



Public awareness and dissemination of results report

Action E.1.-E.9.

LIFE to Alvars project

Environmental Board

September, 2019

LIFE to Alvars project is implemented with the contribution of the LIFE+ financial instrument of the European Union

Introduction.

LIFE to alvars project has 9 E-actions that are designed to increase the awareness of the projects participants and general public or public awareness and dissemination of results.

These actions are:

- E1 Media work
- E2 Training for farmers
- E3 Establishment of notice boards
- E4 Preparation of printed materials
- E5 Update of management guidelines
- E6 Work with landowners
- E7 Web page
- E8 Working group for promotion of added-value products from alvar grasslands
- E9 Layman's report

Results of public awareness and dissemination of results actions.

Action E.1. Media work

Expected quantifiable results of the media work actions were:

At least 4 articles written in the local newspapers annually (20 all together); 4 public meeting held annually (20 all together). 2 information centres established on the reference areas; 6 information boards established and an interactive study tools made available for children at both visitor centre.

The indoor portable information boards and the interactive study tools are available in the nature centres of Sörve and Orjaku since February 2017. The media coverage of the project activities has been fruitful and the initial numerical goal (4 articles in local newspapers, 20 in total) has been significantly exceeded. Links to all the articles and other type of coverage are available as links to pdf or video/audio file in the project website organized by year, source and name of the coverage:

<https://life.envir.ee/meist-meedias-project-media>

Type of coverage	No of coverage
Local newspaper article	56
National newspaper article	13
National magazine article	6
International magazine article	3
Scientific magazine article	2
National TV coverage	6
Radio coverage	6
Blog/website coverage	3

International website coverage	5
Press release	6
TOTAL	106

Table 1 Overview of media coverage as of 01/09/2019

We are very happy of the article published in the biggest (print-run 124 000 and FB followers 2,3 millions) popular-science magazine New Scientist:

<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2141576-restoring-estonian-alvar-grasslands-to-save-unique-species/>

The public meetings have been regularly organised as the project progresses- 20 public meetings have been organized all together.

Action E.2. Training for farmers

ESCCA organised the first training for farmers in November 2014 in Saaremaa so we could start with the habitat restoration one season earlier. Sooner start of the activity was initiated by the farmers and entrepreneurs who were interested to start the restoration work already during 2014...2015 winter season. At the first training 70 farmers, landowners and entrepreneurs were trained (we expected to train only 50 people in total initially). The second training for farmers was organised by ESCCA in September 2015. PM I and PM II of EB helped to organise the event in Muhu island. The number of participants of that training was 50. In February 2016 the third farmers training was carried out in Muhu Island. This was specifically targeted to the contractors of SFMC restoring the project areas at state owned land. The number of participants was 22. Another training focussing on to the same target group was organised in of April 2016 in Muhu Island. This time the number of participants was 20. In April 2017 another training day was organized in Muhu Island. This time the number of participants was 16. After each training the respective certificate has been issued to each of the participant. During last three trainings the Koguva-Igaküla project area (area no 7) was visited for the practical demonstration.

We trained all together 178 farmers, landowners and entrepreneurs. This is due to substantially greater interest towards the project than initially predicted. As we changed the reference areas we managed to save the budget and were able to train substantially more participants with the same amount of funds. Therefore we have been within the planned budget carrying out this action with much larger impact than initially planned.

This action had a vital importance in achieving very good restoration quality on all the project sites. No major issues occurred with the restoration. Farmers, landowners and entrepreneurs trained are successfully using the knowledge from the training to apply it on other sites and habitat restoration now.

Action E.3. Establishment of notice boards

The preparations of the action started as planned but the implementation of the action was delayed due to the unsuccessful public procurement. 49 information boards were erected in June 2017 and last 2 in August 2019. The final number of the information boards that was established is 51. Initially we planned to erect 59 information boards but the locations and need was re-evaluated during the project implementation. All information boards have note that LIFE to alvars project is implemented with the contribution of the LIFE+ financial instrument of the European Union and NATURA 2000 and LIFE logos. In addition we have placed smaller information boards for the purpose of practical management of grazing in the restored areas which inform the visitors how to behave in the vicinity of livestock and electric fences. All the livestock shelters and portable watering facilities were also marked with the notice boards or stickers bearing the NATURA 2000 and LIFE logos.

Photo 1: information board and small information board.



Action E.4. Preparation of printed materials

The booklets or brochures of the project were designed, printed and delivered to EB much earlier, in November 2015. This was needed due to the great public interest towards the project. Instead of 10 000 booklets initially planned we ordered 14 000 as the price turned out to be lower than predicted. We printed three different booklets one for each island (Saaremaa, Hiiumaa and Muhu) involved in the project as those island and the respective alvars are slightly different. Those brochures are mainly meant for the clients of local entrepreneurs visiting the project areas of these particular islands. Fourth booklet describes the project and characterises the alvars of Estonia in general summarising the essence of all the island-specific booklets. The last one is mainly addressed to the stakeholders and tourist from the mainland or abroad who

would probably visit the alvars of different islands and the information given is not that area-specific. Therefore this booklet was also translated into English, Russian and Finnish (4000 copies in total). All booklets are available also at the homepage of the project (at both language versions of the homepage) under the Results section.

Delivering booklets to the local businesses of all the islands involved in the project also started in November 2015 and it continued more actively in summer 2016 as this period is the main tourism season. All the booklets printed were distributed. All printed materials have note that LIFE to alvars project is implemented with the contribution of the LIFE+ financial instrument of the European Union and NATURA 2000 and LIFE logos.

Action E.5. Update of management guidelines

The information for updating the best practice guidelines was gathered constantly during the project. The conception of the methodology of alvar grassland restoration has changed during the project and reached beyond the frames of the project. New mechanised approach of alvar restoration is now a common practice for all the different semi-natural habitat type restoration in Estonia. Project team was asked to give input to the legislative act according to which the restoration is usually carried out and also subsidised in Estonia. In the current act the methodology described is not appropriate any more as the restoration can be much more effective than the manual restoration used so far. The effective way of carrying out the public procurements to find the entrepreneurs to carry out the restoration work is also now taken over into the legislative act currently that is expected to be renewed by March 2020.

Associated beneficiary EULS coordinate this action. Leading expert in this work was Dr Aveliina Helm, who was also the author of the first version of management guidelines that was published in 2011. All the associated beneficiary's and project team gave input to the management guidelines. 500 copies of management guideline was also printed to be handed out to the farmers and entrepreneurs on the training days organized by EB on semi-natural grassland restoration and management. This is additional value to the action compared to the planned action.

Action E.6. Work with landowners

There have been few personal meetings and e-mail communications with foreign landowners on demand to introduce the project activities and plans and to get the landowner to communicate with the farmer interested in the restoration and re-introduction of grazing during the project. Foreign land owners are also contacted personally to give the overview of the restoration work carried out in their land. This involves both written overviews and site visits. In January 2017 first letters and photos about the restoration work carried out were sent out to 11 foreign landowners participating in the project. The next round of letters was sent in January 2019. 6 study trips to introduce the idea, methods and the results of the project progressing were carried out during the project. The overview of the trips is shown in the table below.

Date and place	Project areas visited	Number of participants
23 May 2015, Muhu	7 – Koguva-Igaküla	45

	9 – Nõmmküla-Üügu 10 – Lõetsa	
18 June 2015, Hiiumaa	18 – Käina lahe - Kassari	13
19 Sept. 2016, Hiiumaa	18 – Käina lahe – Kassari 1 – Sarve	14
24 Sept. 2016, Muhu	9 – Nõmmküla-Üügu	13 of which 2 foreign landowners
25 April 2017, Muhu	7 – Koguva-Igaküla 9 – Nõmmküla-Üügu	13 of which 1 foreign landowner
20.07.2018, Saaremaa	Kuressaare town restored alvar	20

Table 2 Overview of landowner studytrips as of 01/09/2019

The target, to reach 80 participants, was reached already by the time of Mid-term report but six study trips was carried out as foreseen in the proposal. All together 118 landowners participated on the 6 studytrip. 11 foreign landowners received 2 letters with information about the restoration process together with photos from the area.

Action E.7. Web page

Approximately 40 000 people have visited the web page since the beginning of the project. The majority of visitors seems to be from abroad and approximately 1/3 from Estonia. As the average duration of each visit is more than 2 minutes we can conclude that those visits are targeted and not random.

In year 2017 the location of the web page changed due to the centralisation of the web design and structure of all governmental institutions. The new environment for LIFE projects is provided by the Ministry of Environment and created for all the LIFE projects in Estonia. By 2Q 2018 we managed to restore all sections and the new web site at <http://life.envir.ee/elualvaritel> is fully functional.

The Facebook page of the project (<https://www.facebook.com/lifetoalvars>) is modified and renewed continuously by adding relevant information, announcements of the project events and photos of the conservation activities. By now we have gained 437 followers which is the number of direct followers reaching each inscription as soon as they log in their FB account. However, the number of people reached by a single inscription could be up to several hundred depending on the amount of people sharing the news in this social media network. Interesting posts get engagement numbers up to 2000 people. About 550 photos and 500 posts have been published on the LIFE to alvars FB page during the project duration.

Projects webpage have been updated with contact information to reach after the end of the project and FB page will remain open and available for updates.

Action E.8. Working group for promotion of added-value products from alvar grasslands

To promote the sustainable use of the wooden material produced during the restoration and also the side products like meat and wool from the livestock grazing the areas afterwards, the working group of added-value products from alvar grasslands was formed. The purpose of the group was to identify the obstacles and to come up with the ideas for the added-value products from the alvar grassland that could give additional income for the farmer managing the area in long term.

The action was started in 2015 with gathering the information on the interest groups possible involved in any kind of products originating from alvar grasslands. Several meetings focussing on different product groups (wood, meadow meat, wool) took place in the following years.

At first the wood based producers were focussed. Soon it become clear that the alvar related handicraft products are well established, the respective market functions well and there is no urgent need to promote this sector. However, the usage of the wood material in fence building of the same areas where it was gathered during the restoration has been promoted among the farmers since the strt of the project by EB. Also the usage of wooden biomass collected during the restoration for the head and electricity production rather than on site burning has been promoted during the project among the contractors in the frames of that action. This practice has established well, the majority of the biomass is used as a renewable energy source.

During 2016 the wool and meat related producers among the farmers of the project areas were focussed. The first official assembly of the working group for promotion of added-value products from alvar grasslands was organised in Kuressaare town in the beginning of January 2016. This event was mainly attended by the livestock keepers grazing the project areas of Saaremaa and Muhu islands. The idea was to synchronize the level of knowledge among more and less experienced meat producers on valorising the meat products of the livestock used for the seminatural communities management. The possible solutions for processing and marketing the meat products as “meadow meat” close to the initial production areas were discussed. The lecture was given by the sheep farmer experienced in short chain marketing of his own farm products. The number of participants was 13. During that event the main barrier hindering local meat production was identified to be the absence of slaughter service that would also process sheep and untraditional beef cattle like Scottish highland cattle.

On 24th of October 2016 another meeting of the working group was organised. This event was mainly attended by the sheep breeders grazing the project areas of Saaremaa and Muhu islands. The main problem of that stakeholder group is the wool usage as the market for wool is low and local wool does not compete with the quality and price of that from New Zealand for example. During the meeting alternative possibilities of wool usage were introduced by the respective experts: natural insulation material importer selling wool based products and composite materials expert. The number of participants of that event was 16.

During the last meeting organised on 13th of December 2016 the problems of meat producers were further discussed. The idea for the future is to establish a local slaughter house somewhere in Saaremaa or Muhu that would be operated by the organisation of sheep and cattle breeders of the project areas not to transport the animals to the mainland or Latvia and the meat back again. The number of the participants of the last event was 35.

The same topic was further discussed during the meeting organised on 2nd of January 2017 where some local entrepreneurs and sheep breeders agreed the concrete actions in terms of slaughter house establishment survey. The first step agreed was to visit the existing slaughter house in Hiiumaa in January 2017 and a removable one that is not operational at the moment and locates in South Estonia. The purpose of these visits will be to evaluate the pros and cons of both technical solutions for further analysis which kind of solution would be the most suitable in local conditions. At that event 6 people outside EB participated.

The main role of EB during the last meetings of the working group for promotion of added-value products has been mainly to identify the stakeholders, to organise the meetings and being generally supportive. Another role has been to activate the discussion and to foster the of the current situation, the clear identification of the existing problems and the possible solutions of those by involving the respective experts. Any kind of practical or financial involvement of EB in the establishment of some kind of wool processing facility or butchery is beyond the scope of this project.

We think that the action has been successful. The proof is the establishment of the slaughtering house is beyond the scope of Life to alvars project but definitely a spin-off of this project. Coop initiated by the farmers opened up their own grassland meat selling counter on Muhu Island in May 2018. The Coop. received financing for the slaughterhouse building in November 2019.

More information is provided in the report of the action available at project's web page at: http://life.envir.ee/sites/default/files/pictures/Lisandv%C3%A4%C3%A4rtusega_toodete_t%C3%B6%C3%B6grupi_t%C3%B6%C3%B6aruanne_0.pdf

Action E.9. Layman's report

Associated beneficiary ESSCA coordinate this action. Leading expert in this work was Dr Kadri Tali, who was involved in the project as restoration success monitor. All the associated beneficiary's and project team gave input to the Layman's report. Layman's report was compiled in more thorough version in Estonian language (54 pages) and in shorter version in English language (12 pages). Layman's report is completed in pdf and printed 500 in Estonian and 500 in English language. Both versions are available on projects website since June 2019 (https://life.envir.ee/sites/default/files/pictures/200x230_laymans_EST_veeb_vaike.pdf

https://life.envir.ee/sites/default/files/pictures/200x230_laymans_Eng_l%C3%B5plik_veebi.pdf

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Conclusion.

Many of the actions have done in bigger volume than planned. There have been just some minor setbacks with finishing the actions. We can conclude that the public awareness and dissemination of results have been successful.