

LIFE16 GIE/EE/000665

NATURALLY-EST LIFE

AFTER-LIFE COMMUNICATION PLAN



PREPARED AND PRESENTED BY

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THE PROJECT "NATURALLY-EST LIFE" (PILOTING NATURA 2000 COMMUNICATION IN ESTONIA) WAS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION'S LIFE PROGRAM, THE ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTMENT CENTER FOUNDATION AND THE PROJECT PARTNERS. THIS AFTERLIFE PLAN DOES NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE OFFICIAL VIEWS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION.



PROJECT SUMMARY

**TITLE: NATURALLYEST-LIFE - PILOTING NATURA2000
COMMUNICATION IN ESTONIA**

COORDINATING BENEFICIARY: ESTONIAN FUND FOR NATURE

**ASSOCIATED BENEFICIARIES: UNIVERSITY OF TARTU, ESTONIAN
ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER, OÜ LOODUSKIRI (PARTICIPATED IN
THE FIRST HALF OF THE PROJECT)**

PROJECT DURATION: 15/09/2017 - 15/03/2022

PROJECT BUDGET: 654,350 EURO OF WHICH IS ELIGIBLE 652,300 EURO

**EU FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION REQUESTED: 390,810 EURO (= 59.91%
OF TOTAL ELIGIBLE BUDGET)**

**CO-FINANCED BY: ENVIRONMENTAL INVESTMENT CENTRE AND
PROJECT'S PARTNERS**

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INTRODUCTION

A large part of the economic activity in rural areas exploits Estonian nature and its values in one way or another. In order to preserve important natural values for Estonia and Europe, some activities need to be regulated and some activities need to be restricted. People living in Natura 2000 protected areas often perceive these restrictions as grave injustice. Often also the explanation provided by relevant authorities remains too feeble or too formal. Therefore it will be difficult to understand the needs of nature and the necessity of restrictions. This forms a good ground for conflicts, which in turn will shape attitudes towards nature conservation. How to prevent or mitigate conflicts is perhaps one of the most important key issues facing nature conservation today. In order to study these key issues and pilot solutions, this project NaturallyEst LIFE was launched.

The After-LIFE Communication Plan of the NaturallyEst LIFE project is designed to ensure the dissemination of knowledge and information about the conflicts and appreciation of the NATURA 2000 sites in Estonia, and thus to maximize the demonstrative value of project actions after its completion. It describes the methodological approach, the technical means and the tools with which the project beneficiaries intend to transfer their know-how and experience, and provide guidance to the Environmental Board and other competent public authorities on how they can develop an information and communication strategy to minimize conflicts and gain positive appreciation of Natura 2000 sites in Estonia.

The After-LIFE Communication Plan indicates how beneficiaries will continue after the end of the project communicating the role and importance of conservation of biodiversity in the NATURA 2000 Network in Estonia. Among others, the After-LIFE Communication Plan refers to the resources dedicated to each action, the beneficiaries responsible, the target groups and the timetable according to which the After-LIFE communication actions will be executed for an indicative period of 5 years after the completion of the project.

PROJECT SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

The NaturallyEst LIFE project was designed and carried out with objectives of:

- Resolving nature conservation conflicts and providing legal assistance in conservation questions
- Improving the image of nature conservation and Natura 2000 in Estonian society
- Improving communication in nature conservation practice

To do so the project communication strategy was developed but several project actions required their own specific communication strategies: citizen science campaign “Looking for cowslips”, Natura 2000 helpdesk, Natura 2000 open-air events and citizen science campaign “Attention! Steady! Lichen!” had all their specific targets, actions and results related to the general public. Actions like communication trainings, study tours, handbook, case studies and some of the Natura 2000 helpdesk cases were more specifically directed to officials and spokespersons of conservation. Current After LIFE Communication Plan will give an overview how these actions and results will be carried on.



LESSONS LEARNED FROM PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND THE NEED FOR FOLLOW-UP

The results and actual impact of all three objectives can be assessed only after some time that unfortunately falls out from the project period. New things take time to test and take root in the practice. NaturallyEst LIFE project aimed to pilot different approaches and share experiences between the public sector and the third sector. The project's impact assessment shows that the debate on nature protection in the media has become more meaningful and active during the project. It is certainly not only the effect of this project, but we believe that for example our two citizen science campaigns involving the large amount of the general public have helped to improve the image and broaden the topics of discussion here. The following activities have been shown to be effective enough to continue to be practised.



NATURA 2000 HELPDESK (HD)

The Helpdesk as implemented during the project lifetime proved that people have very different needs and asks about Natura 2000 conservation. As the need was proven by the project there were also specific lessons to learn on future implementation of such a task in Estonia. Firstly the people turning to the HD fell into two very different groups: (1) officials, activists, experts or other involved people like hunters and farmers who are familiar with the Natura 2000 general questions and have specific case that needs expert solutions (2) people who do not have any baseline knowledge and turned to the HD to ask very basic things i.e where I can find information about restrictions, subsidies etc. It is therefore reasonable to target the groups with different methods. People who need more baseline information should have more easy-to-follow guidelines, short study videos etc where they can get the answer for their FAQs. The responsibility for basic answers will remain a task for the Environmental Board. The more advanced cases are not so easily solved and need special consultation services for help. So we concluded that these two target groups need a different approach after the project.



CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERING

Conservation volunteering and activities piloted during the project proved to be a very powerful way to engage people for conservation. The plan for implementation is anticipated in the current After LIFE plan.

COMMUNICATION TRAININGS

The project implemented two communication training sets for officials and conservation spokespersons. The results and the feedback showed that there is a definitive need for this kind of trainings also after the project. The plan for implementation is anticipated in the current After LIFE plan.

CITIZEN SCIENCE CAMPAIGN

The project implemented two citizen science campaigns that demonstrated the need for well designed and user friendly campaigns to involve people in conservation. The plan for implementation is anticipated in the current After LIFE plan.



DATA COLLECTED DURING THE PROJECT

The botanical and lichenological data collected during the citizen science campaigns have been entered into the Estonian national platform PlutoF managed by the University of Tartu Natural History Museum. This ensures the preservation and use of data, including compatibility with the Estonian Nature Information System, as well as making them available to the public if necessary.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Project and campaign websites, youtube videos, roll-ups, handbook, Layman's report and case studies have demonstrated to be interesting to target groups and remain in use. The plan for implementation is anticipated in the current After LIFE plan.

THE LESSONS LEARNED ARE ALSO LISTED BY THE PROJECT IMPACT MONITOR UNIVERSITY OF TARTU IN THEIR FINAL REPORT AS FOLLOWS:

ACTIVITY OF THE PROJECT	NEEDED AS A CONTINUOUS ACTIVITY	OUTCOMES IN TARGET GROUP ACTIVITY	LONGER-TERM IMPACT
Nature conservation advisory board	Advising landowners and residents has ended, instead environmental decision makers should be given advice in the future	Better comprehension of the situation, informed environmental decisions or other practical activities	Other random impact* An opportunity for EELC to think through the forms of strategic partnership with public authorities
Solving legal cases, conflict situations	Needs to be done on an ongoing basis, in an up-to-date format (part of newsletter)	The decision makers read these to grasp the decision framework	
Natura handbook	Introduction of legal concepts in Natura matters	Decision makers use it to check or frame decisions	
Communication trainings	It is advisable to think about the organisational learning process instead of one-off trainings	Environmental officials aquired new knowledge, skills	Develop further new communication training experiences
Outdoor events	Contribution to relations between nature conservation and community	New spokespersons can mediate nature conservation	Other random impact*
Study trips for nature conservation officers	Improves the ability of stakeholders to understand and consult each other	New knowledge, tips	A new project of nature conservation Other random impact*
Citizen science campaigns	Continue experimenting with new campaign models	This campaign format as an example encourages other organisers to experiment	A new narrative in biodiversity communication New campaigns
Volunteer involvement	Preservation of the volunteer camp culture and development of new communities through volunteer camps	Better organising skills, more spokepersons among volunteers for nature conservation	An opportunity for ELF to think about a new leap in the development of camps
Conferences	Discussion on the ways of nature conservation needs to go on	New knowledge, tips, fresh momentum	Other random impact*

AFTER-LIFE COMMUNICATION PLAN

The After-LIFE Communication Plan is designed and developed so as to engage all stakeholders in the project's results. More specifically, the communication and dissemination strategy of the After-LIFE Communication Plan aims to accomplish the following goals (qualitative and quantitative):

- Continuous update of knowledge about the: legal framework regarding the conservation and management of Natura 2000 areas in Estonia; new public engagement and public communication strategies; conflict prevention and mitigation strategies and educating environmental spokesperson on this
- Continuous dissemination of project outputs and publications, such as:
 - Project website with deliverables: www.elfond.ee/naturallyest
 - Cowslip citizen science web page: www.nurmenukk.ee
 - Lichen citizen science web page: www.samblikud.ee
 - Natura 2000 handbook: <https://bit.ly/3QVgfN8>
 - Layman's report: <https://bit.ly/3CCzg2y>
 - Roll-ups in Estonian Fund for Nature office
 - Study videos about cowslip: <https://bit.ly/3To30Gc>
 - Study videos about lichens: <https://bit.ly/3Tf3AGt>
 - Final conference recordings: <https://bit.ly/3pRgsFk>

All the materials will be further disseminated and maintained by project's partners - websites, roll-ups and videos by Estonian Fund for Nature and Natura 2000 handbook by Environmental Law Centre.

Maintenance and expansion of the cooperation networks established with stakeholders, such as:

- Environmental Board
- Association of Estonian Seminatural Community Managers
- Nature Tourism Association
- University of Tallinn
- Mass media and social media journalists
- Tallinn Botanical Garden
- Estonian National Museum
- Municipalities' environmental officers
- Estonian State Audit

TARGET GROUPS OF THE AFTER-LIFE PLAN

During the implementation of the NaturallyEst LIFE project, the beneficiaries cooperated with a great number of local organisations and created lists of interested parties of different project activities. The stakeholders and organisations were invited in project's events including the Natura 2000 open air events and final conference. The lists are focused on specific target groups and key stakeholders, as they were initially defined at the beginning of the project.

The target groups of the After LIFE plan are same as target groups or the project itself: owners of the land in and near Natura 2000 sites, especially farmers and forest owners, developers of possible project on and near Natura 2000 sites, officials in local municipalities, officials at permitting authorities, general public, youth and families, school teachers, Natura 2000 professionals in Estonia and Europe.

PROCESS OF THE AFTER-LIFE PLAN

As some of the project actions had already ended before the end of the project some of the agreements for follow-up were already formed before the end of the project.

- In 2019 when the project ended citizen science campaign “Looking for Cowslips” then agreement was made with University of Tartu to continue the campaign as long as it is scientifically needed.
- In 2020 when the project ended the first public open air hand scything competition a project agreement was made with EEA Grants to continue with organising the competition. Currently the follow-up project has been ended but since 2022 Tallinn Botanical Garden has agreed to organise annually such an event for grassland biodiversity promotion.
- In 2022 several meetings with Environmental Board, Ministry of Environment and LIFE project teams LIFE IP ForEst&FarmLand, WOODEDMEADOW_LIFE and CONNECTING MEADOWS LIFE were held to ensure following up the lessons learned and continuation of piloted methods. CONNECTING MEADOWS LIFE has included the communication training for the semi-natural habitats counsellors into the project activity list.

Communication with Natura 2000 landowners and lessons learned from NaturallyEst LIFE were discussed with Environmental Board, WoodMeadowLIFE project and LIFE IP ForEst&FarmLand. The projects and the EB have agreed to implement the proactive stakeholder targeted communication recommended by NaturallyEst LIFE. Project LIFE IP ForEst&FarmLand has agreed to arrange strategic communication planning for farmers of seminatural communities.

TIMELINE AND BUDGET OF THE AFTER-LIFE PLAN

After-LIFE Communication Action	Responsible body	Timetable	Budget / fund
Helpdesk with legal conservation aid	Environmental Law Centre	Since 2022	Continues as paid services
Communication trainings to Eastern and Central European Natura 2000 professionals	Estonian Fund for Nature	May 2022	3600.00 / Ceeweb for Biodiversity via SaveGreen project
Training series based on the handbook for the representatives of local governments	Environmental Law Centre	Since Autumn 2022	via local municipalities
Dissemination of the Natura 2000 Handbook	Environmental Law Centre		N/R
Communication training for land management specialists	Environmental Board	Since 2019	6000.00
Looking for cowslips campaign continuation	University of Tartu	Since 2020	8000.00
Scientific paper on lichen citizen science campaign	University of Tartu	Autumn 2022	N/R
Seminar for educators and nature conservation officers about joint messages, dissemination of the Layman's report of NaturallyEst LIFE	Ministry of Environment	September 2022	9000.00 / LIFE IP ForEst&FarmLand
Hand scything competition	EEA Grants Tallinn Botanical Garden	2020-2022 Since 2022	10000.00 800.00

After LIFE Communication Action	Responsible body	Timetable	Budget / fund
Approval of consulting and educating system of meadow farmers in Estonia	Environmental Board	By the end of 2022	N/R
Consulting service for managers of semi-natural communities	University of Life Sciences	2023	via Connecting Meadows LIFE
Study videos for landowners of Natura 2000 sites	Environmental Board	2023	via LIFE IP ForEst&FarmLand
Strategic Communication Plan for meadow managers in Estonia	Environmental Board	2023	8000.00 / LIFE IP ForEst&FarmLand
Engagement project development for consultation and education system of forest owners in Natura 2000 areas in Estonia	Estonian Fund for Nature	2023-2025	Project development 1000.00 / Sigrid Rausing Trust
Presentation of Lessons Learned on Estonian Species Protection Conference	University of Tartu	August 2022	N/R
Media training for environmental spokespersons	Estonian Fund for Nature	October 2022	800.00 / Sigrid Rausing Trust

N/R - not relevant

STAFF & TEAM MEMBERS

FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US FOR FUTURE FUN
COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES ON NATURA 2000 SITES



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