

1st meeting of the Support Measure Steering Committee

Micorsoft Teams meeting

15.10.2024

Minutes

Chaired by Mr Tanel Ross

Director of Finance Department and Foreign Funds

Agenda

14:00 - 14:15 Overview of the “Biodiversity Programme” by the Programme Operator, the Ministry of Climate

14:15 - 14:45 Overview of Programme Component 1 “Development of innovative monitoring technologies/solutions and improvement of Environmental databases and systems”

Lauri Klein, Environmental Agency

14:45 - 15:15 Overview of Programme Component 2 “Implementation of a systematic assessment of the social and conservation outcomes of protected areas”

Riina Kotter, Environmental Board

15.15 - 16.00 General discussion and questions

Participants

Members of the Steering Committee

- 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

Observers:

- Nathalie Vesco Ghelew, Programme Manager EU Member States Section at SDC
- Margit Tennokene, the Ministry of Climate

Steering Committee Secretary

- Kairi Toiger, the Ministry of Climate

The Chair, Mr Tanel Ross, opened the meeting, welcomed the participants, and initiated the introduction round. Mr Ross presented the agenda and briefly outlined the main issues to be addressed during the meeting. He then asked the participants if there were any additional topics to be included in the agenda.

Mr Tanel Ross declared the agenda approved.

Mrs Kairi Toiger, Secretary of the Steering Committee, introduced the rules of procedure.

Steering Committee Rules of Procedure

- The working language is English;
- The Steering Committee meets at least once a year;
- By the initiative of the Steering Committee members the Chair has the right to invite the representatives of the partners and other organisations to the Steering Committee meetings, who will act as observers;
- The NCU, the Ministry of Climate (the Programme Operator) and the Swiss Contribution Office have a voting right. Each organization has one vote.
- A quorum is constituted by the presence of representatives from the NCU, the Swiss Contribution Office and the Ministry of Climate;
- Decision-making within the Steering Committee is based on consensus among members with voting rights;
- The Steering Committee may also take decisions through a written procedure at the initiative of any member with voting rights.
- The Finance Department of the Ministry of Climate acts as the Secretary of the Steering Committee;
- The Secretary of the Steering Committee organises meetings. invitations, including the preliminary agenda and relevant documents, are sent no later than ten working days prior to the meeting to all members of the Steering Committee. Also Secretary drafts minutes of the meetings recording the decisions of the Steering Committee, consults all members on the draft and distributes the finalised minutes no later than 20 working days after the meeting to all members of the Steering Committee;
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The members of the Steering Committee agreed to the rules of procedure.

Kairi Toiger provided an overview of the 'Biodiversity Programme' on behalf of the Programme Operator, covering the period from May 1 to September 30, 2024

- The Ministry of Climate submitted the final Support Measure Proposal, which was signed in April 2024.
- The opening event held in May at Palmse was successful.
- National documentation is currently being addressed, including the agreement between the NCU and the Programme Operator, as well as the directive for the components and associated matters.

Ieva Junevičienė inquired about the implementation schedule, noting that the agreement and directive were expected to have been signed by this time. The Programme Operator responded that both documents will be signed by the end of the year and confirmed that this will not impact the implementation of the components.

Lauri Klein provided an overview of Programme Component 1 “Development of innovative monitoring technologies/solutions and improvement of Environmental databases and systems”, covering the period from May 1 to September 30, 2024:

- The project personnel is hired and working properly,
- The international procurement for the acquisition of a 3D bird radar is currently in the preparatory phase. A study trip to one of the European radar producers, Swiss Birdradar Solution AG, is scheduled for 28 October 2024. The procurement plan is as follows: drafting the Terms of Reference in November 2024, preparing additional documents in December 2024, with the procurement to be posted in January-February 2025. The service contract is expected to be signed by May 2025.

The following comments were submitted by the Swiss Contribution Office: the procurement should also be uploaded into the Swiss procurement system; therefore, the documents are required at least 25 days prior to the official procurement date. It was agreed that KAUR will provide draft documents, including the Terms of Reference and Selection Criteria, in November 2024. Following this, discussions will be held to determine how and when the documents will be uploaded to the various systems.

- The first field testing of the Random Encounter Model (REM) was conducted in spring-summer 2024 across 39 monitoring areas. Approximately half of the photos collected during this testing are processed. A total of around 170,000 photo files were manually reviewed, of which approximately 60,000 contained animals, representing roughly 5,500 unique cases. The analysis of the entire photo dataset from spring 2024 will proceed after the completion of the IV stage development by KEMIT. A second field testing period is planned for autumn 2024.
- The national procurement for various devices for testing new technologies in wildlife biodiversity monitoring is currently active, having commenced on 16 October 2024 and remaining open until 1 November 2024. The devices included in this procurement are as follows: rugged tablet computers for fieldwork, bat detectors attachable to mobile phones, bird sound recorders with GPS-linked files, GPS devices compatible with existing bird sound recorders, a drone equipped with a thermal camera, binoculars with a distance meter and altimeter, binoculars with a thermal camera, and a fully automated insect monitoring device.
- Marko Kübarsepp, a wolf expert from KAUR, undertook a study trip to the USA to acquire technical knowledge on live-trapping wolves. Most questions were addressed through practical activities during the trip.
- The national procurement for eDNA testing in aquatic environments (targeting crayfish, mussels, dragonflies, and diving beetles) is scheduled as follows: preparation of documents in October-November 2024, procurement in January-February 2025, and contracting by March 1, 2025. A second procurement for terrestrial environments (including species such as the flying squirrel and European mink) is planned for 2025-2026.
- Promotion of citizen science and creation of network of volunteers for voluntary monitoring of wildlife has been started with selection of species groups to be monitored, preparation of campaigns for them and testing preliminary methods by KAUR monitorers. Following species groups were selected for monitoring method

testing in 2024: Otters (simple mobile app (Qfield) based monitoring); Diving beetles (catch-photo-release with simple traps); Bats (social media group and preparation for simple mobile based sound recorders); Amphibians (social media campaigns).

- The following campaigns and monitoring testing is planned for the coming years:
2025: bats, amphibians, Northern birch mouse, diving beetles, pollinators, globeflower, nesting birds, geese and cranes, coastal count;
2026: snakes, lizards, moths, night singers;
2027: Otter, wood ants, dragonflies, swallows, White Stork.
- Additionally fieldwork resistant leaflets are planned to be produced for volunteer campaigns.
- It has been a preparatory stage for the development of IT systems. Four main developments are planned: the EELIS-KESE interface, the EELIS-PlutoF interface, a management plans assessment tool, and a fieldwork tool for monitoring and inventories.

Riina Kotter provided an overview of the programme activities of the Component 2 “Implementation of a systematic assessment of the social and conservation outcomes of protected areas” covering the period from May 1 to September 30, 2024.:

She introduced the project team and provided a brief overview of the prepared agreements (inventories, expert opinions);

She stated that the methodology for the conservation effectiveness assessment and the guidelines are ready, with assessments scheduled to start in January 2025.

New guidelines for management plans and species action plans are also prepared.

In 2025, a website/map will be available where everyone can view all ongoing inventories."

Seminars were held in May and September.

Team members participated in study trips to Finland (funded by the European Commission) and to Czechia (partly funded by the European Commission).

Mr Tanel Ross asked for comments.

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.