



LIFE
Viva
Grass



EU LIFE Platform meeting in Estonia

COSTING THE EARTH? – translating the ecosystem services concept into practical decision making

Tallinn – 10th to 12th May 2017

Despite widespread conservation efforts there is a growing argument that traditional approaches have failed to stem the tide of biodiversity loss. One potential solution, increasing in popularity as well as generating controversy, is to assign values to the benefits that ecosystems provide for humanity (ecosystem services), and to incorporate these into conservation and management decision-making.

Target 2 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020¹ seeks to maintain and restore ecosystems and their services across the member states with obvious shared benefits in relation to climate change and the wider environment. In October 2015, the European Commission published a Mid Term Review of the Strategy². The report concluded that progress has been made on policy and knowledge improvement actions under this target and some restoration activities have taken place in Member States. However, this has not yet halted the trend of degradation of ecosystems and their services.

This Platform Meeting, hosted by the Baltic Environmental Forum under the auspices of the LIFE 13 Viva Grass Project³, will showcase a variety of restoration techniques, innovative approaches to improving our knowledge and understanding of ecosystem services, new management initiatives and governance challenges facing the member states. The event will provide answers and solutions which may be instrumental in overcoming some of the key barriers and bottlenecks to halting biodiversity loss throughout Europe.

The project-based approach of the EU LIFE programme has proved a good fit with nature conservation policies, providing practical examples of sustainable and equitable ways of maintaining and restoring ecosystems. We have organised our meeting around three key themes:

- *Defining/mapping ecosystem services*: we explore the role that LIFE projects play in developing, testing and applying different tools and methods.
- *Valuing ecosystem services*: we will discuss the methods developed for valuation, outcomes and findings from valuations, barriers and look at some practical examples from LIFE projects.
- *Application of the ecosystem services concept in decision making*: how can we take the lessons learnt from the LIFE projects and use the results to inform policy.

Our meeting will explore these three themes, visit locations in Estonia where we can see examples of issues relating to ecosystem services in both the rural and urban environments, and see some practical solutions. In the workshop sessions, we intend to explore common solutions and practices. Our conclusions will be transmitted to the Natural Capital Directorate in the European Commission's DG Environment and other relevant policymakers.

¹ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0244&from=EN>

² <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015DC0478&from=EN>

³ Viva Grass aims to support maintenance of biodiversity and ecosystem services provided by grasslands, through encouraging ecosystem based approach to planning and economically viable grassland management.