



LIFE Viva Grass - Integrated planning tool to ensure viability of grasslands

LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189



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Project description:

Background

Natural and semi-natural grasslands (NSG) are complex ecosystems that provide a range of ecosystem functions and services, which are essential for maintaining biodiversity and healthy societies in general. Loss of grassland biodiversity leads to the degradation and even total destruction of ecosystem functions and services, which would require enormous financial investments to provide artificially.

Grassland ecosystems, however, are still threatened all across Europe. The area covered by NSG has decreased considerably in Europe over the last century as a result of urbanisation, the intensification of agriculture in the more productive and accessible areas, and marginalisation or land abandonment in more remote areas. With EU accession and the availability of agricultural subsidies the share of managed agricultural land has increased. However, measures within the Rural Development Programmes tend to promote agricultural production and intensive land use rather than extensive, nature-friendly management practices. Although agri-environmental measures of the RDP help maintain valuable ecosystems, they must be more area specific. Furthermore, only economically viable management practices are sustainable in the longer term. It is, therefore, important to move from subsidy-based grassland management towards economically viable and area-specific management models for the multifunctional use of grasslands.

Objectives

The LIFE Viva Grass project aims to contribute to the improvement of land use and nature conservation policies and to the legal framework for the long-term maintenance of grassland biodiversity and the ecosystem services they provide. It will achieve this aim by encouraging an ecosystem-based approach to planning and by promoting economically viable grassland management. The project will demonstrate opportunities for the multifunctional use of grasslands as a basis for strengthening the sustainability of rural areas and as a stimulus for local economies.

Specific objectives include:

- Policy assessment and evaluation of experiences in maintaining grassland ecosystems;
- Development of recommendations for rural development policies and legal systems;
- Integrated, ecosystem based planning solutions for strategic planning processes and the implementation of sustainable grassland management;
- Establishment of an active stakeholder network for the implementation of demonstration actions;
- Development of integrated planning tool for sustainable grassland management, which allows for the compiling of spatial data layers on grassland ecosystems, demonstrates its causal relationship with social-economic data, and generates sustainable grassland management scenarios;
- Demonstration of ecosystem based solutions for planning and viable grassland management in nine case study areas at regional, municipality, farm and protected area level;
- Monitoring of the environmental and socioeconomic impacts of the demonstration activities; and
- Drawing up of capacity building programmes and the implementation of training courses on the application of the integrated planning tool by relevant stakeholders (A4, D3).

Expected results:

- Common policy shortcomings identified and recommendations developed for national and EU policies and for legal documents on strengthening synergies and eliminating shortcomings to ensure long-term maintenance of grassland biodiversity;
- Integrated planning tool for sustainable grassland management developed and tested in nine case study areas;
- Improvement of the co-ordination between nature conservation and rural development policies;
- Grassland ecosystem services mapped and assessed in the nine study areas;
- Proposals for economically viable grassland management models developed for the study areas;
- Sustainable multifunctional grassland management business plans developed for two farms;
- A landscape protection and development plan drawn up for one case study area and adopted by the local government;
- Around 140 ha of grasslands restored to create the preconditions for sustainable

- grassland management;
- A water body created that provides access to water for 300 cattle, an essential precondition for developing cattle breeding in one case study area;
 - Recommendations developed for sustainable grassland management and for strategic planning documents for one county and four municipalities;
 - Recommendations developed for integrating socio-economic issues into one nature management plan; and
 - Capacity building programme on applying the developed integrated planning tool, with 400 people trained.
 - Direct information disseminated to 1 500 people about grassland ecosystem services and solutions for maintenance
 - Presentation of the project's findings on socio-economic aspects in planning and maintenance of grassland ecosystems in two scientific peer-review publications.

Results

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Environmental issues addressed:

Themes

Environmental management - Integrated management

Habitats - Grasslands

Industry-Production - Agriculture - Forestry

Information - Governance - Public and Stakeholders participation

Land-use & Planning - Sensitive and protected areas management

Land-use & Planning - Soil and landscape protection

Keywords

grassland ecosystem, grazing, decision making support, biodiversity, landscape protection, public awareness campaign, integrated management, nature conservation

Natura 2000 sites

Not applicable

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Beneficiaries:

Coordinator	Public institution Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania
Type of organisation	NGO-Foundation
Description	Baltic Environmental Forum (BEF) Lithuania was founded in 2003 as a non-governmental, non-profit organisation. BEF Lithuania focuses on nature conservation, defining the most valuable areas for target species conservation and evaluating their conservation statuses and management needs. It also engages in institutional capacity building of the administrations responsible for protected areas, as well as stakeholder dialogue, and raising awareness of the long-term benefits of conservation for farmers. In collaboration with local environmental authorities, BEF Lithuania is also involved in devising more attractive agri-environmental support schemes.
Partners	10 PVRPD(Pavilniai and Verkiai Regional Park Directorate), Lithuania 06 BEF EE(Private institution Baltic Environmental Forum-Estonia), Estonia 14 IES(Institute for Environmental Solutions), Latvia 09 Kurese(Farm Kurese Urmas Vahur FIE (self-employed entrepreneur)), Estonia 13 Hnit(JSC Hnit-Baltic), Lithuania 03 Ciesis(Municipality of Ciesis), Latvia 04 Sovites(SOVITES Farm), Latvia 01 BEF LV(Public institution Baltic Environmental Forum - Latvia), Latvia 05 OtrMaj(Otras Majas), Latvia 07 EMU(Estonian University of Life Sciences), Estonia 11 Dubysa(Directorate of Dubysa Regional Park), Lithuania 02 LU GZZF(University of Latvia), Latvia 08 Lumanda(Municipality of Lumanda), Estonia 12 Silute(Silute District Municipality), Lithuania

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Administrative data:

Project reference	LIFE13 ENV/LT/000189
Duration	01-JUN-2014 to 30-NOV -2018
Total budget	2,751,426.00 €
EU contribution	1,370,563.00 €

Project location

Põhja-Eesti(Estonia Eesti) Lääne-Eesti(Estonia Eesti) Kesk-Eesti(Estonia Eesti) Kirde-Eesti(Estonia Eesti) Lõuna-Eesti(Estonia Eesti) Extra-Regio(Estonia Eesti) Associated Estonia (EE)(Estonia Eesti) Alytaus apskritis(Lithuania Lietuva) Kauno apskritis(Lithuania Lietuva) Klaipėdos apskritis(Lithuania Lietuva) Marijampolės apskritis(Lithuania Lietuva) Panevėžio apskritis(Lithuania Lietuva) Šiaulių apskritis(Lithuania Lietuva) Tauragės apskritis(Lithuania Lietuva) Telsių apskritis(Lithuania Lietuva) Utenos apskritis(Lithuania Lietuva) Vilniaus apskritis(Lithuania Lietuva) Extra-Regio(Lithuania Lietuva) Associated Lithuania (LT)(Lithuania Lietuva) Kurzeme(Latvia Latvija) Latgale(Latvia Latvija) Rīga(Latvia Latvija) Pierīga(Latvia Latvija) Vidzeme(Latvia Latvija) Zemgale(Latvia Latvija) Extra-Regio(Latvia Latvija) Associated Latvia (LV)(Latvia Latvija)

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Read more:

Brochure

Title: "How much is the grass?" Year: 2015 No of pages: 2

Leaflet

Title: "How much is the grass ? Well maintained grassland" (5.77MB) Author: Kstutis Navickas Editor: Baltic Environmental Forum No of pages: 2

Project web site

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