

Sub-action A.4.2: Preparation of the methodical guidance and forest management planning standards on integration of nature conservation measures into forestry management planning process

Beneficiary responsible for implementation:

VMU AA is in charge of the action, and other participates: MoE, SSPA, DNP, SFE.

Description (what, how, where and when):

Methodological guidance and forest management planning standards in sub-action A.4.2 are based on several activities, ensuring evaluation of former experience and results of Natura 2000 areas management, transfer of best practices from other European countries; preparation of demonstration activities in Dzūkija National Park and associated with monitoring of results (under Actions D.1) as well as national level multi-stakeholder approach. The inventory of the habitats and species of Community interest was completed in all Lithuania and quantitative favourable reference values were evaluated and agreed. However qualitative values on habitat structure and functions are still unclear and must be discussed among stakeholders. Set of quantitative favourable reference values on habitat structure and functions will be initial task for this sub-action. As the result of the action two documents will be prepared. The “Methodological guidance on integration of nature conservation measures into forestry” is aiming to describe management scenarios (including alternatives) that might be done in every forest habitat type and forest dwelling species of Community interest. It will also include qualitative favourable reference value description and the methodology of post action monitoring. The auditory of this document is professional ecologists, foresters and all who interested in conservation and management of Natura 2000 areas. Another document “Forest management planning standards” is important for professional forest management planning and includes standardise procedures for every habitat and species of Community interest situated in various stand types (tree species, age, stocking density, etc.) and growing conditions. Such document will ensure legal certainty for main stakeholders and automate planning process as it is done by special software that will be updated on final stage. We aiming to find win-win solutions that all main stakeholders including ecologists and foresters were satisfied from one side to make effective conservation of Natura 2000 areas and from another – to supply in limited quantity wood recourses into market. Both documents are the key elements of capacity building of the project. The work directly supports the implementation of the Priority Action Framework. This Sub-Action is divided into four activities:

- 1) Estimation of qualitative values on habitat structure and functions of habitats and species of Community interest. This estimation is essential as it gives theoretical background on the structures and functions that must be aimed during forest management. For the species of Community interest it is description of preferred habitat structure (qualitative and quantitative information). For the habitats of Community interest it will include more complex structural features. The estimation will include a search of literature, evaluation of the results of Natura 2000 areas management as well as transfer the practices from European countries. Finally, it will be presented and discussed in the meetings with main stakeholder groups. The activity will be parallel with 2, 3 activities described below.
- 2) Evaluation of former experience and results of Natura 2000 areas management. Extensive GIS data of the country-wide habitats mapping (which has been conducted in 2010-2015) will be analyzed and plots for post-management assessment will be selected. Both “traditional” forestry measures outside Natura 2000 areas and conservation measures inside Natura 2000 areas will be assessed with a view to detect their impact on the quality of the natural habitats or species habitats. As many of Natura 2000 areas in Lithuania have Nature Management Plans with management activities for enhancing the conservation status of habitat / species, it is important to make methodology to describe and evaluate implemented measures and their results. In order to ensure best coverage of ecological variety of the habitats, more than 80 plots of implemented management measures will be selected. It also includes tracking of forestry management measures in

- recently identified valuable territories for better understanding, how traditional forest management influenced favourable status of protected values.
- 3) Transfer best practices from other European countries. As Natura 2000 is comparatively new idea in Lithuania, the experience and best practices from other EU countries are very important to successfully complete the methodological and planning document. Moreover, here we do not have management models for/ experience on/ quality assessment knowledge about all existing habitat types and species, so the information from other EU Member States in wider biogeographical region with similar habitats is essential. We will take examples from at least two countries of purposive forest habitat and species conservation management from other European countries. This activity is directly associated with C.7.2 that cover planned study visits (with SSPA and Dzukija National park) to at least 4 EU countries to get more field information and experience on conservation management issues. Described above activity will start parallel with (1) and will be completed by the end of 2021.
 - 4) Enhancing demonstration activities in Dzukija National Park. As a new forest management plan is going to start at 2021 (or supplement to existing management plan), before forest management planning process is necessary prepare technological models for demonstration activities. It will cover alternative management models for various habitat types and species representing Dzukija National park. It is associated with Action C.2, that will use the results of this activity, and later it will follow up in Action D.1 with monitoring on progress of conservation status of targeted habitats or species. Monitoring results will be useful to update preliminary management recommendations (4). This activity cover the preparation of technological models and planning of conservation management in Dzukija National park (State Forest Enterprise Veisiejai and Varena regional divisions) for existing habitats/species forest management plan or its supplement.
 - 5) Preparation of the methodical guidance and planning standards. After completing activities described above it makes possible successfully prepare “Methodological guidance on integration of nature conservation measures into forestry” and “Forest management planning standards”. Methodological guidance will contain detailed description of possible management scenarios and post action monitoring; Planning standards – document for direct integration of conservation issues to forest management plans. The latter document will give algorithms for forest management planning. The preliminary document will be prepared by the end of 2024, however updated by Dzukija National park results will be on 2026 and then will be published as the part of Action E.1.
 - 6) National level multi-stakeholder approach. For successful communication with stakeholders during and after the project we need apply inclusiveness of various stakeholders group policy. Nature protection specialist, foresters, forest owners, hunters, berry pickers, local communities etc., all have interest in forest management and designing for favourable aims. Their ideas must be taken into account, disagreements discussed to find win-win solution. The meetings with stakeholders are planned during 1-5 activities and after it.

It is foreseen that methodological guidance on integration of nature conservation measures into forestry will be policy-relevant output relevant for policy development, and methodological guidelines on forest management planning standards will be policy-relevant output relevant for current policy implementation.

Knowledge and experience gained during implementation of action A.4 will be shared through the action E.3 “Experience exchange and replication” by participating in the international conferences, workshops, other international events, organization of an international conference in Lithuania regarding forest management measures. Also, proactive networking with other LIFE projects, participation in international exchange meetings and study visits, especially aiming at boreal region (sharing same habitat types) and use of other means

planned under E actions (such as project website) is foreseen as a tool for experience replication tool.

In the activity will be involved wide team of VMU AA as well as partner representatives from MoE, SSPA, and Dzūkija National park. State Forest Enterprise Veisiejai and Varena regional divisions will be responsible for the preparation of forest management plan updated version.

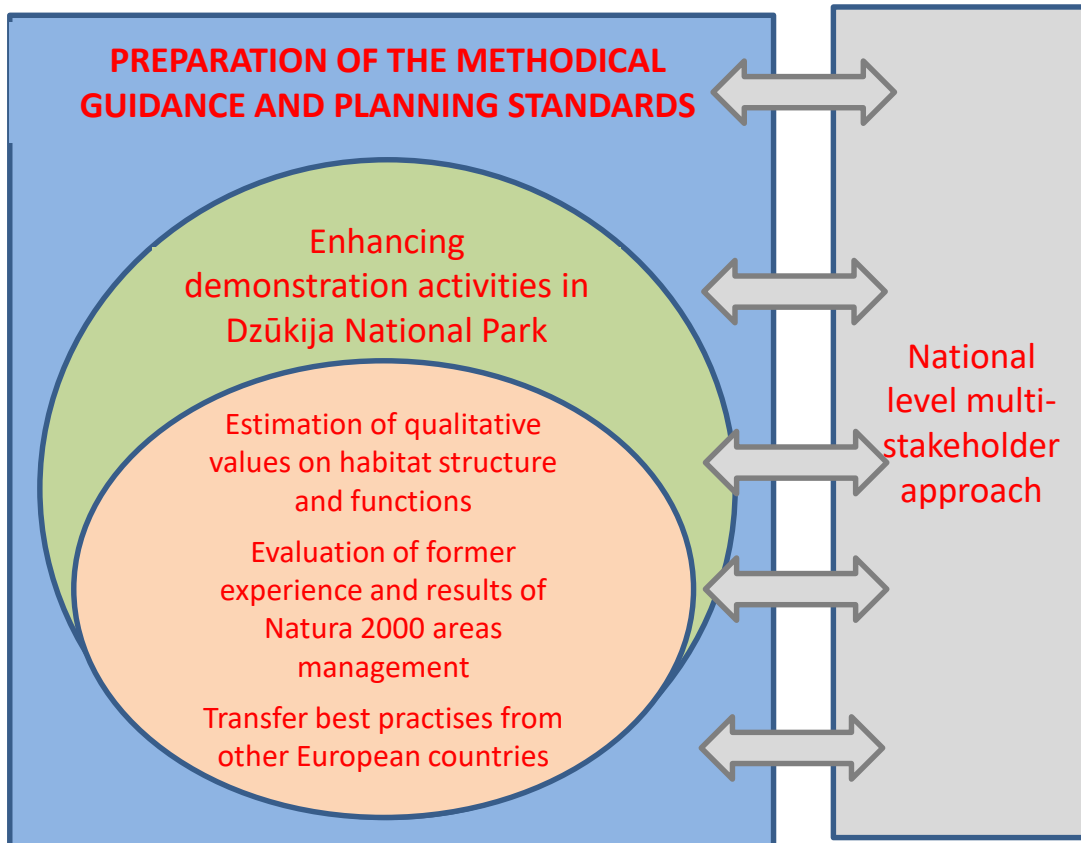


Figure A.4-1. Framework of A.4.2 Sub-action.

Reasons why this action is necessary:

Internal forest management plan is required by the national law and prepared to all state and private forests in Lithuania. Currently there is no firm and common understanding of what conservation management measures in forests should look like. Current practice is that conservation measures for habitats and species of Community interest must be agreed with forest owner / manager on case by case basis, although this is done on very late stage of the forest management planning process. In addition to that, prevailing management solution is “no forest use” as the consequence of the precautionary approach. Stakeholders are lacking legal certainty in this situation. All this evoke disagreements and certain level conflict. Another aspect of current practice is that organizers of forest management plan tend to accept the management decisions on habitats and species only when they are derived from nature management plans. In this case measures will be implemented only after approval of the nature management plans, which means that duplication of planning efforts and postponed implementation are programmed. The aim of the IP under this action is to establish the system for direct integration of Natura 2000 management measures into forest management processes without unnecessary duplication of nature management planning process. The effect of acceleration of setting necessary conservation measures for Natura 2000 sites is expected. This is especially relevant to areas with forest habitats or species only.

Constraints and assumptions

There are no major risks for implementation of this action. However, delay of nationally planned Dzukija National park forest management planning (in 2021) may result of delay of C.2 action and delay of major results of this Sub-Action. If management planning will delay the supplement to existing management plan will be prepared.

Expected results (quantitative information when possible):

- nature conservation management planning integrated into regular forest management planning procedures and became common tool for forest management in the future;
- national level comprehensive Methodological guidance (at least 200 pages) and planning standards for forest management planners prepared (covering totally at least 23 bird species listed in Bird directive as well as at least 15 habitat types and 13 species listed in Habitat directive).

