

Volunteering for nature conservation

LIFE Platform Meeting

19–21 September 2018

Tartu, Estonia



Report



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1. Why a Platform Meeting on this topic?

Volunteering for nature or wildlife conservation covers various activities designed to manage and restore habitats and species and to raise awareness on the importance of biodiversity. These activities range widely: from practical restoration work, such as planting, removal of vegetation, fighting Invasive Alien Species (IAS), and setting up structures important for biodiversity, to citizen science, such as reporting on nature observations or monitoring species. The experience of volunteering can help people learn new skills, become socially integrated, and contribute to a better future. Understanding volunteers' motivations for participating in nature conservation programmes is an important element in the design and provision of programmes intended to harness the increasingly important talents and labour that volunteers bring to conservation programmes.

Mobilising volunteers helps protect nature in numerous ways. It enables activities that would otherwise not be possible and involves society in conservation activities, which leads to greater public awareness, trust, and ownership of the process.

The European Union (EU) has recognised the value of volunteers for the protection of the environment, in particular volunteers' roles in managing the Natura 2000 network, and it has included this aspect in the 'Action Plan for nature, people and the economy' (Action 15).

Work in the past had mainly been done through the Grundtvig, Leonardo and Youth programmes. The projects included:

PETAL - 'Passport for European Training and Learning': developing an environmental/nature volunteer passport and standards that would be recognised across Europe.

LEAVES - Learning partnership: learning through volunteering in nature. ReVEAL - all about the unplanned learning (not formal or skills) gained from environmental volunteering - e.g. greater personal understanding and awareness, confidence etc.

La Team - an elaborate construction of 5 European Voluntary Service (EVS) networks all designed to work together to create an exchange programme in which young participants worked initially with their home organisation and identified something that needed to be done, spent a period volunteering with a host organisation building up their skills, then came home and implemented a real practical nature/wildlife/conservation project at home.

Volunteers play a crucial role in the success of the LIFE programme. Since the beginning of the LIFE programme, it is estimated that more than 160 projects have included voluntary activities. LIFE Nature and Biodiversity projects in particular have benefited from the ability of nature conservation non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to leverage their networks of volunteers. These projects have various ways in which they involve volunteers; the most common types of actions and activities are:

Nature/Biodiversity projects	Governance and Information projects
Monitoring species	Helping with awareness-raising campaigns and communication tasks—acting as advocates for nature conservation activities
Cleaning up litter	Reporting on Invasive Alien Species, removal of IAS

Planting trees	Involvement in training courses
Small construction jobs (e.g. fences, wooden paths)	Surveys
Local surveillance of poisoning	Helping to monitor and report illegal bird killing activities
Restoration work	Creating a network of volunteers
Help with habitat management	
Tracking large carnivores in snow	

Estonia is one of the EU countries that have a strong volunteering culture and the concept of conservation volunteering has been around for decades. The host project of the Platform Meeting, LIFE Mires Estonia (LIFE14 NAT/EE/000126), is coordinated by the NGO Estonian Fund for Nature, an organisation with extensive experience in volunteer work.



Photo 1. Raised bog (7110) in Estonia*

2. European Solidarity Corps and LIFE

The EU Action plan for nature, people and the economy (Action 15) defines the following objective: *Involve young people actively in measures dealing with societal needs by giving them the opportunity to get involved in nature protection in Natura 2000 sites (European Solidarity Corps (ESC))*. The ESC was launched by the European Commission in December 2016. This new initiative gives young people between 18 and 30 a chance to support an NGO, local authority or private company that is active in addressing challenging situations across the EU, including nature conservation activities in N2000 sites. In the two LIFE ESC calls (2016 and 2017), altogether six projects have been funded in Italy, Spain and Portugal, to be implemented in the period from 2017 to 2021.

Five out of six ESC projects were represented at the event. One of the working sessions during the Platform Meeting (workshop session 6) was dedicated to engaging young people as volunteers in LIFE projects.

3. Objectives of the Platform Meeting

The main objective of the LIFE Platform Meeting was to discuss experience and formulate recommendations for increasing the impact of volunteers in LIFE projects. Further objectives included exchanging best practices and identifying legal incentives that encourage the engagement of volunteers in nature protection activities.

These objectives were addressed by:

- bringing together various stakeholders engaged in promoting and employing volunteers in nature conservation activities, such as NGOs, foundations, social enterprise representatives, researchers, civil servants, LIFE project managers, and volunteers;
- highlighting the importance and urgency of better involvement of volunteers in nature conservation in Europe;
- highlighting the LIFE programme's contribution to volunteer involvement in the EU;
- enabling networking, exchanging best practices and learning from each other;
- discussing the future of volunteering for nature conservation, and the challenges facing and opportunities for multiplying volunteer input into LIFE projects;
- exploring opportunities for cooperation within the EU and beyond; and
- exploring synergies with other EU policies, in particular policies on social innovation and employment.

4. The concept of the Platform Meeting

The focus of this Platform Meeting was on practical issues: best practices and experience related to engaging volunteers in nature conservation and in LIFE. This approach was highly appreciated by the participants in view of the general lack of events that focus on volunteering. For more details on participants' feedback, please refer to the section 'Overall assessment of the event' and Annex 7.

The three-day event included plenary sessions, thematic workshops, and a poster session presenting and discussing project experiences from several EU countries. Invited experts made presentations and contributed to discussions based on their experience in organising volunteer work (e.g. attracting and motivating volunteers). The social aspects of volunteering were explored, such as: strengthening existing and developing new social relationships, building a sense of community, increasing social support, reducing social isolation, and fostering a sense of pride and care for the particular nature area.



Photo 2. Poster exhibition

The first seminar day was followed by a volunteer day in Alam-Pedja Nature Reserve in Soosaare mire, where mire restoration is taking place with LIFE funding. Participants in the meeting helped to build peat dams in order to restore the water regime of a raised bog (7110*) that had been drained due to peat mining operations more than 30 years ago.



Photo 3. Preparations for volunteer work in the project area

The meeting ended with the wrap-up session on the last day with short presentations from each working group. The participants reflected on their experiences as volunteers during the previous day and discussed potential future cooperation.

The briefing document and the agenda are attached as Annexes 1 and 2, respectively.

5. Main facts about the Platform Meeting

- Hosted by LIFE14 NAT/EE/000126 LIFE Mires Estonia, run by the Estonian Fund for Nature;
- Supported by LIFE 14 CAP/EE/000009 AwaRaEst LIFE, led by the Estonian Ministry of the Environment;
- 58 participants from 16 countries;
- 28 different LIFE projects represented;
- Participating projects introduced their volunteering work via 3-minute videos;
- Five out of six running ESC projects were represented at the Platform Meeting and
- **Altogether, the participating organisations represented about 100,000 volunteers!**

The list of participants is available in Annex 4. Brief information about and contact details for the participating LIFE projects are included in Annex 6.

The event website was created and hosted by the Estonian Fund for Nature and it was used to store information (presentations) before and after the event. It can be found at: https://soo.elfond.ee/en/life_platvorm_meeting2018/.

Photos of the event are available at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/161755563@N04/sets/72157701305419994>.

6. Main conclusions

Volunteering for nature conservation has been a part of LIFE programme, particularly of Nature/Biodiversity projects, for a long time. In terms of policy, only the recent **EU Action Plan for nature, people and the economy** (Action 15) explicitly mentions involvement of young people in nature protection at Natura 2000 sites (in ESC projects). Thus, the need for a more strategic approach was identified—to develop **national volunteering strategies** that recognise the key role of volunteering in nature management and moreover to integrate volunteering for nature conservation into nature/wildlife management strategies. Ideally, the approach should be **harmonized at the EU level** to simplify and encourage volunteering in different countries.

Following the plenary sessions, participants split into working group sessions (WSs) and addressed the following issues:

1. Legal tools and incentives for volunteering (WS1)
2. What motivates volunteers (WS2)
3. The citizen science approach in nature conservation (WS3)

Discussion on the above three topics was followed by the three sessions dedicated to experience on LIFE projects, namely:

1. Engaging volunteers in monitoring activities (WS4)
2. Engaging volunteers in practical conservation work (WS5)
3. Engaging young people as volunteers (WS6)

Participants identified the following practices that can either contribute to or hinder the deployment of volunteers:

- (Core) funding: regardless of the value that volunteers create, involving them in conservation activities requires resources (e.g. training, management).
- The volunteers managing volunteers approach: the approach that helps build responsibility among volunteers and that has been successfully used by Natuurpunt in Belgium.
- Fiscal incentives for companies can help: e.g. encouraging employees to participate in volunteering activities.
- Project-based, “overly structured” volunteer programmes discourage the participation of those who would like to try volunteering without longer-term commitment.

The Royal Society for the Protection for Birds (RSPB), an NGO with one of the longest traditions of involving volunteers in their activities in Europe, estimates that 12,000 of their volunteers contributed 973,000 hours per year to their activities; this is worth over 10 million euros per year.

The experience of the UK and France, countries with a long volunteering history, shows that a certain level of legal regulation has been important in promoting volunteering in society. On the other hand, at least one country, Estonia, has been successful in engaging volunteers in nature conservation activities even without the enabling legal framework that exists in the UK. This can be partly explained by the volunteers’ expressed motives, which go beyond just gaining experience and increasing one’s knowledge and skills that may lead to employment.

It became apparent that in some countries more clarity would be needed on the legal position of volunteers: what their rights are, what the benefits are, and what the possible insurance

arrangements are. While in the UK and Italy there is a choice of insurance providers, Portugal has only one provider, and no insurance for volunteers is available in Estonia. There are differences among EU countries and gaps that need to be addressed in order to engage volunteers more effectively in conservation activities.

Conflicting policies were identified even in countries with a long tradition of volunteering, such as the UK, where regulations for unemployed job-seekers make volunteering hard and can even impact the benefit payments.

What motivates volunteers?

Overall, it was concluded that there is a lot of enthusiasm for volunteering for nature conservation among across different age groups and different types of voluntary work. Most commonly, the volunteers express a **wish to do something good for nature**, to **be outdoors** and to **socialise** with like-minded people. Again, the good example of the UK showed how organisations can engage professionals in their work so that lawyers, for example, help with their expertise rather than carry out physical volunteering work. This approach is still fairly under-represented in other countries in Europe.

Community involvement, the **personal approach** and **ownership** were emphasised as key aspects in long-term volunteer engagement, as well as showing **appreciation** for the work that volunteers do. A **positive feedback loop** and ‘thank you’ events where their work is acknowledged, also with a prize, are very important in keeping volunteers motivated. No less importantly, **volunteering should be fun!**

A number of specific suggestions on the LIFE programme were made during the workshop discussions, some of which included **lowering own-financing rates** for small NGOs that involve volunteers, using **in-kind contributions**, and giving credit in the evaluation procedure to projects that engage volunteers. To attract young people, as experience from ESC projects shows, **appropriate communication channels** should be used, such as WhatsApp Messenger and Instagram.

The way forward

The participants expressed interest in international **cooperation** but felt there was a **lack of a platform** where contacts could be found. An international database of volunteers that is not limited to young people would be useful. The idea of bringing back a passport for volunteers was raised again; a concept already introduced by the Conservation Volunteer Alliance. For LIFE projects, there could be a mechanism to find best practices and search for projects involving volunteers in the LIFE database.

During the event, **bilateral cooperation** opportunities were discussed between Estonia and Latvia, and between Hungary and the UK. While the Estonian Fund for Nature has all the equipment needed for organising voluntary work, this is currently not the case for the Latvian Fund for Nature; therefore, cooperation to hold camps in Latvia was established. A British participant suggested that in order to attract large groups of volunteers, it would be worth building relationships with some British universities that might be able to bring groups of undergraduate students for a week-long field trip to do volunteer activities in Nature.

Finally, the participants estimated that they represented approximately **100,000 volunteers** through their networks!



Photo 4. After the volunteering day...

6.1. Plenary and discussion

The plenary session aimed to provide background on volunteering for nature conservation and showcase its various aspects, such as what motivates volunteers and the social benefits of being a volunteer. Several large and established volunteer networks, such as the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) from the UK and Natuurpunt from Belgium, shared their knowledge and experience, followed by specific examples and stories from LIFE projects. The presentations also aimed to introduce the topics that were then discussed in detail in the working group sessions in the afternoon.

Ms. Sylvia Barova from DG Environment welcomed the participants (via Skype) and Ms. Diana Oancea from EASME introduced the topics and summarised the contribution of volunteers in implementing LIFE projects. The EU's intention to support volunteering in the future was highlighted as well.

There are numerous organisations that engage volunteers in their work, but the scale, commitment, understanding of the mechanisms, and benefits of the approach differ largely among organisations, also within the LIFE community. The LIFE community stands at both ends of the scale: large, experienced volunteer network organisations, and smaller, inexperienced nature conservation organisations that would benefit greatly from sharing knowledge and exchanging experiences. The Platform Meeting confirmed that there is a consensus about the necessity of involving volunteers in conservation activities and a strong demand for more active networking within the LIFE community.

6.2. Main conclusions from the workshops

Six workshop sessions were organised during the event, addressing six important aspects of engaging volunteers in nature conservation. The first three sessions focused on issues that affect all volunteer organisations, such as legal tools and incentives (WS1), motivations of volunteers (WS2), and citizen science (WS3). The remaining three sessions focused on experience from LIFE projects with volunteering: monitoring and citizen science (WS4); volunteering in practical conservation work (WS5); and engagement of young people as volunteers (WS6). Each workshop started with 3–4 keynote presentations and was followed by a moderated discussion.

The detailed workshop agenda is available in Annex 3.

WS1: Legal tools and incentives for volunteering

The aim of the workshop was to get an overview of various legal tools and other incentives that support volunteering for nature conservation that could be replicated on a wider scale. Before breaking into two small groups, the topic was introduced by the following presentations:

- Legal (or regulatory) support and obstacles for volunteering, by Andy Jefferies, Wild Days Conservation, UK.
- French legislation in support of volunteers, by Alain Salvi, Fédération des Conservatoires d'espaces naturels, France.
- Volunteering as crowdsourcing for private land conservation, by Jóni Vieira, LIFE ELCN, MONTIS – Associação de Conservação da Natureza, Portugal.

Both France and the UK have a long tradition of engaging volunteers in nature conservation activities. However, the funding landscape has been changing and there is a lack of core funding for NGOs that involve volunteers in their activities. The new Civil Society Strategy in the UK recognises the role of volunteers, but there is no explicit recognition of volunteering specifically in nature conservation

activities. Some policies still conflict with each other and make it hard for unemployed job-seekers to engage in voluntary activities.

In France, the law defines the roles of a leader of a volunteer association, who gets paid time off from their regular job for representing the association. For other volunteering activities, unpaid time off is allowed under French law, and further laws are being proposed, such as tax relief.

The practice is quite different in Portugal, where volunteers are entitled to modest compensation in addition to coverage of travel and accommodation costs, which is not the case in France and in Italy, for example. Low payment in a country with a high unemployment rate poses certain risks and using volunteers is sometimes interpreted as 'using cheap labour' instead of providing proper employment.

The main challenges identified by the participants include:

- In Hungary, only public bodies can engage volunteers. This limits NGOs that wish to involve volunteers in their activities.
- The availability of insurance for volunteers differs across the EU: e.g. in the UK and Italy there is a choice of providers; in Portugal there is only one provider; in Estonia, insurance is not available at all.
- Conflicting policies: UK regulations for unemployed job-seekers make volunteering hard.
- Institutionalisation of volunteering: regulation means a narrower range of volunteering opportunities.
- Pressure on volunteering is created by focus on outputs in project design. When volunteering is financed from a project, the expected results have to be reached.

Several good examples of incentives were identified, such as using fiscal incentives to promote corporate volunteering, establishing a lasting cooperation with schools, and developing a national volunteering strategy.

The participants identified the following possible solutions and made recommendations for the future:

1. Corporate fiscal incentives to promote employee volunteering: e.g. tax breaks.
2. Clarity should be provided on the legal position of volunteers regarding insurance, benefits, and rights in countries where these specifications are missing.
3. Harmonisation of legal provisions across the EU would be good and could encourage volunteering across borders.
4. Evaluation criteria could prioritize funding bids that involve volunteers.
5. Volunteering could be integrated into nature/wildlife management strategies.
6. National volunteering strategies that recognise the key role of volunteering in nature management could be developed.
7. Core funding for volunteer organisations should be available.
8. Professional volunteering should be encouraged and strengthened.
9. Volunteering should be promoted at an early age and could be linked to academic credits.
10. Early retirement as a reward for volunteering could be introduced.

WS2: What motivates volunteers: studies and lessons learned

The aims of the workshop were to identify the main motivations of people for getting involved in volunteering for nature conservation, to share lessons learned, and to discuss how to facilitate the wider involvement of volunteers.

The workshop opened with three key-note presentations to set the scene. Siim Kuresoo from the Estonian Fund for Nature (ELF) presented the main motivating and hindering factors, based on the

‘Study of voluntary participation in nature conservation activities’ commissioned by ELF on the topic. In his presentation “Giving responsibility is giving wings”, Ewoud L'Amiral from Natuurpunt gave an overview of how management of nature reserves is organised with the help of volunteers and how giving responsibility is the key to sustainable engagement. Ismo Marttinen from WWF Finland/Metsähallitus shared his experience from the LIFE Saimaa Seal project (LIFE12 NAT/FI/000367). He emphasized the growing need for volunteering to support government-led nature conservation work, but also warned about risks and resistance from certain stakeholders that the volunteers might face while being advocates for nature conservation. In the project context, fishermen threatened volunteers who were building snow lairs for Saimaa seals.

Numerous reasons for volunteering for nature conservation were named in the group, the core ones being: the opportunity to do something good for nature and to engage in some social interaction. Passion for the well-being of a certain species or a habitat was considered a very strong driver.

It was agreed that a lack of time and resources is one of the main hindering factors. A challenge is to keep volunteers motivated for a longer period of time. This in turn relates to certain social pressures—society’s expectation for young people to start a family, etc. Finally, as there is a need to continuously grow the network of volunteers, attracting new volunteers remains a challenge.

Recommendations for the wider involvement of volunteers in nature conservation were:

- Further engagement and feedback to volunteers; the volunteers should feel part of the group and feel that they are appreciated.
- Find finance and support; there is a need for financing in order to organise voluntary work.
- Recruit more volunteer managers; active communication and follow-up is important for keeping volunteers in the long run.
- Set short-term goals to see the results of volunteering; this is necessary because the impact of voluntary work can often be seen only after a very long time.

WS3: Citizen science: a new type of volunteering

The citizen science approach is a new type of volunteering and has already proven to be a very effective way of gathering nature data. Several good examples were shared from different organisations during the working session: monitoring different (invasive) species by volunteers (mammals, birds, etc.) and monitoring roadkill, flagship species, the weather, etc. Various monitoring methods have been used: monitoring transects, camera traps, online applications, etc.

All participants concluded that an enormous volume of data could be collected and used for different purposes. Nevertheless, there are several issues which need to be taken into account in the citizen science approach, such as:

- a created database does not work by itself: it needs to be improved and expanded all the time;
- the validation of data is crucial for making essential conclusions on trends and other patterns and in order to integrate those data into more substantial information systems;
- training volunteers is necessary for successful management of a data collection; training and guidance are essential and cannot be underestimated;
- it is vital to ensure that the value of the work being done is communicated—regular updates on what is being achieved and why.

The main recommendations for future work are:

- everybody should be cautious about sharing sensitive information (e.g. habitats of rare species);
- it is important to ensure proper training of the volunteers involved; training should be planned and well-structured - the suggestion was to find people who volunteer longer and constantly engage new young volunteers; and
- check what has been done beforehand and do not spend time “reinventing the wheel”.

Cooperation between different networks is essential and therefore it would be good to have a common platform on citizen science.

WS4–WS6 focused on experience from LIFE projects involving volunteers:

- WS4 was on monitoring and citizen science;
- WS5 was on practical conservation work; and
- WS6 was on the engagement of young people as volunteers.

The aim of these workshops was to discuss the experiences of practitioners and what the LIFE programme could do for volunteering in the future.

During the sessions, the following conclusions were drawn from experience on LIFE projects:

- The involvement of volunteers is a good option when a vast, but rather simple, workload is needed for a very short time.
- Certain tasks are not suitable for volunteers (e.g. if they do not have adequate expertise).
- Good cooperation between the volunteers and others involved in restoration activities is crucial.
- Motivation among individual volunteers and among the group is crucial (if the job turns out to be harder than expected or if the weather conditions are unfavourable).
- Covering direct costs and welcoming volunteers with gifts and socialising actions could elicit more interest and better volunteering.
- Volunteers can also motivate others to participate in nature protection activities.

The participants have provided excellent recommendations for the LIFE programme and what it could do for volunteers in the future:

- Using volunteers in the project should be viewed as a positive matter in the ranking of the LIFE project applications;
- Involvement of volunteers could be considered as an in-kind contribution and could be allowed, particularly for NGOs, instead of a monetary contribution.
- It would be useful to share best practice experiences of using volunteers in projects with new applicants (i.e. projects using volunteers could easily be found in the LIFE database).
- Establish a different financial model for small NGOs using volunteers. It should include less bureaucracy and simplified reporting.
- Change the financial rules for NGOs that use volunteers, considering 100% or close to 100% co-financing instead of 50/50, as it is now for most LIFE projects.
- Provide after-LIFE funding for successful voluntary work by NGOs in order to ensure sustainability.
- It is crucial to train coordinators and managers of volunteers.
- Establish a special international exchange panel of trained volunteers who could possibly be involved in projects;

- Establish a database of LIFE projects that involved volunteers and develop initiatives that would engage different age groups in volunteering (not limited to young people but including also retired or disabled people);
- Better formal recognition of volunteers' involvement by the LIFE programme would be good, such as LIFE Platform Meetings for volunteers, LIFE award for volunteers, etc.

The assessment of the quality of the working sessions by the participants was good, scoring between 3.5 and 5 points on a scale of 0–5. The main deficiencies that were identified were linked to the lack of time in the workshop sessions to discuss all the issues in depth.

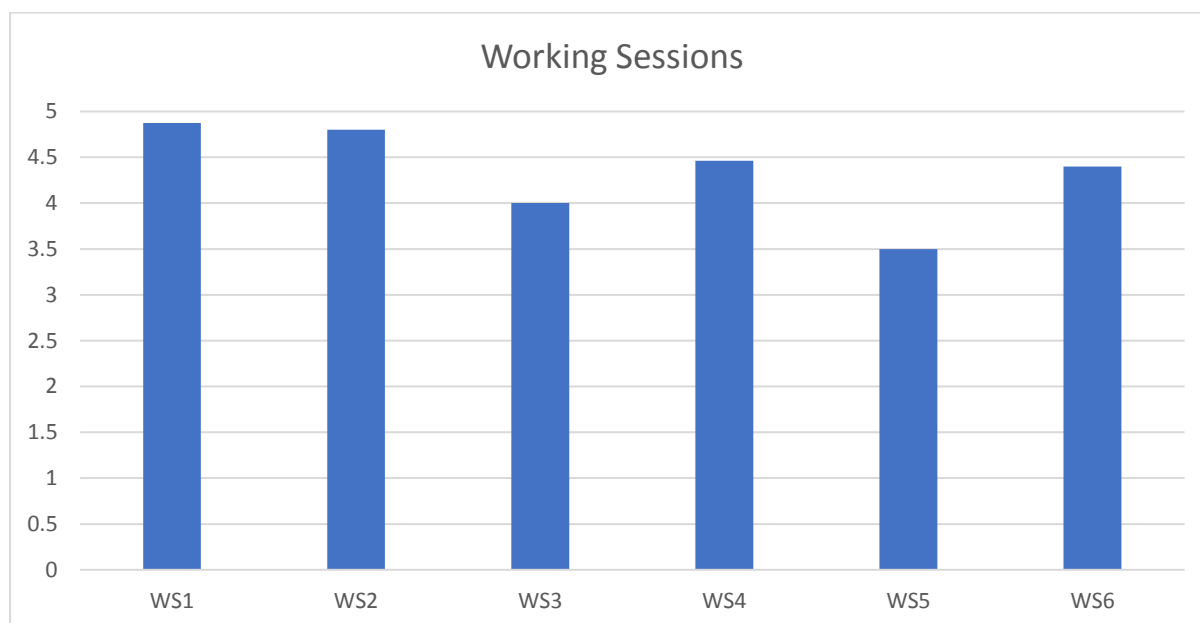


Figure 1. Feedback on the workshop sessions, on a scale of 0–5.

6.3. Voluntary work

This Platform Meeting had a unique element compared to other LIFE Platform Meetings. There was no field excursion during the meeting; instead, the host organised a day of practical volunteering work in the Soosaare mire, with all participants of the meeting invited to experience volunteer work.

The work on the mire included manually building peat dams to block the water flow in the ditches and restore the hydrological regime in the mire.



Photo 5. Introduction of the project area.

Photo 6. LIFE in action.

The participants were organised in teams of 5–6 people and each team were led by an experienced team leader. Using shovels, people dug peat blocks from the mire to build the dam. Each team constructed one dam. Tools for the work were provided by the Estonian Fund for Nature.



Photo 7. Practical voluntary work: emptying water from the hole so as to then fill it tightly with peat blocks in order to establish a peat dam across a drainage ditch about 1 m deep and 0.5 m wide.

Participants evaluated the exercise very highly, praising the good organisation of the work, the experienced team leaders and the very interesting natural sites. Participants also suggested valuable improvements to the volunteer work for the Estonian Fund for Nature to take on board. Several cooperation opportunities were also suggested: between Estonia and the UK, Estonia and Latvia, Estonia and Hungary, etc. For example, since the Latvian Fund for Nature does not possess all the tools and other equipment needed for holding voluntary events or organising camps, it was agreed that it would be efficient to organise such events in cooperation with the Estonian Fund for Nature, which could bring all that is needed to Latvia. As regards potential cooperation between Estonia and the UK, it was proposed to seek cooperation with British universities in order to bring students over to undertake monitoring and to engage in voluntary work. Conservation camp organisation for Hungarian youth in August 2019 in Estonia together with ELF has started.

Some reflections from the participants:

‘... the volunteering work was the best part of the meeting. It really brought people together and helped understanding the power and importance of volunteering;

... good to experience how physically demanding voluntary work can sometimes be;

... great opportunity to get to know the other participants better.

...great to see the bog and to do something good for it’.

More feedback is provided in Annex 7.

It was suggested to always make voluntary work a part of such events, whenever possible!

6.4. Overall assessment of the event

'I can truly say it was the most enjoyable and worthwhile conference I have been to, I learnt a great deal from the conference and from meeting other attendees.' David Tompkins, Volunteering coordinator/Reserve Manager, Natural England.

The participants' overall level of satisfaction with the event was very high, and we conclude that it was largely due to the fact that it was specifically tailored for the needs of LIFE projects that engage volunteers.

The need for further LIFE Platform Meetings on this subject was generally acknowledged and understood by the participants to mean anything that promotes, recognises and celebrates volunteers and that shows that volunteering is worthwhile. Volunteering provides a very important function in society in general and in LIFE projects in particular. More meetings on this subject will keep public attention alive to the importance of volunteering.

It was also mentioned that the focus should be first and foremost on exchanging good practices; the format of the event is of lesser importance.



Photo 8. Raised bog (7110) in Estonia*

Ideas for future LIFE Platform Meeting topics included:

- Public participation practices in decision-making in nature conservation;
- Private land conservation and management, and ways for LIFE to further that;
- Improvement of the encouragement tools for volunteers: volunteering awards, a platform for LIFE volunteers to exchange experiences, etc.;
- A Platform Meeting targeting volunteers across Europe;
- A Platform Meeting on soils and nutrient cycles: e.g. "LIFE Digging the dirt".

EU LIFE Programme Announces a Platform Meeting in Estonia

Volunteering for Nature Conservation

Tartu – 19th to 21st September 2018

Volunteering for nature conservation or wildlife volunteering covers various activities designed to manage and restore habitats and species and to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity. These activities range widely—from practical restoration works such as planting, removal of vegetation, fighting alien species, or setting up structures important for biodiversity, to citizen science—reporting of nature observations or monitoring species. The experience of volunteering can help people learn new skills, become socially integrated and be part of a larger community, and contribute to a better future. Understanding volunteer motivations for participating in nature conservation programmes is an important element in the design and provision of programmes intended to harness the increasingly important talents and labour that volunteers bring to conservation programmes.

Mobilising volunteers helps protect nature in numerous ways. It reduces the costs of organisations that protect nature, enables activities that would otherwise not be possible, and involves society, which leads to greater public awareness of, trust in, and ownership of the process.

The EU has recognised the value of volunteers for the protection of the environment, in particular volunteers' roles in managing the Natura 2000 network, and the EU has included this aspect in the EU 'Action Plan for Nature, People and the Economy' (Action 15).

Volunteers play a crucial role in the success of the LIFE programme. LIFE Nature and Biodiversity projects in particular have benefited from the ability of nature conservation NGOs to leverage their networks of volunteers.

Estonia is one of the EU countries that have a strong volunteering culture and the concept of conservation volunteering has been around for decades. The host project, LIFE Mires Estonia (LIFE14 NAT/EE/000126), is coordinated by the NGO Estonian Fund for Nature. The overall aim of the project is to secure a favourable conservation status of wetlands. One of the activities planned to achieve this goal involves about 500 volunteers in volunteers' camps.

The main objective of this LIFE Platform meeting is to share experience between LIFE projects and to identify what is most important for increasing the impact of volunteers in nature conservation.

The three-day event will include plenary sessions, thematic workshops and a poster session presenting and discussing projects' experience from several EU countries. Invited experts will present experience from other programmes that involve volunteers and offer experience on organising volunteers' work and attracting and motivating volunteers. Social aspects of volunteering will be explored and linkages made with other policy areas.

It will provide excellent opportunities for networking and feature the possibility to work as a volunteer for a day helping to build dams in a mire.

Annex 2: Agenda

Volunteering for nature conservation LIFE Platform meeting

AGENDA

19-21 September 2018

Wednesday, 19 September 2018

Location: Tartu Environmental Education Centre, Lille 10 Tartu 51010,

<http://www.tartuloodusmaja.ee/EN/uldinfo/>

Event moderator: Andy Jefferies, Wild Days Conservation Trust			
9:00 – 9:30	Registration, coffee		
9:30 – 10:15	Welcome notes: Estonian Fund for Nature, Siim Kuresoo, Member of the Executive Committee of ELF DG Environment, Sylvia Barova (tbc) External monitoring team NEEMO, Luule Sinnisov, LIFE monitoring expert		
10:15–10:30	Welcome note and A brief Introduction to volunteering in LIFE, EASME, Diana Oancea, Project Adviser		
10:30 – 11:00	General introduction to volunteering for nature conservation and volunteer networks. Jenny Atkins & Mark Thomas, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)		
11:00 - 11:20	Coffee Break		
11:20 – 11:40	Setting up a successful and sustainable network of volunteers. Kristijn Swinnen, Natuurpunt Study		
11:40 – 12:00	Motivations and challenges of volunteering for red squirrel conservation. Mariella Marzano, LIFE14 NAT/UK/000467 SciriousLIFE (Red Squirrel)		
12:00 – 12:20	Social benefits from volunteering for nature conservation. Sanna-Kaisa Rautio, LIFE13 NAT/FI/000099 Light & Fire LIFE		
12:20 – 12:40	Volunteering in Estonia: the experience from organising a global civic-led movement grown out from Estonia: Let's Do It! World Clean-up Day! Kadi Kenk, Let's Do It World		
12:40 – 14:00	Lunch		
14:00 – 15:00	Video session: video presentations from the participating LIFE projects		
15:00 – 15:10	Introduction to workshops, Inga Račinska, LIFE monitoring expert		
15:10 – 16:30	Thematic session, WS1- WS3. Please see the workshop agenda for more detail.		
	WS1: Legal tools and incentives for volunteering.	WS2: What motivates volunteers?	WS3: Citizen science – a new type of volunteering.
16:40 – 18:00	LIFE experience session, WS4 – WS6. Please see the workshop agenda for more detail.		
	WS4: Engaging volunteers in monitoring in LIFE.	WS5: Engaging volunteers in practical conservation work in LIFE.	WS6: Engaging young people as volunteers in LIFE.
18:00 – 19:00	Poster session and a networking cocktail		

19:30	Joint dinner on a boat - Sisevete Saatkond (Emajõe, Tartu)
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Thursday, 20 September 2018

Location: Soosaare mire in Alam-Pedja Nature reserve – North-West of Tartu -

<https://goo.gl/maps/v7Fs9tkRymA2>

9:00 - 18:30	Voluntary work in a mire
	09:00 Departure from Tartu (meeting point at hotel Dorpat);
	10:30 Arrival to Soosaare; formation of work groups
	10:45 Walking to work sites; restoration work begins
	13:00 Lunch break
	13:40 Restoration work continues
	15:10 Return to bus - warm drinks and soup served
	15:30 Transport to Põltsamaa
	16:00 Degustation of wines at Põltsamaa Wine Cellar and excursion at Põltsamaa Castle
	17:30 Departure from Põltsamaa
	18:30 Arrival to Tartu
	20:00 Joint dinner - Püssirohukelder (Lossi 28, Tartu)
<p><i>The participants are expected to bring a raincoat and rubber boots or wellingtons!</i> <i>We advise you to bring spare clothes, an extra pair of (woollen) socks and an extra sweater. The gloves and necessary tools for work will be provided.</i></p>	

Friday, 21 September 2018

Location: V SPA Hotel Conference Centre, Riia 2, Tartu - <https://vspahotel.ee/en/>

Event moderator: Andy Jefferies, Wild Days Conservation Trust	
9:00 – 10:45	Conclusions and take-home message from workshops on Wednesday
10:45 - 11:15	Coffee Break
11:15 – 11:45	Reflections from the voluntary work on Thursday
11:45 – 12:00	Wrap-up by NEEMO
12:00	End of the meeting

Annex 3: Workshop agenda

WORKSHOP SESSIONS

19 September 15:00 – 18:00

Six workshop sessions will be held on the first day of the Platform meeting. During the workshops we offer the floor for practical contributions from organisations working with volunteers. Workshops are designed to trigger the discussions on numerous issues that are in the heart of the work with volunteers, starting from legal tools and incentives, to motivation for the volunteers, engaging young people, and various applications of the volunteer input for nature conservation. The issues highlighted, lessons-learned during the workshops and take-away messages will be summarized by a moderator and a rapporteur of each workshop and presented to the plenary on 21 September.

There will be six workshops in total, organised in two workshop sessions. First session focuses on three major issues that are closely related to the volunteer work – legal tools and incentives for volunteers, motivation for the volunteers and the citizen science approach. The second session will enable the participants to share the experience of the LIFE projects in engaging and supporting volunteers all across EU, with the perspective on application of volunteer skills for monitoring, engaging young people and other practical aspects of working with volunteers in nature conservation.

Each participant will be able to attend two workshops. Each workshop session will last 80 minutes and will start with three to four 10-minute presentations, followed by a 40-50 minute moderated discussion. Participants have been pre-assigned to the workshops, and the distribution list will be circulated prior to the meeting*.

Workshop topics are summarized in the table below.

Thematic session		
WS1: Legal tools and incentives for volunteering.	WS2: What motivates volunteers?	WS3: Citizen science – a new type of volunteering.
LIFE experience		
WS4: Engaging volunteers in monitoring in LIFE.	WS5: Engaging volunteers in practical conservation work in LIFE.	WS6: Engaging young people as volunteers in LIFE.

For further reference, please see the workshop sessions described below. A more detailed description of the aims for each workshop please see on pages 3-4 of this document.

*To ensure a good geographic and thematic representation of participants per workshops, we have pre-assigned participants to the workshop sessions, based on their listed preferences upon registration for WS1-3. However, to ensure an even distribution of the participants per various sessions, it was not always possible to assign participants to their preferences. For those who have not been assigned to their preferred sessions, please be understanding and embrace the opportunities to learn something new!

Thematic session. 15:10 – 16:30		
WS1: Legal tools and incentives for volunteering Moderator: Andy Jefferies Rapporteur: Ivona Malbasic Presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal (or regulatory) support and obstacles for volunteering. <i>Andy Jefferies, Wild Days Conservation, United Kingdom</i> - French legislation in support of volunteers. <i>Alain Salvi, Fédération des Conservatoires d'espaces naturels, France</i> - Volunteering as crowdsourcing for private land conservation. <i>Jóni Vieira, LIFE ELCN, MONTIS - Associação de Conservação da Natureza, Portugal</i> 	WS2: What motivates volunteers – studies and lessons-learned Moderator: Luule Sinnisov Rapporteur: Sanna Kaisa Rautio Presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivating and hindering factors for volunteers. <i>Siim Kuresoo, Estonian Fund for Nature, Estonia</i> - Giving responsibility is giving wings. <i>Ewoud L'Amiral, Natuurpunt and Eurosite, Belgium</i> - Volunteering in practice. <i>Ismo Marttinen, WWF Finland / Metsähallitus, Finland</i> 	WS3: Citizen science – a new type of volunteering Moderator: Lucie Trokanova Rapporteur: Kadri Aller Presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Natuurpunt – 10th anniversary of the waarnemingen.be database. <i>Kristijn Swinnen, Natuurpunt, Belgium</i> - Euro Bird Portal. <i>Daniel Villero, Forest Sciences Center of Catalonia, Spain</i> - Citizen science in the South Pennines. <i>Thomas Aspinall, Moors for the Future Partnership, MoorLIFE 2020, United Kingdom</i>
LIFE experience session. 16:40 – 18:00		
WS4: Engaging volunteers in monitoring and citizen science in LIFE projects Moderator: Inga Račinska Rapporteur: Lauri Klein Presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Detecting the Small and Secretive: the power of volunteer workforce. <i>Genevieve Dalley, Natural England, Marches Mosses BogLIFE Project - LIFE15 NAT/UK/786</i> - Monitoring of wolves with volunteers in Slovenia. <i>Nina Ražen, Biotechnical Faculty, SLOWOLF Project - LIFE08 NAT/SLO/244</i> - “Sturgeon Watchers” in Ukraine. <i>Inna Hoch, WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme in Ukraine, LIFE for Danube Sturgeons Project - LIFE15 GIE/AT/1004</i> - Marine experience of citizen science from Andalusia. <i>Soledad Vivas, Regional Government of Andalusia, LIFE BLUE NATURA Project - LIFE14 CCM/ES/957</i> 	WS5: Engaging volunteers in practical conservation work in LIFE projects Moderator: Jüri-Ott Salm Rapporteur: Lūcija Kursīte Presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conservation work in the mire is fun! <i>Elo Uibokand, Estonian Fund for Nature, LIFE Mires Estonia Project - LIFE14 NAT/EE/126</i> - Volunteering with the ESC for nature conservation. <i>Luis Jordão, MONTIS - Associação de Conservação da Natureza, LIFE VOLUNTEER ESCAPES Project - LIFE17 ESC/PT/003</i> - Engaging volunteers in Osprey protection in Poland. <i>Łukasz Porębski, Directorate General of the State Forests in Poland, LIFE PandionPL Project - LIFE15 NAT/PL/819</i> - Volunteer activities after LIFE. <i>Christos Georgiadis, Hellenic Society for the Protection of Nature. PINDOS GREVENA Project - LIFE07 NAT/GR/291</i> 	WS6: Engaging young people as volunteers in LIFE projects Moderator: Ivona Malbasic Rapporteur: Mari Kaisel Presentations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Volunteering for Real. <i>Paul Stephens, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, LIFE Waders for Real Project, LIFE13 BIO/UK/315</i> - Volunteer student placements. <i>David Tompkins, Natural England, Marches Mosses BogLIFE Project - LIFE15 NAT/UK/786</i> - Young volunteers for monitoring forest biodiversity in the Italian Natura 2000 Network: the LIFE ESC 360 Project LIFE17 ESC/IT/001. <i>Franco Mason and Alessandro Campanaro, National Center for Forest Biodiversity and Conservation Carabinieri - Verona and Council for Agricultural Research and Economics - Research Centre for Plant Protection and Certification - Florence (Italy).</i> - Engaging young volunteers in choosing nature. <i>Greta Regondi, Lipu, Choo-na! Project - LIFE16 ESC/IT/002</i>

Aims of the workshops

Thematic session – WS1-3 running in parallel:

WS1. Legal tools and incentives for volunteering.

Moderator: Andy Jefferies

Rapporteur: Ivona Malbasic

The aim of the workshop is to get an overview of various legal tools and other incentives that support volunteering for nature conservation that could be replicated on a wider scale. Key points to discuss and report on to the plenary on Friday:

- Good examples;
- Lessons learned - problems, gaps, bottlenecks;
- Possible solutions, recommendations.

WS2. What motivates volunteers – studies and lessons-learned.

Moderator: Luule Sinnisov

Rapporteur: Sanna Kaisa Rautio

The aim of the workshop is to identify the main motivations for people to get involved in volunteering for nature conservation, lessons learnt and discuss how to facilitate the wider application of volunteers.

Key points to discuss and report on to the plenary on Friday:

- Main motivations;
- Lessons learned - main hindering factors, problems;
- Recommendations for wider application of volunteers in the nature conservation.

WS3. Citizen science – a new type of volunteering.

Moderator: Lucie Trokanova

Rapporteur: Kadri Aller

The aim of the workshop is to discuss the citizen science approach that is a new type of volunteering and has already proven to be a very effective way for gathering nature data. Key points to discuss and report on to the plenary on Friday:

- Good examples;
- Lessons learned – main hindering factors, problems;
- Possibilities in the future, recommendations.

LIFE session – WS4-6 running in parallel:

WS4: Engaging volunteers in monitoring and citizen science in LIFE projects.

Moderator: Inga Racinska

Rapporteur: Lauri Klein

The aim of this workshop is to discuss the experiences of practitioners in engaging volunteers in the nature conservation projects dealing with monitoring and assessments of species or habitats, including also a citizen science approach. Key points to discuss and report on to the plenary on Friday:

- Good examples;
- Lessons learned – what works, what are the main hindering factors;
- Recommendations for wider application of citizen science concept;
- What could LIFE programme do for a wider application of volunteers for citizen science in the nature conservation projects?

WS5: Engaging volunteers in practical conservation work in LIFE projects.

Moderator: Jüri-Ott Salm

Rapporteur: Elo Uibokand

The aim of the workshop is to discuss the actual conservation work experience in LIFE projects involving volunteers and to determine what steps should be taken to increase the impact of the volunteers in the LIFE programme. Key points to discuss and report on to the plenary on Friday:

- Types of the conservation work done by volunteers and good examples;

- Lessons learned - challenges and success stories;
- Further recommendations for the involvement of the volunteers in the practical conservation work in LIFE projects.

WS6: Engaging young people as volunteers in LIFE projects.

Moderator: Ivona Malbasic

Rapporteur: Mari Kaisal

The aim of workshop is to discuss the experiences of practitioners in engaging young people as volunteers in various nature conservation projects. Key points to discuss and report on to the plenary on Friday:

- Good examples;
- Lessons learned - problems, gaps, bottlenecks;
- Possible solutions, recommendations.
- What could LIFE programme do for a better engagement of young people as volunteers in LIFE projects?




Annex 4: List of participants




Last name	First name	Country (Project)	Organisation (Position)	E-mail
Ražen	Nina	Slovenia (SloWolf)	Biotechnical faculty (Researcher)	nina.razen@gmail.com
Campanaro	Alessandr	Italy (LIFE ESC 360)	CREA-DC & CNBF (Researcher)	ale.naro@gmail.com
Porębski	Łukasz	Poland (LIFE PandionPL)	Directorate General of the State Forests in Poland (LIFE Project Manager)	ljporebski@gmail.com
Oancea	Diana	Belgium	EASME (Project Adviser)	diana.oancea@ec.europa.eu
Takács	Emőke	Hungary (VisPo)	ERI Hungary Nonprofit Ltd. (Managing Director)	t.emoke@eri.net.in
Dömölki	Judit	Hungary (VisPo)	ERI Hungary Nonprofit Ltd. (Project Manager)	d.judit@eri.net.in
Roasto	Reigo	Estonia	Estonian Environment Agency (Leading Specialist of Nature Conservation)	reigo.roasto@envir.ee
Viilma	Kaili	Estonia	Estonian Environmental Board (Leading Specialist of Nature Conservation)	kaili.viilma@keskkonnaamet.ee
Kaskevich	Volha	Estonia	Estonian Fund for Nature	kaskevich@gmail.com
Kuresoo	Siim	Estonia	Estonian Fund for Nature (Member of Executive Committee, Volunteer Coordinator)	siim@elfond.ee
Hool	Kertu	Estonia	Estonian Fund for Nature (Communications Manager)	kertu@elfond.ee
Klein	Lauri	Estonia (EstBatLIFE)	Estonian Fund for Nature (EstBatLIFE Project Manager)	Lauri.Klein@elfond.ee
Järvpõld	Liina	Estonia	Estonian Fund for Nature (Project Assistant)	liina@elfond.ee
Kaisel	Mari	Estonia (NaturallyEst-LIFE)	Estonian Fund for Nature (Project Coordinator)	mari@elfond.ee
Salm	Jüri-Ott	Estonia (LIFE Mires Estonia)	Estonian Fund for Nature (Project Coordinator)	jott@elfond.ee
Aller	Kadri	Estonia	Estonian Fund for Nature (Volunteer Coordinator)	kadri.aller@elfond.ee
Uibokand	Elo	Estonia	Estonian Fund For Nature (Volunteer Coordinator)	elo.uibokand@elfond.ee
Lopez Cañizares	Celia	Spain	Estonian Fund for Nature (Volunteer)	celialc.bio@gmail.com
Adler	Epp	Estonia	Estonian Fund for Nature (Volunteer)	epp@headest.ee
Salvi	Alain	France	FCEN (Administrateur - trésorier)	alain.salvi@univ-lorraine.fr
Marzano	Mariella	United Kingdom (Red Squirrels United)	Forest Research (Senior Social Researcher)	Mariella.Marzano@forestry.gsi.gov.uk
Villero	Daniel	Spain (LIFE-EBP)	Forest Sciences Center of Catalonia (Researcher)	dani.villero@ctfc.cat


Gustavo	Viera Ruiz	Spain (LIFE+ Guguy)	GESPLAN, S.A. (Project Management)	gvierui@gesplan.es
Stephens	Paul	United Kingdom (LIFE Waders for Real)	GWCT (Public Sector Funding Manager)	pstephens@gwct.org.uk
Priedniece	Ilze	Latvia (GrassLIFE)	Latvian Fund for Nature (GrassLIFE citizen science coordinator)	ilze.priedniece@lu.lv
Racinska	Inga	Latvia (GrassLIFE)	Latvian Fund for Nature (GrassLIFE Project Manager)	inga.racinska@ldf.lv
Mežavilka	Lita	Latvia (GrassLIFE)	Latvian Fund for Nature (Planning Coordinator GrassLIFE)	ldf@ldf.lv
Kenk	Kadi	Estonia	Let's Do It Foundation (Expert Consultant on Partnerships)	Kadi@letsdoitworld.org
Regondi	Greta	Italy (CHOO-NA!)	Lipu (National Volunteers Coordinator)	greta.regondi@lipu.it
Di Grado	Marianna	Italy (CHOO-NA!)	Lipu (Volunteer)	marianna.digrado@gmail.com
Finotello	Lisa	Italy (CHOO-NA!)	Lipu (Volunteer)	finotello.lisa@gmail.com
Rossini	Elena	Italy (CHOO-NA!)	Lipu (Volunteer, Social Report, Projects Office)	elena.rossini@lipu.it
Rautio	Sanna-Kaisa	Finland (Light & Fire LIFE)	Metsähallitus, Park & Wildlife Finland (Project Manager)	sanna-kaisa.rautio@metso.fi
Barbosa	Carolina	Portugal (LIFE VOLUNTEER ESCAPES)	MONTIS - Associação de Conservação da Natureza (Biologist)	volunteer.escapes@gmail.com
Vieira	Jóni	Portugal (LIFE ELCN)	Montis ACN (Project Manager)	montis.elcn@gmail.com
Jordao	Luis	Portugal (LIFE VOLUNTEER ESCAPES)	MONTIS (Coordinator of project LIFE Volunteer ESCAPES)	volunteer.escapes@gmail.com
Aspinall	Thomas	United Kingdom (MoorLIFE 2020)	Moors for the Future Partnership (Community Science Project Officer)	thomas.aspinall@peakdistrict.gov.uk
Georgiadis	Christos	Greece (LIFE PINDOS/GREVENA)	Mr. (Project Manager)	cgeorgiadis@gmail.com
Mason	Franco	Italy (LIFE ESC360)	National Center of Forest Biodiversity "Bosco Fontana" (Director)	franco.mason.cnbfvr@gmail.com
Dalley	Genevieve	England (Marches Mosses BogLIFE)	Natural England (Monitoring Officer)	genevieve.dalley@naturalengland.org.uk

Tompkins	David	England (Marches Mosses BogLIFE)	Natural England (Volunteer Coordinator)	david.tompkins@naturalengland.org.uk
L'Amiral	Ewoud	Belgium (Green valleys LIFE)	Natuurpunt (Head of the department nature management)	ewoud.lamiral@natuurpunt.be
Swinnen	Kristijn	Belgium	Natuurpunt Study (Scientist)	kristijn.swinnen@natuurpunt.be
Trokanova	Lucie	Belgium	NEEMO - LIFE Communications Team (Communications Expert)	lucie.trokanova@neemo.eu
Malbasic	Ivona	Croatia	NEEMO (LIFE NGO Grants & Good Governance Sector Coordinator)	ivona.malbasic@neemo.eu
Kursīte	Lūcija	Latvia	NEEMO (Monitoring Expert)	lucija.kursite@neemo.eu
Sinnisov	Luule	Estonia	NEEMO (Monitoring Expert)	luule.sinnisov@neemo.eu
Toland	Justin	United Kingdom	Neemo (Senior Editor, LIFE Communication Team)	justin.toland@neemo.eu
Santos	Ana	Portugal (PT CAPACITY BUILDING)	Portuguese Environment Agency (Environmental technician)	anam.santos@apambiente.pt
Vivas	Soledad	Spain (Blue Natura)	Regional Government of Andalusia (Life project Coordinator)	marias.vivas@juntadeandalucia.es
Atkins	Jenny	United Kingdom	RSPB (Agricultural Projects Manager)	jenny.atkins@rspb.org.uk
de la Nava Martínez	Pablo	Spain (LIFE Followers)	SEO/BirdLife (LIFE Followers Coordinator)	pdelanava@seo.org
Runnel	Veljo	Estonia	University of Tartu Natural History Museum (Citizen Science Expert)	veljo.runnel@gmail.com
de Groen	Nora	Netherlands (Amsterdam Dune project)	Waternet (Volunteer Coordinator)	nora.de.groen@waternet.nl
Jefferies	Andy	United Kingdom	Wild Days Conservation (Director)	a.jefferies@wilddaysconservation.org
Hoch	Inna	Ukraine (LIFE for Danube Sturgeons)	WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme in Ukraine (Project Officer)	ihoch@wwfdcp.org
Marttinen	Ismo	Finland (LIFE Saimaa Seal)	WWF Finland / Metsähallitus (Member of Board/Volunteer)	ismo.marttinen@elisanet.fi

Annex 5: Short Biographies of speakers in the plenary session

ANDY JEFFERIES	
Organization	Wild Days Conservation
Job title	Director. Moderator of the event
	<p>Andy Jefferies first volunteered for nature when he was 17 years old spending a week helping restore a peat bog in his native Scotland – and never looked back! Since then he has led volunteer groups, managed volunteer projects and worked extensively to develop environmental volunteering in the UK, collaboratively across Europe and worldwide. He worked for many years in the international department of UK NGO ‘The Conservation Volunteers’ and is now founder and director of Wild Days Conservation – a social enterprise that works with large conservation managing organisations in the UK to support wider volunteering. He never stopped volunteering himself though and still gets his hands dirty surveying rivers where he lives in the Southwest of England.</p>
JENNY ATKINS	
Organization	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Job title	Agricultural Projects Manager
	<p>In 1997 Jenny started volunteering on an RSPB reserve, becoming a Little Tern Warden later that year. In 1999, she joined the advisory team and has been their Agricultural Projects Manager since, excepting maternity leave. She has managed agricultural projects including the Volunteer and Farmer Alliance (V&FA) which has been emulated elsewhere. Designed to improve relations with the farming community, these projects involved hundreds of volunteers, thousands of farmers and hundreds of thousands of hectares.</p> <p>Jenny now manages the delivery of targeted agricultural advice, across the UK. Besides her ornithological background, she attended agricultural college and has an HND and BSc (Hons) in Conservation.</p>
MARK THOMAS	
Organization	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Job title	RSPB Principal Specialist
	<p>Mark Thomas has worked in the Investigations team at RSPB for 20 years, he protects rare breeding birds and works with the Police to catch people who commit crimes against birds, especially raptors. Mark is a very keen birder and ringer and leads on Montagu’s Harrier conservation for the RSPB.</p> <p>Mark is passionate about communication and helping young people and volunteers in the conservation world.</p>
KADI KENK	

Organization	Let's Do It Foundation
Job title	Expert Consultant on Partnerships
	<p>Kadi is an expert consultant on partnerships in Let's Do It Foundation. She joined the organization as a volunteer in 2011 to be a coordinator of the Let's Do It! World movement in South-Europe and North-Africa. It led her to join the team full time as a head of the global coordinators team in 2013. For the past 3 years her job has been to plan and help carry out World Cleanup Day (15 Sept 2018); this including developing partners relations, advocacy and representing the organization abroad. Kadi has broad experience working with international civil society organisations, introducing the UN SDGs and engaging volunteers to change management in society and spreading social innovation.</p>
SANNA KAISA-RAUTIO	
Organization	Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland
Job title	Project Manager
	<p>Sanna-Kaisa Rautio (MSc in Mire & Forest Ecology) works as a Project manager in Light & Fire LIFE Nature Project in Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland. She has background of project leading in different organizations. She was coordinator of the voluntary work and co-operation with NGO's in Metsähallitus, Parks & Wildlife Finland, in 2017, that was 4 600 volunteers in 200 different events doing 26 man-years voluntary work.</p> <p>Sanna-Kaisa is doing some voluntary work herself in Suomen Latu, Outdoor Association of Finland.</p>
KRISTIJN SWINNEN	
Organization	Natuurpunt Study
Job title	Scientist
	<p>Kristijn Swinnen is a biologist that studied the return of the Eurasian beaver in Flanders for his PhD. Within the study department of Natuurpunt, he is responsible for the scientific support of projects and analysis of data, mainly citizen science data collected via www.waarnemingen.be.</p> <p>As a volunteer, he is also active in the mammal workgroup (European hamster, Wild boar, Wolf,...), he manages a small scale camera trap study with volunteers and he is active in the local nature management unit in his hometown.</p>
MARIELLA MARZANO	

Organization	Forest Research
Job title	Senior Social Researcher
	<p>Dr Mariella Marzano is a senior social researcher at Forest Research with over 15 years of experience in agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors in the UK and internationally. Her Ph.D. in Social Anthropology explored rural development and natural resource management issues in Sri Lanka. Mariella has worked in a number of areas related to natural resource management from adaptation to climate change to volunteer biodiversity monitoring networks and has led or contributed to over 48 peer-reviewed publications. She currently leads a number of interdisciplinary research projects on topics related to the human dimensions of species conservation and management, tree and plant biosecurity, stakeholder engagement and risk management and communication.</p>

Annex 6: Summaries of participating projects

Participating LIFE projects – brief description and contact details

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

[LIFE16 NAT/LV/000262](#) **GrassLIFE** - Restoring EU priority grasslands and promoting their multiple use
Latvia's priority grassland habitats are in urgent need of support.

This project will restore and reconnect more than 1300 hectares of grasslands and establish long-term management through grazing. This will involve working with partner farms to identify grassland-related business products with high added value. The project will also submit proposals to the Latvian government of hotspots for further grassland restoration and ways to incorporate protection of these habitats into the country's Rural Development Programme for 2021-2027.

Contact details:

Contact person: Baiba Strazdina

Tel: 37167830999

Email: ldf@ldf.lv

[LIFE16 NAT/EE/000710](#) **EstBatLIFE** - Improving the Pond Bat (*Myotis dasycneme*) habitats in Estonia
The pond bat (*Myotis dasycneme*) is a rare and threatened species in Europe, listed in the EU Habitats Directive.

The loss of many of its safe winter roosts has been key to its decline. This project will work to protect and improve underground hibernation sites for the species in Estonia. It will secure the most important of these against uncontrolled visits, reduce visitor numbers during the hibernation period in the most vulnerable habitats, stop roost degradation, involve local volunteers in cleaning caves, and make policy recommendations for management plans for the pond bat and its protected areas.

Contact details:

Contact person: Lauri KLEIN

Tel: +3725179668

Email: Lauri.Klein@elfond.ee

[LIFE15 NAT/PL/000819](#) **LIFEPandionPL** - Osprey conservation in selected SPA Natura 2000 sites in Poland

The main objective is to increase the population of the osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) in Poland.

The project is focusing on activities carried out in forests, where the osprey most commonly nests, as well as on lakes and ponds, its main feeding areas. The project will install artificial nests, protected by site wardens, and identify fish stocks necessary to support the osprey population while avoiding conflict with the fishing community. An important result will be the production of guidelines for the protection of the species in Poland and Central Europe. These should enhance cooperation between institutions in order to detect or prevent wildlife crimes, particularly poaching and egg theft. The project expects to increase the osprey population by 20% compared with 2014 levels.

Contact details:

Contact person: Łukasz PORĘBSKI

Tel: 225898297

Email: lukasz.porebski@las.gov.pl

LIFE15/NAT/UK/000786 Marches Mosses BogLIFE - Marches Mosses Raised Bog Restoration Project

The project aims to improve the conservation status of the UK's third largest lowland raised bog. The Fenn's, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem & Cadney Mosses SAC covers an area of 949.2 ha on the border of England and Wales. This LIFE project will restore 665 ha of habitat to achieve a more sustainable, resilient and better functioning active raised bog, in line with the UK's Prioritised Action Framework Priority Measures. Actions are expected to improve the conservation status of the site from 'unfavourable' to 'unfavourable improving'.

Contact details:

Contact person: Robert DUFF

Tel: 442080261259

Email: robert.duff@naturalengland.org.uk

LIFE14 NAT/UK/000070 MoorLIFE2020 - MoorLIFE 2020

The aim of the project is to protect the priority habitat 'active blanket bog' within the South Pennine moors. Actions will protect the integrity of around 9 500 ha of the target habitat and the ecosystem services it provides. The project will raise water tables, remove invasive species and introduce appropriate plant species to stop erosion of the peat body, reduce wildfire risk and increase habitat resilience. The carbon benefits of the capital works programme will be included in the project's accounting.

Contact details:

Contact person: Diarmuid CREHAN

Tel: 441629816578

Email: Diarmuid.Crehan@peakdistrict.gov.uk

LIFE14 NAT/EE/00126 LIFE Mires Estonia - Conservation and restoration of Mire Habitats

The objective of the project is to secure a 'favourable' conservation status in Estonia of wetlands, especially mires and priority habitats protected by the Habitats Directive such as active raised bogs, bog woodland and Fennoscandian deciduous swamp woods. Hydrological improvements will be carried out and hydrology improved on around 5 800 ha, of which some 3 450 ha are Natura 2000 priority habitats.

Contact details:

Project Manager: Jüri-Ott Salm

Tel: 3725295933

Email: jott@elfond.ee

LIFE14 NAT/UK/000467 ScuriousLIFE - Scuriosity - Evolving IAS grey squirrel management techniques in the UK.

The project aims to develop early warning/rapid response mechanisms to prevent the invasive grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*) colonising (or re-colonising) areas of Wales, England and Northern Ireland where populations of the native Eurasian red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) are found. ScuriousLIFE

will also mitigate the impact of grey squirrels on urban woodlands with high biodiversity and tourism value and inform the development of a long-term management framework for the species in the UK.

Contact details:

Project Manager: Cathleen Thomas

Tel: +44 1636 670037

Email: cthomas@wildlifetrusts.org

[LIFE13 NAT/FI/000099](#) **Light & Fire -LIFE** - Light & Fire open the Doors for Biodiversity –LIFE

The project aims to restore structural features important for the maintenance of biodiverse habitats and increase the area of such habitats by restoring severely degraded areas. Activities will be carried out on Natura 2000 habitats where ecological characteristics are shaped by fire or extreme solar radiation and luminosity. The project also aims to improve the conservation status of bird species, such as the red-backed shrike (*Lanius collurio*) and barred warbler (*Sylvia nisoria*).

Contact details:

Project Manager: Sanna-Kaisa RAUTIO

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[LIFE12 NAT/FI/000367](#) **LIFE Saimaa Seal** - Safeguarding the Saimaa Ringed Seal

The goal of this project is to help improve the conservation status of the Saimaa ringed seal by reducing risks, in particular, those related to fishing, human-induced disturbance and climate change. Results of the project will be used to update the seal conservation strategy and related regulations.

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[LIFE12 NAT/ES/000286](#) **LIFE+ GUGUY** - Recover of native forests with *Juniperus* spp, and its flora and fauna, in the Special Nature Reserve Güigüí.

The project targeted three habitats in the Canary Islands: endemic *Juniperus* spp. forests, endemic Macaronesian heaths and Canarian endemic pine forests. The project aimed to restore these three habitats to their full potential range in the project area and remove the main threats to the Guigüí Special Nature Reserve.

Contact details:

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[LIFE11 NAT/NL/000776](#) **Amsterdam Dune project** - 'Amsterdam Dunes - source for nature', dune habitat restoration project

The project's overall aim was to restore and improve the characteristic and priority habitat types listed in the Habitats Directive that are part of the "Kennemerland Zuid" Natura 2000 site. The recovery of the area was encouraged by actions targeting the effects of desiccation and

eutrophication, such as the removal of the nitrogen-rich top layer of soil and of invasive species; by restoration of ponds; and by mowing, grazing, and other nature management measures.

Contact details:

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[LIFE09/NAT/ES/000534](#) **Life Posidonia Andalusia** - Conservation of Posidonia oceanica meadows in Andalusian Mediterranean Sea

This LIFE Nature project's main objective was to improve the conservation status of Neptune grass (Posidonia oceanica) meadows. This would be achieved by undertaking studies and applying protection measures. Threats to the ecosystems (including pollution, boat anchoring, uncontrolled trawling and traditional local fishing and the expansion of exotic invasive species) were investigated and mechanisms assessed for mitigating negative impacts on the meadows. Further studies would clarify the broader benefits linked to the meadows, plus the costs of their loss, such as impacts on fish populations, beach regeneration and deterioration of tourist attractions.

Contact details:

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[LIFE08 NAT/SLO/000244](#) **SloWolf** - Conservation and surveillance of conservation status of wolf (Canis lupus) population in Slovenia

The goal of this project was to facilitate long-term conservation of wolves, their prey base and their habitats in Slovenia. It attempted to take human attitudes towards the wolves into account in order to overcome any apparent conflicts through a Wolf Management Action Plan. The project aimed to provide accurate scientific information on the wolf through a specific national wolf-surveillance system.

Contact details:

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[LIFE07/NAT/GR/000291](#) **PINDOS/GREVENA** - Demonstration of Conservation Actions for Ursus arctos* and habitat type 9530* in Northern Pindos N.P., Grevena Prefecture, Greece

The project focused on conservation actions for the brown bear (Ursus arctos) in the northern Pindos in Grevena, and the improvement of 60 ha of the priority forest habitat type "sub-Mediterranean pine forests with endemic black pines".

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[LIFE13 BIO/UK/000315](#) **LIFE WADERS FOR REAL** - Demonstrating wader population recovery through innovative site management and novel stakeholder engagement

This project sought to reverse the decline of breeding waders in the Avon Valley (Hampshire), a river floodplain of high biodiversity interest, part of which is designated as a Natura 2000 network site, through a unique combination of habitat restoration and innovative targeted, seasonal exclusion and reduction of predators.

Contact details:

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[LIFE16 GIE/EE/000665](#) **NaturallyEst-LIFE** - Piloting Natura2000 communication in Estonia

The Natura 2000 network is the centrepiece of EU biodiversity policy. To avoid conflicts over the management of Natura 2000 sites in Estonia, this project enhanced communication between local communities, landowners and nature conservation stakeholders. This was also expected to reduce illegal activities in protected areas. Solutions to conflicts successfully applied elsewhere would be used to show that the network is a flexible and efficient tool for nature conservation. Improving the overall image of the Natura 2000 network would also help to promote the implementation of the EU Habitats and Birds directives.

Contact details:

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[LIFE15 GIE/AT/001004](#) **LIFE FOR DANUBE STURGEONS** - Sustainable protection of lower Danube sturgeons by preventing and counteracting poaching and illegal wildlife trade

Four of the five sturgeon species in the Danube basin are classed as 'critically endangered'. The objective of this project was the survival and recovery of sturgeons in the entire lower Danube region and their long-term protection from illegal fishing and trade. It focused on: increasing authorities' capacity to enforce laws banning sturgeon fishing and trade; increasing fishing communities' acceptance of these bans and helping them to find alternative sources of income; and increasing retailers' awareness of the ban and the need for its enforcement.

Contact details:

Contact person: Jutta Jahrl

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[LIFE08 INF/UK/000214](#) **Birds Directive** - Promoting the importance of the EU Birds Directive in conservation management on farmland

The project aimed to engage directly with general public and more specifically with farmers through on-farm bird surveys, a network of demonstration farms and a Biodiversity Award scheme, in order to raise awareness of the EU Birds Directive and promote positive land management. The objective was to create a positive profile for the Birds Directive among participating farmers and members of their

local communities, as well as more widely among farmers and the public, through and media activities highlighting the importance of protecting both rare and widespread farmland birds.

Contact details:

Project Manager: Jenny ATKINS

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[LIFE14 CCM/ES/000957](#) **LIFE Blue Natura** - Andalusian blue carbon for climate change mitigation: quantification and valorization mechanisms.

The project's main aim is to quantify the carbon deposits and the sequestration rates of marsh and seagrass meadow habitats in Andalusia. An emphasis are placed on what is accumulated under the ground or sea, as well as analysing predicted future developments, from the carbon loss rate, to potential carbon fixation and accumulation rates, and the emission/sequestration ratio of carbon from damaged meadow zones into the atmosphere . This information will enable an approximate evaluation of the environmental services created by these habitats to be made. It should also encourage existing

initiatives to finance conservation and restoration projects of blue carbon sink-habitats and the development of key policies for mitigating and adapting to climate change, with special attention to carbon emissions trading or carbon markets.

Contact details:

Contact person: Rosa Mendoza

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[LIFE16 PRE/DE/000005](#) **LIFE ELCN** - Development of a European private land conservation network

Contact details:

The LIFE ELCN project aims to develop a network of organisations and individuals active in private land conservation. The objective of the project is twofold: to test a number of private land conservation tools with an eye to promoting their replication at a wider level wherever feasible and proposing policy actions to support them, and to develop a robust, well-informed European network on private land conservation with a clear long-term strategy (after LIFE) and strong international allies.

Contact details

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[LIFE15 PRE/ES/000002](#) **LIFE Euro Bird Portal** - Combining and improving online bird portals data to display near-real-time spatiotemporal patterns of bird distribution across Europe

The aim of the project is to develop the EuroBirdPortal (EBP) demo viewer into a full-fledged web portal displaying detailed and up-to-date European-wide spatiotemporal patterns of bird distribution in near-real-time and in a reliable manner.

Contact details:

Project Manager: Nicolas TITEUX

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[LIFE14 PRE/UK/000002](#) **EuroSAP** - Coordinated Efforts for International Species Recovery

The EuroSAP project is aiming to develop or update species action plans for eight bird species, as well as creating a multi-species action plan for eight of the most threatened European waders. It is planning establish a system for coordination to enable the European Commission, Member States, international conventions and NGOs to work together more effectively for the conservation of bird species in Europe.

Contact details:

Project Manager: Anna STANEVA

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Email: anna.staneva@birdlife.org

[LIFE17 ESC/PT/000003](#) **VOLUNTEER ESCAPES** - Volunteer with European Solidarity Corps (ESC) for Activities in Portugal with Ecological Sense

The project aims to train 175 volunteers through the ESC and the involvement of nine Portuguese organisations with different aims and national coverage. Tasks will focus on environmental protection, nature conservation, and restoration of natural areas and ecosystems – mainly Natura 2000 network sites and species/habitats protected by the Birds and Habitats Directive. It is expected that each associated beneficiary's team increases its capacity to undertake at least two new activities in which volunteers are trained, and increases their overall cooperation for conservation by embracing numerous public and private organisations. The aim is to improve the continuity of deployment within the project's innovative joint volunteer scheme, in order to bolster the use of volunteers by ESC for nature conservation.

Contact details:

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[LIFE16 ESC/IT/000002](#) **CHOO-NA** - Choose the nature. Involvement of young volunteers for the Italian nature conservation

The project is planning to recruit, train and lead 310 young volunteers from the European Solidarity Corps who will help tackle specific threats to 11 bird species and their habitats. This should include forming nest guarding and anti-poaching teams to safeguard protected wading birds, raptors and songbirds. One group of volunteers will operate a rapid reaction unit to respond to fuel spills and intervene to rescue affected birds. Another group should communicate the project's work online.

Contact details:

Contact person: Massimo Soldarini

Email: massimo.soldarini@lipu.it

[LIFE17 ESC/IT/000001](#) **LIFE ESC360** - 360 volunteers for monitoring forest biodiversity in the Italian Natura 2000 Network

The LIFE ESC 360 project aims to create opportunities for young people to work on the monitoring of protected species in state-owned nature reserves in Italy. The volunteers will acquire knowledge and skills on species and habitats of Community interest in the conservation of Natura 2000 network sites.

Contact details:

Contact person: **Franko Masson**

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[LIFE16 ESC/ES/000003](#) **LIFEFOLLOWERSRN2000** - of the Natura 2000 network

The overall objective of the project is to increase awareness of Natura 2000 in Spain among young people, who in the future will be responsible for its care. The project aims to create a network of young volunteers committed to the Natura 2000 network. It is planned to develop different and new ways for volunteers to participate in the improvement of the Natura 2000 network; to design and run activities involving monitoring, awareness-raising and conservation actions in Natura 2000 sites.

Contact details:

Contact person: José Sanchez Ruis

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[LIFE14 CAP/PT/000004](#) **PT CAPACITY BUILDING** - Portugal Capacity Building for better use of LIFE

The main objective of the project is to improve the overall Portuguese capacity for participation in the LIFE Programme, by increasing the number and quality of proposals that are presented each year. The project team expect to overcome the weaknesses they have identified as major obstacles to a better use of the LIFE Programme nationally.

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Annex 7: Feedback survey results

Feedback Survey Results

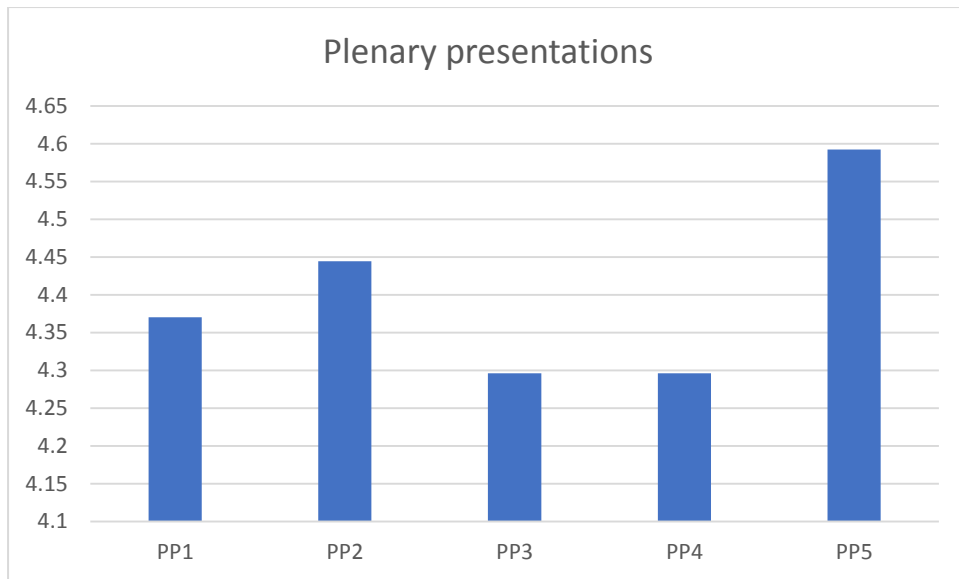
1. What is your general appraisal of the LIFE platform meeting on Volunteering for Nature Conservation that took place in Tartu on 19-21 September?

- ☐ Very well done 23
- ☐ Well done 4
- ☐ Could do better 0

Comments:

- Excellent organisation of the meeting
- Perfect planning and organization! The workshops were especially successful!
- It was brilliantly organised with the right balance of activities
- very very very well done;))
- It was a very good organization, nice place and very interesting presentations.
- It was an excellent event and very well organised. I have organised events such as this for this many people before and understand the effort it took to make it run so smoothly.
- Everything was kept to time, all the talks were informative, great refreshments and meal choices

2. Please score the plenary presentations from 0 (not relevant) to 5 (very useful):
- a. General introduction to volunteering for nature conservation and volunteer networks. *Jenny Atkins & Mark Thomas, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)*
 - b. Setting up a successful and sustainable network of volunteers. *Kristijn Swinnen, Natuurpunt Study*
 - c. Motivations and challenges of volunteering for red squirrel conservation. *Mariella Marzano, LIFE14 NAT/UK/000467 SciriousLIFE (Red Squirrel)*
 - d. Social benefits from volunteering for nature conservation. *Sanna-Kaisa Rautio, LIFE13 NAT/FI/000099 Light & Fire LIFE*
 - e. Volunteering in Estonia: the experience from organising a global civic-led movement grown out from Estonia: Let's Do It! World Clean-up Day! *Kadi Kenk, Let's Do It World*

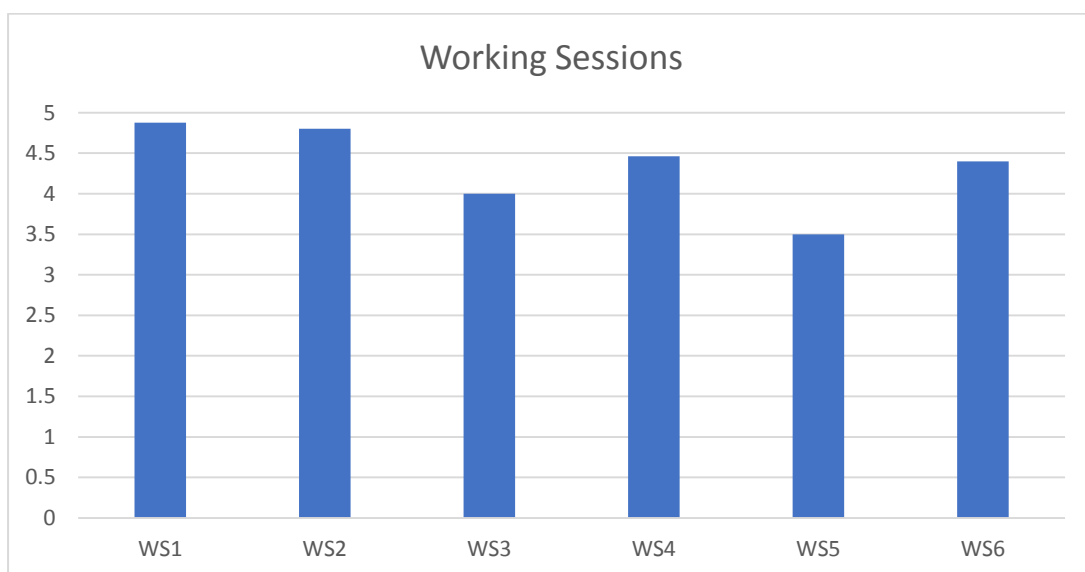


Comments:

- Very inspiring plenary part of the meeting, very good idea to ask the projects to send videos to present their work.
- All very good and nicely varied talks.
- No comment, everything was very well presented and organized.

3. Please score the workshops 1-6 from 0 (not relevant) to 5 (very useful) or mark (I did not participate in this workshop):

- a. WS1: Legal tools and incentives for volunteering.
- b. WS2: What motivates volunteers?
- c. WS3: Citizen science – a new type of volunteering.
- d. WS4: Engaging volunteers in monitoring in LIFE.
- e. WS5: Engaging volunteers in practical conservation work in LIFE.
- f. WS6: Engaging young people as volunteers in LIFE.



Comments:

- Very good to have had the whole afternoon for discussions in small groups, a lot of practical and useful information was exchanged.
- It was great to have Diana Oancea with us to express all the doubts and problems we are having with the ESC projects.
- I really liked that the workshops had a goal set, and this way practical results, and we were not only discussing the topics!
- Enjoyed the interactions in both workshops.

4. 4a Did you attend the voluntary work in the field on Thursday (second day of the event)?

☐ Yes 22

☐ No 5

5. 4b If you joined the voluntary work, did you find it enjoyable, interesting and useful? Please indicate your score from 0 (disappointing) to 5 (excellent). *Aver.: 4.63*

Comments:

- Excellent organisation of the volunteering day, my first time in the mire and I truly enjoyed building a dam with my group. We also had a very good team leader who explained what needed to be done and how. Soup & tea afterwards was much appreciated!
- It was great, we had Marko with us. An incredible knowledgeable specialist.
- It was very hard and the path was a bit too much difficult
- Excellent opportunity to experience what "regular" volunteers do.
- Great to see the bog (and bear prints) and to give something back to the team in Estonia and learn more about the bog and its restoration, as compared to ours in UK. Also very well organised, especially the soup!
- I was not prepared for this hard work, there was not enough water but I enjoyed it a lot.
- Very very hard, maybe too much hard for me, but at the end I have enjoyed it!
- Great place, great people, great day. Grateful.
- The volunteering work was the best part of the meeting. It really brought people together and helped understanding the power and importance of volunteering. (1) good to experience how physically demanding voluntary work can sometimes be (2) great opportunity to get to know the other participants better

6. 4c Do you think voluntary work could be part of future LIFE platform meetings?

☐ Yes 23

☐ No 0

☐ Maybe 4

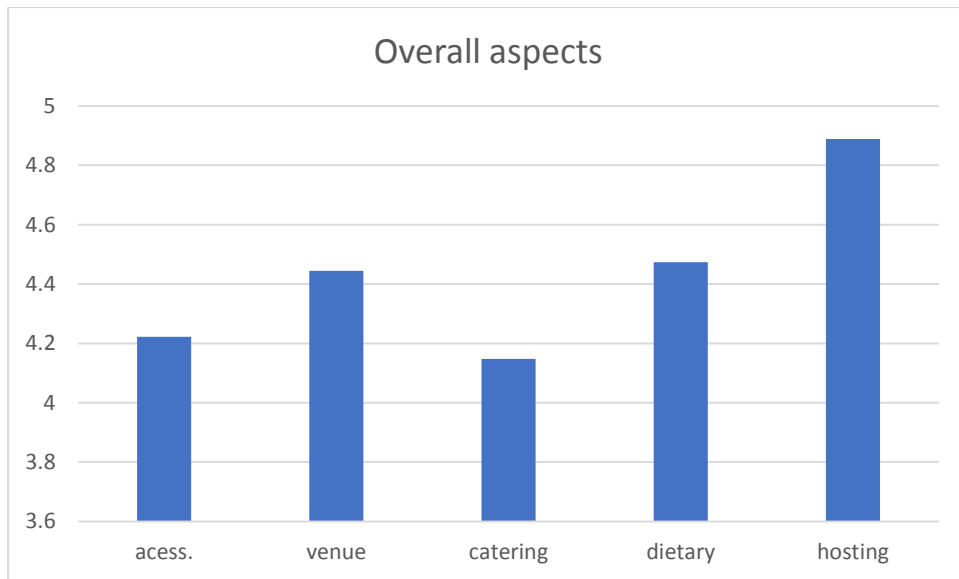
Comments:

- If feasible for the host to organise it and if the organisation receiving the volunteers can handle a big group.
- IT is a great chance for networking and get to know each other.

- I think it is a great way to get people thinking and talking about the project/ volunteering/ conservation methods etc. It also gets you out of the chair which is good! More of a mention about not spreading non native invasive species is the only suggested improvement.
 - Should be! Not only in Life platform meetings but also at conferences, other meetings...;) (if possible) Being also useful at the end really matters! Thank you very much for this experiences and your good work done!
 - Absolutely. Getting out and doing and seeing rather than sitting and hearing is always valuable.
 - but for a shorter time, it was a great experience but a full day of field work is too much
 - not could be: should be! :)
7. Was the overall programme well balanced (presentations, discussion) and the duration not too long / too short? Please indicate your score from 0 (poor) to 5 (excellent). [Aver. 4.48.](#)

Comments:

- It was rather tight in time, but that is usual in such meetings, and to be expected.
 - More time allocated for workshop session would be good
 - More time for discussion.
 - I thought it was just right.
 - The timings were perfect
8. Your feedback on the venue and organisational aspects will also be appreciated. Please score the following from 0 (disappointing) to 5 (excellent):
- a. Accessibility of Tartu in terms of transport and ease of finding accommodation at reasonable prices
 - b. Meeting venues and facilities
 - c. Catering
 - d. Consideration of dietary preferences if you indicated certain allergies / intolerance
 - e. Hosting by the LIFE Mires project



Comments:

- The venue on the first day was excellent and very pleasant
- Excellent and friendly hosts
- I very much enjoyed the work in the mire and the excellent atmosphere thanks to the professional as well as relaxed & humorous attitude of the organisers; (admittedly: the nice weather helped a lot!)

9. 6. Was your participation in the meeting worth your time, effort and resources in terms of:
- a. Important insights and good practices that you became familiar with, which are of relevance to your project [Aver. 4.29](#).
 - b. Networking with other relevant projects and speakers [Aver. 4.48](#).
- Please score a. and b. from 0 (not at all worth it) to 5 (very much worth it).

10. 7. Do you think there is need for further LIFE Platform meetings on the topic of volunteering?
- ☐ Yes [17](#)
- ☐ No [0](#)
- ☐ Maybe [5](#)

Comments:

- Perhaps not a platform meeting but facilitating the cooperation of those interested to build upon the experiences from this platform meeting.
- There many things to talk about and time is restricted so ...YES!
- Not that much meetings, that exchange of good practices in any way...
- Absolutely, YES!
- Volunteering provides a very important function in society in general and LIFE projects in particular. Anything that promotes, recognises and celebrates volunteers and volunteering is worthwhile.
- Engaging stakeholders

- although many/almost all topics were addressed I think that more platform meetings on this subject will keep the attention for the importance of volunteering alive

11. Recommendations: We value your suggestions for improvement for future such meetings.

Proposals of topics for future LIFE platform meetings.

- Public participation practices in decision making in nature conservation
- Private land conservation and management, and ways for LIFE to further that
- Improvement of the encouragement tools for volunteers: Volunteering awards, Platform for Life volunteers exchange, etc
- I would like to be informed more about best practices and of course networking with other NGOs and LIFE projects.
- It will be great if volunteers can meet others from other projects in Europe.
- So much of life depends on our soils and nutrient cycling. So a LIFE Platform meeting called 'LIFE Digging the dirt' could be an idea.
- Always include a volunteering action.