

**EU LIFE Programme project

**Optimising the Governance and Management of the
Natura 2000 Protected Areas Network in Latvia*

(LIFE19 IPE/LV/000010 LIFE-IP LatViaNature)







INDICATORS, PAYMENTS, UPSCALING BLOOMING MEADOWS: experience of result-based pilot programme for grassland biodiversity conservation in Latvia

Maija Medne Nature Conservation Agency of Latvia

LIFE Platform meeting «Agriculture for the Benefit of Biodiversity" Leuven, 11th of October 2024



What could be the most often asked question by landowner to grassland expert?



Is this the right harrow to buy?

I have bats in my attic.
What should I do?!



Please, help me to install the tablet!
Bought it for monitoring!



Where all the corncrakes gone? Can't hear them anymore.





Can I plant *topinambur* in small part of my Blooming Meadow?









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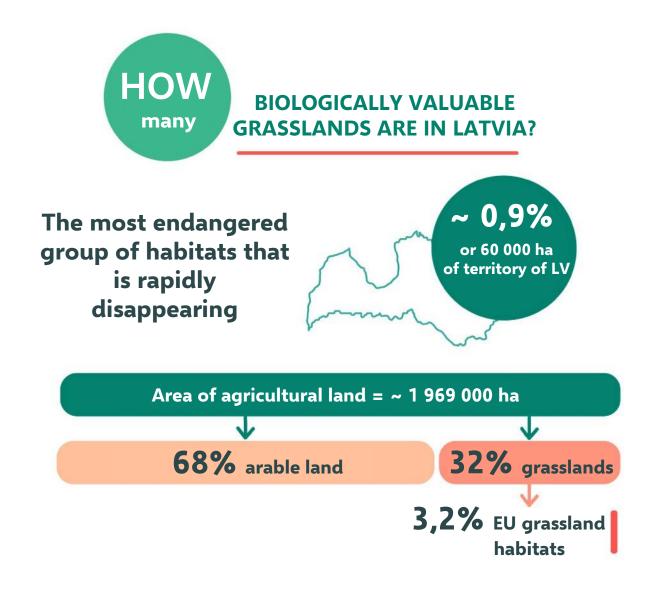




Background

► EU grassland habitats left less than 1% of state area

Creation of EU
 habitats by working
 with potentially
 valuable grasslands





Designing the pilot-scheme

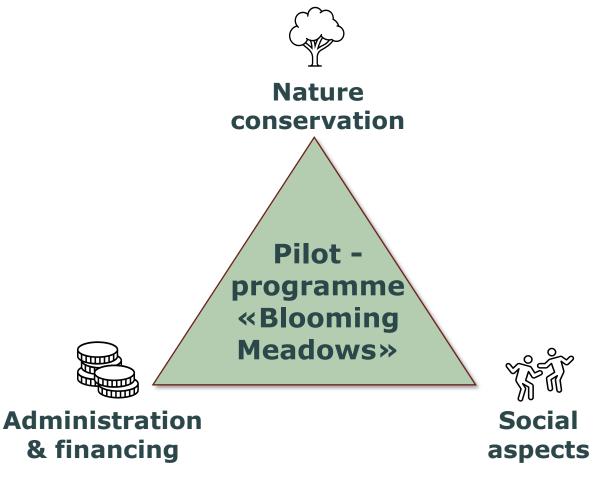
- **V** LIFE-IP LatViaNature (2021 2028)
- **V Survey** for grassland owners (n=442)
- ➤ Scheme designed together with diverse partners (Universities, Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development, Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre (policy makers), NGOs, farmers, etc.)
- ➤ Collected information regarding different grassland conservation programmes in Europe (e.g., Ireland, UK, Romania, Slovenia, Germany, Estonia, Lithuania)
- ▼ Testing new approaches in cooperation with farmers





Development

- ▶ Planned: at least 40 contracts and 675 ha
- ▼ Statutes for applicants: including three objectives of the programme
- ▶ Applicants: permanent, potentially diverse grasslands outside Natura 2000
- ★ Aim: to develop a programme for later use in national level





Starting the pilot-scheme

- ✓ Call for participants: on October 2022
- Prepared detailed and public statutes for applicants
- ► Huge interest: 4x more (2496 ha applied, 678 ha contracted)
- **▶ Pre-inspection** of grasslands
- ▶ Basic criteria for selection: region, size of the grassland, conectivity, management (meadows & pastures)
- ➤ Team: 1 workload **grassland expert** (consulting, monitoring & cartography) and 1 workload **administrator** (legal and finansial assistance)
- **▼ Results** announced on December 2022
- **V** Contracting: March 2022 June 2022

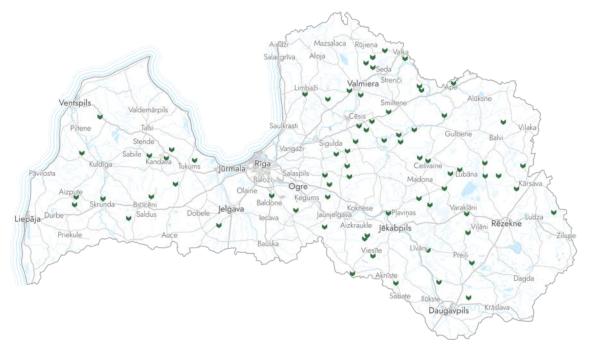




Blooming Meadows: in a nutshell

- ✓ 678 ha of permanent, potentially biologically valuable grasslands outside Natura 2000
- Meadows and pastures
- Different botanical and structural quality
- ▼ 50/50 result based approach and combined approach
- → +7 voluntary participants







Thoughts, conclusions, challenges

- Importance of available data (GIS systems, orthophoto maps etc.)
- Importance of survey (grassland owners' opinion taken into count)
- Pre-inspection of grasslands: mandatory!
- Variation in spreading the news: social media, project homepage, local press, key stakeholders etc.
- Better timing for call for application (including the vegetation season for pre-inspection)
- Informative seminar for applicants
- Contracting process how to make it easier?
- Dealing with rejected applicants...



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Blooming Meadows: testing two approaches

RESULT BASED APPROACH

- Management activities chosen by farmer
- ▼ Consultations available
- ▶ Payment depends on result

HYBRID APPROACH

- Minimum (compulsory) management measures in accordance with the grassland management plan
- ✓ If plan is fulfilled, certain payment part is guaranteed

Level	1. level	2. level	3. level	4. level	5. level
Points	1-20	21-40	41-60	61-80	81-100
Rate (euro/ha)	87	115	150	179	203





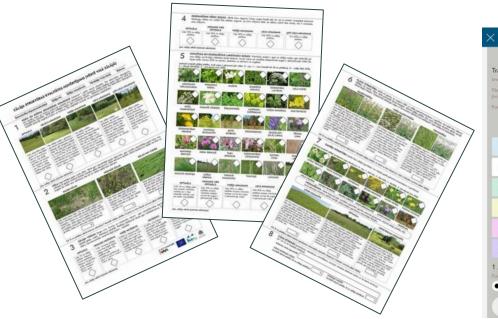


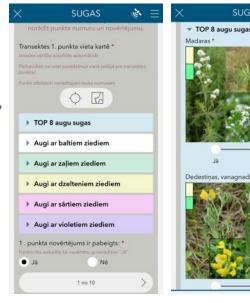




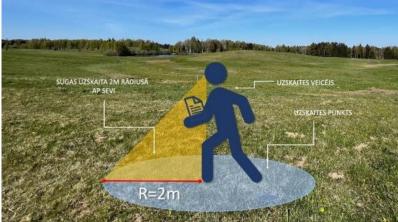


- Carried out by farmer and expert
- Structures and species monitored
- ✓ Structures & species count give 50 /50 to the final points
- Monitoring field max 5 ha
- ▼ Transect with 10 points for plant counting in R=2m
- Field forms: in paper or in Fieldmaps/Survey123 applications
- Monitoring designed and carried out together with University of Latvia











Structures monitored:

- 1. Coverage of trees and schrubs;
- Litter (lack of litter, normal, a lot);
- **3. The surface of grassland** (dug-up ground by moles, wild-boar, previous ploughing, tussocks);
- 4. Expansive moss species;
- 5. Expansive native & invasive vascular plant species;
- **6. Overall meadow structure** (stands, colours, etc);
- 7. Overall pasture structure (% of overgrazed area, normal grazing intensity, not enough grazed);
- **8. Other effects** (e.g., erosion, wild animal feeding places, etc.)

















Photos: M.Medne, Wikimedia Commons



- ➤ **Species count** in each of 10 points of transect (present/not present)
- **▶ List of 50 taxa** (16 genus, 34 species)
- ▶ Selected **nicely blooming species**, easy to distinguish
- Grouped by colour of flowers: white, green, yellow, pink and purple/blue
- Species covering whole range of moisture conditions
 (10 wet, 10 dry, 30 moist species)





Studying species in field trips

AUGU SUGU DAUDZVEIDĪBAS NOVĒRTĒJUMS ZĀLĀJĀ TRANSEKTES 10 PUNKTOS Saimniecība (Apsaimniekotājs) Zālāja Nr. Zālāja nosaukums Vērtētāja V.Uzvārds ZIEDU TRANSEKTES PUNKTS SUGAS NOSAUKUMS KRĀSA 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Āboliņš, kalnu Baldriāns, ārstniecības Madara, ziemelu Noraga, klinšu Naktsvijoles Pīpene, parastā Spradzene; zemene, meža Grīslis, sāres Meldrs, meža Rasaskrēslinš, parastais Vizulis, parastais Ancītis, ārstniecības Asinszāles Abolini dzelt, ziediem Dedestinas, vanagnadzini (arī rozā ziedi) Gailbiksīte Laimiņš, kodīgais Lēdzerkste Lucerna, apiņu Madara, īstā Nārbuli Pamauragas, mauragas Plostbārdis, plavas Retējs, stāvais Retēis, sudraba Saulkrēslini Saulpurene, Eiropas Vēlpiene, matainā/Donavas Zeltdadzis, parastais Zeltgalvīte, dzeltenā Zvaguli Bitenes (arī dzelteni ziedi) Ceļteka, vidējā Dadzis, dažādlapu Dzegužpirksfītes Dzelzenes Dzirkstelīte Gandrenes Spulgnaglene, plavas Sveķene, lipīgā Vēimietinš, vītolu Pëterene, firuma Veronika, garlapu

Ziepenītes (arī violeti un balti ziedi)





Field guide for Blooming Meadows species Including:

- 50 indicator species for plant count;
- Invasive/expansive species;
- Indicators for overgrazing

TOP 8 taxa of 2023







Lathyrus sp.



Alchemilla sp.



Leucanthemum vulgare



Hypericum sp.

Centaurea sp.



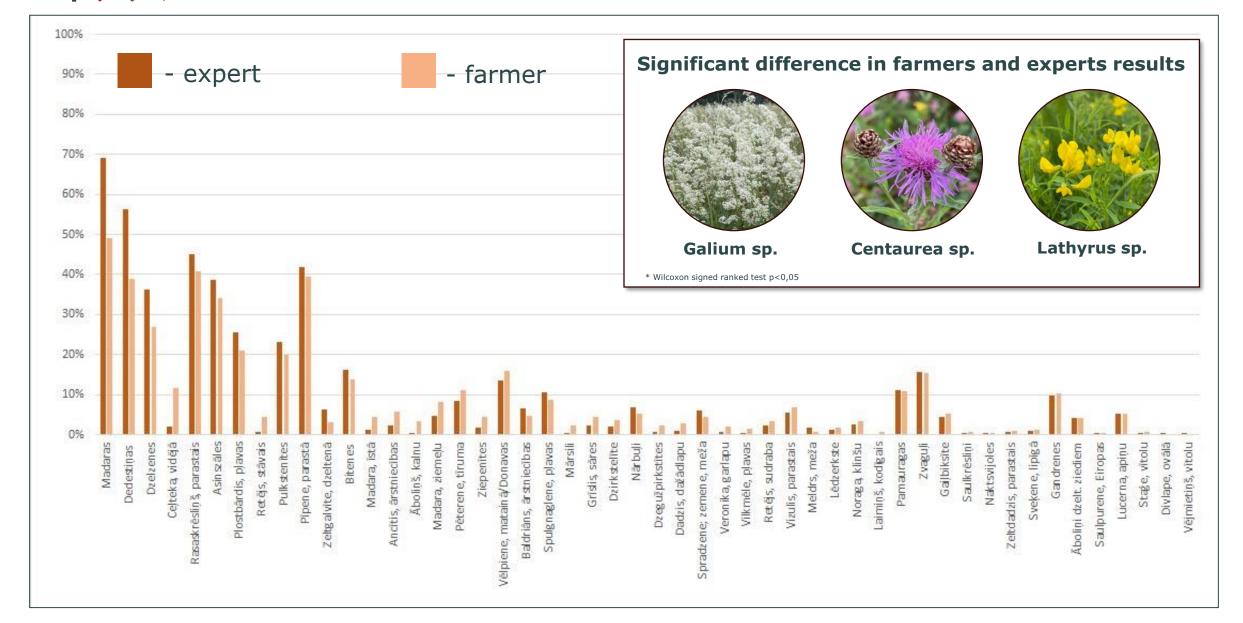
Rhinanthus sp.



Tragopogon pratensis

Photos: M.Medne







«Anti top-8 species»



















Challenge: weather conditions of 2023, 2024...



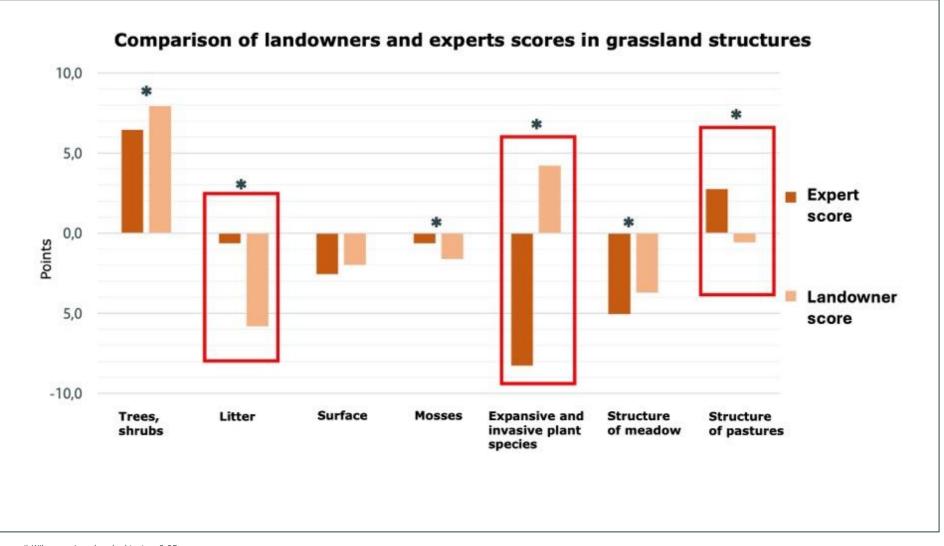




Results of 2023: differences in structures



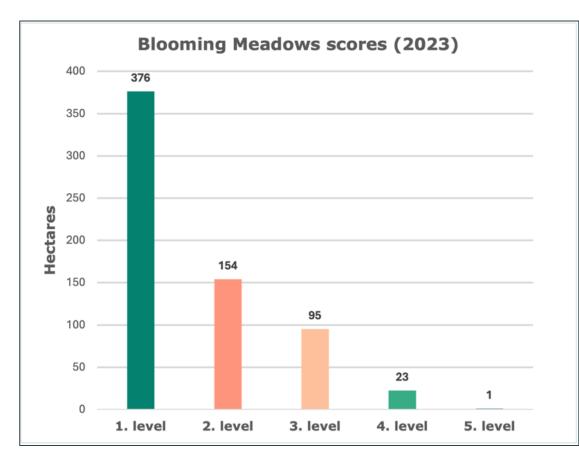




^{*} Wilcoxon signed ranked test p<0,05



Results of 2023: payments



- ▶ Payment levels calculated by Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre
- ► EUR 69 500 has been paid in support payments regarding grassland conservation results in 2023
- ✓ Average support in 2023: 105 euro/ha

Level	1. level	2. level	3. level	4. level	5. level
Points	1-20	21-40	41-60	61-80	81-100
Rate (euro/ha)	87	115	150	179	203



Result vs. hybrid: comparison of administration amount

HYBRID PARTICIPANT: an example		
April	Field visit , inspection of grassland condition and planning the works	
April	Preparation of management plan (prescribed works: harrowing and second moving)	
April	Receiving the report of harrowing	
April	Inspection (field visit) of reported harrowing	
June	Annual monitoring	
July	Changing planned works in management plan due to weather conditions (drought)	
September	Receiving report of next works (selective mowing of invasive species)	
September	Inspection (field visit) of reported selective mowing of invasive species	
September	Receiving final report	
October- December	Calculations and payment	

RESULT-BASED PARTICIPANT: an example			
April	Field visit , inspection of grassland condition, consultation		
June	Annual monitoring		
July	Short consultation (phone call) on works if necessary		
September	Receiving final report		
October- December	Calculations and payment		



Thoughts, conclusions, challenges

- ▼ Species vs. structures?
- ▶ Does the perfect list of species exist?
- Methodology easy for farmers?
- ▼ The use of indicators of structures, which have a high risk of subjective evaluation, should be avoided
- ▼ Flexible polygons for monitoring challenging for continuous evaluation of result
- Are payments motivating enough?



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Informing



LAIKS

NOTIKUMS

Februāris/marts

Līgumu slēgšana ar Dabas aizsardzības pārvaldi (DAP)

실을 Maijs

levadseminārs par programmas "Ziedu pļavas" norisi (attālinātā formātā, dalība brīvprātīga)

Līdz 15. maijam

Jāsazinās ar zālāju ekspertu Maiju Medni par šajā gadā plānoto zālāja apsaimniekošanu, lai eksperts var paspēt novērtēt zālāja sākumstāvokli pirms tas nopļauts. Kontakti: +37126741537; maija.medne@daba.gov.lv



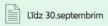
DAP iepazīstinās apsaimniekotāju ar programmas "Ziedu plavas" zālāju monitoringa metodiku, nosūtot uz e-pastu.



DAP novērtēs zālāja sākumstāvokli, apsekojot katru programmas "Ziedu pļavas" zālāju dabā



Apsaimniekotājs veic ikgadējo monitoringu, t.i. programmas "Ziedu pļavas" zālāja dabas daudzveidības novērtēšanu atbilstoši monitoringa metodikai.



Apsaimniekotāis iesniedz atskaiti DAP (monitoringa datus), kā arī informāciju par programmas "Ziedu pļavas" zālāju šajā sezonā veikto apsaimniekošanu.



Piedalīties DAP organizētās mācībās par zālāju bioloģiskās daudzveidības saglabāšanu (orientējoši jūlijā, augustā,



DAP veic ikgadējo maksājumu atbilstoši zālāja kvalitātei. Atbalsta apmērs ir atkarīgs no zālāja struktūras kvalitātes un dabiskiem zālājiem raksturīgu augu sugu sastopamības.

KONTAKTI:

Vispārīgie jautājumi zieduplavas@daba.gov.lv Zālāju eksperte Maija Medne maiia.medne@daba.gov.lv t. 26741537

Kompensāciju nodaļas vadītājs Ģirts Baranovskis girts.baranovskis@daba.gov.lv







Pilotprogrammas

ZIEDU PLAVAS

2023. GADA AKTUALITĀTES

KOMBINĒTĀ PIEEJA

NOTIKUMS Februāris/marts



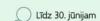
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DAP sadarbībā ar apsaimniekotāju izstrādās zālāja apsaimniekošanas plānu, kurā vienosies par minimālajiem (obligātajiem) apsaimniekošanas pasākumiem. Zālāju apsaimniekošanas plāns katru gadu tiks aktualizēts



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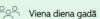
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DAP veic ikgadējo maksājumu. Maksājuma apmērs atkarīgs gan no veiktajiem apsaimniekošanas pasākumiem, gan sasniegtā rezultāta (zālāja struktūras kvalitātes un dabiskiem zālājiem raksturīgu augu sugu sastopamības)

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Informative leaflet in the beginning of season in 2023



Communication











Whatsapp group



Training



Annual seminars



Consultations, field visits



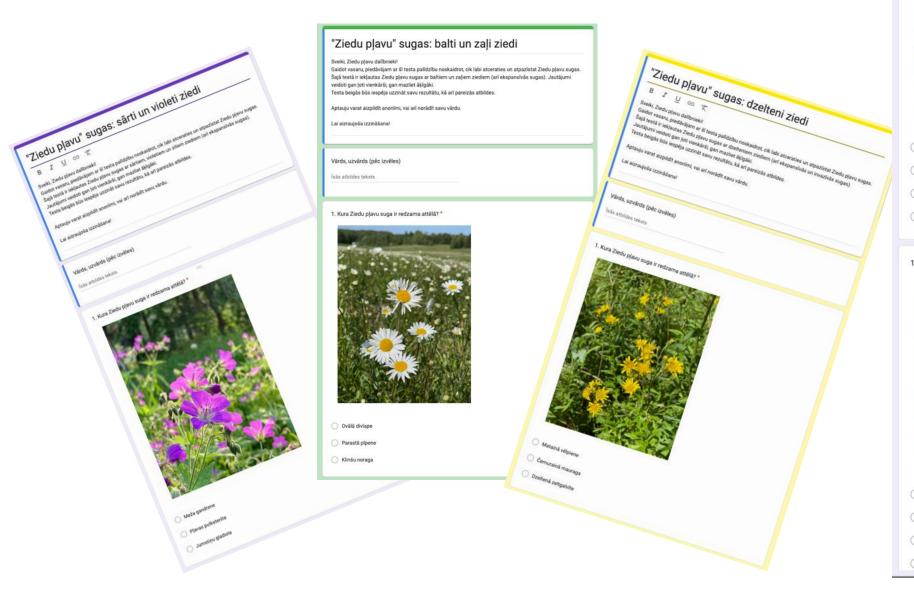




- Helping to understand monitoring methodology, learning plants
- ✔ Advise in management works: cutting bushes, harrowing, mowing time, dealing with the invasive/expansive species etc.
- Discussing and explaining the results of monitoring
- ★ Advise in raising species richness



Species tests



16. Kura no attēlā redzamajām sugām ir Ziedu pļavu sarakstā? * (A O C neviena no dotajām sugām nav Ziedu pļavu sarakstā 18. Kurš (kuri) no attēlos redzamajiem augiem ir Ziedu pļavu sarakstā? * O A un C O B un C O A un B neviens no dotajiem augiem nav Ziedu pļavu sarakstā



Individual approach









Thoughts, conclusions, challenges...

- ▼ Focused communication, individual approach
- Same administration costs for 0,6 ha and 30 ha participant
- Many procedures from seeing the nicely blooming meadow to money in farmer's bank account
- Experts' capacity and communication skills
- ▼ Individual approach-is it possible in country level?
- ▼ Is result-based support scheme suitable for all landowners or only for motivated ones?



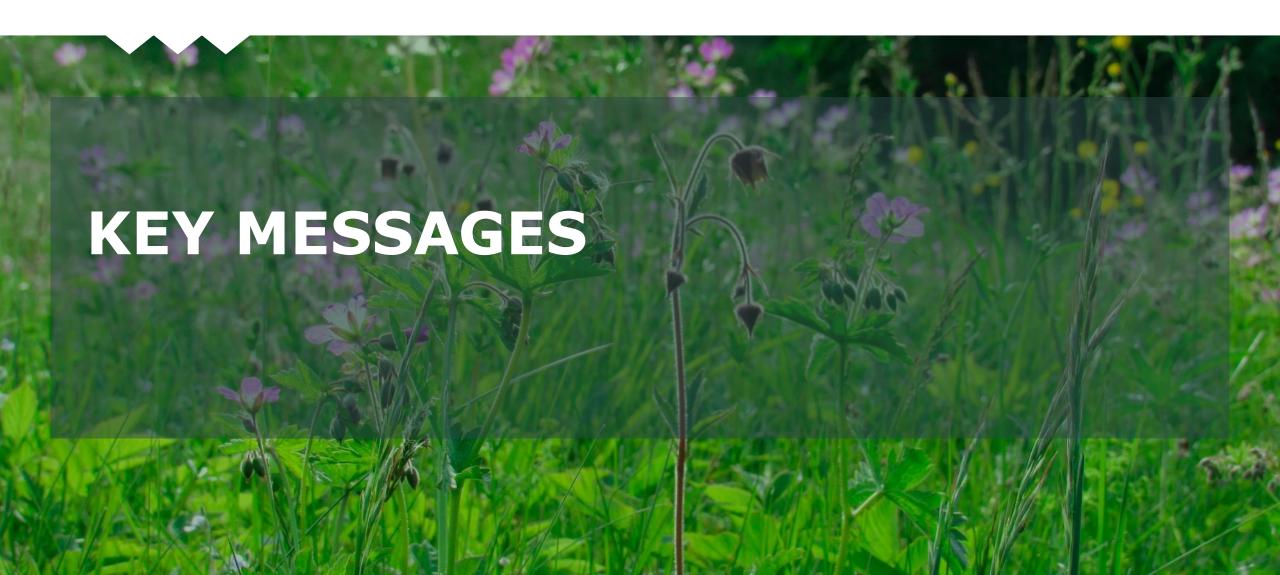
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KEY MESSAGES

- ▼ Involving landowners in monitoring is raising their awareness of grassland condition and helps to choose most suitable management
- → Hybrid approach = extra administration costs (should have strong impact on biodiversity improvement to reach value for money)
- ▶ Monitoring methodology: exclude the indicators with the risk of subjective evaluation and avoid "hard species" (e.g. Carex, grasses)
- ➤ Social aspects (individual approach) very important but challenging for national level (possible if significant investment in advisory capacity)
- ▼ The team of result-based scheme: skilled not only in grassland ecology and restoration but also in communication



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