



After-LIFE Plan

AwaRaEst LIFE
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Introduction

Estonian Capacity Building Project (CAP) lasted almost three years (01.01.2016-30.09.2018) and it had two general objectives: to make the LIFE programme more visible in Estonia among potential applicants and public sector officials, and; to educate potential applicants so that they would have a clearer idea of how to draw up the application in a correct way.

The Estonian Ministry of the Environment has been the official partner of the European Commission from Estonia since Estonia got the right to participate in the LIFE programme. The Ministry has been acting as National Contact Point (NCP) of the LIFE program, and therefore is responsible for implementing LIFE. The Ministry of the Environment has shared the information on LIFE, advised potential applicants and been a link between European Commission and the applicants.

Before the CAP, Ministry of the Environment organized one LIFE information day per year right after the call for proposals was announced. Information about the call for proposals and information day was sent directly to the potential applicants and published on Ministry's website. Also, Ministry's Facebook page was used to promote LIFE. Two public servants working in the Ministry acted as LIFE NCP-s – one person in the Nature Conservation Department and one person in the Foreign Finance Department. They advised potential applicants and provided feedback on project applications.

For years, applicants have considered LIFE programme as a funding for nature conservation and other fields have not been so recognised. The number of beneficiaries has been limited, which may be due to the lack of awareness or too high self-financing rate. In Estonia, there is no national co-financing system in place, but it is possible to cover own contribution from the national environmental fund. This depends on the available budget, priorities and opened measures. In 22 years (since 1992 till 2014) only 33 proposals, which were submitted by Estonian applicants, were financed from the LIFE programme.

In order to reach the objectives it was necessary to increase the capacity and competence of the NCP-s. To make LIFE programme more visible in Estonia, we increased the number of information days and we organized them in different cities around Estonia. Estonian LIFE webpage was created where all relevant information about the programme is published. This page is now easier to find when using google, which is the most used search engine (2018). LIFE webpage, Ministry's Facebook page, Environment Investment Centre's webpage, etc. was used to promote call for proposals, information days and trainings. Thanks to the project we were able to publish adverts and articles in newspapers. In 2018, a specific *Facebook* Campaign was outsourced, which had a great impact. Also, LIFE video clip, banners, new booklet were created and disseminated. In order to improve the quality of the applications, we organized trainings which were carried out by external experts from Finland and Italy. This kind of trainings were never done in Estonia before. Also, guidelines were translated into Estonian language which helps applicants to understand the rules better.

In summary the results of the project were very good and most of the targets of the indicators were achieved or exceeded by the end of the project. But there are still issues that need more attention.

After LIFE

Estonia is one of the two Member States who is eligible for the second Capacity Building Project. This is a good opportunity to continue with the activities already started and strengthen the created system. Ministry of the Environment will submit the proposal in the beginning of 2019 and if the project will be financed, the implementation of the second CAP will begin in April 2019. Second CAP should last till the end of 2021 (33 months) as this would cover 3 calls for proposals, including first year of the next program period (2021-2027). This is especially important as this would help us to prepare for the next period in good time. There will be major changes in the next period and in order to provide relevant information to the applicants, we need to update and exchange the existing information materials (webpage, booklet, video clip, guidelines etc.). If the follow-up project will be financed by EASME, then all the following actions will be financed from the project.

Actions

LIFE Helpdesk

LIFE Helpdesk will continue its work and the number of NCP-s will be kept on the same level (5-6 NCP-s). According to the guidelines, staff that was considered as additional under the first CAP, can be considered as additional staff under the second CAP too. Salary of the new 3 NCP-s will be covered from the follow-up project and salary of the non-additional NCP-s will be covered by the Ministry of the Environment.

Alternative: if the follow-up project won't be financed, then the salary of the NCP-s will be covered by the Ministry of the Environment.

LIFE webpage

Created webpage (<https://life.envir.ee/>) will be used during the implementation of the second CAP, which will be managed by the new Project Manager. Major changes (if needed) will be done or outsourced by the IT Centre of the Ministry of the Environment, which is one of the subordinates of the Ministry. As IT Centre of the Ministry is responsible for the IT-systems in the administration of the Ministry of the Environment, they will be involved in the second project as an associated beneficiary.

LIFE webpage will be the first place where potential applicants search information about LIFE programme and all relevant information will be published on the webpage. This webpage is also used to communicate the results of the first and possible second Capacity Building Project.

As the next financing period starts in 2021, major changes must be done in the beginning of 2021 in order to keep the webpage updated. The webpage will be online till the end of the next period (2027). After that there might be a need for a new website as the technology changes and the old website might not work properly. Also, public authorities must ensure security of their websites.

Alternative: if the follow-up project won't be financed, then Estonian LIFE webpage will be online at least till 2023 as foreseen in the proposal. Still, it would be reasonable to keep the webpage online till the end of the next financing period, but without the follow-up project, it will be complicated to outsource necessary modifications.

Communication plan

In order to improve the implementation of the project, we plan to outsource a communication plan. First CAP didn't include specific communication plan, but we have learned from other Member States (for example Latvia), that this kind of communication plan prepared by specialists, would help to improve the quality of the implementation. Even though the first CAP was successfully implemented and most of the targets were achieved, we would like to improve the implementation, so the impact of the project would be greater. Besides the new possible actions, this communication plan will include following actions: organizing information days (at least two per year) and trainings (2-3 trainings per year), preparing and publishing adverts and articles in newspapers, outsourcing a Facebook Campaign, using different websites to promote LIFE programme, updating LIFE webpage, creating and distributing dissemination materials (booklets, video clip, notebooks, etc.) and monitoring the results of the actions.

Alternative: if the follow-up project won't be financed, there is no need for specific communication plan as the number of actions will be limited.

Awareness raising among public sector officials

During the first Capacity Building Project we were able to organize 3 study trips to Member States who have successfully used the opportunities of the LIFE programme. Also one national study tour was organized for public servants to introduce financed Estonian LIFE projects. Without additional funding it would be complicated to organize specific LIFE study trips, but it would be possible within the framework of the follow-up project. As study trips have proven to be very useful, this action should be continued.

Alternative: if the follow-up project won't be financed, there will be no study trips outside Estonia. Estonian projects will be visited in agreement with the project managers.

LIFE information days

During the first Capacity Building Project we organized 16 LIFE programme information days in different cities around Estonia. Most of the information days were held in Tallinn and Tartu as the population is higher and we have learned that most of the potential applicants are from Tallinn or Tartu. Since the interest in the program was lower in smaller cities, then 2 information days per year is enough. This is the reason why we organized only two information days in 2018 and in the future it's reasonable to keep the number of information days on the same level. Estonia is small enough that people are able to come to Tallinn or Tartu if they are really interested in the programme. And there are people who rather call, write or meet privately instead of coming to the information days.

In order to maintain the quality of the information days, we plan to continue collaborating with Estonian Research Centre who is responsible for the Horizon2020 programme in Estonia. Also, project managers will be asked to participate in the information days and present the actions and results of the projects. Project managers from other Member States will be asked to participate which would help to cover different topics and enhance the collaboration between different Member States.

In collaboration with other departments, we are going to organize information day for private enterprises in January 2019. Different funding opportunities will be introduced, including LIFE. This kind of collaboration will be done also during the follow-up project.

Alternative: if the follow-up project won't be financed, there will be one or two information days per year after the launch of call for proposals (in Tallinn and Tartu). In Tallinn, the information day will be held in the premises of the Ministry of the Environment. It would be still possible to ask project managers and Estonian Research Council to make presentations about the results of their projects or about the measures of Horizon2020. LIFE helpdesk will make the information days as attractive as possible, but without the follow-up project, it would be complicated to invite project managers from other Member States to participate.

LIFE application and project management quality improvement workshop

One of the most complicated and important tasks during the next project will be the improvement of the quality of the applications. Before the first CAP, the number of applicants was limited as LIFE programme was mainly used for nature conservation. During the project we have reached new applicants and the number of environmental project proposals has increased in 2017 and 2018 (4 proposals in 2017 and 11 proposals in 2018). Most of them were submitted by new applicants who have never applied grant from the LIFE programme. Statistically newcomers usually fail the first time and one of the reasons is the low quality of the proposals. Also, NCP-s need to encourage applicants to involve more partners, especially from other Member States in order to guarantee the replication and transferability of the results.

New 2-stage system has had a positive impact and more people consider LIFE programme as the possible fund for their project. Even though the concept note does not have to be very long and detailed, it still needs much work to ensure the quality. This issue needs more attention in the future and therefore specific training is needed. One training should be held in spring, about one month before the deadline of the submission of the concept notes.

In order to ensure equal treatment of the applicants, we need to organize two trainings how to prepare full proposals – one training in August, one month before the deadline of the climate project proposals and one training in the end of the year, 1 month before the deadline of the nature and environmental project proposals.

In 2021 there might be a need for changing the strategy as the application system might change.

Alternative: if the follow-up project won't be financed, there will be at least one (maximum two) workshop per year. In Tallinn, the workshop will be held in the premises of the Ministry of the Environment and this will be carried out by the National Contact Points. Without the follow-up project, it would not be possible to use experts from other Member States and the number of the workshops will be limited.

Creating and distributing adverts

Information about the call for proposals, information days and trainings will be published at least in 3 national and 2 local newspapers after the launch of call for proposals. Also, LIFE webpage and Ministry's Facebook page will be used to promote different events. A Facebook Campaign will be outsourced every year from April till August to reach wide range of people. Other websites will be used in collaboration with other authorities – in 2018 the call for proposals was promoted on the website of the Environmental Investment Centre. This kind of collaboration must be continued and improved.

Alternative: if the follow-up project won't be financed, then the Ministry of the Environment will use mainly their own webpage, LIFE webpage and Ministry' Facebook page to promote call for proposals, information day(s) and workshop(s). Also direct communication will be

used. In collaboration with other authorities (Environment Investment Centre, Estonian Research Council, etc.), call for proposals and information days will be promoted on their websites and their mailing lists will be used.

Dissemination materials

Video

Already created video is uploaded to youtube and this will be distributed at every information day and seminar. This is also published on the LIFE website and this is added to the registration forms. This video will be shown during the Facebook Campaign.

Due to the new 2 stage approach, this video must be updated in the beginning of 2019. Also, new video clip will be outsourced in the end of 2020.

Alternative: if the follow-up project won't be financed, most probably there will be no video clip for the next financing period.

Booklets

Already created booklets will be distributed during information days and seminars. Most of the previously ordered booklets have been distributed around Estonia. This booklet was updated in 2018 due to the 2 stage approach and extra 400 booklets were printed. There are enough booklets to distribute till the end of the ongoing financing period. Before the beginning of the next period, new booklet will be created.

Alternative: if the follow-up project won't be financed, most probably there will be no booklets for the next financing period.

Notebooks and pens

Notebooks with LIFE logos will be created as these turned out to be very popular and useful during the first CAP. These notebooks will be distributed at the information days and seminars.

Alternative: if the follow-up project won't be financed, most probably there will be no notebooks and pens for the next financing period.

Roll-ups

New project roll-up must be created in the beginning of 2019 and also new roll-up promoting the LIFE programme (new period) will be created in the beginning of 2021.

Alternative: if the follow-up project won't be financed, there will be no need for the roll-ups. It's an obligatory action of the project.

Completion of data gathering

Due to the new 2-stage approach we need to pay more attention to the quality of the concept note. In order to give relevant advice to the applicants, NCP-s need to have the knowledge about main mistakes and shortcomings. Data gathering turned out to be very useful and eye-opening in the first CAP. Main mistakes were pointed out during the meetings and also a summary about the mistakes was published on the LIFE website.

This kind on analyses must be continued with or without the second CAP.

Translation of the guidelines

In 2018, LIFE guidelines were translated into Estonian language and these documents were published on LIFE webpage. These guidelines must be updated every year and new ones must be translated in the beginning of 2021. Translation of the guidelines will be outsourced, but the final design will be done by the project team.

Alternative: if the follow-up project won't be financed, most probably guidelines of the next financing period will not be translated. Already translated guidelines will be updated every year by NCP-s.

Monitoring of the results

Monitoring of the results will be done mainly on a daily bases by the project team. During all the events, the project team will record the number of participants (every person has to sign that he/she participated in the event) and those sheets will be retained in the project folder. After each event, participants will be asked to fill in the questionnaires to get feedback about the quality of the event, how useful it was and what could be done better in the future.

Also the enquiries sent to the helpdesk will be recorded and retained in the project folder (excel sheet).

Media is monitored through the number of the editions we publish the LIFE adverts/articles in. We can also monitor the visits of the LIFE webpage and views of the LIFE video clip. Views (impressions) of the adverts published during the Facebook Campaign will be monitored and analysed to make the campaign as effective as possible.

In order to get an overview of the general awareness about LIFE programme and its opportunities, a specific survey will be outsourced in the end of 2020 or in the beginning of 2021. It can be done separately or in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, who is outsourcing this kind of surveys every year to assess Estonians` awareness of European funds.

Alternative: if the follow-up project won't be financed, there is no need for planning specific monitoring actions. People have to sign that he/she participated at the information day or training and also feedback sheets will be distributed to improve the quality of the events.

National co-financing system

In 2018, Ministry of the Environment started to develop national co-financing system for LIFE projects. Original idea was approved by the Minister of the Environment and now, further development is needed. It must be decided, what shall be the co-financing rate, what will be the priorities, criteria and procedure of choosing the projects, calculation of the budget for each year, etc. Hopefully this is done by the call for proposals in 2019. If this new system will be in place by that time, it should have a positive effect and most probably the number of proposals and financed projects will increase in the coming years. This would affect directly the implementation of the whole project.

This action will be implemented with or without the second CAP.

International LIFE conference

This will be a new action compared to the first CAP. As Estonia and Croatia are the only two Member States, who are eligible for the second CAP, we plan to organize in collaboration with

Croatian CAP team, one international conference per year. One conference will be carried out in Estonia and one in Croatia. Maximum 2 people from each Member States will be invited and each Member States will give an overview about the results of their first CAP. Member States, who were not eligible for the first CAP, are asked to give an overview of their systems, best projects and results of the period 2014-2020. Also people from EASME are asked to participate. This will also enhance networking and collaboration with other countries. All costs will be covered by organizers if the follow-up project will be financed.

Alternative: this action won't be implemented without the follow-up project.