



# The role of the LIFE programme in advancing the ecosystem services concept – assessing ecosystem services in LIFE projects

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# Why LIFE?

- ➔ **It is the only EU financial instrument fully dedicated to the environment**
- ➔ **Objective: Protecting and improving the environment; maintaining and improving biodiversity, ecosystems and, in particular, the Natura 2000 network**
- ➔ **IAS - a threat to biodiversity and related ecosystems, human health or the economy**





## Legal background vs. ES

→ **Previous LIFE regulations – no clear reference to ES, but**

***LIFE+ Nature projects*** were to benefit ES like flood protection, improving water quality etc. through nature conservation activities resulting in the preservation or enhancement of these functions for a site or for the whole network in a region.

***LIFE+ Biodiversity projects*** were to contribute to achieving the target of "halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020", and restoring them in so far as feasible,

***LIFE+ Nature and LIFE+ Biodiversity*** projects were to be primarily focussed on nature protection and/or on halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services.



## Legal background vs. ES

***LIFE+ Water projects*** Development of innovative tools and best practices for using Ecosystem Approach and utilization of ecosystem services for support implementation of WFD

***LIFE+ Strategic approaches:*** Promoting integrated planning approaches which consider ecosystem approaches to tackle fragmentation, and developing a Green Infrastructure approach, supporting the multi-purpose use of land by safeguarding and improving ecosystem services.



# Legal background vs. ES

## → Current LIFE regulations

- **The 2014-2020 LIFE Regulation** (EU Regulation 1293/2013 of 20/12/2013): contribute to achieving the targets of Union Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 – incl. maintaining and restoring ecosystems and their services
- **The LIFE Multiannual Work Programme 2014-2017** (Commission Decision 2014/203/EU of 9/03/2014): objective of the program is to contribute to the protection and improvement of the quality of the environment and to halting and reversing biodiversity loss, including the support of the Natura 2000 network and tackling the degradation of ecosystems.



## Priority areas of LIFE vs ES

- **Water sector:** focus on developing and particularly implementing actions which can help Member States move to genuinely integrated water resource management, promoting ecosystem-based approaches where relevant.



- **Soil sector:** projects providing cost-effective solutions improving existing tools or methodologies, or supporting soil functions as part of the wider ecosystem, e.g. for water retention.
- **Forestry:** projects that build on the information collected by existing forest information networks and develop and implement new methods for the collection and reporting of sustainable forest management criteria and indicators. These projects should show how the information and new methods may be used to improve the protection of forest ecosystems.



## Priority areas of LIFE vs ES

- **Air sector:** reducing air pollution that remains the most serious environmental health problem in Europe, and also having a significant impact on ecosystems (e.g. 70 % of the EU's Natura 2000 sites suffer from eutrophication as a result of air pollution).
- **Governance and Information: awareness-raising**
  - on air quality in urban areas and its health effects where people and ecosystems are exposed to high levels of pollutants.
  - on Natura 2000 to ensure a significant change in awareness of the natural values (including ecosystem services) for which Natura 2000 has been set up.
- **Climate change adaptation:** support for implementation of adaptation strategies, including specific vulnerability assessments focusing on highly vulnerable areas as well as implementing innovative adaptation approaches, preparation of specific investment plans



# Priority areas of LIFE vs ES

**Nature and Biodiversity** projects are still to be primarily *focussed on* nature protection and/or on *halting the* loss of biodiversity and *the degradation of ecosystem services*.

**Biodiversity projects** aimed at implementing Target 2 of the Biodiversity Strategy, through the integration of actions to maintain and enhance ecosystems and their services into the activities of the public or private sectors, by establishing Green as well as Blue Infrastructure and restoring degraded ecosystems. These projects should test and apply approaches aimed at:

- (a) mapping and assessing (including valuation) of ecosystems (including marine) and their services;
- (b) restoring ecosystems (including coastal and marine) and their services;
- (c) developing methodologies for valuation of and payment for ecosystem services (including tangible and intangible services);



# Funding - Projects

## Traditional projects

**Integrated projects** - implementing **large scale** environmental and climate **plans or strategies:**

- **Nature:** Prioritised Action Frameworks (PAF)
- **Water:** River Basin Management Plan (RBMP)
- **Air:** Air Quality Plans
- **Waste:** Waste Management Plans and/or Waste Prevention Programmes
  
- **Climate Change Mitigation (CCM):** greenhouse gases strategies
- **Climate Change Adaptation (CCA):** low carbon economy, climate resilient society



# Funding - NCFE

**NCFE (Natural Capital Financing Facility)** is a new policy instrument for innovative pilot projects. It offers the potential to improve the cost-effectiveness of the LIFE Programme through leverage and complementarity. It is managed by EIB.

It contributes to implementing Union policy and legislation **in the area of nature and biodiversity**, in particular by applying, developing, and testing projects and demonstrating their viability. It also supports the further development, implementation and management of the Natura 2000 network and increases its resilience through protecting and restoring ecosystems also outside the network.

Regarding **climate change adaptation**, the NCFE contributes to implementing Union policy on adaptation, in particular by developing, testing and demonstrating ecosystem based approaches for climate change adaptation. It also contributes to developing and demonstrating innovative adaptation technologies, systems, methods and instruments that are suitable for being replicated, transferred or mainstreamed.



# Project reporting on ES

## Compulsory monitoring action since 2011 (NAT and BIO):

- Primary objective is to analyse the possible effect of project actions on ecosystem service(s), eg. the direct links between *Natura 2000* management measures and key ecosystem services provided.
- The impact of project actions aimed at restoring multi-functional ecosystems (rivers, floodplains, forests, peatlands or mires) should be assessed as far as possible in economic terms (in monetary terms or if not possible with a qualitative estimation).
- All these should be consistent if possible with the methodology on Mapping and Assessing Ecosystems and their Services (MAES).
- Enable decision makers to weigh any added ecological and possible economic value of improved ecosystem services reached through the project against the cost of the actions to improve them further or maintain their improved condition beyond the LIFE project.



# Project reporting on ES

## **Projects should select a method after assessing:**

- the objectives and scale of the project,
- the reasons for targeting a specific ecosystem and ecosystem service,
- the available resources (time, data, expertise, budget)

## **Project should assess (involving stakeholders)**

- baseline
- project impact (3 years minimum)



# Where are we?

## Survey

- How do LIFE projects relate to ecosystems?
- How do they deal with ecosystem services, which kind of ES?
- How do they report on ES?
- What resources they use?
- What indicators are used?
- Experiences?
- Help needed?





# Where are we headed

- **Provide guidance** to project monitors and to the projects.
- Analyse information from projects (ES monitoring reports).
- Compile project level data at LIFE program level (using indicators) to see impact and trends.
- **Feedback to policy** makers on practical implementations/use of methods, indicators.





# More information

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/index.htm>

