Based on the experience of the 1st phase of the project, the schedule and the budget of the project were adjusted in the Amendment Request. Based on the preconditions created during the first phase of the project and the implementation of ongoing activities, we can confirm that the implementation of the project actions and the fulfilment of the PAF within the existing timeframe and budget are realistic and fully achievable.

2. Project relation to the Plan

The project is implemented to fulfil the "Prioritized Action Framework for NATURA 2000 in Estonia for the Multiannual Financial Framework period 2021-2027" (PAF). It is important to note that the project's themes and actions cover only part of the PAF: the PAF has 25 sub-themes and 119 measures, the LIFE IP project covers eight sub-themes and 26 measures, which are located under three pillars. 26 measures of the PAF related to the project can be divided into three groups:

- First, these where the PAF measure and project action completely overlap (for example compiling an action plan for pollinators, PAF E.3.1. measure 5 and project Action A2).
- Secondly, these where the project action covers part of the PAF goal (for example restoration of wet forests, PAF E.2.6 measure 3 goal is 6000 ha and the project Action C1 Task 1 goal is 3500 ha). In this case, the project helps to fulfil the objectives of the PAF both directly (Action A1 Task 1, action plan for wet forest habitat types and Action C1 Task 1, restoration of wet forest ecosystems) and through complementary actions.
- The third are PAF measures, which do not directly overlap with the project's actions, but project contributes to their implementation (for example the management of semi-natural grasslands, PAF E.2.4 measure 2). The project does not maintain semi-natural habitats but it restores them (Action C2 Task 1), which is a precondition for the maintenance of areas. Preparation of the new PAF 2028+ is also task of the project (Action F3).

The Pillar approach was not used during the project application preparation. According to the Agency's recommendation, grouping of the project actions according to the PAF structure was made. The Pillar structure was prepared in cooperation with EMT and sent to the Agency in 2021.

Pillar/Theme/Measure of the Plan	LIFE IP	Supporting actions within the	Supporting
	objective*	LIFE IP	complementary
			actions
PILLAR OF THE PLAN: E.1. Horizont	al measures a	nd administrative costs related to	o Natura 2000
E.1.1. Site designation and management plan	ning	-	-
6. Compiling and updating action plans for	1	A1 (Task 1,2,3)	CA01
protected habitats			
E.1.2. Site administration and communication	n with the stake	eholders	-
1. Better involvement of local communities	3	E3 (Task 2,3)	CA02
in nature conservation			
2. Development of information systems	2	C6	CA03
8. Increasing capacity (cooperation and	3	A7 (Task 1,2,3), A8 (Task 1)	CA02
performance) of administration			
E.1.3. Monitoring and reporting			
4. Assessment of conservation measures'	1	D1, D2 (Task 1,2), D3	CA04
effectiveness			
E.1.5. Natura 2000 related communication ar	nd awareness ra	ising measures, education and visitor	access
7. Development of IT solutions, smart	2	E1 (Task 1), E3 (Task 4),	CA02
applications, websites		E4 (Task 3)	
8. Compilation of information materials	3	E1 (Task 2,3,4,5,6),	CA02
		E4 (Task 1,2), E6	
9. Training and involvement of volunteers,	3	E3 (Task 1)	CA02
incl. conservation camps			
10. General awareness raising and	3	A9, E2 (Task 1,2),	CA02
behavioural change		E5 (Task 1,2), F2	

Relationship between Plan (PAF) and LIFE IP objectives

PILLAR OF THE PLAN: E.2. Site-related maintenance and restoration measures, within and beyond Natura 2000

Natura 2000			
E.2.4. Grasslands			
1. Improving the support scheme for the	1	A3 (Task 2)	CA05
management of semi-natural grasslands			
2. Management of semi-natural grasslands	1	-	CA05
3. Restoration of semi-natural grasslands	1	A6 (Task 4), C2 (Task 1,2)	CA05
(average restoration cost 2500 eur)			
4. Making the restoration and management	1	A3 (Task 2)	CA05
schemes of semi-natural grasslands more			
applicant-friendly			
5. Developing a recognition scheme for	1	A3 (Task 2)	CA05
managers of semi-natural grasslands			
11. Creating a counseling system for	1	A3 (Task 1)	CA05
management of semi-natural grasslands			
*additional measures beyond Natura 2000 (w	ider green inf	frastructure measures)	1
2. Developing biodiversity friendly support	1	A4, C3 (Task 1)	CA06
schemes in agricultural land			
3. Implementing biodiversity friendly	1	A4, C3 (Task 1)	CA06
support schemes			
4. Diversification of agricultural landscape	1	C3 (Task 1)	CA06
E.2.6. Woodlands and forests			
1. Restoring the structure of forest habitat	1	A6 (Task 3), C1 (Task 2)	CA07
types (2180, *9010, *9020, 9050, 9060,			
*9180)			
3. Restoring wet forest water regime	1	A6 Task (1,2), C1 (Task 1)	CA07
(*9080, *91D0, *91E0, 91F0, protected			
drained peatland forest)			
4. Compensations of income loss for	1	-	CA07
private forest owners			
5. Developing and implementing active	1	A5 (Task 1,2)	CA07
forest conservation support scheme			
7. Purchasing land with strict conservation	1	C5	CA07
restrictions for the state			
PILLAR OF THE PLAN: E.3. Additiona	al species-sp	ecific measures not related to s	pecific ecosystems or
habitats			
E.3.1. Species-specific measures and program	nmes not cove	ered elsewhere	
1. Eradication of invasive alien species	1	C4	CA08
5. Compiling an action plan for pollinators	1	A2	CA09
6. Restoration of habitats suitable for small	1	C3 (Task 2)	CA10
water body species			

*LIFE IP objectives:

(1) Improving the conservation status of forest and farmland habitats and species to achieve results benefiting the whole ecosystems such as:

* forest habitats *9010, *9020, 9050, 9060, *9080, *91D0, *91E0, 91F0;

* grassland habitats *1630, (*)6210, *6270, *6280, 6450, *6530, 9070, 7230;

* forest species such as woodpeckers, black stork, eagles, dragonflies, amphibians, etc.;

* birds and other species related to grasslands and arable land;

* pollinators;

* lessening the impacts of invasive alien species by controlling the following species Fallopia sp (Fallopia japonica, F. sachalinensis, Fallopia x bohemica), Solidago sp (Solidago canadensis, S. gigantea), Symphoricarpos albus and Sorbaria sorbifolia.

(2) Improving conservation practices and collaboration between administrative authorities:

* cross-sectoral harmonization of data management;

* harmonized practices and innovative tools for authorities.

(3) Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions

3. Administrative part

The project's coordinating beneficiary is the Estonian MoE. Associated beneficiaries are state agencies (MoRA, EB, KEMIT), a state foundation (Estonian Private Forest Centre), a profit-making state agency (RMK), universities (UT and TLU) and NGOs (EPF, EOÜ, EEML, Siuts). This composition of beneficiaries includes the formulation and implementation of (nature conservation) policy, a research-based approach and the participation of the private sector and stakeholders, which provides a good basis for achieving the goals of the project and implementing its activities.

There are two project managers, both hired by public competition (see also Action F1). The project manager Voldemar Rannap is responsible for general project coordination, cooperation among beneficiaries, the implementation of actions and reporting. During the years 2020–2021, the project manager also fulfilled the functions of financial manager. The communications manager Kaidi Tingas is in charge of communication activities and public awareness. Both project managers are also involved in the implementation of all actions (key meetings, fieldwork, reporting, etc.). In November 2021, a financial coordinator Marju Tamm and in January 2022, a website administrator Jürg Samel were hired. Hiring a financial coordinator was also strongly advised by the Agency (Agency letter of 09/10/2020).

All beneficiaries have their respective project managers who coordinate the work of beneficiary working groups and experts, prepare progress and financial reports and act as liaisons in inter-beneficiary communication. UT was the only beneficiary without a project manager assigned in the project proposal, but as they take part in numerous actions with five different working groups, the only feasible solution was to create the position for a project manager. Project management costs are covered from the personnel cost budgets of all UT actions. This doesn't affect negatively the implementation of actions because the preparation of the reports was originally planned as the work of experts.

Partnership agreements were prepared by project managers together with MoE lawyers. Eight of the nine contracts were signed in April 2020 and the last one at the beginning of May 2020. The partnership agreements are attached to this report (Annex 2). All beneficiaries are guided in their work by the Grant Agreement, partnership agreements, internal rules of beneficiaries and guidance by project managers.

The project has together with sub-actions (tasks) a total of 66 actions, The beneficiaries in charge of the implementation of the respective actions and the participating beneficiaries are set out in the Grant Agreement. The majority of the actions are implemented using the working group method. Most actions are carried out with the involvement of two working groups. The more broad-based working group is compiled by the key personnel of all beneficiaries involved in the corresponding action (project managers, officials, experts), while stakeholders and in some cases the members of Steering Committee are also represented, depending on the specific action. The broader working group is tasked with organizing work, making decisions regarding the content and principles of the relevant topic, analysing the compiled materials and assigning duties to the specialized working group. The specialized working group is made up of experts (both employees at beneficiaries as

well as external experts if needed) who carry out the content of the action (fieldwork, analyzing and reporting, preparing plans, etc.) based on guidance provided by the broader working group. All members of the specialized working group also belong to the broader working group. The project manager and the communications manager of MoE take part in working groups either together or separately, and thus have a complete overview of progress in implementing actions.

Organizing and ensuring the implementation of complementary actions takes place on multiple levels. As MoE shapes and directs nature conservation policy in Estonia, the project managers are working closely with the officials of nature conservation department of MoE to secure the implementation of the complementary actions. Implementing complementary actions is also among the tasks of the Management Team, which means that all beneficiaries are involved. The third level is the Steering Committee, which ensures the contribution of various stakeholders in implementing complementary actions. All three levels are connected by people who are involved with the various levels. MoE officials also take part in the Management Team and Steering Committee, while Management Team members participate in Steering Committee meetings, and some members from all three levels participate in implementing various project actions. The project manager and communications manager also participate on all three levels.

The project's management body is the Management Team, made up of representatives of all beneficiaries. Management Team meetings have two major objectives: firstly, to discuss all management-related aspects together, and secondly, to update all beneficiaries on progress with various actions, including to find common solutions to any problems that have emerged. Starting from 2022, one Management Team meeting taking place in spring and another one with project key experts in autumn. At these meetings, presentations on actions are made, discussions take place and some project sites are also visited.

Meetings necessary for implementing project actions are held as needed. All working group members may suggest holding meetings. Meetings are convened by the beneficiary responsible for the respective action (head of the working group). Any issues regarding project management are dealt with by e-mail, phone or virtual meetings (mainly Teams). In these situations, the project managers are in contact with beneficiary managers, who pass any questions on to their experts. Each year, the managers of the coordinating beneficiary meets with each beneficiary separately on a regular basis (2-3 times a year), and beneficiary managers are joined by experts and the financial manager. Usually these meetings are held face-to-face.

Associated beneficiaries are autonomous in their work and responsible for the implementation of their actions. They organize their work on their own but in coordination with the coordinating beneficiary, who is also constantly monitoring the progress of actions. The ABs submit progress reports to the CB as the actions progress (at the end of a certain phase) and as needed (meetings of the Management Team, Steering Committee and the EMT, the project report). The CB conducts its running checks by participating in working groups. Each beneficiary completes financial reports independently and submits them to CB together with all documents three times a year (January, May, September). Thus, each report covers a period of four months. Additional financial reports are also submitted as needed (for EMT meetings, preparing project reports). The first year of the project 2020 was an exception - financial reports were submitted every two months, so that each beneficiary would learn how to complete financial reports and documents correctly. Finances are

discussed in further detail in chapter 9: Comments on the financial report. Beneficiaries store all reports and original documents in accordance with their own internal and accounting rules. In addition, the coordinating beneficiary stores all reports and copies of documents (in pdf or photo format) in its own server. Financial records are kept in a folder with restricted access, as these contain sensitive personal data. The folder can be accessed by MoE project managers, the head of nature conservation department and the deputy secretary general. This way, we have ensured that all project documents are preserved under all circumstances. Firstly, they are stored in several locations and secondly, the MoE (being a state agency) server is highly secured and backed up multiple times.

Project Lead Team in MoE consists of the project manager Mr. Voldemar Rannap, deputy manager/communications specialist Ms. Kaidi Tingas and financial manager Ms. Marju Tamm. The extended Lead Team includes employees of the MoE nature conservation department, each partisipant is responsible for one or several project topics corresponding to their specific area of expertise (list of members, Annex 3). The extended Lead Team was formed on 02/03/2020. Project managers consult the officials as needed in the day-to-day handling of issues. Each year, two meetings are held with all Lead Team members. Phase one included five such meetings.

Project Management Team consists of project managers of all beneficiaries and it was formed on 14/02/2020. More detailed overview in the description of action F1.

Steering Committee was formed in the autumn of 2020. It includes representatives and key specialists from different fields. More detailed overview in the description of action F1.

Communication with the Agency and External Monitoring Team has been smooth. Three EMT visits took place during the first phase of the project (10/06/2020, 10-11/09/2020, 02-04/11/2021). The next visit is planned for December 2022. Due to Covid 19, these visits were either completely or partially virtual, visits to project sites took place during the last two meetings. The visits were followed by letters from the Agency, and the questions raised were addressed at subsequent meetings with the EMT or are addressed in this report (Annex 4 – Annex to the letter).

We wish to emphasize that cooperation with the EMT has been exceptionally good, and their assistance in solving various issues has been invaluable. They have drawn our attention to various aspects requiring resolution. Their contribution has been particularly important in transitioning to the pillar approach and preparing the project's Amendment Request.

Amendment Request was prepared and submitted to the Agency on 23/08/2022. In addition to technical amendments and financial amendments, the request included two additional significant amendments requested by the project: request to include a new beneficiary in connection with the creation of the bird app (see Action E4 Task 3 for a more detailed explanation) and the wish to request an amendment to merge the phases in the budget and proceed with a single budget for the whole project duration. As we submitted the Amendment Request to the Agency only after the end of phase one (30/06/2022), we also informed the Agency and EMT of our wish to submit this report in January 2023, so that the report could already take into account the amendments approved by the Agency. Otherwise, we would have been obligated to describe and justify in this report amendments that we had already requested and that had been approved.

4. Project impact and analysis of contribution to implementation of the Plan

The 1st phase of the project was primarily a preparatory period, with the main focus on creating conditions for fulfilment of the goals set out to contribute to the implementation of the PAF. The main emphasis were mainly on drawing up plans, developing methodologies, selecting project sites, mapping the expectations of interest groups. At the same time, a number of activities were started and the first results have been already achieved. The following subchapters present an overview and analysis of the progress of the project. The results of the first phase of the project and the implementation of complementary actions are described in chapter 5. Implementation of the complementary actions.

4.1. Environmental benefits

4.1.1. Direct / quantitative environmental benefits

In the first phase of the project, the restoration of the habitats and species began.

- 1 076 66 ha of semi-natural grasslands were restored. The overall goal of the project is to restore 1000 ha within 2020-2029, but restoration will continue to reach the Plan's goal of 10 000 ha (more detailed explanation in the description of Action C2, Task 1).
- 17 small water bodies in the agricultural landscape were restored to improve the living conditions of amphibians and aquatic macro-invertebrates (Action C3, Task2). The goal of the project is to restore 100 small water bodies.
- 152 ha of forest land was purchased for nature conservation purposes (Action C5). The goal of the project is to purchase 500 ha.
- Five nature conservation camps were organized, 72 people took part of them (Action E3, Task1). In these camps semi-natural habitats were restored mainly on small islands and islets, where the use of heavy equipment is not possible. The goal of the project is to organize 20 nature conservation camps.
- In 2022, hunting of small predators was organized on the coastal meadows (Action C2, Task 2 and D1). The results of the 2022 monitoring showed robbery (eggs eaten by predators) in 86% of the nests, the spring monitoring showed that after the hunt, robbery had decreased to 65%. In other words, nesting was successful in 14 nests out of a hundred before the hunt and in 35 nests out of a hundred after the hunt.

In the second phase of the project these activities will continue and new ones will start (restoration of forests (Action C1 Task 1-2); restoration of coastal meadows (Action C2, Task 2); designing demonstration sites for environmentally friendly farming, (Action C3 Task 1); eradication of invasive alien species, (Action C4). The preliminary work has been done and according to the activities the restoration areas/demonstration sites are selected, the methodologies have been drawn up, the techniques have been agreed upon and the criteria are in place.

4.1.2. Qualitative environmental benefits

The aim of the project is to ensure the improvement of the condition of habitats and species in various forest and agricultural landscapes and to stop the negative trends in order to ensure the favourable conservation status of these habitats and species in a long term. In the project application, the threats were not presented in a separate chapter, but they are described in the technical part within the actions description (reasons why this action is necessary). In summary, the main threat is the intensification of the economy (forestry, agriculture), as a result of which the areas of habitats have decreased, the condition of existing habitats has deteriorated, and the number of many species has drastically decreased. At the same time, semi-natural habitats have fallen out of management because the economic model has changed. In addition, people's awareness of nature is not very high and their connections with the nature is weak. The project's aim is reduce these threats through various activities.

The project has lasted for two and a half years, and it is clear that for such a period it has not yet been possible to significantly improve the condition of habitats and species and reverse the negative trends. At the same time, first steps have already been taken and quite a lot has been done in the field (see the previous subsection). On a larger scale, various practical works will start in the second phase and the corresponding preparatory work for this is done during the first phase of the project.

- An action plan for wet forests (Action A1 Task1) has been drawn to stipulate protection goals, methods and specific activities in Natura 2000 areas. Within the framework of the plan, restoration areas are selected to meet the goals of the project and the PAF. The protection principles, implementation mechanisms and methods presented in the plan can also be used outside of Natura 2000 areas, i.e. throughout Estonia and in other EU states.
- The consultation system for semi-natural communities (Action A3 Task 1) is launched with the purpose to involve more landowners and land managers for the restoration and maintenance of semi-natural grasslands. A map layer of potential and priority areas suitable for restoration is part of the system. This system is not only intended to fulfil the goals of the project but also of the PAF. It is applicable everywhere, inside and outside protected areas.
- Bird research has started in the agricultural landscape and the first important research data has already been obtained (Action A4). In the future, the results of this action will be the basis for updating existing support schemes and adding new ones.
- Restoration plans have been drawn up for 24 coastal meadows (Action A6 Task 4) and meadow restoration works will begin in the second phase of the project (Action C2 Task 2). The basic principles and principles of the plans are also applicable to other coastal meadows with similar problems (meadows are managed but not yet sufficiently suitable for different species).
- Innovative methods for the elimination of alien species and selected areas are prepared (Action C4). If the selected techniques are bringing results, they can be used throughout Estonia. Eradication starts 2023.

Project plans, guidelines, methodologies and systems are prepared in a way that they can be used as widely as possible. They are designed to achieve the goals of the project as well as to fulfil the goals of the PAF, both in and outside of Natura areas, i.e. they are universal. This ensures the protection of the habitats and species and their favourable nature conservation status.

4.2. Economic and social benefits

The project is still at too early stage to generate wider economic benefits. The methodologies, processes and technologies are still at a testing stage and the results will be revealed in the second half of the project.

The biggest economic impact so far has been the restoration of semi-natural grasslands (ca 1000 ha) which provides work (grazing, mowing) for the inhabitants of rural areas for a longer period of time. It is difficult to estimate the direct benefit, but indirectly, approx. 1000 animals are needed to maintain 1000 ha of grasslands, thus, quite extensive economical activities are taking place and bringing job opportunities to the rural areas, creating not only economical but also social benefits.

As of the project maintenance the biggest savings have been achieved so far by replacing majority of the face-to-face meetings with virtual meetings. This has saved money from the transportation and working hours that otherwise would have been spent on travel.

The number of full time equivalent (FTE) jobs created by the project is 10. All employees employed within the project are qualified and have university degree.

Last but not least, improving the natural environment is contributing to people's health and wellbeing.

4.3. Innovation, demonstration, replicability, transferability, cooperation and transboundary <u>effects</u>

Innovative activities listed in form B4 of the project application (A2, Action plan for pollinators; A4 Effectiveness of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) support schemes for farmland biodiversity; C1 Restoration and management of different forest ecosystems; C6 Developing and introducing modern conservation tool for practical nature conservation action planning, implementing and monitoring) all will start in the second phase of the project. However, several new innovative approaches and activities have already started in the first phase.

- Development of novel methods for the eradication of invasive alien species (Action C4), which will be tested in the second phase.
- The creation of a consultation system for the restoration and maintenance of semi-natural habitats (Action A3 Task 1), which started in the fall of 2021, is completely new for Estonia.
- During the first phase, the results-based agri-environment schemes (RBAPS) criteria and test sheets for landowners were prepared (Action A3 Task 2). The support measures were added into the CAP support schemes by the project team and will be implemented with the start of the new EU funding period in 2023. The RBAPS approach is the first of its kind in Estonia.

Demonstration actions listed in the project application form B4 (E4, Eradication methods of invasive alien species; C3, Designing more nature friendly farming landscapes as demonstration site) will start in the second phase of the project. At the same time, it is clear that several other activities also contain a demonstration element, and according to the results obtained in their implementation, we will introduce them more widely.

Replicability and transferability are planned for different project activities. The outcomes of the preparatory, as well as, of the concrete activities can be used in all Natura 2000 sites in Estonia and in EU level (e.g. in Boreal region). This goes especially for the forest restoration activities (C1), nature friendly farming activities (A4, C3), semi-natural grassland restoration (C2), and invasive species eradication (C4), but it also concerns many other activities. Amore extensive use of the results and experiences of various activities is also described in other subsections of this chapter.

Most of the activities have just started or will start in the second phase of the project and hence, we don't have many results at this stage that can be widely shared. If the methodologies and techniques and approaches planned in the project will produce results and prove their applicability, they will be introduced both at the Estonian and EU level. For this purpose, the project actions include participation in seminars, cooperation with other projects, study trips, etc. A website in Estonian and English has also been created. The results, which take the form of scientific articles, reach the researchers of other countries in this way and are therefore usable by them.

4.4. Policy implications and feedback

The project implements the PAF, however it has a strong link to other policy areas and plans. Additionally, the implementation of project actions contribute to the objectives of the "Estonian Environmental Strategy 2030", "Estonian National Strategy on Sustainable Development "Sustainable Estonia 21" 2030", "Climate Change Adaptation Development Plan until 2030", EU Birds Directive and Habitats Directive and others.

In addition to fulfilling the goals of various policies and plans through project activities, we have participated in the drafting of several policies, laws and plans in the first phase of the project. This work has taken place with the direct participation of experts and researchers of the project's various beneficiaries in the preparation of these documents.

- "Estonian National Environmental Development Plan 2030" (KEVAD) is currently prepared as a continuation of the "Nature Conservation Development Plan 2020".
- "Nature Conservation Law" will be submitted to the government at the end of the year.
- "Estonian Forestry Development Plan 2030" is under preparation.
- "Common Agricultural Policy Strategic Plan 2023-2027", accepted by the European Commission. Enters into force from 1 January 2023.
- "European Union Common Agricultural Policy Implementation Act", updated in Estonian Parliament on 15 November 2022. As a Basic law, it stipulates the procedure for implementing the CAP in Estonia.
- "Biodiversity Strategy for 2030" linked to European Green Deal.

In addition to the active activities of the project itself (for example, restoration) and participation in drafting of various policies and the preparation of laws, the latest EU guidelines are taken into account in the plans prepared or updated within the project. As an example, PAF envisages restoring 6000 ha of wet forests by 2028 (of which 3500 ha is restored by the project). However, the wet forests action plan (prepared in the first phase of the project) aims to restore 13 000 ha by 2030.

4.5. Capacity building, sustainability and other comments on impacts, barriers, challenges and lessons learned

Activities related to the capacity building, upskilling, training, and organisational and administrative changes are foreseen in the second and future phases of the project. Analysation and mapping of training needs of the administration of nature protection (incl. on municipal level) starts at the beginning of 2023, and in the same year, we would like to start offering trainings based on the needs of us (MoE) and our partners. Few topics that come up repeatedly are the communication with the media, communicating your messages clearly, learning how to present your ideas in front of camera without getting nervous and losing your point, enhancement of argumentation skills, and skills to run participatory processes on environmental decision making, negotiate with landowners/users, and resolve environmental conflicts.

Activities as A3 Task 1 (setting up the consultation system for the grassland owners and managers) require lots of additional support (through the trainings, capacity building events and exchange visits). One aim of the consultation system is to bring new potential people into the grassland management schemes and the land use specialists of EB who have to convince these people to contribute to the nature protection while having valuable lands on their hand, need lots of specific trainings. Their trainings should contain practical assignments on how to communicate with different people with different mindset, how to come up with good arguments and stick to them, how to persuade people and keep a good relationship in a longer terms.

These type of skills are needed by all (land use) specialists who are in a position to deal with grassland managers or are in the negotiation process on restoration projects (coastal meadows, small water bodies for amphibians, etc.) taking place on private lands, and have to reach to the agreements which are mutually accepted by both sides.

While collecting information on the training needs of administration, we will have focus group interviews also with our stakeholders (land managers (A3, Task 1), private forest owners (A5), farmers participation in C3 Task 1 pilots, etc.) to find out their needs and wishes in order to accommodate also these into the training programme.

Beside training programmes, a useful and practical guidance materials are to be compiled and published to support nature conservation specialists in their work. Based on training needs, actual trainings taking place in coming years as well as based on feedback and possible corrections – a longer term training strategy should be established and made obligatory to everyone who is actively involved in the implementation of the Plan or only starts working on it. Any capacity building support/mentoring, etc. helps to keep people in the field of nature conservation, reduce burnouts and/or leaving the job.

The biggest capacity building so far has been the implementation of the project itself having in mind the complexity, scale (numerous partners, hundreds of stakeholders) and ambitions of it! Its the learning curve for everybody involved to the project and hopefully there are possibilities to sustain this knowledge for future use.

5. Implementation of the complementary actions

Complementary actions contribute to the implementation of the forest and farmland part of the "Prioritized Action Framework for NATURA 2000 in Estonia for the Multiannual Financial Framework period 2021-2027" (PAF).

The Pillar approach was not used when the project application was prepared. According to the Agency's recommendation, we switched to the Pillar approach in 2021. As a result of the new approach, a clear link between PAF, LIFE IP actions and complementary actions has now emerged. Relationship between PAF, LIFE IP actions and complementary actions is presented in the chapter 2. Project relation to the Plan.

5.1. Coordination mechanism established with other funds

Organizing and ensuring the implementation of complementary actions takes place in cooperation with different organisations.

The Project is in a unique position as the project partners are responsible for the budget for the implementation of the complementary actions and the use of the corresponding funds, MoE for the Cohesion fund and the MoRA for the European agricultural fund for rural development. These are the most important funds in the implementation of complementary actions. In addition, MoE and MoRA are responsible for the preparation and use of the state budget, MoE in the field of nature protection and MoRA in the field of agriculture. MoE is also the coordinator of LIFE programme in Estonia. It provides the necessary resources to fulfil the complementary activities and thereby the PAF.

The use of funds and state budget resources in practice, i.e. the organization of the corresponding complementary works, is mainly the responsibility of the project beneficiaries. EB and RMK deal with restoration (forests, semi-natural communities), eradication of alien species, etc. KEMIT deals with IT solutions and PFC coordinates private forest subsidies. UT researchers participate in the preparation of support schemes, which are the basis for compensation payments. All partners engage in awareness raising activities. Outside of the circle of project partners, there is close cooperation with the Agricultural Registers and Information Board (ARIB) that deals with the payment of subsidies for the management of semi-natural grasslands and the distribution of private forest subsidies. Together with the NGO ELF, working camps and other awareness-raising activities are organized.

The Steering Committee (SC) is the most important coordination mechanism for the execution of complementary actions. This is both from the point of view of the implementation of actions and the securing of financial resources of various funds. The SC is led by the Deputy Chancellor of the MoE, members are the representatives of all institutions involved in the management of various funds (the list is given in Annex 5). Thus, SC consolidates the information of different funds, helps to plan the course of financing and also the implementation of activities.

Also, the PAF Monitoring Team (Action D2, Task1) deals with the process of financing complementary actions, combining MoE officials responsible for different topics. Some members of the Monitoring Team also participate in SC meetings as external observers.

The use of the allocated funds already in the implementation of activities is coordinated at the meetings of the project beneficiaries. The topic of complementary activities is usually discussed at meetings held at the beginning of the year and further as needed.

5.2. Summary status of the complementary actions

Pillar	Complementary	Source of funding				
	action					
		EAFRD	SB	CF	LIFE	PS
E.1.						
	CA01		52 787			
	CA02		419 525	14 675	163 300	1 000
	CA03		500 000	1 906 570		
	CA04		800 000			
E.2.						
	CA05	13 275 463	6 593 978	2 648 000		
	CA06	45 322 360	15 105 570			
	CA07	10 209 696	7 946 537	3 721 600		
E.3.						
	CA08		1 318 178			
	CA09					
	CA10		124 264			1 000
	Total per fund	68 807 519	32 860 839	8 290 845	163 300	2 000
	Total	110 124 503				

The costs incurred f	for the impl	ementation of th	e complementar	y actions in tl	he first phase
				J	

EAFRD – The European agricultural fund for rural development; SB – State budget; CF – The Cohesion Fund LIFE – other LIFE projects; PS – Private sector

According to the project application, the planned complementary actions budget of the first phase was 70,008,588 euros, while its implementation was 110,124,503 euros. Thus, the execution exceeded expectations; its increase by approx. 40,000,000 euros is partially due to the transition to the Pillar approach. Each project action was linked to the PAF activity and as a result new complementary actions were added compare to the project application budget.

Consultations with various institutions show that the expected volume of complementary actions for the next project phase is approximately the same size. In the second phase, we will pay attention to the involvement of new funds and especially to the private sector.

5.3. Discussion on the contribution of complementary actions to the implementation of the targeted Plan

The measures of the PAF related to the project are divided into three groups. First, those in which PAF measure and project action completely overlap. Secondly, those where the project action covers part of the PAF goal. In this case, the project helps to fulfil the objectives of the PAF both directly and through complementary actions. The third is PAF measures, which do not directly

overlap with the project's actions, but to which the project contributes. More detailed overview and the link between PAF, complementary actions and project actions is given in chapter 2. Project relation to the Plan.

PAF measures in many cases do not have quantitative targets. Therefore, it is not easy to assess the fulfilment of the Plan's goals and especially its connection with complementary and project actions. Nevertheless, it is clear that the implementation of the Plan is done by the project and complementary actions. In many cases, the project creates a prerequisite for the implementation of both its own and complementary actions. For example, plans for wet and dry forests are prepared, which are the basis for their protection and restoration of forest in Estonia (Action A1); a consultation system for the restoration and management of semi-natural grasslands is created, which supports landowners (Action A3), etc.

The financial implementation of the plan is described in the previous subsection, execution of the plan is proceeding as expected. The quantitative execution of the plan is characterized by the following table. It presents plan measures with quantitative values and corresponding project objectives and implementation results in the first phase. This comparison also shows that the implementation of the Plan is proceeding successfully, in many cases more than half of what was planned has been completed. Restoration of forests will begin as planned in 2024. The action plans drawn up by the project are the basis for forest restoration both within the project and within the framework of complementary actions. The draft plan for wet forests is ready, and the restoration areas have been selected. The preparation of the plan for dry forests will begin at the beginning of the second phase. Therefore, all prerequisites for the implementation of these complementary actions during the period of the PAF are also present.

			Achieved during Phase 1		
Pillar/Theme/Measure of the Plan	PAF target	LIFE IP	LIFE IP	CA result	CA and
		target	result		LIFE IP
					total
PILLAR OF THE PLAN: E.2. Site-related n	naintenance an	d restoration	measures, within	n and beyond	Natura 2000
E.2.4. Grasslands				-	-
2. Management of semi-natural grasslands	50 000 ha	Not	Not foreseen	36 050 ha	36 050 ha
		foreseen			
3. Restoration of semi-natural grasslands	10 000 ha	1 000 ha	1 077 ha	5 230 ha	6 307 ha
(average restoration cost 2500 eur)					
E.2.6. Woodlands and forests			•		
1. Restoring the structure of forest habitat	2 000 ha	500 ha	0 ha	0 ha	0 ha
types (2180, *9010, *9020, 9050, 9060,					
*9180)					
3. Restoring wet forest water regime (*9080,	6 000 ha	3 500 ha	0 ha	1 000 ha	1 000 ha
*91D0, *91E0, 91F0, protected drained					
peatland forest)					
4. Compensations of income loss for private	90 000 ha	Not	Not foreeen	66 000 ha	66 000 ha
forest owners		foreeen			
7. Purchasing land with strict conservation	1 500 ha	5 00 ha	152 ha	364 ha	516 ha
restrictions for the state					
PILLAR OF THE PLAN: E.3. Additional species-specific measures not related to specific ecosystems or habitats					
E.3.1. Species-specific measures and programmes not covered elsewhere					
1. Eradication of invasive alien species	3 000 ha	44 plots	0 plots	2 500 ha	2 500 ha
6. Restoration of habitats suitable for small	60 ponds	100 ponds	17 ponds	78 ponds	95 ponds
water body species	_	_	_	_	_

6. Evaluation of Project Implementation

6.1. Methodology applied

The methodology used for achieving project aims in the first phase and implementing specific actions proved to be adequate.

Several teams are formed to manage and monitor the project: Leading Team, Management Team, Monitoring Team and Steering Committee (described in Chapter 3. Administrative part and Chapter 6. Evaluation of Project Implementation in actions D2 and F1). They are operating at different levels but are connected through people who were members of several teams. This ensured the optimal distribution, coordination and supervision of management tasks.

Activities are mostly carried out by the method of two working groups. The more broad-based working group consisted of officials, representatives of interest groups and experts. They are formulating the basic principles and assigning tasks to content writers (specialized working group, made up of experts). According to these guidelines, experts preparing the necessary content documents. The documents are after that completion discussed in a wider working group. This ensures the involvement of various parties (private sector, NGOs, officials, experts) and optimal organization of the work.

Private sector (landowners, managers) is involved already in the preparation process. In cooperation, the prepared guidelines, worksheets, support schemes, etc. are discussed and, if necessary, tested. As a result, we can assume that the subsequent implementation of the results will be significantly easier and meet the expectations of the private sector.

The project envisaged numerous meetings and discussions, which had to take place in the traditional way - in the form of a physical meeting. Due to Covid-19, face-to-face meetings were replaced by virtual meetings. The initially unfamiliar format quickly became familiar, and even after the end of the restrictions, the majority of meetings take place virtually. This provided significant savings in terms of travel costs, and released resources were directed to the execution of content works (the change was formalized in the Request for Changes). However, key meetings are still held face-to-face as important discussions work better this way.

Nevertheless, direct face-to-face communication is important when communicating with landowners and managers, doing joint planning and coordinating their work. The success of a project is ensured by three things: talking, talking and talking again, i.e. communication.

Optimal use of the budget is ensured by taking price offers from different providers and organizing procurements. In this process beneficiaries are guided by national laws, LIFE programme rules and internal regulations. In case of small purchases, direct purchase is more practical because the administrative cost for organizing quotations would exceed the purchase itself. If possible, the internet is used for market research.

An important aspect is that the composition of project beneficiaries includes all relevant parties. ministries (MoE, MoRA) are policy makers, universities (UT, TLU) ensure a science-based approach, nature conservation implementers (EB, RMK) give a practical aspect, representatives of the private sector (EEML, PFC) bring their interests into consideration, KEMIT and SIUTS ensure IT solutions. EOÜ represents the interests of the NGO's and we also cooperate very closely with ELF, the largest NGO in Estonia. Such a composition of participants does increase the time of implementation of actions, because different views are represented. It ensures the balance of the results and we hope the best result as well.

6.2. Dissemination

Project dissemination is based on Communication and Participation Strategy (2020-2029) and on the annual media plan developed by the end of each year/the beginning of new year together with partners. While the strategy is a set document, which gives strategic objectives of communication and instructions on how to address our stakeholders, interest groups and media, then the action/media plan is a living document which follows the dynamics of the project and is updated accordingly.

Only properly set up strategy which is broadly discussed, agreed and followed among the project partners can be successfully implemented, and therefore we are happy that the strategy development was organised in participatory way, involving all the project partners.

Our strategic focus is on following: (1) promote cooperation and communication between partners; (2) generate new role models in nature conservation; (3) reach to more people with the concept of everyone's nature conservation; (4) link nature conservation benefits and human well-being.

While being strategically active in five main fields of the project: semi-natural grassland management, forest measures and restoration, biodiversity based solutions for agricultural lands, species protection and everybody's nature conservation, following principles are implemented while communicating with our stakeholders and wider audience –

- (1) we don't blame anybody;
- (2) we do not prohibit anything but seek for balance;
- (3) we explain the benefits of the nature protection to our target groups;
- (4) our talk is concrete, related to the content and practical;
- (5) we rather show then describe;
- (6) we try to get close to people, and
- (7) we ourselves too are capable of learning.

These principles are built in to the action/media plan which is in first 2,5 years has put the biggest focus on:

- recognition of the managers of the semi-natural grasslands, disseminate their stories and passion of contributing to the wellbeing of Estonian nature, finding new role models and spokespeople among land managers to advocate for the nature protection;
- restoration of small water bodies for amphibians, the activity which raise surprisingly big amount of media attention and had many popular public activities around the topic;

- restoration of coastal meadows, info-days and consultations with the landowners/managers to make an informed decision about the restoration works on their land;
- eradication of invasive species. Due to successful mapping campaign, more than 420 colonies of invasive species were mapped and more than 100 people got engaged to this activity;
- farmland bird studies.

The project has functional and beautiful website <u>www.loodusrikaseesti.ee</u> which is updated on weekly bases but most active change of information is ongoing in social media where the project has a considerable number of followers.

Major drawback was involved to the fact that the website development was postponed by almost two years and the lead of the project was not in a position to influence the delay. Nevertheless, these problems are solved and by now the project website has features to engage people and give a comprehensive overview on project activities.

Overview of the articles and TV/radio broadcasts can be found in Annex 6.

6.3. Technical implementation

PILLAR E.1 OF THE PLAN: Horizontal measures and administrative costs related to Natura 2000

Pillar E.1 is the most voluminous and it covers the topics related to the planning, communication/awareness raising, and monitoring.

Following sub-themes and LIFE-IP project actions belong under the Pillar E.1:

Sub-theme of the plan E.1.1. Site designation and management planning (Action A1 Task 1-3). **Sub-theme of the Plan E.1.2** Site administration and communication with stakeholders (Action E3 Task 2-3; Action C6; Action A7 Task 1-3; Action 8 Task 1-3).

Sub-theme of the Plan E.1.3. Monitoring and Reporting (Action D1; Action D2 Task 1-2; Action D3).

Sub-theme of the Plan E.1.5. Natura 2000 – related communication and awareness raising measures, education and visitors access (Action E1 Task 1-6; Action E2 Task 2; Action E3 Task 1, 4; Action E4 Task1-2-3; Action E5 Task 1-2; Action E6; Action A9; Action F2.

The main achievements of the 1st reporting period are the following:

- Draft action plan for the wet forest is compiled and the wet forest restorations sites are selected.
- Several currently important nature conservation topics discussed via think-tanks and the findings of these discussions will be the basis for several future plans (i.e action plan for pollinators (A2), private forest active measures (A5), etc.).
- Monitoring schemes developed for (1) small water bodies, (2) coastal meadows.
- PAF monitoring team established, LIFE KEY project level indicators entered to the database.
 Project logo and style book as well as the webpage is created, communication strategy and yearly plan developed, mobile application for bird songs created, roll-ups made, several awareness raising campaigns are ongoing, 20 videos are produced, 5 nature conservation camps are organised, 4 info days are carried out.
- The project has started the cooperation with several other LIFE projects and has introduced itself on an international arena.

ACTION A.1: Developing and/or updating action plans for Natura 2000 habitat types

Task 1. Action plan for wet forest habitat types

•	Foreseen start date: 2 nd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 2 nd quarter 2020
•	Foreseen end date: 4 th quarter 2023	Actual end date: N/A

First objective of this action is to compile nationwide action plan for wet forest habitats (*9080, *91D0, *91E0, 91F0, protected drained peatland forest).

During the introductory meeting (April 16, 2020) basic principles of the action plan and future work arrangements were agreed, two working groups were formed. The wider working group includes officials (EB; RMK, MoE) and experts (UT, TLU, PFC, EEML) to make fundamental decisions. The smaller working group consists of experts whose task was to draft the plan. To gain additional expertise and expand the social scope, a forest expert from ELF and external expert from UT was involved in preparation of the plan.

In 2020 the structure of the plan was developed, introductory chapters were assembled and relevant background information was gathered. In 2021, all chapters were compiled and discussed several times in a wider working group. The discussions and improvement of the plan continued in 2022, focusing on quantitative and qualitative objectives of the plan (Annex 7).

The second aim of this action is to select wet forest sites for restoration (Action C1 Task 1).

In 2021 the working group, led by UT, worked out restauration sites selection criteria and made a pre-selection of core areas with deciduous swamp forests within Natura sites as a geo-information request. This was followed by a fourth-stage selection process. Firstly, areas with a visually higher drainage impact were selected from this set, where the closure of drainage ditches could improve the quality of wet deciduous forests. In the second stage, areas with a surface area of less than 20 hectares were removed from the generated sample: as a result, 64 areas were selected (with a total area of about 20 000 ha, the estimated area per site being 50–1000 hectares per area). In the third and fourth stages, different factors related to these areas were assessed and as a result, 17 sites were chosen with a total area of about 7700 ha. Out of these 17 sites, 10 were selected as project sites to be restored with a total area of 4536 ha. All of them are state lands.

The final decision about the sites was made by the working group in June 2022. Although the project aim is to restore 3500 ha, the exact borders of the sites will be specified during the preparation of the restoration projects. As the surface of the areas may change, more hectares were selected for the restauration. Some of these sites need inventories (planned for 2023). In summer 2022, TLU started pre-monitoring of two sites (Action A6 Task 2) and RMK started preparation of restoration projects in three sites (Action A6 Task 1).

The action plan for wet forests is not only for the fulfilment of the project goals, but it also accomplish the goal of the PAF to restore 6000 ha by 2027. Selected 17 sites with a total area of 7700 ha create the prerequisites for achieving this goal.

Nr	Name of the area	Name of the protected area	Restoration hectares
1	Meleski	Alam-Pedja Nature Reserve	449
2	Soomaa 2	Soomaa National Park	309
3	Peterna-Laashoone	Alam-Pedja Nature Reserve	751
4	Laulaste	Laulaste Nature Reserve	452
5	Tudusoo	Tudusoo Nature Reserve	593
6	Mustassaare	Alutaguse National Park	236
7	Ohepalu 2	Ohepalu Nature Reserve	468
8	Soomaa 3	Soomaa National Park	307
9	Pilhla-Kaibaldi	Pihla-Karibaldi Nature Reserve	529
10	Luusika	Luusikametsa Nature Reserve	442
			TOTAL: 4536

Within the project following sites will be restored:

Dissemination: By the UT forestry experts a presentation on preparation of the wet forests action planning and site selection was made at the Conference on Nature Conservation and Wetlands held by the ELF in 01-02/02/2022.

Deliverables: No deliverables were foreseen in the first phase.

Milestones: First meetings for forest action plan working groups held 16/04/2020. The draft of wet forest expert action plan compiled in June 2022 (second phase).

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: The draft action plan will be introduced to the stakeholders (spring 2023) and updated according to the feedback. The action plan will be approved by the Executive Director of EB in the end of 2023.

Person days executed: 787 (a total of 837 person days are planned)

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success
A 1		DT/A	
AI	Objective:	N/A	It is difficult to reach a
Task	Improving the conservation status of		common decision that
1	forest and farmland habitats and species		would satisfy experts,
	to achieve results benefiting the whole		managers and officials
	ecosystems such as:		with different views and
	* forest habitats *9010, *9020, 9050,		positions.
	9060, *9080, *91D0, *91E0, 91F0;		
	* forest species such as woodpeckers,		The experience of the
	black stork, eagles, dragonflies,		project shows that it is
	amphibians, etc.		possible as a result of
			discussions and skillful
	Expected results:	Draft action plan is	coordination, but it also
	Action plan for wet forest habitat types.	compiled.	takes a lot of time.

ACTION A.1: Developing and/or updating action plans for Natura 2000 habitat types

Task 2. Action plan for dry forest habitat types

•	Foreseen start date: 3 rd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 3 rd quarter 2022

• Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2023 Actual end date: N/A

This action foresees the compilation of nationwide action plan for dry forest habitats 2180, *9010, *9020, 9050, 9060, *9180).

The introductory meeting with partners to discuss the preparation of the action plan for wet forests (Action A1 Task 1) and dry forests habitat types took place in April 16, 2020. The preparation of this type of natural habitat type plans is new for Estonia and therefore it was decided to start with the preparation of the wet forest action plan as it is significantly more complicated and time-consuming than the planning and restauration of dry forest sites. The structure of the wet forest management plan, its general principles, principles procedures for selecting restauration areas and many other topics of the plan will become the basis for the preparation of the dry forest action plan.

During the preparation of both action plans the restoration sites are selected. After the selection, the restoration projects (Action A6) will be prepared for restoration sites and the restoration will take place (Action C1).

The wet forest action plan draft was completed in June of 2022, the preparation of the dry forest action plan will begin at the end of 2022. Although the preparation of the dry forest action plan will start later than initially planned, the start of the restoration works in 2024 are not affected as the restoration sites can be selected during the preparation of the plan as it was also done for wet forests. Furthermore, restoration projects and restoration of dry forests are significantly easier than the restauration of wet forests because there is no need to change the water regime (which makes restoration of wet forests difficult). Similar to wet forests, dry forest restoration sites are selected on state land and therefore there is no need for time-consuming (and often unsuccessful) coordination with private forest owners.

Deliverables: No deliverables were foreseen in the first phase.

Milestones: First meetings for forest action plan working groups held 16/04/2020.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: The start of compiling the action plan was postponed for two years for the reasons given above and it has no negative impact on this action or on other actions of the project. The content and budget of the action will not change.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: The draft of the action plan will be compiled, introduced to the stakeholders and updated according to their feedback. The action plan will be approved at the end of 2023.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
A1 Task 2	Objective: Improving the conservation status of forest and farmland habitats and species to achieve results benefiting the whole ecosystems such as: * forest habitats *9010, *9020, 9050, 9060, *9080, *91D0, *91E0, 91F0.	N/A	Initial plan to draft two action plans in parallel was too ambitious and it was justified to start with the wet forest management plan as its more complicated and time consuming.
	Expected results: Action plan for dry forest habitat types.	N/A	

Person days executed: 0 (a total of 360 person days are planned)

ACTION A.1: Developing and/or updating action plans for Natura 2000 habitat types

Task 3. Update of approved action plan for semi-natural grasslands

•	Foreseen start date:	1 st quarter 2024	Actual start date: N/A
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• Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2026 Actual end date: N/A

The aim of this action is to update the action plan by 2026 for semi-natural habitat types (*1630, 6210, *6270, *6280, 6410, 6430, 6450, 6510, *6530, 9070). The previous plan was compiled and approved in 24.03.2021 by the Debuty Director of EB.

Analyse of the existing plan start in 2024. In the renewed plan the experience and knowledge gained during the implementation of the existing plan as well as the implementation of different actions (A2, A3 Task 1, A3 Task 2, C2 task 1, C2 task 2, D1) of LIFE-IP project will be taken account.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Analysis of the implementation of the existing plan.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
A1 Task 3	Objective: Improving the conservation status of forest and farmland habitats and species to achieve results benefiting the whole ecosystems such as: * grassland habitats *1630, (*)6210, *6270, *6280, 6450, *6530, 9070, 7230; * birds and other species related to grasslands and arable land; * pollinators.	N/A	N/A
	Expected results: Action plan for semi-natural grasslands has been updated and approved.	N/A	

Person days executed: 0 (a total of 101 person days are planned)

ACTION E.3: Spreading conservation ideas: everyman's nature conservation, community based management, volunteer involvement, site-based cooperation networks

Task 2. Organization of Nature Conservation Month

•	Foreseen start date: 2 nd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 2 nd quarter 2022		
•	Foreseen end date: 2 nd quarter 2029	Actual end date: N/A		

The purpose of the Nature Conservation Month is to focus on the issues that are currently important in nature and biodiversity. Nature Conservation Month takes place in Estonia every year in May, having its own specific theme and containing different events (hikes, study tours, etc.). Nature Conservation Month opens with the opening event, where nature conservation awards are presented. The task of the project is to organize together with its partners the opening event.

The slogan of the Nature Conservation Month in 2020 was "Take care of what you love". Due to Covid 19, the opening event was cancelled. In 2021, the slogan was "Nature and culture unites". In connection with this, the project announced a photo competition "Life is a flower – heritage in the meadow" (Action E2 Task 1). Again, the opening event did not take place due to Covid 19.

The cancellation of the opening events did not reduce impact of the Nature Conservation Month, because the events in nature took place and there were a lot of participants all over Estonia.

The slogan of the Nature Conservation Month of 2022 was "Permanent and changeable in Estonian nature", an opening event with the presence of the President of Estonia was organised on May 10th, 2002 in Tallinn Zoo and about 100 people participated. Together with the Minister of the Environment nature conservation awards were announced. During the Mmnth there were many hikes, study trips and other events organized by several organizations.

Dissemination: The Nature Conservation Month always have a wide response in the media. Events covered by radio and TV, different activities are organised by beneficiaries and other organisations, incl. Estonian Society for Nature Conservation, Estonian Fund for Nature, Estonian Nature Tourism Association.

Deliverables: No deliverables were foreseen in the first phase.

Milestones: Nature Conservation Month organized yearly in May 2021 to 2029, first Month organized, 2nd quarter 2020 - Nature Conservation Month was organized in 2020, 2021 and 2022. The opening event took place only in 2022.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Two Nature Conservation Months and opening events will be organized (2023 and 2024).

Person days executed: 0 (a total of 0 person days are planned)

Here and after, if the number of planned person days is 0, the implementation of the action is done as a part of project management, Action F1.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
E3 Task 2	Objective: Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions.	Nature Conservation Month draws attention to nature and related issues and contributes to the raise of public awareness.	Although we did not manage to organize the event in two years, we managed to do it in the best way at the first opportunity - the President of Estonia also took part in the event, which arouses significantly
	Expected results: 10 opening events will be organized.	Opening event has been organized in 2022.	wider interest.

ACTION E.3: Spreading conservation ideas: everyman's nature conservation, community based management, volunteer involvement, site-based cooperation networks

Task 3: Better informing and involving landowners of conservation values on their lands

- Foreseen start date: 3rd quarter 2022 Actual start date: N/A
- Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2027 Actual end date: N/A

Although the task to develop a system for sharing information about the nature values (and how to preserve them) for the landowners of protected areas is planned to the 2nd phase of the project, the preparation for such comprehensive system is already going on. Everything that is currently done within the consultation system (Action A3 Task 1) for the grassland manegers, participatory testing of RBAPS (Action A3 Task 2) and joint planning for nature-based solutions on agricultural land (Action C3) contributes to the future developed system to help the land owners and land managers to understand better the nature values of their land, hence also taking better care of them.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: The experience and knowledge of the project's various actions will be gathered and the creation of the system will begin in 2024.

Person	davs	executed:	0	(a	total	of 0	person	day	vs are	planned)
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Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
E3	Objective:	N/A	N/A
Task 3	Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions.		
	Expected results: System of informing and involving landowners of conservation values created	N/A	

ACTION C.6: Developing and introducing modern conservation tool for practical nature conservation action planning implementing and monitoring

• Foreseen end date: 4th quarter of 2027 Actual end date: N/A

The aim of the project is to develop a toolset for the information system (EELIS) that allows store and analyse data for practical nature conservation.

The EELIS (modern conservation tool) system consists of five parts. LIFE-IP develops parts four and five to cover all activities in planning-implementing-monitoring-evaluation cycle of practical nature conservation. First, the basic parts of the system were developed. Other parts will be built on that, including those foreseen in the LIFE-IP project.

The public procurement for the development of the EELIS software was conducted by KEMIT in June-September 2020. The framework contract concluded as a result of the procurement covers all five parts of the EELIS. The framework agreement was concluded on 17/09/2020. The work started in November 2020. The work is carried out in three-month cycles, and the work of each cycle is ordered separately according to the developments that have taken place

It has become clear while developing basic parts of EELIS that significantly more work is required than initially predicted. Therefore, basic parts of this development as well as part 4 and 5 will get ready later than planned. Although, the entire system will be ready later than expected, single parts will be tested and used as quickly as components are completed.

While the full completion of the system is delayed compare to the initial plan, its completion is certain because it is an object of national importance for which the MoE is responsible. A later start of EELIS does not affect the execution of other project actions, because EELIS is not related to the execution of other actions.

Deliverables: No deliverables were foreseen in the first phase.

Milestones: The public procurement was conducted in June-September 2020.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: Actual start date of development of parts four and five of EELIS is postponed, because the basic parts of the EELIS is not finished yet, thefore the action will be extended in time, the content and budget of the development of the fourth and fifth parts will not change.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Development of parts 4 and 5 begins.

Person days executed: 0 (a total of 0 person days are planned)
Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
C6	Objective: Improving conservation practices and collaboration between administrative authorities: * cross-sectoral harmonization of data management; * harmonized practices and innovative tools for authorities.	N/A	It is difficult to estimate the volume of IT developments, mostly the cost is underestimated.
	Expected results: EELIS is ready for use.	The development of basic parts have started.	

ACTION A.7: Solving different conservation challenges by the thematic think-tanks

Task 1. Capacity building of conservation system

•	Foreseen start date: 3 rd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 3 rd quarter 2020
•	Foreseen end date: 3 rd quarter 2029	Actual end date: N/A

The aim of this action is to assess the efficiency of administrative conservation system in Estonia.

In the first and second phase of the project, knowledge and experience of the functioning of the administrative conservation system are acquired while implementing project actions. Based on these experiences the assessment starts with thematic think-tank at the end of second phase.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: One think-tank will be organised at the end of the second phase.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
A7	Objective:	N/A	N/A
Task 1	Improving conservation practices and collaboration between administrative authorities: * cross-sectoral harmonization of data management; * harmonized practices and innovative tools for authorities.		
	Expected results: Chart indicating the proposed future situation of institutional co-operation on Natura 2000 network management.	N/A	

ACTION A.7: Solving different conservation challenges by the thematic think-tanks

Task 2. Developing and launching different smart decision-making tools and solving conservation challenges

•	Foreseen start date: 2 nd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 1 st quarter 2021
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• Foreseen end date: 3rd quarter 2029 Actual end date: N/A

This task aims at improving the quality of the environmental decision making by solving different topical issues.

In 2021 four (due to Covid-19) web-based think-tanks were organized and convened by UT. 18th of February 2021 the thematic needs for substantive think-tanks were mapped, described and prioritized by 31 participants who represented all the project partners. Altogether 25 topics were proposed and openly discussed. The order of priority was determined on the basis of (i) the general importance and (ii) insufficient knowledge of the topics, which were established by a voting procedure. The result was a selection of 11 priority topics to be discussed in think-tanks in the coming years.

8th of April 2021 to identify and analyse (i) existing and (ii) lacking measures for the protection of Estonian natural pollinators. These measures will become an input to the pollinators' action plan (A2). In total, 30 existing and 17 necessary measures were identified. 24 people from various organisations, such as MoE, EB, MoRA, RMK, UT, University of Life Sciences, and ELF participated.

5th of May 2021 for promoting LIFE-IP action A5, which includes the development of a new support system to contribute active nature conservation measures in private forest. The think-tank mapped techniques that, based on ecological knowledge, would promote biodiversity through active nature conservation and are affordable for private forest owners in Estonia. A total of 16 such techniques were described. There were 24 participants from various organisations, such as MoE, EB, MoRA, RMK, UT, University of Life Sciences, ELF, and forest management organizations: MTÜ Ühinenud Metsaomanikud, Metsatervenduse OÜ and Püsimetsaühistu. Four such activities were selected for scrutinizing actual measures in 2021 (Action A5. Tasks 2).

17th of December 2021 on the economic accounting of nature goods and services, as a joint activity with the ELME <u>https://keskkonnaagentuur.ee/elme</u> project. The aim was to map potential applications for nature's economic accounting in Estonia and to explicitly discuss its possibilities and shortcomings. Altogether 36 participants took part.

Additionally, developments are made to better harmonise the management approaches according to the Art 5 of the Birds Directive in the state and private forests (to keep so-called bird peace during the breeding season). While the current Nature Conservation Act states in general that birds must not be disturbed during the breeding season throughout Estonia, then in the new law this point

has been specified. So-called bird peace is mandatory from April 15to July 15 in all protected areas (incl. Natura areas) both on state and private lands.

In addition, the EB has the right to regulate felling on the basis of a discretionary decision if it disturbs the nesting of birds, regardless of time.

The draft law has passed all approval rounds. The next step is for the Minister of the Environment to present it to the government and then it goes to the Parliament.

Measures on how to prevent *Canis aureus* attacks on sheep has been put on hold as by now *Canis aureus* is not considered to be invasive species and its hunted during the hunting season the same way as other predators are hunted.

Dissemination: The number of participants of think-thanks has increased each time, and there have been a total of 75 different participants after all the think-tanks that have taken place so far. The contribution of think tanks to other activities (e.g. A2, A5 Tasks 1, 2) or national policies and projects (e.g. ELME) has been very important. Reports on outcomes are available on the project website.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: First think-tanks were scheduled for autumn 2020. Due to Covid-19 the think-tanks were postponed once more to the year 2021. For implementation of think-tanks a new web-format was developed, which was safer but still very effective. These changes did not lead to changes in the budget.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: At least five think-tanks will be organized.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achieved	Main factors of success and lessons learned
A7 Task 2	Objectives: Improving conservation practices and collaboration between administrative authorities: *harmonized practices and innovative tools for authorities	Important nature- conservation topics have been discussed within wide range of experts and officials and innovative solutions and ideas have been proposed	Skilful organization and implementation of think-tanks, which creates a good opportunity and atmosphere to discuss important nature conservation issues. It
	Expected results: At least 20 think-tanks should be hold to contribute to the sectoral policies and solving conservation challenges.	4 think-tanks on important nature conservation topics took place in 2021	conditions for widespread participation.

ACTION A.7: Solving different conservation challenges by the thematic think-tanks

Task 3. Integrating conservation aims into sectoral development

•	Foreseen start date: 3 rd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 3 rd quarter 2020
•	Foreseen end date: 3 rd quarter 2029	Actual end date: N/A

This task includes evidence-based recommendations for integrating conservation objectives in the agriculture, forestry and semi-natural grassland management practices, compensating the loss of income for strict forest protection supporting the biodiversity.

Various new innovative nature-friendly support measures, methods and techniques are prepared and tested during the implementation of numerous project actions. According to the obtained results, several schemes and guidelines will be updated and implemented in practice.

In the first phase of the project, new approaches were developed while selecting wet forest sites for restoration (Action A1), consultation system for land manager (Action A3), result-based support scheme for semi-natural grasslands (Action A3), design of nature-friendly agricultural landscapes (Action C3), eradication methods of alien species (Action C4), etc.

Testing will take place in the second and third phases of the project, and based on the results, the reports will be compiled and proposals will be made for implementing the results in different sectors in the third and fourth phases of the project.

Deliverables: Different reports, suggestions, guidelines during the whole project, 2020-2030 – The draft of wet forest action plan was compiled (action A1 Task 1), guideline for consultant and managers has been developed (Action A3 Task 1), etc.

Milestones: No milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Different reports, suggestions, guidelines will be prepared according to the progress of different actions.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
A7 Task 3	Objective: All objectives	N/A	N/A
	Expected results: New approached to the different sectorial challenges. Different reports, suggestions, guidelines during the whole project.	Different methods, schemes ready for implementation.	

ACTION A.8: Capacity Building

Task 1. Elaboration and implementation of training system for nature conservation staff

- Foreseen start date: 4th quarter 2022 Actual start date: N/A
- Foreseen end date: 3rd quarter 2029 Actual end date: N/A

The aim of the action is to create of training system for state and municipal officials dealing with nature conservation issues. The exact topics of the trainings will be decided during the development of the system. The system development should be ready to use 2024. After that until the end of the project, trainings on different topics to the officials will be conducted.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Mapping of the training needs starts at the end of 2022, based on needs assessment a training programme for various nature conservation specialists, (municipal) officials and our stakeholders will be put together. Based on the training programme the actual training system will be elaborated by the third quarter of 2024 after that the implementation starts.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
A8	Objectives:	N/A	N/A
Task 1	Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions		
	Expected results: Training system and individual trainings raise the capacity and skills of nature conservationists to performed better in their work, incl. with environmental communication and engagement with stakeholders.	N/A	

ACTION A.8: Capacity Building

Task 2. Study trips to raise the awareness of the project team and public servants about the possibilities and best practices implemented in other countries

•	Foreseen start date: 3 rd quarter 2022	Actual start date: N/A
•	Foreseen end date: 3 rd quarter 2029	Actual end date: N/A

The project aimed to organize at least four study trips during the project lifetime (one after every 2.5 years) to countries, who already have effective systems in place or who are implementing similar projects in order to find solutions to the problems Estonia is facing at the moment.

The first study trip takes place in September 2022 to Lithuania to visit and exchange experiences with LIFE-IP "NaturaLit" who implements a very similar program of ours.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Visiting Lithuanian LIFE-IP project "NaturaLit" in September 2022. The study tour is organised by EB. The second study trip will take place in 2024.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
A8 Task 2	Objectives: Raising awareness and capacity of	N/A	N/A
1 d3K 2	main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions		
	Expected results: Study visits have raised awareness of the project team and public servants about the best practices implemented in other countries, have given opportunity to change experiences, contacts and learn from each other.	N/A	

Action D.1: Developing and implementing monitoring schemes for all concrete conservation actions

•	Foreseen start date: 3 rd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 2 nd quarter 2020	
•	Foreseen end date: 3 rd quarter 2028	Actual end date: N/A	

The aim of this action is to compile a monitoring methodology for small water bodies (restoration action C3 Task 2), semi-natural grasslands and coastal meadows (C2 Task 1 and Task 2), wet and dry forests (C1 Task 1 and Task 2) and monitor the success of restoration works.

Monitoring result scheme for small water bodies (Action C3 Task 2)

In the 2nd quarter of 2020 a monitoring methodology was developed for the monitoring of amphibians in small water bodies. Based on this methodology, an amphibian inventory for the selection of small water bodies was conducted in June 2020 (described at Action C3 Task 2). In the first quarter of 2021, a methodology for monitoring aquatic macro-invertebrates in small water bodies was developed, which will be applied in the pre-restoration monitoring of small water bodies. In the end of May and in June 2021 pre-restoration monitoring of amphibians and aquatic macro-invertebrates in 38 small water bodies selected for restoration, was carried out (described at Action C3 Task 2). The monitoring methodologies of amphibians and aquatic macro-invertebrates are added to this report (Annex 8).

In June 2022, amphibians were monitored in 17 small water bodies restored in the autumn of 2021 to find out the impact of restoration. Species diversity increased in all sites.

Monitoring result scheme for coastal meadows (Action C2 Task 2)

The monitoring methodology for amphibians and plants was developed before the start of the project as the pre-selection of possible project sites took place during the preparation of project application. In the first quarter of 2021, a monitoring methodology was developed to monitor the condition of coastal birds. In 2021, birds were monitored in 17 coastal meadows. As the birds of the coastal meadows have previously been shown to suffer from high nest predation, 15 track cameras were purchased in order to collect information on nest predators in parallel with the monitoring of hatching success.

At the end of 2021, the monitoring methods for coastal birds, amphibians and plants were compiled into a single report (Annex 9).

Pre-restoration monitoring of coastal meadow plants and amphibians was carried out in most of the project sites during the site selection phase in 2020.

In 2022 April and May, bird surveys were conducted in 18 coastal meadow areas to record the condition before restoration activities and to determine the impact of winter hunting of small carnivores (Action C2 Task 2). Also a botanical inventory in the coastal meadow and the surrounding stands was carried out in three sites.

Monitoring result scheme for semi-natural grasslands (Action C2 Task 1)

Semi-natural grasslands are monitored as part of national monitoring and on the basis of the relevant methodology (Annex 10). The monitoring cycle is six years and it coincides with the reporting period of the Habitats Directive. Each year, different communities are monitored based on a random sample. Monitoring is organized by the Environment Agency and monitoring reports can be found on the website <u>https://kese.envir.ee/kese/viewProgramNew.action?uid=473573</u>

The results of the monitoring of semi-natural grasslands are one of the inputs for updating the action plan for the semi-natural grasslands (Action A1 Task 3).

Monitoring result scheme for wet and dry forests (Action C1 Task 1 and Task 2)

The wet forest monitoring methodology was developed in 2022. Restoration sites were selected during the preparation of the action plan for wet forests (Action A1 Task 1). The final selection was made in June 2022, when 10 sites were chosen. In the summer of 2022, TLU experts started with determining the locations of the monitoring transects in two sites. As the transect locations is one part of the monitoring methodology report, the report will be compiled after the transects locations are known in first sites (2023). The plan is constantly updated according to the addition of new areas (see also Action A6 Task 2). During the fieldwork in 2022 first water lever loggers were installed and the premonitoring in the first sites begun.

The preparation of the action plan for dry forest habitats (Action A1 Task 2) will only start at the end of 2022 and because of that the restoration sites of dry forests have not been selected yet. The monitoring methodology will be developed after the sites are selected because the monitoring is site specific.

Dissemination: In June 8-9, 2021, an information day for landowners took place on Hiiumaa, where also the results of pre-restoration monitoring were introduced (Action A6). On September 15, 2021, an information day on coastal meadows took place in Matsalu RP in Puise, where also the results of pre-restoration monitoring were introduced (Action A6).

Deliverables: Monitoring result schemes for C2 and C3 developed at 1st quarter 2021.

Milestones: No milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: The pre-restoration and post-restoration monitoring of small water bodies will continue. The post-restoration monitoring of birds, plants and amphibian will be carried out in coastal meadows after restoration activities. The monitoring methodology for dry forest will be developed and for wet forests drawn up. The pre-restoration monitoring of wet and dry forests were carried out in all sites and after restoration monitoring starts in restored sites.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achieved	Main factors of success and lessons learned
D1	Objectives: Improving the conservation status of forest and farmland habitats and species to achieve results benefiting the whole ecosystems.	The restoration and enlargement of meadow areas and improvement the conditions of small water bodies has created preconditions for the improvement of the habitat and breeding conditions of species related to these habitats.	A good methodological basis and the use of skilled experts are needed to assess the status of species and habitats before restoration work and to determine the impact of
	Expected results: Monitoring schemes developed for each restoration action foreseen in the project. Monitoring actions carried out based on monitoring schemes.	Monitoring schemes for concrete conservation actions C2 and C3 are developed. For wet forests (C1) schemes are developed and the report will be compiled in 2023. Pre-restoration monitoring of small water bodies and coastal meadows is carried out. 17 water bodies were monitored after restoration.	restoration. Good cooperation and communication with landowners and – managers because the implementation of restoration actions depend on them.

ACTION D.2: Monitoring the effects of the project on the conservation status trends of relevant habitats and species of Community Interest and the degree of implementation of the PAF within the project

Task 1. Overall monitoring of project's success (incl. PAF)

•	Foreseen start date: 1 st quarter 2020	Actual start date: 1 st quarter 2020
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• Foreseen end date: 1st quarter 2028 Actual end date: N/A

The Monitoring Team with the aim of supervision of the implementation of the PAF and project objectives was formed 09/03/2020. The members (list in Annex 3) of the team are the officials of the Nature Conservation Department of the MoE. Each employee of the department curates one or more project and PAF tasks and objectives according to their field of work. Members of the Monitoring Team also actively participating in working groups of different actions.

Monitoring Team meetings are held twice a year. In the first phase five meetings took place (09/03/2020, 24/11/2020, 23/03/2021, 14/09/2021, 22-24/04/2022). Meeting in April 2022 was combined with nature conservation camp (Action E3 Task 1). At meetings an overview is given of the implementation of the actions (incl. PAF) and objectives of the project. Problems and their solution options are discussed together. A very important aspect is that the project proposal was largely prepared by the Monitoring Team members, i.e they also have the background knowledge of objectives and actions.

Added value of Monitoring Team will be full integration into different policy sectors the Natura 2000 management issues, giving the strategic advice on implementation of PAF.

Deliverables: No deliverables were foreseen in the first phase.

Milestones: PAF monitoring Team established, 1st quarter 2020 – PAF Monitoring Team was established 09/03/2020.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Five Monitoring Team meetings will take place.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant	Achivied	Main factors of success
	Agreement		and lessons learned
D2	Objective:	Involvement of the	The involvement of
Task 1	All project objectives.	Monitoring Team helps	experienced officials has
		to achieve the project	helped to implement the
		and PAF objectives.	actions and solve the
	Expected results:	The Monitoring Team	problems.
	Report about the	has formed and is	
	implementation of PAF in the	actively working.	
	frame of the project.		

ACTION D.2: Monitoring the effects of the project on the conservation status trends of relevant habitats and species of Community Interest and the degree of implementation of the PAF within the project

Task 2. Assessment of the LIFE Key project level indicators

•	Foreseen start date: 1 st quarter 2021	Actual start date: 1 st quarter 2021

• Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2029 Actual end date: N/A

Key project level indicators (KPI) are defined in the Grant Agreement of the project. In 2021, KPI's were entered into the LIFE database. The indicators cover all areas of the project (areas of agricultural land under biodiversity friendly management; improved nature, species and biodiversity; communication, dissemination, awareness rising) and contain quantitative goals.

KPI values and their implementation are described in more detail in Chapter 7. Key project-level indicators.

The KPI values will be reviewed in the middle of the project and the results achieved will be entered into the database at the end of the project and five years after the end of the project. The latter is the responsibility of the coordinating beneficiary MoE. The monitoring of KPIs is one of the task of the Monitoring Team (see also Action D2 Task1).

Deliverables: No deliverables were foreseen in the first phase.

Milestones: LIFE Key project level indicators baseline determined and inserted into the online database, 1st quarter 2021 – KPIs were entered into the LIFE database 15/06/2021.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: At the end of the second phase KPIs will be reviewed.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons
			learned
D2	Objective:	N/A	N/A
Task 2	All project objectives.		
	Expected results:	KPIs are entered into the	
	KPIs have been entered into the	database	
	database and updated according to		
	the schedule.		

ACTION D.3: Monitoring the effects of the project to the public perception, its impact to socio-economy and ecosystem services

- Foreseen start date: 3rd quarter 2026
 Actual start date: N/A
- Foreseen end date: 1st quarter 2029 Actual end date: N/A

The aim of this action is to measure the project's effects on social change, socio-economy and provision of ecosystem services.

The UT expert, who will deal with the monitoring and assessment of the project, was already involved in the preparation of the communication strategy (Action A9). It is important to be aware of the project objectives, topics and the communication plans, which is an important background for the later impact monitoring and analysis.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: No activities were foreseen in the second phase.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
D3	Objective: Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions.	N/A N/A	
	Expected results: Report of social, socio-economic and ecosystem services change.	N/A	

SUB-THEME OF THE PLAN: E.1.5. Natura 2000-related communication and awareness raising measures, education and visitor access

Action E.1: Project visibility and dissemination info on project activities and their effects.

Task 1. Project website creation and management

•	Foreseen start date: 2 nd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 2 nd quarter 2021
-	Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2034	Actual end date: 4 th quarter 2034

The project proposal had an ambition plan to be ready with the project website by 2nd quarter 2020 but inevitability public tenders take more time and efforts. It took from the project partner KEMIT more than a year to prepare for the tender offer and announce it eventually in May 2021. Once the winner was found and contract with the winner (digital solution company ADM) signed (07/06/2021), it took another 9 months to create the website and launch it.

These delays were discussed during the 2^{nd} (September 10-11, 2020) and 3^{rd} EMT Meeting (November 2-4, 2021) and concerns expressed in the Agency Monitoring Visit Letters from 9.10.2020 and 9.12.2021

The fully operational website <u>www.loodusrikaseesti.ee</u> (in English: <u>www.loodusrikaseesti.ee/en</u>) was launched in 04/03/2022. This information was also delivered to the EMT by email at 19.04.2022.

In the meanwhile the project was not entirely without the website as the main information was posted to the Ministry's website <u>https://envir.ee/elusloodus-looduskaitse/looduskaitse/looduskaitse/loodusrikas-eesti</u> (in English: <u>https://envir.ee/elusloodus-looduskaitse/looduskaitse/loodusrikas-eesti</u>) In addition, January 16th 2021 was created the Facebook page <u>www.facebook.com/loodusrikaseesti</u> which has more than 1100 subscribers and remains the most popular source of information about the project activities.

Technically the website is built on content management software platform Drupal 9 with several advanced features for enabling the content managers to create new content with ease, administrators to keep the page up to date and to collect relevant information, i.e. statistics on visits, etc.

Content wise the website is divided into four main parts (forests, species, semi-natural grasslands and agricultural landscapes) giving thorough overview of all the activities within these four directions, yet using user friendly language and avoiding bureaucratic jargon. In addition, the website hosts the consultation center for the managers of the semi-natural grasslands (Activity A3 Task 1). Up-to-date news, events and engagement activities (as campaigns, competitions, etc) are posted on the front page of the website. Map application <u>www.loodusrikaseesti.ee/et/projektialade-kaart</u> provides a comprehensive overview of the restauration areas.

In addition to the project website, <u>www.heapõld.ee</u> was created (2nd quarter 2020) by the project beneficiary UT, dedicated to the land managers who are willing to learn about good agricultural techniques that help maintain biodiversity, improve the environment and soil health.

Dissemination: Reference to the website (as an additional source of information) is always made while communicating with public. The project website has many visitors who reach it via newsfeed of the Facebook. Therefore, it is important that every Facebook post would refer to the homepage where one can read more about the topic of interest.

Deliverables: Website ready and operational, 1^{st} quarter 2022 - The fully operational website was launched 04/03/2022.

Milestones: Website ready and operational, 1^{st} quarter 2022 – The fully operational website was launched 04/03/2022.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: The project website is updated on weekly bases. Its structure provides a good ground for any information we would like to disseminate among our stakeholders and general public, therefore no major changes are needed. Some so-called cosmetical changes are needed for English language website but these changes are not related to the content.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achieved	Main factors of success and lessons learned
E1 Task 1	Objectives: Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions. Expected results: Project website ready and operational	The website was launched at the beginning of March 2022, providing good insights to the project objectives, activities and results but also providing comprehensive material for the managers of the semi-natural grasslands (via consultation system placed to the website). The website is actively visited by wide audience, the content is used for improving knowledge and understanding on nature conservation and increasing the understanding of complex challenges it faces. The website should also be a good source of tips and advices on everyman's nature protection	Website and any IT related developments take more time than initially planned. A certain time buffer needs to be inserted to the timeline of the project. Despite of delays we are happy with our website design and functionality. It looks colourful and as distance from representing any bureaucratic institutions as possible.

Action E.3: Spreading conservation ideas: everyman's nature conservation, community based management, volunteer involvement, site-based cooperation network

Task 4. Improving protected areas web-page (making it interactive)

- Foreseen start date: 3rd quarter 2022 Actual start date: 2nd quarter 2021
- Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2025 Actual end date: N/A

For fulfilling the objectives to contribute to public awareness, disseminate nature protection related news as well as raise awareness on nature conservation values, the user-friendliness of the website of protected areas <u>https://kaitsealad.ee/et</u> needs to be improved.

After several consultations with the project partners and website users in 2nd quarter of 2021, EB has come up with the draft list of IT developments to improve functionality and design of the website. Current web platform needs to be upgraded, considering also users with special needs.

During 2021 in cooperation with the Land Board the website map application was changed from Google Maps into Land Board map layer <u>https://kaitsealad.ee/et/Kaart</u> providing more detailed information to the visitors and land owners about protected areas and objects. Now it is possible to display different layers important for nature conservation: movement restrictions, semi-natural habitats (connected with Action A3 Task 1 – complementary action to develop meadow specific map layer), etc. The Land Board keeps the map layers updated. Background information for the map comes from the Estonian Nature Information System (EELIS).

Activity started earlier in order to plan the workload and budget for KEMIT.

Dissemination: Project banner is displayed and project related news are shared on the website <u>www.kaitsealad.ee</u>

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: At the beginning of 2023 tender for required IT developments are prepared, developments are taking place 2023-2024.

Action	Foreseen in the GA	Achieved	Main factors of
			success and lessons learned
E3 Task 4	Objectives: Raising awareness and	Preliminary list of necessary IT developments to improve the	Good cooperation with MoE, EB and
	capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions.	website is created. More functional map layers are in use.	KeMIT are giving a good ground for future developments of the website.
	Expected results: Protected areas webpage improved	To design easily accessible spatial information for people living in protected areas or visiting them, and helping these people to have a say in important decisions concerning their life style. To design (mobile) user-friendly and accessible website.	

ACTION E.4: Creating and distributing of a high quality communication products

Task 3. Mobile app for bird songs

• Foreseen start date: 1 st qua	Actual Actual	start date: 1 st quarter 2020
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• Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2028 Actual end date: N/A

This task requires to develop an mobile application for recognizing bird species by their song. This proposal was made to the project on the assumption that there is no bird recognition application in Estonia. Nevertheless, in March 2020, the mobile application "Siuts" for the recognition of the bird songs was launched by the Estonian IT services company Proekspert. As it's not reasonable to have two similar applications on bird song recognition in Estonia, the project team contacted the developers of the mobile app and discussed about the cooperation on future development of the application.

The project team informed Agency about the situation and potential new arrangements during the 1st Monitoring visit (10th of June 2020) and Agency confirmed by its letter from 23rd of August 2020 that cooperation approach is reasonable and cost-effective.

After consulting with the legal officials of the Ministry of the Environment, we came to the conclusion that the best and only way to continue developing already existing application is to include the developers of the application as of Associated Beneficiary of the project.

With the Amendment Request submitted to the Agency at the end of the first phase of the project, we requested to include a new beneficiary to the project. Amendment Request was sent to the Agency in August 2022. According to the Agency's letter dated December 21, 2022, MTÜ SIUTS has been added to the Grant Agreement as the associated beneficiary.

Currently, the application has information about one hundred species. By determining the bird species based on the song, the app gives five options (pictures and names), the one listed first is the most correct according to the opinion of application. By clicking on species, the app shows additional information as of brief descriptions of appearance, habitat and nesting. In addition, one can also listen the recorded song.

During the project, the existing bird song app will be improved – recognised bird species will be increased up to 200 species, distribution maps and conservation status will be added for all species, the app will be translated into Russian and English, and be regularly updated during 2022-2029 (plus at least five years after the end of the project). The major addition is to integrate the app with a public database where bird observations and sounds are gathered. This is the way, the application can be used to make an citizens sciences.

Integrating already existing application into the project has several important advantages. While the project originally envisaged the creation of a bird song app at the end of the project (ready to use in 2028) then now it can be used in early stages of the project. If keeping the initial deadline,

the app would have been created without time to improve it within the project and without time to promote the project through the app.

An important aspect is the fact that based on current knowledge and the major increase of the prices of the IT sector the initial budget (200,000 Euro) was clearly too small to create an app from the scratch.

This kind of cooperation with the IT sector is also the project's first step to involve private sector for fulfilment of the project's objectives.

Dissemination: Promotional activities start at beginning of 2023 before the birds` spring migration and breeding season.

Deliverables: No deliverables were foreseen in the first phase.

Milestones: First version of bird's mobile app ready to use (60 species), 1st quarter 2020 – First version of bird's mobile app was ready to use (60 species) 01/03/2020.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: Bird app was supposed to be ready in the third quarter of 2028. Due to the involvement of a new beneficiary who had created the first version of the bird app in 2020, the application will be used within the project already in 2022. The content and overall budget will not change.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Mobile app for the bird songs will be regularly updated and 80 new species (in total 180 species) and distribution maps will be added for all recorded species. The app has been translated into English.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant	Achivied	Main factors of success
	Agreement		and lessons learned
E4	Objective:	Mobile app for bird songs,	A flexible approach to the
Task 3	Raising awareness and	which is an innovative	situation allows the bird
	capacity of main	solution in Estonian	application to be developed
	stakeholders and general	context, has created	in the best possible way.
	public including using	precondition for the	
	innovative tools and	development of citizen	
	solutions.	science and increase public	
		awareness and interest in	
		nature.	
	Expected results:	First version of bird's	
	Bird's mobile app ready	mobile app ready to use	
	(200 bird songs).	(100 bird songs at the end	
		of second phase).	

Task 2. Project on-spot visibility (e.g. information boards)

•	Foreseen start date: 3 rd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 3 rd quarter 2020
	Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2021	Actual end date: 2 nd quarter 2028

10 roll-ups (Annex 11) in both language (visible also at project website) were produced by winter 2020 and distributed among beneficiaries. Posters are used in the premises of beneficiaries and set up while having public events. Some roll-ups are also in public places, for example in the library of the UT.

Posters are designed by the designer who created the visuals for the project (overview of the project visual can be seen <u>www.behance.net/gallery/111912811/ForEst-FarmLand-branding</u>).

Smaller information boards for the restoration sites of semi-natural grasslands are designed (Annex 12) and will be installed in project sites at the beginning of next phase. Text for larger information boards is currently drafted.

Deliverables: Roll-ups completed 21/12/2020.

Milestones: No milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: In autumn 2022 first small info boards will be installed next to the restoration sites of semi-natural grasslands (Action C2 Task 1 and 2). In spring 2023, also the sites of restored small waterbodies for amphibians will be equipped with the info boards (Action C3 Task 2). In the future, information boards will be installed according to the implementation of C actions.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achieved	Main factors of success and lessons learned
E1 Task 2	Objectives: Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions.	Info boards have the link to the project website and therefore we hope people to visit the website and learn more about the project.	With roll-ups everything worked out smoothly. The EB who is in charge of info-boards has a long term plan to replace physical boards with the virtual ones
	Expected results: 18 roll-ups produced, 10 large and 100 small info-boards designed and installed.	20 roll-ups are ready and in use. Small info- boards for semi-natural grasslands are designed.	and therefore some additional coordination had to be made for reaching out to an agreement to install boards.

Task 3. Creating and distributing adverts

•	Foreseen start date: 2 nd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 3 rd quarter 2020
	Foreseen end date: 4 th guarter 2029	Actual end date: N/A

The project's main communication channel is Facebook <u>www.facebook.com/loodusrikaseesti</u> where we post overviews of the activities, videos, advertisements and invitations to the different events. The project also has an Instagram account but it has not been used as actively as Facebook. For posting videos the project website is connected with the YouTube channel. Currently the project has approx. 20 videos posted to the Youtube and website.

Since the communication on social media channels is mainly free, not a big sum has been used for advertisements. Instead of paid advertisements, #tags and Facebook Events are used to reach out to the right target groups. Project has over 1200 followers on Facebook, our posts reach 2000-3000 people on average, videos and short films are viewed even more than 20,000 times and shared among other users hundreds of times.

The Facebook channel is relatively popular because the project rather tells the stories than issues press releases type of texts. Sharing the news on partners' (MoE, EB, other LIFE projects) websites and newsfeeds also helps to reach out to potentially interested people and parties.

Social media paid advertising is currently used in mapping campaign where people are asked to use nature observation application and post the location and pictures of four invasive species (oldenrods, knotweeds, common snowberry, and false spiraea) the project deals with (C4). This is an educational initiative to raise people's knowledge about the invasive species and the way to control them. Along the mapping exercise, the project shares tricks and tips on how to keep control over the invasive species or regulate them. Advertisement campaign has raised interest and more than 422 locations of four invasive plants are put on the map of Estonia.

Some more intense advertisements and postings are also used while inviting people to participate in the celebration of Semi-natural Grasslands Day (2^{nd} of July). The tradition is yet very young – established within the project 2020 and therefore more efforts need to be made to establish the tradition and certain activities of the day. Here the cooperation with other LIFE projects, NGO ELF, and others is an asset.

In connection with the consultation system, the project partner EB starts issuing a newsletter dedicated for land managers and informing them about new EU support schemes, value and result based supports as well as about everything else related to the management of semi-natural lands and restoration of coastal meadows within the project. The newsletter is a supplementary to already existing mailing lists of land use managers and aims to reach out also to the people who could potentially be interested to manage their lands but don't know yet the semi-natural value of it.

Mailing list is also established among farmers who are interested of piloting different agrienvironmental schemes (C3) on their land. The mailing list is a supplementary to the website <u>www.heapõld.ee</u> that contains huge amount of practical advises on nature friendly land management.

Before any information days or local study visit contacts with local municipalities, community leaders and local newspapers have been made to spread the word and invite people to participate in the event.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: In October 2022 a bigger advertisement campaign will be organised together with the agricultural fair in Tartu to invite potentially interested farmers to participate in the project (C3) and spread a word about environmentally friendly agricultural methods and activities.

In spring 2023 the draft wet forest action plan will be introduced to the interest groups (which are rather diverse) and consulted thoroughly with a long list of nature protection and forestry organisations. As any forestry issue is sensitive in Estonia its it is extremely important that this process is carried out properly taking into account the best participatory practices.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant	Achieved	Main factors of
	Agreement		success and
			lessons learned
E1 Task 3	Objectives: Raising awareness and	Well established information flow in social media.	More to find the
	stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions.	activities.	the project and its activities outside of social media (i.e regular
	Expected results: God knowledge about the project among its main stakeholders, and general knowledge among the wider audience. At least 25 adverts created and published in different channels (newspapers, websites, Facebook, etc.) during the whole project duration.	Stakeholders of the project are mapped and everyday work to reach out them is going on. Specific campaigns/outreach/cooperation comes hand in hand with the project activities. Approximately 20 adverts created and published in different channels during the first phase of the project.	etc).

Task 4. Project logo

•	Foreseen start date: 2 nd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 1 st quarter 2020
•	Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2020	Actual end date: 3rd quarter 2020

For the logo design an international competition was launched at the beginning of project. Both legal and natural persons were invited to take part of the public competition; every contestant were allowed to submit up to three ideas.

Seven contestants from Estonia and abroad with 15 ideas took part of the competition, most favourable ideas were voted by the beneficiaries of the project. The winner was rewarded with 800 euro, 2nd place with 500 euro and 3rd place with 300 euro. In addition, a contract was offered to the winner to create the entire visual identity of the project. Visual identity manual (containing necessary elements for the project recognition) can be found at Annex 13.

Dissemination: Logo is widely used and well recognised by our stakeholders.

Deliverables: No deliverables were foreseen in the first phase.

Milestones: Project logo approved 29/03/2020 and visual identity manual 20/07/2020.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: N/A.

Action	Foreseen in the GA	Achieved	Main factors of success and lessons learned
E1 Task 4	Objectives: Raising awareness and capacity of main stake- holders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions. Expected results: Project logo.	Strong colourful logo is created both for the English language name of the project as well as for the Estonian one. Strong branding and recognition of the project. Project logo designed.	With the public competition we found good designers and visual artists and therefore we are also very satisfied with the visual identity of the project!

Task 5. Products with LIFE and project logo

•	Foreseen start date: 4 th quarter 2024	Actual start date: 2 nd quarter 2022
•	Foreseen end date: 4 th quarter 2029	Actual end date: N/A

Due to the Covid-19 in first two years of the project products and gifts were not relevant as there were no possibilities to meet people and distribute them.

In spring 2022 in cooperation with ELF a card came "What frog it is?" was produced to teach children about amphibians living in Estonia. With that game we celebrated the thematic year devoted to common spadefoot (a indicator species of the project) and the game was widely distributed during the different events of the project. (incl. during the celebration of the 30 years of the LIFE Programme on Mädapea Oak-forest Landscape Conservation Area where 16 water bodies for amphibians and newts were restored in 2021). Another cooperation product dedicated to amphibians is a little book called "Frogs in Estonian folklore".

For the study visit to Lithuanian LIFE-IP project "NaturaLit" (taking place in September 2022) hiking gaiters with project logo are produced as a gift for our hosts.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: The initial plan was to make and distribute 500 gift bags with project logo but after negotiations with beneficiaries it was decided to make more practical goods and gifts.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Designing competition and production for project T-shirts, sweaters, hiking bags, practical rain coats, and other important gears for outside activities and field works will be announced in February 2023.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achieved	Main factors of success and lessons learned
E1	Objectives:	Educational card game	To have only useful,
Task 5	 Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions. Expected results: 500 gift bags with LIFE logo made and distributed. 	"What frog it is?" and a little book "Frogs in Estonian folklore" has been produced so far and used as a project gift among partners and co-operators.	handy and/or educational products and gifts.

Task 6. Exhibition

•	Foreseen start date: 1 st quarter 2028	Actual start date: N/A

• Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2029 Actual end date: N/A

The exhibition takes place in the end of the project but most of the project activities are photographed already now to illustrate the project news and activities. Some collection of pictures can be found at the project website (gallery) www.loodusrikaseesti.ee/et/galerii. Some from example days for Flicker. for info the semi-natural grassland managers: www.flickr.com/photos/126986850@N06/albums/72157719566847789; voluntary working camps www.flickr.com/photos/126986850@N06/albums/72157719637746187; recognition event for outstanding managers of semi-natural grasslands www.aventus.ee/PMT_2022, etc. Currently the pictures are made by the project stuff, if later needed, also professional photographers can be used.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Collection of photos.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achieved	Main factors of success and lessons learned
E1 Task 6	Objectives: Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions.	N/A	N/A
	Expected results: Exhibition created and exhibited at 12 locations.	N/A	

Action E.4: Creating and distributing of a high quality communication products

Task 1. Guidelines and digital booklets

•	Foreseen start date: 1 st quarter 2021	Actual start date: N/A

• Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2029 Actual end date: N/A

Guidelines for different stakeholders are in writing process. Some guidelines, for example the (1) evaluation forms for value-based support, (2) instruction materials on value-based evaluation, (3) book to recognize plants of nature-rich meadows will be printed as the grassland managers would like to take these materials with them to the meadows (related to Action A3 task 1 and Task 2). Some other materials could remain digital and posted to the project website as for example wide range of good agricultural techniques that help maintain biodiversity, improve the environment and soil health in <u>www.heapõld.ee</u> (related to Action A4 and C3 Task 1).

Lots of practical information (and video advices) on different everyone's nature conservation solutions are posted also to the website <u>www.loodusrikaseeesti.ee</u>. For example how one could create small water body to his yard (related to Action C3 Task 2), how to eredict invasive speaces (Action C4) or how to manage the private forest more nature friendly manner (Action A5). These advices could also be later collected and elaborated to the practical guidelines to help to raise the awareness of the target groups and general public about conservation issues in forest and farmland settings.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: At least 6 guidelines are ready in total.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achieved	Main factors of success and lessons learned
E4 Task 1	Objectives: Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions.	The impact of the guidelines will be assessed in the second and later phases.	It is important to discuss with the stakeholders whether the guidance materials they need needs to be printed or these could remain digital.
	Expected results: 10 guidelines/booklets created and uploaded on the website.	Three guidelines on semi-natural grasslands are ready,	

Action E.4: Creating and distributing of a high quality communication products

Task 2. Videos

• Foreseen start date: 2nd quarter 2021

Actual start date: 1st quarter 2021

Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2029 Actual end date: N/A

The project created in early 2021 two introductory videos, <u>www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAw7ajVFRyI&t=10s</u> (est), <u>www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0mdgqvk03Q</u> (eng) and these are available on the front page of the project website. First video was completed 01/04/2021.

Since the opening conference of the project took place (27/01/2021) in an online format <u>https://globalvirtualsolutions.eu/loodusrikaseesti</u> we were able to cut the recorded material into pieces and use it also later while illustrating project actions. Although we were initially sad that due to Covid 19 we had to postpone the launching conference of the project several times and only virtual broadcast was eventually allowed, we ended up with lots of good video material which is used later in the project. In addition, launching conference of the project has been watched over 700 times on Youtube – by the amount of people we could have never reached while organising offline event.

In relation with the opening conference, short clips on everyone's nature conservation were also made and all these videos are up on the website to illustrate different topics and complement the text.

Before the competition to find the best grassland manager, 10 video stories with outstanding managers were recorded in February 2022 and these videos <u>www.loodusrikaseesti.ee/et/maaomanike-noustamine</u> have had a very large audience! The next competition to find the best grassland managers will take place in January 2023, and this time, too, it is planned to make video stories with the winners.

Creating and disseminating videos has became a key to deliver messages therefore more cooperation with video production companies should be done.

Deliverables: No deliverables were foreseen in the first phase.

Milestones: First video clip ready 01/04/2021.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Two videos on restoration of small water bodies (Action C3 Task 2) are on post-production, to be released in autumn 2022.

Public procurement will be made to find a film maker for the series of (educational) films to introduce environmental friendly solutions in agriculture, forestry, grasslands, etc. and disseminate

the results of the project actions/pilots. Scrips of the films will drafted along the progress of the project actions.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achieved	Main factors of success and lessons learned
E4 Task 2	Objectives: Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions.	Creating and disseminating videos has became a key to deliver messages and it made a good contribution to raising awareness.	Instead of reading, people prefer watching; therefore more video materials need to be produced. At the same time, people's attention is distracted in few seconds, thus the video material must also be compact, fast and short. We cannot talk about
	Expected results: 10 high quality videos.	Approx. 20 videos and broadcasts are made so far.	drawing peoples' attention in first few minutes – attention needs to be drawn in first few seconds. Not sure we are good in it!

ACTION E.6: Layman's Report

•	Foreseen start date: 4 th quarter 2029	Actual start date: N/A

• Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2029 Actual end date: N/A

The Layman's report will give and overview about the project, its objectives, actions and the key results.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: $\ensuremath{\mathrm{N/A}}$

Action	Foreseen in the Grant	Achivied	Main factors of success
	Agreement		and lessons learned
E6	Objective:	N/A	N/A
	Raising awareness and		
	capacity of main		
	stakeholders and general		
	public including using		
	innovative tools and		
	solutions.		
	Expected results:	N/A	
	Layman's report has been		
	compiled.		

Action E.3: Spreading conservation ideas: everyman's nature conservation, community based management, volunteer involvement, site-based cooperation networks

Task 1. Organizing nature conservation camps

•	Foreseen start date: 2 nd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 3 rd quarter 2020
•	Foreseen end date: 3 rd quarter 2029	Actual end date: N/A

The aim of this action is to organize conservation work events for the general public. All together 20 camps will be organised during the project's lifetime.

The nature conservation camps are mainly outsourced and an experienced institution ELF has carried them out as follows:

2020 – two restoration camps to restore wooded meadows in Hobulaid (17-20 August, 2020) and alvars in Kesselaid (27-30 July, 2020);

2021 - one camp to restore alvars in Kesselaid (26-29 July, 2021).

These camps remain extremely popular and the places are filled in 5-10 minutes after the camp schedule is announced. Pictures of Kesselaid nature restauration camps are available <u>www.flickr.com/photos/126986850@N06/albums/72157719637746187</u> In each of the camp a representative of the project has been present, giving an overview of the project activities and problems the project is trying to solve.

In addition – EB has organised in 2022 (12th of May) a nature conservation camp with its project team to restore Kostivere grasslands and MoE has organised in 2022 a nature conservation camp in Manilaid (22-24 April, 2022) as a back to back event with the management meeting of the project.

All together 65 people have participated on camps during first phase of the project.

Dissemination: Camps remain highly popular and there is no need for extra advertisements. Our partner ELF publishes an annual newsletter dedicated to the camps and their results. At the end of the year, a party is organized for those who participated in the camps.

Deliverables: No deliverables were foreseen in the first phase.

Milestones: First two camps organized (2021 to 2029 yearly 2 camps), 2nd quarter 2020 – First two camps took place in July and August 2020.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: five camps will be organised during the second phase. The first one is planned for August 20-23, 2022.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
E3 Task 1	Objective: Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions.	Nature camps are traditional tools to involve people into practical nature protection and through the years they have proven to be a right gear to develop peoples' love towards nature and engage them to the conservation work.	There has been a long cooperaton with Estonian Fund for Nature and as they are experiences nature conservation camp organisers everything is always organised very well and the need for specific camps in specific places are
	Expected results: 20 nature conservation camps.	5 camps organised so far.	carefully concidered.

Action A.9: Preparation of the Communication Plan

•	Foreseen start date: 2 nd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 1 st quarter 2020
•	Foreseen end date: 3 rd quarter 2028	Actual end date: N/A

The Communication Plan will improve the implementation of the dissemination actions.

The creation of the project's long-term Communication and Participation Strategy and Media Plan for 2020-2022 began in February 2020, when a bid for writing the strategy was sent to five wellknown PR and communication agencies in Estonia. Four agencies responded to the offer by February 26, 2020; after interviewing three of them, the PR and governmental relation agency MetaAdvisory was chosen to help the project team to create a Communication and Participation Strategy and Media Plan for the project. After signing the contract it took three months to compile the Strategy and Media Plan.

The strategy is based on semi-structured interviews conducted with representatives of project partner organisations, stakeholder mapping based on public data and series of working meetings between the PR agency and the project team as well as on Strategy day discussions (September 19, 2020) with representatives of project partner organisations.

The strategy (Annex 14) contains five components, which are:

- a description of the situation, which maps the societal processes affecting the implementation of the strategy;
- strategic objectives of communication, which give direction and focus to the proposed communication-related activities and principles;
- mapping communication stakeholders and target groups, their interrelationships and communication needs;
- the communication principles that project partners should follow when planning communication activities.

The Strategy aims to be very practical – there is still a lack of practical knowledge about nature conservation and environmentally sustainable practices among ordinary people, farmers, and forest owners. Thus, there is a need to provide different target groups with knowledge-based and practical information and examples, which will help people to make environmentally conscious choices and thereby achieve behavioural change.

<u>The Media Plan</u> sets out a detailed communication plan for the first two and half years of the project, outlining the key activities and channel that help achieve the set objectives. The structure and design of the Media Plan can be used in all subsequent years. The plan itself is hosted online making it accessible for all the project partners, and continuously updated. The screenshot of the plan is added to this report as Annex 15.

In order to build the linkage with the Action D3, a sociologist and nature conservation communication specialist from the UT responsible of social-economy assessment was involved in the drafting process of the Communication and Participation Strategy.

Dissemination: The Strategy is a comprehensive document which has been disseminated as an exemplary paper among several nature conservation projects. Often projects have communication plans but not a long-term strategy for facilitating changes via stakeholders' engagement and communication.

As an added value, a practical one-pager (Annex16) was created covering all the strategic goals, outputs and expected outcomes of the project communication.

Deliverables: 1st Communication Plan was drawn up by 07/12/2020.

Milestones: No milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: The long-term Communication and Participation Strategy is based on recent societal changes and needs that are relevant from the perspective of the project, hence the strategy is up to date and needs to be reviewed by mid-course of the project. The 2^{nd} Communication Plan will be compiled in 2023. The Media Plan is updated on regular bases (two-three times per year).

Action	Foreseen in the	Achieved	Main factors of success and
	GA		lessons learned
A9	Objectives: Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions.	The Strategy was compiled taking into account the ideas and thoughts of all 10 partners of the project. Every message/action and stakeholder's group was discussed, analysed and agreed upon before finalising the Strategy. This gives a good bases for future communication. <u>The Media Plan</u> for everyday actions was set up online making it easy to follow and update by project partners. Strategical approach to the communication aims, messages and protocols help to engage our stakeholders and interest groups throughout the project period in timely and appropriate manner.	Only properly set up strategy which is broadly discussed, agreed and followed among the project partners can be successfully implemented. The major lesson learned comes from the fact that PR agencies have very little knowledge about participatory processes and public engagements in nature/environmental protection and therefore quite some time was invested to introduce them the concept of participatory decision- making. Therefore, their
	Expected	First Communication Plan is compiled.	input to the communication
	results:		activities was much more
	Four		efficient than the input to the
	Communication		participatory actions.
	Plans.		

Action E.2: Raising awareness about the conservation aims and challenges of forest and farmland landscapes to the main stakeholders

Task 1. Implementation of the Communication Plan

•	Foreseen start date: 1 st quarter 2021	Actual start date: 1 st quarter 2021
•	Foreseen end date: 4 rd quarter 2029	Actual end date: N/A

The communication plan is based on the Communication and Participation Strategy (A9) developed by the autumn 2021. To be more proactive and follow the dynamics of the project activities, the plan is updated for each year and in order to have an ownership over the plan its co-created by the communication manager and project partners.

The communication plan consists -

- (1) priority topics for each year,
- (2) stakeholders and interest groups to be reached out;
- (3) key messages to be delivered,
- (5) spokespersons to talk about the topic,
- (6) social media/media channels to be used,
- (7) exact timing for delivering messages,
- (8) division of precise roles and tasks among partners.

During the 1st period the project attention was to make itself visible and introduce the project and its ambitious aims to our stakeholders but of course also raise public awareness on different topics of the project. Since the first year of the project was mainly about preparations (incl. the preparation of the Communication Strategy, visuals, etc), there were also fewer media contacts and almost no news to offer to the public/media. However, disclosure based on the communication plan started in the second year of the project with the online opening (press) conference https://globalvirtualsolutions.eu/loodusrikaseesti/ which was followed in real time by 68 people and has been watched afterwards more than 700 times. This is an excellent example on how the Covid 19 restrictions turned to be beneficial for us.

The biggest focus (following the timeline of project activities) has been during the 1st period on semi-natural grasslands (A3 task 1, C2, Task 1), incl. restoration of coastal areas (C2 Task 2), invasive species (C4), restoration of small water bodies for amphibians (C3 Task 2), and studies on farmland birds (A4). As stated in the Communication Strategy, we rather shown and tell the stories than send out press release type of texts.

In addition to our own social media posts and news in the project and its partners website, approx. 50 articles in local and national media was issued, number of TV and radio broadcast were made to write/discuss about topics initiated by the project. Approx. 10 articles were written also by several project partners in different media outlets.

As of <u>semi-natural grasslands</u>, the most outstanding event was hold on 17th of February 2002 - award ceremony to recognize those grassland managers who stand out for their dedication, take exemplary care of their lands, contribute to the activities of the local communities and are the promoters of the semi-natural grasslands and its maintenance challenges. The social media coverage of the event and the managers were extremely good (films made with the nominees were watched more than 20 00 times). The traditional media coverage did not work out as the event happened only few days before the war and the agreements we had made for the personal stories were not relevant in this very moment any more. But in summer 2021 Estonian public broadcasting nature show "Osoon" covered very well the issue of semi-natural grasslands, with the focus on coastal areas and the future restoration plans with them. Word was given to several project specialists and scientists as well as the land managers.

As of alien species, from May to November 2022 a campaign "Notice the alien species" <u>https://www.loodusrikaseesti.ee/et/marka-voorliiki</u> is taking place in cooperation with the nature observation application Loodusvaatluste äpp. People are invited to map the sites (coordinates) and make a picture of the alien species they see while being outside. The campaign has been very successful so far and more than 80 people have been engaged with more than 300 locations mapped and described. Most enthusiastic people and best contributors will be awarded with the joint food event taking place in the middle of forest and lead by one of the most inspirational Foodie in Estonia. Campaign has attract lots of attention and along with the mapping exercise lots of practical advices are given on how to handle alien species and prevent their spread.

There has been very good media coverage on the <u>restoration of small water bodies for amphibians</u>. Journalists from a local newspaper have been visiting the restoration locations several times and issued articles both in 2021 and 2022. Estonian public broadcasting (both in TV, "Osoon" and in radio, "Ökoskoop" has dedicated full broadcast for the restoration work.

Studies on <u>farmland birds</u> have been well documented and presented to the audience by the Ornitological Society itself as they also have their own magazine "Tiirutaja" which allows more in-depth analyses of the studies, yet presented in a popular form. Nevertheless, "Osoon" has made also the broadcasts on corn crake habitat use and the way the ornithologists collect the habitat use data.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: To finalyse ongoing campaign on alien species, make preparations for the communication plan of 2023 which will contains some new topics and new activities.

2023 starts with the consultation process on draft wet forest management plan. The process has to be carefully planned and implemented as the forestry (in any form) is a sensitive issue to discuss in Estonian society.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achieved	Main factors of success and lessons learned
E2 Task 1	Objectives: Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions.	More than 50 articles, radio and TV broadcasts Active social media newsfeed, up to date website. The project is visible and the aims/actions/results of the project well communicated. Stakeholders are engaged in participatory manner.	Cooperation with partners and proper planning will bring the results.
	Expected results: All 4 Communication Plans are executed.	The implementation of the first Communication Plan is underway.	
Action E.2: Raising awareness about the conservation aims and challenges of forest and farmland landscapes to the main stakeholders

Task 2. Information days and site visits

•	Foreseen start date: 2 nd quarter 2021	Actual start date: 2 nd quarter 202

• Foreseen end date: 3rd quarter 2027 Actual end date: N/A

Under this task information days and site visits are foreseen for the landowners, local government officials and other stakeholders about the different topics of the project.

In June 8-9, 2021, in cooperation with EB and UT an information day for landowners of the coastal meadows took place on Hiiumaa. More than 35 people visited different coastal meadows where also the results of pre-restoration monitoring were introduced (Action A6), the habitat requirements of meadow waders and the connections between the choice of their nesting site and predator pressure and the general conditions of coastal meadows were introduced. Project specialists were providing individual consultations to the land owners/managers who are interested of the restoration work on their lands.

In September 15, 2021, a similar information day on coastal meadows took place in Matsalu RP in Puise, where also pre-restoration monitoring were introduced (Action A6). Pictures of info days www.flickr.com/photos/126986850@N06/albums/72157719566847789

An information day on restoration of small water bodies for amphibians were organised by EB in 1st of October 2021 in Mädapea Oak-forest Landscape Conservation Area, where the project has inventoried and restored 17 water bodies for amphibian. The main target groups of the info day were the municipal officials and officials of EB to learn about the needs for small water bodies and see the restoring techniques. Approx. 15 people took part of the day. Next time more personal invitations to the municipal officials need to be sent as their level of awareness and understanding of nature conservation work is rather low.

On 28th of May 2022 when the 30th birthday the LIFE programme was organised another two trips was organised to the Mädapea Oak-forest Landscape Conservation Area, this time for the wider audience. Under the guidance of herpetologists from UT participants were able to observe a flourishing life in water bodies excavated last autumn. Along with a large number of common toads, people were also acquainted with moor frog tadpoles, northern crested newt females, eggs of the newts folded between aquatic plant leaves, and last year's moor frogs. Approx. 40 people took part of the day.

In 2022 the project cooperated with the Estonian Fund for Nature to raise awareness about unfavourable living conditions of spadefoot toad as well as to raise awareness on other amphibians living in Estonia. Five trips were organised (11th-12th May and , 21st, 28th of June, 2022) in several

parts of Estonia where herpetologists from UT introduced tadpoles of spadefoot toad and other pond life. All together 102 people took part of these trips, incl. some journalist who wrote articles and made broadcasts afterwards. Information on the cooperation project at <u>www.talgud.ee/teema/mudakonn</u>

Dissemination: Amphibians in general as well as the project restoration activities have raised quite some attention. There is a good media coverage, including articles, radio broadcasts and TV news. The list of media coverage can be found in Annex 6. Issues related to the coastal meadows and their restauration have more attention from local newspapers. Yet, TV broadcast "Osoon" have has a full coverage of the project activities in this regard.

For both subjects many Facebook stories were made and the cooperation with Estonian Fund for Nature definitely increased the media coverage, especially in the media outlets of South-Estonia.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Eight site visits carried out to alien species test plots, one info day about forest measures for private forest owners and at least 3 info days for biodiversity friendly agriculture and semi-natural grassland actions will be organized.

Action	Foreseen in the GA	Achieved	Main factors of
			success and
			lessons learned
E2	Objectives:	Info days with the land	Top-notch
Task 2	Raising awareness and capacity	owners/managers on coastal	scientists, well
	of main stakeholders and	meadows have contributed to the	organised events
	general public including using	smooth negotiations for the	together with
	innovative tools and solutions.	restoration of their lands. Personal	local specialists.
		consultations have made easier for	
		managers to decide whether to	
		restore their meadows or not.	
		Info days to visit small restored	
		water bodies have raised an	
		interest about Estonian nature and	
		contributed to the wider	
		understanding of trends and	
		tendencies we should avoid in our	
		environment.	
	Expected results:	Four info days have been carried	
	16 site visits carried out to alien	out, in cooperation with Estonian	
	species test plots, at least 2 info	Fund for Nature additional 5.	
	days about forest measures for		
	private forest owners, at least 3		
	info days for biodiversity		
	friendly agricultural support		
	scheme, at least 2 info days for		
	semi-natural grassland actions.		

ACTION E.5: Raising awareness of stakeholders in international context

Task 1. Organizing international conference for presenting projects results (project's final conference) and participating in international events

•	Foreseen start date: ^{3rd} quarter 2020	Actual start date: 1 st quarter 2020

Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2029 Actual end date: N/A

Due to Covid-19 majority of international meetings, seminars and workshops were postponed.

October 28th-29th, 2021 Riinu Rannap (UT) participated in international conference "Revitalization of lakes and sills, pools and ponds and other amphibian protection measures" in Schwedt/Oder Brandenburg. Networking between amphibian experts took place and good connections were established with LIFE AMPHICON project team.

On May 18^{th-20st,} 2022 Riinu Rannap and Elin Soomets (UT) participated in the 1st LIFE AMPHICON international conference in Grosuplje Slovania. R. Rannap gave an oral presentation "Protection of *Pelobates fuscus* and *Triturus cristatus* in intensively used agricultural areas of Estonia" to present the objectives and planned activities of the project concerning the improvement of the state of amphibians' populations and habitats. Conference topics covered amphibians and the protection of their habitats; habitat restoration; amphibians on roads - construction of tunnels, fences and passages; and citizen science and education concerning amphibians. Networking between amphibian experts, habitats and projects managers took place and good connections were established with several LIFE project teams, e.g. LIFE-IP NATURA.SI (LIFE17IPE/SI/000011), LIFE-IP Atlantic Sand Landscapes (Germany), LIFE Insubricus (LIFE19NAT/IT/000883), LIFE BEAVER (LIFE19 GIE/SI/001111).

Project's final international conference will take place in 2029.

Deliverables & milestones: No deliverables and milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: N/A

Action	Foreseen in the GA	Achieved	Main factors of success
			and lessons learned
E5	Objectives:	Project and its	N/A
Task 1	Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions.	outcomes are introduced on international arena.	
	Expected results: Project`s final conference.	N/A	

ACTION E.5: Raising awareness of stakeholders in international context

Task 2. Networking with LIFE and other projects

•	Foreseen start date: 3 rd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 4 st quarter 2021
•	Foreseen end date: 4 th quarter 2029	Actual end date: N/A

Due to Covid-19 majority of international meetings, seminars and workshops were postponed.

On February 16th-17th, 2020 the communication manager Kaidi Tingas participated in the LIFE18 IP Welcome Meeting in Brussels, gave an overview of the project and provided the case study for the communication workshop.

On April 14th, 2021 the communication manager Kaidi Tingas participated in online platform meeting among Baltic and Scandinavian LIFE projects. The meeting was dedicated to the communication and stakeholder engagement, and lead by BEF Latvia. The project as a newcomer was introduced by a short English language video.

The cooperation with LIFE AMPHICON and other projects is described in the Action E5 Task 1.

Changes in milestones: Many international meetings and conferences were postponed due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

Next phase: The project will participate in LIFE gatherings taking place in autumn 2022 as well as in the WoodmeadowLIFE international conference taking place in June 12-14, 2023 in Estonia.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achieved	Main factors of success and lessons learned
E5 Task 2	Objectives: Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions.	A good network has been established with other EU LIFE projects aimed at the protection of amphibians and their habitats restoration.	A good co-operation network with experts from other LIFE projects in different EU countries, allows to share knowledge and experiences and thereby find more relevant solutions.
	Expected results: Participation in at least five international conferences. Networking system with other projects in place, participated in 20 LIFE or other project events.	Participated in two international conferences and in one LIFE project event.	

ACTION F.2: Project seminars

•	Foreseen start date: 2nd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 1st quarter 2021

• Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2029 Actual end date: N/A

First seminar to introduce the project for the stakeholders and wider audience was to be organized in the 2nd quarter of 2020 but due to Covid-19, the seminar was postponed and took place virtually on 27/01/2021. The seminar was held in the form of a press conference and was broadcast in a way that listeners could join at <u>https://globalvirtualsolutions.eu/loodusrikaseesti/</u>

The seminar was opened by the MoE Secretary General and the project manager gave an overview of the project. After that the goals and activities of the project were introduced in a theme based manner (forests, nature-sustainable farming, species etc.). Each topic block was opened by a pre-recorded speech by experts of the project beneficiaries, followed by a discussion and answers to the questions posed by the audience. The kick-off seminar was attended by 68 people, including the follow-up viewing, the number of viewers was more than 700. The seminar is broadcasts on the project's website and in YouTube www.youtube.com/watch?v=udI15YJK94w&t=694s

Dissemination: The kick-off seminar is available and it has been viewed over 700 times.

Deliverables: No deliverables were foreseen in the first phase.

Milestones: Kick off seminar took place 27/01/2021.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: The first kick-off seminar was postponed for half of the year because of Covid 19. The content and budget of the action did not change.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Project's second seminar is planned for autumn 2022.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
F2	Objective: Raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions.	The project have been introduced in a innovative way to stakeholders, policy makers and the general public which creates a good basis fpr achivieng the project`s goals and for public awareness increase.	A virtual press conference was organized, a form rarely used to convey conservation messages. This form attracted attention and generated wider
	Expected results: Four seminars have been organized.	One seminar has been organized.	interest.

PILLAR 2: Site-related maintenance and restoration measures, within and beyond Natura 2000

Pillar 2 is related to restoration and protection of wet and dry forest habitat types and semi-natural grasslands and with the development of the nature-friendly agricultural measures.

Following sub-themes and LIFE-IP project actions belong under the Pillar E.2:

Sub-theme of the Plan E.2.4. Grasslands (Action 3 Task 1-2; Action A6 Task 4; Action C2 Task 1-2)

Sub-theme of the Plan: *additional measures beyond Natura 2000 (wider green infrastructure measures) (Action A4; Action C3 Task 1)

Sub-theme of the Plan E.2.6. Woodlands and forest (Action A6 Task 3; Action C1 Task 1-2; Action A6 Task 1-2; Action A5 Task 1-2; Action C5)

Main achievements of the 1st reporting period:

- RBAPS methods have been developed and tested, schemes are inserted into the CAP support schemes and are available for the support requests;
- 24 restoration plans for coastal meadows are compiled;
- 1076 ha of semi-natural grasslands are restored;
- consultation system for consultant of semi-natural grassland management is created and launched;
- farmland birds research has started, first results of the habitat use are made;
- website <u>www.heapõld.ee</u> is created for the farmers;
- pre-monitoring for the wet forest restoration sites have started;
- preliminary active measures for the private forest nature protection are selected;
- 152 ha of private forest land has been bought for the nature protection purposes.

Action A.3: Design and communication of measures for semi-natural grasslands of EU interest

Task 2. Analysing and updating the agri-environment schemes for semi-natural grasslands

•	Foreseen start date: 1st quarter 2021	Actual start date: 2nd quarter 2021
	Foreseen end date: 3rd quarter 2027	Actual start date: N/A

During this action, the current system will be analysed and updated. As a completely new approach, the results-based agri-environment schemes (RBAPS) method is being tested in Estonia.

First meeting of the working group took place in April 27, 2021 to work out the methodology of assessing the RBAPS and agree on the schedule of the development of result-based support. The work continued to design Estonian specific measures, to prepare the scorecards and scoring guidance – a support tool for the indoor and field-based training, and a plant species booklet to help to identify the positive and negative indicator species of each of the grassland type.

Methodology and scoring cards were tested and analysed on different grasslands with the local grassland managers and land use specialists two times during the summer 2021 (one testing event was cancelled due to Covid-19) and so far one time during the summer 2022.

Based on the fieldwork, on-site visits and working group discussions it was decided that valuebased support is not for one year but can be applied for up to three years.

Dissemination: There has been quite many Facebook posts/website news about the on-site testing (process and results). These posts have been very popular among the grassland managers and shared further to the specific Facebook groups (on rural life).

Deliverables: No deliverables were foreseen in the first phase.

Milestones: Developing RBAPS methods, 1st quarter 2021 – Developing RBAPS methods started in April 2021.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: The implementation of the activity is in delay because the trialogue between Member States, the European Parliament and the European Commission on the EU's basic regulations governing the CAP is delayed. The issuance of implementing and delegated regulations by the European Commission under the basic regulations has also been delayed. Therefore so-called "transition years" of 2021 and 2022 were the continuation of the 2014-2020 CAP and the rules for the new budget period are expected to apply from 2023 onwards. Uncertainty about the new rules and subsidies have hindered the pilot area selecting process. The content and budget of the action will not change.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase:

- Testing scorecards with local grassland managers and land use specialists on 9th and 31st of August 2022.
- Finalising the methodology, incl. maintenance regulations by September 2022.
- Selecting 500 ha of pilot areas and start biodiversity monitoring in these areas.
- Developing IT solution necessary for the implementation of the methods/measures.
- 2023 result-based subsidy is part of meadow maintenance subsidies.
- Information days, trainings and specific (regularly issued) newsletters for the land managers.
- 2023-2026 implementing new measures, getting input for the next period.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achieved	Main factors of success and lessons learned
A3 Task 2	Objectives: Improving the conservation status of forest and farmland habitats and species to achieve results benefiting the whole ecosystems such as grassland habitats	N/A	Assessment and implementation of RBAPS methods needs a wide group of experts to provide their input. Its important to test methods on field and collect valuable input from the grassland managers. It helps to improve the methodology and make it specific and appropriate for Estonian conditions. Methods needs to be tested in different
	Expected results: The updated subsidy system for semi-natural habitats	The scorecards and scoring guidance for RBAPS are compiled.	grasslands.

ACTION A.6: Preparatory actions necessary for restoration works

Task 4. Restoration plan for coastal meadows

•	Foreseen start date: 2 rd quarter 2021	Actual start date: 1st quarter 2020

• Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2024 Actual end date: N/A

The aim of the action is to prepare restoration plans for the restoration of 20 coastal meadows.

In 2020 17 currently managed coastal meadows (Natura 2000 Important Bird Areas) in Hiiu, Saare, Pärnu and Lääne counties were selected for the project to improve habitat demands of waders and other species in these meadows. Surveys of birds, plants and amphibians were carried out in all these sites and restoration plans with specific recommendations were made to improve the condition of the meadow areas. The recommendations included expansion of meadow areas at the expense of pine plantations; reduction of fragmentation through the removal of trees and shrubs; improvement of the water regime through the closure of ditches or their conversion into ponds. The work was done by the UT and respective report was submitted to the EB.

In 2021 February 10th, an information day was held for the employees of the EB and the MoE, where UT introduced the results of the aforementioned survey and the planned activities in 17 selected coastal meadows. The impact of the planned activities on the populations of waders was also explained. At the end of February, UT report was submitted to the EB with action plans for seven additional Natura 2000 IBAs. In April and May 2021, preliminary bird surveys were conducted in selected areas.

In April-May 2022, bird surveys were conducted in 18 (including 10 areas were hunting was carried out, see action C2 Task 2) areas to record the condition before and after restoration activities and to determine the impact of winter hunting of small carnivores. Also a botanical inventory in the coastal meadow and the surrounding stands was carried out in three sites. The aim was to record the situation prior to rehabilitation activities.

The total number of coastal meadows selected for the restauration is 24, although the aim of the project is to restore 20 coastal meadows. More meadows were selected because some landowners may not agree with the restoration. In total, there are 385 properties and 326 land owners in these 24 sites. In addition there are a lot of managers because in many cases the landowner does not do the maintenance. The negotiations with owners and managers started in 2021. By summer 2022, 254 managers have been contacted by EB and 245 agree with restoration; 101 landowners have been contacted and 81 have given their agreement. The negotiations will continue in 2022-2023.

Although the restoration plans are drawn up, they can still change due to negotiations with landowners and managers. Therefore the plans will be finally completed in the second phase of the project as it was foreseen in the application.

Dissemination: In June 8-9, 2021 an info day for landowners of coastal meadows took place on Hiiumaa, in September 15, 2021 in Matsalu RP, where the habitat requirements of meadow waders and the connections between the choice of their nesting site and predator pressure and the general conditions of coastal meadows were introduced. During the information day, personal consultations were held with landowners. In June 3, 2022 dissemination of preliminary results of Action A6 was organised to local stakeholders in Matsalu NP.

The preservation and restauration of coastal meadows has been widely discussed in media, the complete list of broadcasts, articles and interviews are in Annex 6.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: The selection of project sites started in 2019 as part of the project of Environmental Investment Centre, thus, the whole activity could start earlier than planned. As negotiations with landowners and the implementation of activities take time, an early start is very important to achieve results. The budget will not change as a result of the earlier start of action.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Action A6 is related to action C2 Task 2 restoration plans. All agreements needed for restoration will be achieved. According to the negotiations the plans will be completed.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
A6 Task 4	Objectives: Improving the conservation status of forest and farmland habitats and species to achieve results benefiting the whole ecosystems such as: * grassland habitats *1630, (*)6210, *6270, *6280, 6450, *6530, 9070, 7230; * birds and other species related to grasslands and arable land	The restoration and enlargement of meadow areas has created preconditions for the improvement of the habitat and breeding conditions of meadow waders and other species related to these habitats.	Good cooperation and communication with landowners and -managers is essential as also the restoration actions depend on the landowners and managers – their understanding and willingness.
	Expected results: Restoration plans for 20 coastal areas completed.	24 Natura 2000 (IBA) coastal meadow sites have been pre- selected and preliminary plans for restoration created. The agreements with landowners have been achieved for seven sites.	

ACTION C.2: Restoration and management of different semi-natural grasslands by adapting best practices and testing innovative ideas planned in the habitat action plans compiled in the project

Task 1. Restoration of semi-natural grasslands

•	Foreseen start date: 4 th quarter 2020	Actual start date: 3 rd quarter 2020
-	Foreseen end date: 1 st quarter 2028	Actual end date: N/A

The aim of this action is to restore 1000 ha of semi-natural grasslands.

On April 20, 2020 the first meeting on the restoration of semi-natural grasslands took place. Work arrangements were discussed at this meeting among the EB and MoE experts. EB is responsible for the action and signs the contracts with landowners and/or managers and accept the results of the work.

The signing of contracts with landowners began in July 2020, and the restoration started in the middle of the same month. According to the guideline of the Environmental Board it is not allowed to mow and cut bushes in semi-natural grasslands between April 1st till August 1st. This restriction is established to protect birds and plants.

In 2020 37 contracts were signed and in 2021 36 contracts were signed. Based on contracts restoration work has started on 1076.66 ha. In some areas the work is completed, in some areas it`s still ongoing because in certain cases the restoration lasts 2-3 years.

Depending on the habitat and the nature of the work (reed or bush cutting), the contracts cover the period from July until next spring of the following year. In case of multi-year restoration, payment is made each year separately based on the amount of work done in a given year.

So far the cost of restoration works is 452 487.64 euros, EB expects the final cost for the restoration of the 1076.66 ha to be ca 700,000 euros. This is significantly lower than was planned in the budget (3 250 000). There are three reasons for this:

- the average restoration price per ha was calculated incorrectly. The restoration of the coastal meadow (500 euros per ha) and the restoration of the wooded meadow (5000 euros per ha) were taken as a basis, and based on these two sums, the average restoration price per ha (3325 euros) was calculated. However, it was not taken into account that there are less wooden meadows to restore than other habitats (with the cheaper price for the restauration);
- 01/11/2021 the project LIFE20NAT/EE/000074 started in Estonia with the main objective to restore wooden meadows, i.e. most of the restoration of wooden meadows will be done within the framework of this project;
- the restoration of 20 coastal meadows as a pilot action (Action C2 Task 2) has not yet started. Their restoration is expensive, while the areas are relatively small.

For staying in budget lines we predict that at least 3000 ha of semi-natural grasslands can be restored during the project. This is entirely realistic as the consultation system for semi-natural habitats managers and owners was created and it was launched at the beginning of 2022 (Action A3 Task 1) to support land owners and managers in restoring and maintaining meadows as well as to bring new land owners to the management system.

The larger volume of restoration is also important for the PAF which foresees to restore 10 000 ha of semi-natural grasslands in 2021-2027.

The results of the action are one of the inputs for updating the action plan for the semi-natural grasslands (Action A1 Task 3).

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: The end date of the action and the budget remains the same, but the volume of work increases approximately 3 times.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: An additional 800-1000 ha of grasslands have been restored.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
C2	Objective:	The conservation	Already working
Task 1	Improving the conservation status of	status of restored sites	system and
	forest and farmland habitats and	has improved and	experienced staff
	species to achieve results benefiting	better conditions for	was used, which was
	the whole ecosystems such as:	the semi-natural	supplemented with
	* grassland habitats *1630, (*)6210,	grassland species are	the established
	*6270, *6280, 6450, *6530, 9070,	created.	consultation system.
	7230;		
	* birds and other species related to		
	grasslands and arable land.		
	Expected results:	The restoration work	
	1000 ha of semi-natural grasslands	has started on 1076.66	
	have been restored.	ha.	

ACTION C.2: Restoration and management of different semi-natural grasslands by adapting best practices and testing innovative ideas planned in the habitat action plans compiled in the project

Task 2. Restoration of coastal areas

•	Foreseen start date: 4 th quarter 2021	Actual start date: N/A
	Foreseen end date: 1 st guarter 2026	Actual end date: N/A

The restoration of 20 coastal meadows is based on the restoration plans drawn up within Action A6 Task 4. Plans were prepared by UT for 17 areas in 2020 and for another seven areas in 2021. Plans were prepared for more than 20 areas, because not all landowners may agree with it.

First contracts for the restoration work will be signed in July 2022, after signatures the restoration will also begin.

In 2022 hunting of predators was planned in 10 areas as the UT research has shown a very high predation pressure on the wader nests (86% of nests were damaged), especially by predators (fox and jackal). Between 1st of February and 31st of March 2022, the EB organized hunting in cooperation with the Estonian Hunters' Association (hunt is related to Action A7 Task 2, Action A6 Task 4. Action D1). A total of 26 foxes, 34 raccoon dogs and six jackals were hunted in ten areas. In April-May 2022, bird surveys were conducted in these areas to determine the impact of winter hunting. The results of the monitoring showed that after the hunt robbery (eggs eaten by predators) had decreased to 65%. Before the hunt 86% of the nests were damaged by the predators. In other words, nesting was successful in 14 nests out of a hundred before the hunt and in 35 nests out of a hundred after the hunt.

The hunting of small carnivores takes initially place in a 3-year pilot project, the results will be evaluated during each breeding season. According to the results, proposals will be made to improve the methodology of the pilot project after the end of the breeding season.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: The restoration will start almost one year later, because there are hundreds of landowners on the selected meadows. Despite this, it is realistic to restore all 20 sites during 2022-2026.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: 10 coastal meadow have been restored.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
C2	Objective:	N/A	N/A
Task 2	Improving the conservation status of forest and farmland habitats and species to achieve results benefiting the whole ecosystems such as: * grassland habitats *1630, (*)6210, *6270, *6280, 6450, *6530, 9070, 7230; * birds and other species related to grasslands and arable land.		
	Expected results:	The restoration plans	
	20 coastal meadows have been restored as a pilot.	are prepared.	

Action A.3: Design and communication of measures for semi-natural grasslands of EU interest

Task 1. Design and launch of a consultation system for semi-natural habitats managers and <u>owners</u>

- Foreseen start date: 1st quarter 2021 Actual start date: 1st quarter 2021
- Foreseen end date: 3rd quarter 2026 Actual end date: N/A

Preparatory work for the consultation system was done in 2021, incl. focus groups interviews with the grassland owners and managers to find out what kind of information and in which form they would like to receive from the EB. Interviews were carried out also with these managers who are not benefitting from the support schemes but nevertheless maintaining the grasslands. In addition lots of background information was collected on different support schemes (issued at least by three different institutions, each of them having their own conditions and requirements for the land managers), maps were studied to find out every unmanaged grassland bigger than one hectare.

Additional help was required from the Innoteam² for creating the road map for the consultation system as well as setting up standards on how EB could approach and talk with the land managers.

Although the counselling needs were clarified and the system in place, the start of the real counselling was stuck because the amendments of the Regulation on Nature Conservation subsidies were in delay and there were no information about new subsidy system and compensation sums per ha.

In 1^{st} quarter of 2021 (completed 01/04/2021) the guideline for consultants were finalised (Annex 17) on how to communicate and advice land managers. Stakeholders' guideline (Annex 18) was compiled and based this. counselling at the same time on the section www.loodusrikaseesti.ee/et/millest-alustada was built up in 1st quarter of 2022 on the project website, containing useful information about management techniques, indicator species on well managed lands, information on different type of grasslands and their maintaining requirements, etc.

While part of the consultation system is to provide better information in more regular bases to the land owners and managers already in system, then another part of the task is to find new potential landowners who would like to join the system and let their lands to be maintained. There are currently about 10 000 ha of such lands. Priority goes to the plots which could be managed together in order to get better nature conservation results.

Mapping of the interest of new potential landowners were carried out from February to April, 2022, focusing on 147 land units in Lahemaa National Park and Väinamere Conservation Area, with an area of 502 ha and 181 landowners. Information letter was sent to 62 landowners, 10 of them asked for additional information, one stated that he does not want any additional information, and the rest

² The task of the Innovation Team of the State Office is to make Estonian public services more user-friendly and people-oriented in cooperation with ministries and subordinate institutions. The team also organizes meetings of the innovation network iKlub and service design trainings for public sector officials.

did not respond to the e-mail. After calling, the number of those interested in additional information increased to 39 cadastral unit owners. The number of owners who do not want information about PLK increased to six and three people who have got letter stated that they want to manage their grassland on their own terms.

As a complementary activity, in spring 2022 in collaboration with Land Board, a new public map layer/application on semi-natural habitats <u>https://xgis.maaamet.ee/xgis2/page/app/parandniit</u> was established and launched on May 3, 2022 <u>https://keskkonnaamet.ee/uudised/uus-kaardirakendus-naitab-eesti-parandniitude-asukohti</u> The layer is interfaced with the map displayed on the website <u>www.kaitsealad.ee</u> (E3 task 4).

The map layer consolidates the most important information about meadows into one map application. In addition, RMK lease interest map will be developed by the EB by autumn 2022, consisting also private land, so that in addition to state land, lease interest can also be shown in respect of private land. It would also be a place for landowners to let lessees know if they want to have consultation or manage areas.

Dissemination: Photo competition about semi-natural habitats were taken place from May to September 2021 <u>https://keskkonnaamet.ee/elu-on-lill</u> Acknowledgement of the semi-natural habitat managers took place on February 17th, 2022 <u>https://globalvirtualsolutions.eu/loodusrikaseesti.</u> 10 short videos (incl. one in English language) on best semi-natural habitat managers available on project Facebook page and project website.

Deliverables: Guidelines for the consultants and stakeholders, 4^{th} quarter 2021 -Guidelines were completed 01/04/2021

Milestones: Developing the methods, tools and information system for the consultation system, 4^{th} quarter 2021 - The methods, tools and information system for the consultation system were developed during 2021. Consultation system launched, 1^{nd} quarter 2022 – System was launched 01/09/2021.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: The guideline for stakeholders is part of the project homepage (section "Nõustamine") and is not as a separate document.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Continue with the consultancy work and contacting potential new land owners, bringing together land owners and a potential land managers, if needed. If needed, increase the consultancy team.

Preparatory work for three short video clips financed by the Structural Funds to introduce the maintenance, restoration and consultation of meadows will be made by the Ministry of Environment. These videos are made as a complementary contribution to the project.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achieved	Main factors of success and lessons learned
A3 Task 1	Objectives: Improving the conservation status of forest and farmland habitats and species to achieve results benefiting the whole ecosystems such as: grassland habitats	The procedure for advising new landowners has been developed and consultations have begun. Guideline for consultant has been developed and updated regularly. Website with the grassland management know-how has been launched.	Communication with landowners and lessees via email, telephone and onsite visits.
	Expected results: Consultation system launched and piloted.	Consultation system launched and operating.	

SUB-THEME OF THE PLAN: *additional measures beyond Natura 2000 (wider green infrastructure measures)

ACTION A.4: Effectiveness of Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) support schemes for farmland biodiversity

- Foreseen start date: 1st quarter 2021 Actual start date: 1st quarter 2020
- Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2026 Actual end date: N/A

The aim is to analyse effectiveness of different Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) support schemes on farmland birds, vascular plants, and soil micro- and macrofauna. The activity consists of two parts, a survey of field birds and a survey of nature-friendly CAP schemes in selected sites.

Although all breeding birds on the agricultural landscape fall within the field of interest of the project, EOÜ monitors three species – the corn crake, the grey partridge, and the common starling.

Different transmitters were brought at the beginning of 2020 to test their features and suitability with the indicator species. A total of 46 transmitters from four company were tested in 2020-2022 to compare the reliability and efficacy of devices and to get already data about habitat use of bird species. Based on knowledge obtained during the testing, a tender for the purchase of transmitters will be organized in 2022-2023. After that fieldwork will continue.

During the fieldwork in 2020-2021 EOÜ also elaborated novice methods to catch starlings and corncrakes. Received data was entered to unified database and the analysis of corncrake movements indicate that bird prefers grassland that is mowed later (mid-July). Therefore, an agri-environmental measure that would allow subsequent mowing of grassland would favour species and its habitat. Data received from tagged grey partridges indicates that predation by carnivores and collisions with human-related obstacles (powerlines, cars) are important factors of low survival. Nests of tagged birds were destroyed mainly by red fox and grain harvesting.

The second part of this action is a survey of nature-friendly CAP schemes in selected sites. For this, farmers have to select appropriate schemes to implement in their fields and project sites are selected among them. As the development of CAP support schemes in Estonia is still ongoing, farmers are enabled to choose schemes. New support schemes and other requirements for CAP will be developed and agreed by the end of 2022, making it possible to start with this action in 2023 (see also Action C3 Task 1). But even now preliminary work is going on with farmers to get the farmers to join these schemes.

During 2020-2022 UT has advised MoRA in the development of the CAP measures for valuable grasslands and in the development of the ecosystem services measures.

Dissemination: EOÜ has been an active disseminator on importance of farmland birds and the outcomes of ongoing surveys. Around 12 publications and news have been published and several TV and radio broadcasts have taken place till summer 2022.

Before the monitoring has started, UT has focussed on dissemination of general knowledge about the importance of landscape structure and management practices on biodiversity. UT has published one scientific article and two local analysis in the series "Agriculture and Environment".

The full list of publications and broadcasts can be found from Annex 6 on media coverage.

The web site <u>www.heapold.ee</u>, created in action C3 Task 1, provides important information about nature-friendly agriculture.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Analysis of obtained transmitter data of farmland birds and publication of results. The main topics are habitat use of corncrake and grey partridge. Inclusion of *Copernicus* environmental indices in the analysis of habitat use using the QGIS interface. International public procurement to be made to obtain transmitters for starling, corncrake and grey partridge.

Study sites for agri-environmental measure testing will be chosen, appropriate methodology established and the research of CAP schemes begins.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achieved	Main factors of success and lessons learned
A4	Objectives: Improving the conservation status of forest and farmland habitats and species to achieve results benefiting the whole ecosystems, such as birds and other species related to grasslands and arable land.	N/A	High level of predation and other human causes of bird mortality was unexpected. It is difficult to plan monitoring scheme before it is known which
	Expected results: Report on effectiveness of assessed CAP agri-environmental schemes on biodiversity. Proposal for improving agri-environment schemes for the years 2028+.	Field studies have started and the first results have been received. The dissemination is active.	schemes and practices will be supported in new CAP.

ACTION C.3: Designing more nature friendly landscapes as demonstration sites

Task 1. Enhancing the agriculture-environment relationship in Estonia by designing demonstration sites for environmentally friendly farming

•	Foreseen start date: 1 st quarter 2020	Actual start date: 2 nd quarter 2020

• Foreseen end date: 1st quarter 2028 Actual end date: N/A

The aim is to assess applicability of agro ecological farming approaches and related agrienvironmental schemes in Estonia.

In 2020, three meetings were held with representatives of farmers to plan the creation of demonstration sites.

In 2021, information materials for farmers on participation in the project were completed, incl. a sample map of possible activities in the fields, and the website <u>http://heapold.ee</u> that describes the most effective practices for supporting biodiversity and ensuring good environmental conditions on agricultural land. The portal has become a good source of information where information on project activities as well as about nature-friendly agriculture is given. 10 online meetings were held with farmers interested in the project, discussions on the location of possible demo areas, interventions and participation in project activities were discussed.

In 2022, a list of producers involved into the project has been partially finalised. Suitable farmlands have been selected and foreseen activities agreed through the participatory process with farmers regarding the situation and their respective needs. The signing of contracts and implementation of the activities is pending because the development of CAP support schemes in Estonia is still ongoing (see Action A4). Therefore farmers have been hesitant to join the activities without knowing which support schemes and mandatory requirements will be applied during the new period of CAP and it has been difficult to design interventions in demonstration sites without farmers knowing their plans over next years. New support schemes and other requirements for CAP will be developed and agreed by the end of 2022, making it possible to start more active stakeholder involvement and development of demonstration areas in spring 2023.

11 farms (five different farmers) are interested of being involved in the project. Out of participating farmers, some are interested in creating landscape elements and in application of different management practices. Some of the participating farmers are interested in knowledge-sharing activities and are willing to contribute with their already existing expertise in application of regenerative agricultural practices and interventions. In addition to already committed farms, nine more farms are interested of the project activities, more detailed agreements (the location and size of fields and potential interventions) will be finalized during winter 2022.

Most of the agricultural fields that are suitable for the project are situated outside of Natura 2000 area. Not all fields within Natura areas are crop fields and lots of areas are already relatively heterogeneous and diverse, it also applies broader for all Estonian Natura 2000 sites.

The project finds it highly necessary and valuable to include agricultural fields outside of Natura 2000 areas, to mitigate the negative spill-over impacts of agricultural practices on protected areas (incl. Natura 2000 sites) - most of the environmental hazards from agriculture to Natura 2000 sites originate from outside protected areas. Making changes next to Natura 2000 sites also affect the surrounding landscape and making changes together with bigger farmers helps to spread the knowledge and information to other farmers more easily. While the finalization of the sites where the interventions will be carried out right now, it would be beneficial for the project to add sites outside Natura 2000 areas and get permission from the Commission to carry out some of the interventions in those areas. That would result in the best outcome and would allow to develop the nature-friendly practices for Estonian farming community.

Dissemination: In 2022 the website <u>www.heapold.ee</u> was updated, there are more different practices described for fields and also news section. Beside of specific website, many articles are written, presentations and workshops are organised to promote the nature friendly agriculture and landscape management. Full list of interventions in Annex 6.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: In October 2022 the project participates at the Annual Agriculture Exhibition of Estonian, to get more contacts with farmers. Development of the mapping tool for landscape elements within the <u>www.heapõld.ee</u> is in process. Contacts and agreements with larger producers within Natura 2000 areas are actively developed. Test regions have been selected and agreements with farmers have been achieved. Pre-intervention assessment has been carried out. Agro ecological interventions have been applied.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant	Achivied	Main factors of success
	Agreement		and lessons learned
C3	Objective:	N/A	It is important to
Task 1	Improving the		communicate with
	conservation status of		landowners, farmers and
	forest and farmland		local communities and
	habitats and species to		municipalities.
	achieve results benefiting		Farmers are waiting the
	the whole ecosystems.		new CAP period – many
	Raising awareness and		of them are yet unsure of
	capacity of main		how the new period will
	stakeholders and general		influence their decisions
	public including using		to e.g. create and maintain
	innovative solutions.		landscape elements and
	Expected results:	Website heapold.ee completed.	how the actions planned
	Ca 30 farmers/farming	Ca 20 farmers have expressed	during the project will
	companies will be	interest in participating in the	influence their income.
	involved. Demonstration	project and negotiations have	There are more interested
	sites will be covering ca	been held. In addition, 21 more	farmers outside Natura
	250 ha. Web platform	farmers have received	2000 areas than inside.
	established.	information about the project.	

SUB-THEME OF THE PLAN: E.2.6. Woodlands and forests

ACTION A.6: Preparatory actions necessary for restoration works

Task 3. Restoration projects for dry forests

•	Foreseen start date: 2 rd quarter 2023	Actual start date: N/A
•	Foreseen end date: 4 th quarter 2023	Actual end date: N/A

The project sites will be selected during the preparation of the action plan for dry forests (Action A1 Task 2). As the preparation of the action plan for dry forest habitats will only start in autumn 2022, the restoration sites of dry forests have not been selected yet.

Restoration projects of dry forests are much simpler than wet forest restoration projects (Action A6 Task 1). In addition, the restoration projects will be completed on a site-by-site basis, so the restoration itself (Action C1 task 2) can begin as soon as the first plans are approved. As the restoration is technically also relatively simple (the work takes place on dry ground and main activity is wood cutting), the potentiality is good for staying within the project schedule.

According to the schedule restoration of dry forests starts in 2024 and finishes in 2025.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: According to the schedule all restoration projects must be completed in 2023. As the restoration sites will be selected in 2023, the first plans will be completed in 2023 and the rest of the projects in 2024.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: All restoration projects have been completed.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
A6	Objective:	N/A	N/A
Task 1	Improving the conservation status of forest and		
	farmland habitats and species to achieve results		
	benefiting the whole ecosystems such as:		
	* forest habitats *9010, *9020, 9050, 9060, *9080,		
	*91D0, *91E0, 91F0;		
	* forest species such as woodpeckers, black stork,		
	eagles, dragonflies, amphibians, etc.		
	Expected results:	N/A	
	All restoration projects completed.		

ACTION C.1: Restoration and management of different forest ecosystems (e.g. water regime, species habitats, natural processes) by adapting best practices and testing innovative ideas planned in the habitat action plans compiled in the project

Task 2. Restoration and management of dry forest habitats

•	Foreseen start date: 1 st quarter 2024	Actual start date: N/A
•	Foreseen end date: 4 th quarter 2025	Actual end date: N/A

Since the preparation of the action plan for dry forest habitats only starts in autumn 2022 (Action A1 Task 2), the restoration sites (500 ha) of dry forests have not been selected yet.

Restoration projects of dry forests (Action A6 Task 3) are much simpler than wet forest restoration projects. The restoration projects will be completed site-by-site and restoration can begin as soon as the first plan is approved. As the work is technically relatively simple (the work takes place on dry ground and main activity is wood cutting), the potentiality is good for staying within the project schedule.

It is planned to start the restoration of dry forests in 2024 according to the schedule provided in the project.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: The project sites have been selected, the restoration projects compiled and 200 ha of dry forest habitats have been restored.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and
			lessons learned
C1	Objective:	N/A	N/A
Task 2	Improving the conservation status of forest and		
	farmland habitats and species to achieve results		
	benefiting the whole ecosystems such as:		
	* forest habitats *9010, *9020, 9050, 9060,		
	*9080, *91D0, *91E0, 91F0;		
	* forest species such as woodpeckers, black stork,		
	eagles, dragonflies, amphibians, etc.		
	Expected results:	N/A	
	500 ha of dry forest habitats have been restored.		

ACTION A.6: Preparatory actions necessary for restoration works

Task 1. Restoration project for wet forest

•	Foreseen start date: 3 rd quarter 2022	Actual start date: 2 nd quarter 2022
-	Foreseen end date: 3 rd quarter 2023	Actual end date: N/A

Restoration sites were selected during the preparation of the action plan for wet forests (Action A1 Task 1). The final selection of 10 sites were made in spring 2022. Eight out of ten sites were inventoried more than 10 years ago, hence these sites must be inventoried before continuing the work. The inventories are organised by EB and planned for 2023. Therefore it is not possible to prepare all restoration projects in 2023 nut this does not affect negatively the restoration schedule. Restoration projects will be completed on a site-by-site basis, the restauration work begins as soon as the plan is approved. All the selected sites are located on state land, which simplifies and speeds up the approval of projects. According to the project schedule the restoration of wet forests (Action C1 Task 1) starts in 2024.

In 2022 RMK and TLU experts started fieldwork in two sites. The aim of the first fieldwork was to map the current state of the restoration sites and specify the borders of the restoration sites in nature. The preparation and coordination of restoration projects takes place mostly in the second phase of the project.

Deliverables & milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: According to the schedule all restoration projects must be completed in 2023. Based on previously described reason, these plans will be completed between 2023 and 2026.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Most of the restoration projects have been completed.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and
			lessons learned
A6	Objective:	N/A	N/A
Task 1	Improving the conservation status of forest and		
	farmland habitats and species to achieve results		
	benefiting the whole ecosystems such as:		
	* forest habitats *9010, *9020, 9050, 9060, *9080,		
	*91D0, *91E0, 91F0;		
	* forest species such as woodpeckers, black stork,		
	eagles, dragonflies, amphibians, etc.		
	Expected results:	The preparation	
	All restoration projects completed.	of restoration	
		projects started.	

ACTION A.6: Preparatory actions necessary for restoration works

Task 2. Soil and water analyses necessary for the wet forest restoration projects

•	Foreseen start date: 3 rd quarter 2022	Actual start date: 2 nd quarter 2022

• Foreseen end date: 3rd quarter 2023 Actual end date: N/A

Soil and water analyses in wet forest restoration sites are necessary for the preparation of the restoration projects (Action A6 Task 1) and for monitoring the success of restoration of wet forests (Action D1). Restoration sites were selected during the preparation of the action plan for wet forests (Action A1 Task 1). The final selection was made in June 2022, when 10 sites were chosen.

In summer of 2022, TLU experts started fieldwork in two sites. The aim of the fieldwork was to map the current state of the restoration sites and to determine the monitoring transects locations, because the soil and water analyses must be done in places related to monitoring (Action D1). First water lever loggers were also installed. Soil and water analyses and the water level measurement will be carried out according to the methodology developed within the action D1.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: The analyzes will be carried out 2022-2025, because the work can start after the inventories of sites (described in Action A6 Task1).

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Most of the soil and water analyses necessary for the preparation of restoration projects have been done.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
A6 Task 2	Objective: Improving the conservation status of forest and farmland habitats and species to achieve results benefiting the whole	N/A	N/A
	ecosystems such as: * forest habitats *9010, *9020, 9050, 9060, *9080, *91D0, *91E0, 91F0; * forest species such as woodpeckers, black stork, eagles, dragonflies,		
	amphibians, etc.Expected results:All analyzes are completed.	First loggers are installed and transects established.	

ACTION C.1: Restoration and management of different forest ecosystems (e.g. water regime, species habitats, natural processes) by adapting best practices and testing innovative ideas planned in the habitat action plans compiled in the project

Task 1. Restoration of wet forest ecosystems

•	Foreseen start date: 1 st quarter 2024	Actual start date: N/A
•	Foreseen end date: 1 st quarter 2027	Actual end date: N/A

The selection of restoration sites (3500 ha all together) took place within the preparation of wet forest action plan (Action A1 Task 1). The final selection was made in June 2022, when 10 sites were chosen. The restoration will be carried out according to the site-specific restoration projects (Action A.6 Task 1) started in the summer 2022. Restoration projects will be completed on a site-by-site basis, therefore the work can begin as soon as the first plan is approved. It is planned to start the restoration of wet forests in 2024 according to the schedule provided in the project.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: At least 1000 ha of wet forest habitats have been restored.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
C1	Objective:	N/A	N/A
Task 1	Improving the conservation status of		
	forest and farmland habitats and		
	species to achieve results benefiting		
	the whole ecosystems such as:		
	* forest habitats *9010, *9020, 9050,		
	9060, *9080, *91D0, *91E0, 91F0;		
	* forest species such as woodpeckers,		
	black stork, eagles, dragonflies,		
	amphibians, etc.		
	Expected results:	The sites are selected and	
	3500 ha of wet forest habitats have	preparation of restoration	
	been restored.	projects has begun.	

ACTION A.5: Design of private forest measures in protected areas

Task 1. Analysing and updating the Natura 2000 private forest support

•	Foreseen start date: 2 nd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 3 nd quarter 2020
-	Foreseen end date: 1 st quarter 2025	Actual end date: N/A

The work started with a meeting on 04/06/2020, where the employees of EMK (responsible for the action) and project managers participated. Work organization, schedule and budget were discussed.

30/09/2020 the first meeting of working group was held. The working group includes specialists from the EMK, EML, MoE, EB and project managers. The strengths and weaknesses of the existing support system were mapped.

In the following meetings, possible funding sources for compensations and options for differentiating compensation rates depending on limitations and values were discussed. An important topic was also the costs related to the launch of a new IT system and system management. The distribution of differentiated subsidies requires a greater administrative capacity.

In April 2021, survey for Natura forest owners about their satisfaction with the Natura 2000 forestland compensation was conducted. More than half of the responders (38 people) replied that they are rather dissatisfied or not satisfied at all with the compensation. More than half of the responders found also that the Natura compensation rate is too low. One of the main common responses was that the compensation needs to be applied each year.



At the beginning of second phase of the project, EMK will order from Estonian University of Life Sciences the research on calculation of loss of income due to nature protection outside Natura areas and protection and proposing compensation on those areas. There have had several meetings in 2021 and 2022 with the working group and University of Life Sciences

regarding clarifying the tasks for the research.

So far there have been discussions that the compensation should be consisted from the following components: tolerance obligation; loss of income; soil fertility (the forest grows faster on more fertile soil); activities that increase biodiversity; dependence of compensation on forest age.

Dissemination: Analysing and updating the Natura 2000 private forest support has been a participatory process, engaging all important interest groups. Wider discussions starts later.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: The research on calculation of loss of income due to nature protection outside Natura areas and protection and proposing compensation on those areas is completed and the results analysed. The report on Natura 2000 private forest support measures will be compiled.

Person days executed:	116 (a total of 309	person days are planned)
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Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
A5 Task 1	Objective: Improving the conservation status of forest and farmland habitats and species to achieve results benefiting the whole ecosystems such as: * forest habitats *9010, *9020, 9050, 9060, *9080, *91D0, *91E0, 91F0; * forest species such as woodpeckers, black	N/A	N/A
	stork, eagles, dragonflies, amphibians, etc. Expected results: Report on updated private forest support schemes.	The first analyzes are made.	

ACTION A.5: Design of private forest measures in protected areas

Task 2. Elaboration of active forest measure for protected areas in order to improve the conservation status of forest habitats and species

•	Foreseen start date: 2 nd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 3 rd quarter 2020

• Foreseen end date: 1st quarter 2024 Actual end date: N/A

First meeting of working group was held 30/09/2020. The working group includes specialists from the EMK, EML, MoE, EB and project managers. At the first meeting a broader background and principles of active forest measures were discussed, incl. the motivation of the forest owner to take up active measures in the forest where the compensation is given for doing nothing. It was considered important that the measures should be implemented over the entire area (entire forest) in order to obtain a functioning result. Since one area (forest) can have many owners, forest associations must be involved. It was decided to organize brainstorming (think-tank) to find different active measures.

The think-tank was organized by the EMK and UT on May 5, 2021 and were conducted by the UT. A total of 25 people from different organizations participated: EMK, MoRA, EB, RMK, EEML (including the chairman of the board), officials from MoE (nature conservation and forest departments), Continuous Cover Forest Association, Metsatervenduse OÜ, MTÜ Ühinenud Metsaomanikud (NGO united forest owners) and project managers. A total of 16 active and four passive measures were selected, these are available at https://www.loodusrikaseesti.ee/sites/forest/files/2022-

02/Erametsatoetuste%20mo%CC%83ttetalgud_5.05.2021.pdf

After the evaluation of the activities by the working group, the top preferred activities were ranked as follows:

- 1) formation of young forests by selective felling;
- 2) diversification of the forest by planting broad-leaved trees;
- 3) use of lightweight machines and corresponding techniques in forest works;
- 4) making residual water bodies and their banks more natural.

These measures were selected based on feasibility. For example, closing ditches in wet forests was left aside as it requires a complex project, pre-and post- monitoring and the amount of the work is usually large, and therefore cannot be solved with a classic subsidy scheme.

In March 2022 the topic was discussed further and two additional measures were added, namely the restoration of small waterbodies and keeping floods caused by beaver (not destruct dams). It was decided to have one more discussion on this topic in autumn 2022.

Next step is to analyse the experience of different countries with similar subsidies. After that amount and cost of active forest management measures will be assessed as well as the different possibilities to finance active forest management measures.

Dissemination: There has been discussions with the private forest owners, the results of the think-tank is widely distributed and discussed. Engagement of wider audience comes later.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: The draft of active forest management measures is prepared and then discussed with various institutions, private forest owners and organizations. A coordinated report with proposals on measures will be completed by 2024.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
A5 Task 2	Objective: Improving the conservation status of forest and farmland habitats and species to achieve results benefiting the whole ecosystems such as: * forest habitats *9010, *9020, 9050, 9060, *9080, *91D0, *91E0, 91F0; * forest species such as woodpeckers, black stork, eagles, dragonflies, amphibians, etc. Expected results: Report on elaborated active forest	N/A Possible measures have been selected.	It was important to involve both state authorities and private forest organisations with different views right from the start.
	measures.		

ACTION C.5: Land purchase for conservation purposes

•	Foreseen start date: 2 nd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 1 st quarter 2020

Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2029 Actual end date: N/A

Main objective of the action is to purchase 500 ha of private forestland in protected areas (Natura 2000 sites) to ensure the protection of natural values.

The purchase of land is carried out in accordance with the procedure in force in Estonia: the land purchase will be prepared by EB, approved by the Minister of Environment and implemented by the RMK, who also signs the notarial purchase contract with landowner. The purchased land will be managed by RMK.

As a first step, experts and officials from MoE, EB and RMK developed the criteria for land to be purchased within the project. The purpose of the criteria was to ensure that the purchased land fulfills the objectives of the project and complies with the Grant Agreement. The criteria also ensured the optimization of the work process because even one or two employees could make a decision based on them. Otherwise, it would have been necessary to form a working group to make a decision for each purchase. Now, in a wider working group, it is necessary to decide the purchase of only those land units that are valuable but may not meet all the other criteria (see also the last point of the criteria).

The criteria:

- The minimum size of the property is 3 ha
- At least 90% is a Natura area or will become a Natura area before the end of the project.
- At least 75% of the area is in the stricktly protected zone.
- The minimum proportion of forest land is 50%.
- The property has a forest habitat type or the habitat of a forest species that is the protection objective of the Natura area.
- If there is no forest habitat type or species, the Environment Agency must review the area and decide whether the area could develop into a forest habitat type if the area is subject to natural development or if it is important from the point of view of the coherence of the forest (species).

Subsequently, the same beneficiaries prepared the formulation of the points of the minister's directive and the notarial contract, which uniquely link the purchase to the project and ensure the preservation of natural values and natural development on the purchased land in the form and perspective that corresponds to the project objectives and Grant Agreement. The mentioned formulations were coordinated with the External Monitoring Team. Samples of the ministry's directive and the notarial contract are attached to the report (Annexes 19 and 20).

The first land units were purchased in July 2020. In the first phase of the project, a total 14 land units with a total area of 152 ha were purchased. All purchased land units are entered in the Land Purchases Database. Maps of purchased land units are attached to this report (Annex 21).

Out of 14 purchased lands two are located outside Natura area (Jürimetsa and Salu units). In the case of these sites, it has been proposed to merge them with the existing Natura area and the process is ongoing. This is a good example of how the LIFE IP project can contribute to the expansion of existing Natura sites.

Deliverables: No deliverables were foreseen in the first phase.

Milestones: 100 ha land purchased, 2^{nd} quarter 2022 – From the third quarter of 2020 to the second quarter of 2022, 152 ha of land was purchased.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: An additional approx. 150 ha will be purchased in the second phase.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant	Achivied	Main factors of
	Agreement		success and
			lessons learned
C5	Objective:	The purchased land has created	The fulfillment of
	Improving the conservation	preconditions for the protection of	the planned goals
	status of forest and farmland	the habitats and species related to	has been ensured
	habitats and species to	these habitats.	by close
	achieve results benefiting the		cooperation
	whole ecosystems such as:		between project
	* forest habitats *9010,		beneficiaries and
	*9020, 9050, 9060, *9080,		involvment of
	*91D0, *91E0, 91F0;		officials in the
	* forest species such as		field.
	woodpeckers, black stork,		
	eagles, dragonflies,		
	amphibians, etc.		
	Expected results:	152 ha of land has been purchased	
	500 ha of land is purchased		

PILLAR OF THE PLAN: E.3. Additional species-specific measures not related to specific ecosystems or habitats

Pillar E.3 is related to the species protection.

Sub-theme of the Plan E.3.1. Species-specific measures and programmes not covered elsewhere (Action C4, Action A2, Action C3 Task 2)

Main achievements regarding the implementation of Pillar 3:

- in relation to alien species the eradication methods and eradication areas are selected, monitoring methodology is created;
- think-tank for pollinator action plan is made;
- 17 water bodies have been restored.

SUB-THEME OF THE PLAN: E.3.1. Species-specific measures and programmes not covered elsewhere

Action C.4: Testing of novel eradication methods of invasive alien species in agriculture landscapes

•	Foreseen start date: 3 rd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 3 rd quarter 2021

• Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2025 Actual end date: N/A

The aim of this action is to test novel eradication methods for Fallopia sp (*Fallopia japonica*, *F. sachalinensis and F. x bohemica*), Solidago sp (*Solidago canadensis, S. gigantea*), *Symphoricarpos albus* and *Sorbaria sorbifolia*. in 44 pilot plots.

In 2021 EB contracted OÜ Sunsaare to compile a methodology (Annex 22) for evaluating the effectiveness of eradication methods of following agricultural landscape alien species:

Different eradication methods will be tested on 44 areas mapped during the fieldwork in 2021. These areas are located all over Estonia on both private and state lands. Cooperation with landowners and their attitude towards eradication work has been different: while local municipalities have been very positive, the negotiations and explanatory work with private landowners have been more time consuming than predicted and thefore the actual eradication work starts in 2023.

Two to three eradication methodologies will be used in each pilot area from 2023 to 2026 to compare these with one another as well as with the control sample (16 samples also selected in 2022) where eradication works are not carried out. Different methods will be tested at regular intervals from spring to autumn for four years, and then the analyse of the success of each method is made. In the control areas, EB monitors and evaluates for four years the natural growth of the plants without control activities.

Dissemination: From May to November 2022 a campaign "Notice the alien species" <u>www.loodusrikaseesti.ee/et/marka-voorliiki</u> is taking place in cooperation with the nature observation application Loodusvaatluste äpp. People are invited to map the sites (coordinates) and make a picture of the alien species they see while being outside. The campaign has been very successful so far and more than 80 people have been engaged with more than 300 locations mapped and described. Most enthusiastic people and best contributors will be awarded with the joint food event taking place in the middle of forest and lead by one of the most inspirational Foodie in Estonia. Campaign has attract lots of attention and along with the mapping exercise lots of practical advices are given on how to handle alien species and prevent their spread.

Deliverables and Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: In the project the eradication works were planned to start in 2022 and to be finished by the end of 2026. Due to time consuming negotiations

with private landowners and the arrival of a specific and innovative eradication technology (steam machine), EB was not able to start with the activity as planned.

In addition, finding the pilot areas has been complicated – not all of the invasive species are present in each region of Estonia. Preliminary works, such as mapping of the areas, describing the situation before the eradication work starts have taken more time than predicted. Particularly time-consuming was to find suitable control areas in each region.

The eradication will start in 2023 and will be finished in 2027. It does not affect the implementation of other actions because there are no other actions related to this action. There are also no changes in the budget.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: First eradication works will be carried out 2023. Tender to film the eradication works is completed and the filming takes place along the fieldworks in 2022-2023. In autumn 2022 a service provider is contracted to monitor and evaluate the testing period. Practical guidance document will be compiled based on experiences gained by the end of eradication testing.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achieved	Main factors of success and lessons learned
C4	Objectives: Improving the conservation status of farmland habitats and species to achieve results benefiting the whole ecosystem such as: lessening the impacts of invasive species by controlling the following species <i>Fallopia sp, Solidago sp, Symphoricarpos albus</i> and <i>Sorbaria sorbifolia</i> .	Methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of control methods for invasive alien species will be as a basis for similar works in the future.	Good cooperation (especially personal face to face communication with landowners and the representatives of local municipalities is a key.
	Expected results: Eradication of invasive alien species <i>Fallopia sp</i> in 12, <i>Solidago sp</i> in 8, <i>Symphoricarpos albus</i> in 12 and Sorbaria sorbifolia in 12 pilot plots; <i>Practical guidance</i> document for eradication.	Test sites are selected, methodology elaborated.	

ACTION A.2: Developing action plan for pollinators

• Foreseen start date: 1st quarter 2022

Actual start date: 2nd quarter 2021

Actual end date: N/A

• Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2024

On 8th of April 2021, a think-tank (Action 7 Task 2)

www.loodusrikaseesti.ee/sites/forest/files/2022-

<u>02/Tolmeldajate%20mo%CC%83ttetalgud_A7_2021.pdf</u> was held to identify both the existing and lacking measures for the protection of Estonian wild pollinators. These measures will become an input to the pollinators' action plan. In total, 30 existing and 17 necessary measures were identified. Substantive work began in April 2022 when an agreement was signed with a researcher in entomology at the UT to prepare an action plan.

A working group was formed in May 2022 and the first major meeting of this working group will take place at the end of 2022.

During the first three months of work the pollinators' action plans drawn up in other countries were collected and their content were examined. In addition a number of expert meetings and discussions have taken place in spring 2022 (e.g. with EB: a meeting on the timetable for the action plan on May 11th and a meeting on the action plan structure on May 27th).

The results of the action is also one of the inputs for updating the action plan for the semi-natural grasslands (Action A1 Task 3).

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: The drafting of the action plan involves a wide range of stakeholders and thereafter presented to and discussed with competent authorities, e.g. EB, MoE, MoRA, etc. Action plan for pollinators will be compiled and adopted.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achieved	Main factors of success and lessons learned
A2	Objectives: Improving the conservation status of forest and farmland habitats and species to achieve results benefiting the whole ecosystems such as pollinators.	Improved knowledge about the status of pollinators and the threats imposed on them.	A pollinator expert has been hired to implement the whole task and prepare the action plan through the participatory process.
	Expected results: Action plan for pollinators adopted.	The necessary information has been collected and working group established.	
ACTION C.3: Designing more nature friendly landscapes as demonstration sites

Task 2. Restauration of small water bodies

•	Foreseen start date: 2 nd quarter 2020	Actual start date: 2 nd quarter 2020

• Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2025 Actual end date: N/A

To improve the spawning conditions of amphibians, especially the common spadefoot toad (*Pelobates fuscus*) and the northern crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) in the agricultural landscape, the project will restore 100 small waterbodies.

In the spring of 2020, experts from the UT made an inventory of 86 small waterbodies in Lääne County (Luiste), Harju County (Kõrvemaa), Lääne-Viru County (Porkuni, Mädapea and Mõdriku-Roela) and Põlva County (Räpina, Lüübnitsa) of which 62 were chosen to be restored. In 2021, additional 62 water bodies were inventoried in Tartu County (Vooremaa and Pangodi), from which 9 water bodies from Pangodi were selected for restoration. Vooremaa was excluded from the project sites because no target species (*P. fuscus* or *T. cristatus*) were found in this area. Instead four replacement sites (Järni, Alatskivi, Ropka-Ihaste, Otepää) were selected which locate in intensively used agricultural areas in Lääne-Viru, Tartu and Valga Counties.

In 2022, 58 water bodies were inventoried in Järni, Alatskivi, Ropka-Ihaste and Otepää and 51 were selected for restoration. A total of 206 waterbodies were inventoried in the first phase of the project and 122 waterbodies were selected for restoration.

After selecting the waterbodies, the EB identified the owners of the inventoried ponds, negotiated with them and entered into goodwill agreements. Until June 2022, the EB has made 21 agreements with landowners for the restoration of 37 waterbodies.

In the spring 2021, the EB organized the first tender for the restoration of small waterbodies. As a result of the procurement, three companies were selected, which in the autumn of 2021 restored 17 small waterbodies in the Porkuni and Mädapea landscape protection areas and Kõrvemaa landscape protection area, where in addition to the common speadefoot toad (*P. fuscus*) and the northern created newt (*T. cristatus*) also the moor frog (*Rana arvalis*), the common frog (*R. temporaria*) and the smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*) occur. All restored waterbodies are monitored annually throughout the project. The first pre-restoration monitoring took place in late May-early June of 2021 and the first post-restoration monitoring in June 2022 (Action D1).

Cooperation with landowners and their attitude towards restoration work has been very positive. As we invite landowners to study tours, inventories and restoration work, they will gain new knowledge about the nature values of their lands, the need for small waterbodies and the role of amphibians and other species in these ecosystems (Action E3 Task 3).

Dissemination: There has been very good media coverage of the topic. Full list of broadcasts and articles in Annex 6. In addition in October 2021, the EB together with UT organized a study day for nature conservation specialists of the EB and local government officials on restoration of small waterbodies in Mädapea (Action E2 Task 2). In the spring of 2022, the project cooperated with the Estonian Fund for Nature to draw attention to the condition and conservation of *P. fuscus* (Action E2 Task 1, Task 3).

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the LIFE program, together with AwaRaEst LIFE 2 project (LIFE18CAP/EE/000002) and local landowners two hikes on May 28, 2022 were organised in the restoration areas of small waterbodies in Mädapea (Action E2 Task 2).

Deliverables: No deliverables were foreseen in the first phase.

Milestones: 20% waterbodies restored, 4th quarter 2021 – During first phase 17 small waterbodies were restored (17%).

Main modifications to the action and related budget: In the project restoration of 100 ponds was planned in 2021-2022. As such restoration work can only be done in autumn and the work must be supervised by an expert, the extremely short deadline for the restoration work was not realistic. We informed about the need to change the schedule (milestones) during the monitoring visit in June 10th, 2020. In the letter (sent on 23.08.2020), Agency accepted a new schedule (restoration of 100 ponds in 2021-2025).

In 2021, 21 ponds were planned to be restored, for which all necessary agreements had been concluded with both landowners and contractors. 17 ponds were restored and the restoration of four ponds was postponed to August 2022 because the area was very wet in 2021 and the restoration would have damaged the landscape around the ponds.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: The restoration work will continue in autumn of 2022, when 20 small waterbodies will be restored. 80 small waterbodies will be restored during second phase of the project.

Action	Foreseen in the Grant	Achivied	Main factors of success
	Agreement		and lessons learned
C3	Objective:	The restoration of small	Good cooperation with
Task 2	Improving the conservation	waterbodies has created	landowners, as a large part
	status of farmland habitats	preconditions for the	of the ponds are located on
	and species to achieve	improvement of the habitat	private land.
	results benefiting the whole	and breeding conditions of	It is important to
	ecosystem;	species related to these	communicate with both
	* birds and other species	habitats.	landowners and local
	related to grasslands and		communities and
	arable land.		municipalities.
	Expected results:	17 small waterbodies has	
	100 restored small	been restored in 2021.	
	waterbodies.		

Person days executed: 206 (a total of 780 person days are planned)

Project Management

Project management is necessary for the project as well as the PAF implementation, nevertheless these action are not included to any of the pillar actions. Chapter consists of Action F1, F3, F4 and F5.

As of achievements – project team is compiled, Management Team and Steering Committee are created. partnership agreements are made, amendments request was submitted to the Agency in August 2022. Phases in the budget merged and proceed with the single budget for the whole project duration.

ACTION F.1: Overall project management

•	Foreseen start date: 1 st quarter 2020	Actual start date: 1 st quarter 2020
•	Foreseen end date: 1 st quarter 2030	Actual end date: N/A

The purpose of project management is to ensure the implementation of project objectives and actions in accordance with the Grant Agreement.

To find project managers, the coordinating beneficiary MoE organized a public competition at the end of 2019. Voldemar Rannap, who has been the manager of six LIFE projects was chosen as the project manager. Two of these six have been selected among the best LIFE projects (LIFE04 NAT/EE/000070 and LIFE08NAT/EE/000257). Kaidi Tingas who is having 20+ years of international experiences on environmental communication, public participation in decision-making, environmental justice, environmental governance and civil society development issues was chosen as the deputy manager/communication specialist. Both started working on 01/01/2020. The financial manager Marju Tamm was hired in November 2021, until then the project manager performed the tasks of the financial manager. The financial manager also had previous experience in LIFE projects (LIFE05NAT/D/000152 and LIFE13NAT/EE/000082) and bookkeeping.

The project manager, deputy manager/communication specialist and financial manager form the Project Lead Team. In their daily work they cooperate with the employees of MoE (nature conservation specialists, lawyers, financial specialists, procurement specialists, public relations specialists, etc.) and work in close cooperation with beneficiaries.

At the beginning of 2020 project managers of MoE met separately with all the partners. The topics of the meetings were the objectives of the project, the actions and their implementation, as well as the budget, the rules of the LIFE programme and the possible work organization of the project. On 14/02/2020, the kick-off meeting of the project took place, which was attended by representatives of all beneficiaries. At this meeting, the work arrangements were agreed (described in chapter 3) and project Management Team was formed (list of members, Annex 23). During the first phase three Management Team meetings were organized (14/02/2020, 30/10/2020, 31/03/2021). The main content of the meetings was the implementation of actions, problems and their solutions. One of the most important aspects of Management Team meetings is that all participants have a comprehensive overview of the fulfilment of actions and the coordination of cooperation. The members of the Management Team also took part in the Steering Committee meeting on March 10, 2022. The next Management Team meeting is planned at the last quarter of 2022 and it will summarize phase one of the project and also include visits to project sites.

The Steering Committee was formed in the autumn of 2020. It includes representatives and key specialists from different fields and is chaired by the Deputy Secretary of the MoE (list of members, Annex 5). The first meeting was planned to be held face to face so that the members could get to know each other. Due to Covid 19, it was postponed several times, and the first meeting took place nevertheless virtually on 19/02/2021. The second (off-line) meeting took place on 10/03/2022. If at the first meeting the project managers introduced the project and its implementation plan, at the

second meeting the implementation of the actions and related issues were already discussed in substance. It was also decided to organize Steering Committee meetings more frequently than the project foresees (agenda and memo in Annex 24). The next meeting is planned for the beginning of 2023.

Partnership agreements were prepared by the project managers of MoE together with MoE lawyers. Eight of the nine contracts were signed in April 2020 and the last one at the beginning of May.

The structure of the project organisation is presented in Annex 25.

The Amendment Request was prepared and sent to the Agency on 23/08/2022. It includes:

- administrative changes (new addresses of MoE and EB),
- partnership changes (to include a new beneficiary to develop the bird application (more detailed explanation Action E4 Task 3),
- technical changes (related to changes in the milestones of several actions), and
- financial changes (budget changes and the wish to request an amendment to merge the phases in the budget and proceed with the single budget for the whole project duration).

Dissemination: Information about the project events, information days, media coverage, visits to the project's website and Facebook, etc. related to the presentation of the project and its activities are given under other actions description in this chapter of the report.

Deliverables: 1st interim report and request for payment, 3rd quarter 2022 (second phase) -1^{st} interim report and request for payment was sent to the Agency 10.02.2023.

Milestones:

- Personnel of project lead team in MoE hired (project manager, deputy manager), 1st quarter 2020 Personnel of project lead team in MoE hired 01/01/2020.
- Project Management Team established and first meeting of project Management Team organised, 1st quarter 2020 – Management Team was established and first meeting organised 14/02/2020.
- Contracts with associated beneficiaries signed, 1st quarter 2020 Contracts were signed in April-May 2020.
- A project kick-off meeting with partners organised (Action F.2), 2nd quarter 2020 A project kick-off meeting with partners was organised 14/02/2020.
- Steering Committee set up and the rules of procedure approved first meeting of the Steering Committee organised, 1st quarter 2021 – The Steering Committee was formed in the autumn of 2020 and first meeting took place 19/02/2021.
- At least 20 Project Management Team meetings held by 2030 During first phase 3 Management Team meetings were organised.
- At least 10 Steering Group meetings held by 2030 During first phase 2 Steering Committee meetings were organised.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: The first meeting of the Steering Committee was supposed to take place in the 3rd quarter of 2020, but due to Covid 19 it took place in the 1st quarter of 2021.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Project management continues and work organization is carried out according to agreed and proven procedures. Five Management Team meetings and three or four Steering Committee meetings will be organised.

Action	Foreseen in the	Achivied	Main factors of success and
	Grant Agreement		lessons learned
F1	Objectives: The aim of project management is the fulfilment of all project objectives.	As a result of project management, actions have started as planned, which has created a prerequisite for achieving the project's goals in accordance with the Grant Agreement.	The successful launch of the project are ensured by the selection of experienced project managers. The key aspects are good cooperation between project beneficiaries and active involvement of
	Expected results: All objectives and results have been achieved.	Project managers have been hired, Lead Team, Management Team and Steering Committee have been formed. Partnership Agreements concluded.	stakeholders, land owners and policy makers as well as the effective communication.

Person days executed: 1663 (a total of 12 458 person days are planned)

ACTION F.3: Compilation of PAF 2028+

•	Foreseen start date: 2 nd quarter 2026	Actual start date: N/A
•	Foreseen end date: 3 rd quarter 2027	Actual end date: N/A

The aim of this action is to prepare Estonian Prioritised action framework (PAF) for Natura 2000 for the EU Multiannual Financing Period 2028+.

On March 9, 2020, the PAF Monitoring Team was formed (Action D2 Task 1), whose members are also important compilers of PAF 2028+.

The preparation of PAF 2028+ will start in the third phase of the project.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: N/A

Person days executed: 0 (a total of 0 person days are planned)

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
F3	Objective: All project objectives.	N/A	N/A
	Expected results: Estonian PAF for the period 2028+ submitted to European Commission.	The Monitoring Team has formed.	

ACTION F.4: Financial audit of the project

•	Foreseen start date: 3 rd quarter 2022	Actual start date: N/A
•	Foreseen end date: 1 st quarter 2030	Actual end date: N/A

The aim of this action is to verify the compliance of project costs and financial documentation with Estonian legislation and accounting rules and to certify that all costs comply with the Grant Agreement.

The financial reports covering the entire first phase were completed in August 2022. Auditing was not necessary because the amount of expenses incurred, the EU contribution requested for each beneficiary is less than 325,000 euros. The topic was also discussed with the External Monitoring Team.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Main modifications to the action and related budget: The first auditing was postponed to the first quarter of 2025. No budget changes are foreseen.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: Auditing of the expenses covering first and second phase will take place in the first quarter of 2025.

Person days executed: 0 (a total of 0 person days are planned)

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
F4	Objective: Assessment of the eligibility of the costs.	N/A	N/A
	Expected results: 4 audit reports	N/A	

ACTION F.5: After-LIFE Plan

•	Foreseen start date: 3 rd quarter 2029	Actual start date: N/A
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• Foreseen end date: 4th quarter 2029 Actual end date: N/A

After-LIFE Plan will set out how to continue and develop the activities and measures after the project's end.

Deliverables & Milestones: No deliverables or milestones were foreseen in the first phase.

Proposed targets and goals for next phase: N/A

Person days executed: 0 (a total of 0 person days are planned)

Action	Foreseen in the Grant Agreement	Achivied	Main factors of success and lessons learned
F5	Objective: Improving the conservation status of forest and farmland habitats and species to achieve results benefiting the whole ecosystems; improving conservation practices and collaboration between administrative authorities; raising awareness and capacity of main stakeholders and general public including using innovative tools and solutions.	N/A	N/A
	Expected results: After-LIFE Plan has been compiled.	N/A	

7. Key Project-level Indicators

Key project level indicators (KPI) are defined in the Grant Agreement of the project. In 2021, KPI's were entered into the LIFE database. The indicators cover all areas of the project (areas of agricultural land under biodiversity friendly management; improved nature, species and biodiversity; communication, dissemination, awareness rising) and contain quantitative goals.

Objective	Inc	licators	Estimated impact		First phase
			At the end of the	5 years after	result
			project	the project	
Sustainable	Agriculture	Areas of agricultural	0 ha	75 000 ha	Testing of
land use,		land under			methods starts
agriculture		biodiversity friendly			2023
and forestry		management			
Improved	*Boreal Baltic	Restored areas	400 ha	400 ha	Restoration
Nature,	Coastal Meadows				starts 2022
Species and	1630				
Biodiversity	*Western Taiga	Restored areas	250 ha	250 ha	Restoration
	9010				starts 2024
	*Fennoscandian	Restored areas	1 500 ha	1 500 ha	Restoration
	Deciduous				starts 2024
	Swamp Woods				
	9080				
	Tetrao urogallus	Estonian population	1 300 - 1 400	1 300 - 1 400	ca 1 300
		size	lekking males	lekking males	
	Crex crex	Estonian population	30 000 calling	30 000 calling	ca 15 000
		size	males	males	
	Pelobates fuscus	Number of localities	8 localities	8 localities	3 localities
		with improved			
		conservation status			
	Eradication of	Reduction of invasive	12 plots	12 plots	Eradication
	Fallopia sp	alien species			starts 2023
	Eradication of	Reduction of invasive	12 plots	12 plots	Eradication
	Symphoricarpos	alien species			starts 2023
	albus				
	Eradication of	Reduction of invasive	12 plots	12 plots	Eradication
	Sorbaria	alien species			starts 2023
	sorbifolia				
Communi-	Awareness raising	Number of	Number 175	200 000	ca 25 000
cation,		entities/individuals	000		
dissemination,		reached/ made aware			
awareness	Project videos	Number of views on	Number of views	150 000	ca 22 000
rising		project videos	100 000		
		(combined value for			
		all videos)			
	Public	Number of people	Number of people	N/A	753
	engagement in	attending project	1 500		
	events (camps,	events			
	site visits,				
	seminars)				1.7.000
	Website	Number of views on	Number of views	75 000	ca 15 000
		project website	55 000		
	Behavioural	Number of	Number 6 000	8 000	Analysis starts
	change	entities/individuals			2024
		changing behaviour			

Based on the implementation of project activities the fulfilment of KPI goals is realistic. Most of the practical works (restoration, eradication of alien invasive species) start in the second phase and the preliminary work is completed or underway. Communication and awareness raising activities started right from the beginning of the project and the achieved results are already good. It is also clear that along the progress of the project the number of different events and the amount of compiled information materials increases exponentially, which also increases the number of people the project eventually reaches out.

The only KPI goal that may not be met is to increase the population of Crex crex by about two times. In the second phase of the project, the set goal is discussed with ornithologists and, if necessary, a proposal is made to correct the corresponding indicator at the end of the second phase.

The KPI values will be reviewed in the middle of the project. The final results achieved will be entered into the database at the end of the project and five years after the end of the project. The latter is the responsibility of the coordinating beneficiary MoE. The monitoring of KPI's is one of the task of the Monitoring Team (see also Chapter 6. Evaluation of project implementation, Action D2 Task1).

Commentary on communication indicators.

Number of entities/individuals reached/ made aware.

This number is calculated roughly on the basis of values of other communication indicators, taking into account that one and the same person can visit the homepage several times and watch videos several times, etc.

Number of views on project website.

The website and social media of the project are merged here. From March till June 2022 - 800 individual visitors. Facebook page has 1248 followers and an average post reaches out up to 4000 people. More information can be found in chapter 6, Action E1. Task 1. The value presented in the table is estimated.

Number of views of project videos.

The project has made 20 videos and three broadcasts by the end of the 1st phase. Broadcasts have been watched around 1800 times and most popular videos (stories of the grassland managers) have been watched around 20 000 times. The value presented in the table is estimated.

Public engagements in events.

Nature conservation camps – 72 people; information days on coastal meadows – 60 people; information days on small water bodies and amphibians – 15 people; celebration of the LIFE programme 30 - 30 people; nature hikes to celebrate the Grassland Day (2nd of July) – 40; Conference of Environmental Awareness and Nature protection – 60 people (plus online viewers approx. 476 people).

8. Next phase: changes/adjustments

During the 1st phase of the project the need for changes became clear. For various reasons some activities started earlier than planned and some later, in a few cases the planned schedule was unrealistic, and there was also a need to involve a new beneficiary. During the implementation of the actions, the required volume of work and costs were specified. An important role was played by Covid-19 and ongoing war in Ukraine, which caused an economic crisis and has increased prices.

Therefore, at the end of 1st phase of the project, an Amendment Request was prepared and submitted to the Agency on August 23, 2022. In addition to technical amendments and financial amendments, the request included two additional significant amendments requested by the project: request to include a new beneficiary and the wish to request an amendment to merge the phases in the budget and proceed with a single budget for the whole project duration.

As we submitted the Amendment Request to the Agency after the end of phase one (phase one ended on June 30, 2022), we also informed the Agency and EMT of our wish to submit this interim report in January 2023, so that the report could already take into account the amendments approved by the Agency. We received the Agency's decision in January 2023 which approved the changes we requested.

Due to the above, the needed changes have already been accepted and the project application has been changed accordingly. As can be seen in the Annex 1. "Deliverable and milestones schedule (1st and 2nd phase)", no changes are foreseen in the second phase, with two exceptions.

Deliverables: Restoration projects for wet and dry forest habitats (Action A6, tasks 1 and 3) should be completed by the end of 2023. In fact, the wet forest plans will be completed in 2023-2025 and the dry forest plan in 2023-2024 but his does not affect negatively the restoration schedule. Restoration projects will be compiled on a site-by-site basis and the work starts as soon as the first plan is approved. The explanation is also given in chapter 6. Evaluation of Project Implementation, Action A6 Task 1-2.

Milestones: Alien species eradication was supposed to start in the second half of 2022, but it will start in the second half of 2023, as the necessary preparation took more time than planned (a more detailed explanation is provided in chapter 6. Evaluation of Project Implementation, Action E4). Regardless of the postponement, we can confirm that the work and accompanying monitoring will be completed within the project timeframe.

9. Comments on the financial report

The financial report is based on the financial statements and templates provided by the LIFE programme. On August 23, 2022 Amendment Request to the Agency was submitted, incl. financial changes to merge the phases in the budget and proceed with the single simplified budget for the whole project duration. The request was accepted by the Agency (Agency's letter dated December 21, 2022) and the financial report is based on the new revised budget.

To the Interim Report are attached Payment Request with Consolidated Cost Summary (Annex 26) and Financial Statements of Individual Beneficiaries (Annex 27).

Cost category	Approved budget. Eligible costs (€)	Eligible costs accepted in previous Phase(s) (€)	Consolidated cost statement for Phase 1. Eligible costs (€)	Percentage of costs incurred per whole budget (%)
Personnel	5 021 886	0	721 134,95	14,36
Travel	472 593	0	25 477,02	5,39
External Assistance	8 411 688	0	579 922,79	6,89
Infrastructure	0	0	0	0
Equipment	15 000	0	0	0
Prototype	0	0	0	0
Land Purchase	4 050 000	0	750 762,10	18,54
Consumables	330 335	0	100 524,03	30,43
Other Costs	316 909	0	45 303,22	14,30
Overheads	943 373	0	56 847,00	6,03
TOTAL ELIGIBLE COSTS	19 561 784	0	2 279 971,11	11,66

9.1. Summary of Cost incurred

The first phase of the project lasted two and a half year or 25% of the entire project duration. However, the amount of expenses was ca 12%. It is logical, because many actions will start in the second or even later phases while the first phase was also mainly a preparatory period when prerequisites and conditions were created for the continuation or initiation of various actions.

In the first phase of the implementation of actions, it became clear that the budgets of several actions need to be changed. Based on this knowledge and also on the results of different procurements similar to the activities of the project, the budgets of the actions were adjusted. The new budget was submitted to the Agency with the Amendment Request and was approved by the Agency. As a result, the allocation of costs between the actions corresponds to the actual need, and no changes are foreseen in coming years.

When preparing the Amendment Request all possible changes we taken into account, except one expense item was left out. When buying land (Action C5), it is necessary to sign a notarial contract and it is paid by the buyer, or in our case RMK. This expense was not included in the budget. We ask this expense to be considered eligible! In the Financial statement of RMK it is placed under other costs. These costs are covered from the land purchase costs and this do not affect the volume of land purchase. In the first phase of the project, a total 14 land units with a total area of 152 ha were purchased for 750 762 euros. The cost of notary fees was 3792 euros. The project target is to buy 500 ha of land. Therefore the expected amount of notary fees is approximately 12 500 euros. The total budget for the purchase of the land is 4 000 000 euros.

9.2. Accounting system

The accountancy procedures of project beneficiaries were established in accordance with the normal accounting conventions imposed on them by law, existing regulations and Grant Agreement. The project budget formed part of the budgets of the beneficiaries. An analytical accounting system (cost centre accounting) was applied for coordinating and associated beneficiaries. This allowed for separating project expenses from other expenses. All beneficiaries used unique project codes, which were associated with corresponding expenses.

Codes identifying the project costs in the accounting systems of beneficiaries

MoE – 9L10-MU00-LIFEIPLKO EB – 9L70-MU00-LIFEIPLKO KEMIT - 9L90-MU00-LIFEIPLKO RMK – FORESTFARM MoRA – P10-MUUD-LIFE-IP EOÜ – LIFE-IP UT – MLTOM20102 TLU – 111_TKA20059 EEML – LIFE-IP ForEst&FarmLand LIFE18 IPE/EE/000007 PFC – The code LIFE was used in 2020, and the code 9LS1-LIFE-IP-FFL from 2021. The modification resulted from switching to the new accounting system.

Cost approving procedures. In the cost approval procedure, all beneficiaries follow the organisation's bookkeeping rules and common practice. Although each beneficiary has its own procedural rules, they are generally similar and based on the Estonian Accounting Law.

At first, the cost (invoice, expenditures report, etc.) is verified by the Project Manager of the beneficiary who checks the relevance of the costs in terms of the respective document (contract, business trip report, etc.) and the budget. The task of the Project Manager is also to check the presence of the project identifiers (abbreviation and number) on the cost documents. Then the document is sent to accounting where the cost according to the accountancy rules of the organisation are checked. After that, the payment is made by accounting. For state organisations (MoE, EB, MoRA, KEMIT), the State Shared Service Centre makes the payment.

All the costs of associated beneficiaries are double-checked by the coordinating beneficiary and compared against the aims of the project actions and the budget. For that, the associated beneficiaries send filled financial reports together with the copies of all expense documents (contracts, invoices, payment orders, timesheets, etc.) to the MoE. This ensured complete control over the project's expenses.

Procurement/selection procedures. The procedure for finding a service provider and purchasing goods is based on laws, accounting rules of beneficiaries and the Grant Agreement. According to the Estonian Public Procurement Law the public procurement is mandatory if the expected cost exceeds 30,000 euros without VAT.

Within the project it has been decided that the price offers will be asked from different companies if the amount exceeds 1,000 euros without VAT regardless of the internal rules of the beneficiary. For all beneficiaries, this sum is lower than the internal rule prescribes. It is important that this rule is used when possible and reasonable. For example we take offers when the expected cost is lower but the service or goods are very common (GPS, print of stands and similar). At the same time we will not take the price offers if the expected cost is higher but the service or goods are unique in a way. For example room rent and catering at a specific place (study day at restored ponds), MapInfo software has only one seller and similar).

An exception is work on private land, where the landowner does the work himself or the landowner's consent is required for the offer. In the project, such system is related to the restoration of semi-natural grasslands. According to the procedure, the application for restoration must be submitted by the landowner or somebody who will start management after restoration. In the latter case, he must have the landowner's agreement. To ensure a reasonable cost, restoration is carried out on the basis of taxes fixed by the state.

Registration of working time. All beneficiaries using the standard timesheets of LIFE programme. Only exception is EEML, who uses a different format. This format was accepted by the Agency in another LIFE project (LIFE17NAT/FI/000469) where an EEML employee participates. This format contains all information that the LIFE programme standard timesheet contains.

Project employees fill out the timesheets and timesheets are usually signed digitally. The working time is registered on a daily basis and the timesheets are completed electronically.

Few employees do not fill timesheets because they only work on a project and their workload is fixed (project managers of MoE and some employees of EB). In one case (RMK), the timesheets are not filled in because the employee`s workload is less than 5% per month.

Timesheets are signed at the beginning of next month by the employee and project manager of the beneficiary who also checks their correctness. Project manager's timesheets are signed by the supervisor. In case of late validation the explanation is added to the timesheet if possible. In the case of digital signing it can only be added by the first signer (employee). If for some reason the supervisor signs after that significantly later, it is not possible to add an explanation anymore.

Associated beneficiaries send timesheets to the coordinating beneficiary (MoE) with all other documents at least three times a year.

Reference to the project. We used two options for adding project references to the project's expense receipts. Either the issuer of an invoice provided a reference to the project (abbreviation and number) or, where this was not possible, the invoices are stamped with the project stamp. The stamp has both the project abbreviation and number. The latter option is needed primarily in situations involving gas stations, store receipts, electronic tickets, etc.

If the invoice provided by the company (service provider) did not have the project identifier, the invoice was sent back and a correct invoice was requested.

Control of the presence of the project identifiers on the documents is the task of the manager of the beneficiary. Presence of project abbreviation and number is double-checked by the project Financial Manager of MoE.

9.3. Partnership arrangements (if relevant)

Partnership agreements were prepared by project managers of MoE together with MoE lawyers. Eight of the nine contracts were signed in April 2020 and the last one at the beginning of May. The agreements stipulated also the conditions of transaction of the EU contribution.

Project managers of MoE together with the financial department developed a standard order form for transfers. For the first transfer, the beneficiaries calculated the expected amount of expenses for 2020 and the amounts were coordinated with coordinating beneficiary. According to these amounts the orders were compiled, signed by the person who had the right to do so and were sent to the MoE. The transfer requests were confirmed by the Project Manager, Head of the Nature Conservation Department and Deputy Secretary General of the MoE, after that the transfers were made. The following transfers were (and will be) made as needed, but not in a large amount than is necessary to cover one year's expenses. From the second, transfers also required a correct financial report on previous expenses (financial form and supporting documents). This approach ensures the targeted use of EU contribution and reduces possible risks.

In 2020, the associated beneficiaries submitted financial reports and documents (including timesheets) every two months to learn how to fill reports and compile the documents. Starting from 2021, financial reports are submitted three times a year or more frequently, if needed (transfer of EU contribution, EMT visits, Interim Report). Each beneficiary fills the financial forms itself, either the Project Manager (MoE, EB, RMK, MoRA, UT, EEML, PFC, KEMIT) or bookkeeper (TLU, EOÜ) does it. All financial forms and documents are double-checked by the coordinating beneficiary. Consolidated cost statement was prepared by the coordinating beneficiary according to the financial reports of all beneficiaries.

Documents are kept in two places, originals by the associated beneficiary and copies by the coordinating beneficiary. The last one keeps documents on a server disk with limited access, because they contain delicate personal data (access is allowed only to the Project Manager, Head

of the Nature Conservation Department and Deputy Secretary General). Such an arrangement ensures the preservation of documents even in case of emergency.

To simplify the work, a unified file naming system was used, which significantly saves time when searching for a file. It also provides a good overview of existing files, keeps them in order and allows to discover missing files quickly.

An example of timesheets: firstname_surname_ts_01_2020, firstname_surname_ts_02_2020, firstname_surname_ts_03_2020, etc.).

9.4. Certificate on the financial statement

The financial report covering the first phase was completed in August 2022. Based on the amount of expenses incurred, the EU contribution requested for each beneficiary is less than 325,000 euros and therefore no auditing was necessary. The topic was also discussed with External Monitoring Team.

ANNEX 1: DELIVERABLE AND MILESTONES SCHEDULE

MAIN DELIVERABLE PRODUCTS OF THE PROJECT (first and second phase):

	Code of the			
Name of the Deliverable	associated	Deadline	Actual date of	
	action		completion	
First p	hase 01.01.202	0-30.06.2022		
All deliverables foreseen in the first phase are included in this Interim Report as annexes, except project web site (Action E1 Task 1) and Guidelines for stakeholders (Action A3 Task 1). The address of the project website was sent to the LIFE Unit (including Communication team) and to EMT on April 19, 2022 and it can also be found in the description of Action E1 Task 1. Guidelines for stakeholders is a sub-part of the project homepage ("Nõustamine", available only in Estonian), see also description of Action A3 Task 1.				
Roll-ups ready	E.1.2	3 rd quarter 2020	21.12.2020	
1 st Communication Plan	A.9	4 th quarter 2020	07.12.2020	
Monitoring result scheme for C2 developed	D.1	1 st quarter 2021	Task 1 - national monitoring (started in 2006), Task 2 – 20.02.2021	
Monitoring result scheme for C3 developed	D.1	1 st quarter 2021	15.03.2021	
Guidelines for the consultants	A.3.1 4 th quarter 2021 01.04.2021			
Guidelines for the stakeholders	2holders A.3.1 4 th quarter 2021 01.04.2021			
Project website ready and operational	E.1.1 1 st quarter 2022 04.03.2022			
Second phase 01.07.2022-31.12.2024				
First audit report	F.4	3 rd quarter 2022	Auditing is not necessary because the EU contribution requested by each beneficiary is less than 325,000 euros.	
1st interim report and request for payment	F.1	3 rd quarter 2022	10.02.2023	
Restoration project for wet forest habitats completed	A.6.1	3 rd quarter 2023	Restoration projects will be completed on a site-by-site basis during 2023-2025.	
2 nd Communication Plan	A.9	3 rd quarter 2023	No changes are foreseen.	

Report on stakeholder involvement	C.3	4 th quarter 2023	No changes are
and participatory planning process			foreseen.
Action plan for wet forest habitat	A.1.1	4 th quarter 2023	No changes are
types			foreseen.
Action plan for dry forest habitat	A.1.2	4 th quarter 2023	No changes are
types			foreseen.
Restoration projects for dry forest	A.6.3	4 th quarter 2023	Restoration projects
habitats completed			will be completed on
			a site-by-site basis
			during 2023-2024.
Report on elaborated active forest	A.5	1 st quarter 2024	No changes are
measure			foreseen.
Training system elaborated	A.8	2 nd quarter 2024	No changes are
			foreseen.
Monitoring result scheme for C1	D.1	2 nd quarter 2024	No changes are
developed			foreseen.
Action plan for pollinators adopted	A.2	4 th quarter 2024	No changes are
			foreseen.
Restoration plans for 20 coastal	A.6	4 th quarter 2024	No changes are
areas completed			foreseen.
Different reports, suggestions,	A.7	2020-2030	No changes are
guidelines during the whole project			foreseen.

MAIN MILESTONES OF THE PROJECT (first and second phase):

Name of the Milestone	Code of the associated action	Deadline	Actual date of completion
First phase 01	1.01.2020-30.06	5.2022	
PAF monitoring team established	D.2	1 st quarter 2020	09.03.2020
Project Management Team established and	F.1	1 st quarter 2020	14.02.2020
first meeting of project Management Team organised			
Contracts with associated beneficiaries	F.1	1 st quarter 2020	14.04-
signed			06.05.2020
Personnel of project lead team in MoE	F.1	1 st quarter 2020	01.01.2020
hired (project manager, deputy manager)			
A project kick-off meeting with partners	F.1	2 nd quarter	14.02.2020
organised		2020	
First meetings for forest action plan	A.1.1; A.1.2	2 nd quarter	16.04.2020
working groups held		2020	
Kick off seminar	F.2	2 nd quarter	27.01.2021
		2020	
First 2 camps organized (2021 to 2029	E.3.1	2 nd quarter	20.08.2020
yearly 2 camps)		2020	

Nature Conservation Month organized	E.3.2	2 nd quarter	Opening event
yearly in May 2021 to 2029		2020	in 2020 was
			cancelled due
			to Covid-19.
Project logo approved	E.1.4	4 th quarter 2020	29.03.2020
250 gift bags made and distributed	E.1.5	4 th quarter 2020	Postponed to
			2023.
LIFE Key project level indicators baseline	D.2	1 st quarter 2021	15.06.2021
determined and inserted into the online			
database			
Developing RBAPS methods	A.3.2	1 st quarter 2021	Developing
			started 02/2021,
			approved
			30.06.2022.
Steering Committee set up and the rules of	F.1	1 st quarter 2021	19.02.2021
procedure approved first meeting of the			
Steering Committee organised			
First video clip ready	E.4.2	2 nd quarter 2021	01.04.2021
Carrying out public procurement for the	C.6	4 th quarter 2021	17.09.2020
programmer of the information system			
Developing the methods, tools and info-	A.3.1	4 th quarter 2021	01.09.2021
system for the consultation system			
Consultation system launched	A.3.1	1 st quarter 2022	01.09.2021
Website ready and operational	E.1.1	1 st quarter 2022	04.03.2022
100 ha land purchased	C.5	2 nd quarter	10.08.2021
		2022	
Second phase (01.07.2022-31.1	2.2024	
First phase study trip	A.8	3 rd quarter 2022	No changes are
			foreseen.
Eradication work carried out for the first	C.4	3 rd quarter 2022	Postponed,
year in 44 test plots			3 rd quarter
			2023.
Draft of wet forest expert action plan	A.1.1	4 th quarter 2022	No changes are
compiled			foreseen.
Water and habitat monitoring schemes	D.1	4th quarter	No changes are
established on all habitats that are selected		2022	foreseen.
for restoration and management			
First information boards and signs installed	E.1.2	4 th quarter 2022	No changes are
			foreseen.
Bird's mobile app ready to use	E.4	4 th quarter 2022	No changes are
			foreseen.
Draft of dry forest expert action plan	A.1.2	1 st quarter 2023	No changes are
compiled			foreseen.

Study sites selected, appropriate	A.4	1 st quarter 2023	No changes are
methodology established			foreseen.
2 nd seminar	F.2	1 st quarter 2023	No changes are
			foreseen.
Pilot sites selected and agreements signed	A.3.2	2 nd quarter	No changes are
with land owners		2023	foreseen.
Drafts forest action plans introduced to all	A.1.1; A.1.2	3 rd quarter 2023	No changes are
main stakeholders			foreseen.
1 st Communication Plan executed	E.2.1	3 rd quarter 2023	No changes are
			foreseen.
8 site visits carried out to alien species test	E.2.2	3 rd quarter 2023	No changes are
plots			foreseen.
Test regions are selected, agreements with	C.3.1	4 th quarter 2023	No changes are
farmers have achieved, participatory			foreseen.
planning processes have been launched			
Pre-intervention assessment of	C.3.1	4 th quarter 2023	No changes are
biodiversity, soil health, crop yield has			foreseen.
carried out			
Landscape- and field-scale agroecological	C.3.1	4 th quarter 2023	No changes are
interventions have been applied			foreseen.
First meetings for action plan of semi-	A.1.3	1 st quarter 2024	No changes are
natural grassland working group held			foreseen.
Semi-natural grasslands restored (including	C.2	1 st quarter 2024	No changes are
10 sites of coastal meadows) on 350 ha			foreseen.
Research done, action plan for pollinators	A.2	2nd quarter	No changes are
compiled and submitted by UT to the EB		2024	foreseen.
Second phase study trip	A.8	2 nd quarter	No changes are
		2024	foreseen.
Info day about forest measures for private	E.2.2	2 nd quarter	No changes are
forest owners		2024	foreseen.
Implementing the training system	A.8	3 rd quarter	No changes are
		2024-2029	foreseen.
Preliminary results from farmland bird	A.4	4 th quarter 2024	No changes are
studies			foreseen.
Forest structure and composition on 200 ha	C.1	4th quarter of	No changes are
dry forest habitats improved		2024	foreseen.
80 % waterbodies created	C.3.2	4 th quarter 2024	No changes are
			foreseen.
Additional 140 ha purchased (in total	C.5	4 th quarter 2024	No changes are
240ha purchased)			foreseen.
250 gift bags made and distributed	E.1.5	4 th quarter 2024	No changes are
			foreseen.