Second Swiss Contribution

Estonia

Annual Support Measure Report

Support Measure Name	Biodiversity Programme
Reporting Period	01.05.2024 – 31.12.2024
Report Number	I
Report Submission Date	31.03.2025
Partner State Support Measure Code (if any)	
Swiss Support Measure Code	7F-10768.01

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List of abbreviations

SCO Swiss Contribution Office

CHF Swiss Franc

CH Switzerland

SM Support Measure

NCU National Coordination Unit

1. Basic Support Measure information

Executing Agency type	Programme Operator
Executing Agency name and address	The Ministry of Climate
Name of contact person	Kairi Toiger
E-Mail of contact person	Kairi.toiger@kliimaministeerium.ee
Phone of contact person	+3726262931

SM type	Programme	
Objective	Protecting the environment and the climate	
Thematic area	Nature conservation and biodiversity	
Duration according to SM Agreement	Start date: 01.05.2024	Completion date: 30.04.2028
Swiss Contribution to the SM CHF	6 930 000	

2. Report submission and approval

Executing Agency	The Ministry of Climate	Signature *digitally signed*
Name		
Position	Secretary General	

3. Overview of results achieved and steering implications

The Ministry of Climate submitted the second-stage Support Measure Proposal to the SCO in February 2024 and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation approved it in March 2024. The Support Measure Agreement was concluded between the NCU and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation on April 30, 2024.

After signing the opening event was held in May at Palmse which was very successful. At the event, the Swiss-Estonian Cooperation was introduced and several presentations were held on topics related to the programme. In addition, there were discussion session and outdoor activities, where participants could choose between various activities.

First Steering Committee meeting was held in October 2024 where Steering Committee agreed to the rules of procedure and Programme Operator and Programme Components provided the overview of the developments of the 'Biodiversity Programme'.

Support measure implementation agreement between the NCU and the Programme Operator was signed 19th of December 2024. The Minister´s directive for the components was signed 28th of February 2025.

4. Support Measure progress

4.1 Achievement of Support Measure objectives

Strategy of intervention	Key Indicators Baseline	Key Indicators Target	Achieved this period	Cumulatively achieved	Cumulatively achieved as percentage of target
Outcomes					
Outcome 1 The efficiency and reliability of biodiversity monitoring has improved	Baseline: no automated process, most of the data reaches databases within more than one year	Data collected as part of the biodiversity monitoring programme reaches the databases within one year through automated process		-	-
Outcome 2 The effectiveness of management planning of protected areas as well as protected species and habitats has improved	Baseline: The previous guidelines are outdated (2012, updated 2018)	New guidelines for drawing up management plans of protected areas have been implemented	70%	70%	70%
Outputs					
Output 1.1 Existing IT systems (databases and portals) and their connectivity is improved	Baseline: 0 for additional connections and tools (overall, IT systems has already many other existing connections and tools)	At least 4 additional connections or tools for the exchange of data between the IT systems have been established		-	-

Strategy of intervention	Key Indicators Baseline	Key Indicators Target	Achieved this period	Cumulatively achieved	Cumulatively achieved as percentage of target
Output 1.2 New technologies and novel solutions for biodiversity monitoring are mapped, developed, tested and implemented	Baseline: 0	At least 5 new developed and piloted solutions (Random Encounter Method, Artificial Intelligence, 3D bird radar, eDNA and, other new technical solutions that will be worked out in first stage of the project	-	-	-
Output 2.1 Site-based and national conservation objectives and measures for protected species and habitats are revised	Baseline: 0 (using new methodology)	The effectiveness of the management of at least 300 protected objects (different types of protected areas) is assessed	-		-
Output 2.2 The conservation management plans of protected areas, action plans for species and habitats are revised and updated	Baselines: 2 action plans for habitats; 0 conservation management plans for protected areas (using the new format)	5 action plans for habitats; 64 Conservation management plans for protected areas using a new format, 5 action plans for habitats and 24% of all the protected species in Estonia have action plans.	-		-

Strategy of intervention	Key Indicators Baseline	Key Indicators Target	Achieved this period	Cumulatively achieved	Cumulatively achieved as percentage of target
	Baseline: 0	16% of all the protected species in Estonia have action plans. The protection categories of all the protected species' groups (not separate species) are evaluated	-		-
	Baseline: 0	Draft document to change the regulations of protection categories is prepared.	-		-
	Baseline: 0	The toolset for Conservation Management Effectiveness assessment is set up and in use in the Environmental Board.	-		-

Strategy of intervention	Key Indicators Baseline	Key Indicators Target	Achieved this period	Cumulatively achieved	Cumulatively achieved as percentage of target
Output 3 Competence of the specialists as well as public awareness and engagement is improved	Baseline: 0	• At least 21 trainings/seminars • At least 8 study trips • A network of volunteers is created • At least 20 campaigns to involve volunteers in wildlife monitoring • 2 bigger events for volunteers • 2 bigger events for stakeholders • At least 8 articles of the new solutions in wildlife monitoring • At least 8 appearances in radio shows • At least 2 appearances in TV shows • 1 presentation in Switzerland to introduce the results of the project • At least 350 people will benefiting from training to improve institutional and professional capacity	2% (3 study trips, 1 event stakeholders, 4 voluntary monitoring methods tested)	2%	

Programme component 1 “Development of innovative monitoring technologies/solutions and improvement of Environmental databases and systems”

Random Encounter Method (REM) has been under practical testing and software development in order to involve AI has been also under testing phase during the 2024. Testing of REM during the spring period of 2024 was done in 39 monitoring areas. Into every area 25-26 trail cameras were installed for at least 35 days. Trail camera photos from spring period are still under manual checking process. From all photo series all positive image cases (start and end time of series), species on images and number of animals on series were registered. 504 210 photo files (630GB) out of ~824 000 photo files (1001,7GB) are manually checked (from 28 monitoring areas out of 39), from which 78 383 were with animals (~7000 different cases). In addition to that fieldwork with trail cameras has also been done in autumn period (29. October to 10. December 2024) on four monitoring areas (on Hiiumaa and Saaremaa Islands), mostly at the same locations where they were also in spring. Photo files are also collected from autumn camera monitoring (30 826 photo files with total amount as 15,2GB), but their analysis will start after spring 2024 files are analysed. Software development for using AI in species detection from trail camera photos is still in testing phase.

For acquisition of mobile 3D bird radars study trip was organised in 27th to 29th of October 2024 to Zurich, Swizerland into the factory of one of the swiss radar producer: Swiss Birdradar Solution AG (https://swiss-birdradar.com/) to get updated information about radar types that are specified for birds as well as other flying living organisms. Main goal of the study trip was to visit one of the radar producers in Europe, in order to get better overview about technical capabilities of radars meant for biodiversity monitoring as well as what kind of specified products are in the market. Stuy trip gave very good overview of products and radar capabilities and knowledge on what kind of currently available radars will be best for the biodiversity monitoring and what should be their technical specifications. As a result of that study trip biodiversity monitoring team of Estonian Environment Agency has now much better capability to purchase radars meant for biodiversity monitoring. After that study trip draft terms of reference were prepared and coordination of them as well as other needed documents in procurement was started in December 2024. Procurement is planned to be finalised during next period.

For acquisition and testing of new technologies for wildlife biodiversity monitoring first procurement was prepared by the end of the year and following devices were received by now: rugged tablets (5) for testing with fieldwork software QField in voluntary monitoring networks; bat-detectors attachable to mobile phones (11) for testing in voluntary monitoring network campaign in 2025; bird sound recorders with GPS attached (5) for testing in national bird and other animals monitoring methods; GPS-devices compatible with existing bird sound recorders for testing and use in national bird monitoring methods; drone with thermal camera to be tested in night bird monitoring as well as in seal monitoring methods; binoculars with distance meter and altimeter (3) to be tested in national bird monitoring methods, incl. on-site surveys in wind parks; binoculars with thermal camera (1) to be tested in night bird, bat and other animals monitoring methods; fully automated insect monitoring device (2) to be tested in national insect monitoring methods. One very important study trip was held in 16th of September to 2nd of October in 2024: wolf expert of Estonia got very valuable information and hands on experiences on wolf monitoring in USA (Idaho, Montana and Washington States). Main goal of study trip was to get technical knowledge regarding different practical methods in monitoring of wolves - as cost-effective and as small human resource demanding as possible. In Europe many of these methods has not been in use for centuries, but in USA this knowledge is inherited so-called „father-to-son“ and still actively used. Majority of the questions found an answer during the practical activities together with best wolf experts in USA. Biggest gain from that study trip was that one of the best wolf experts in Estonia, who is responsible for state level wolf monitoring has now knowledge for improvement of monitoring methods so, that they will be more cost-effective and less human resourse demanding.

Testing of eDNA usage in biodiversity monitoring methods has been divided into two parts: first testing set has been started during the second half of 2024 and it includes testing eDNA usability and method cost-effectiveness in aquatic environment (rivers) with focus on species identification (crayfish, mussels, dragonflies, diving beetles) and distribution detection (Habitat directive Fish species). For that a separate procurement has been prepared and will be finalised during the next period. Second testing set, testing eDNA usability and method cost-effectiveness in terrestrial environment with focus on bar-coding, e.g. animal dispersal within same species (Flying squirrel, European mink etc) in order to compare current catch and release method with eDNA usage as not affecting animals themselves is planned to be performed during period 2025-2026.

In promoting citizen science and creating network of volunteers 2024 has been preparatory and planning period. Four voluntary monitoring methods, for monitoring otter (QField usage), diving beetles (simple catch-photo-release method), bats (wintering campaign in social media group and preparation for simple mobile based sound recorders usage in summer count) and amphibians (social media campaign) were tested during 2024. Planning of the voluntary monitoring networks to be tested and launched with campaigns are as follows: 2025: moose, as official animal of the year 2025 (in cooperation with Estonian Theriological Society and other third sector associations), wintering bats, reptiles, amphibians, bats in summer habitats, Northern birch mouse, diving beetles, pollinators, globeflower, geese and swans; 2026: nesting birds, night singers, moths, cranes, magpies and crows; 2027: wood ants, dragonflies, swallows, White Stork.
For a development of IT systems (establishment of interfaces between KESE and EELIS; establishment of interface between EELIS and eBiodiversity (PlutoF); development of management plans assessment tool and development of fieldwork tool) 2024 was a preparatory phase: framework contract was signed in September 2024 between IT Centre of the Ministry of the Environment and IT developer (Inversion Software OÜ) that won the framework procurement for IT developments in IT-plan of Ministry of Climate for next four years (2025-2028). Preparation of cooperation contract between Estonian Environment Agency and IT Centre of the Ministry of the Environment in order to set up framework for all four developments listed above. EELIS2 (new version of IT-system) has been under testing by Chief Specialist (IT system specialist) in the Environmental Agency (responsible for the input of the IT developments and testing). That specialist also participated in weekly EELIS2 development meetings and EELIS1 (old IT-system) development meetings as well as workshops for different feedback to developer (massive data import, data handling, protected areas and objects, data forms, object migration etc). Specialist (data manager) in the Environmental Agency has been manually transporting data from KESE to EELIS, testing same time details for interface development, also testing Tableau analytics and open data. All four developments/interfaces will be performed during next periods of the programme.

Programme component 2 “Implementation of a systematic assessment of the social and conservation outcomes of protected areas”

Activity 1. Conservation Management Effectiveness Assessment
2024 was the preparatory phase for the management effectiveness assessment. As the TAIEX TSI project ended, it provided the methodology for the assessment. The coordinator made preparatory work about how the assessment will be organised in the Environmental Board. The order was put together that describes the procedures of the assessment within the Environmental Board and describes the roles of different departments in the assessement. The discussions were carried out in order to put together the order. The coordinator also put together the list of areas that will be assessed in 2025 and cooperated with the Environmental Agency and the Forest Management Centre about how to gather data necessary for the assessment, initial discussions about the assessment IT tool took place. The assessors (Liggi Namm, Kirsi Loide, Kerttu Elm, Andres Miller) were hired from January 1, 2025.

Activity 2. Conservation Management Planning
Updating the guidelines for management plans. The guidelines are updated and include all the compulsory (legally required) topics, optional topics (e.g. visitor management, green infrastructure, climate changes) will be added in the course of the project. The testing of the changes of the guidelines has started, it means that the project specialists put together new management plans according to the updated guidelines and propose minor changes to the guidelines whenever necessary. The aim was to make the compiling of management plans more effective. Ther are no longer lengthy descriptions in the management plan, tables are used to describe the habitats and species, what the aim of their protection is, what the area and status of the habitat or species is, what the main pressures and threats are, what the conservation measures and activities are.

The management plan will be connected with web pages. A data sheet was put together about protected areas using the data analytics tool Tableau and the information will be provided on the web page in the environmental portal (keskkonnaportaal.ee), the data used is from the Estonian Nature Information System

(EELIS). The web page will be available to the public by the end of March 2025, so there is no need to describe protected areas in management plans, management plans provide the necessary link to the web page. Visitor management infrastructure planning will also be a separate web tool (virtual office). It will be under discussion in 2025.

Estonian management plans will use the system of pressures and threats that is used in Natura 2000 habitat and species assessments. The project team put together the list of pressures and threats that can be used for Estonian habitats and species and chose the possible pressures and threats for each habitat. The same was done with measures. Accordingly, it is not necessary to describe them in management plans, you need to choose them from the list. The management plans will be easier to follow and the data can be used in the information system for data analysis.

Project experts have started putting together action plans for habitats. The compilation of two action plans has been started: rivers and streams, lakes. The data has been gathered and organised, inventories of lakes and rivers have been planned and will be carried out starting from 2025. The new guidelines for inventories of lakes is under compilation.

In cooperation with the Land Board of Estonia a web map for inventories has been put together. It will be made available for the public in February 2025. You can see all the inventories that are carried out in Estonia on the map, land owners can see what inventories are carried out on their land. Other institutions (Environmental Agency, Forest Management Centre etc) have also the access to the page and they can also upload the inventories on the site.

The following inventories and expert opinions were ordered in 2024:

1. Updating the guidelines for lake inventories
2. Inventory and expert opinion of the habitats of the crested newt in Lasila, Sadramõtsa, Martsina, Kõõru and Kiksova species' protection sites (1st part completed)
3. Expert opinion on the restoriation of natural water regime in Tillniidu Nature Protection Area
4. Inventories of semi-cultural habitats in West Estonia
5. Inventories of protected butterflies in Elva, Prange, Endla and Alam-Pedja SCI
6. Inventories of protected butterflies in Poanse, Kuke-Kiili, Kurese, Väinamere and Marimetsa-Õmma SCI
7. Inventories of protected plants in Mustajõe, Puhatu and Änniksaare SCI (completed)
8. Inventory and protection measures of protected plants in Aseri Lanscape Protection Area (completed)
9. Inventory of protected vascular plants in Sarve Landscape Protection Area
10. Expert opinion of protected plant species of wetland habitats in Kuke-Kiili SCI
11. Expert opinion on the restoration of natural water regime in Kaisma SCI (1st part completed)
12. Expert opinion on the protection measures of the white-tailed eagle and inventory of forest habitats in Karujärve and Ranna SCI (completed)
13. Expert opinion on the restoration of natural water regime and natural habitats in Kalli Landscape Protection Area (completed)
14. Inventory and expert opinion of habitats in Põduste-Upa Limited-Conservation Area (completed)

Activity 3. Species Protection

Updating the guidelines of species' action plans. The guidelines are updated, there isa also a new guideline for the short version of species action plan. The same principles as there were in the guidelines of management plans have been used: there is a new system of pressures, threats and protection measures used. The new topics are included, e.g. when to archive/delete the species' habitats. All the data of previous action plans and draft copies was gathered,

discussions about what species need action plans and how to make the process of putting together action plans easier were carried out with the Ministry of Climate. Species were grouped and it was decided that some species' groups can have a joint action plan, other species can have short action plans. Action plans are being compiled.

The following inventories and expert opinions were ordered in 2024:

1. Inventory of the habitats of the moor-king lousewort and *Saussurea alpina subsp. Esthonica* (completed)
2. Inventory of the thick shelled river mussel in Kurtna-Vilivere and Vääna SCI
3. Expert opinion on updating the action plan of the white-tailed eagle
4. Expert opinion on updating the action plan of the lesser spotted eagle

Changing the categories of protected species. Data on all the protected species has been collected and analysed, principles of assessing the categories of species have been put together and discussed with the Ministry of Climate. On January 22, 2025 the kick-off seminar was organised by the project team, Estonian best species experts were invited to the seminar. 119 people participated in Tartu and more than 140 people listened to the seminar online. All the materials (recordings, presentations, summary, photos) can be found HERE. The seminar also summarised what the project team have done in 2024 (data gathering, principles of assessing the categories, updating the guidelines of management plans, habitat and species' action plans).

4.2 Status of implementation

4.2.1 Update of implementation schedule

Has the detailed implementation schedule (as originally submitted with the SM Proposal) for the remaining SM duration been adjusted in the reporting period?	Yes☒ No☐
If yes, the new, updated implementation schedule is in Annex:	

New implementation schedule provided. There were delay for signing implementation agreement and minister´s directive for components because these documents took more time to prepare.

4.2.2 Procurements

Annex to this report the procurement plan submitted with the last Reimbursement Request. If in the previous reporting period no Reimbursement Request was submitted, update the procurement plan according to latest information.

Please describe the tenders, for which the contract was awarded during the reporting period. In particular, the following information is requested:

- Justification if non-competitive procedures were used
- Explanation if bids were rejected
- Explanation if there was only one bid

- Explanation and measures to be taken in case of major differences between the estimated and actual contract value
- Explanation in case of important delays
- Information on any suspected irregularities during the tender process

Please explain also if any tender had to be repeated or cancelled during the reporting period. Finally, inform about any contracts that were extended or whose contract value was increased during the reporting period.

According to the initial procurement plan following procurements were foreseen to be launched in 2024: 1. “Purchasing mobile 3D bird radar” (990 000 €); 2. “Development of new monitoring methods (eDNA)” (150 000 €) and following to be prepared in 2024 and launched in 2025: “Development of necessary connections between IT systems and field work tool” (300 000 €);

First of listed procurements (mobile 3D bird radar purchase) was prepared, but launching was postponed to 2025 because there was need for updated information about radars available. Study tour was organised in October 2024 to get updated information about radar types that are specified for birds as well as other flying living organisms and it gave new information that was very valuable for making purchase as effective for monitoring needs and as cost-effective as possible and therefore it also changed procurement documents.

Second listed procurement (eDNA methods) was prepared, but planned to be launched in 2025.

Third listed procurement (Connecting IT systems) together with other IT-procurement in initial procurement plan (“Development of management efficiency assesment tool, web forms and analytics” with estimated cost as 400 000 € foreseen for period 2026/2027) as both IT-development procurements were included into the large national level framework procurement launched in early spring 2024, before Swiss-Estonian cooperation programme contract. That framework procurement included all IT-developments needed for EELIS IT-system during the period 2024-2028 and ended in 30th of September 2024 with signed framework contract between IT Centre of the Ministry of the Environment (KEMIT) and IT developer (Inversion Software OÜ) covering all needed IT-developments related to EELIS IT system in Estonia, including these foreseen in Swiss-Estonian cooperation programme. Due to that there will not be any more procurements foreseen for all IT-developments within frame of that contract (including these foreseen within Swiss-Estonian cooperation programme) as all developments will be done by contracted IT developer according to the contract.

New procurement plan schedule provided.

4.2.3 Communication activities

General information about the Support Measure “Biodiversity” is published on the website of the Ministry of Climate https://kliimaministeerium.ee/eesti-sveitsi-koostooprogramm
Opening event of the Support Measure took place in Palmse manor on May 30, 2024. It was organised in cooperation with component operators. Ministry of Climate published the press-release about the opening event https://kliimaministeerium.ee/uudised/sveits-panustab-eesti-looduskaitse-innovatsiooni Lots of pictures were taken which were used in social media post.

In opening event made opening remarks from Swiss representative, Ministry of Climate and Environmental Agency. Programme components gave the overview of both programmes and there were several presentations about biodiversity in Estonia. At last there were panel discussion “"Nature conservation is not

rocket science". Second half of the day the participants had an opportunity to attend to practical outdoor activities, for example volunteer monitoring using smartphone application; demonstration of trail camera installation etc.

Programme component 1 “Development of innovative monitoring technologies/solutions and improvement of Environmental databases and systems”

Web page for programme component 1 description and activities presentation in Estonian language is launched and is available here: https://keskkonnaagentuur.ee/šveitsi-eesti-koostooprogrammi-elurikkuse-programm

Events:

1. In 21.09.24 in autumn school of Estonian Theriological Society, monitoring specialist of the Programme component 1, Liisa Rennel, made introductive presentation of pilot monitoring method of otter (who was animal of the year 2024 in Estonia) with the help of volunteers and performed pilot monitoring with volunteers also in field in 22.09.24, searching and identifying traces of activity of the otter as well as making photos and entering data through QField application in mobile phone. Photos and overview of the event has been posted here: https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=843845197928546&set=a.231025209210551

2. In 2.10.24 there was held a meeting of the wildlife monitoring team from the institutions in administrative area of the Ministry of Climate. Monitoring specialist of the Programme component 1, Liisa Rennel, made a presentation there about possible new monitoring methods that will be tested during the Swiss-Estonian cooperation programme “Biodiversity programme” component 1 working period. Methods presented were eDNA based methods, usage of mobile 3D bird radars and involvement of volunteers in biodiversity monitoring.

3. In 24-25.10.24 there was held a seminar for officers working in the field of biodiversity in administrative area of the Ministry of Climate. Project manager Lauri Klein presented there an overview about all activities planned by the Estonian Environment Agency within the frame of the Swiss-Estonian cooperation programme “Biodiversity programme” component 1 during the years 2024 to 2027.

4. In 5.12.24 there was held a seminar for the officers working in Wildlife Department of Estonian Environment Agency. Project manager Lauri Klein presented there an overview about activities done in 2024 and planned for 2025 within the frame of the Swiss-Estonian cooperation programme “Biodiversity programme” component 1. Discussion followed.

Web media / social media posts:

25.11.24 post describing study trip of wolf expert to USA (in Estonian):

https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=885069913806074&set=pb.100069092204688.-2207520000&type=3

https://keskkonnaagentuur.ee/node/2009

16.01.25 introductory post about Moose as animal of the year 2025 (in Estonian):

https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=920007736978958&set=a.231025209210551&__cft__[0]=AZUVoEp3-5KgJSG05XQnW0g3n9FMUMmwCfhECBC-cAnpL9M5EVBp6E0GOfvvk3bmOmCdZVpb1Pl_8Jtc1zLoUbTNZom4cEB196RQyxD8hPp_HVTxfT-qDPtCrv8dHx4hwkSr-dubyzxScGuu0XQo5IGVlge7EKC_odazU1XN3bCyvZqD0rng8V0sdGSZO8i_QAmrQ&__tn__=EH-R

https://keskkonnaagentuur.ee/node/2086

21.01.25 launching post of voluntary observations campaign for Moose during the year 2025 (including call for volunteers to monitor the Moose and enter the observations into one of the two open online databases for citizen science in Estonia (Nature Observations Database or eBiodiverity portal) (in Estonian):

https://loodusveeb.ee/et/themes/harrastusteaduse-projektid/podra-vaatluste-kogumine-2025?fbclid=IwY2xjawH_QfxleH-RuA2FlbQIxMQABHReYnWL5FYEXc7HXl3hCqdMIXxOWWmNrxuro97TqBHjRyrKQ887l5TTmvg_aem_Ny_gcYJkPCpPkjOI0YbSLA

Programme component 2 “Implementation of a systematic assessment of the social and conservation outcomes of protected areas”

EVENTS (most important events are listed)

8 May 2024, the project team participated in the seminar on the protection management effectiveness assessment in Tartu. The seminar summarised the results of the TSI project funded by the European Commission, the methodology proposed in this project will be used in the assessment of protected areas. Gunnar Raun made a presentation about the piloting of the methodology. The seminar was organised to introduce the methodology in Estonia.

14-15 May 2024, seminar organised for the heads and leading specialists of the Environmental Board’s departments in the field of wildlife protection and the department of strategy and analysis (17 participants). The seminar took place in Endla Nature Centre. Riina Kotter introduced the project activities and discussed the possible cooperation between the departments. Gert Enno introduced what the proposals for the changes in the guidelines of management plans are and started the discussion what other departments wanted to see in the management plan. It was also discussed what the possibilities for IT solutions were.

16 May 2024, MS Teams, one-hour long “Coffee Morning” that takes place once a week for the whole Environmental Board. The department of conservation management planning introduced their activities. Riina Kotter introduced the activities of the Swiss-Estonian Cooperation Programme.

29 May 2024, the project team participated in the international MS Teams seminar “Framework for assessment of effectiveness of biodiversity”. The seminar was organised for the people from other countries who participated in the process of proposing the new methodology for Estonia.

30 May 2024, the project team participated in the opening event of the Swiss-Estonian Cooperation Programme in Palmse. Riina Kotter introduced the project activities of the Environmental Board.

23-24 July, Riina Kotter participated in the meeting for the heads of departments in Kivilõppe to discuss the restructuring of the work connected with species protection in the Environmental Board and how the activities planned in the Swiss-Estonian cooperation programme should be divided within the Environmental Board if there are changes.

7 August 2024, Polina Degtjarenko, Kaire Kalk and Riina Kotter had a full day meeting with the representatives with the Ministry of Climate in Tartu to discuss how to organise the discussions about the changes of protection categories of species and what changes should be made to species action plans.

27-28 August 2024 Riina Kotter participated in the meeting for the heads and leading specialists of the Environmental Board's departments in the field of wildlife protection. The meeting was held in Nigula Nature Reserve, project activities were also discussed in the meeting.

12-13 September 2024, the first seminar and meeting for the project team in Matsalu National Park (17 participants), the representatives of the Ministry of Climate and Environmental Agency participated in the lectures and discussions, they introduced how the assessment of the conservation status of the habitats and species listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives is carried out and what the connection between the assessment, management plans and action plans is. The other members of the department of conservation planning joined the discussions through MS Teams. Polina Degtjarenko gave a lecture about the biology and protection of lichens in Estonia, the lecture was accessible for the whole Environmental Board (96 people listened to it). The topic of the second day of the seminar was bird protection in Matsalu National Park, the lecturer was the ornitologist Olavi Vainu, a trip to the national park was organised.

23 September 2024, MS Teams meeting for the representatives of Ministry of Climate, Environmental Board and Environmental Agency was organised by Gert Enno in order to discuss the guidelines of management plans.

7-10 October 2024, Marju Keis, Kaire Kalk and Riina Kotter participated in the TAIEX TSI study trip to Czechia. The joint trip was organised to the representatives of Environmental Board, Environmental Agency and Forest Management Centre. The expenses of two participants (Riina Kotter, Kaire Kalk) were paid by the Swiss-Estonian Cooperation Programme, other expenses were paid by the European Commission. The group visited Nature Conservation Agency of the Czech Republic, INTEGRA Group and VUKUZ research institute. The topics were: general overview of the nature protection system of Czechia, Nature Conservation Information System (NCIS), management plans (structure, digitalization, and future plans), monitoring (including inventories, data quality), managemnet cycle, management effectiveness, SDF, conservation objectives, development of the nature conservation system in the EU context (including the EU accession process), international activities and how they influence the national system. Estonian system of nature protection was introduced. A field trip to Bohemian Karst was carried out: introduction to monitored plant species, habitats and methods in the office, showcasing the monitoring in the field. The topics were connected with the activities of the project. Summary of the trip was shared with the whole Environmental Board (ca 500 people) on the internal website of the Environmental Board. The results of the trip were introduced to the conservation management planning department on a meeting (ca 35 people).

16-17 October 2024, the project team participated in the seminar for the conservation management department that took place in Järva County. Gert Enno and Kaire Kalk introduced the planned changes in the guidelines of management plans and species action plans, there was a discussion with the whole department. Riina Kotter introduced the activities of the project.

17 December 2024, Gert Enno and Riina Kotter introduced the new guidelines for management plans to the Ministry of Climate.

Project Web Page: Šveitsi-Eesti koostööprogrammi elurikkuse programm | Keskkonnaamet

Press Releases

- 17 October 2024, the Environmental Board published the press release about the new methodology of protection management assessment (project supported by the European Commission), in the same press release it was announced that the assessment of the management of protected areas will be carried out with the funding of the Swiss-Estonian Cooperation Programme. The press release was posted on two other web pages.

Valminud on metoodiline raamistik ja tegevuskava Eesti looduskaitse tulemuslikkuse hindamiseks | Keskkonnaamet

Valminud on raamistik ja tegevuskava Eesti looduskaitse tulemuslikkuse hindamiseks - BEF Estonia

Valminud on metoodiline raamistik ja tegevuskava Eesti looduskaitse tulemuslikkuse hindamiseks – Loomaveeb.ee

- 30 December 2024, the Environmental Board of Estonia published the press release that the Environmental Board will start the discussions on the changing of species protection categories and announced the date of the seminar: 22 January 2025, “Updating the List of Estonian Protected Species”. The press release was posted on four other web pages.

Keskkonnaamet kaasajastab Eesti kaitsealuste liikide nimekirju | Keskkonnaamet (Environmental Board’s web page)

Keskkonnaamet uuendab Eesti kaitsealuste liikide nimekirju - Lõunaeestlane

Keskkonnaamet kaasajastab Eesti kaitsealuste liikide nimekirju – Loomaveeb.ee

Keskkonnaamet kaasajastab Eesti kaitsealuste liikide nimekirju

Kaasajastatakse kaitsealuste liikide nimekirju | Looduskalender.ee

Social Media Posts

2 January 2025, Facebook post: the Environmental Board will start the discussions on the changing of species protection categories and announced the date of the seminar: 22 January 2025, “Updating the List of Estonian Protected Species”.

30 December 2024, Facebook post and Instagram post about the results of the inventory of the thick shelled river mussel in the Vääna and Keila River.

15 December 2024, Facebook post and Instagram post about the results of the inventory of the moor-king lousewort and the Saussurea alpina subsp. Esthonica.

21 October 2024, Facebook post about the new methodology of protection management assessment (project supported by the European Commission) and that the assessment of the management of protected areas will be carried out with the funding of the Swiss-Estonian Cooperation Programme.

4.3 Beneficiaries

No new information at this point.

4.4 Swiss Support Measure Partners

Estonian Environment Agency organised in 27th to 29th of October 2024 study trip to Zurich, Swizerland into the factory of one of the swiss radar producer: Swiss Birdradar Solution AG (https://swiss-birdradar.com/) in order to get updated information about radar types that are specified for birds as well as other flying living organisms. Main goal of the study trip was to visit one of the radar producers in Europe, in order to get better overview about technical

capabilities of radars meant for biodiversity monitoring as well as what kind of specified products are in the market. Stuy trip gave very good overview of products and radar capabilities and knowledge on what kind of currently available radars will be best for the biodiversity monitoring and what should be their technical specifications. As a result of that study trip biodiversity mon-itoring team of Estonian Environment Agency has now much better capability to purchase radars meant for biodiversity monitoring. In the process of purchasing innovative optical devices, such as binoculars with altimeters, laser distance sensors and thermocameras, Estonian Environment Agency has also been consulting with a company I.V.A. Leon, that has been a representative of Leica in Estonia as well as has been distributor for swiss company Safran Vectronix AG devices (www.safran-vectronix.ch). Also there is a plan, if possible to have also study trip to Swizerland either in 2026 or 2027 in order to excange experiences on trail camera network usage for large ungulate and other animals monitoring. Discussions with swiss side contacts (Ms. Sonja Wipf, Head of Research and Monitoring SNP) on that topic are still under way. There might also rise a need for one more study visit to Swizerland to share experiences on biodiversity monitoring through networking of volunteers.

The Environmental Board will organise a study trip to Switzerland in the second half of 2025. One of the aims is to visit Swiss National Park, the details of the trip are under discussion.

4.5 Products and services supplied by Swiss contractors

There are no products and services supplied at this point.

Short description of products/services/works supplied	Value of supplied products/ services/ works in the reporting period[CHF]	Name of the Swiss contractor involved

5. Support Measure management

5.1 Organisational level

The Support Measure Agreement between SDC and NCU was signed on 30 April 2024. Also Estonian national legislation was established on 1 August 2024. This legislation defines the conditions, procedures and roles for using the support provided by the cooperation programme at the national level. The Support Measure Implementation Agreement between NCU and PO was signed on 19 December 2024.

The Ministry of Climate has 0,3 FTE and this is divided between 2 employees – Kairi Toiger (foreign funds coordinator) and Margit Tennokene (advisor from biodiversity department).

Programme component 1

Project Manager (1 FTE): **Lauri Klein** (from 1.06.2024 to 31.12.2027)

Chief specialist (monitoring specialist, 1 FTE): **Liisa Rennel** (from 1.06.2024 to 31.12.2027)

Specialist (monitoring assistant on Random Encounter Model, 1 FTE): **Remek Meel**, worked from 1.05.2024 until 31.08.2024; **Christel Rose Bachmann** (0,5 FTE) and **Karl Jakob Toplaan** (0,5 FTE) from 16.09.2024 to 31.12.2027

Chief Specialist (IT system specialist, 0,5 FTE): **Kaire Sirel** (from 1.05.2024 to 31.12.2027)

Specialist (data manager, 1 FTE): **Merith Unt** (from 1.05.2024 to 31.12.2027)

IT project manager in the IT Centre of the Ministry of the Environment (responsible for the development of IT systems, 0,5 FTE): **Raul Tammesoo** (to be confirmed).

Programme component 2

Riina Kotter, project manager (0.5 FTE, May 1, 2024 – April 30, 2028)

Marju Keis, project coordinator of conservation management effectiveness assessment (1 FTE, July 1 – October 28, 2024; took the position of the department manager in the Environment Agency)

Veljo Runnel, project coordinator of conservation management effectiveness assessment (0.5 FTEs, December 1 – December 31, 2024; 1 FTE, January 1, 2025 – April 30, 2028)

Kirsi Loide, project senior specialist of conservation management effectiveness assessment (0.5 FTEs, January 1, 2025 – April 30, 2028)

Andres Miller, project senior specialist of conservation management effectiveness assessment (0.5 FTEs, January 1, 2025 – April 30, 2028)

Kerttu Elm, project senior specialist of conservation management effectiveness assessment (0.5 FTEs, January 1, 2025 – April 30, 2028)

Liggi Namm, project senior specialist of conservation management effectiveness assessment (0.5 FTEs, January 1, 2025 – April 30, 2028)

Gert Enno, project coordinator of conservation management planning (1 FTE, May 1, 2024 – April 30, 2028)

Liggi Namm, project coordinator of conservation management planning (0.5 FTEs, May 1, 2024 – April 30, 2028)

Kadri Paomees, project senior specialist of conservation management planning (1 FTE, May 1, 2024 – April 30, 2028)

Gunnar Raun, project senior specialist of conservation management planning (0.5 FTEs, May 1, 2024, April 30, 2028)

Kirsi Loide, project senior specialist of conservation management planning (0.5 FTEs, May 1, 2024 – December 31, 2024)

Triin Amos, project senior specialist of conservation management planning (0.5 FTEs, May 1, 2024 – April 30, 2028)

Kristi Pai, project senior specialist of conservation management planning (0.5 FTEs, May 1, 2024 – April 30, 2028)

Kaidi Erik, project senior specialist of conservation management planning (0.5 FTEs, February 1, 2025 – April 30, 2028)

Marko Vainu, project expert (lakes and springs; 0.4 FTEs, since September 1, 2024 – June 30, 2026)

Jürgen Karvak, project expert (rivers; 0.2 FTEs October 15 – December 31, 2024; 0.4 FTEs January 1, 2025 – April 30, 2028)

Kaire Kalk, project coordinator of species protection (1 FTE, June 17, 2024 – April 30, 2028)

Reet Rannik, project senior specialist of species protection (1 FTE, June 17, 2024 – April 30, 2028)

Polina Degtjarenko, project expert of species protection categories (1 FTE, July 1, 2024 – April 30, 2028)

Geili Pütsepp, data analyst (1 FTE, December 1, 2024 – April 30, 2028)

Virkeli Viiberg, data specialist (1 FTE, December 1, 2024 – April 30, 2028)

5.2 Steering Committees

Steering Committee´s first meeting was held on 15th of October 2024 in Microsoft teams were programme operator and components gave overview of the programme.

Members of the Steering Committee who participated:

Tanel Ross, Programme Operator, the Ministry of Climate;

Timo Kark, Programme Operator, the Ministry of Climate;

Christoph Liechti, Swiss Contribution Office;

Ieva Junevičienė, Swiss Contribution Office;

Helena Musthallik, National Coordination Unit (NCU);

Lauri Klein, Programme Component 1, Environmental Agency;

Riina Kotter, Programme Component 2, Environmental Board.

The members of the Steering Committee agreed to the rules of procedure. Also the Swiss Contribution Office suggested that, in future meetings, the Programme Operator and Programme Components should also provide an overview of the budget, logframe, and indicators, which the committee members agreed upon.

The members of the committee agreed to make more social media posts about study trips and learning events.

The members decided that the next meeting will be held in Estonia from April 14 to 17 2025.

5.3 Audits

There are no audits at this point.

5.4 Evaluation

There are no evaluation at this point Evaluation will take place at 2028.

5.5 Monitoring

According to the Swiss Regulations and national legislation, the NCU is responsible for monitoring. Various tools are used for monitoring, and it is carried out in cooperation with the Programme Operator, Component Operators, and the SCO. At the Support Measure level, the activities of the components are monitored through the Task Force, Steering Committee meetings, and Reimbursement Requests, while the achievement of indicators is tracked through Steering Committee meetings and Annual Support Measure Reports. The NCU also conducts risk-based on-the-spot controls.

Information on the implementation of activities is also exchanged on an ongoing basis through informal meetings and continuous communication between the relevant parties.

First monitoring mission will take place in April 2025.

6. Risk management

Risk	**Impact** [1 – 5]	**Likeli-hood** [1 – 5]	**Risk level**	**Mitigation measure(s)** (including information on status of implementation and responsibilities)
Institutional reforms	1	3	Low	Internal institutional reform is ongoing in the Environmental Board, but it has low impact on support measure, because the project activities can be adjusted to the new structure of the institution.
Changes in legislation	3	3	Low-Medium	Necessary adjustments in the programme will be made following the legislative changes
Price of the services and equipment will increase	3	3	Low-Medium	To mitigate the risk, we have taken this into account in the preparation of the budget and we have added necessary buffer. In case buffer will be not needed we will make a proposal to transfer it to another budget line.
IT developments take longer than planned	3	4	Medium-High	We are already developing procurement documents to save time and start as soon as agreement is signed.
The number of potential service providers (including experts) is limited that impacts public procurements and public procurements may fail	3	3	Low-Medium	To mitigate the risks, we have involved stakeholder in the preparation of this programme and we will actively spread the information of the public procurements and as the number of potential service providers is limited in Estonia, we will use international public procurements if necessary and mandatory according to the law.
The quality of services is low	3	3	Low-Medium	When ordering services it is necessary to plan well ahead and provide the quality criteria that need to be followed. The services have to be described in detail in contracts, if work does not confirm to the contract, a chance to improve the work is given. It is necessary to check the quality services offered regularly.
Being unable to hire the personnel for the programme	4	1	Low	It is necessary to provide the salaries that motivate, also, services can be chosen instead.
Overall Risk Level SM		Medium-low		

Overall Risk Description	In general we think the risk is low, but there are some risk mentioned above that evaluated as low-medium.

Annexes

#	Annex
	Updated list of all Programme Components and characteristics in case of Programmes (the same format as in the Reimbursement Request)
	Updated implementation schedule
	Updated procurement plan (the same format as in the Reimbursement Request)
	Updated overview of implementation locations (see template on next page)

Annex x: Overview of Implementation locations

General (Programme Management)

Location name	Address
Ministry of Climate	Suur-Ameerika 1, Tallinn,

Programme Component 1 (“Development of innovative monitoring technologies/solutions and improvement of Environmental databases and systems”)

Location name	Address
Estonian Environment Agency	Mustamäe tee 33, Tallinn

Programme Component 2 (“Implementation of a systematic assessment of the social and conservation outcomes of protected areas”)

Location name	Address
Environmental Board	Roheline 64, Pärnu