



## Costing the Earth? - translating the ecosystem services concept into practical decision making EU LIFE Platform meeting on Ecosystem Services

10-12 May 2017, Sokos Hotel Viru, Tallinn, Estonia

### REPORT

#### **Introduction to the event.** *Heidrun Fammler, Baltic Environmental Forum*

H. Fammler introduced the topic, goals and agenda of the event. She informed that 50 LIFE projects from 16 countries were participating in the meeting. The event was organised in cooperation of the EU LIFE Programme and LIFE Viva Grass project.

The goals of the event:

- to identify the relationships between LIFE projects and the application of ecosystem services concept in the EU
- to explore the contribution our LIFE projects make to testing, applying and enhancing the ecosystem services concept in the European Union
- to discuss how LIFE programme contributes to policy and decision making
- to contribute to guidance for assessing and applying ecosystem services concepts at both the LIFE programme level and at the individual LIFE project level.

#### **Opening address.** *Marko Pomerants, Minister of the Environment of Estonia*

The Minister welcomed all the participants in Tallinn, Estonia. He stressed that we all are parties of EU Biodiversity Strategy aiming at halting biodiversity loss by 2020. As the mid-term review showed that biodiversity loss and degradation of ecosystems and their services in EU have continued, a greater effort must be put into this area. National and regional frameworks to promote restoration and green infrastructure need to be developed and implemented.

Nature is a foundation of our society, people do not take it always into consideration. In order to provide essential services, ecosystems must be healthy and diverse. There are still knowledge gaps but we are more and more aware. 25% of species are threatened to extinction. Ecosystem services providing tangible results are relatively easy to measure but some others are more complicate to evaluate. After mapping ES we can move further with assessing/valuing the services. We need to address these difficult questions.

The Minister also gave an overview about activities related to ES in Estonia, including mapping and evaluation of ES by 2018 and development of methodology for that. In 2015 a project on mapping ES was launched in Estonia.

Mapping of ES is currently undertaken by all Member States. We must start think about practical application, especially in areas of land use and spatial planning. It is essential to take a comprehensive approach. In Estonia there are two strands: evaluating ES and increase awareness. More than half of Estonian habitats and species of

The project "Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands" (LIFE Viva Grass) No. LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189 is co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Programme, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, Estonian Environmental Investment Centre and the project partners.





EU importance are in favourable conservation status. Different projects are dealing with the topic, such as LIFE Viva Grass developing an integrated planning tool for grassland management.

State Forest Management Centre is responsible for visitor management in protected areas in Estonia and contributing a lot to awareness rising through info stands, nature trails and hiking routes, nature information centres and a special website where people can find information on recreation areas and visitor infrastructure (<http://loodusegakoos.ee/where-to-go/search-options>).

Other activities promoting environmental awareness include for example nature protection month in Estonia, different excursions, hikes and educational events organised for people, online apps about nature.

89% of Estonians consider themselves to be environmentally aware, 55% have visited nature trails. Closeness to nature is an intrinsic part of national identity of Estonians. 51% of Estonia is under forest cover, which offers different ecosystem services, including timber, wildlife habitats etc. A recent debate has highlighted the cultural importance of forest. ES approach allows integrating all different aspects in planning and decision making. But it needs also some explanation because sometimes people are not aware of all aspects. E.g. while some think that bees are annoying pest, others recognise their importance.

Estonian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (from 1st of July to 31 December 2017; [www.EU2017.ee](http://www.EU2017.ee)) will focus on eco-innovation (together with Austria and Bulgaria having Presidency in 2018). It should be self-evident that all innovation should take environmental issues into account. On 24-26.10.2017 a seminar on „Nature-based Solutions: From Innovation to Common-Use“ will take place in Tallinn.

The Minister concluded that our task to incorporate ES into decision making and find a balance between development and environmental sustainability is far from easy, and hoped that seminar results will contribute to this challenging task.

**Keynote: Where do we stand with ecosystem services concept in the EU? Integrating Ecosystems, their Services and Values into Decision Making.** *Jakub Wejchert, European Commission, DG Environment, Nature and Biodiversity Unit*

Jakub Wejchert gave an overview on ongoing work on EU level concerning integrating ecosystem services into decision making.

**Keynote: Is Ecosystem Services policy working? What progress has been made and how do we measure success?**

*Rob Bugter, Wageningen University and Research Centre, Alterra, Netherlands*

Rob Bugter analysed in his presentation the progress towards halting loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services – where there is progress and where it is insufficient and why. He also explained how the concept of ecosystem services can be helpful in decision processes and made some recommendations for further steps.

**Discussion:**

The project “Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands” (LIFE Viva Grass) No. LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189 is co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Programme, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, Estonian Environmental Investment Centre and the project partners.





- Importance of children's education to connect them to nature was discussed. Massive urbanisation has caused disconnection from nature. People should be encouraged to go out to nature (however, we cannot force them)
- An opinion was expressed that Natura 2000, ecosystem services and nature-based solutions should not be three different tracks but they should support each other, e.g. ecosystem services should help communicate importance of Natura 2000/nature conservation to part of society through showing the benefits. ES concept should not cost us money, only show additional value.
  - The slide was showing how national governments or policy makers at lower level often perceive these three tracks. Extra effort is still needed for applying ES concept but it should not cost much if done smartly. Good communication is needed to show how these three tracks support each other.
- We have to see historically how different policies have been added on. MSFD, WFD etc. can be complementary and support each other. Integration is important.

**Small but Beautiful. The challenges of implementing the Ecosystem Services concept in Estonia.** *Lauri Klein, Environmental Agency, Estonia*

Lauri Klein gave a brief overview on Estonian ecosystems, their services and protection as well as introduced Estonian MAES project ELME („Essential Tools for Integrating Socio-Economic and Climate Change Data into Assessing and Forecasting Biodiversity Status, and Ensuring Data Availability”, 2015-2023) and highlighted the biggest challenges in implementing ES concept in Estonia.

**The role of the LIFE programme in advancing the ecosystem services concept – assessing ecosystem services in LIFE projects.** *Laszlo Becs, European Commission, DG Environment, LIFE Unit*

Laszlo Becs described the relations and contribution of the LIFE Programme and its different priority areas to ecosystem services. He also informed about NCF (Natural Capital Financing Facility) - a new policy instrument for innovative pilot projects – and about reporting on ES in LIFE projects – the requirements and relevant survey among the projects.

Discussion:

- Projects need to monitor impact on ES but how these monitoring results are used?
  - The analysis of reports on project level has been done but the results are not yet aggregated. The guidance document for the projects is under preparation.

**What is going on at programme level?** *Christian Strasser, European Commission, DG Environment, LIFE Unit*

Christian Strasser informed about currently ongoing LIFE Mid-Term-Evaluation, the next Multi-Annual-Financial Framework of the European Union (MFF) 2021 – 2028, LIFE winning of EU Ombudsman Award for “Excellence in Collaboration” and activities to celebrate LIFE 25 year anniversary.

The project “Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands” (LIFE Viva Grass) No. LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189 is co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Programme, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, Estonian Environmental Investment Centre and the project partners.





#### Discussion:

- It was discussed that there are less and less applications because compiling applications has become more and more complicate, it needs a lot of work to prepare an application. Regulations should be made easier.
  - The applicants should inform the Commission what exactly is complicate and where the administrative burden should be reduced.

#### **Project-scaled ES assessment / Application of the TESSA tool in LIFE+ Nature projects Sustainable Ordunte (LIFE11 NAT/ES/704) and Tremedal (LIFE11 NAT/ES/707). José María Fernández García, HAZI Foundation, Spain**

José María Fernández García briefly introduced the LIFE+ Nature projects Sustainable Ordunte and Tremedal and described the challenges and results of assessing the impact of these projects on ecosystem services with help of the TESSA tool.

#### Discussion:

- This was the first phase, will you make an ex-post assessment?
  - We have worked with scenario, had baseline at first and the scenario for when the project will be completed. We need some more years after the project to see how the real results will change the ES in the area. We will not make ex-post assessment, may be will write an after-LIFE project.
- How did you distinguish between nature and non-nature tourism?
  - Regional statistics on rural and ecotourism for the particular municipality was used, which was based on number of nights spent in rural/farm houses.
- The project increased 15% of bog area but tourism was there also before that. It cannot be said that increase of tourism comes from bog restoration.
- The trade-off between forest income and carbon sequestration is also problematic - politicians often only see the income loss.
  - The project also includes awareness rising activities to increase awareness on nature values on provincial scale. The forest area is not private, it belongs to the municipality. The income loss is compensated by the LIFE project.

#### **LIFE12 ENV/UK/473 NaturEtrade: creating a market place for ecosystem services. Peter Long, Biodiversity Institute, the University of Oxford, UK**

Peter Long introduced the Naturetrade – a demonstration project to create a scalable infrastructure to enable landowners to assess ecosystem services provided by their land and build a web-based trading platform to support payments for ecosystem services.

#### Questions & discussion:

The project “Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands” (LIFE Viva Grass) No. LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189 is co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Programme, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, Estonian Environmental Investment Centre and the project partners.





- You have done great job valuing the land. Do you really see the contractor who will pay for this in long term?
  - It is a demonstration project. It could work if get people from both sides.
- According to contract, farmers have to maintain the land but what about enhancing? Why only 10 broad land cover classes are considered?
  - We had to be simple, although this technology could be used to create scenarios, define the best places where to plant trees or to do something else. Simplified system has its advantages, e.g. to inform politicians.
- How confident are you that the model works in Mediterranean, southern countries?
  - We use high quality data, all estimates are consistent across EU.
- Working group on ecosystem services is exploring nature credits, carbon credits. Could it be applicable for site managers?
  - Yes
- Do you have ground data? How confident you are that your model is accurate on the ground?
  - Yes, we have ground data and we are confident. Our algorithms are probably the best possible.
- The relationship between biodiversity and specific species and ES: There is lot of scientific evidence that ES increase when biodiversity increases. But in some cases it is opposite. And sometimes it might have a negative effect on endangered species. How do you avoid unwanted results in your tool?
- The tool is based on maintaining what is already there, therefore there cannot happen much bad.

**LIFE13 ENV/LT/189 Vivagrass, the Integrated Planning Tool for grassland management.** *Žymantas Morkvėnas, Baltic Environmental Forum*

Žymantas Morkvėnas explained the reasons for developing LIFE Viva Grass project, introduced the aims of the project and the integrated planning/decision support tool developed in the project.

**Questions & discussion:**

- How weighting is addressed in this tool? Setting weights can make a difference.
  - We are still discussing technological aspects and agreeing on weights.
  - Bundles and trade-offs of ecosystem services is a complicate issue, we have to go deeper into that and see how trade-offs work.
  - We have selected the cases, partners representing different levels of application, to test the tool application and to develop the tool.
- Could you bring Flintstone back on some sites, rewild Europe, bring bison back?
  - We have the socio-economic layers, which are very important precondition to maintain the areas.
- We would need this tool for all over EU, however, the situation is different in different parts of EU. Would it make sense for other Member States to take over this model?
  - Technologically it is definitely possible, the question is how relevant these cases/decision making systems are for diffnt Member States. If the solutions programmed in the tool would

The project “Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands” (LIFE Viva Grass) No. LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189 is co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Programme, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, Estonian Environmental Investment Centre and the project partners.





work then it could be used. It could be discussed further, in autumn a smaller training seminar is planned in Viva Grass.

**Mapping and assessment of ecosystems and their services at different spatial scales.** *Prof. Panayotis Dimpoulos, University of Patras, Greece*

Panayotis Dimpoulos described the process of MAES – Mapping and Assessment of Ecosystems and their Services according to Action 5 of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the different MAES working streams and the conceptual framework of MAES. He also explained the need for implementing MAES at different spatial (and temporal) scales.

**Valuing ecosystem services at the project level: what do we want to achieve and how best to go about it?** *Jenny Merriman, Birdlife International, and Michael MacDonald, Royal Society for the Protection of Birds*

Jenny Merriman gave a brief overview on policy documents and existing initiatives and tools related to assessment of ecosystem services/natural capital at the project level. Michael MacDonald informed about the results of the survey of BirdLife partners on how they manage to assess project impact on ecosystem services according to relevant LIFE guidance. They concluded that clear methodological guidelines would be needed as well as information/capacity building on relevant tools and resources.

**The ecosystem services framework in decision making.** *Marc Metzger, School of Geosciences, The University of Edinburgh*

Marc Metzger provided international examples of applying the ecosystem services framework in decision making, followed by a recent assessment of the level of integration of the ecosystem services framework in EU policy. He compared this EU assessment with the Scottish policy context and ended with local example using the concept in land use planning in the Pentland Hills Regional Park. As a conclusion he highlighted the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to applying ES concept in decision making.

**WORKING GROUPS**

The goal for the work group discussions was to harness the expertise of the LIFE project practitioners to help inform the LIFE Unit on the most practical and cost effective ways of assessing the contribution individual projects make to the ecosystem services (ES) assessment in the LIFE programme and highlight the potential and strengths of LIFE in advancing the respective themes.

**WORK GROUP 1: Defining and mapping ecosystem services.** *Moderated by Anda Ruskule, reported by Íñigo Ortiz de Urbina & Dana Prižavoite*

The experience of LIFE and other projects in defining and mapping of ecosystem services was introduced by the following cases:

The project “Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands” (LIFE Viva Grass) No. LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189 is co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Programme, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, Estonian Environmental Investment Centre and the project partners.





- Mapping and identifying grassland ecosystem services in the LIFE Viva Grass project, *by Miguel Villoslada Pecina, Estonia*;
- A scan tool for ecosystem services from water extraction, nature conservation, recreation, coastal protection and raw material in Amsterdam Dune project, *by Luc Geelen, The Netherlands*;
- Defining and mapping soil based ecosystem services at different scales: a flexible methodological approach at multiple governance levels, *by Francesca Ugolini, Italy*;
- Integrated mapping and assessment of ecosystem services: example from the Czech Republic, *by David Vačkář, Czech Republic*;
- The establishment, monitoring and valuation of ecosystem services of stormwater wetlands: a case study from Finland, *by Outi Wahlroos, Finland*;
- Protection of key ecosystem services by adaptive management of climate change endangered Mediterranean socio-ecosystems in LIFE AdaptaMed project, *by Rut Aspizua, Spain*.

Session moderator, Mrs. Anda Ruskule opened the discussion part with short introduction to the context of defining and mapping ecosystem services (ES) related to EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020 and LIFE projects. She adverted the main reasons, why ES mapping might be needed within LIFE projects:

- assessing the impact of the project activities;
- pilot cases for achievement of the Biodiversity Strategy targets;
- communication and awareness rising tool;
- support in decision making;
- holistic view and ecosystem approach in management of natural resources.

She also emphasized few major challenges of ES mapping, including interpretation of ecosystem service concept, insufficient understanding of ecological processes and functions behind many ES, different classification systems and variety of indicators for assessment ES, variety of mapping methods for different scales, contexts and tiers as well as data availability, expertise and other resources required (time and costs).

Discussions started with an example from Finland where in one fresh water habitat project needs to map underwater nature and need to develop specific ES mapping method, but there is lack of knowledge and reference information on ecosystem conditions and how to connect them to ES. The discussion group admitted that, in such cases, every LIFE project is developing new methodology and later this results in diversity of methodological approaches. Projects are using different ES classification systems and, at its discretion, selecting variety of indicators for ES assessment. This was also confirmed by the previous presentations, revealing variety of mapping methods at different scales, contexts and tiers, which later makes difficult to compare the ES assessment results among the projects. Projects also have different interpretations what they need to map: demand, current status or changes.

The discussions continued with more conceptual issues, what is ES assessment in relation to LIFE projects. Ecosystem service approach is used to assess the impacts of habitats changes or implementation of different project actions. ES mapping can be also a good communication approach with stakeholders and local people. However, participants did not have common understanding on what is the main target of ES assessment in LIFE projects. Several main targets were mentioned in discussion:

- measure improvement of biodiversity;

The project “Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands” (LIFE Viva Grass) No. LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189 is co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Programme, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, Estonian Environmental Investment Centre and the project partners.





- understand benefits of projects;
- inform decision makers.

Participants suggested that the European Commission should clarify the purpose and scope of the ES assessment within LIFE projects.

The next topic of discussion was how to raise the knowledge and competence of LIFE projects with regard to ES assessment. Some participants advised to use several ongoing project experiences and developed platforms (Esmeralda, OpenNESS, OPERAs, Oppla, ESP, BASE). The discussion group members also recommended to the LIFE programme to make a review of different existing platforms and include overview in the guidelines. There was also a proposal for LIFE Unit to collaborate more with MAES working group and get involved in their actions, for example, MAES group is organizing meeting in June 2017 about conservation status linkage to ecosystem services. An idea was brought up to make a platform where to spread practical experience generated by LIFE projects focusing on ES.

Majority of the group agreed that development of ES defining and mapping methodologies are complicated for those who are not scientists and all LIFE projects do not have capacities to carry out ES assessment. In such cases, beneficiaries have to contract external expertise, which might require additional resources (time and costs).

All participants agreed that the purpose of ES assessment in the context of LIFE projects shall be clarified and a common framework for assessment of ES shall be established, which means standardise approach determining the appropriate ES mapping and assessment methods for particular scales and tiers (expected results of the ESERALDA project in this context might be very useful). It would be good also to use one common ES classification system for all projects, instead of developing new ones. A common methodological framework should provide definitions and indicators for ES assessment in different ecosystems, because now most of projects do not understand, which indicators and how many they should apply. LIFE programme should provide a guidance through a tier approach with feasible minimum standard of ES assessment in projects which are not directly related to ES. The biggest challenges could be with implementation of the ES approach in integrated LIFE projects.

All participants came to an agreement that a common methodological framework is absolutely needed for mapping ES in LIFE projects. LIFE programme need to use already existing terminology, methods, tools, but evaluate the best practice and experience examples for guidelines development.

**WORK GROUP 2: Valuation of ES.** Moderated by Kristina Veidemane, reported by Inga Račinska & Justas Gulbinas

The experience of LIFE and other projects in valuation of ecosystem services was introduced by the following cases:

- Valuing social and cultural ecosystem services in Cumbria Bog LIFE+ project, by Jane Lusardi, UK
- Evaluation of ecosystem services of Natura 2000 sites in Calabria, by Claudio Marciano, Italy

The project “Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands” (LIFE Viva Grass) No. LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189 is co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Programme, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, Estonian Environmental Investment Centre and the project partners.





- The ecological services, social benefits and economic value of ES in Natura 2000 sites in Crete, *by Michalis Probonas, Greece*
- Identification of ES in quarries; monitoring and evaluation of ES significance of quarries in the landscape, *by Kathleen Mercken, Belgium*
- Qualitative and quantitative valuation of ES and innovative models for financing including Payment for ES (PES), *by Giampiero Mazzocchi, Italy*
- Economic valuation of ecosystem services for implementation areas, *by Inga Hoņavko, Latvia*

The discussion started from a question from Simonas Valatka. He was concerned that there is a lack of assessment of ES connected to health issues. Although some of the participants agreed with the statement, they introduced several ways how these ES could be measured:

- In indirect ways, by valuing pest regulation management, for example invasive mosquitos;
- Direct costs for valuing ES can be acquired from medical institutions and by questionnaires.

It was also agreed that ES related to health value could be divided to very specific cases and to more general ones, as issues related to mental health.

The next topic discussed was the perspective of valuing ES and the value itself. The question whose opinion matters more in ES assessment was raised. Usually there are two main groups who use the ES, the local communities and the “outsiders” (tourists). Both of these groups have different ES needs and may find that the most valuable ES for one group are not valued at all by the other. Therefore, when assessing ES, the target group must be chosen carefully, considering the background of the project and the environment. Also, connected to this, there is the issue of scale of assessment. For example, tourists usually visit a site once and bring a lot of money, while the locals bring little money but more frequently. This should also be taken into account when valuing ES, as the values of the same ES could really differ looking from the perspective of different target groups.

Coming back to the value of ES itself and ways of evaluating, most of the group agreed that the values are relative and therefore economics should not be a priority for assessing. The method of monetary valuation was named as “dangerous”, as it creates a risk that all nature (even the most protected areas) has a calculated value, which can be bought out and developed in a non-appropriate way. It was agreed that biophysical values are easier to understand, but these can only be easily obtained for provisioning group of ES. Although it was agreed that the monetary method is a risky one, it was also stated that it was introduced by the community of ecologists in the first place. Adding to that Mr. Michael MacDonald said that it was created to let people to better understand the value of nature and if it is not the environmentalists who evaluate the nature first, then someone else will and it might be, that the valuation results will not stand on the side of nature. Finally, it was agreed that the methods chosen for valuation depend on what is the goal of valuation and what decisions you need to make based on those valuations. For example, everyone agreed that the monetary method is necessary when you come to development of ES based RDP measures and relevant policy development.

Next, the process of assessing ES in LIFE projects was discussed. It starts by picking out relevant ES for assessment for the areas of the project. This can be done in various approaches, for example: asking stakeholders which ES are important for them or analysing the land use. Next comes collection of data, which is

The project “Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands” (LIFE Viva Grass) No. LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189 is co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Programme, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, Estonian Environmental Investment Centre and the project partners.





highly dependent on the scale of the assessment. It was also noted that ecosystems are dynamic and therefore the values can fluctuate, also regarding the project activities. Therefore, short term hops and drops in ES values could be seen in the project lifetime.

Also, some open questions and issues were raised:

- Question of demand: is it relevant to assess the ES, which are not demanded in the area?
- Risk-based approach can be used, which shows what you will have in ES values if you do not implement the measures;
- Is money saved by ecosystems vs. development of new infrastructure included in the assessment of ES?
- ES value differs from site to site –thus the benefit transfer method has to be applied with care;
- Decisions are made on local scale, that is why ES should be assessed on local scale;
- In some cases, demand must be “created” to show the value of ES in the area.

Lastly, the issue of resources and assistance needed for valuing ES in LIFE projects was discussed. The conclusions of the discussion state:

- In order to have quality assessment results involvement of scientists is needed or/also allocation of money in the project budget for assessment of ES. It is hard to assess the impact at the end of the project, because the projects are too short to measure the change, therefore budget for assessment in the after-LIFE project stage should be allocated also;
- Social scientist expertise is very much needed in the assessment process;
- Initial LIFE training or guidance is needed. A template could be provided followed by case studies;
- Assessment of ES in LIFE projects could be divided into two levels: basic assessment of ES in a LIFE project; on top of that, optionally, a detail assessment in a chosen case study;
- Platform of ES assessments best practices could be created. It was agreed that the Oppla platform could be used and that it could have a menu entry dedicated for LIFE projects;
- Minimal requirements should be set in the LIFE programme for assessing impact of the project through ES. Different requirements and indicators could be set for sub-programmes;
- Indicators for ES assessment from various cases could be shared on the platform for other projects to choose and learn how they work.

**WORK GROUP 3: Application of ES in decision making.** Moderated by Žymantas Morkvėnas, reported by Bent Jepsen & Merle Kuris

The experience of LIFE and other projects in application of ecosystem services in decision making was introduced by the following cases:

- LIFE Blue Natura - Contributing to better understanding of Blue carbon sink habitats, improve regional policies to mitigate climate change and influence regional law on climate change, *by Soledad Vivas, Spain*
- LIFE PeatLandUse - Predictive modelling of ES after peatland re-use, trade-off calculation and decision support tool development, *by Miia Parviainen, Finland*

The project “Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands” (LIFE Viva Grass) No. LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189 is co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Programme, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, Estonian Environmental Investment Centre and the project partners.





- LIFE SAM4CP - Development of a digital simulator (usable by decision makers) for good planning and promotion of land use practices that preserve the ecosystem functions of soils, *by Simonetta Alberico, Italy*
- EcoCoLIFE - Ecological coherence and ecosystem services and how they can be used to influence planning and policy decisions, *by Paul Sizeland, Scotland*
- GREEN4GREY - A multifunctional green and blue infrastructure in peri-urban areas and participative design, *by Pieter de Corte, Belgium*
- Different perceptions of biodiversity, ecosystem services and values (7th framework project BESAFE), *by Rob Bugter, The Netherlands*

The group discussed about application of ES concept and different tools in decision making as well as challenges, opportunities and solutions related to it. The importance of involvement of stakeholders, including politicians and decision makers amongst others, and using „their language“ in communication was stressed. To use the right arguments, it is important to know what stakeholders are thinking and valuing. Also non-instrumental, intrinsic, emotional arguments, which are often neglected, should be used more. It was also pointed out that one tool for all would not work, we might need different tools for different purposes and stakeholders. Decision makers understand the monetary language, however, one must be careful with calculating ES values into monetary value because then politicians can have an impression that they should only consider money. We should try to include also things that are not so easy to evaluate and point out also other values and aspects.

Representatives of decision makers/Baltic ministries of environment in the group expressed an opinion that it would be helpful to have tool(s) showing the impact of decisions - what it will cost for people. The tools should be translated into simple language, understandable for everybody; the figures help to convince other sectors. It was also pointed out that different level of detail of ES assessment might be needed for different purposes, e.g. for land use planning we need a fine scale, on policy level more generic scale. It was also proposed that may be the tools created in LIFE projects could be used to analyse different scenarios and lead to change of CAP.

The difficulties related to involvement of authorities and politicians were discussed and it was concluded that it is a lot about communication, about understanding how the other side communicates. E.g. we have to understand how parliament works, to see where we can feed in with our work into policy debates. We should explain to the politicians that the developed tools are not creating additional tasks for them but aiming at making their life easier. Finally it was concluded that environmental education is the basis for everything, people start to act when they care.

Information was shared on Action plan on people, nature and the economy, recently adapted by the European Commission [http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness\\_check/action\\_plan/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/legislation/fitness_check/action_plan/index_en.htm). Incorporating ES in planning and decision making on different levels will be supported by relevant guidelines developed by the EC by the end of 2018. Projects are welcome to provide input into these guidelines.

### **The main conclusions from the working group:**

#### **Challenges**

- Do we need the tools? Who do we make the tools for?

The project “Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands” (LIFE Viva Grass) No. LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189 is co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Programme, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, Estonian Environmental Investment Centre and the project partners.





- Non-instrumental intrinsic, emotional values are presently undervalued,
- Concentrating on just one value includes a risk of crowding out!
- The differences between the regions in EU dictate different strategies for involvement of stakeholders/decision makers
- Landowners are going to be more and more used to being compensated for nature conservation, what happens if one day the funding will not be sufficient?
- Adjusting LIFE timetable to process of legislative process.
- Tools are complicate to explain and understand for stakeholders/users
- Also examples of less favourable examples, e.g. transformation of woodlands to heath with neutral ES balance
- Bottlenecks are not so much related to the tools as such or the quality of them, but lack of commitment of policy makers and decision makers. How can this be ensured?
- Are there any procedures for decision making where we can hook up on procedures?

### Opportunities

- A number of LIFE projects provide experience in working on inclusion of ES concept in decision making.
- Issues are similar across EU, it is important to build on local experience.
- Scottish water is an attractive service, due to Scottish whiskey - probably much more than C-sequestration,
- Azores birds: simple examples of (monetary) value of habitats of birds (e.g. protection against flood) help to create acceptance for conservation work. Needs to be explained in a simple way! ES evaluation can be a good tool for communication.
- Ongoing round of consultations of groups in DG ENV and others how to engage ES and different tools in decision making
- We can attach to requirements for evidence based decision making... tools, models etc. It can be a way to improve the basis for decisions
- Action plan following fitness check defines that guidance is needed to integrate ES in planning and decision making by 2018! LIFE project experience very appreciated!
- Capacity building measures need to be planned in 2018-2019 /- LIFE projects can provide valuable inputs!

### Solutions

- Talk in the language of the stakeholders/decision makers and adapt to their priorities, which may be different than biodiversity!
- Start the project simple – offering quick wins!
- Integrate ES requirements in EIAs, CAP etc.
- When preparing decision basis for politicians scientific basis is very important, but often inputs need to be translated into their language
- Use the human element, e.g. making ministers adopt a species, etc.
- Show to politicians/policy makers that using ES concept and different tools is not additional task but can make their life easier!
- The stick or the carrot?

The project “Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands” (LIFE Viva Grass) No. LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189 is co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Programme, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, Estonian Environmental Investment Centre and the project partners.





**Overview on results of survey of LIFE projects on „How do LIFE projects relate to Ecosystem Services?“. Ben Delbaere, NEEMO LIFE monitoring team**

Ben Delbaere informed that there were 73 responses, including 44 of this meeting. The projects answered mostly that they were directly related to ES, as provider or user. The approaches how projects deal with ES include soft approaches such as communication, engaging stakeholders but also technical approaches (mapping, modelling). The projects are dealing with various ES categories. Most of projects have not yet reported on the evaluation of ES. Concerning the resources, publications were very much used, the databases not so much.

**Drawing to together the lessons learnt from the workgroups to inform the guidance documents. Moderated by Ben Delbaere & Lynne Barratt, NEEMO LIFE monitoring team**

**Challenges/needs:**

- Why we are doing this? Why need to report on ES?
- MAES process/methodology? Does it help you, does it work on local level?
- Selecting ES
- Stakeholders? Involving them in prioritising ES
- Communication
- CICES? Or other ES classification systems used?
- Timeline?
- Standards?
- Sharing (case studies)
- Information, where to find info and data, is it accessible, economic info etc.
- Tools/choice of methods/education/training. How to choose, are they working on local scale?
- Who? Who should do the assessment? How do you know that this is the right person, expert, institution to do quality research?
- Cost?/expectations from the Commission/resources. All demands for projects piling up
- Monetization/valuation. Turning nature into money.

**Opportunities/solutions:**

- Procedures/steps how to implement the process
- Intrinsic value/emotions
- Variety of methods (biophysical, economic, social, etc.) – choice of methods
- Integration of natural aspects in addition to socio-economic
- Realistic expectations from the Commission - if we have to involve many different experts then the costs should not be challenged later

**Do we stay with variety of tools or propose common approach?**

- Transparency is critical

The project “Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands” (LIFE Viva Grass) No. LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189 is co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Programme, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, Estonian Environmental Investment Centre and the project partners.





- Examples of use
- Tool means to assess the change, if we try to assess impact of LIFE projects there needs to be a change
- Tiered approach (and tiered standard): Some projects could do minimum /focus on implementation, other focus on scientific issues. Selection of the tier should be the decision of the project, depends on the purpose.
- Guidance for selection of tools and methods/flow chart/quality/peer review
  - o There is a diversity of tools, different platforms - too much info, and little knowledge in LIFE project community on what is available and what to choose for what.
  - o Recommendations on tools would be needed and quality check/definition of standard
  - o It is methods rather than tools, a tool might implement a method. Tool might have too many black boxes causing lack of trust
- How do we share info? Request for case studies. Are we talking about case studies illustrating a specific point? Do we take different case studies from a project or each project as case study?
  - o Specific topics could be picked out
  - o Some of projects have ES assessment as ultimate goal and some that have to use ES assessment to assess the impact of the project. It is also related to how we use ES assessment, e.g. for communication or for decision making support
  - o Examples of case studies might not help in reporting, experience on reporting needed
  - o Information could be shared also through networking, virtual networking, meetings where examples could be showcased.
    - There is ES partnership platform but there is a participation fee
    - LIFE could discuss with OPPLA about platforms for different initiatives

**Panel discussion on contribution of the LIFE programme to the policy targets in relation to ecosystem services and integration of ES into different sector policies. Moderated by Heidrun Fammler, Baltic Environment Forum**

*Panelists: Jakub Wejchert (European Commission, DG Environment, Nature and Biodiversity Unit), Silvia Donato (EASME), Jenny Merriman (BirdLife International), Rob Bugter (Wageningen Environmental Research), Algirdas Klimavicius (Ministry of Environment, Lithuania)*

What is the essence of contribution of LIFE projects?

- Important assets that LIFE projects have is working directly with nature. Policies are developed from a range of experiences but for talking about nature you have to work with it. There can be fancy ideas on high level but it is important to do projects on the ground level.
- EASME is managing on behalf of EC the LIFE programme. It is very high contribution that these projects can make to all this discussion, LIFE programme implements EU policy, biodiversity strategy is one of those. The support that LIFE projects do on the ground is needed for policy level. It is about connecting the macrolevel perspective to microlevel perspective. EASME tries to help LIFE projects to better implement this task.

The project “Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands” (LIFE Viva Grass) No. LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189 is co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Programme, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, Estonian Environmental Investment Centre and the project partners.





- BirdLife partners are very diverse in what they do, many partners are engaged in ES concept because it helps to communicate, achieve the conservation goals on local level. BirdLife secretariat is looking for opportunities to involve ES on policy level, using experience from local level.
- The community dealing with ES has developed very fast in last 10 years. It started from science for policy level, for science-policy interface. Now the concept has changed towards stakeholder science, public interface. LIFE projects actually are already implementing/reporting on ES, although it might not be called like that. Important question is why the projects are asked to report on ES, for what it will be used. Also how it can be used locally for communication to upper levels. And, it is important to ensure that science is translated into stakeholders' language.
- Lithuania will have MAES concept integrated in decision making by 2020. It is difficult to communicate the ES concept to politicians, ministerial officials. Explanations are needed and also some legislative changes. LIFE projects have contributed to the issue in practical way, also a former LIFE project leader is now the minister of the environment.
- It is important to get local decision makers on board in implementation of the ES concept.
- The question concerning UK exit from EU and LIFE eligibility was risen. LIFE is just one of many EU programmes UK is participating. Cooperation and involvement of UK experts can still continue. UK government has committed to finish the ongoing projects. Until UK is a member of EU, they are fully eligible for LIFE. Also third countries are eligible in LIFE.
- May be more important than "why" is the question "to whom" we address the ES assessment. May be public needs the results of this assessment, promoting the concept of ES. LIFE projects could spread the concept on local level, since they work on local scale.

Policies are not only made on policy level but by everybody. Using ES in communication? Is LIFE a tool to form public opinion on ES?

- All projects can influence policy making by influencing public opinion about ES. This can be done through social media, communication, education.
- Public engagement is the core of many BirdLife partners working with local communities. Projects often just add on that they do education, awareness raising without knowing exactly how. This should be improved, education and awareness raising should be incorporated as a properly integrated component of conservation actions because conservation actions can be only successful with support of local people and if they change their behaviour. It needs other kind of expertise than conservation actions. That is an opportunity that should be explored more in the LIFE programme. A lot of NGOs recognise the importance of public awareness and education, especially concerning young people to make them value sustainable benefits in long term.
- LIFE is close to nature programme and also close to people. Importance of projects is translating EU policy into language understandable for people and results that people can see with their eyes. Projects can translate policy into implementation and also bring people closer to policy.

The biodiversity policy and strategy as well as ES approach are quite high level concepts. How to bring them closer to people?

- A lot of high level concepts came from UN, including ES concept and sustainable development goals. First nature was addressed through parks, after the crisis of industrialisation in 60-70ies protection of

The project "Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands" (LIFE Viva Grass) No. LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189 is co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Programme, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, Estonian Environmental Investment Centre and the project partners.





species and habitats was initiated, later came thinking of biodiversity and ecosystems, and then the ES concept. All those high level concepts are important when dealing with nature and strategies. EC includes the terms in policies and tries to communicate the concepts continuously, to be taken on board also by other sectors (e.g. agriculture, marine policies). Policy is about spreading concepts.

- Often people are not aware that they are using ES. By communicating that you can make a difference, and people on the ground can make a difference by implementing the concept. ES concept is still on high level, needs to be brought down to the ground level. LIFE projects could play a role in this.
- Lithuanian linguistic commission did not accept the term “ecosystem services” because services mean interaction from people to people.
- The stakeholder meetings in LIFE Viva Grass project have proven that people actually understand ecosystem services although they might not know the term. The values/assets of nature and grasslands listed by people could be easily grouped under CICES classification. It is the question of finding the right language, not so much to bring across the concept but to get from people their feeling about those benefits from nature.
- It is easy to criticize CICES or MAES or other classifications because they use technical language but they are still needed from scientific or technical point of view. E.g. Latin species names are much needed although they are not used in everyday speaking. But the question is how you use them in negotiations, discussions, dialogues or exchanges with people. You have very little chance to be understood when using technical language with farmers. We also need a language of persuasion, communication for translating the concepts into understandable language.
- Need for understandable language should be considered also when making LIFE guidelines to make them more accessible and usable by people that are not so proficient in the scientific side of things. By definition of ES that projects provide do we automatically impact across policies (water, biodiversity, floods directives’ benefit)?
- It is important to think about framing of ES concept, to show how it feeds into different policies in a framing that people understand.

Should we make other sectors use the ES concept?

- The concepts can be helpful sometimes. There are examples in policy decision making where MAES would have worked if it would have been an accepted methodology that time (ES of a wetland vs. drainage).
  - Multi-functionality is an important aspect but it requires an integrated/holistic approach. For example, a solution for clean water can provide other benefits as well. That is the reason why LIFE integrated projects have been very successful.
- EU policy gets more complex, integrative but funding programmes get more scattered, mono-focused, integrative part has been lost. It is important to keep this integration also in other funding to enable nature projects to communicate/influence other sectors. Sociologists should be involved to make people and administrators understand ES.

Report by Merle Kuris, Baltic Environmental Forum Estonia ([merle.kuris@bef.ee](mailto:merle.kuris@bef.ee))

The project “Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands” (LIFE Viva Grass) No. LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189 is co-financed by the EU LIFE+ Programme, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Administration of Latvian Environmental Protection Fund, Estonian Environmental Investment Centre and the project partners.

