



Riverine LIFE Platform Meeting

10-12th September 2014, Tartu, Estonia

Conference Report



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1. Introduction

The aim of the meeting was to bring together riverine conservation practitioners, international researchers and officers from across Europe to discuss some of the key issues regarding the conservation of these species, sharing the experience of completed and ongoing LIFE and other projects and discussing how the LIFE programme can continue to support projects which enhance the conservation status of riverine species and habitats. The meeting was organized by the Astrale monitoring team and Wildlife Estonia (the beneficiary of LIFE projects: LIFE07 NAT/EE/000120) and LIFE12 NAT/EE/000871 Happyriver). The report at hand is compiled for the participants as well as for the other stakeholders who were not able to attend the meeting in person.

The participants of this meeting came from different sectors (private, public, NGO-s) and represented the development of the LIFE programme, the design and delivery of LIFE projects, the expertise of species groups in Europe, and statutory nature conservation bodies.

The conference was welcomed and introduced by the presentation ‘LIFE projects – a tool for implementing environmental policies’ by Mr Bent Jepsen. After this the first session of the conference started with the presentation of Mr Harald Rosenthal, president and founder of the World Sturgeon Conservation Society. The presentations by LIFE projects representatives followed which abstracts are provided in the second chapter of this document. The conference was closed by the presentation ‘Overview of LIFE programme contribution to fish conservation – cost effectiveness of the actions’ by Mr João Pedro Silva which also incited the audience before the final panel discussion. The participants’ conclusions and recommendations from that panel are presented in the third chapter.

The annexes of this report include the full programme of the conference, overview of practical organisation of the event including consumption of resources related to the conference, and the list of participants with contact information.

This report has been prepared by the members of the Astrale LIFE external monitoring team. For more details please contact kaia.treier@neemo.eu.

2. LIFE Projects & Presentation Summary Sheets

[Presentations from the Platform Meeting are available on:

http://www.loodushoid.ee/LIFE_PLATFORM_MEETING_446.htm]

The conference was covered by three days during which the presentations were divided between the following sessions:

Session 1 – Strengthening populations and re-introduction programmes

Session 2 – Migration barriers and fish passages

Session 3 – Hosting Estonian LIFE projects

The local LIFE projects (Session 3) were also filmed at the time of the conference by the Estonian national TV channel, ETV. The weekly programme ‘Osoon’ broadcasted the local LIFE projects together with the comments of the international participants of the conference. It was broadcasted on 20 October 2014 and can be accessed at <http://etv.err.ee/v/elusaated/osoon/saated/ea5a4762-32a1-4a0f-a482-a46f458d45e9>

Session 4 – Who benefits from the conservation of riverine species and habitats?

There were also projects that participated with the poster presentations. The posters were made available in the conference venue during the first and third conference day.

Session 1 – Strengthening populations and re-introduction programmes

Project	Houting - Urgent actions for the endangered Houting. "Coregonus oxyrhynchus"
Project number	LIFE05NAT/DK/000153
Country	Denmark
Status	Completed
Representative	Jan Steinberg Jensen
Target species	<i>Coregonus oxyrhynchus</i> (houting)
Target habitats	Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion or Hydrocharition - type vegetation (3150) Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation (3260)
Overall project objective	The overall objective of this project was to restore and maintain a favourable conservation status for the threatened houting in four Danish river systems.
Presentation abstract	“The Houting Project – efforts for one fish species and benefits for an entire ecosystem” The houting (<i>Coregonus oxyrhynchus</i>) is an endangered species of European whitefish, in the Salmonidae family. It lives in salt water but spawns in freshwater (anadromous), and is vulnerable to relatively small habitat disturbances. It was previously distributed throughout the Wadden Sea (the Netherlands, Germany and Denmark) but it has declined severely and is now restricted to just a few rivers in Denmark. One of the main impediments to successful reproduction is the presence of even small obstacles in rivers during the spawning migration, as the houting is unable to pass weirs or make use of fish ladders. Silting of spawning grounds is also a severe problem. Furthermore, juvenile houting require large areas of reed beds or flooded meadows, where they forage for several months prior to migrating to the sea. Previous restocking attempts in Denmark have failed, because they were not followed up by habitat restoration.
Project results	The Houting project provided improvements to river life in general. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to additional approx. 120 km river Houting spawning habitats by demolition of 13 river obstacles. • Houting nursery area for Houting fry increased with 480 ha. • The area and extent of suitable spawning areas has been increased with the restoration of 28 km naturally meandering watercourse. Conditions for other anadromous fish species like Salmon and Sea Trout have been improved considerably. Lay out of approx. 50.000m ² gravel and stone has created high quality spawning grounds. Natural river dynamics were restored.
LIFE Database	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.dspPage&n_proj_id=2947
Project website	http://naturstyrelsen.dk/naturbeskyttelse/naturprojekter/find-et-naturprojekt/soenderjylland/snaebel/
Project video	http://lifevideos.eu/videos/?id=LIFE05_NAT_DK_000153_01_EN_SPECI.mp4

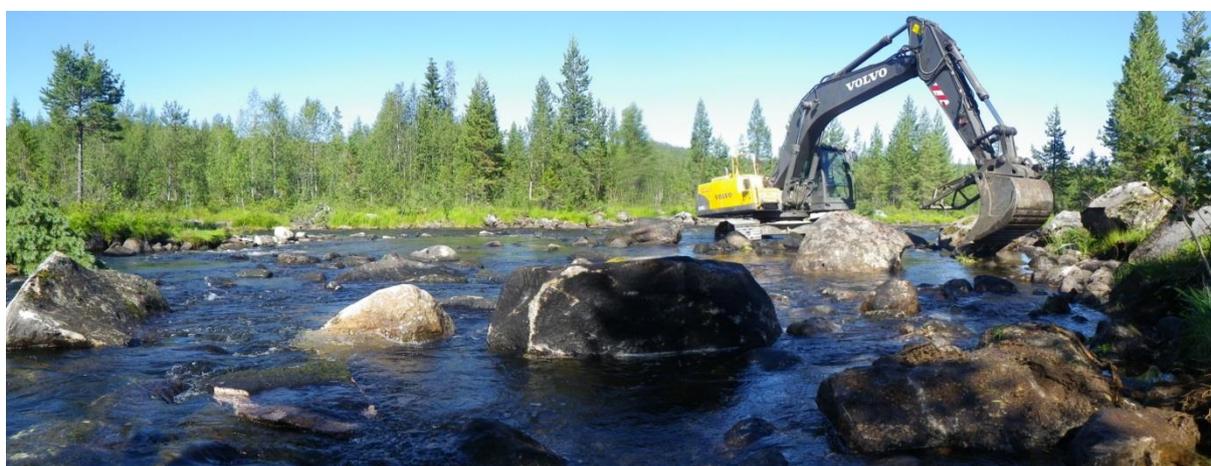
Project	SMOOTH - Restoring Sølsted Mose - a contribution to the network of Danish raised bogs (7110*) in favourable conservation status
Project number	LIFE10 NAT/DK/000099
Country	Denmark
Status	Ongoing
Representative	Ole Ottosen
Target species	<i>Misgurnus fossilis</i> (European weatherfish)
Target habitats	Main target habitat is Raised Bog (7110*)
Overall project objectives	To restore the degraded raised bog (7110*), create favourable conditions for <i>Misgurnus fossilis</i> and enhance public access to the area.
Presentation abstract	<p>“25 years’ experience from Denmark – changes in the perception of what a good quality project must include to improve conditions for fish life?”</p> <p>The Sølsted area is a Natura 2000 area due to its bog nature types and due to the occurrence of Weather fish. The project will convert the degraded bog structure into the original raised bog ecosystem.</p> <p>All 20 private landowners in the project area have now signed agreements to participate in the LIFE+ project. An important tool in this context has been a land consolidation process.</p>
Projects results	When the project started there was not caught weatherfish for more years in Denmark and one of the last places it was seen was in the project area. At the preliminary investigations in the project period we succeeded to catch few species of the weatherfish in two streams in the project area. Due to that we have extended to project area from 200 to 240 hectares to create more new habitats for the <i>Misgurnus Fossiles</i> .
LIFE Database	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=se arch.dspPage&n_proj_id=4052
Project website	http://www.soelstedmose.dk/



Project	Alosa alosa - Conservation and restoration of the Allis shad in the Gironde and Rhine watersheds
Project number	LIFE09 NAT/D/000008
Country	Germany
Status	Ongoing
Representatives	Andreas Scharbert and David Clavé
Target species	<i>Alosa alosa</i> (allis shad)
Project overall objectives	The key objective of the project is the re-introduction of Allis shad to the Rhine watershed.
Presentations and abstracts	<p>“The introduction of the allis shad to the Rhine system – backgrounds, objectives and first signs of success”</p> <p>One hundred years ago, the Allis shad population in the Rhine watershed was the most important shad population in its northern distribution range with annual catches of several hundred tonnes/yr of fish. Within 30 years this population collapsed. Reintroduction efforts were started in 2007 as part of a LIFE project (LIFE06 NAT/D/00005).</p> <p>“Possible explanations for the current decrease of the formerly biggest remaining population of the allis shad in the Gironde watersheds, France”</p> <p>The Allis shad population in the Gironde watershed was the most important population in Europe until the beginning of the 21st Century with catches of several hundred tonnes/yr of fish. Since 2006 there has been a marked decline in the return rates of mature shads to the rivers for reproduction, the reasons for which are still not well understood. In 2008, a moratorium on Allis shad fishing was established in the Gironde watershed.</p>
Project expected results	<p>An increase in the return rates of mature shad to the Rhine watershed from 2013 onwards;</p> <p>Improvement of the migration possibilities in the Gironde watershed;</p> <p>Installation of an ex-situ pilot facility in Germany with an output of 50 mature or near mature Allis shad in 2015;</p> <p>Technical publications on Allis shad aquaculture with special emphasis on the development of an ex-situ stock, state-of-the-art fish pass design and monitoring techniques; and</p> <p>Increased public awareness of the conservation and restoration of Allis shad in Europe through aquarium exhibitions, information panels, events, Allis shad festivals and school programmes.</p>
LIFE Database	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.dspPage&n_proj_id=3815
Project website	http://www.lanuv.nrw.de/alosa-alosa-2011/

Session 2 – Migration barriers and fish passages

Project	Vindel - Restoration of tributaries of the Vindel river combined with monitoring and evaluation of ecological responses of species and habitats
Project number	LIFE08/NAT/S/266
Country	Sweden
Status	Ongoing
Representative	Christer Nilsson
Target species	<i>Cottus gobio</i> (Bullhead), <i>Lampetra planeri</i> (European brook lamprey,) <i>Lutra lutra</i> (Otter), <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (Freshwater pearl mussel) <i>Salmo salar</i> (Atlantic salmon)
Target habitats	3210 - Fennoscandian natural rivers 3260 - Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation
Project overall objectives	The project aims at reducing the effects of fragmentation and channelization in Natura 2000 areas in the Vindel River catchment to achieve 'good status' for the waters of the Vindel river with reference to the WFD, and a good conservation status for the species in the project area (under the Habitats Directive).
Presentation abstract	“Restoration of the Vindel river – the linkage between science and practice” The Vindel River system is one of the best protected Swedish rivers and one of the few free-flowing large rivers in Europe. The river and its entire catchment are part of the Natura 2000 network and it is also one of four major rivers declared as national rivers in Sweden. The conservation status of the Vindel River is less favourable due to its exploitation for timber floating during the period 1850–1976. To facilitate timber floating, the tributaries were adjusted in different ways: the channels were straightened with stone piers and wing dams along the rapids, and boulders and wood were removed. The previously heterogeneous environments were replaced by more homogeneous ones with limited habitats for aquatic species. Further, water velocity increased in the cleared channels which led to the loss of fish spawning areas.
LIFE Database	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=search_dspPage&n_proj_id=3567
Project website	http://vindelfiverlife.se/
Project video	http://lifevideos.eu/videos/?id=LIFE08_NAT_S_000266_01_EN_HABIT.mp4



Project	ReMiBar - Remediation of migratory barriers in stream crossings
Project number	LIFE10 NAT/SE/000045
Country	Sweden
Status	Ongoing
Representatives	Sofia Perä and Ida Schönfeldt
Target species	<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (freshwater pearl mussel), <i>Salmo salar</i> (salmon), <i>Cottus gobio</i> (bullhead), <i>Lutra lutra</i> (otter)
Target habitats	Fennoscandinavian natural rivers (3210), Watercourses of plain to montane levels with Ranunculion fluitans and Callitriche-Batrachion vegetation (3260)
Project overall objectives	All known migration barriers are removed and fish and other aquatic animals can move freely in five large water systems in Sweden.
Presentation abstract	<p>“Making the change in the life of riverine species – removal of 300 barriers in northern Sweden”</p> <p>In Sweden there is a road crossing approximately every second kilometer of a stream and at least 30% are barriers to fish and other aquatic species. There are also dams, remaining from the log-driving period, which are no longer in use but still make barriers.</p>
LIFE Database	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.dspPage&n_proj_id=4040
Project website	http://www.trafikverket.se/remibar/

Project	NAT-PROGRAMME – National Conservation and Management Programme for Natura 2000 Sites in Latvia
Project number	LIFE11 NAT/LV/000371
Country	Latvia
Status	Ongoing
Representative	Andris Urtans
Project overall objectives	The aim of this project is to prepare, on the basis of the approach of the Priority Action Frameworks (PAFs), concrete and operational measures for the Natura 2000 network.
Presentation abstract	“Local level Actor long term motivation for healthy riverine habitat management. Experience in Latvia.” The presentation focused on discussing how to tune project aims and local actor interests, how to find joint interest point (examples), and how to keep the river management idea without costly projects.
LIFE Database	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.dspPage&n_proj_id=4283
Project website	http://nat-programme.daba.gov.lv/public/eng/about_the_project/

Project	LIFE Ljubljana connects - Restoration of the Ljubljana River corridor and improvement of the river's flow regime
Project number	LIFE10 NAT/SI/000142
Country	Slovenia
Status	Ongoing
Representatives	Andrej Vidmar and Katarina Zabret
Target species	<i>Hucho hucho</i> (Danube Salmon), <i>Rutilus pigus</i> (Danube Roach) and <i>Leuciscus souffia</i> (Striped Chub)
Target habitats	Natura 2000 areas: Ljubljansko barje and Sava-Medvode-Kresnice
Project overall objectives	Improvement of fish habitats and migration with concrete restoration actions
Presentation abstract	<p>“Ljubljana River connects: concrete restoration actions and advanced monitoring system to enable fish migration”</p> <p>The heavily degraded Ljubljana River corridor upstream and downstream of the Ljubljana urban area is an important habitat for the fragmented and heavily endangered fish population. The concrete conservation actions include restoration of sill and two fish passes and modernization of the lifting system of barrier on the dam. These measures should again ensure the migration of the fish in the river. The current situation is controlled by monitoring on 17 spots along the river where the pressure and oxygen sensors are installed. Also the discharge measurements are performed few times per year. These data will be compared with latter ones gathered after the restoration for evaluation of our actions.</p>
LIFE Database	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.dspPage&n_proj_id=4062
Project website	http://ksh.fgg.uni-lj.si/ljubljanaconnects/ANG/default.htm

Session 3 – Hosting Estonian LIFE projects

River Emajõgi, oxbow lakes, fish and the project Happyfish

The LIFE+ project “Saving life in meanders and oxbow lakes of Emajõgi River on Alam-Pedja NATURA 2000 area” focused on restoring valuable wetlands and organizing the protection of fish species and reintroduction of *Aspius aspius*.

The Natura 2000 site of Alam-Pedja is situated in the central Estonia, in the upper course of River Emajõgi. It is a complex landscape covering 34,494 ha consisting of different types of marshlands, forests, flooded meadows and a stretch of river, rendered especially valuable by high diversity of habitats and large number of species. The meadows of Alam-Pedja are among the most prominent of their kind not only in Estonia, but also in the whole Boreal Region of Europe. An important factor in creating the habitat diversity is the network of various water-bodies covering this site, of which River Emajõgi with its oxbow lakes is central.



River Emajõgi (or Great Emajõgi) is the second largest river in Estonia by its volume rate of water flow. Its basin, covering 9740 km², is about 1/5 of the territory of Estonia and it is situated almost entirely within Estonia’s borders. The length of River Emajõgi is 100 km; its width is 35 m in upper course and up to 145 m in lower course; the depth is usually between 2 to 3.5 m. River Emajõgi with its fall of 3.6 cm per km has the lowest gradient among the rivers in Estonia. This low gradient together with ground characteristics has caused strong meandering of the riverbed, which has yielded numerous oxbow lakes – former meanders separated from the “true river” and forming separate water-bodies.

River Emajõgi connects the two of largest and most important fishing lakes in Estonia – Lake Peipsi (by area the fourth largest in Europe) and Lake Võrtsjärv. For fishing industry the main importance of this river is being migration route and spawning area for the fish of the whole

basin. The most important spawning grounds are the oxbow lakes and flooded meadows situated within the Alam-Pedja protected area. Due to vast area of flooded meadows and numerous oxbow lakes many fish from the lakes Peipsi and Võrtsjärv arrive here during the spawning period.

Oxbow lakes

River Emajõgi has 55 oxbow lakes within the protected area and their total length is considerably longer and their area bigger than that of the present course of the river here. Those oxbow lakes vary greatly in size and shape, but their average width is 30-40 m and depth 2-4 m. Many of these lakes are connected to the main course of the river, but many have lost the link.

In the mouths of the oxbow lakes with standing water, intensive sediment formation takes place. Thus the mouths of many of these lakes have become narrower, and within the last decades, several have lost or are losing their permanent connection with River Emajõgi. This means inevitable damage to the fish life of these lakes, mainly due to loss of spawning grounds and massive loss of animal life due to insufficient oxygen.

The natural defence mechanism for the fish would be to flee from the uninhabitable oxbow lakes and swim into the oxygen-rich River Emajõgi. Unfortunately, this is not always possible. During the periods of low water, link between the lake and the river may be interrupted due to clogging of the lake mouth. Fish trapped in this oxygen-poor lake may die. To avoid this situation, the mouths of the lakes must be kept open by removing all the clogging sediments. When links to the river are open, in addition to better mobility for the fish, also the water circulation is improved and thus the water quality is better.

Local people have cleaned the mouths of several of these lakes. According to some information, the cleaning of mouths of the lakes considered important for fishing has been taking place for about a hundred years at least. In the old times, the dredging was carried out by local fishermen with the help of spades. The major earth-moving works of the last century took place in 1959 and 1960.

Another severe problem for the fish reproducing within the site of Alam-Pedja is the overgrowing of spawning grounds situated on the meadows. As the overgrown meadows are not suitable for spawning, the spawning grounds are constantly shrinking. The consequence is decreasing of the fish resources – within the whole big network of water-bodies linked to River Emajõgi and depending on offspring from Alam-Pedja. The solution is easy – spawning grounds should always be kept free of overgrowth.

What was done during this project?

The mouths of the oxbow lakes were reopened. Within the project Happyfish, sediment walls were removed from 10 connecting points between the lakes and River Emajõgi. 720 m of digging were done, resulting in improved habitats and migrating conditions in the oxbow lakes with total length of 15 km. In some places, floating machines were used for approaching the sites and carrying out the work. During this project, 56.58 ha of spawning grounds on the flooded meadows were restored and maintained. The population of asp was strengthened through reintroductions and studying its ecology. Asp is one of the four fish species listed in Annex II of the Habitats Directive whose habitats are protected in Alam-Pedja site of Natura 2000. The population of asp needs diverse environment for maintaining good health – this fish spawns in the river with rapid flow, but feeds in other parts of the river, but also in oxbow lakes and real lakes, and spends the winter in the lakes or in deeper places in the river. Asps travel a lot in searching for suitable habitats, but before this project there was no deeper knowledge about the habits of this big and attractive fish, even the location of its spawning grounds were not entirely clear. To obtain better picture about this fish, its migration was studied using a novel method – telemetry. To strengthen the asp population in the River Emajõgi network of water-bodies, around 53,000 young asps were released into these waters.



LIFE after LIFE

The action plan for securing the sustainability of the project results is being implemented. The monitoring is being carried out and the results are showing the great positive impact of the project activities for the habitat's status and fish populations. The meadows are maintained and the plan for removing the sediments from the connections of the Albri oxbow lake and brook of Teilma are under the development. The most important task for implementing the objectives of Alam-Pedja Natura 2000 area and increasing the cumulative impact of activities already undertaken in Happyfish project was to restore the natural riverbed of the river Laeva. In July 2013 a subsequent LIFE project „Restoring the integrity of freshwater habitats in Alam-Pedja Natura 2000 area- bringing the River Laeva back to life“(LIFE Happyriver) was started.

Session 4 – Who benefits from the conservation of riverine species and habitats?

Project	UC4LIFE - The thick shelled river mussel (<i>Unio crassus</i>) brings LIFE+ back to rivers
Project number	LIFE10 NAT/SE/000046
Country	Sweden
Status	Ongoing
Representative	Ivan Olsson
Target species	<i>Homo sapiens</i> (Humans), <i>Unio crassus</i> (thick shelled river mussel) and <i>Cottus gobio</i> (bullhead)
Target habitats	Aquatic habitats (3260 and 3210)
Overall objectives	To improve habitat conditions and water quality in 12 rivers and in the Baltic Sea.
Presentation abstract	<p>“How much is a mussel worth?”</p> <p>The mussel is the project symbol, acting as a pedagogue while communicating why river restoration is necessary. By restoring riverine habitats, LIFE projects can also enhance the ecosystem services they provide. The UC4LIFE project provided one such example, improved river quality by raising water levels in a number of Swedish rivers to create a more natural floodplain hydrology. Although the project’s target species was a mussel, biodiversity was generally increased as a result. The lesson learnt was that a good quality LIFE river restoration project must include knowledge of what constitutes a good fish spawning ground and the best type of riverbed substrate for the type of river. The cost benefit study suggests that improvements in ecosystem services (restoration, improvements in water quality and increased biodiversity, including increased fish production) will balance the costs for restoration after only years (post restoration).</p>
Project results	<p>By re-meandering the former channelized <i>ditch</i> in 2013, the <i>creek</i> is one kilometer longer today and the habitats more heterogeneous compared to pre-restoration conditions. By rising the ground water level in the valley (70 ha), today flooding occurs at a larger scale, more frequently, resulting in a more dynamic and nature-like floodplain hydrology compared to pre-restoration conditions. In addition, nine wetlands and five tributaries have been restored, enhancing the Valley with additional habitat types, favouring a more diverse flora and fauna, terrestrial as well as aquatic ones.</p> <p>The mapping and identifying the host-fish species used by <i>Unio crassus</i> during its parasitic stage have been done. By means of the knowledge gained, the farming and re-introducing of <i>Unio crassus</i> in Fyleån Creek has been successful. Here, preliminary results suggest that the farmed mussels have been surviving in their new habitat after being transplanted from the laboratory.</p>
LIFE Database	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.dspPage&n_proj_id=4041
Project website	http://www.ucforlife.se/

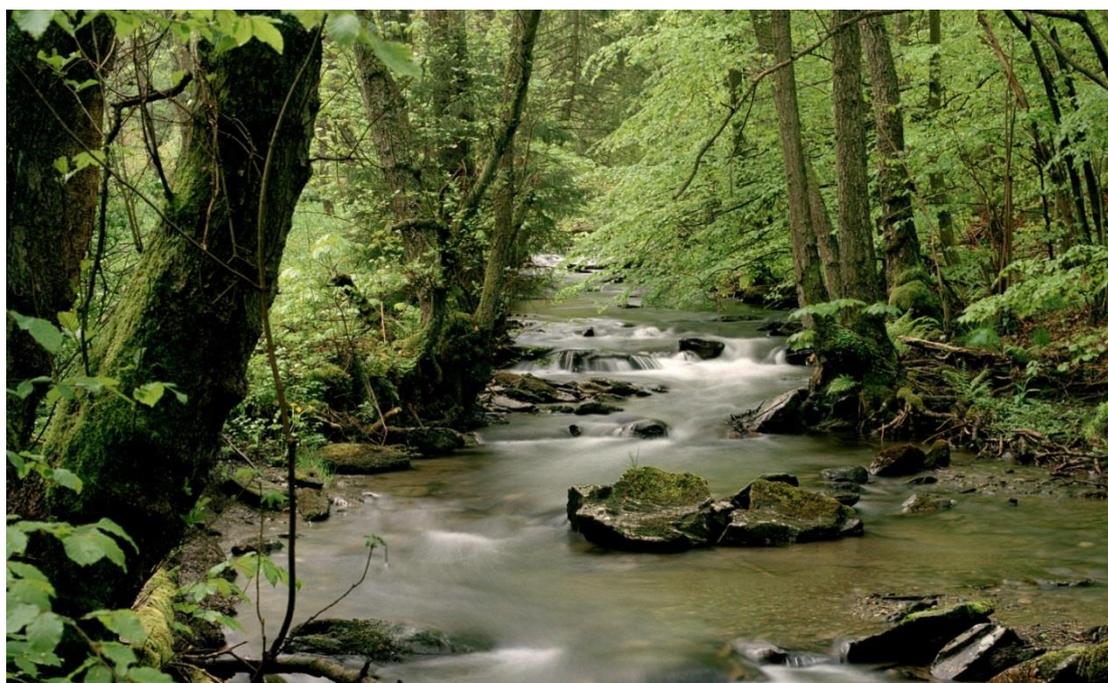


Project	Danube Sturgeon - Joint actions to raise awareness on overexploitation of danube sturgeons in Romania and Bulgaria
Project number	LIFE11 INF/AT/000902
Country	Austria
Status	Open
Representative	Cristina Munteanu
Target species	<i>Huso huso</i> , <i>Acipenser stellatus</i> , <i>A. gueldenstaedtii</i> , <i>A. ruthenus</i> , <i>A. nudiventris</i> , <i>A. sturio</i>
Project overall objectives	The project will provide a major contribution to protect and stop overexploitation of Critically Endangered Danube sturgeons in Bulgaria and Romania and to secure the long term survival of these species with high natural and economic value.
Presentation abstract	<p>“Saving Danube Sturgeons – a WWF priority in Europe”</p> <p>Sturgeons are the most threatened animals on the IUCN Red List of Threatened species. Of 6 species native to the Danube, Beluga, Stellate Sturgeon, Russian Sturgeon, Ship Sturgeon and Atlantic Sturgeon are listed as Critically Endangered, with Atlantic Sturgeon already extinct here. Only Sterlet is assessed as Vulnerable.</p> <p>For Danube sturgeon populations, quantitative information is hardly available due to very patchy monitoring. However, the decline of Danube sturgeons is clearly documented by the rapidly decreasing catches in the last decades. In Bulgaria, total annual catches fell from 63.5 t in the 1940 to 25.3 t in 1995 – 2002 and in Romania from app. 1144 t in 1940 to less than 8 t in 1995.</p> <p>The main direct threat to the survival of all Danube sturgeons is overexploitation, further aggravated by habitat loss and disruption of spawning migration. Reasons for dramatic decline of these species are complex, but lack of awareness and information is the background of all identified threats and the root cause of the most important one, overfishing.</p>
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By June 2013, Sturgeon Advocates are established in both countries and are recognized as liaison persons and information sources regarding sturgeon issues by at least 300 fishermen in 15 targeted villages. • By October 2014, at least 150 targeted fishermen are aware of alternatives to substitute income from illegal sturgeon fishing. • By December 2013, 2 workshops (for at least 100 officials in total) and 4 special sessions providing training on the job (for at least 10 officials each) are held for competent enforcement authorities in Bulgaria and Romania. • By the end of the project, first time seizures of illegal sturgeon caviar in Bulgaria and Romania and imposed sanctions to deter further poaching and illegal trade show higher enforcement effectiveness and improved conservation of wild sturgeons. • By April 2015, a joint declaration is signed by at least 7 high level decision makers from Danube States, expressing clear political support for the protection of sturgeons.
LIFE Database	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=se arch.dspPage&n_proj_id=4340
Project website	http://danube-sturgeons.org/the-project/

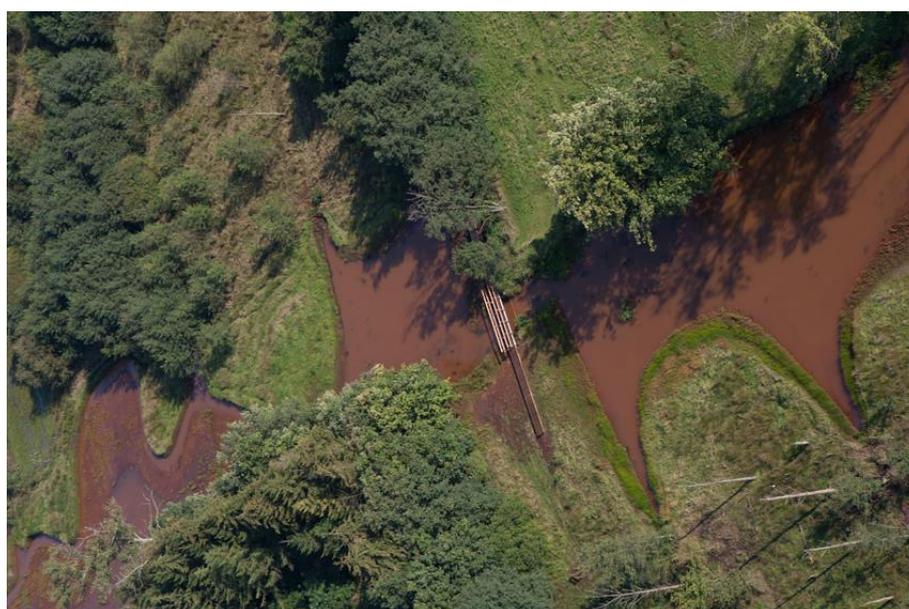
Project	RESTORE - RESTORE - Rivers: Engaging, Supporting and Transferring knOwledge for Restoration in Europe
Project number	LIFE09 INF/UK/000032
Country	UK
Status	Closed
Representative	Jukka Jormola
Project overall objective	The overall river restoration effort is hindered, however, not by a lack of expertise at the local level but by a lack of opportunities for sharing best practice and knowledge. Addressing this gap in knowledge transfer is the main aim of the 'RESTORE' project.
Presentation abstract	"Best practices of river restoration in Europe: RiverWiki produced by RESTORE Life+" The presentation focused on one of the important outcomes of this cross European project was the creation of a 'RiverWiki', a tool for sharing best practices and lessons learnt for policy makers, practitioners and researchers of river restoration. This interactive source of information on river restoration schemes around Europe currently holds 813 case studies from 31 countries.
Project main result	'RiverWiki' available at https://restorerivers.eu/wiki
LIFE Database	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.dspPage&n_proj_id=3780
Project website	http://www.ecrr.org/

Projects represented by poster presentations and other projects

Project	Wald - Wasser – Wildnis - Optimisation of NATURA-2000-habitats in the National Park Eifel
Project number	LIFE09 NAT/DE/000006
Country	Germany
Status	Ongoing
Representative	Bettina Krebs
Target species	<i>Cottus gobio</i> (bull head), <i>Austropotamobius torrentium</i> (stone crayfish), <i>Castor fiber</i> (beaver), <i>Ciconia nigra</i> (black stork), <i>Felis silvestris</i> (wild cat), <i>Lynx lynx</i> (lynx), <i>Lycaena helle</i> (small copper)
Target habitats	Water courses of plain to montane levels with the <i>Ranunculion fluitantis</i> and <i>Callitricho-Batrachion</i> (3260) Alluvial forests with <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> and <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> (91EO*) vegetation“ (3260) Tilio-Acerion forests of slopes, screes and ravines (9180*)
Background	This project aims to allow woodland and water habitats in the Eifel National Park to develop wilderness. These areas have a largely natural character and contain rare animal and plant species. Nevertheless, the traces of human management are visible. Conifers - not native in the Eifel region - bear witness to the former forestry. Streams were straightened in places, tubes and weirs were installed.
Objectives	Optimisation of the ecological permeability and dynamics of water courses and riparian sites and development of natural forest- and open landscape habitats
LIFE Database	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=search_dspPage&n_proj_id=3856
Project website	http://www.wald-wasser-wildnis.de/en/



Project	Life Grote Nete - Restoration of the lowland river system 'Grote Nete'
Project number	LIFE05 NAT/B/000090
Country	Belgium
Status	Completed
Representative	Stefan Versweyveld
Target species	<i>Lampetra planeri</i> (brook lamprey), <i>Cobitis taenia</i> (spined loach)
Target habitats	Water courses of plain to montane levels with the Ranunculion fluitantis and Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation (3260) Natural eutrophic lakes with Magnopotamion type vegetation (3150)
Background	The upper course of the valley of the Grote Nete holds 11 remarkable habitat types. Starting with the river itself connected with species rich grasslands and alluvial forest, up to the inland sand dunes, The river system is home to more than 15% of the Flemish population of <i>Lampetra planeri</i> and <i>Cobitis taenia</i> . Natuurpunt and the nature management agency have established several strictly protected areas in the valley but eutrophication, habitat fragmentation, intensification of agriculture, and disturbances of the natural hydrology continue to adversely affect the fragile habitat types.
Results	100 ha land is acquired and good grazing management is introduced in cooperation with local farmers. The grazing will help to develop a full gradient of some open and heavily grazed patches to closed and almost non-grazed forests with a rich undergrowth of plants. Around 137 ha of alluvial forest will develop this way. Eighteen weekend cottages were removed and 15 horticultural ponds were restored and re-integrated in the landscape. The naturalisation of the main excavated river included removing the dikes along a stretch of 690 m and created more than 4 ha of open water, marshland and oxbows.
LIFE Database	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=se arch.dspPage&n_proj_id=2918
Project website	http://www.life-grotenete.be/



Project	LIFE Free Fish - Conservation and restoration of Natura 2000 rheophilic fish species and their migratory routes in key SCIs in Bulgaria
Project number	LIFE12 NAT/BG/001011
Country	Bulgaria
Status	Ongoing
Representative	Ivan Hristov
Target species	<i>Cottus gobio</i> (European bullhead) , <i>Barbus meridionalis</i> (Mediterranean Barbel), <i>Gobio albipinnatus</i> (White-finned Gudgeon), <i>Gobio kessleri</i> (Kessler's Gudgeon), <i>Gobio uranoscopus</i> (Danube Gudgeon), <i>Cobitis elongata</i> (Balkan Loach), <i>Sabanejewia aurata</i> (Golden Spined Loach), <i>Rhodeus sericeus amarus</i> (Bitterling), <i>Unio crassus</i> (Thick Shelled River Mussel)
Background	Threats to the target species and their habitats are common and are considered together. The main issues are, stream fragmentation and fish migration barriers, pollution, stream adjustments, straightening and channelling of streams, eradication of riparian vegetation, gravel extraction and illegal fishing. Fragmentation is currently the most severe threat to rivers and target species. It is placed first because it is a factor that acts independently, directly, autonomously and cumulates to the impact of all other factors. Rivers today are severely fragmented by physical construction barriers - hydroelectric barrages, water intakes, bridges, erosion control facilities, linear infrastructure, etc. This factor is crucial due to the fact that currently its role grows exponentially with the avalanche-like increase in the number of small HPPs. A particular additional problem is the lack of specific national requirements for the protection of habitats and providing for migration of aquatic organisms both upstream and downstream.
Objectives	The main project goal is improvement of the conservation status of threatened and endangered 6 Natura 2000 small reophilic fish species and 1 Natura 2000 mollusc species in selected river sections in Natura 2000 sites of the Bulgarian Danube river basin.
LIFE Database	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.dspPage&n_proj_id=4761
Project website	http://www.wwf.bg/what_we_do/rivers/free_fish/life_free_fish/?desktop=1



Project	Margal Ulla - Recovery of populations of <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> and <i>Galemys pyrenaicus</i> in the Ulla river basin (Galicia)
Project number	LIFE09 NAT/ES/000514
Country	Spain
Status	Ongoing
Representative	Jesús Santamarina
Target species	<i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> (freshwater pearl mussel) and <i>Galemys pyrenaicus</i> (Pyrenean desman)
Target habitats	Rivers, especially lotic habitats
Background	The Ulla river basin was selected as a representative of mean conditions of Galician river basins, as regards its impacts and environmental constraints. This river and its watershed experience different pressures that impact on aquatic species such as <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> and <i>Galemys pyrenaicus</i> . Both species show a contrasting physiology and natural history, but require a similar habitat quality that bonds their fates together. Threats affecting these species include degradation of the river bed substrate, from dredging and siltation, degradation of riparian forest and difficulties for host species to move upriver (in the case of <i>M. margaritifera</i>). Both these species act as biological indicators for the overall state of the fluvial ecosystem and conservation actions that tackle threats to these species will have knock-on benefits for many other species living within the Ulla river basin.
Objectives	Contribute to the improvement of the conservation status of <i>Margaritifera margaritifera</i> and <i>Galemys pyrenaicus</i> in Galicia, ensuring the conservation of the existing populations in the Ulla river basin, and establish suitable conditions for the recovery of the original populations.
LIFE Database	http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=se_arch.dspPage&n_proj_id=3844
Project website	http://margalulla.xunta.es/es

Proxecto LIFE09 NAT ES 000514 Margal Ulla
 Recuperación das poboacións de *Margaritifera margaritifera* e *Galemys pyrenaicus* na bacia do río Ulla. (Galicia)

A náíade *Margaritifera margaritifera* + A toupa de río *Galemys pyrenaicus* = **ríos vivos**
 Coidamos do noso futuro

LIFE MARGAL-ULLA

A. Outeiro

3. The final panel discussion – conclusions and recommendations

At the final panel discussion the participants were asked to write down topics on policy and project level which were the most relevant for them to further discuss. The further discussion was facilitated by the experts of Astrale Monitoring Team. As a result of the discussion a number of recommendations arose, including better linkage between the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and LIFE Nature projects, a greater emphasis on climate change, enhanced capacity building to help set up new projects, simplified LIFE project administration, and improved guidelines for LIFE project applicants. A greater focus on after-LIFE monitoring was recommended, with more responsibility given at member states level.

It was agreed that: river restoration should be more science-based with more reliance on natural processes; restocking and reintroduction projects must include elements to check fish species' fitness for natural environments before release; and greater project transparency should provide information about costly fish passes.

Some of those issues were given more time to discuss while some points were only briefly touched. Therefore, below are presented all points raised by the participants.

Legend: Points written in plain text are the ones from the flip-over, written in the original wording of participants. Points following the '/' and written in italics are the texts from the participants 'stickers' that fit the statement.

Policy level:

1. Water Framework Directive requirements versus LIFE requirements, the answer could be Integrated projects and bigger projects./missing link to WFD=> many objectives of WFD are the same for HD, LIFE projects can make links for further aquatic habitat maintenance from other WFD tools (flood mitigation, nitrate directive etc.)
2. CC link/Link with climate change should be emphasized
3. Too much financing is given for priority species (the co-financing rates)/as far as they are priority species with different level for financing they are going to be most targeted.
4. (need) to put pressure on member states governments to ensure that what has been achieved should be maintained
5. Capacity building needed for helping setting up new projects
6. National allocations => small countries in unfavorable situation=> nothing left for small countries
7. /project proposal design and guidelines or applicants could be improved

8. */stronger implications of (monitoring) measures for the 'after life' time => external financing must be guaranteed.*
9. */bigger or multinational projects to aim targets at EU level*
10. */bottom up!*
11. */external assistance for setting up a project- bringing institutions & people together,*
12. */Projects attempting to restock a species must apply culture methods that are designed to prepare the species for fitness for survival in a harsh and highly competitive environment in line with the FAO technical guidelines no 570, 2011.*
13. */Monitoring restocking programmes for migratory species moving across range states must follow a standardised format across borders to obtain comparable and reliable results.*
14. */More responsibilities should be given to national level.*
15. */improve links to WFD and Flood directives*
16. */climate change mitigation*
17. */transparency while reviewing the applications => why not personal meeting/interview?*
18. */Administration of LIFE projects should be simplified*
19. */Continuous pushing on MS policy makers to follow and improve the WFD regulation*
20. */The problem with the WFD is that there are actions plans when the status is below good (moderate or worse). The LIFE projects are in our best areas (N2000) so the status is often good or excellent.*

Project level

1. *River restoration is often best action/priority, but should be science based. /Yes, river restoration is often the best action for achieving the required CS. /River restoration is important/priority, but together with good quality, scientific monitoring possibility.*
2. *There is a need for flexibility in projects (access to amendments)/Need to be more flexible if actions have to be modified it should be easier to do so.*
3. *Need for better instructions/info on the rules of the game. /project proposal design and guidelines or applicants could be improved. /better instructions for proposals, education/meetings to explain during proposals*
4. *BE AWARE of the possibility of further DIALOGUE with the EU (in revision phase)*
5. *Monitoring should be followed by evaluation/ Monitoring needs to be followed by evaluation*
6. *Status quo monitoring (baseline...) must be longer /In some cases longer monitoring time before real LIFE actions is needed because (target) species/habitats we affect are dependent of several natural aspects and with longer time we can see year specific effect to species abundance-richness. Se the more data we got before actions the better we can say after our work how this work affected our target species (or habitats) The question is about more funding (several years) before actions. /better understanding of project evaluators on needs for monitoring for baseline assessment. /monitoring to short time period for adequate methods (pre-restoration monitoring)*
7. *The proportion of C-actions cannot go down*

8. Projects should be longer (more time for implementation)/longer project duration than 5 years => better monitoring possible & => long term effects
9. Guidelines are needed how to put 'price tags' on biodiversity/*Ecosystem services-price tags at an European level*
10. Transparency of effect and efficiency (of projects)/*automatic and public (via internet/online) possibilities to watch if and how the pass is working. Should be obligatory on passes where the difference of height is bigger than 1.2 m*
11. Make it simple, will lead to more success/ *Simple actions => greater chance for success*
12. Better stakeholder involvement needed/ *Better understanding and involvement of stakeholders*
13. Rely more on natural processes /*more restoration that is not based on human activities*
14. MAKE USE of best practices
15. /*better monitoring*
16. /*assistance how to manage monitoring after LIFE*
17. /*the monitoring should not take too big role, monitoring itself does not improve CS!*
18. /*if your want monitoring do not cut it out of the application, maybe contact the project owner to discuss if there are any questions*
19. /*Lessons learned: EU added value/value for money is extremely important for new projects for countries with average-value Nature 2000 sites compared with other EU states.*



The meeting and the recommendations that arose from the concluding panel discussion were featured in the September issue of LIFE news

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/features/2014/rivers1.htm>

and form part of the basis for the LIFE publication 'LIFE and freshwater fish', 2015.

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/publications/lifepublications/index.htm>

Annex 1. Agenda

Day 1 – Wednesday, 10 September 2014

08.30-09.00	Registration	Arrival conference venue, registration and coffee
09.00-09.30	Opening	Welcome and introduction of the programme LIFE projects - a tool for implementing environmental policies <i>Bent Jepsen, Nature/Biodiversity Coordinator at the LIFE Team Astrale GEIE</i>
09.30-10.00	Session 1	Rearing fishes for re-introduction: preparing juveniles for fitness for survival in a harsh and highly competitive outside world <i>Dr. Harald Rosenthal, President and Founder of the World Sturgeon Conservation Society</i>
10.00-10.30		The Houting Project - Efforts for one fish species and benefits for an entire ecosystem <i>Jan Steinbring Jensen, Nature Agency, Danish Ministry of the Environment</i>
10.30-11.00		Discussion in groups
11.00-11.30		Coffee break (poster presentations also available)
11.30-12.00	Session 1	25 years' experience from Denmark - changes in the perception of what a good quality project must include to improve conditions for fish life? <i>Ole Ottosen, the Project Manager of LIFE10 NAT/DK/000099 SMOOTH</i>
12.00-12.30		Overcoming river fragmentation: the need for harmonized and standardized procedures to operate and monitor fish passes in large (multinational) river systems (the case of sturgeons) <i>Jörn Gessner, Senior Scientist of the Leibniz-Institute for Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries and Paolo Bronzi, Vice President of World Sturgeon Conservation Society</i>
12.30-13.25		The reintroduction of the allis shad to the Rhine system - backgrounds, objectives and first signs of success <i>Dr. Andreas Scharbert, Project Manager of LIFE09 NAT/D/000008 Life+ Alosa alosa</i>

Possible explanations for the current decrease of the formerly biggest remaining population of the allis shad in the Gironde watersheds, France

David Clavé, LIFE09 NAT/D/000008 Life+ Alosa alosa

13.30-14.25	Lunch	Restaurant Spargel
14.30-15.00		Restoration of the Vindel river – the linkage between science and practice <i>Prof. Christer Nilsson, LIFE08/NAT/S/266 Vindel LIFE</i>
	Session 2	
15.00-15.30		Making the change in the life of riverine species - removal of 300 barriers in northern Sweden <i>Ida Schönfeldt and Sofia Perä, the Project Coordinators of LIFE10 NAT/SE/000045 Remediation of migratory barriers in stream crossings</i>
15.30-16.00		Discussion
16.00-16.30	Coffee break	Poster presentations (poster authors are kindly asked to be by their poster for explanations and possible questions)
16.30-17.00		Local level Actor long term motivation for healthy riverine habitat management. Experience in Latvia. <i>Andris Urtans, expert of LIFE11 NAT/LV/000371 the Life NAT-PROGRAMME</i>
	Session 2	
17.00-17.30		Ljubljana River connects: concrete restoration actions to enable fish migration and advanced monitoring system <i>Andrej Vidmar and Katarina Zabret, LIFE10 NAT/SI/000142 LIFE Ljubljana connects</i>
17.30	Brief introduction to Day 2	
17.40	End of the day	
19.30	Joint dinner	Restaurant Atlantis

Day 2 – Thursday, 11 September 2014

09.00		A coach will leave TEEC at 09.00 for a field trip to Alam-Pedja Natura 2000 area.
	Session 3	
10.30		The barge Jõmmu will leave Palupõhja Nature School around 10 depending on the wishes of the participants but not later than 10.30. The values of Alam-Pedja Natura 2000 area, projects Happyfish, LIFE07 NAT/EE/000120 Saving life in meanders and oxbow lakes of Emajõgi River on Alam-Pedja NATURA 2000 area), and Happyriver, LIFE12 NAT/EE/000871 Restoring the integrity of freshwater habitats in Alam-Pedja Natura 2000 area – bringing the River Laeva back to life, will be presented and discussed during the boat ride.
Lunch		The lunch will be served on the barge
16.00-16.30	Arrival Tartu	The bus from Kärevere will leave ~16.00 (<i>exact time depends on the wishes of participants</i>).
19.00	Joint dinner	Restaurant Ülikooli Kohvik



Day 3 – Friday, 12 September 2014

9.00-9.30	Session 4	How much is a mussel worth? <i>Ivan Olsson, the Project Manager of LIFE10 NAT/SE/000046</i> <i>The thick shelled river mussel (Unio crassus) brings Life+ back to rivers</i>
9.30-10.00		Saving Danube Sturgeons – a WWF priority in Europe <i>Cristina Munteanu, the Expert of LIFE11 INF/AT/000902</i> Saving Danube sturgeons - joint actions to raise awareness on overexploitation of Danube sturgeons in Romania and Bulgaria
10.00-10.30		Best practices of river restoration in Europe: RiverWiki produced by RESTORE Life+ <i>Jukka Jormola, Project Coordinator of RESTORE Life+, HEALFISH Interreg IVA</i>
10.30-11.00		Overview of LIFE programme contribution to fish conservation - cost effectiveness of the actions <i>João Pedro Silva, LIFE-Nature Expert</i>
11.00-11.30	Closing	Panel discussion/conclusions - close of official meeting
	Departure	<i>For the ones that have their <u>flight departing from 15.30</u> in the afternoon should take a bus that departs 12.00.</i>
11.45-15.55	Optional programme	Optional field visit to Centre for Limnology A coach will leave TEEC at 11.45 sharply to lake Vörtsjärv for experimental trawling.
15.55	Arrival Tartu Bus Station	<i>For the ones that have their <u>flight departing from 19.30</u> or the <u>next day</u></i>



Annex 2. Consumption of resources related to the conference

Venue

Tartu Environmental Education Centre is located in a newly constructed building that was opened for public in year 2013. The building was constructed by following the energy efficient design; all the interior materials carefully selected. The Centre holds and implements environmental policy in its' everyday functioning.



Accommodation

Unfortunately, there are no hotels and or motels in Tartu city that have been awarded with Green Key Ecolabel. However, among the selection of accommodation places there was a hostel Looming that had been pre-booked for the participants that follows the sustainable criteria (e.g. Economical management by the reduction of consumption meaning a reduction of costs).

Catering

Lunch and dinners

The restaurants that had been pre-booked for the group were asked to make an effort and offer local and organically grown food.

At the meeting

The Estonian tap water is of high quality. Therefore, all participants were encouraged to count on filling out personal water bottle from the tap water.

At the conference

Name tags

Prior to the meeting all participants were encouraged to bring along the name tag cases from previous conferences with them. At the time of the meeting all participants were provided with the second hand name tag case with the personal paper label.

Materials

All participants were kindly asked to save the delegate pack at hand into their computer and/or print out the parts of this delegate pack that might be of interest during your stay in Tartu. There were no printed materials available at the registration desk.

Annex 3. The list of participants

Name	Last name	Email	Organisation (name in English)	Project (LIFE or other)	Country
Paolo	Bronzi	aerespe@mac.com	WSCS (World Sturgeon Conservation Society)		Italy
David	Clavé	clave.migado@orange.fr	Association MIGADO	Life + alosa alosa	France
Gatis	Erins	gatis.erins@videsinstituts.lv	Institute for Environmental Solutions		Latvia
Jörn	Gessner	sturgeon@igb-berlin.de	Leibniz-Institute for Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries	Baltic sturgeon Rehabilitation	Germany
Ivan	Hristov	ihristov@wwfdcp.bg	WWF Danube-Carpathian Programme Bulgaria	LIFE FREE FISH	Bulgaria
Davide	Ilardo	davide_ilardo@regione.lombardia.it	Lombardy Region	CON.FLU.PO	Italy
Jarko	Jaadla	jarko.jaadla@envir.ee	Ministry of Environment		Estonia
Jan Steinbring	Jensen	jsj@nst.dk	Nature Agency, Danish Ministry of the Environment	Houting	Denmark
Bent	Jepsen	bent.jepsen@astrale.org	Astrale Life Monitoring Team		Belgium/ Denmark
Jukka	Jormola	jukka.jormola@ymparisto.fi	Finnish Environment Institute SYKE	RESTORE Life+, HEALFISH Interreg IV A	Finland
Einar	Kärgerberg	einar.kargenberg@gmail.com	Wildlife Estonia	LIFE Happyriver	Estonia
Bettina	Krebs	bettina.krebs@bs-aachen.de	Nature conservation association of the district of Aachen	Wald - Wasser - Wildnis	Germany
Brigita	Kukonenko	brigita.kukonenko@zuv.lt	Fisheries Service under the Ministry of Agriculture		Lithuania
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Ivan	Olsson	ivan.olsson@lansstyrelsen.se	UC4LIFE	UC4LIFE	Sweden
Ole	Ottosen	oot@tonder.dk	Tønder Municipality	SMOOTH	Denmark
Ruta	Pedecce		Institute for Environmental Solutions		Latvia

Sofia	Perä	sofia.pera@lansstyrelsen.se	County Administrative Board of Norrbotten	Remibar	Sweden
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Jesús	Santamarina	jesus.santamarina.fernandez@xunta.es	Consellería de Medio Ambiente Territorio e Infraestruturas. Xunta de Galicia	MARGAL ULLA	Spain
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Andrej	Vidmar	avidmar@fgg.uni-lj.si	University of Ljubljana	LIFE Ljubljana connects	Slovenia
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