Directorate General Environment, Unit E.4. LIFE

# **Ex-Post Evaluation of Projects and Activities Financed under the LIFE Programme**

Country-by-country analysis Estonia

July 2009







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Estonia

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The views expressed are those of the Consultant and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Commission.

#### **Table of Contents**

1	Executive Summary	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2	Introduction	Error! Bookmark not defined.
<b>3</b> 3.1	Environmental policy overview  Nature and Biodiversity E	Error! Bookmark not defined. rror! Bookmark not defined.
4	Overview of LIFE projects in Est	toniaError! Bookmark not defined.
<b>5</b> 5.1 5.2	• • •	Error! Bookmark not defined. ectsError! Bookmark not defined. ectsError! Bookmark not defined.
6	The effectiveness of projects	Error! Bookmark not defined.
7	The sustainability of projects	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8	The utility of projects	Error! Bookmark not defined.

### Table of Appendices

Appendix 1	Comprehensive overview of LIFE Projects in Estonia
Appendix 2	Summary tables on LIFE Environment projects in Estonia
Appendix 3	Summary tables on LIFE Nature projects in Estonia

#### 1 Executive summary

Estonia has been involved in the LIFE Programmes since 2000. A total of 16 (five Environment and 11 Nature) projects have received support within the period covered by this evaluation (1996-2006). Of these 16, three Nature projects were still ongoing in 2008.

Estonian LIFE Nature projects and the majority of the LIFE Environment projects have been effective in delivering expected results. Two Environment projects have been terminated. The sustainability of the LIFE Nature projects is believed to be high, while the sustainability of LIFE Environment projects is considered to be medium. Estonian LIFE Nature projects have mainly focused on habitat restoration and have had a significant impact on biodiversity conservation. Estonian LIFE Environment projects have covered water, urban planning and strategic approaches themes.

#### 2 Introduction

This country report on the implementation of the LIFE Programme in Estonia is part of the overall expost evaluation of the LIFE Programme. The evaluation was commissioned in July 2008 and covers all LIFE projects initiated during the period 1996-2006. The overall objective of this evaluation is to assess the relevance and impact of the activities and projects financed under the LIFE Programme. The evaluation comprises country studies in all Member States except Bulgaria, which has never had any LIFE projects. This report documents the analysis carried out concerning the implementation of the LIFE Programme in Estonia. The ex-post evaluation focuses on assessing the effects of the LIFE Programme on Europe's nature and environment through looking at results and impacts of LIFE projects implemented under the Nature (NAT) and Environment (ENV) components. The results and impacts have further been assessed along three main evaluation criteria:

- Effectiveness, i.e. the extent to which planned objectives have been reached;
- Sustainability, i.e. the extent to which positive impacts have continued or are likely to continue;
- Utility, i.e. the extent to which impacts address key environmental needs and priorities in the EU and for the stakeholders concerned.

#### 3 Environmental policy overview

The Estonian National Strategy for Sustainable Development (adopted in 2005) integrates economic, environmental and social dimensions and is based on four objectives and principles. The one most directly related to environment and nature is "Ecological Balance" which includes: a) the use of natural resources; b) the reduction of pollution; c) the preservation of biological diversity and natural areas.

The national strategy is complemented by sector, or issue-specific policies and plans. The main environmental challenges mentioned in the strategy include: sustainable use of natural resources and reduction of waste generation; preservation of the diversity of landscapes and biodiversity; climate change mitigation and quality of ambient air; the environment, health and quality of life. The strategy encompasses four cross-cutting action areas in a structure which is similar to that of the 6th EAP (see **Error! Reference source not found.** below).



#### Box 1 Cross-cutting areas of action in Estonian's Environmental Strategy

In relation to **climate change,** it has been emphasised that Estonia has a high level of CO<sub>2</sub> emission per capita as compared to other countries. Estonia is committed to a greenhouse gas emission reduction target of 8 per cent for 2008-2012. Estonia has a fairly high energy intensity at 967 kg oil equivalent per EUR 1000 GDP in 2005, even though this has been halved over the past ten years.

**Biodiversity** has survived relatively well in Estonia, when compared to many other European countries. In 2007, the Natura 2000 network in Estonia consisted of 67 Special Protection Areas (13.1 per cent of the total land area) and 497 Sites of Community Importance (16.5 per cent of the total land area). Estonia has reached about 85 per cent of the minimum standards of the Habitats Directive.

**Environment and health** focuses on four main areas: 1) that the outdoor environment should safeguard and support health; 2) that safe interior space should advance the preservation of health; 3) that the content of environmental pollutants in the food chain should not harm human health; 4) that drinking and bathing water does not harm human health.

Within **resources and resource efficiency** it is noted that the volume of municipal waste has increased from 368 kg per capita in 1995 to 466 kg per capita in 2006, but remains below the EU average. Between 2000 and 2006 the proportion of landfilled municipal waste was reduced from 100 per cent to 60 per cent of the total volume, but a considerable amount is still disposed of unsorted. The main tasks for the future are: 1) to reduce waste generation by implementing the best available waste handling technology; 2) to improve the state of surface and ground water; 3) to improve resource efficiency and ensure a responsible use of forests.

#### 4 Overview of LIFE projects in Estonia

During the period from 1996-2006, the LIFE Programme co-financed 16 projects in Estonia, including 11 Nature projects and five Environment projects. A full overview of the projects is provided in Appendix 1. In Appendices 2 and 3, a number of summary tables are provided for Environment and Nature, respectively. Table 4.1 provides a brief summary.

Table 4.1 Overview of LIFE projects 1996-2006 in Estonia

	Number of projects	Total LIFE contribution (million EUR)	Main themes covered <sup>2</sup>	Average LIFE con- tribution per project (million EUR)	Average project duration (years)
Environment	<b>7</b> <sup>3</sup>	3.8	Water (57%)	0.5	3.3
Nature	11	4.2	Habitats (81%)	0.4	4.1

Source: BUTLER

The **LIFE Environment** projects co-financed by the LIFE Programme are mainly water management development projects. Typical beneficiaries were public entities, which accounted for three projects in total.

The 11 **LIFE Nature** projects co-financed by the LIFE Programme during 1996-2006 comprise mostly habitat restoration projects (grasslands, coastal grasslands, and forests). In most cases, the restoration was carried out to improve the conservation status of a group of species. LIFE Nature projects in Estonia were carried out by public authorities and NGO-Foundations.

#### 5 Effects of projects implemented



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> As compared to the 1990 level.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this evaluation, the LIFE projects were categorised according to the thematic structure of the LIFE+ Programme (ref. Regulation EC No. 614/2007, Annex II). The themes included for LIFE Nature: Habitat Directive, Birds Directive and Biodiversity. For LIFE Environment: Climate change, air, water, soil, forests, natural resources and waste, chemicals, urban environment, strategic approaches.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Two of the projects were terminated according to interview data.

Estonian **LIFE Nature** projects focused on the restoration of nature types and on habitats for species. This resulted in many projects having a high impact regarding indicators such as restored habitats, improved conservation status of habitat types or species, improved land management, land acquisition, land use agreements etc. The projects contributed significantly to the development and management/administration of Estonia's Natura 2000 areas. The following species have, in particular, targeted by LIFE Nature projects in Estonia: Mustela lutreola, Crex crex, Bufo calamita, Triturus cristatus, Aquila clanga, Aquila pomarina, Ciconia nigra etc. For long-term species protection, several National Conservation Action Plans were elaborated through LIFE projects. Interviews and project studies show that LIFE Nature projects in Estonia promoted the management systems of beneficiary organisations and increased cooperation between authorities and all stakeholders involved in the projects. In addition, the projects contributed to raise the general awareness of Natura 2000 areas and environmental protection. This also had an effect on management of other (non-LIFE funded) projects in Estonian NATURA 2000 sites. Stakeholders indicate that without EU co-finance most of the Estonian Nature projects would have been delayed or the actions within acquired and protected areas would have been limited in scope.

The Estonian **LIFE Environment** water projects contributed towards the development of management systems or schemes for the protection of surface water, groundwater or river basins as such. The strategic approaches project has also introduced innovative environmental performance of products such as Life Cycle Assessment methodology. The urban planning project contributed towards the implementation of innovative systems for urban planning. Environment projects in Estonia have had a positive effect considering their more innovative and demonstrable aspects. Stakeholders consider that without EU co-finance most of these Estonian Environment projects would have been implemented on a lower scale and at a later stage. In some cases the projects would have not been implemented at all. LIFE funding provided greater possibilities for international cooperation and helped to ensure the sustainability of the final outcome.

#### 6 The effectiveness of projects

Effectiveness can be assessed on two levels: at project level, which compares achievements with project objectives, and at programme level, which compares achievements with LIFE Programme objectives.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> About five new NATURA 2000 sites were designated due to LIFE projects. It is difficult to say anything about the total Natura 2000 area affected by LIFE Projects in Estonia during the period as data sources provide limited information

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> National conservation action plans for species - Bufo calamita, Triturus cristatus, and Aquila clanga have been prepared and approved, two others (for Aquila pomarina and Ciconia nigra) are under preparation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> This was achieved by stakeholders' (local municipalities, landowners, authorities etc.) involvement in projects as well as by dissemination via different publications (e.g. leaflets, booklets, Layman's reports, articles in the newspapers); workshops and seminars, films (e.g. video film "Nature Conservation in Estonia" in DVD format is a successful tool for promoting nature conservation and Natura 2000 network); information boards, web-sites, educational activities etc.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> For example, the "Viru-Peipsi" project contributed towards the implementation of the Water Framework Directive by drawing up the Viru Peipsi River Basin Management Plan, consulting experts and involving the public. New plans use this as a case study for elaborating future plans. Experience can be applied in the Estonian context, but wider application is also possible.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Some LIFE projects evoked interesting ideas and several connections between research and development were established, e.g. OSELCA project, which promotes life cycle thinking and could therefore have international as well as national significance (according an interview with national focal point).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> When seen from Estonia's national focal point and from project studies (summaries as well as in-depth studies). <sup>10</sup> Specific objective for LIFE Nature: to contribute to the implementation of Council Directive 79/409/EEC (Birds Directive) and Council Directive 92/43/EEC (Habitats Directive); LIFE Environment: to contribute to the development of innovative and integrated techniques and methods and to the further development of Community environmental policy.

Project-level effectiveness of Estonian LIFE Nature projects is assessed<sup>11</sup> as high. All projects have been effective with a few exceptions. There have been some problems because the targets have been too ambitious.<sup>12</sup> Effectiveness at programme level is assessed<sup>13</sup> as high for nature projects, which have been instrumental in implementing the Birds and Habitats Directives in Estonia.

For **Environment projects**, programme-level effectiveness is assessed<sup>14</sup> as medium to high. The projects have certainly contributed towards innovative and integrated techniques and to the further development of Community Environmental Policy. Project level effectiveness is assessed<sup>15</sup>, on average as medium. Whilst the majority of projects have been effective, two were a total failure. Overall, LIFE Nature projects have been more successful.

#### 7 The sustainability of projects

The sustainability of LIFE Nature projects is assessed<sup>17</sup> as high. Most of the Nature projects generate long term effects through the purchase of land for protective areas, elaboration of management/action plans, and implementation of the non-recurring habitat management actions, which are normally not financed by other financial instruments (e.g. by agri-environmental funding). Preparation and approval of action/management plans by institutions also support sustainability. The sustainability of the LIFE Environment projects is assessed<sup>18</sup> as medium - the majority of projects are sustainable. That LIFE Environment project's targets correspond with national economic interest and/or priorities is a factor which also supports sustainability.<sup>19</sup>

#### 8 The utility of projects

Estonian LIFE projects have contributed towards addressing many goals and aims set forth in the 6th EAP as well as addressing the national priorities as, in general, both are correlated. Links to EU environmental policies are guaranteed through adherence to the application guidelines, which are quite specific. Because of LIFE, nature projects have been much larger and more comprehensive than would have been expected without LIFE funding. Environment projects without LIFE funding would be implemented at a lower scale and at a later stage or would not have been implemented at all.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> There have been some conflicts between EU and national priorities, as some species (e.g. brown bears) are very rare in the EU, but not in Estonia.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Assessment according to interviews with Estonian national focal point, monitor and the LIFE Unit desk officer.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> For example, in the "RAPINA" project the objectives were too ambitious and also too expensive (according national focal point).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Assessment according to the project studies (summaries as well as in-depth) and interviews with Estonian national focal point, monitor and the LIFE Unit desk officer .

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Assessment from project studies and from interview with national focal point.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Assessment according to interviews with Estonian national focal point, monitor and the LIFE Unit desk officer.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Successful projects (e.g. EstWaste, ViruPeipsi) have had a long-term positive impact and are used as best-practice examples. Failed ones (e.g. Hasco, Ecoman) have done some damage to the overall image of the LIFE support scheme. Poor project management caused administrative, legal and financial problems (according to national focal point).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Assessment according to interviews with Estonian national focal point, monitor and the LIFE Unit desk officer and from the project studies.

Assessment according to interviews with Estonian national focal point, monitor and the LIFE Unit desk officer.

<sup>19</sup> According the LIFE Unit desk officer

### **Appendix 1** Comprehensive overview of LIFE Projects in Estonia

In connection with the ex-post evaluation, data was extracted from the BUTLER database of the LIFE Unit. Table 1 and Table 2 below provide an overview of the information available on each project as well as the LIFE+ theme attached by the evaluation team to the project. The budget figures for LIFE co-financing do not necessarily correspond to the actual payments made.

Table 2 Overview of LIFE Environment Projects in Estonia

ld.	Title	LIFE generation	Funding year	Start year	End year	Total budget (EUR)	LIFE co- financing budget (EUR)	Beneficiary type	International partners (yes/no)	LIFE+ theme
LIFE00 ENV/EE/000922	Demonstration Activities for the Reduction of Water Losses and Preservation of Water Quality in Over-dimensioned Water Distribution Network in Rakvere Town, Estonia	LIFE II	2000	2001	2004	128,945	98,767	Local authority	No	Water
LIFE00 ENV/EE/000924	Sustainable wastewater purification in Estonian small municipalities	LIFE II	2000	2002	2006	711,268	325,334	University	No	Water
LIFE00 ENV/EE/000925	Viru and Peipsi Catchment Area Management Plan	LIFE II	2000	2001	2006	1,668,320	500,000	National au- thority	No	Water
LIFE02 ENV/EE/000424	Oil-shale semi-coke processing into soil improver, soil improver used to statilise slurry and restore damaged soils for foresting mainly with hybrid aspen	LIFE III	2002	2002	2005	3,549,970	1,264,985	Local authority	No	Soil
LIFE02 ENV/EE/000426	e-System for Real Time Democratic Land-Use Planning of Urban Environment - Pilot Action in Narva Community	LIFE III	2002	2002	2005	1,590,589	768,205	Local authority	No	Urban envi- ronment

ld.	Title	LIFE generation	Funding year	Start year	End year	Total budget (EUR)	LIFE co- financing budget (EUR)	Beneficiary type	International partners (yes/no)	LIFE+ theme
LIFE03 ENV/EE/000194	Introduction and Implementation of Life Cycle Assessment Methodology in Estonia: Effects of Oil Shale Electricity on the Environmental Performance of Products	LIFE III	2003	2003	2006	661,934	327,153	Public enter- prise	No	Strategic Approaches
LIFE05 ENV/EE/000387	An ecological and economic viable concept for 100% fermentation, advanced oxidation and ultra filtration of pig manure	LIFE III Extension	2005	2005	2007	3,490,912	564,648	SME	No	Water

Table 3 Overview of LIFE Nature Projects in Estonia

ld.	Title	LIFE generation	Funding year	Start year	End year	Total budget (EUR)	LIFE co- financing (EUR)	Beneficiary type	International partners (yes/no)	Directive (Birds, Habitats) or biodiversity
LIFE00 NAT/EE/007081	Recovery of Mustela lu- treola in Estonia : captive and island populations	LIFE II	2000	2001	2005	373,454	186,727	NGO- Foundation	No	Habitats
LIFE00 NAT/EE/007082	Restoration and man- agement of the Hääde- meeste wetland complex	LIFE II	2000	2001	2005	675,286	506,465		No	Habitats
LIFE00 NAT/EE/007083	Boreal Baltic Coastal Meadow Preservation in Estonia	LIFE II	2000	2001	2005	705,868	529,401	National au- thority	No	Habitats
LIFE02 NAT/EE/008555	Protection of priority for- est habitat types in Esto- nia	LIFE III	2002	2001	2006	1,200,514	900,386	NGO- Foundation	No	Habitats
LIFE02 NAT/EE/008559	Conservation of Natura 2000 biotopes in Karula National Park	LIFE III	2002	2001	2005	263,995	197,996	Park-Reserve authority	No	Habitats
LIFE2002NAT/ST/EE/000015	Protection of Great Newt in Eastern-Baltic Region	LIFE III	2002	2003	2004	30,000	30,000		No	Habitats
LIFE03 NAT/EE/000180	Conservation of NATURA 2000 biotopes in Räpina polder	LIFE III	2003	2003	2007	411,691	205,846	Regional authority	No	Birds
LIFE03 NAT/EE/000181	Restoration of habitats of endangered species in Silma Nature Reserve	LIFE III	2003	2002	2007	704,214	504,292	Park-Reserve authority	No	Habitats
LIFE04 NAT/EE/000070	Protection of Triturus cristatus in Eastern Baltic Region	LIFE III	2004	2004	2009	736,190	368,095	National au- thority	No	Habitats

ld.	Title	LIFE generation	Funding year	Start year	End year	Total budget (EUR)	LIFE co- financing (EUR)	Beneficiary type	International partners (yes/no)	Directive (Birds, Habitats) or biodiversity
LIFE04 NAT/EE/000072	Arrangement of spotted	LIFE III	2004	2004	2009	846,618	634,963	NGO-	No	Birds
	eagles and black stork							Foundation		
	conservation in Estonia									
LIFE04 NAT/EE/000073	Management of Natura	LIFE III	2004	2004	2008	412,891	176,304	Park-Reserve	No	Habitats
	2000 habitats of the Kopu							authority		
	Peninsula									

# Appendix 2 Summary tables on LIFE Environment projects in Estonia

Table 4 Overview of LIFE ENV projects in Estonia by year, 1996-2006

Generation	Year	Number of projects	Total budget (EUR million)	Total LIFE co-financing budget (EUR million)	Average duration (years)	Average LIFE funding per project (EUR million)
LIFE II	1996	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	1997	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	1998	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	1999	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Total	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
LIFE III	2000	3	2.5	0.9	4.0	0.3
	2002	2	5.1	2.0	3.0	1.0
	2003	1	0.7	0.3	3.0	0.3
	2004	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Total	6	8	3	3.5	0.5
LIFE III extension	2005	1	3.5	0.6	2.0	0.6
	2006	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Total	1	3.5	0.6	2.0	0.6
Grand total		7	11.8	3.8	3.3	0.5
Comparative figures for all ENV projects		1,076	1,947.7	615.9	3.3	0.6

Table 5 Overview of LIFE ENV projects in Estonia 1996-2006 by theme

LIFE+ theme	No. of projects	In % of total	Total budget (EUR million)	In % of total	LIFE contribution (EUR million)	In % of total
Climate change	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Air	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Water	4	57%	6.0	51%	1.5	39%
Soil	1	14%	3.5	30%	1.3	33%
Forests	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Natural resources and waste	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Chemicals	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Urban environment	1	14%	1.6	13%	0.8	20%
Strategic approaches	1	14%	0.7	6%	0.3	8%
Total	7	100%	11.8	100%	3.8	100%

Table 6 Estonia LIFE ENV projects 1996-2006 according to beneficiary type

Beneficiary type	No. of projects	In % of total	Total budget (EUR million)	In % of total	LIFE contribution (EUR million)	In % of total
Public entities						
National authority	1	14%	1.7	14%	0.5	13%
Regional authority	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Local authority	3	43%	5.3	45%	2.1	55%
Development agency	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Intergovernmental body	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Park-reserve authority	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Sub-total	4	57%	6.9	59%	2.6	68%
Public and private enterprises						
International enterprise	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Large enterprise	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
SME Small and medium sized enterprise	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Mixed enterprise	1	14%	0.7	6%	0.3	8%
Public enterprise	1	14%	3.5	30%	0.6	15%
Sub-total	2	29%	4.2	35%	0.9	23%
NGOs and research						
NGO-Foundation	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Research institutions	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
University	1	14%	0.7	6%	0.3	8%
Training centre	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Sub-total	1	14%	0.7	6%	0.3	8%
None indicated	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Total	7	100%	11.8	100%	3.8	100%

# Appendix 3 Summary tables on LIFE Nature projects in Estonia

Table 7 Overview of LIFE NAT projects in Estonia, 1996-2006

Generation	Year	Number of projects	Total budget (EUR million)	Total LIFE co-financing budget (EUR million)	Average duration (years)	Average LIFE funding per project (EUR million)
LIFE II	1996	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	1997	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	1998	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	1999	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Total	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
LIFE III	2000	3	1.8	1.2	4.0	0.4
	2002	3	1.5	1.1	3.3	0.4
	2003	2	1.1	0.7	4.5	0.4
	2004	3	2.0	1.2	4.7	0.4
	Total	11	6	4	4.1	0.4
LIFE III extension	2005	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	2006	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	Total	0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Grand total		11	6.4	4.2	4.1	0.4
Comparative figures for all NAT projects		771	1,224.1	637.2	4.2	0.8

Table 8 Categories of LIFE NAT projects in Estonia, 1996-2006

LIFE NAT themes	No. of projects	In % of total	Total budget (EUR million)	In % of total	LIFE contribution (EUR million	In % of total
Habitats Directive	9	82%	5.1	80%	3.4	80%
Birds Directive	2	18%	1.3	20%	0.8	20%
Biodiversity projects	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Total	11	100%	6.4	100%	4.2	100%

Table 9 Estonia LIFE NAT projects 1996-2006 according to beneficiary type

Beneficiary type	No. of projects	In % of total	Total budget (EUR million)	In % of total	LIFE contribution (EUR million)	In % of total
Public entities						
National authority	2	18%	1.4	23%	0.9	21%
Regional authority	1	9%	0.4	6%	0.2	5%
Local authority	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Development agency	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Intergovernmental body	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Park-reserve authority	3	27%	1.4	22%	0.9	21%
Sub-total	6	55%	3.2	51%	2.0	47%
Public and private enterprises	_					
International enterprise	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Large enterprise	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
SME Small and medium sized enterprise	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Mixed enterprise	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Public enterprise	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Sub-total	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
NGOs and research						
NGO-Foundation	3	27%	2.4	38%	1.7	41%
Research institutions	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
University	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Training centre	0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%
Sub-total	3	27%	2.4	38%	1.7	41%
None indicated	2	18%	0.7	11%	0.5	13%
Total	11	100%	6.4	100%	4.2	100%